Springvale Structure Plan—Archaeological Review

Michael Taylor and Annetta Sutton,
Archaeology North Ltd., Wanganui

Introduction

This report provides an initial assessment of the potential for archaeological sites to be located in Study Areas 4 and 5 of the Springvale Structure Plan. Historically the area was known as Mosstown, becoming more commonly called Mosston early in the 20th century.

Under the HPA 1993, all archaeological sites are protected from any modification, damage or destruction whether the site has been previously recorded, or remains unrecorded. An archaeological site is defined in the Act as a place associated with human activity that occurred before 1900 and that is, or may be able through investigation by archaeological methods to provide evidence relating to the history of New Zealand. Most archaeological remains are below the ground surface, and are not visible. Standing buildings that predate 1900 can also be considered to be archaeological sites.

Method

The assessment work was carried out in December 2011 and January 2012. Archaeology North Ltd., commenced its assessment of the Mosston area with background research, which included a review of existing archaeological data and published and unpublished historical information. This included checking information held by the N. Z. Archaeological Association (NZAA), Wanganui District Council (WDC) Archives, Wanganui Alexander Heritage and Research Library and Whanganui Regional Museum on the history of Mosstown (and Mosston).

Papers Past (***paperspast****.natlib.govt.nz),* the National Library website, that has on-line editions of old newspapers including the Wanganui Herald for 1867 to 1909 and Wanganui Chronicle 1874 to 1919, was also searched for historical information about the area.

Previous archaeological studies in the Wanganui area, including A Scoping Report on the Archaeological Sites of Wanganui District (Taylor & Sutton 2001) and Wanganui District Council Historic Place and Archaeological Site Identification Project (Horwood & Taylor 2011), both prepared for the WDC, provided valuable background information.

The 1942 N. Z. Aerial Mapping series of aerial photographs (Run numbers 381/7 and 382/3) and early survey maps for the Study Area were examined. Further, more detailed, research into early plans held by LINZ could be undertaken, as required.

The background research was used to identify likely locations of archaeological sites so that these areas could be ground checked for archaeological remains.

The study area was observed from the road and some properties in the study area were then field checked for archaeological evidence and some property owners were also consulted about the history of their land and the area and whether they were aware of any archaeological discoveries that had been made on their properties. No invasive forms of archaeological investigation such as ground testing were used.

Some priority was given to the zones identified for low and high density development and proposed roading as these zones are likely to sustain the most significant landscape modification, which may reveal, damage or destroy archaeological remains.

Results

The predominant soil type in the Study Areas is black sand, described either as imperfectly drained on the low lying areas, where historically it was swamp, or excessively drained, where there are dunes. In the east (mainly in Area 4) the soils are described as black loam sands. Cowie describes the soils generally as yellow-brown sands and gley soils (Saunders 1968).

The dunes generally extend the width of the Study Areas and run east to west with drained swampland between them. The dunes in Area 4, which include a large dune, were active until modern times with the area marked as “bare sand” on one early plan (Igglesden 1856). Early aerial photographs show that much of Area 4 remained relatively undeveloped up until 1942, with only two houses and some farmland located there. Most of the area was then in pines and low vegetation, most likely lupins or gorse.

Soil profiles on the dunes in Area 4, which had been exposed by stock damage and wind erosion, show a shallow, poorly developed, horizon with some charcoal staining overlying modern loose sands. This also indicates that the stabilisation of dunes is recent.

The dunes further inland in Study Area 5 exhibit the same pattern of dry dunes interspersed with wetter land, except the dunes are lower and smaller. The area has been more stable in human times and the soils are more developed, which appears to have made the area attractive for historical settlement from the 1870’s. In the aerial photographs from 1942, the southern part of Study Area 5 remained in low vegetation, but the area fronting onto Buxton and Fox Roads has nearly 20 houses, well established properties and mature trees.

The historic predominance of sand dunes and swamp in the Mosstown area is reflected in a petition from the ratepayers of Mosstown to the Wanganui-Waitotara Highway Board in 1881 *“… requesting that the road known as Swamp Road might be put in proper repair, as it was at present overgrown with rubbish and the sand had accumulated in various places so that two conveyances would not pass each other. Between the Swamp road and Mosstown Schoolhouse the sand had completely blocked the road up.”* (Wanganui Chronicle, 8 March 1881, page 2).

No references to prehistoric or historic Maori use of the Mosstown area have been located. The Whanganui Regional Museum holds no artefacts or taonga with provenance to the Mosstown area, although there are two stone adze blades with a general provenance to Springvale.

The NZAA holds over 420 records of archaeological sites in Wanganui District, but no archaeological sites have been recorded in the Study Areas. However, the Mosstown area has not previously been field surveyed to locate archaeological sites.

No buildings or structures are listed within the Study Areas in the WDC Heritage Resources List in the Wanganui District Plan. The nearest listed building is No. 73, the Roots House, located at 107 Springvale Road, which probably dates from the early 1860's.

Kokohuia swamp, which adjoins Study Area 4, was listed as a traditionally important site during the 2010-2011 Site Identification Project undertaken for WDC (Horwood & Taylor 2011). The Kokohuia swamp was important for the gathering of resources including eels, birds, raupo pollen, and reeds. The location was marked as at Titoki Street, and is shown as an archaeological site on Figure 9, as adjoining the southern end of Study Area 4, but prehistorically the swamp and its resources extended over a much wider area.

Another possible archaeological site, a group of pits located in Clarkson Avenue about 700m west of Study Area 5 (Fig. 9), was also noted from aerial photographs during the WDC project (Horwood & Taylor 2011: Appendix A). These pits may be associated with kumara cultivation, but the site has not been field checked.

An area with a known concentration of prehistoric archaeological sites is located less than 2 km north of the Study Area 5 in the Tirimoana Structure Plan Area, off Tirimoana Place on St John's Hill, with the sites extending through to Lake Westmere (Mokoia) and Rapanui Road. Unrecorded groups of pits, middens and burrow holes related to prehistoric gardening are known to be present in this area, but only two sites, R22/496, a burial ground, and R22/500, a midden and hangi site, are recorded with NZAA. The recorded sites are near to the southern end of Rapanui Road and are very likely to be part of an extensive area of prehistoric settlement located in the area. Excavations on R22/500 provided a date of 601+/-36 BP for the site indicating it was formed

between 1350 and 1460 AD (68.2% confidence) (Jones 2009), and by inference the rest of the settlement may also be of a similar age.

The prehistoric environment in the Study Areas would have provided opportunities for forays for the seasonal harvest of resources, with swamp areas providing eels, birds, raupo leaves and pollen, and reeds. The low sand ridges in Area 5, which then may have been vegetated with light bush, would have allowed access into the swamps and would have provided sheltered locations for camps and short term occupation. The prehistoric Rapanui/Westmere/Tirimoana community would have had ready access to the Mosstown swamps across the rolling dune land that separates the two areas. The Karamu Stream, which flowed from Lake Westmere into the Mosstown swamp, was also a source of food (Smart and Bates 1972: 31).

No physical evidence of prehistoric archaeological sites was located in the course of this scoping study in Areas 4 and 5. During the walkovers, some fragments of sea shells were observed scattered over the large dune that runs across Area 4, as were a few isolated rocks cracked by heating in fires, such as are often found in sites occupied by prehistoric Maori. Both the shell and rocks were in loose sand and although there was no associated evidence or context identified, they may indicate that archaeological sites, such as middens or cooking fires were, or are, present.

Numerous karaka trees (Corynocarpus laevigatus) were observed growing in Area 5 during the field visits, indicating that the area is a favourable habitat for the species. The berries from these trees were a food source for Maori and the trees were often planted near to prehistoric settlements, and elsewhere, and their presence is often associated with Maori archaeological sites. The karaka trees in Area 5 may reflect the prehistoric use of the area.

The Study Areas were included in the New Zealand Company purchase of Wanganui. No reserves for Maori were made in, or close to, the Study Areas by the Company.

Early European land ownership and other details are shown on the historic plan, SO 10552, which is an 1856 copy of an earlier map by New Zealand Company surveyor, Robert Park (Igglesden 1856). The map shows that the land in Study Areas 4 and 5 was then mostly owned by Peter Imlay (who lived near to the Whanganui River) with smaller areas owned by F. D. Bell and George Wright. Other land adjoining the Mosstown Study Areas was owned by Samuel Parkes and the business of Taylor and Watt. Mosstown was then fairly remote from the original town settlement of Wanganui.

Samuel Parkes, who owned land at Springvale, lived with his family on St John's Hill where he owned more land. Samuel's sons, Frank and Frederick Parkes, are recorded as operating a flax mill, presumably over their Springvale estate, which extended to Lincoln and Buxton Roads, and they also commenced farming some of the area (Parkes 1955). During the 1870's, at least five steam driven flax mills operated in the Mosstown area, however, the mills were largely unsuccessful despite the quantities of flax growing there (Smart 1957; Smart and Bates 1972: 146).

George Wright, who was resident in Wanganui by 1851, was given land by Samuel Parkes that today adjoins Buxton Road and a small portion of Lincoln Road. Wright's family married into the Parkes family. Although Wright mostly lived and farmed at Brunswick, he appears to have lived at Mosstown until at least 1861, although probably not on the actual Study Area (Hawera and Normanby Star, 19 December 1922, page 4, Obituary of Mrs F. B. Parkes (nee Wright)).

Other local residents were W. Buxton, after whom Buxton Road is named, and James Dempsey, who farmed in the area until 1908 and was a Waitotara County Councillor. Dempsey is reputed to have named his farm Mosstown after his home village of Moss Town in Kent (Melody 1983: 8). The area was usually called Mosstown for most of the 19th century with Mosston not becoming the more common usage in the 20th century.

Possibly no permanent settlement or significant development occurred within the Study Areas until after the mid-1870's, when subdivision and development of the Mosstown area commenced.

The earliest subdivision identified was in 1876, when an auction of 20 blocks of superior land ranging from 3.5 to 5 acres was advertised. The advertisement stated that these blocks were to *"… comprise the TOWNSHIP OF MOSSTON"*. It also stated that the land was part of 'Allengate' estate, owned by Mrs T. B. Taylor, and was well adapted for market gardens and residential sites, with a metalled road to within a short distance of the property (Wanganui Chronicle, 3 April 1876). Mrs Taylor had married Mr T. B. Taylor in 1846, shortly before they came to Wanganui, where her husband developed a trading and farming business known as Taylor and Watts.

Mr W. H. Watt (of Taylor and Watts) also advertised the sale of other 5 acre blocks in the "Township of Mosstown" in 1877 (Wanganui Chronicle, 3 August 1877). Advertisements for the sale and lease of land and houses in Mosstown become more common in the newspapers after this, with, for example one advertisement from 1879 selling "Mosstown Gardens" with 5.25 acres, all securely fenced, with a three room cottage, and new cart shed and out-house (Wanganui Herald, 31 May 1879).

The first Mosstown School was built in 1878, on land given by the Taylor subdivision, just outside the Study Area. It is described as having been half a mile from the current Mosston Primary School site. Mr F. Parkes was appointed Master in 1882, and the school was extended to accommodate an additional 24 children in 1883 as the newspaper reported *"Mosstown is on the increase"* (Wanganui Herald, 12 January 1883, page 3).

By 1900, the population of the Mosstown area was 108 and the school roll had increased from an initial 19 pupils to 51 pupils (Mosston School Centennial Committee 1978).

Lincoln Road was one of the earliest roads in the Study Area, and was historically the main road leading to Mosstown. Mosston Road, which forms the western boundary of the Study Area, was developed from the late 1870's. Minutes of the Wanganui-Waitotara District Road Board from 1882 show that the ratepayers were still petitioning then for the road to be metalled, and in 1890 and 1900 residents were petitioning for the section of road from Mosstown to Heads Road to be formed and metalled.

Springvale Road, formed in 1875, originally led to Tayforth Road, and provided access to 'Allengate'. It appears that Springvale Road and Mosston Road may not have been connected until the early 1900's.

Archaeological evidence of the early Mosston Road formation can be seen in a cutting through the sand dune adjacent to 104 Mosston Road, where over time the road through the dune has been cut down leaving behind the profile that shows the early clay and gravel road layers. This could be considered to be an archaeological feature in the road reserve.

Newspaper reports from the 19th century indicate that Mosstown residents were concerned mostly with roading, drainage and schooling.

Historically, Mosston was a small farming community with market gardens, orchards and dairy farming. One report from 1885 describes how five acres of tobacco had been planted by two Mosstown growers as an experimental crop (Wanganui Chronicle, 20 February 1885, page 2).

It is clear that by the end of 1870's there was an established and growing community in the Mosstown area. Previously, there had been just a small number of land owners who held large estates. Within the Study Areas, most of the historic settlement was focused in the Buxton and Fox Road area, extending back towards Springvale. This concentration of settlement is also evident in the 1940's aerial photographs of the Study Areas.

The background research and field inspections indicate that the Buxton and Fox Roads vicinity of Area 5 has the highest potential for both prehistoric and historic archaeological remains to be present. It is likely that historic archaeological remains related to the settlement of the area from the 1870's are present.

Field inspections revealed one standing cottage at 13 Buxton Road, which may pre-date 1900, as the owner has suggested the cottage may be over 100 years in age. The grounds of the property currently include a number of old pear trees, some ground anomalies, and a boundary of mature remnant macrocarpa trees of some antiquity. Other properties in the vicinity similarly may contain historic archaeological evidence from the early settlement of the area.

Risk Assessment

Generally, the Study Areas 4 and 5 present a low risk for discovery of complex or extensive archaeological sites, as there is no evidence that the area was intensively occupied in either prehistoric or historic times. However, some archaeological sites are likely to be present in the Study Areas.

The higher and drier areas are probably the locations with the greatest risk of archaeological remains being present.

The low dunes in the vicinity of Buxton and Fox Road, in Study Area 5, have the greatest potential for the presence of both prehistoric and historic archaeological sites within the Study Areas. This area had the better soils and probably would have had resources and conditions favourable for both prehistoric and historic occupation. Area 5 was also the focus of the historic settlement within the Study Areas.

Area 4 presents the lowest risk for the discovery of evidence of prehistoric and historic settlement as the area was mainly mobile sands and/or swamp. While temporary use or forays to the area may have left some prehistoric archaeological evidence, this is not likely to be extensive.

The high dune in Area 4 that runs through 104 Mosston Road as well as some other less substantial dunes may have been attractive in prehistoric times for temporary camping and possibly for use for burials. Any such archaeological remains can be expected to be limited, but may be present.

Old pathways from the Whanganui River and coast may also cross the Study Areas, with one likely destination the prehistoric community that once existed in the Westmere/Rapanui area.

Should prehistoric (or possibly historic) archaeological remains be found on the dune areas during earthmoving for development, then it is possible that nearby wet or ex-swamp areas may also contain related archaeological evidence. Wet areas have the potential to preserve artefacts made of wood or fibre, which normally do not survive.

Prehistoric remains most likely to be located within the study area include shell middens and remains of cooking fires and hangi, and other features related to temporary use of the area while seasonal resources were harvested from the swamps and small lagoons.

As noted, karaka may have been cultivated and exploited in Area 5 and it is possible that prehistoric gardening also occurred in the area.

Another prehistoric archaeological site type which may be present are isolated human burials, but these are not readily detected unless disturbed.

It is also possible that artefacts, such as stone flakes or adzes, may be discovered within the Study Areas.

The sites of European settler homesteads and cottages from the 1870’s onwards are the most likely historic archaeological remains to be present and these could be revealed during earth moving for roading and subdivision development. Features such as house piles, chimney bases, paths, wells, long

drops and rubbish pits could be expected. Site types related to flax exploitation and other early industries may be present but would be difficult to identify.

The area along Buxton and Fox Roads presents the highest risk for the discovery of historic archaeological sites, and historic archaeological remains can be expected to be present. The cottage at 13 Buxton Road may be an archaeological building and buried archaeological remains may be present in the grounds. Further investigation through title records may clarify the age of the cottage and property ownership and this should be carried out if the proposed new road and swale are to be constructed through this property.

Old road formations, including Mosston Road or other roads, that pre-date 1900 are also considered archaeological features.

Conclusion

The Springvale Study Areas 4 and 5 have a comparatively low risk for the presence of archaeological remains. While some archaeological remains can be expected to be present within the area it is unlikely that any major or extensive prehistoric or historic archaeological sites will be present.

The sand dune ridges that occur across the Study Areas have the highest potential for discovery of buried prehistoric and historic remains. The extent and area of earthworks required for the new development will determine the likelihood of discovery of buried remains i.e. the more ground disturbance and excavation undertaken the more likely that any archaeological remains that may be present will be uncovered.

The area in the vicinity of Buxton and Fox Roads has the highest potential for archaeological remains. Historic remains can be expected to be present and prehistoric remains may be present.

Prehistoric archaeological sites are most likely to originate from the short term seasonal utilisation of swamp resources, such as eels and birds, or land based

resources such as karaka berries or birds. Possibly old pathways also crossed the Study Areas.

Historically there is little evidence of the area having much use by Europeans until the second half of the 1870's when subdivisions occurred, houses were built, farms and gardens developed, land use intensified, a school was built and the road formed. These activities will have left archaeological remains, some of which can be expected to have survived to the modern day.

References

Horwood, M. & M. Taylor 2011 Wanganui District Council - Historic Place and Archaeological Site Identification Project, Archaeology North Ltd., Unpublished Report to WDC.

Igglesden, C. M. 1856 SO 10552, Copy of Robert Parkes original plan made by C .M. Igglesden in 1856, LINZ.

Jones, K. L. 2009 Investigations at Lots 7 and 8 DP 359097, 183 Rapanui Road, Wanganui for Fraser Addenbrook holder of New Zealand Historic Places Trust authority 2009/87, Unpublished Report.

Melody, P. (Ed.) 1983 Bush People and Pasture, Waitotara County Centennial Committee, Waitotara.

Mosston Primary School Centennial Committee 1978 Mosston Primary School Centennial Committee Booklet, Mosston Primary School Centennial Committee, Wanganui.

Parkes, N. A.1955 Parkes 1840-1940, Chronicle Print, Wanganui.

Saunders, B. G. R. (Ed.) 1968 Introducing Wanganui, Department of Geography, Massey University, Palmerston North.

Smart, M. 1957 Radio Talk No. 16, Radio Talks Broadcast on Radio 2XA, Alexander Heritage and Research Library, Wanganui.

Smart, M. and A. Bates 1972 The Wanganui Story, Wanganui Newspapers Ltd.

Taylor, M. & A. Sutton 2001 A Scoping Report on the Archaeological Sites of Wanganui District, Archaeology North, Unpublished Report to WDC.