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CASTLE HILL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE SURVEY

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An archaeological site survey on reserve, pastoral lease, and freehold land in the Castle Hill vicinity (Figure 1, Plates 1 and 2) was carried out at the request of the Canterbury Conservancy, Department of Conservation, between 16 and 19 November 1993. The personnel involved in the survey, for all or part of the time, were Aidan Challis and Tony Walton (Science and Research Division, Department of Conservation), Chris Jacomb (Canterbury Museum), Brian Allingham (South Island Maori Rock Art Project), Ian Hill (Canterbury Conservancy, Department of Conservation), Robin Smith and Kay Holder (Waimakariri Field Centre, Department of Conservation), Marlene Morrison (Kati Waewae) and Lois Bradley (Castle Hill).

This report is concerned with details of the survey and is intended to provide commentary and supplementary information relating to records (K34/1-7, 9-14) filed in the New Zealand Archaeological Site Recording Scheme. The records are summarised in Table 1. Four previously recorded rock shelters with art were relocated and updated records were filed in the Site Recording Scheme. Six new records (K34/9-14) were added, all of which describe historical occupation, some of it dating to the 1860s and 1880s.

BACKGROUND

Environment

The mountainous terrain in the vicinity of the Castle Hill basin was formed by geological processes acting on the grey sandstones and dark mudstones of the Torlesse rocks. Overlying this Torlesse basement are various later deposits including the uplifted and tilted limestones (Bradshaw 1977) which dominate the landscape investigated during this site survey. Soil comprises high country yellow-brown earths which, in this cool to cool-humid climate, once supported tall tussock and beech forest (Leamy and Fieldes 1975). Annual precipitation is approximately 1000 mm (Greenland 1977).

Studies of sub-fossil plant records and residual vegetation indicate that the limestone country in the Flock Hill-Broken River area was characterised in pre-Polynesian times by primary beech forest and in pre-European times by secondary grassland and scrub. It is now considered to be 'modified secondary grassland and scrub' (Molloy 1969:354).

In a review of the fire history of the Cass-Porters Pass district, Molloy

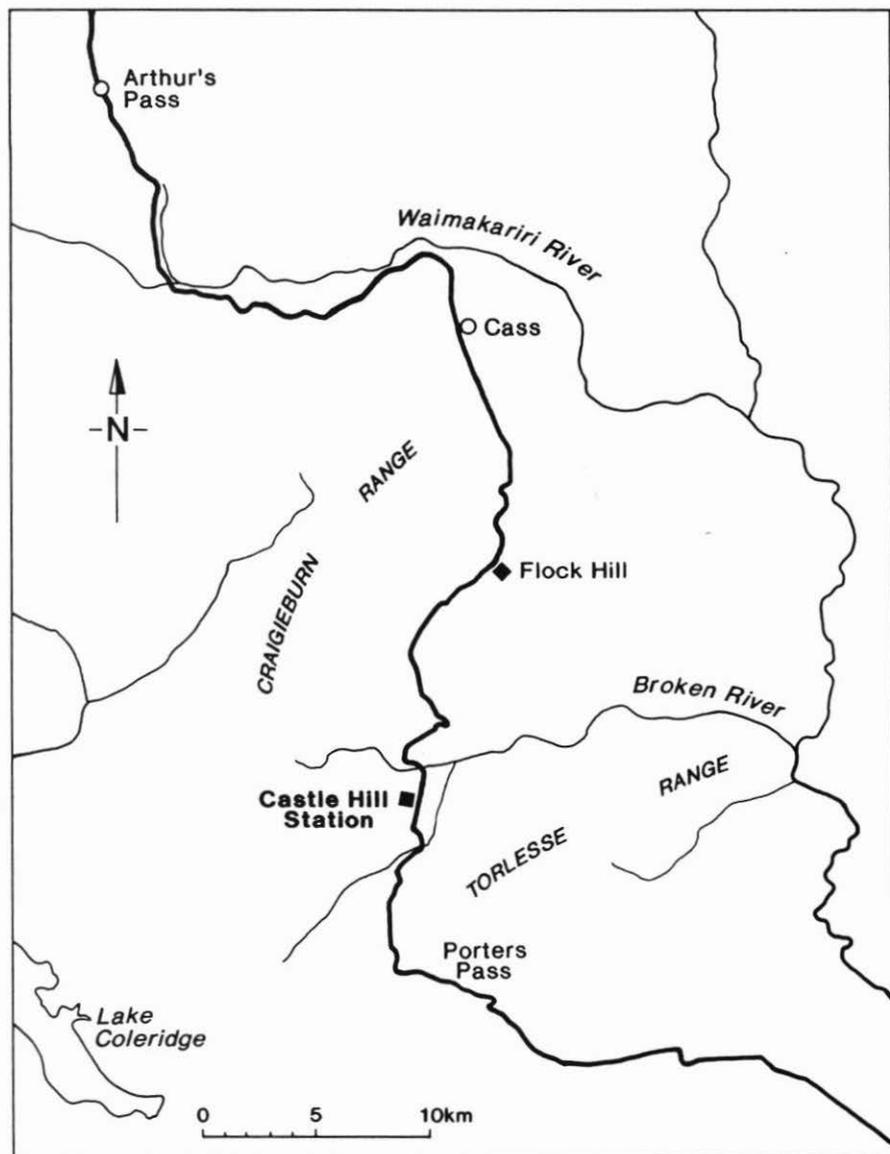


Figure 1. Castle Hill and surrounding areas. The thick line represents the State Highway 73.

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Plate 1. Looking north along the face of the limestone outcrops. The concentration of recorded sites is in a gap between two outcrops located centre right.

presented fourteen radiocarbon dates for beech charcoal which range from 392 ± 37 BP (NZ 655) to 950 ± 105 BP (H 1050). After discussing possible sources of error, he concluded that probably a single fire swept through the area between 500 and 600 years BP (Molloy 1977:163).

In 1973 the Canterbury Museum obtained a radiocarbon date from moa bones (collagen, *Euryapteryx geranoides*) from a natural deposit in a hollow within the survey area (K34/058747; McCulloch and Trotter 1979; NZ1724, R4556/2; conventional radiocarbon age 980 ± 60 BP; calibrated 95% confidence interval 989-1217 AD; B.G. McFadgen: pers. comm. 1994). This provides local confirmation of the presence of moa in the area in the pre-human period.

Maori use

Little is known of Maori use of this mountainous part of the South Island. Castle Hill is near Arthur's Pass but this pass was apparently not an important or much-used route to the West Coast; Harpers Pass, further north, was the favoured route (Skinner 1912; Brailsford 1984).



Plate 2. Looking north across the back surface of the limestone outcrop. Note outcrops top left, also examined, but without result.

Although recorded archaeological sites are few, some isolated artefact finds are known. Artefacts found within the survey area include a flake of chert, a variety known locally as Marlborough limestone flint, found at site K34/4, a water-worn piece of unworked nephrite, and a flake of quartzite.

Other artefacts found in the vicinity include a backpack found in a shelter at Broken River in 1983. Radiocarbon dated to about the fifteenth or sixteenth century (wood, *Coprosma* sp., NZ7466, R11458, conventional radiocarbon age 468 ± 66 BP, calibrated 95% confidence interval 1397-1638 AD; B.G. McFadgen: pers. comm. 1994), the pack was made with a circular wooden frame and a sack of plaited flax closed with a drawstring. It was found with the feathers of weka, kakapo and kaka and the bones of two dogs and a kiwi, as well as some fine cordage and freshwater mussel shells. A second, smaller bag was found inside the pack as were two unfinished pendants of paua shell. A small supply of dry firewood was found beneath the pack (Trotter 1987).

A greenstone ulu was recently found at the summit of Arthur's Pass. Such polished discoidal cutting tools are usually found associated with moa-hunting sites and are thought to have been used for skin preparation. This is the northernmost recorded occurrence of the artefact type (Jacomb 1990).

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THE SURVEY

Objectives

The objectives were to record rock art and any associated archaeological indications in rock shelters, and to record other forms of archaeological evidence. Blanket coverage of the Castle Hill limestone outcrops was achieved. Permission for access to private land adjacent to the Department of Conservation managed reserves was granted by Castle Hill Partnership/Bradmac Farms.

Methods

A written description was made of each site and all identified sites except K34/11 were mapped and photographed. (The old stockyard site, K34/10, was not remapped as it had been mapped by Chris Jacomb some months previously.) Plans of each rock shelter located were drawn by Aidan Challis and Tony Walton. Brian Allingham recorded and photographed the rock art in detail. Other members of the team were involved in a careful foot survey of the Castle Hill area, with particular emphasis on potential rock art or rock shelter sites. The art was difficult to see and a fine water spray was used sparingly on surfaces where art was suspected, but not evident, to enhance visibility and improve the chances of discovery. Most of the area surveyed was in pasture and access was good.

Site locations were marked on a 1986 aerial photograph (SN 8584 H/11) which had been enlarged to a scale of 1:5000. Grid references were assigned afterwards from NZMS 260 K34 (1:50,000) using the marked-up aerial photograph to help pinpoint the correct co-ordinates. Site locations are shown on Figure 2. Site plans are included with the site records.

Sites not relocated

A number of sites (K34/1-7) had been recorded at Castle Hill in the 1960s and 1970s. Tony Fomison recorded two sites in 1961 and five further sites were recorded by Beverley McCulloch in 1967-70. McCulloch's work at Castle Hill is summarised in a submission to the Malvern County Council dated 1 May 1971 (McCulloch 1971).

Three of the previously recorded sites (K34/2, 5, 6) were not positively re-identified. Considerable effort was put into attempting to relocate a rock shelter with occupation deposits on its floor (K34/2) reported by Tony Fomison. Three places fitting his description were located. Examination of sub-surface deposits may have helped to definitely identify the Fomison site, but no excavation was undertaken.

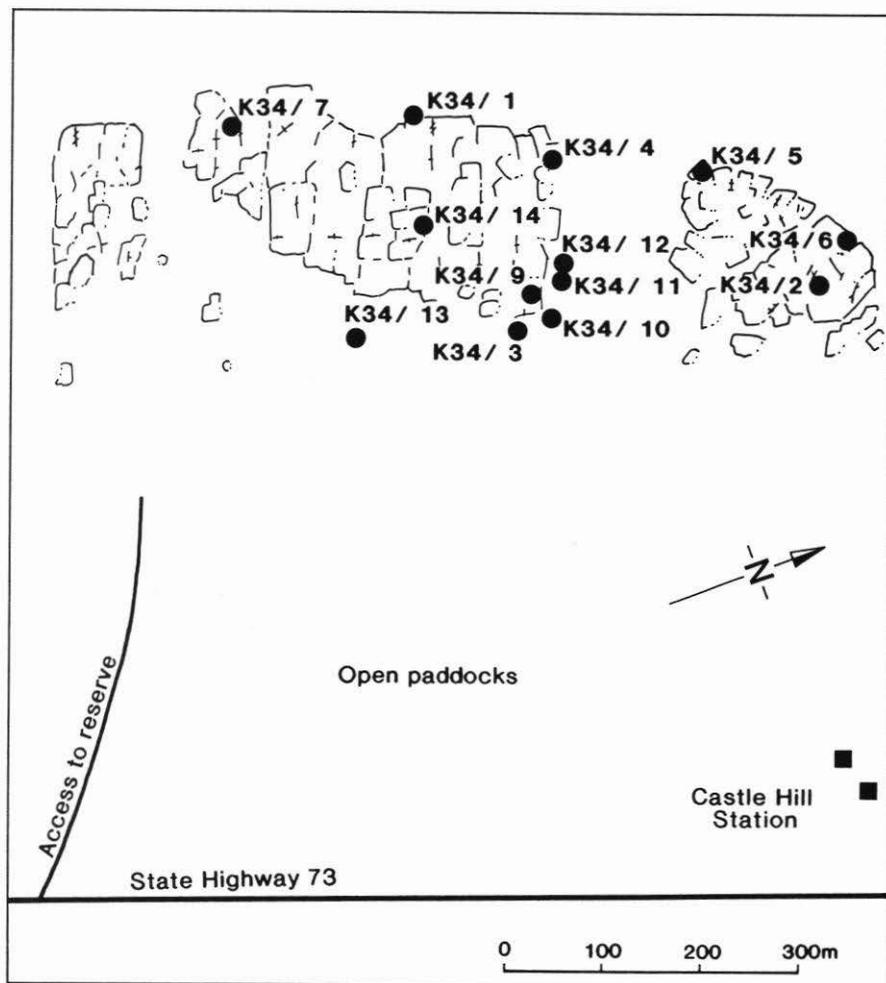


Figure 2. Distribution of recorded sites at Castle Hill.

Two sites reported by Beverley McCulloch (K34/5 and K34/6) were relocated but no trace of the art recorded there some 25 years ago was found. The art at K34/5 was described as 'fragmentary' and 'almost non-existent' in 1967 so the lack of any trace is perhaps not unexpected. It is more surprising that the art at K34/6 should have disappeared. The art was unusual and its appearance, and disappearance, is thought by the authors to have been a hoax.

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The rock art

The recorded rock art is located on the periphery of the southern limestone outcrop area in shelters of varying size. It is possible that other now exfoliated art existed in similar contexts, and that further remnants may be recorded under different weather and lighting conditions.

Photographs and dot for dot drawings of rock art at the four established sites (K34/1, 3, 4 and 7) are being produced by Brian Allingham and will be reported separately to the South Island Rock Art Project. The rock art is in poor and fragmentary condition. It is likely that the majority has exfoliated and is irretrievable in shelter floor debris.

The surviving art may be regarded as an important remnant in a discrete and relatively isolated location. It provides a crucial basis for comparison and contrast with art from other localities in Canterbury and Otago.

Rock shelter occupation

That pre-European occupation remains may be present in some shelters is suggested by a chert flake recorded at K34/4. Twenty years ago Beverley McCulloch reported occupational debris in the floors of at least three of the shelters, and illustrated moa bone as the remains from meals (McCulloch 1971:2).

Later use of rock shelters as camps is apparent at five sites (K34/4, 9, 12, 13 and 14). Corrugated iron, iron bolts and wire, chiselled driplines and post sockets in the rock, low stone walling, and inscriptions with dates of the 1880s indicate use as makeshift shelters in the late nineteenth century. To the same period belong names and dates marked on a sawn boulder (K34/11, legible dates from 1868 to 1894), and probably post holes apparently remaining from a stockyard (K34/10). The Castle Hill station was first taken up in the period 1858-1861. Some of the names on the sawn boulder - J. O'Malley, R. Milliken, and C. Haast - relate to those recorded in a brief history of the station.

The present [Castle Hill] homestead site was the base for a farm (leased by G. O'Malley, and, from 1888, by J. Milliken) growing oats for the coaching and cartage horses ... The place was leased by the Enys estate to A.G. Stronach in 1890, H. von Haast in 1897, and L. Mathias in 1898. J. McKenzie bought it in 1901, Milliken brothers in 1908, and W.B. Clarkson and Co. in 1920 ... (McLeod and Burrows 1977:36).

SITE MANAGEMENT

There is a relative lack of graffiti affecting rock art despite high visitor

usage of parts of the area. This may be a consequence of low visibility of the art. Unintentional damage arising out of lack of awareness may be as great a risk as deliberate defacement.

It is suggested that the surviving art should be assessed by a qualified rock art conservator, who should produce condition reports and recommendations for any necessary conservation intervention.

The evidence of rock shelter occupation does not appear to warrant specific protective measures. The appropriate approach would be to minimise disturbance.

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Table 1. List of recorded sites.

| Site No. | Grid Ref. | Site Type | 1st Rec | Work Undertaken |
|----------|-----------|------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| K34/1 | 055746 | Rock shelter with art | 1961 | M, P, D |
| K34/2 | 058749 | Rock shelter | 1961 | Location sought |
| K34/3 | 058746 | Rock shelter with art | 1967 | M, P, D |
| K34/4 | 056747 | Rock shelter with art | 1967 | M, P, D |
| K34/5 | 057749 | Rock art | 1967 | Art not found |
| K34/6 | 057750 | Rock art | 1967 | Probably a hoax |
| K34/7 | 055744 | Rock shelter with art | 1970 | M, P, D |
| K34/9 | 057747 | Rock shelter camp site | 1993 | M, P |
| K34/10 | 058747 | Stockyard | 1993 | M |
| K34/11 | 057747 | Sawn boulder | 1993 | P |
| K34/12 | 057747 | Rock shelter camp site | 1993 | M, P |
| J34/13 | 057745 | Rock shelter camp site | 1993 | M, P |
| K34/14 | 057746 | Rock shelter camp site | 1993 | M, P |

Key: M = mapped, P = photographed, D = rock art drawn