

**ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION  
OF SITE Q07/1215, 10 THE HEIGHTS,  
REOTAHI, WHANGAREI HEADS  
(HNZPTA AUTHORITY 2018/240)**

**REPORT TO  
HERITAGE NEW ZEALAND POUHERE TAONGA  
AND  
CHRISTINE AND ALAN WOOD**

**DANIELLE TRILFORD**



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Date: 29 May 2018

Reference: 17-0806



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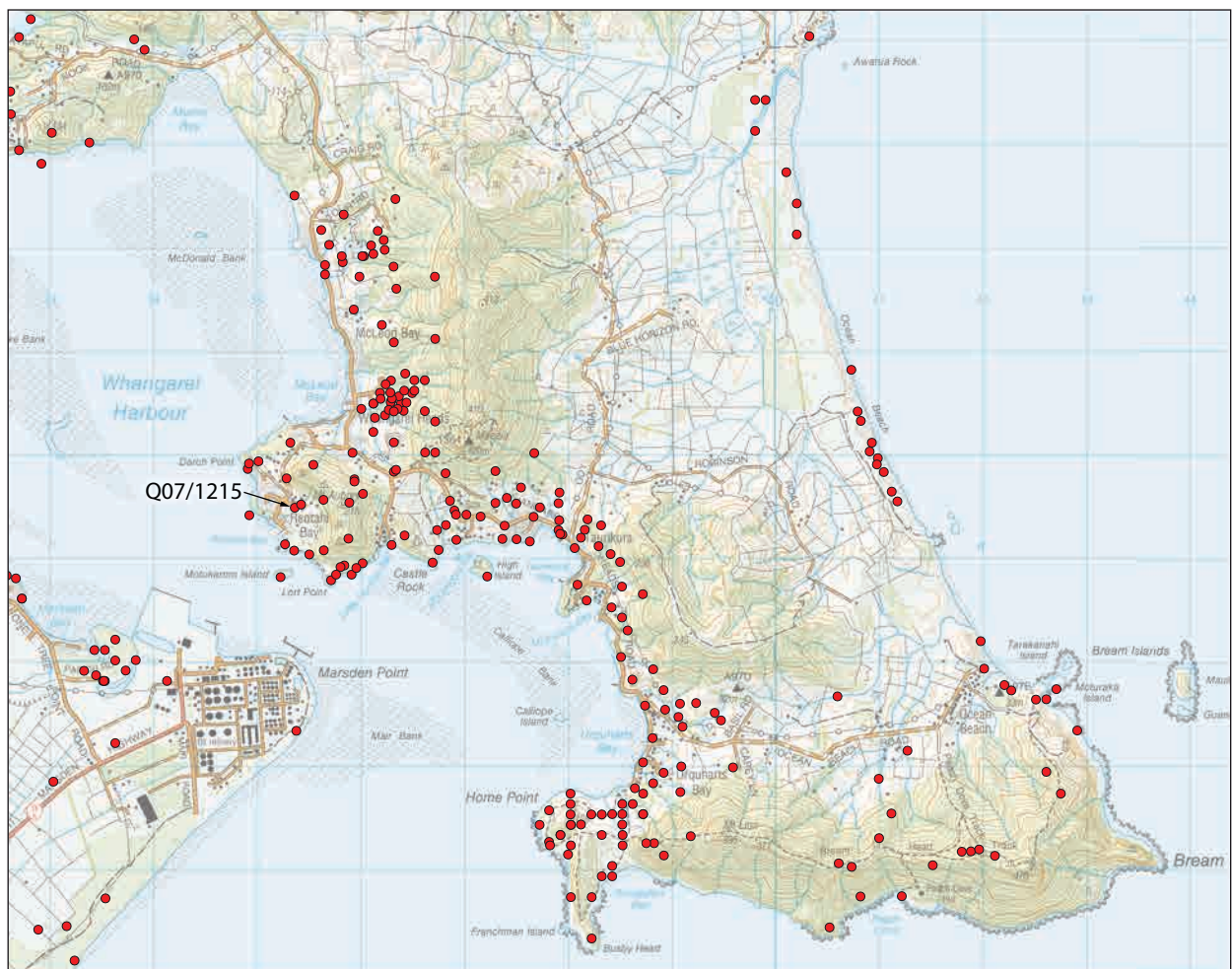
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# ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION OF SITE Q07/1215, 10 THE HEIGHTS, REOTAHI, WHANGAREI HEADS (HNZPTA AUTHORITY 2018/240)

DANIELLE TRILFORD-

Christine and Alan Wood are building a house on land owned by them at 10 The Heights, Reotahi, Whangarei Heads (Lot 8 DP 113547). A midden is recorded on the adjacent property at 8 The Heights as site Q07/1215 in the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) Site Recording Scheme (SRS). This site was assessed by Chris Williams in 2005 and investigated by CFG Heritage in 2006 (Campbell and Keith 2007). The 2006 investigation indicated that the site extended east of 8 The Heights onto the Wood's property. Then property was assessed by Matthew Campbell (2017) on the basis of the previous investigation – no site visit was undertaken. The Woods applied to Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga

*1. Location of Q07/1215 and surrounding archaeological sites.*



(HNZPT) for an authority to modify the site and authority 2018/240 was granted on 2 November 2017. Earthworks were monitored by Matthew Campbell and Danielle Trilford of CFG Heritage on the 26 and 30 January 2018 and exposed archaeological features were investigated. Alan Moore was the cultural monitor on behalf of Ngatiwai. The site record Q07/1215 has been updated in the SRS.

### The archaeology of Whangarei Heads

The Whangarei Harbour and Whangarei Heads is an area with a rich pre-European Maori history represented by numerous recorded archaeological sites. However, few investigations have been reported.

In 2006 the neighbouring property, 8 The Heights, was investigated by Sian Keith (Campbell and Keith 2007). Two trenches were excavated by machine. Trench 1 had a small deposit of the midden at one end. Trench 2 had midden visible throughout as a dense, compact deposit of shell generally 200–300 mm deep but in places up to 600 mm deep. This extended to the eastern boundary of the property where it was thinner. A sample was taken, consisting of mostly pipi (*Paphies australis*) with some tuangi (*Austrovenus stutchburyi*) and a single cat's eye (*Turbo smaragdus*). Another sample was taken from a test pit down the slope to the south of the building platform and contained a similar midden, with a few unidentified gastropods. A shell sample from Trench 2 was dated to cal AD 1650–1840 at a 95% confidence interval. It is most likely the site dates to the last century of the pre-European period. There was indirect evidence of cooking in the form of charcoal, but no firescoops or oven stones were observed. These may have been located upslope from the visible midden and the excavated part of the site consists of a dump of cooking refuse.

Surrounding areas such as Urquharts and McGregors Bay have also been investigated. In 2005 the subdivision of a property at the Vinson Farm, McGregors Bay, monitoring exposed and investigated sites Q09/797, Q07/798, and Q09/800 (Bickler et al. 2005). Obsidian flakes and cores, a grind stone, pipi middens, and terraces were recorded. Midden analysis of each site were mostly dominated by pipi but in one instance by tuatua (*Paphies subtriangulata*). The large valves of the two *Paphies* species were interpreted as indicating people were either collecting their shellfish deliberately based on size, or collection during a spawning event (Bickler et al. 2008: 29). Charcoal analysis indicated the environment was dominated by woody species indicating open environments or regrowth scrub vegetation. A shellfish sample for Q07/800 returned a radiocarbon date from the 15th or early 16th centuries.

Archaeological sites on Urquharts Bay has been investigated on three separate occasions by archaeologists, mostly at site large midden site Q09/751 (Harris 2012; Phillips 2006a, 2006b). Much of the area in Urquharts Bay itself has already been modified by the construction of a road and houses along the beachfront but the evidence of past occupation is evident in the form of shell middens and sites with extensive earthworks such as the pa on the hill at the northern end of the bay (Q07/86). Some limited investigation has been carried out by Phillips on the part of Q07/751 at 2567 Whangarei Heads Road, but this was after the site had already been significantly modified (Phillips 2006a). Koiwi were also discovered near the road verge on the edge of the same property (Phillips 2006b). The site was investigated again in 2012 by CFG Heritage and dated to the late 15th and mid-17th centuries (Harris 2012). Shell was dominated by pipi, cockle and cat's eye with some minor species. The fish assemblage was generally dominated by snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*) but one small assemblage consisted almost exclusively of blue mackerel vertebrae, indicating consumption of preserved fish (Campbell 2016). Artefacts consisted of obsidian flakes and a stone net sinker. The site was

investigated again on the neighbouring property by CFG Heritage in 2017: shell, bone and lithics were collected from the midden but have not yet been analysed and reported.

South of Urquharts Bay is the Smugglers Cove site, Q07/103, a highly deflated midden which has artefacts such as lures, fish hooks and other fishing equipment, tuatara jaw, fosh bone, several bird bones, and evidence of a significant occupation, probably within the early period of New Zealand's pre-European Maori occupation (NZAA Site Record Form).

Across the Harbour several investigations of extensive midden and occupations at One Tree Point and surrounding areas have shown people were large amounts of shellfish, fishing and drying the fish, and other activities with semi/permanent occupation at some stage in the 16th and 17th centuries (Campbell 2006; Phillips and Harlow 2001).

### Methodology

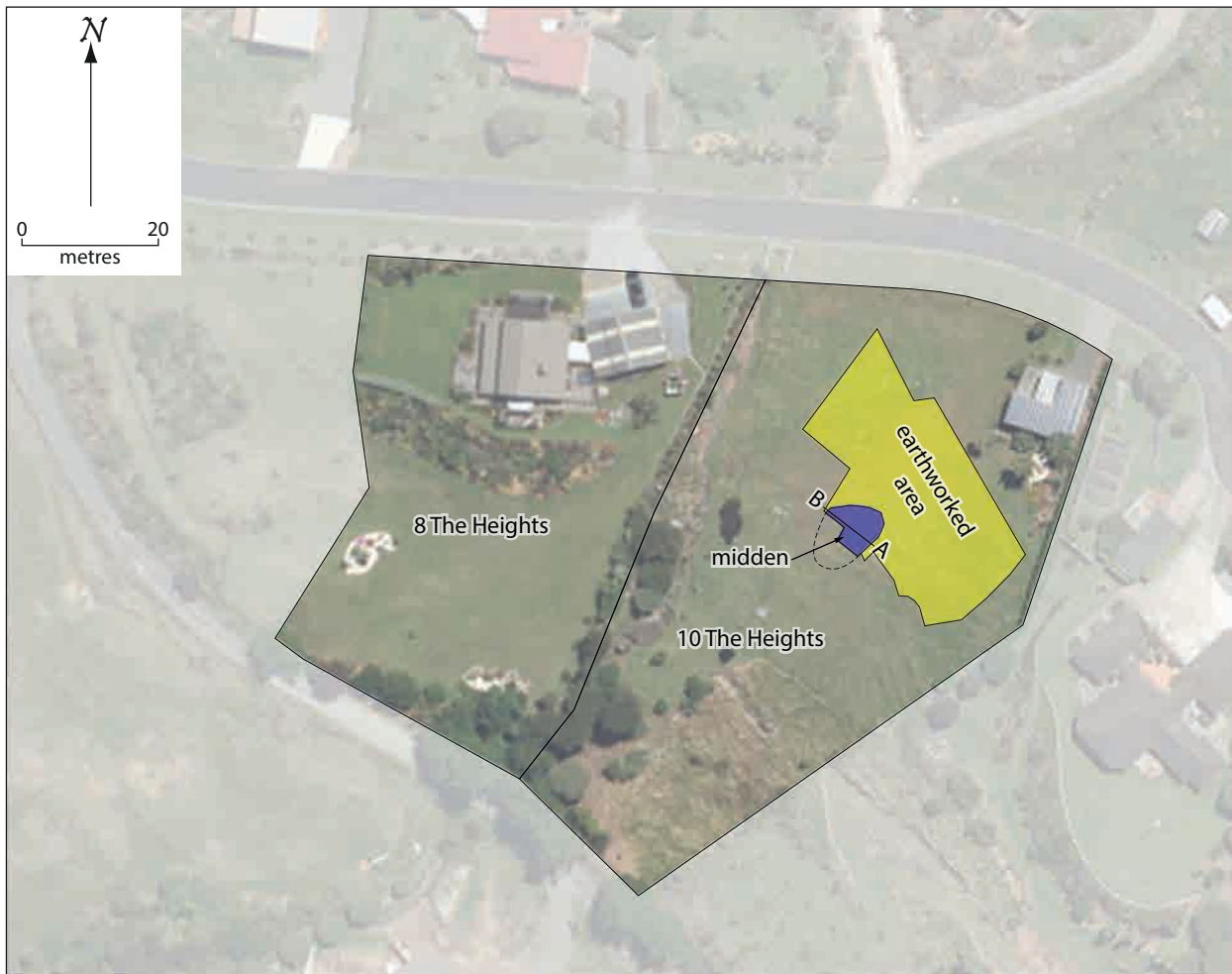
Archaeological monitoring of the site was undertaken by Matthew Campbell and Danielle Trilford of CFG Heritage on 26 and 30 of Jan 2018. Topsoil was stripped with a 13 tonne hydraulic digger equipped with a 1400 mm weed bucket, under archaeological supervision. Works ceased while investigation and recording of any archaeological features took place. Midden was partially excavated, then photographed and recorded following standard archaeological recording procedure. Two 10 litre bulk samples of midden were taken for analysis.

### Archaeology

One in situ midden was exposed, a dense midden consisting mostly of pipi, over an area of 11 x 6 m and 100–120 mm deep. Shell could be probed for another 4–5 m running into the western baulk (downhill and seaward) so the full extent of the midden was not exposed.



2. Midden Q07/1215 at 10 The Heights, facing south. Scale 1 m.



3. 10 The Heights, showing earthworked area, recorded midden and location of profile (Figure 4).

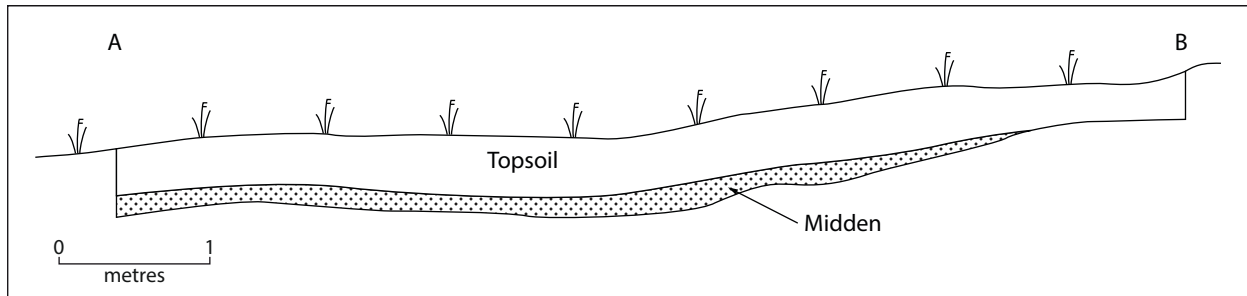
Across the south and southeast portion of the site were scatters of pipi shell which appear to have been recently deposited, probably during earthworks for the original subdivision.

#### Midden analysis

Two 10 litre bulk samples were collected from the in situ deposit. The samples were washed and analysed using conventional methods, with species identification based on Morley (2006). Whole or nearly whole hinges of bivalves were counted. Left and right hinges were not distinguished and MNIs (Minimum Numbers of Individuals) were calculated by dividing the total number of bivalves by two.

Both samples lost around half of their weight from washing (Table 1) with almost all the remainder being shell (small quantities of crushed oven stone were recorded). A large amount of this shell, 57% by weight (Table 2), was unidentifiable shell residue, but was probably mostly pipi or, less likely, tuatua (*Paphies* sp.). This proportion of residue often indicates recent crushing or redeposition but, from the archaeology of the site, this did not appear to be the case. It probably is a result of factors affecting the shell during the occupation of the site.





4. Stratigraphic profile drawing of the southern baulk investigated at Q07/1215.

Shellfish analysis of the samples showed people were almost exclusively collecting pipi; four other species were present but only in very low numbers. These results match those reported from the adjacent property at 8 The Heights (Campbell and Keith 2007).

This contrast with sites on the other side of the harbour at One Tree Point, where cockle is invariably the predominant species (Campbell 2006; Phillips and Harlow 2001). The mudflat environment at One Tree Point is a typical cockle harvesting area, while the sheltered sandier coastline near Reotahi is typical pipi bed; people were collecting from the local environment rather than collecting preferred species or bringing preserved shellfish on site.

#### Fish

A few fragments of fishbone were recovered but only one broken snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*) thoracic vertebra could be identified.

	Volume (L)	Dry weight (g)	Sieved weight (g)	% lost
Sample A	10	9380	5015	46.3
Sample B	10	8360	4174	50.1

Table 1. Metric statistics of two bulk samples.

Taxon	MNI	Weight (g)
Pipi ( <i>Paphies australis</i> )	321	3840
Tuangi ( <i>Austrovenus stutchburyi</i> )	2	2
Tuatua ( <i>Paphies subtriangulata</i> )	1	6
Cat's eye ( <i>Turbo smaragdus</i> )	2	1
Coarse dosinia ( <i>Dosinia anus</i> )	1	1
Unidentifiable shell residue		5020
Total	163	8870

Table 2. Summary of shellfish analysis.

## Discussion and conclusion

Radiocarbon analysis of pipi shell from works at 8 The Heights showed that Q07/1215 was probably occupied at some period between AD 1650–1840 (Campbell and Keith 2007). The investigation exposed a midden of similar contents but thicker, and the evidence suggested cooking was occurring uphill away from the excavated area.

The results from investigations at 10 The Heights support those of other eastern coastlines of Whangarei Heads, although possibly around a century or two older. There is a growing body of evidence that surrounding the larger scale occupations, mainly pa, are smaller sites consisting of no more than small cooking areas and food refuse dumping (Harris 2012; Bickler et al. 2008; Phillips 2006a, 2006b). As Bickler et al. (2008) have pointed out, there are also sites with Whangarei Heads that do not fit this pattern, as seen at Q07/1238 at Takahiwai, where ovens and food refuse sites covered a large area but with no surrounding larger structures or habitation (Harlow et al. 2007). The archaeological landscape and site distribution at Whangarei Heads is not yet well understood.

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