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HARBOUR CONE: A RELIC LANDSCAPE ON THE OTAGO PENINSULA

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Introduction

In 2008 the Dunedin City Council purchased a block of land on the Otago Peninsula covering approximately 324 hectares, dominated by the distinctive old volcanic landform of Harbour Cone (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Nineteenth century photograph of Harbour Cone and Portobello taken from Portobello Peninsula. Otago Peninsula Museum OP 2003/16 A & B.

This purchase followed some lobbying by STOP (Save the Otago Peninsula), a group concerned that the block of land in question, recently put on the market by its owners, might be subdivided and developed in private ownership. An archaeological survey of the Council's purchase identified a

total of 42 archaeological sites within the Harbour Cone area (Middleton 2008). Another nine sites lying adjacent to the Harbour Cone area are included in this discussion. These sites are largely those concerned with European settlement from the late 1860s onwards, and provide evidence of a complex, integrated archaeological landscape associated with nineteenth century small dairy farming. Some of these historic sites were recorded in the 1960s and 1970s by Dunedin identity Hardwicke Knight, who died in late 2008. Knight's recognition of the historical archaeological record demonstrated some foresight at a time when nineteenth and early twentieth century New Zealand sites were not often recognised as significant.

The Harbour Cone purchase area consists principally of land titles subdivided in 1863 in Block II Otago Peninsula Survey District (S.O. 1327; Figure 2). Many of the archaeological features in the area are drystone walls constructed along boundaries of these first survey lines. The two roads shown on this 1863 survey plan were surveyed in without real consideration of the topography they passed through and were subsequently closed and transferred by the Peninsula Roads Board to surrounding land owners, with a series of survey plans illustrating this process.

At the time of the subdivision of Block II, Harbour Cone presented a very different landscape from that seen today. Heavy bush greeted the first European settlers, such as Walter Riddell (n.d.; see also West n.d.), whose diary for the years 1865 to 1871 documents his efforts to clear the bush and establish farming pasture. Although transport was difficult, timber was brought to Dunedin when possible and sold for firewood (Leslie n.d.-a; West n.d.). Waste timber was also sometimes stacked to form fences. Forest clearance and piles of cut wood also led to the hazard of fire, especially in droughts.

Of the total of 51 sites (including nine related sites outside the DCC's purchase boundaries) identified to date, the majority consist of homesteads and/or farmsteads (Figure 3; Table 1). Two of these are also included in the industrial category, one with an associated cheese factory and the other with a forge. A third has a miscellaneous site – a post office – associated. Industrial sites are predominantly associated with the limestone industry but also include the cheese factory, a creamery and a gold mine. The miscellaneous

category includes a school, the post office (also a farm/homestead) and a stand of macrocarpas.

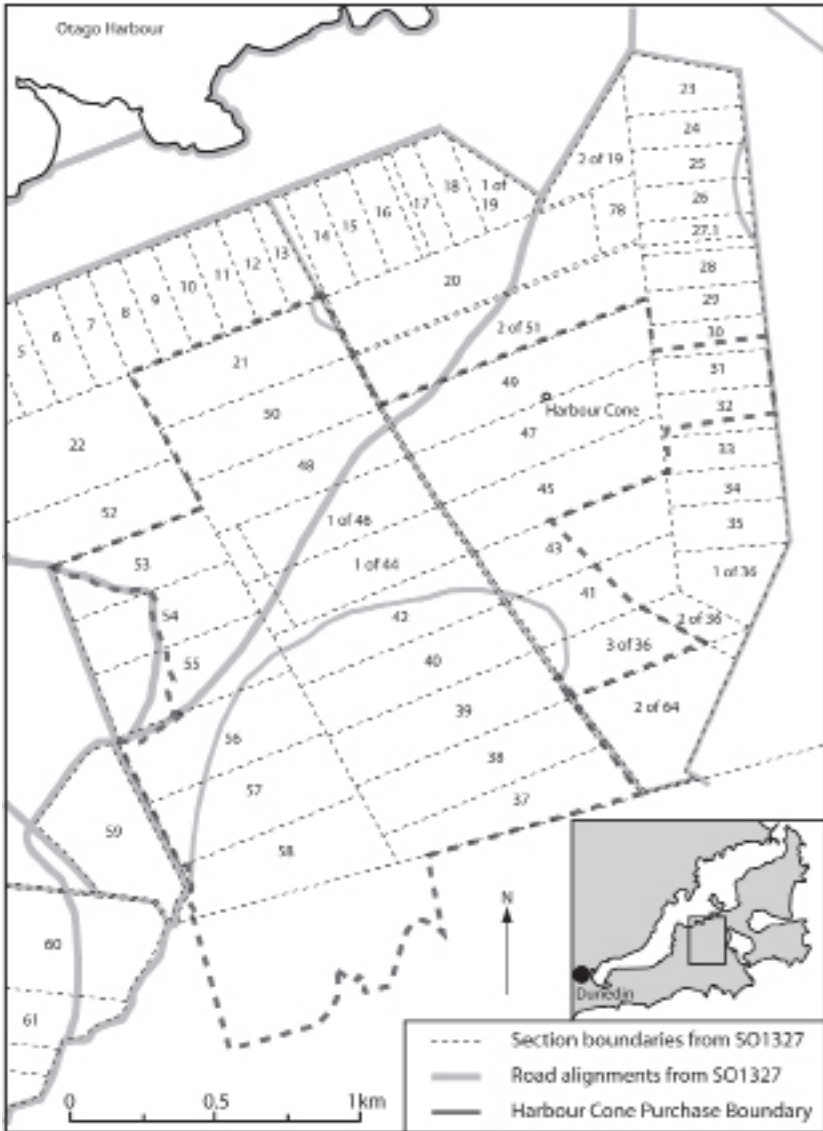


Figure 2. Harbour Cone area showing section boundaries and road alignments from the original 1863 survey (S.O. 1327).

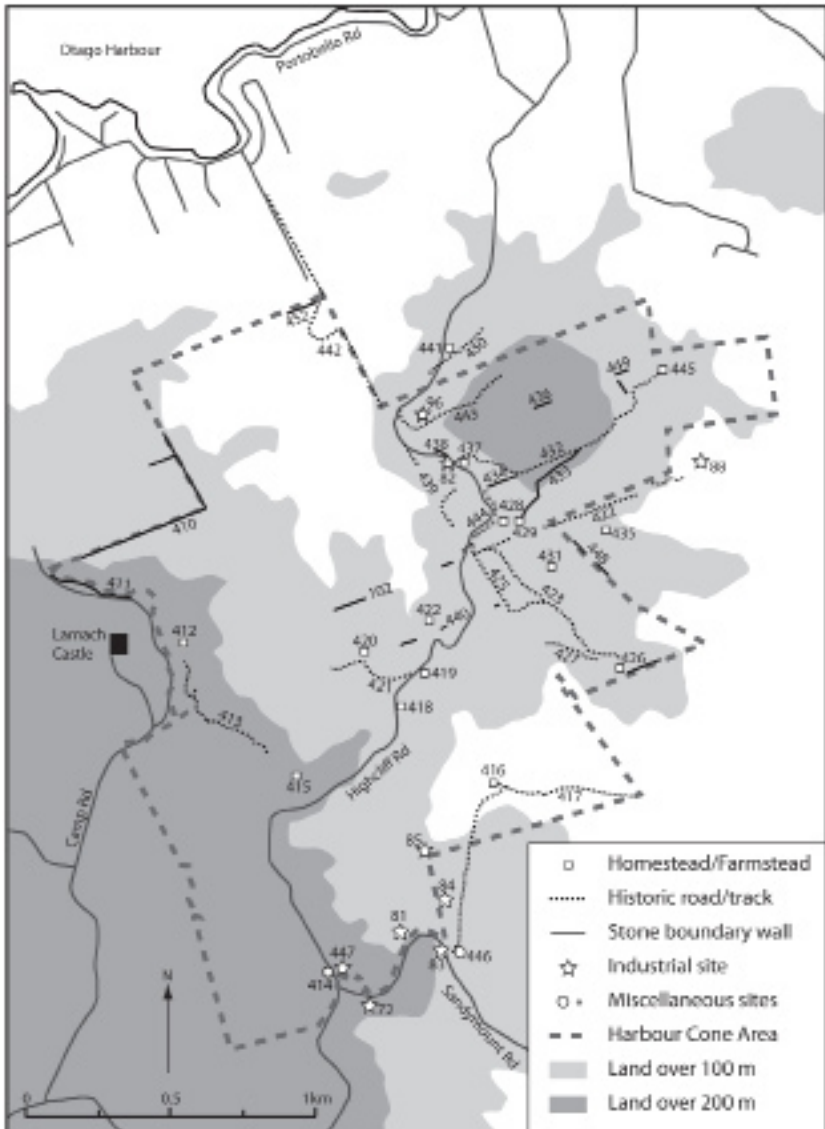


Figure 3. Archaeological sites in the Harbour Cone area, numbers prefixed by 144.

Site type	No.
Homesteads / farmsteads	18
Roads & tracks	11
Stone boundary walls	9
Industrial	9
Miscellaneous	3
Miscellaneous stone features	3

Table 1 Archaeological sites within the Harbour Cone area by type

Reading the archaeological landscape

There are many approaches that can be taken to describe and interpret an archaeological landscape. In this paper the archives and memories of one of Harbour Cone's early residents, William Leslie, are used to explore the ways in which the components of the Harbour Cone archaeological landscape were integrated. The two Leslie households in many ways represent a typical Otago Peninsula farmstead.

William Leslie, born on his father's farm in 1888, grew up on the slopes of Harbour Cone and recorded his memoirs of the area in the late 1960s (Leslie n.d.-a, n.d.-b). The second of these two sources (Leslie n.d.-b) is recorded in the voice of Otago historian Janet Angus, who interviewed William Leslie as they drove along Highcliff Road in 1967. Both sources once had a map associated with them, although the first of these now appears to have been lost. The sites associated with the Leslie families and William Leslie's narrative provide perhaps the best insight into the archaeological landscape at Harbour Cone, where sites such as roads, stone boundary walls, homesteads and farmsteads demonstrate on the ground the social networks that tied a small, isolated community together.

This William Leslie was the youngest of three generations in his family with the same name, his grandfather, Captain William Leslie, receiving a Crown Grant for land on the south side of the cone in the 1860s, where he lived until 1908. Hardwicke Knight recorded this site in 1968 for the Harbour Cone cheese factory (I44/82; Figure 3) that once operated alongside the first Leslie house.

The two Leslie family farms were typical of those found in the Harbour Cone and Sandymount area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The community William Leslie grew up in consisted principally of small family dairy holdings. As Figure 2 shows, Block II Otago Peninsula Survey

District was subdivided into small sections. Captain Leslie's land in section 47 consisted of 42 acres. This south-facing land was so steep and got so little sun that it "could hardly be called Dairying land" (Leslie n.d.-a). A stone wall forming the northern boundary for Section 47 (site I44/436) runs along the upper slope on the south face of Harbour Cone. A further stone section of the same boundary line extends down the eastern slope of the cone (I44/449). This wall once had a post and rail fence built above it; drilled totara posts still stand proud of the stone.



Figure 4. Captain William Leslie's house (I44/82), also the site of the Harbour Cone Cheese Factory. Photograph is dated 1913, showing later occupants. Otago Peninsula Museum.

The site of Captain William Leslie's farmstead sits below Highcliff Road on a terrace with a stand of pine trees below it, where Harbour Cone Cheese Factory opened on 5 November 1877 (Figure 4). This was formed by a consortium of local farmers not registered as a company "on account of the cost, money being scarce in those days" (Leslie n.d.-a). Land for the factory was leased from Leslie and a wooden building 14 ft x 24 ft was erected (Knight 1979: 60; Leslie n.d.). Most of the cheese was sold to a George Street retailer for around 7 pence per pound, "a good price in those days" (Leslie n.d.-a). The cheese maker, Edmund Ward, lived on another small holding further along Highcliff Road (I44/441), where flagstone flooring, a stone byre and drystone

walling still remain inside a macrocarpa windbreak (Higham 1986; Knight 1979). Edmund Ward was paid a weekly wage of £2 at the cheese factory, but his instructor received £5, while a local woman “was engaged to assist Mr. Ward at a salary of 6/- per week” (Leslie n.d.-a). However the factory was not long-lived; it was burnt down on 14 October 1881 during a severe bush fire, “driven by a north-westerly gale coming up from Broad Bay” (Knight 1979: 62). Many other households were affected or destroyed by the fire, and the cheese factory was not rebuilt. William Leslie remembered seeing the burnt out piles of the factory as a child, and the cheese press stored in his father’s house. When the factory burnt down at the beginning of summer the cows were in “full milk” and the farmers (or their wives), with no other choice, “turned to butter, made on the farm” as the only possible source of income (Leslie n.d.-a).

Captain William Leslie’s son (the second William Leslie) built his house on ten acres of land on the north-eastern slopes of Harbour Cone, a distance of perhaps a kilometre from his father’s house, and formed a “sledge track” by pick and shovel across his father’s land to reach it. Timber, iron and bricks were sledged to the house site. The track starts across the road from the site of the first Leslie house and cheese factory (I44/82), crossing a terrace where a cow shed and hen houses once stood (I44/437). As Leslie (n.d.-a) described it, “part of this road at the southern end was so steep that only a sledge could be used on it. There was never a wheeled vehicle on my father’s land other than a wheel barrow and in later years a bicycle”. After the steep beginning at the southern end, the track (I44/432) follows a gentler gradient to the eastern side of Harbour Cone. Along the way, several old totara posts still stand, drilled to run wire through them.

The second Leslie homestead (I44/445) was warm and sunny, compared with William’s grandfather’s steep, south-facing land that was very cold in winter. Archaeological evidence of the house site today consists of an area of paved flooring under a macrocarpa tree and other structural remains under a second large macrocarpa. The house the youngest William Leslie grew up in started as two rooms, each with a double brick chimney. There was a dairy, as “butter making was the sole means of making a living”; next to this “a good wash house with a built in enamelled boiler ... next to that was another room which housed a lot of odds and ends, even a chaff cutter turned by hand” and beyond this, on the “sunny side” a glass house with grape vines. The “cooking arrangements” consisted of a large metal oven, with a fire lit on top or sometimes underneath it. A “gantry” affair about 4 ft high, with hooks of various sizes over the fireplace also allowed for cooking in pots or on a girdle (Leslie n.d.-a). To make butter, the milk, warm from the cow, was poured into wide shallow galvanised iron pans, about 30 inches in diameter set on purpose built

shelves, “9 or 10 needed for about 12 cows”. After standing for about 12 hours, the cream was skimmed off with a metal skimmer and tipped into a “glazed earthenware vessel and allowed to stand until sour enough for churning” (Leslie n.d.-a). Skim milk was “used on the table, and I can well remember liking it too” (Leslie n.d.-a), and also used to rear calves and pigs. The churn had beaters inside, “turned by a handle on the outside, it was a man’s job”. After about 20 minutes churning the butterfat in the cream separated from the buttermilk, and the butter was taken out, salted and “worked” – put through wooden rollers or worked with butter pats, then put into a 1 lb mould with a swan impressed on it. The butter was then taken into Dunedin to be sold; one of Leslie’s (n.d.-a) earliest memories was “of my mother passing up a basket of butter to my father on horseback, bareback no saddle”. Family accounts record the prices butter made in the Dunedin markets. While prices could be as high as 1/- per lb, at other times it was only half this. It was a subsistence economy, with perhaps twelve cows, a flock of hens and a few pigs kept, some of which would be sold to the butcher when large enough, and gardens producing other food for the family. As the youngest William Leslie (n.d.-a) noted, “making a living from 50 or 60 acres was hard enough, but 10 or 12 NO”. However, “At the beginning of 1892 sales of butter ceased and in its place appeared ‘622 Galls Milk’” (Leslie n.d.-a). This marked the opening of the Sandymount creamery on Sandymount Road perhaps 5 kilometres from the second Leslie homestead.

This creamery (I44/72) was one of several operated by the Taieri and Peninsula Milk Company, where the milk was separated into cream and skim milk (this skim milk was much inferior to that separated by the pan method, according to William Leslie). Farmers took a share of skim milk back to the farm to feed pigs, while the cream was taken into a central factory in Dunedin where the milk company produced butter. The daily visit to the creamery must have been a focal point for interaction in the community (Figure 5), as well as taking a large amount of time out of the day, when transport was slow and sometimes difficult:

On my father’s farm on Harbour Cone the milk for the creamery had to be sledged over the shoulder of Harbour Cone from the North East side to the South West, a distance getting on to half a mile, the horse was then yoked into a spring cart and the milk then taken another 2 to 3 miles to the Sandymount Creamery, suppliers had to wait their turn to unload the milk etc then wait again to get their share of skimmed milk and return home the same way. (Leslie n.d.-a)

In the late nineteenth century four dairy factories were working on the Peninsula, the “hey-day ... of small farm pastoral activity” (Knight 1979: 96;

see also West n.d.). When the Sandymount creamery was operating at its peak, there were 30 dairy farms in the area, but by the close of this period only six remained as sheep farming gradually replaced the dairy herds. By 1967 when Leslie (n.d.-a) recorded his memoirs there were “at least 13 sites on and around Harbour Cone where there was at one time a house, the house belonging to a farm, today not one left, the land is now grouped into a much larger farm or farms carrying sheep”.



Figure 5. Sandymount Creamery (Taieri and Peninsula Milk Company). Hocken Library SO8-247d.

At Sandymount, other sites associated with the infrastructure of the former community can be found within a short distance of the concrete foundations of the creamery. These consist of the site of the school (I44/446, opened in 1873), the post office (I44/414, the site also marking the remains of a large cow byre, stable and homestead), a limestone crushing plant (I44/447) and the remains of three limekilns and an associated tramway (I44/81, I44/83, I44/84, I44/85), the first kiln built in 1865 (Hamel 2008; Middleton 2008). The kilns

are impressive stone structures that were amongst those recorded by Hardwicke Knight in 1968 and 1974 (as was the creamery).

From Highcliff Road, and from the sledge track that runs around the base of Harbour Cone to the second Leslie homestead, a complex network of old roads and stone walls can be seen (Figure 6; for example, sites I44/425, I44/423, I44/439 and I44/424). One of the roads leads to the site of an old gold mine (I44/88; one of Knight's 1968 sites, beyond the Dunedin City Council's purchase boundary), a late nineteenth century venture that brought few returns and was quickly abandoned. Another well-formed, stone-revetted and walled road (I44/423) leads to a stone enclosure and the stone ruins of another homestead (I44/426), the home of one of those involved in the early cheese-making venture.



Figure 6. A series of roads leading off Highcliff Road, some with stone revetting and drystone walling.

Not far from the first Leslie homestead and the site of the cheese factory the most complete stone ruins (I44/96) can be found in a complex of hedgerows, paths, stone walls, a cow byre and a formed stone-lined road (I44/443) leading over a knoll around the northern slopes of Harbour Cone. Knight recorded this site as a forge in 1974, for the blacksmith who once lived there and built

the house and forge in the 1870s out of an inferior local stone quarried from a nearby source. Below this house site, a bridle path (I44/442) now used as a walking track runs in a direct line downhill to Broad Bay. This path appears on the earliest of survey plans, drawn in as a straight line with no consideration for the steep topography. Its continuation (I44/439) can still be seen running across the landscape as a feature, but long incorporated into farmland.

In the valley between Harbour Cone to the north and Peggy's Hill at the south the remains of several other homesteads can be found, along with the stone boundary walls marking the first cadastral lines, often in excellent condition (for example, I44/102, I44/440). At one of these sites lived the local midwife, Mrs Arnott, who delivered William Leslie's twin brothers. As historian Janet Angus recorded, "to Arnott's house came the boy William Leslie at 2 a.m. on July 13th 1900 to fetch Mrs Arnott as a midwife for his mother. His brother Andrew was born at 4 a.m. (3.5 lbs) later 6 ft 6ins and a policeman. The other twin did not survive. Mrs Leslie never had a doctor for a confinement. The nearest doctor was at Port Chalmers." The Arnott homestead site (I44/420) is identifiable by a stand of large macrocarpa trees, with an old formed track (I44/421) leading to this from Highcliff Road. The ruins of the house itself, stone foundations and chimney remains, can be found inside the stand of trees. According to Hardwicke Knight (1974), David Arnott was William Larnach's stonemason.

The two Leslie family farms were humble subsistence economies, with money scarce. Above the site of the Arnott house, on the shoulder of Peggy's Hill the ruins of a grander series of farm buildings overlook the site of Captain William Leslie's small, probably only two-roomed house. This farmstead, accessed through a grand arched entranceway, consisted of a byre, stable, barn, and dairy, and along with the farm manager's house formed William Larnach's model farm (Figure 7). Larnach's castle, today one of Dunedin's tourist destinations, faces out to the west, on the other side of Peggy's Hill, with its back to the farm steading. William Larnach began buying land on the Peninsula in 1870 (Knight 1981; Snedden 1997; West n.d.) and received Crown Grants for sections in Block II Otago Peninsula Survey District in 1872 (LINZ OT 1/327). Larnach may have played a somewhat feudal role in the Harbor Cone and Sandymount community, where he employed local people not only to work on the construction of his castle and associated structures but also as servants within it. While Larnach was a notable figure in both local and national politics, and his "Camp" forms such a focal point on the Peninsula today, it is his neglected complex of farm steading that is of more interest to the archaeological and heritage values of the Harbour Cone area. This must once have formed the heart of Larnach's self-sufficient farming operations,

constructed as a model of the ideal dairy farm. Larnach himself is also likely to have constructed, or to have employed stone masons to build some of the stone boundary walls (I44/410, I44/452). He also pioneered the use of wire fencing. Evidence of some of these early wire fences remains on Larnach's former property as well as others in the area, where posts drilled to run wire through them can still be found.



Figure 7a. Lanarch's farm steading, showing buildings as illustrated in Hardwicke (1981: 25).

Conclusion

The land that lies within the Dunedin City Council's Harbour Cone purchase contains a total of 42 archaeological sites recorded to date, with a further nine related sites beyond the purchase boundaries. These sites constitute a relic landscape that provides evidence of field systems relating to the earliest cadastral survey of the area. Contained within this field system are a series of occupation sites associated with the first European settlement of the Otago Peninsula, including house sites, drystone walls marking cadastral boundaries, road networks, an early post office and sites relating to industrial activity such as lime kilns. Other sites associated with the infrastructure of such a community can be found close by, such as the Sandymount School and

the Sandymount Creamery. Archival sources associated with the area document the social networks that once linked these physical places, through intermarriage, industrial enterprises and the seasonal demands of farming. These sites are concerned not only with the small dairy farm of perhaps ten acres, but also the larger estate of William Larnach.



Figure 7b: Larnach's farm steading as it is today.

The Harbour Cone area contains a pristine archaeological landscape of historic occupation that remains untouched, while other parts of the Peninsula come under increasing pressure for development and change (for example, see Hamel 2006). The Dunedin City Council has taken an excellent first step in purchasing this unique part of the Otago Peninsula. It is to be hoped that the

Council's future plans for it will incorporate preservation and protection of this heritage landscape.

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