



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



This document is made available by The New Zealand Archaeological Association under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

A FIELD SURVEY OF SOME TRADITIONAL MAORI SITES  
IN THE TE ANAU REGION

Peter Coutts

INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this paper to outline the results of a brief survey of a number of traditional Maori sites located in the Te Anau - Manapouri regions. The survey was carried out over a two-week period in October 1968. The survey was by no means intensive, and a considerable amount of work remains to be done in this area.

UPEK RIVER SITES

Two ovens were located on the Upuk River (Fig. 1A) just off the main road. One of these ovens had been completely bulldozed and the other half demolished. In view of the poor condition of the remaining oven, a rescue excavation was carried out.

The oven originally extended over an area of about six meters diameter. Piles of water-worn pebbles were located, and a central pit dug into an underlying river deposit (Fig. 2). There was a distinct hump or rim to the oven which consisted of piles of large rocks and earth. No charcoal, faunal or artefactual material was recovered from this site. The oven was probably one of those described by Beattie (1949: 82).

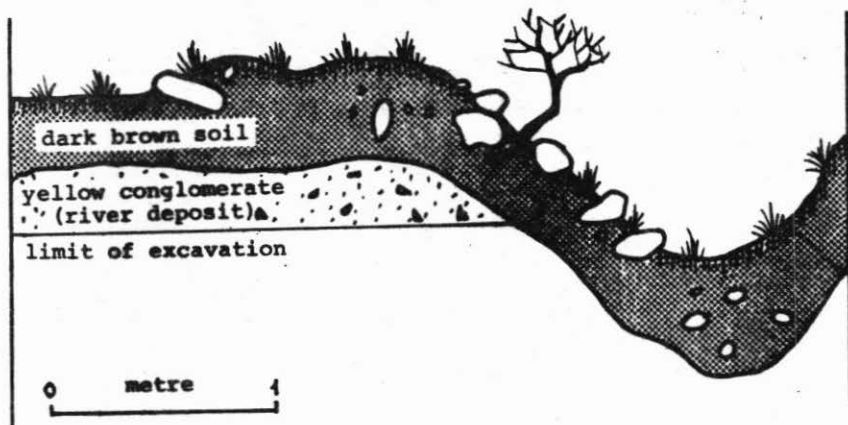


Figure 2. Section of Oven Excavated on Opuk River.

Further up the Upuk Valley (Fig. 1B) a local resident showed the author a solitary, old Rimu tree standing in the middle of a large area of beech forest. There is a relief carving on this tree (Fig. 3). The bark has been removed and timber has been cut away to a depth of about 10 cm around a section of the tree approximately 50 cm long and 20 cm wide. The long sides have been undercut to form a receding, bevelled edge. The lower edge has also been cut to produce a bevelled edge, but this time it is sloping down and outwards. The top section of the carving has been burnt off.

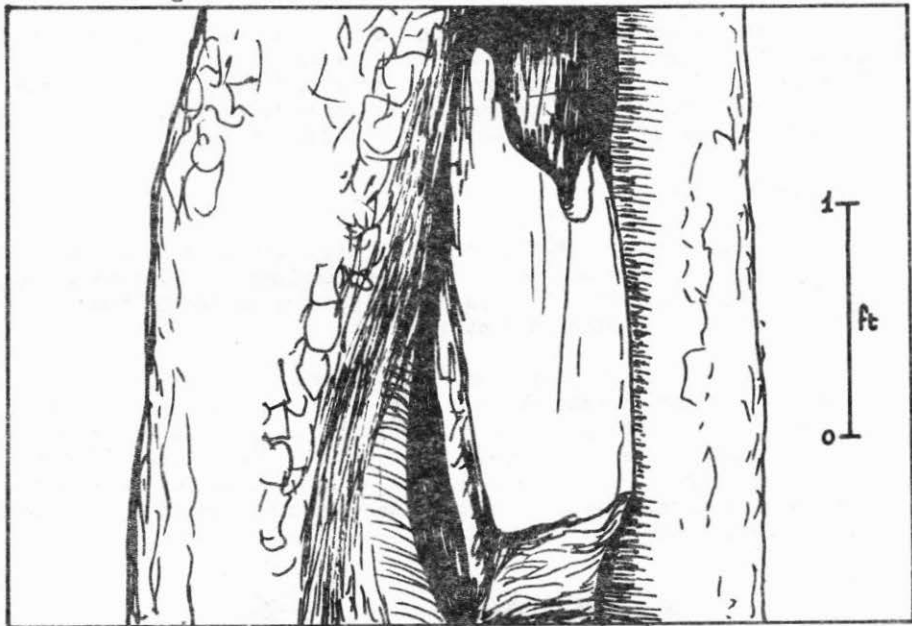


Figure 3. Dendroglyph on Opuk River.

The carving must be reasonably old as the right-hand section of the tree has grown right up to the margin of the carving so that one cannot see its right side. However, one can feel the bevel by pushing one's finger into the top or bottom of the carving longitudinally and feeling the slope of the side.

A local resident claims the carving was in the area when he first arrived there sixty years ago, and that at that time it had a human face carved into it. The destruction of the top part of the dendroglyph, he claims, is recent, and has removed the carving's most remarkable feature.

The author examined the carving carefully, but could not find any sign of the facial features. It also appears to have been cut with steel tools. However, the fact remains that it is a carving in a remote area rarely visited by anybody; it is carved on a solitary Rimu tree in the middle of a Beech forest, and it appears to be quite old. It should be possible to date the carving by tree ring counts. Other tree carvings have been found in the general area. For example, Beattie (1949: 73) mentions a Maori face carved into a birch tree somewhere on the Garnock Burn south of Manapouri.

#### MOUTH OF THE WAI AU (Fig. 1C)

Traditional evidence (Beattie 1949: p. 74) has it that there were Maori settlements on both sides of the river, but the author found no evidence of this occupation.

#### MANAPOURI HOMESTEAD (Fig. 1D)

This area used to be a favourite collecting area, and stone tools, ovens, moa gizzard stones, and so on were frequently found there (Beattie 1949: 77). Careful examination of this region did not reveal any positive evidence of Maori occupation.

#### PLOUGHED IN SITES

There used to be ovens located on areas E, F, G and H (Fig. 1), but all have been ploughed over, and there is no evidence of former occupation in these areas today. According to the farmer who ploughed area F, there were about 12 ovens there previously. The author also examined half a dozen ploughed in traditional sites (Beattie 1949: 74) situated along the foot of the Takitimu Mountains. Again, all evidence of former occupation has been destroyed.

#### CONCLUSIONS

The results of a survey of over a dozen traditional sites were discouraging as none of them appeared to be worthy of further investigation. The portents for future field work would appear to be ominous. The search for useful sites will be difficult and tedious, and it seems certain that such sites will be rare. While in the area, the author was told of dozens of other sites which have been ploughed under, and no doubt more will disappear under the plough in the near future as the whole region is being converted into farm holdings. However, areas

that may yield important sites lie west of Waiau River, the latter having formed a formidable barrier through which the fossicker and farmer have barely penetrated. It is there, in the author's opinion, that the archaeologist might usefully concentrate his attentions.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to thank local residents at Te Anau for being of such great assistance to me during my stay in the area. In particular, I would like to thank Dave Stock (Department of Internal Affairs), Dick Anderson (Department of Internal Affairs), Mr J. E. Roberts, and Mr George Burnby. My thanks to Linden Cowell who very kindly supplied the illustrations for this paper.

I also wish to thank the Myer Foundation for their sponsorship.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- H. Beattie                      1949                      The Maoris and Fiordland.      Dunedin,  
New Zealand.

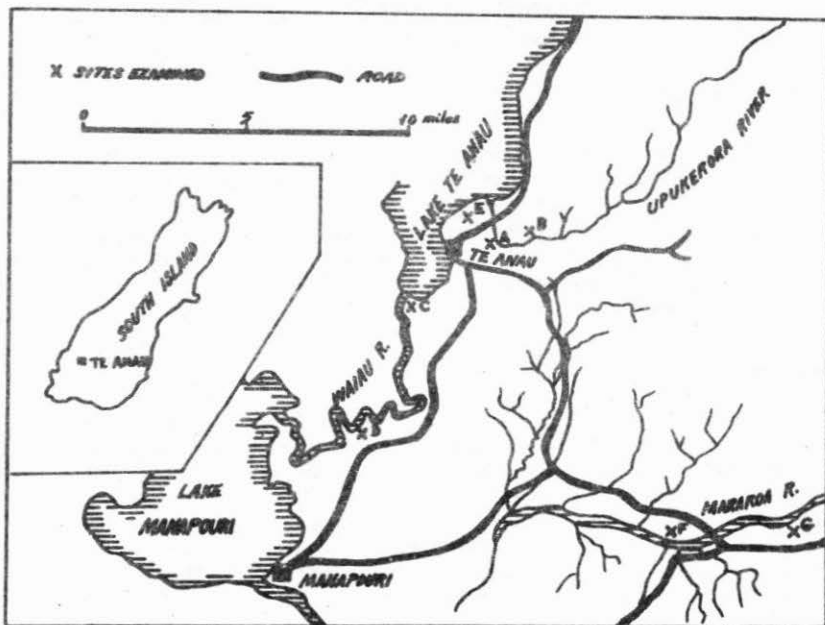


Figure 1. Te Anau and Environs. Location of sites.