

**T10/824, KUAOTUNU, COROMANDEL PENINSULA:  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION**

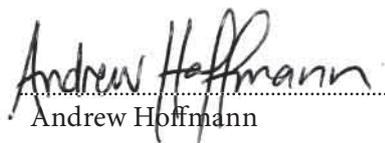
**REPORT TO  
THE NEW ZEALAND HISTORIC PLACES TRUST  
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# T10/824, KUAOTUNU, COROMANDEL PENINSULA: ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

ANDREW HOFFMANN

The archaeological investigation of T10/824 was carried out under authority 2009/16 issued by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (HPT) under section 14 of the Historic Places Act 1993 (HPA). The investigation took place from 24 to 28 November 2008.

## Previous work and scope of investigation

A four-lot subdivision of the property, Part Lot 6 DPS 16142, is proposed. Construction works include establishing four house sites and a driveway through the lot and into the adjoining western property Part Lot 5 DPS 16142. An archaeological assessment (Hoffmann 2008a) covering both properties was completed in March 2008. Recommendations for archaeological testing of potential site locations were made and authority 2008/278 was issued by HPT under section 18 of the HPA. Results of the test excavation (Hoffmann 2008b) indicated that a site comprising at least one pit was present on the ridge knoll in the south-eastern corner of Part Lot 6 DPS 16142. This site was recorded as T10/824. The report for the test excavation recommended that an authority to destroy, damage or modify the site be obtained from HPT; it is the investigation undertaken under this authority (2009/16) that is investigated here.

A previously recorded archaeological site T10/790 (terrace) is located in Part Lot 5 DPS 16142 but will not be affected by the proposed works and was not investigated.

Two other sites were identified during the initial assessment. T10/821, a midden, is located in the northeastern corner of Part Lot 6 DPS 16142 on the crest of the ridge previously truncated and battered for the Kuaotunu–Wharekaho Road (SH25). Remnants of a shell midden, approximately 0.5 m<sup>2</sup> and 10–15 mm thick, were identified on the crest above the existing road batter. The final engineering plans to widen the existing batter and improve sight distances along SH25 from the property entrance indicate the site will not be further disturbed. This site was not investigated and is not discussed further here.

Site T10/828, a fire scoop, was identified during excavation of a benched track through the gully, parallel to and within 10 m of the gully stream. The single circular fire scoop feature was 1000 mm in diameter and 150 mm deep and contained several cooking stones and a heavily charcoal stained black clay. No midden or other features were present in the area. No further investigation of this site was made and no evidence existed to suggest the site comprised other features.

## Site location

The topography of Part Lot 6 DPS 16142 is dominated by an east–west trending ridge that runs through the property across its southern end and continues into the adjoining properties. Pa T10/196 occupies the high western end of the main

1. Aerial view of Part Lot 6 DPS 16142, showing pa (T10/196) to west in separate property, and location of site T10/824.



2. Aerial view of Part Lot 6 DPS 16142, showing the location of features excavated in site T10/824 in relation to the pa site T10/196.



ridgeline approximately 250 m west of T10/824 – it is located in Part Lot 4 DPS 16141 and lies outside the development area. An obvious access/exit route to and from the pa along the main ridgeline is discussed here. The test excavation of the ridge revealed no archaeological features other than those identified as T10/824.

The eastern boundary of Part Lot 6 DPS 16142 follows the crest of a steeply sloping branch spur that runs north off the main east–west ridgeline. Site T10/824 is situated at the south eastern corner of Part Lot 6 DPS 16142, on the crest of a minor knoll of the main ridge. The bulk of Part Lot 6 DPS 16142 land is a moderately to steeply sloping gully with a spring sourced steam running through it.

### Excavation method

A hydraulic excavator with weed bucket was used to strip topsoil from the knoll where the site was identified. The exposed surface was cleaned down by hand to identify archaeological features which were excavated by hand. Samples from features were retained for analysis where appropriate. Features were either excavated completely or in half-section.

The site plan was drawn using baseline-offset measurements. The overlay of the site features on the aerial photograph in Figure 2 was created using coordinates from a hand-held GPS (accuracy  $\pm 5$  m) of identifiable points in the vicinity of the site.

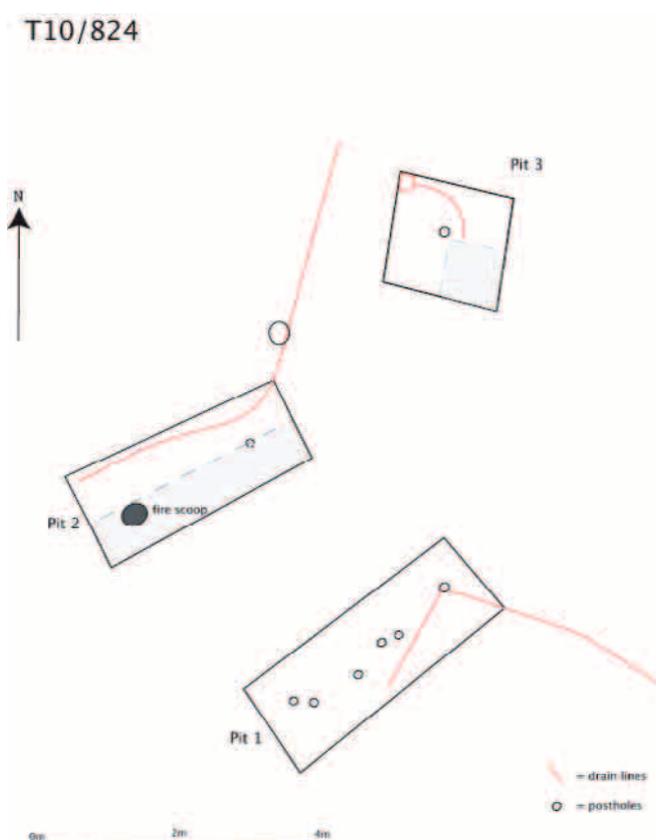
### Results

Three kumara pits were identified (Figures 3 and 4).

#### *Pit 1*

Pit 1 was a rectangular pit measuring 3600 x 1160 mm x 400 mm deep. The pit walls and floor were irregular due to excavation of the pit into hard andesite. The fill of the pit comprised two layers. The lower layer (Layer 2) was a homogenous mottled/mixed clay between 250 and 300 mm thick. The upper layer (Layer 1) was of darker brown more organic rich clay with patchy concentrations of heavily charcoal stained clay.

Six postholes were identified on the pit floor. All were between 80 and 120



3. Excavation plan of T10/824.

4. Site T10/824 showing the pits as exposed during the excavation, with pa T10/196 in the background.





5. Inset shows Pit 1 soil profile Layers 1 and 2 in cross-section of pit [4984]. Main image is of the completely excavated Pit 1. Note offset postholes and drain on pit floor.

mm in diameter and 100–150 mm deep. The postholes were aligned approximately along the central main axis of the pit, however, alternate postholes were offset from each other (Figure 5). The offset postholes indicate that the pit was used for a number of seasons with the roof structure having to be repaired or replaced. An irregular drain was identified on the pit floor and exited the pit through a narrow trench cut down to the pit floor depth through the southeastern corner. The drain trench continued down the southern slope of the knoll. The drain was 250 mm at its widest and continued for approximately 3 m from the corner of the pit. It was 400 mm deep at its exit from the pit, equivalent to the pit floor depth, and lessened in depth down slope away from the pit allowing water to drain freely. The drainage channel was filled with identical material to the Layer 2 pit fill. On the pit floor, the drain did not follow the pit walls. Rather a single c. 50 mm wide by c. 40 mm deep lead ran across the eastern, lower most, quarter of the pit floor, and directed water into the posthole closest to the drain exit. The drain continued from the posthole joining the main channel exit out of the pit (Figure 6). No postholes or drains were evident on the surface outside the pits.

#### *Pit 2*

Pit 2 was a rectangular pit measuring 3300 x 1080 mm x 400 mm deep. It was orientated parallel with Pit 1, approximately parallel to the ridgeline's main axis and together the pits occupied the centre of the knoll.

This pit was excavated in half section only. Part of one posthole (150 mm diameter x 50 mm deep) was evident on the excavated portion of the pit floor and there was no hint of a similar offset arrangement of postholes as in Pit 1.

The fill of Pit 2 was similar to Pit 1. Layer 2 was a homogenous clay fill reflecting a single fill event. Layer 1 was a darker brown more organic topsoil derived clay which probably developed over time. Cut into Layer 1 was a fire scoop 600 mm in diameter and 180 mm deep (Figure 7). The fill of the fire scoop was charcoal stained clay with fragments of charcoal. A sample of charcoal was retained for analysis.

The walls and floor of Pit 2 were excavated into degraded stone and bedrock was visible in the walls, which were irregular as in Pit 1. The drainage system of this pit was similar to Pit 1. The exit channel was cut through the lowest corner of the pit (the north eastern side in this case) down to the floor of the pit. In this case a cap of natural clay was laid into the drain trench at its exit from the pit, forming a tunnel like drain channel under the cap. The drain cut was of similar dimensions to the Pit 1 drain, approximately 250 mm at its widest and 400 mm deep. The drainage trench continued northeast from the pit down slope and the depth of the



6. Drain trench exiting south east corner of Pit 1.



7. Pit 2 excavated in half section. Note the fire scoop cut into Layer 1.



8. Pit 3 partially excavated. Note curved drain leading to sump.

channel cut reduced as it progressed down slope. A single 300 mm diameter by 550 mm deep posthole of unknown function cut the drainage channel. This posthole most probably post dates the abandonment of the pits.

The pit floor drainage lead was a single channel cut irregularly along the floor close to the northern edge of the pit. The lead channel did not, however, connect to any posthole, but rather angled directly into the drainage exit trench and continued through the tunnel.

### *Pit 3*

Pit 3 was a smaller, square pit measuring 1400 x 1350 mm. The pit fill layers are equivalent to Pits 1 and 2 involving a lower layer of homogenous mottled clay (Layer 2) and an organic rich, dark brown to black Layer 1. Pit 3 was not completely excavated (Figure 8). One posthole was identified on the pit floor and a curved section of a drain channel (30 mm wide x 30mm deep) was identified leading to a sump in the northwest corner of the pit. No drainage exit trench was present to lead water from the sump out of the pit floor.

### **Charcoal Analysis**

Charcoal from the firescoop cut into the top of Pit 2 was analysed by Dr Rod Wallace of the Anthropology Department, University of Auckland, and the results are given in Table 1. All of the species identified are relatively short-lived and potentially suitable for radiocarbon dating.

Species (common name)	NISP
Manuka	2
Fivefinger	3
Ramarama	1
Kanuka	1
Mahoe	4
Mapou	14
Mapou bark?	3

*Table 1. Charcoal identification.*

### **Artefacts**

Six fragments of green Mayor Island obsidian were found within Layer 1 of Pit 2. Two showed remnants of cortex. None showed signs of use wear and all could be the combined result of a single episode of flaking reduction of an obsidian core. The largest piece had a maximum dimension of 29 mm, with two other pieces between 20 and 30 mm, and three small fragments under 20 mm. A single other similar piece of obsidian from the same source was recovered from Pit 3.

A single flake of Tahanga basalt was found in the upper portion of Layer 1 fill of Pit 3 along with a section of a large Tahanga Basalt adze. The flake had a maximum dimension of 60 mm and showed evidence of use wear along the cutting edge. The adze fragment was not ground, but parts of the adze surface had been hammer dressed (Figure 10). The cross section of the adze fragment is approximately rectangular and has a maximum width of 81 mm, maximum thickness of 54 mm and survives to a length of 72 mm.



9. Basalt flake from Pit 3 and obsidian artefacts from Pit 2.

10. The recovered portion of a broken Tahanga basalt adze from pit 3 Layer 1.

## Discussion and conclusions

Site T10/824 comprised three storage pits, each with post holes and drains; one fire scoop; and one posthole.

Pits 1 and 2 occupy the knoll crest and are positioned symmetrically and approximately parallel to the ridgeline. Pit 3 is distinct in form from both Pits 1 and 2. The position and symmetry of Pits 1 and 2, and the distinct form and asymmetric relative position of Pit 3, suggests the latter was created at a separate time to Pits 1 and 2 may indicate a separate phase of occupation. The arrangement of postholes on the floor of Pit 1 suggests that it was used over a period of time requiring reconstruction or maintenance of the pit roof prior to its final abandonment and purposeful infilling with mottled clay (Layer 2). Pit 2 may be inferred to have been used over a similar period of time as Pit 1. It is unclear if Pit 3 was created during the period of use of the others. The fill layers of Pit 3 suggest that it was similarly abandoned and purposefully in filled with mottled clay.

The presence of a single fire scoop cut into the top of Pit 2 Layer 1 suggests that some time had passed, allowing virtually complete infilling of the pit with topsoil (Layer 1). The only other feature identified across the whole knoll crest was a single posthole. It is unclear what structure the feature reflects.

Finally, results from this excavation indicate that the knoll crest site T10/824 was used principally for food storage. It is reasonable, but not certain, to relate the occupation of pa T10/196 to T10/824, which is on a ridge running off the pa. In any case the low density and nature of the features indicates that the knoll crest was utilized mainly over a short single occupation period. The fire scoop represents a



more transitory use of the site at a later time following abandonment of the area for storage.

### **References**

- Hoffmann, A. 2008a. Assessment of archaeological values: Part Lot 6 16142 and southern half Part Lot 5 DPS16142, Kuaotunu, Coromandel Peninsula. Unpublished CFG Heritage report to Andrew Frengly.
- Hoffmann, A. 2008b. Archaeological test investigation: Part Lot 6 16142 and southern half Part Lot 5 DPS16142, Kuaotunu, Coromandel Peninsula. Unpublished CFG Heritage report to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and Andrew Frengly.