

**Proposal for Archaeological Excavation of  
P19/261 and P19/262, Oropuriri, Bell Block, Taranaki,**

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**Introduction**

This proposal is for further archaeological excavations at Oropuriri, archaeological sites P19/261 and P19/262. The sites are located on the Bell Block bypass, the proposed route of a new section of State Highway 3 near New Plymouth. Parts of these sites will be required for the construction of the road.

An authority, No. 2002/86, was issued under the Historic Places Act 1993 by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT) to Transit NZ which allows the modification of the sites for the highway construction subject to a number of conditions which include archaeological excavations. The authority also requires research into various archival sources and that archaeological stratigraphy, features, and remains are identified, recorded, measured, investigated, sampled and analysed in accordance with the research strategy and accepted archaeological practice. Earthworks in the vicinity of p19/261 and 262 are to be monitored.

Prior to the initial excavation starting, a research strategy was developed and submitted to the NZHPT for assessment (Holdaway 2001). This plan recommended a two-stage investigation:

1. An initial geophysical survey of a rectangular structure identified on the surface of P19/262 and mechanical clearing of vegetation and testing of deposits at P19/261.
2. If the geophysical surveying indicated that the structure at P19/262 was likely to represent a historic or prehistoric site, further excavation of the structure and areas surrounding it.

It was also indicated that a small test pit be excavated into the structure at P19/262 to help clarify the nature of this feature.

Work to achieve these aims was conducted in January 2002 and the results conveyed to the NZHPT.

The NZHPT has since recognised that the P19/262 *"has extremely high archaeological values. The site is also of considerable importance to tangata whenua. The site has the potential to provide important information about the culture and history of the Taranaki region and New Zealand."* (McGovern-Wilson 2002).

#### *Excavation*

A full-scale excavation was therefore conducted during a two-week period in February 2002. This excavation uncovered an exceptional archaeological site (Taylor, Holdaway and Bader 2002, Holdaway, Taylor and Bader 2002) that included a very large house, beneath which was evidence of two earlier structures also probably houses. The site appears to have been defended with a probable rifle trench and underground bunker revealed through excavation, and a variety of ammunition recovered. Indirect evidence of gardening on the site included an excavated kumara pit, a plough blade and imported coarse sand commonly used to lighten heavier volcanic derived soils. Preliminary analysis of artefacts, some of which offer information about their date of manufacture, indicates that the largest house may have been built and occupied during the 1860's and possibly beyond.

This house is far larger than most known historic houses and much larger than normal residential houses. Other large houses around this time, such as in 1854 at Manawapou, were built for assemblies to debate land issues or for other special purposes.

It is possible that the house may have been later occupied by British military, as two pieces of 18th Royal Irish Regiment regimental regalia were excavated. Some of the remains recovered including alcohol bottles, china, clay pipes and ammunition could be from the military.

#### *Additional Work*

Additional geophysical survey of areas outside that selected for excavation in February 2002 using resistivity, ground penetrating radar and a distinguishing metal detector revealed that there are a large number of archaeological features on the part of P19/262 required for the road development in addition to those that have been excavated (Bader and Russell 2002).

An assessment of Site P19/262 using the knowledge gained from the mapping, excavation and a remote sensing survey indicate that the site is exceptional for its state of preservation, the size and number of the houses, the variety of the structures it contains and the extent of the site.

#### **Significance**

The presence of a house of exceptionally large size is of considerable archaeological significance. The size of the house is a reflection of its

importance. This is probably the largest house excavated by archaeologists in New Zealand and evidence of the construction of three large house structures on one site is unique.

The 1860's were an important and controversial period in Taranaki's and New Zealand's history. Therefore, the excavation of structures and artefacts on the site has considerable potential to provide new information about this period of our history.

The gully to the north of the site, part of which is included with P19/261, is described in historic records variously as a small lake, swamp or stream named Waipapa Stream. Other individuals stated that at least one canoe was believed to be in the stream valley. It is possible that wet wooden remains survive in the valley. An underpass is to be constructed along the length of this gully.

Based on the results of the excavations conducted in February 2002 the conclusion was drawn that "*P19/262 is much more extensive and complex than originally anticipated, therefore additional archaeological investigations are needed*" (Taylor, Holdaway & Bader 2002). Three recommendations were made:

1. The completion of the geophysical survey over the portion of P19/262 that is to be modified by the highway development.
2. Research into the history of the site, as required by the NZHPT authority.
3. Subject to the outcome of the above two recommendations a further major excavation be carried out on site P19/262, prior to the development of the highway.

As outlined above, the geophysical survey identified a number of additional potential structures (Bader and Gibb 2002). Preliminary research into the history of the site was conducted as one of a number of student projects involving the analysis of material excavated in February 2002 from March until June 2002. This research involved a search of the relevant Land Court Records but no specific references to the structures at P19/262 were located. A full report on the results of the February 2002 excavation was submitted to all interested parties in January 2003 (Holdaway, Taylor and Bader 2002).

The rest of this proposal deals with the third recommendation that consideration be given to undertaking a second period of excavation at P19/262 prior to the highway development.

### **Objectives**

Additional archaeological excavation at Oropuriri will be used to achieve the following major objectives:

1. To excavate, investigate and record the area of site P19/262 on the route of the proposed Bell Block by-pass to meet the relevant requirements of the authority No. 2002/86 issued to Transit NZ to construct the Bell Block by-pass.
2. To identify, examine and record the archaeological remains of the houses and other features and structures that are present on the site.
3. To recover, analyse and preserve a representative sample of cultural material associated with the site.
4. To determine if the part of site P19/261 that cuts across the Waipapa Stream contains significant archaeological remains.

Specifically, the excavation aims to:

1. Complete excavation of the initial house,
2. Complete excavation of the other two houses identified,
3. Identify and excavate other structures on the site,
4. Identify the nature and extent of the defences,
5. Clarify the extent and nature of any additional features,
6. Identify the extent and nature of gardening on the site,
7. Recover samples for environmental history and reconstruction,
8. Recover a comprehensive sample of the different types of artefacts on the site,
9. Test the Waipapa Stream gully for archaeological evidence,
10. Determine the nature and age of occupation on the site.

### **Excavation schedule**

It is proposed to undertake the excavation in early 2004 (February).

	<i>Activity</i>
Week 1 (2-3 days)	Machine stripping turf, re-establishing survey points, and preliminary survey
Week 2-3	University Field School excavating on P19 /261 & P19/262.
Week 4-5	Excavation P19/262 continues with professional crew.

### **Archaeological Personnel**

<i>Person</i>	<i>Institution</i>	<i>Role</i>
Dr. Simon Holdaway	University of Auckland	Director, Field School Director
Mr. Michael Taylor	Archaeology North	Director
Dr. Hans Bader	Geometria	Technical Director
Mr. Russell Gibb	Geometria	Surveyor, Health & Safety Officer
Dr. Rod Wallace	University of Auckland	Technical Officer
Mr. Jonathan Welch	Archaeology North	Finds Manager
Mr. Tim Mackrell	University of Auckland	Photographer

In addition, the University of Auckland will provide a tutor for the field school, and up to 10 field assistants will be hired to maintain a sufficient labour pool to undertake the excavations. Tangata whenua involvement is discussed under a separate heading below.

### **Archaeology Field School**

The University of Auckland, Department of Anthropology will run the archaeological field school providing a field crew for weeks 2-3 of the excavation. The field school will be directed by Dr. Simon Holdaway, assisted by a tutor and technical officer from the University and will include up to 15 third or fourth year students.

The field school students will be provided with areas and features to excavate to give appropriate teaching opportunities and experience. Dr. Holdaway will also undertake an investigation of the Waipapa Stream gully to determine if archaeological remains are present and to recover samples appropriate for environmental history and reconstruction studies.

### **Tangata whenua Involvement**

The NZHPT authority requires that *"Any archaeological work shall be undertaken in conformity with any tikanga Maori protocols or monitoring requirements agreed to by Puketapu Hapu and the authority holder"*.

In addition to these requirements, tangata whenua will be closely involved with all aspects of the project. Involvement in the project will include the following:

1. *Historical research.* Employment of a tangata whenua member to undertake research using archival and traditional resources on the historical background to the site. Exact details will be finalised after liaison with the research nominee but should include a review of relevant records held at National Archives, Wellington.
2. *Field work.* A "host" will be employed to greet visitors to the site, and to provide guidance and explanation of the excavation. A field assistant will also be employed to assist with the excavation. These individuals will be taught archaeological techniques and methodology.
3. *Logistical support.* Tangata whenua will be contracted to provide accommodation and the bulk of the catering during the period of excavation following a similar set of arrangements to those negotiated for the February 2002 excavation.

## **Key Responsibilities**

### *University of Auckland*

The major contracting party is the University of Auckland who will provide the following services and resources:

1. Overall project management and report writing under the direction of Dr. Simon Holdaway.
2. Field equipment including excavation tools, consumable equipment (bags, labels, pens etc.), tents, field cooking and vehicles for transport.
3. Surveying equipment including a laser scanner, GPS and total stations.
4. Provision of field assistants as outlined above.
5. Employment of tangata whenua as outlined above.
6. Contract of tangata whenua to provide food and lodging for the duration of the excavation.
7. The analysis of wood and charcoal samples, samples taken for environmental reconstruction and for radiocarbon dating if appropriate.
8. Analysis of artefacts recovered in areas designated for Field School excavation under the supervision of Dr. Simon Holdaway.

### *Geometria*

Geometria personal will be involved both in the excavation and the post excavation analysis and report writing. Geometria staff will provide the following:

1. Technical director and surveyor responsible for the digital recording of excavations and surfaces, features, structures, and finds.
2. A photographer for two weeks of project.
3. Provision of maps showing distribution of features, structures and finds.
4. 3-D modelling and graphics including CAD production.
5. Stratigraphic analysis.
6. Report compilation and printing.

### *Archaeology North*

Archaeology North will provide the following services:

1. Director for project responsible for liaison between archaeologists, tangata whenua and Beca in association with Dr. Simon Holdaway.
2. Director of excavation.
3. Provision of two experienced qualified archaeologists for length of excavation who will manage and curate finds.
4. The identification and analysis of artefact assemblages.
5. The provision of a catalogue of artefacts in an electronic database format.
6. The analysis of, and report on, artefacts.
7. Overall structure and co-ordination of report in collaboration with the University of Auckland.

### *Beca Carter Hollings & Ferner Ltd*

Beca will arrange the following:

1. Necessary permission from owner of P19/262 and P19/261, Waipapa stream bed.
2. A house, preferably as close as possible, on the new road alignment for artefact processing and storage.

3. An on-site building and toilet with regular servicing.
4. A digger for stripping of topsoil at the start of the excavation and at a limited number of subsequent times during the excavation as agreed.
5. Water supply to site for hygiene and sample washing.
6. Other logistical assistance as may be necessary during the excavation if necessary.

### **Relationship Between the Parties**

While the University of Auckland will oversee project direction and work with Archeology North and Geometria to produce a consolidated final report, each party in this excavation will be an independent contractor to Beca.

### **Method**

The excavation will be carried out in accordance with standard archaeological practice and the specific methods developed for the February 2002 excavation. Methodologies are provided for P19/161 and P19/262 separately.

#### *P19/262*

1. Initial excavations will use a digger to strip the topsoil from selected areas identified for excavation. These will include the site of the partially excavated houses and other areas with features and structures identified by geophysical survey and from surface features. The spoil removed by the machine will be monitored for cultural material.
2. Excavation will then proceed, using hand tools although limited use of a machine may be made if appropriate.
3. Excavation will involve progressively hand excavating selected features and areas of the site to basal depth of archaeological deposits to fully define and record structures and features.
4. For recording surfaces, features, finds and stratigraphy the following procedures will be used:
  - Point provenience of all cultural items  $\geq$  20mm in maximum dimension using electronic total stations and the individual bagging of these items.
  - Recording the location of, and bagging together of smaller items of the same material from 0.25x0.25m areas.
  - Recording of all features (e.g. pits, postholes, fire pits) using an electronic total station. Features to be recorded in plan and section.

- Digital photography of each 1x1metre square where cultural material is visible.
5. Sampling will be used if appropriate.
  6. Excavated spoil removed from cultural deposits will generally be sieved. Where warranted, sieve remainder will be washed and further sorted.
  7. Material excavated will be cleaned, described, analysed, securely labelled and catalogued for a report. This will involve the following methods:
    - Construction of a relational database in the field recording the location and type of items recovered.
    - Creation of a Geographic Information System in the field showing the location of items found and features discovered.
  8. Material excavated will be transferred to the Taranaki Museum for permanent storage once analysis is completed. An inventory of the material recovered from the excavation will be deposited with the Taranaki Museum. Items found will be available for further research or display once the archaeological analysis has been completed.
  9. Geophysical survey results indicate that a small number of graves may be present on the road alignment. The possible graves are outside of, but near to, the fenced-in cemetery in the paddock to the south where the road is to be constructed. This will not be included in the initial excavation unless requested by tangata whenua who will be consulted regarding appropriate process and action. The fenced in cemetery will not be affected by the road construction. A forensic anthropologist could be on site to report on any remains if the graves were excavated (provided tangata whenua requested this). If graves were discovered remains would be passed directly to tangata whenua for re-internment.

#### *P19/261*

Excavation at this site is designed to retrieve samples useful in reconstructing past environments at P19/262.

1. Machine trenching in the valley floor is proposed to test for archaeological remains and to obtain material for environmental reconstruction. If complex archaeological remains are located they may require further work at a later date.
2. Sampling by coring of the stream channel and the removal of sediment and pollen samples.

3. Analysis of the cores for information on past vegetation, changing patterns of sedimentation, and the region's fire history.
4. Radiocarbon dating and identification of diagnostic volcanic tephra.

### **Outcomes**

The primary outcome will be to complete a major part of the requirement of the NZHPT authority, so that road construction may be undertaken on parts of P19/261 and P19/262. Specific outcomes are as follows:

1. A record of house construction as evidenced at P19/262 together with the documentation and where possible, history of construction of associated features.
2. An analysis of the artefact assemblages (e.g. bottle glass, ceramics, metal objects, clay objects and window glass together with any faunal material) recovered as a result of excavation.
3. A review of the historical records that relate to P19/262
4. Testing of the Waipapa stream designated P19/261 to determine if archaeological remains are present, and their investigation if practical.
5. Production of a summary report within six months and a final detailed report within 12 months. Other reports, papers or other academic publications may be produced as options.

The detailed report on the archaeological excavations and material recovered from the sites will include an outline of the methods used, results of background research, an inventory of items found, description, drawings, plans, photographs, recording of the stratigraphy, surfaces and structures found, three dimensional reconstructions of some of these features, along with a discussion of interpretations and conclusions.

## References

Bader, H. and R. Gibb 2002 Geophysical Survey Investigation Oropuriri P19/262 Bell Block New Plymouth. Report Prepared for: Beca Carter Hollings & Ferner Ltd.

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