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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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# ARCHAEOLOGY AT SOUTH BAY, KAIKOURA

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## Introduction

South Bay is a sort of “suburb” of the town of Kaikoura on the east coast of the South Island (Figure 1), and like it, contains a great deal of archaeological evidence of past occupations. The records of this evidence, however, are few and more often than not have been overlooked – even in recent years. Hence this summary of the archaeology of the locality up to the end of 2007.



*Figure 1. Aerial photograph of South Bay, Kaikoura, showing recorded archaeological sites. Looking north, 2007.*

One of the earliest relevant records is a small map signed by the Assistant Native Secretary, James Mackay, dated 30 March 1859. It depicts Native Reserve F, an area of a little over three acres (1.3 hectares) and gives the place name Te Hiku o te Waeroa, with the bay itself being called South Kaikoura Bay (Figure 2). Immediately outside the Reserve to the south-west is marked “Fyffes try works” – the first known whaling station in South Bay – and outside the northern tip is the word “Graves” (these are generally assumed to be Maori graves). The south-west corner of the Native Reserve is marked by a limestone rock known as Mackay’s Stool, Te Turu o Make, where James Mackay is reputed to have sat while he discussed the Kaikoura Purchase with Maori representa-

tives. Although the “Stool” has been preserved for its historic significance, it needs to be noted that late Upoko Runanga, Bill Solomon of Kaikoura, described the Purchase as “a rip off of mammoth proportions” and observed that “where Mackay placed his adequate posterior is of no consequence to us” (Solomon 1990). And while “South Kaikoura Bay” seems likely to have been the origin of the present name of the locality, it appears to have been called Gooch Bay in the 1880s (Tilly 1886: 161).

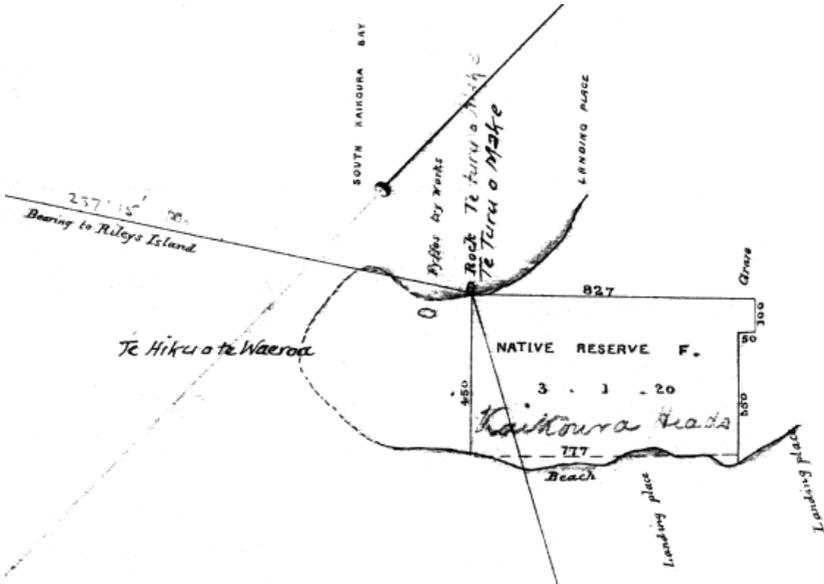


Figure 2. Part of James Mackay's plan of Te Hiku o te Waeroa, northwest at top, 1859.

Modern urban settlement came late to South Bay. It was described as being “a wind-blown, weed-covered landscape forlorn of houses and people” in 1950 (Holland 1994), though in fact there were two or three dwellings – and a lot of boxthorn – there at that time.

The next decade, however, saw considerable changes. Sections became available for purchase – and were taken up – and in the 1960s the Native Reserve (also known as Native Block and Maori Block) was transferred into private ownership and became available for settlement. Figure 3 shows this reserve land with two buildings on it in November 1962. The ‘A’ and ‘B’ indicate the

positions of Canterbury Museum excavations being carried out about that time, and ‘C’ marks the position of Mackay’s Stool.



*Figure 3. 1962 photograph of what used to be the Native Reserve, South Bay, looking southward. A and B are the locations of Canterbury Museum excavations, C is Mackay’s stool, and beyond it is Moa Point.*

## Site Records

Tony Fomison, who was a volunteer associated with Canterbury Museum and for a while was employed by that institution, carried out a survey of archaeological sites on the Kaikoura Peninsula in 1959 (Fomison 1959). This was done principally “to record the evolution of the pa site in one geographically defined area.” He recorded three pa sites on the hills above South Bay, and noted a midden site which he interestingly labelled as “destroyed” on the South Bay flat. Tony was also the Canterbury Filekeeper for the New Zealand Archaeological Association’s site recording scheme at this time. These early records have been rewritten (originally by him) and revised several times since then. By 1963 three more records had been added by Tony – another two pa sites plus the South Bay flat (no longer “destroyed”) – and a seventh record was added in 1991 for the last South Bay Whaling Station. The locations of these sites are marked on the aerial photograph in Figure 1, and Table 1 lists the original site numbers and their metricated equivalents today.

1959	1963	Current	Site Type
12	S49/39	O31/23	Pa
—	S49/40	O31/24	Pa
11	S49/41	O31/25	Pa
10	S49/42	O31/26	Pa
X	S49/43	O31/27	General occupation, burials
—	S49/50	O31/34	Pa
—	—	O31/67	Whaling station

*Table 1. Archaeological site records, South Bay, Kaikoura.*

### Pa Sites

The pa sites on the hilltops overlooking South Bay are not always considered to be part of South Bay archaeology, but it is a reasonable assumption that the people who built the pas would have spent most of their time on the flat below.

With one exception, Tony Fomison drew plans of these pa sites, and almost twenty years later so did Barry Brailsford – and Barry also took some great aerial photographs of them (Brailsford 1981: 119, 124-127). The exception in both cases was O31/24. Tony did not photograph or measure this site and today all that can be seen is about 30 m of barely perceptible wall, which would need some imagination to identify as a pa site.



*Figure 4. Pa site O31/26 has double fortifications. Quarry damage at the right of the photo. Looking southward.*

For the most part the four recognisable pa sites are in good condition, although Deb Foster has reported recent cattle damage to the large O31/23

(Foster 2006b). And pa O31/26 above the recreation reserve at the eastern end of South Bay did suffer some damage through the quarrying of limestone at its westernmost edge, though this appears to have stopped in the late 1960s (the damage is at the right in Figure 4).

### Pits

Three of the pa sites, O31/25, O31/23 and O31/34, have pits as internal features. A very large and deep rectangular pit in O31/34 is larger, deeper and more rectangular than others on the same site or on other South Bay sites.

The records for both O31/26 and O31/34 include “external pits” on the flat at the base of the hill on which each pa is situated. Strictly speaking, these should be on separate site records as their relationship to the pa is unknown.



*Figure 5. Three raised-rim pits below pa O31/26 are actually part of O31/27, adjacent to the present South Bay Reserve. Looking southwest, 1963.*

There were three raised-rim pits below O31/26, and at least one of them was investigated in the 1960s (Figure 5 was taken in December 1963). Sadly, no details of this excavation have been published through a brief mention by Owen Wilkes (Wilkes 1964) suggests that the excavations revealed evidence of a complex structure which possibly had two periods of use before the main occupation of the adjacent area. Owen simply referred to the pits as “a row of raised rim pits” and Tony Fomison referred to them as “a gaggle of pits” though he shows them as three separate pits in a sketch map, Figure 6. Certainly three raised rim pits can be seen in Figure 5, though the two at right appear more as a double pit (i.e. sharing a common rim) rather than two separate ones. Limestone rubble from the nearby quarry, referred to above, has been dumped over

this pit site, obliterating any sign of its features, but its location would have been in the vicinity of E2566515 N5864562. (These pits are noted on two site records, O31/26 and O31/27.)

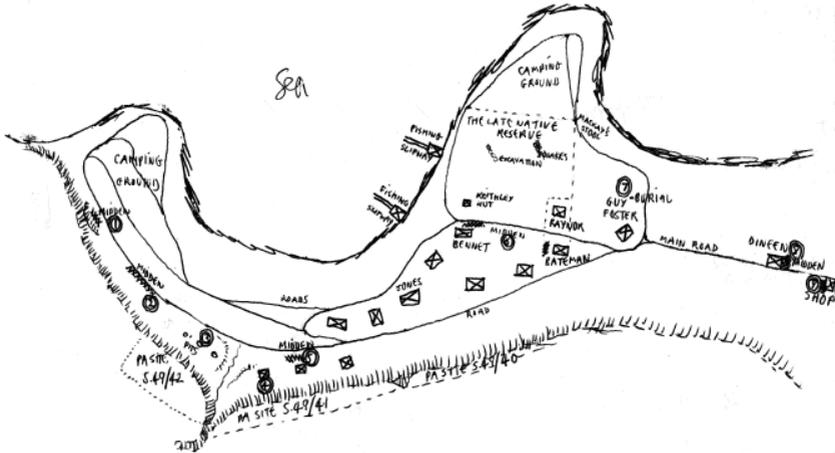


Figure 6. Sketch map of site O31/27 by Tony Fomison, south at the top, 1962.

The other “external pits” were a pair below pa site O31/34, and although they were clearly defined a few years ago they cannot now be found – they appear to have been destroyed by recent Council water channelling work and plantings of native bush.

### Te Hiko o te Waeroa

Site O31/27 is described on the site record form as “the whole beach side flat from the store on the main road, to the latter’s termination at the camping ground.” “Main road” refers to what is today called South Bay Parade. On the 1963 hand-written version of the site record, three NZMS1 map grid references are given to denote the extent of the site, but in a 1970s typed version of the form these have been reduced to two grid references, and the size of the site reduced by 500 yards from the north. It is likely that the 1942 edition of the NZMS1 map, S49, was used for the 1963 hand-written version of the site record, and it varies considerably from the 1972 edition that was used for the typed version – this could partly account for the changes. The 1980s conversion to metric of the site record covers much the same area as the 1970s typed version. But all of them exclude the South Bay Reserve (not to be confused with the Native Reserve mentioned earlier) which extends some 400 m to the

south-east of the built-up area. Figure 6 shows a classic Fomison sketch map from 1962, which clearly includes this South Bay Reserve, labelled “Camping Ground” on the left, and indicates several areas of midden and the aforementioned pits alongside.

The area in and around “The Late Native Reserve” – Mackay’s Native Reserve F – has attracted the most attention over the years. Digging for artefacts is reputed to have occurred at least as far back as the late 1920s or early 1930s (Johnstone 1962: 2 December). Bert Kennington, a well-known artefact collector and one time chairman of the “archaeology division” of the Marlborough Historical Society, said that the area was one of the richest in the South Island for greenstone discoveries (Press 1969: 6 February). And Selwyn Hovell, whose notorious artefact-collecting exploits were largely promulgated by himself, is said to have planned an excavation there at the end of 1962 (Johnstone 1962: 15 October).

In or about 1962 the Native Reserve land passed into the private ownership of Ron Keithley (S. O.2857 1962; Fomison 1963) and in November of that year excavations were carried out in two places by members of the Canterbury Museum Archaeological Society – marked A and B on Figure 3. (The exact position of these excavations in relation to the Reserve boundaries is given in a plan by Jack McLelland (1962).) Tony Fomison interpreted the results of the investigation as indicating two periods of occupation: a brief moa hunter occupation followed by a longer classic occupation extending into an “Early European Maori” phase (Fomison 1963), though his findings were partly challenged by Ron Scarlett (1963) and to some extent by Owen Wilkes (1964).

The following year, further excavations were carried out under the direction of Owen Wilkes. By this time much of the area had been bulldozed. Excavations are reported to have been made in three places: south-east of the 1962 excavation, somewhere near the reserve land, and at one of the pits below pa O31/26 referred to earlier (Wilkes 1963, 1964). Information was also obtained from local residents and from surface collecting. Owen’s interpretation was fairly cautious, but he did note that moa hunter occupation was apparently quite widespread.

Although Owen Wilkes considered that there was a need for more archaeological investigations to be made at South Bay, this does not appear to have been done, probably at least partly due to his break with Canterbury Museum about 1964.

At the end of January 1969 the Kaikoura County Council started to bulldoze a new road along the South Bay foreshore, largely on the small projection of land to the south-west of the old Native Reserve. Quantities of artefacts were uncovered and collected by “an average of 40 local residents and holiday

makers, following the bulldozer like seagulls after the plough.” Roger Duff, director of Canterbury Museum, later visited the site and wrote in his field book: “I witnessed ... in the distance the looming silhouette of a road grader, accompanied by the worshipping forms of its disciples. Eagerly urged on by Mr Bert Kennington of Seddon, with blissful smile and garden fork, the grader was biting into new ground on the outer seaward side of the beach ridge. Up and down following this monstrous god, swayed 30 or 40 fossickers, amongst whom the 10 or 12 Kaikoura Historical Society members proudly wore lapel badges proclaiming their superior right to operate.” (Duff 1969: 5 February).

The opinions of Roger Duff and of Kaikoura historian Jock Sherrard – plus the responses of the Kaikoura County Council – added some colour to topical news items in the *Kaikoura Star*, the *Christchurch Star* and *The Press* (Sherrard 1969; Star 1969; Press 1969), such as in Figure 7. At some stage a “discrete Canterbury Museum team” removed the disturbed remains of two burials from the bulldozed and graded area. The nitrogen level in the bones suggested a fifteenth century age (Philip Houghton, pers. comm. 19 June 1978) but the associated artefacts pointed to a more recent date.

*Kaikoura Artifacts*

Dr Duff Told:  
Don't Tell Us  
Our Business

“DR DUFF need not think he can come up here and tell the Kaikoura County Council how to run its business,” the chairman of the council (Mr V. J. Corbett) said to-day.

“I think the council has acted reasonably and with restraint.”

Mr Corbett was replying to criticism of the council by the director of the Canterbury Museum (Dr R. S. Duff) who said the Museum should have had the opportunity of sending in an experienced team of excavators before the bulldozer was uncovered by the bulldozer at South Bay several days ago.

“A lot of this has been unwarranted criticism with no foundation,” Mr Corbett said.

CHRISTCHURCH  
STAR 15.2.1969

“As soon as the artifacts started to appear the work was stopped,” he said.

“Those artifacts have been discovered far one hundred

Figure 7. An example of news items about fossicking for Maori artefacts at South Bay in 1969.

In 1988 the Kaikoura County Council had considered making improved boat facilities (a “Safe Harbour”) in the South Bay Reserve – the “camping ground” on the left side of Tony Fomison’s sketch map (Figure 6). This original proposal was soon abandoned and the Council (now a District Council) had their engineers look at two other options – one for the northern side of Moa Point and the other a second and different proposal for the South Bay Reserve. Following submissions from a number of interested parties, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust suggested, in 1993, that a “heritage study” of South Bay be undertaken. This was completed in 1995 and recommended in respect to the Maori occupational area in the South Bay flat “that all future development should be monitored and that any projects involving the disturbance of previously unmodified ground should have their archaeological potential assessed beforehand” (Trotter and McCulloch 1995).

Prior to the completion of the South Bay heritage study, Authority 1993/5 for site modification/destruction at Moa Point (excluding Mackay’s Stool, whaling station remains and any burials) was issued by the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, conditional on the prior investigation of whaling station evidence and archaeological monitoring of any earthworks.

The investigation of the whaling station evidence was carried out in October 1993 (Authority 1993/19) and the redevelopment of Moa Point went ahead in 1996. This work comprised the construction of a concrete wharf and the establishment of improved roading and parking facilities on Moa Point, plus the digging of services trenches, most of which was monitored (Trotter and McCulloch 1996, 1997), though it must be said that there had been considerable modifications to the area since the 1969 incident.

### **South Bay Reserve**

The South Bay Reserve is the easternmost part of site O31/27 (see Figure 1). Tony Fomison had noted middens here on his site record and some of these are still clearly visible beneath trees along the north-east side with a mixture of occupational material in the adjacent paddock – besides shell midden and burnt stones there is the occasional Maori artefact and piece of opalised glass. There were pieces of whale bone under the trees in the 1980s but they seem to have since been souvenired.

In 1988 when the local Council was considering making the South Bay Reserve into a safe boat harbour, it commissioned archaeological sampling, which was carried out under New Zealand Historic Places Trust Authority 1988/23. At this time the ground surface had not been modified much – although to form a level road along the north-east side, the sloping ground had been

scraped down a little and the removed material had been spread on the relatively level surface nearby.

Sixteen test pits were dug (see Figure 8, from Trotter 1989) all of which except one (number 16) contained signs of prehistoric occupational material. Test pit number 2 was on the edge of a prehistoric pit structure. From the evidence of artefacts and faunal material it was concluded that the site warranted preservation, or failing that, full archaeological investigation before it was disturbed or destroyed (Trotter 1989). A costing of such an investigation was provided for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust.

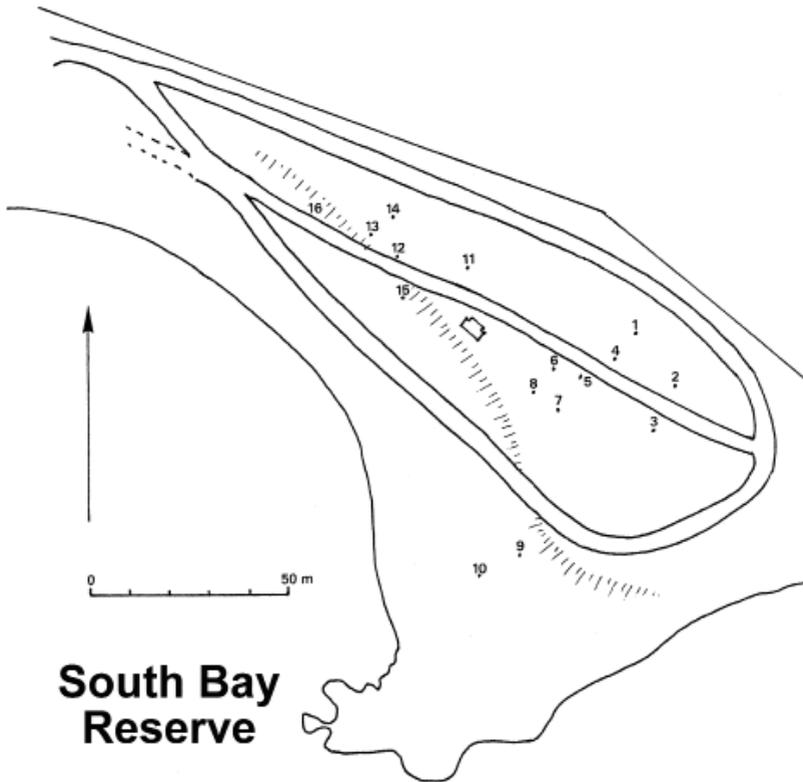


Figure 8. Sixteen archaeological test pits that were dug on the South Bay Reserve in 1988 indicated the importance of this easternmost portion of site O31/27.

A quantity of limestone rubble from the harbour works at Moa Point was dumped on the lower terrace of the South Bay Reserve in 1996, a stated Council objective being to ensure that there was “no disturbance or destruction of any Historical site of archaeological significance” although comparison of photographs taken before and afterwards indicates that some levelling of the higher ground did take place. The lower terrace had been shown on the test pit plan (Figure 8) and also on the contoured aerial plan accompanying the South Bay heritage study (Trotter and McCulloch 1995), so the location and extent of the dumped material was known.

Considerable damage was done to the South Bay Reserve part of site O31/27 during the construction of toilets and an information shelter in 2006. This was caused by the clearance of trees, installation of foundations, digging trenches for sewer, water and power, and digging holes for bollards, all of which was done under New Zealand Historic Places Trust Authority 2006/184. The worst damage was caused by a very wide trench for sewer, water and power which was excavated right across the Reserve. Had this trench been routed through the area that had been filled with limestone rubble in 1996, most of this damage would have been averted.

Deb Foster, who monitored the work, found that there was an almost continual cultural layer varying between 300 and 600 mm in thickness, with shell, fish and bird bone midden, fire scoops, ovens, a pit, artefacts and at least two burials (Foster 2006a, 2007) – it is possible that the pit she reported is the same one as noted in 1988 (Trotter 1989). All the features found are consistent with those referred to in previous reports for site O31/27. Some moa bone, probably indicating moa hunter occupation, was recovered. It is likely that more material would have been found, and certain that more information could have been obtained, had different excavating methods been used – at one place in her report Deb refers to the method used for the main ditch across the Reserve as “devastating.” Some of the work carried out does not appear to have been monitored. Human bones found during the trenching were reburied in a special fenced-off area in an old quarry (not the 1960s quarry) near the cliff opposite the entrance to the information shelter and toilets (Raewyn Solomon, pers. comm., 2007).

### **Whaling Stations**

Archaeological evidence of “Fyffes try works” (referred to in Figure 2) has not been found, though attempts were made both in 1993 and when preparations were being made for the new concrete wharf in 1996. However, later that year a 1.5 m diameter pit that appeared to be linked to early whaling

operations was discovered a short distance north of the position marked on Mackay's map (Trotter and McCulloch 1997).

In 1993 an investigation was made of the foundations and floor of a 9 m<sup>2</sup> building (Figure 9) on the opposite side of Moa Point, which had been used for processing whale blubber to produce whale oil (Authority 1993/19; Trotter and McCulloch 1993). This building seems to have been erected about 1917 and it operated for some years (Sherrard 1966: 75; Prickett 2002: 58-60). It was probably pulled down in the 1940s and there is an anecdotal report of some of the equipment being taken for use in Peranos' whaling station in Tory Channel.



*Figure 9. The site of an early twentieth century whaling station was excavated in 1993.*

## **Artefacts**

The high proportion of greenstone (mostly nephrite) artefacts amongst material known to come from South Bay is probably due to both selective collecting and the fact that most would have come from upper levels of the site. Nevertheless, most of the artefacts obtained from the 1962 excavations were considered by Ron Scarlett to be of Classic types (Scarlett 1963). Tony Fomison had listed paua shell eyes, a kuru pendant, an unfinished bone comb, composite, lure and one-piece fish-hooks, gouges, a sinker, and worked argillite and nephrite (Fomison 1963). Owen Wilkes, however, reported besides 24 greenstone adze-heads, 19 of argillite, "some definitely of moa-hunter origin," amongst surface

collections (Wilkes 1994). Small quantities of moa bone were reported both at this time and from the 2006 works at the South Bay Reserve (Foster 2006a), which does suggest some early occupation.

Any discussion on South Bay artefacts must include at least passing mention of a serpentine bowl that was found in 1980 in the littoral zone immediately to the east of the South Bay Reserve. The 212 mm long object is unlike any known Maori artefact and most closely resembles bowls from northern America (Emberson 1988).

## Acknowledgements

Information used in this summary came from a lot of different sources – various reports and publications (that are listed in the References below); correspondence to and from the Kaikoura County/District Council, their engineers, and the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (that would be too tedious to list); and field books, plans, and personal communications from a lot of people who have helped one way or another over the years. In particular I would like to make acknowledgement the help of Bridget Mosley of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, Roger Fyfe of the Canterbury Museum, and Alan Cragg of the Kaikoura Historical Society.

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