



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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NORTH OTAGO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

Michael M. Trotter

The first part of "North Otago Archaeological Sites" was published in Vol. 11, No. 3 of the Newsletter, 1968.

PART 2: MAPS S.136, S.137:

Although there are some well-known archaeological sites in the northern coastal portion of North Otago, no systematic survey has as yet been made in this area. One site, Tai Rua (Site No. S.136/1), has been thoroughly investigated but a comprehensive report on it is not yet available; another, Awamoa (S.136/4), has been much written about, and should be re-investigated using modern archaeological techniques.

Despoilation by fossicking is fairly light in this area as it is throughout the whole of North Otago. It has not become the problem it is in many other areas (e.g., the Kaikoura, Banks, and Otago Peninsulas), although some localized fossicking by a few individuals has occurred for limited periods in past decades. The present general attitude to archaeological sites in the district is doubtless largely due to the work of the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society.

Most of the information on the following sites is recorded in the site record files (held at Otago, Canterbury and Wellington), but some additional notes have been supplied by David Harrowfield.

Immediately south-west of Bridge Point is the Moa-hunter camp site which I have called Tai Rua (S.136/1: 467512), the recorded Maori name of the point. It was mainly a fishing camp and was situated on "fossil" sand dunes on the south side of a swamp which may possibly have been a creek at the time of occupation. The swamp has a corrosive action on bone and shell, and the midden layer extending into its margins gets progressively softer until organic remains are little more than a stain in the mud. Above a compound deposit of the early occupation are layers of dark stained sand, sparse wind-disturbed midden and earth. Unfortunately, part of the site is shallow and, where it lies within a farmer's paddock, upper levels have been disturbed by cultivation. Excavations which I made here between 1958 and 1961 with the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society were continued in 1960-62 by

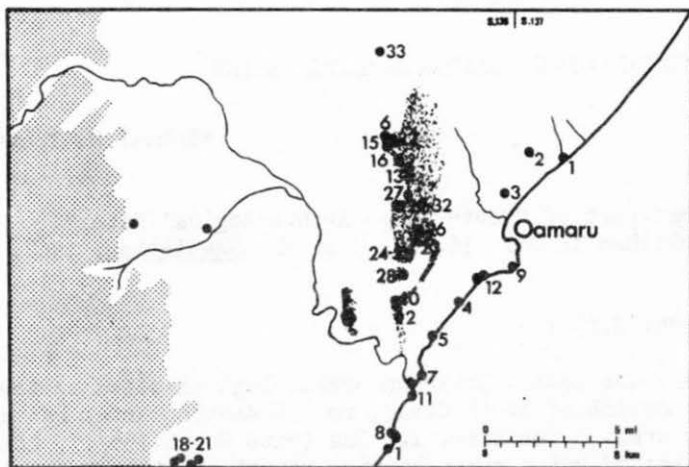


Fig. 1
"North Otago Archaeological Sites" M. M. Trotter

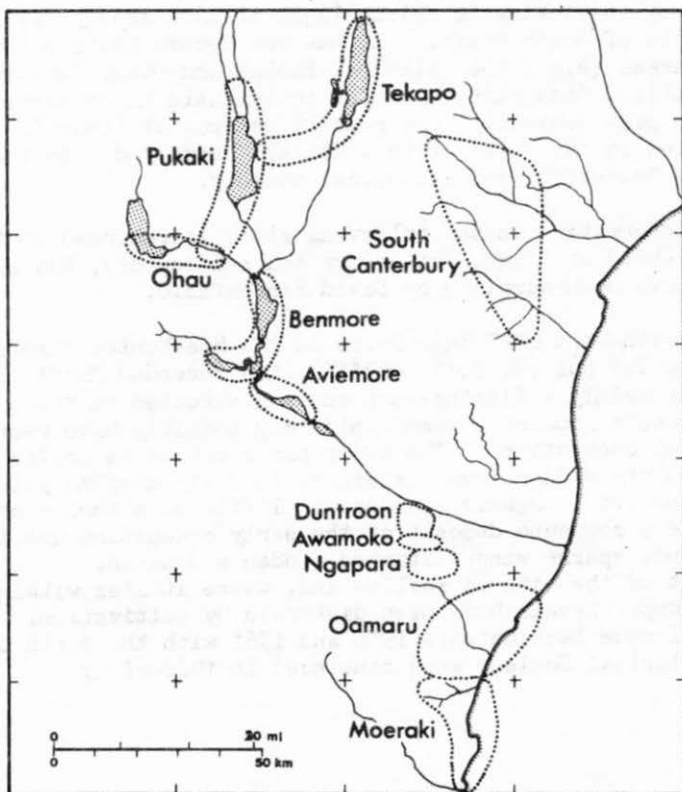
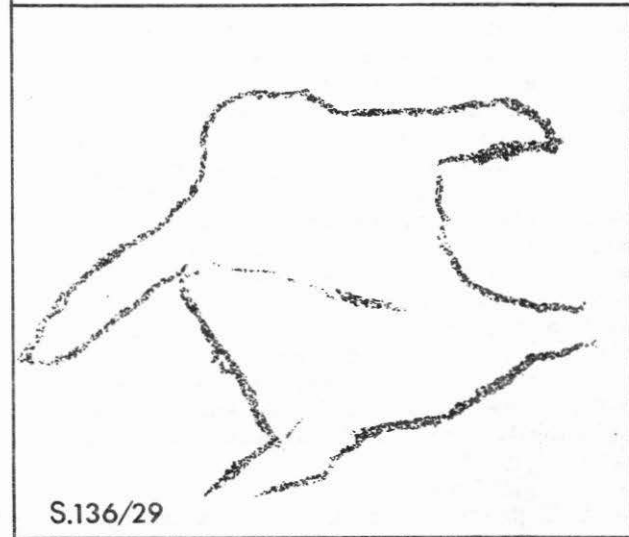
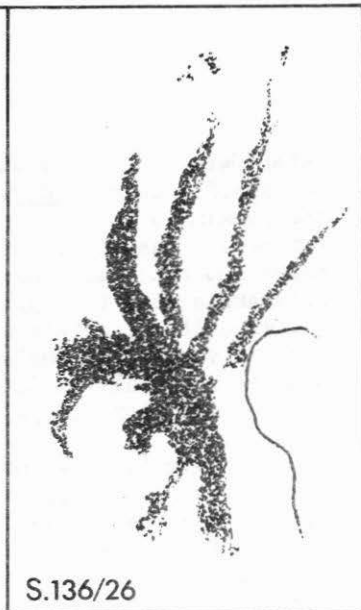
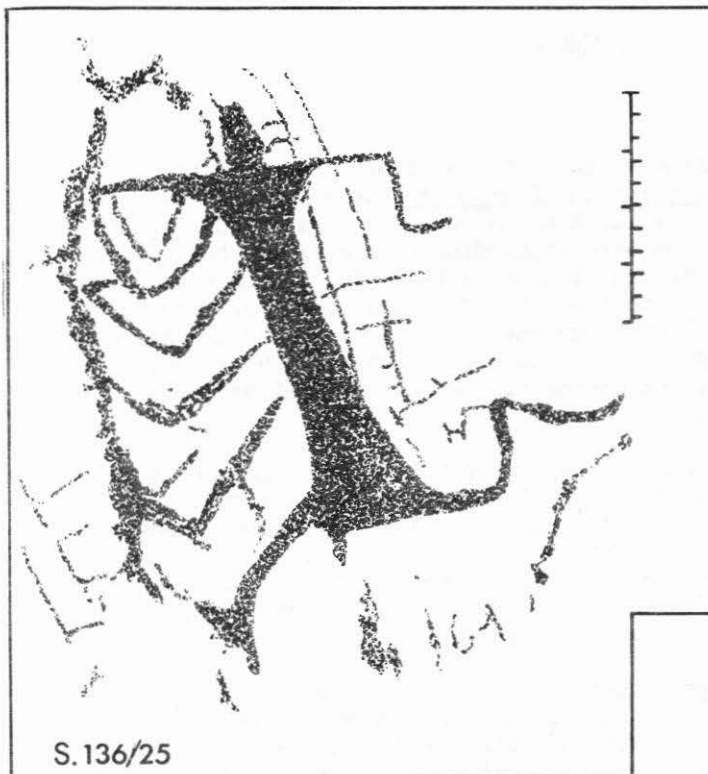


Fig. 3
"North Otago Archaeological Sites" M. M. Trotter



EXAMPLES OF ROCK DRAWINGS, NORTH OTAGO

Top left: composition of human with chevrons and linear design. Top right: subject not identifiable, faded and flaked on right. Bottom left: outline human. Bottom right: human form with linear design near head, flaked on bottom left. All to same scale; scale in inches and centimetres.

Peter Gathercole in a different part of the site. Bones of at least two species of moa (Euryapteryx and Pachyornis) were found as well as the remains of three other extinct birds out of a total bird list of fifteen. Quantities of moa bone, including two necks and heads with bones and tracheal rings in position of articulation, show that there were ample moas to supply both flesh for food and bones for artefacts. The majority of artefacts were concerned with fishing, and hooks are of several varieties, including some with barbs (Trotter, 1965c: 349-51). Radiocarbon analyses date the occupation between A.D. 1119⁺³³ and 1465⁺³² (Trotter, 1967a).

Between Tai Rua and All Day Bay which is the first lagoon to the north, several indications of occupation, such as burnt stones and flakes, have been revealed by cultivation. Most artefactual remains however lie between grid reference S.136/471522 and S.136/473519 and are scattered amongst early European settlement refuse. On the lagoon edge a concentration of flakes and three unfinished adzes found in 1958-59 indicated a workshop area (S.136/8).

Although I would expect there to be - or have been - a large site at the mouth of the Kakanui River, I know of only small sites here. One is to the south of the mouth (S.136/11) and comprises a lens of charcoal and burnt stones exposed in a cliff. Several artefacts have been found near by. An occupational deposit on the north bank has been reported by David Harrowfield. In 1957 he recorded several species of mollusc shells, and bones of seal, dog and moa, but the deposit has since been covered by beach gravel. At Kakanui Point (S.136/7) north of the river mouth, Walter Mantell recorded a Maori pa (probably a small village) in November 1848. Today in the sandhills a layer of midden material is visible in section in the beach bank about four feet below the surface. This contains shells, fish-bone, moa-bone fragments and burnt stones, together with beach shells and stones. There have been a number of artefacts and midden traces found in this locality but most of the latter have been destroyed by intensive cultivation. Little over a mile north of the Kakanui township was a small site on the side of the road (S.136/5), now mostly destroyed by road works and the cultivation and removal of top-soil for use in glass-houses. In 1958 I noted ovens, sparse shell and fish-bone midden, and fragments of moa bone (Pachyornis). This latter does not necessarily indicate that the moa was eaten here.

The name "Awamoa" was given to a small stream south of Oamaru by Walter Mantell to commemorate his discovery of a Moa-hunter site there in 1847 (S.136/4). The site has been described by Buick (1931: 115-123)

and reviewed by Duff (1956: 250), but over a century of fossicking, the changing course of the stream, and latterly road works, have so altered it that it is now almost unrecognizable from the early descriptions. A layer of midden can still be found, though, and ten years ago it was noted to contain the following:

Flakes of argillite, orthoquartzite, chalcedony, jasperoid and obsidian. Shell of catseye (Lunella), pipi (Amphidesma), paua (Haliotis), and fragmentary moa-egg. Bones of little blue, white flippered and crested penguins (Eudyptula minor, E. albosignata, and E. pachyrhynchus), pigeon (Hemiphaga novaeseelandiae), Stewart Island shag (Phalacrocorax c. chalconotus), moa (Euryapteryx and some Emeus), dog (Canis), rat (Rattus) and fish. (Bone identifications by R. J. Scarlett.)

The next recorded coastal site is a midden deposit on both sides of the mouth of the Kaiararo Stream (S.136/12). It is up to six inches thick where exposed, and contains charcoal, burnt stones, flakes of chalcedony, greywacke, obsidian and orthoquartzite, shells of catseye (Lunella), tuangi (Chione), paua (H. iris), pipi (Amphidesma) and limpet (Cellana), bones of moa (fragmentary), dog, seal, fish and small birds including mollymawk (Thalassarche cauta), spotted shag (Phalacrocorax punctatus) and crested penguin (Eudyptula pachyrhynchus). Some two hundred yards south-west of this site Harrowfield found some moa bone fragments, tracheal rings, a flake of orthoquartzite and one of greywacke - presumably a separate site.

Scattered Talus midden - shell, burnt stones, bones - occurs above and on the bank behind Bushy Beach on Cape Wanbrow (S.136/9). Local residents have found several artefacts here including greywacke, chalcedony and orthoquartzite flakes, a grindstone, a sinker and a quadrangular argillite adze. This must be the site mentioned by Stevenson (1947: 77) where moa bones and egg-shell have been found. The site probably extends into paddocks behind a shelter belt of pine trees on the top of the bank; "ovens" are said to have been ploughed up here.

North of Oamaru three small sites have been reported (S.136/3, S.137/1-2) where occupational material has been found, but few details are available.

Inland an important row of sites follow outcropping limestone (marked on sketch map. The shaded area on the left of the map represents land over 1,000 feet above sea level.). These are all rock shelters and most contain art work. The southernmost are several at

Reidston where remains of black drawings have been noted.

The next is Ototara Glen (S.136/2), the name of the locality recorded by Walter Mantell in 1848. It comprises of a small overhanging shelter with sub-surface midden spread over an area of about 100 square yards on a small terrace. There is evidence of only one period of Polynesian occupation, and artefacts were of types common some five or six centuries ago. Bones of 25 species of birds (Trotter, 1965 a, b), including moa (Euryapteryx), extinct goose (Cnemiornis) and extinct swan (Chenopsis), were found with the cultural material. A radiocarbon date of A.D. 1422±32 is in keeping with the other evidence.

Shelters Nos 10 and 22 to 31 all contain black drawings, mostly not in a very good state of preservation. In the majority, the subjects are not clearly recognizable because of flaking and weathering of the rock or, in some cases, because of dark staining on the surface. Those from S.136/10 have been previously figured (Harrowfield and Trotter, 1966; the left-hand object in Fig. 1 has not been shown in its correct position), and a few of the clearer drawings in the others are reproduced here. Although no direct evidence of age is available, the similarity of these drawings to those in sites of known age would suggest that they were drawn about 500 years ago.

During the modification of a small limestone cave (S.136/13) at Gays Quarry (where building stone is obtained) to make an explosives magazine, a number of artefacts were found. Some drawings are still visible on rock nearby.

Petroglyphs of any sort are fairly rare in the South Island but two have been reported in this district. One (S.136/16), which has been described and figured by Turner (1966), comprises a design of seven single-line spirals and other lines engraved on the back of a small shelter. The other was discovered in 1968 and is extremely faint (S.136/32), a line and two spirals or sets of concentric circles being barely discernable.

Both red and black drawings occur on sheltered rock surfaces nearer Enfield (Sites S.136/6, 15, 22) and exploration of this area is planned by the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society, who have been responsible for most of the recent rock shelter investigations in North Otago.

There is a likelihood of a few more sites being found on the coast, and the number of rock shelters could probably be doubled. Ovens have not received much attention in site recording; some have been reported near Government Hill (S.136/18-21) and Kauru Hill (unnumbered), and many farmers know of their occurrence on their properties. Reports of artefact finds, too, would be worth following up as the distribution is an indicator of activity if not of occupational sites. In one such instance (Site S.136/33) a number of flakes and cores has been found in one area on a farm, and the material, orthoquartzite, and size of the flakes suggests Moa-hunter origin.

THE REST OF NORTH OTAGO AND SOUTH CANTERBURY

Intensive site recording surveys were made near Ngapara during 1967-69 by the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society, and in the Awamoko Valley by the Otago Anthropological Society in 1967. Reports on both of these have been published (Trotter and McCulloch, 1969; Trotter, 1967).

A brief survey was made of shelter sites in the Duntroon area by G. Peterson (1962) who recorded several sites besides those described by Stevenson in 1947. This work was continued by Fomison (1962b), members of the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society and the present writer. This area contains some of the best-known rock drawing sites in North Otago, with both prehistoric and contact period art work.

The development of hydro-electric power schemes in the upper Waitaki River area and in the MacKenzie country have created an impetus for site recording and investigation since 1957. Seven sites were located in the Aviemore basin, and the total at Benmore is now 17 (Trotter, 1970), several of which were thoroughly investigated by W. Ambrose and F. Davis (Ambrose, 1970). An Otago Anthropological Society team surveyed the Ohau area (Geeson, 1968), and Canterbury Museum teams found seven sites at Pukaki (Trotter, 1969) and 13 at Tekapo (in 1970).

In South Canterbury A. Fomison has done much field work, mostly in the early 1960's, locating and recording a large number of rock shelters (Fomison, 1962a, b; pers. com.).

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