



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN NORTH OTAGO:

This deals briefly with archaeological sites between Kahanui and Shag Point on which some investigation has been done recently. Only one, that of Te Raka-a-Hineatea, exhibits surface features or earthworks, and others are covered by up to seven feet of earth or soil. This point makes recognition, and in some cases investigation, difficult.

Mata Kaea - Shag Point (S. 146/424201).<sup>1</sup> A small unfortified site on the Shag Point Peninsula, it was used mainly as a workshop for preparing sandstone from a nearby quarry, and as a fishing camp. Although Maoris grew potatoes in the vicinity as late as 1845, material from Mata Kaea shows no sign of European influence. The co-operation of the Crown Lands Department was obtained to bring a stop to despoliation resulting from removal of turf for use on bowling greens, but lack of labour has prevented excavations during the last 20 months. Most of the artifacts that have been obtained came from a cliff top midden area; much less worked material being found elsewhere on the site.

Sandstone from the locality has been found on coastal sites up to 20 miles north and at least 30 miles south of Shag Point, and in many cases was used for cutting greenstone. Files and cutters which are very abundant on Mata Kaea, have in many cases been shaped very carefully. Two non-utility specimens are particularly well made, being shaped as a barracoutta-hook shank and a small hog-backed adze respectively. Both one-piece and composite hooks were used for fishing though points of the latter (usually barbed) far outnumber the former. Apparently solely Ngai Tahu occupation.

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1. Map references hereafter are to S146 unless otherwise stated.

Katiki Beach Sandhills - Katiki (445305). Several burials were found here some decades ago by Hart, Teviotdale and others. Skeletal remains and midden material are still found but most has been wind-disturbed. Moa bones in association with occupational material are apparently sub-fossil, and burials appear to be Ngai Tahu.

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Waimataitai Mouth - Katiki (447306). This is a small Moa-hunter hunting and fishing camp, but there are two narrow occupational strata of indeterminate age above the main deposit. The main items of interest obtained from limited excavations are barbed points of composite fish-hooks and bones of Aptirnis. Erosion is taking place at a high rate and if it continues little will be left of the site in a few years.

Black Sandy Bay - Katiki (453306). Very similar to Katiki Beach Sandhills with both burials and midden.

Te Raka-a-Hineatea - Katiki (457300). A large terraced pa of the Ngai Tahu, occupied probably about the middle of the eighteenth century (no C14 date has yet been obtained). Although there are no defensive walls or ditches visible, the site is almost surrounded by steep cliffs to the sea which would afford good protection. There are two fresh water springs on the site.

Buildings were constructed of dressed Totara slabs having an average section of 8" x 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ ". One of particular interest was about 12'6" x 8'6" in internal dimensions and contained two rectangular stone fire-places. All the stubs of the uprights which marked the walls and the centre pole were charred a few inches below present ground level. Apparently this and other buildings on the site were burnt down.

Artifacts include adzes, chisels, pendants, etc., of nephrite, crushers and pounders for haematite, and bone fish-hooks; all typical of the period.

North Beach - Katiki Point (458307). Probably a small Moa-hunter camp overlain by a later site, the latter possibly a continuation of Te Raka-a-Hineatea.

Moeraki. There are 3 or 4 connected sites here (455327, 452347, 443345), one of which was occupied until about 1900. Because of continued Maori occupation, and the numerous burials (in some cases adjacent to whare sites), no excavation has been done here by the Writer.

Hampden. Between Moeraki and Hampden is one small Moa-Hunter camp site (421384) and at Hampden itself is another (404365). About  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile inland is an area of middens and evens and a number of later period adzes have been found.

Waianakarua Bluff. Three small surface sites (442442, 450455, 449458), one of which is possible Moa-hunter.

Waianakarua River Mouth (448472). An important Moa-hunter camp site from which a number of artifacts have been obtained after ploughing.

### TAI RUA<sup>2</sup>

Archaeological excavations at this recently discovered Moa-hunter camp site have revealed cultural material of considerable interest. Although about half the site has been disturbed by cultivation and roadwork, it is hoped that when the present programme of excavations by members of the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society under the direction of the Writer is completed much important data will be obtained.

The coast road to Kakanui runs right across the site which is on a small flat just south of Tai Rua Point. Part of it lies on private land and the rest on the roadside under the control of the Waitaki County Council. Only a few acres in extent it is bounded on the east by the sea and the north by a swamp.

After preliminary investigations and survey, excavation was commenced at the beginning of 1958. On occasional Saturdays throughout the year some 45 five-foot squares were worked (involving the handling of about 50 tons of soil), from which 270 artifacts have been obtained.

Over much of the site there are between 6 and 8 layers, the fourth, sixth and seventh being occupational. Below this is an ancient beach and containing some skeletal remains of seals that died naturally.

In one area, near a swamp, the occupational deposit is a densely packed layer of Moa bones. Heavier bones of the legs are well preserved, but skulls, necks and pelvis are usually very fragile, in the swamp itself most bones are very similar in consistency to the muddy soil in which

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they are embedded. This makes their removal almost impossible, but luckily it is not the case further from the swamp, where even tracheal rings lie in position alongside articulated necks and skulls. Amongst the bones are artifacts but they are more numerous in certain areas of shell midden. Species of Moa so far discovered are Euryapteryx gravis and Pachyornis elephantopus (Scarlet det.) at a ratio of 3:1.

The majority of artifacts are of Moa bone, though other bird and whale bone was also used. Chiselling of bone (in the preparation of hooks, etc.) was done to a greater extent here than on most other sites in this area, but the more usual methods of working (cutting, drilling, grinding) were also used.

One of the commonest artifacts found in the deposit is a sub-circular spall of greywacke, used for cutting and scraping flesh from bones. Referring to these from the Rakaia Mouth (Canterbury) site, Julius von Haast suggested that they be called "Teshoa", a North American Indian name for a similar flake (Trans.N.Z. Inst., Vol. 7, 91-98). Although perhaps not strictly correct, I have found it convenient to adopt this name for Maori specimens.

It is yet rather early to draw any definite conclusions, but it does appear that the inhabitants of Tai Rua were mainly occupied with hunting and fishing. There is little evidence of buildings or of tools such as adzes that could be used in preparing timber.

Investigations are continuing as time permits.

M. M. T.

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#### FIRST-AID IN THE FIELD:

Readers of Wheeler's 'Archaeology from the Earth' may well be somewhat dismayed by the lengthy baggage-train of specialists and their equipment which, he insists, should accompany an excavation. No-one with any profession to competence would dispute his arguments - too often excavations have suffered from lack of specialist labour, but it is equally true that often lack of money and personnel make such lavish provisios impossible. It is an important point for discussion whether a site of