



NORTHERN WAIROA MAORI,  
MARITIME & PIONEER MUSEUM (INC.)

P.O. Box 166  
Dargaville,  
New Zealand.

18 January 1983

REPORT:- on unidentified Shipwreck remains.

Inside Kaipara Harbour Entrance. M.R. N.Z.1:63360 N33 Kaipara 704186

Early in november 1982 a commercial fisherman Mr. Leon Searle of Te Kopuru while searching for Mussels swam over this site as was originally thought to be a reef.

On snorkelling down at low water 4 - 5 metres in depth he removed some mussel growth and was surprised to find the remains of timber beneath the marine growth.

Some days later he contacted me and advised of his discovery.

We spent some time going thru our records of shipwrecks in the area and at that stage presumed it could be that of the Brigantine HERCULES (1874).

It was decided to make an exploratory dive by my team on the remains to help establish origin. Due to adverse wind and weather conditions which have been quite out ofv character in this region for this time of the year we were unable to do anything.

It was not until the 11th January 1983 when a day dawned out of the blue and a suitable tide was evident that I flew down in my aeroplane and made an aerial survey and a positive siting of the location.

At 1300Hrs on the 12January 1983 a party of 15 including 6 divers arrived and dived on the site.

The remains are heavily encrusted with marine growth mainly large mussel (*Mytilus canaliculus*).

A few were removed to gain access to the timber present.

A bottom hull plank 11 inches wide x 3.25 inches thich eleven feet long was raised and taken into the beach.

Also a Futtock or frame being 11 inches sqare and carved in shape was beached. After initial cleaning these were observed to be Mahogany timber.

What could be measured up showed a hull length of 85-90 feet with a beam of 22-25Ft.



From what was observed the hull had split along the keel and settled on the bottom. Bronze Keel rivets are still present and stretch in line thru the growth.

Timbers from the 2nd Futtock up are no longer present.

One bronze rivet 5 inches long x .75 inch diameter was recovered together with a small piece of copper sheathing in an extremely deteriorated condition which are in a conservation process.

Going on the dimensions recorded and the type of timber it rules out the Hercules.

In the general area was another ship wreck the MIDGE (1871) the hull and keel of this is buried in the sands on the beach at the high tide mark. Also a Tug OLIVE (1974) These sites are known and are shown in the photo xerox.

It would take a number of days of diving with the right tide and conditions to clear the extensive marine growth off the remains to get a clearer picture of what is present. Another precaution in this area as is known and observed are the large number of Shark present and being caught by fishermen.

The assistant director of the Dominion Museum Dr. Alan Baker is planning to visit Dargaville on the 28th January where I have arranged to meet and discuss the subject. Until further information can be obtained on the remains further investigation is not contemplated at this stage.

Report compiled by Noel E Hilliam

*Noel E. Hilliam*