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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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NORTH OTAGO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES

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Part 1: Map S.146 Moeraki:

Maori sites in North Otago, the triangular area bounded by the Horse Range and Kakanui Mountains on the South and West, the Pacific Coast on the East, and the Waitaki River in the North, cover a long period of occupation from early Moa-hunter to post-European. There is a great variety, too, in site types - numerous small fishing villages, large Moa-hunting camps, quarries for stone and moa-bone, terraced pa, and rock shelters. Apart from a quadrant in the southern apex of this triangle no comprehensive survey has been made of the pre-historic evidence available, and this record is therefore of necessity somewhat sketchy. Only half a dozen sites have been the subject of archaeological research and fewer still reports have been published.

The first site north of the Shag River is at Shag Point (New Zealand Archaeological Association site number S.146/5 (See Fig. 1). Occupational material, for the most part sparsely distributed in a loamy matrix, occurs over the whole of the small flat-topped promontory. The site was discovered in the early 1950's when turf was removed to transplant on bowling greens, etc. Investigations have shown it to have been a small unfortified village mainly concerned with fishing with an artefactual assemblage which places the culture intermediate to Moa-hunter and Classic (Trotter, 1965a: 352-353). There is a large quantity of worked siltstone on the site, much hammered, sawn and ground into various abrasive tools, and the only likely source of this stone I have been able to find nearby is on the northern bank of the Shag River where lumps could easily be picked up from an outcrop. In 1843 Edward Shortland noted that Maoris used this local "freestone" for grinding greenstone (Shortland, 1851: 126, 188). This site has been radiocarbon dated as A.D. 1516±50; a report on the excavation here will appear in the Records of the Canterbury Museum 1969.

Twenty-five chains further north from Shag Point along the coast a small inlet called Mata Kaea or Boat Harbour has signs of occupation in the banks of the Shag Point road (S.146/28). Local residents have found adzes in this vicinity, and Fredrick Tuckett (Hocken, 1898: 210) wrote that in 1844 there were a few families of Maoris living here engaged in fishing and potato growing. Shortland (1851: 124) also visited this place in 1843 but did not mention any village, and Stevenson (1947: 94) says it was abandoned in 1845. During the height of the coal-mining industry in this district last century, coal was taken by barge from Boat Harbour, and the construction of railway, road and other associated works have largely

destroyed the site.

In a clay bank on the south side of the road leading from the Main South Road to Shag Point can be seen in section a small amount of shell and fish bone midden at the base of a filled in depression (S.146/27). Further north at the southern end of Katiki Beach is a place where Tuckett met a party of Maoris curing fish in 1844 (Hocken, 1898: 216). The site is meant to be in the vicinity of a small creek called Whataparaerae (Stevenson, 1947: 93) and it is mentioned in traditional history (Beattie, 1920: 135). In 1879 a Maori protest was made to the Railway Department that the Shag Point branch line cut through an ancient burial ground here (Taylor, 1950: 104) but their claim was discounted. I have been unable to find any archaeological evidence of occupation here, but the finding of a Cook medal in the vicinity by a Matthew Andrews many years ago, makes the information worth recording (S.146/33).

Part-way along Katiki Beach is a tidal reef and near it a sparse midden (S.146/25) and a few hundred yards inland south of the reef is an oven depression in the corner of a paddock. Further north still, near the north bank of Back Creek, the remains of several ovens have been ploughed up. There must have been many ovens and sparse middens throughout the district now destroyed by farming operations and public works. Two other known shell middens and an oven occur up Trotters Creek (S.146/24) but are now barely discernable. A large double oven is visible in section in the bank of this Creek (S.146/17), and another, now destroyed, used to be at the entrance to the picnic green at Trotters Gorge Domain. Between these, and visible from the Horse Range Road, is the Swaggers Cave (S.146/9) (Fig. 2) where a trial excavation in 1958 showed a thin Maori occupational layer of shells, bird and tuatara bones, charcoal and porcellanite flakes, overlain by a thicker layer of European refuse, largely from the "Swagger" era which ended a few decades ago.

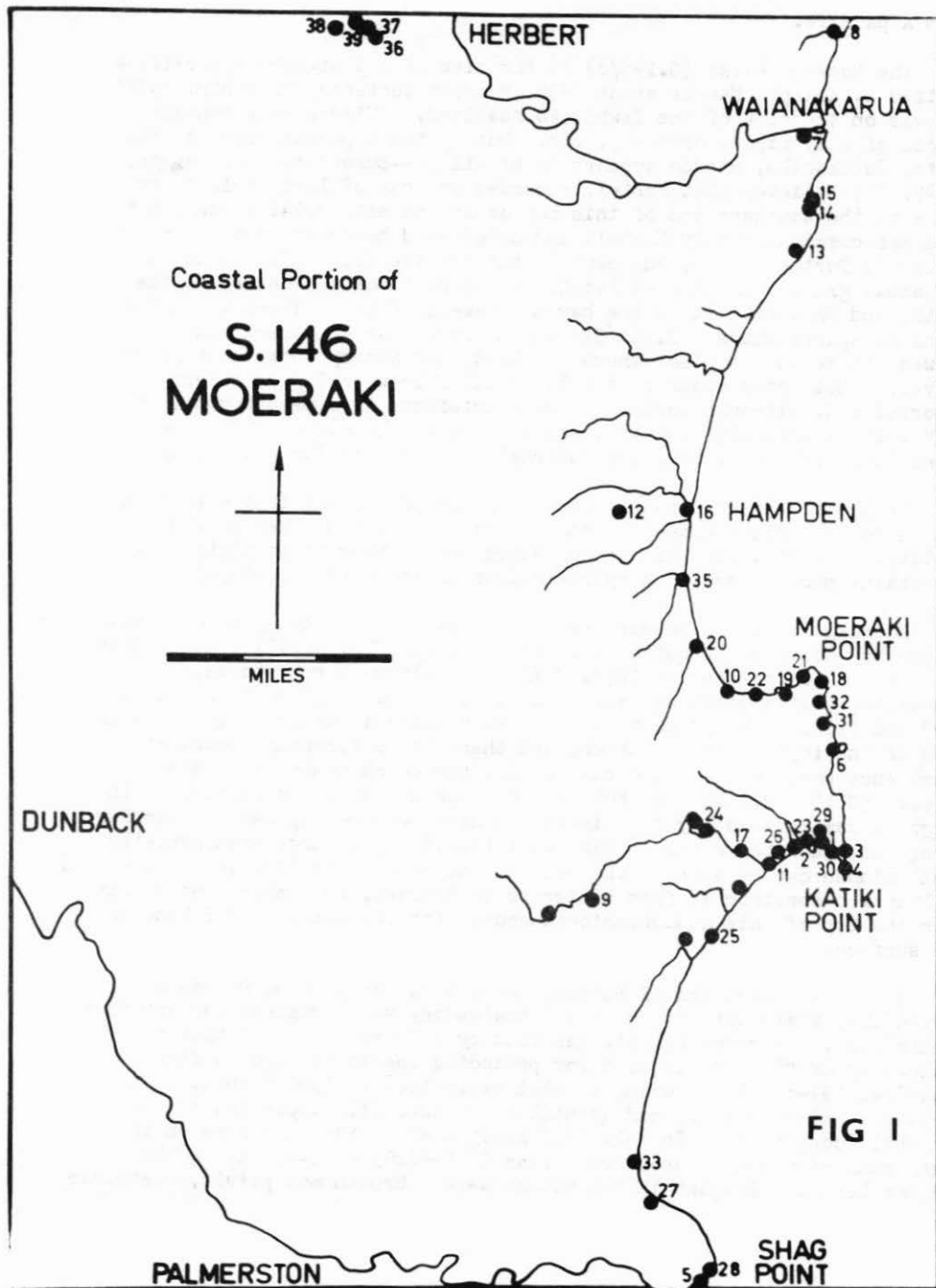
Near the mouth of Trotters Creek on the north side at the margin of a farmer's paddock and the sand dune, firestones, shell and bone midden with odd moa bones and flake tools have been much disturbed by cultivation and wind erosion (S.146/11). Further along the sand dune to the north, a small patch of loam with dune on three sides was ploughed up to grow potatoes in 1953 and sparse midden - shell, burnt stones and human bone - was revealed (S.146/26). Between 1920 and 1930 numerous human bones were found in this area, and several artefacts have been recovered from the sand hills and surrounding paddocks. Some of these are in the Otago Museum's Murdock and Teviotdale collections. On the whole they suggest Classic origin.

At the northern end of Katiki Beach is the Waimataitai Lagoon, round the edges of which a number of artefacts have been found over the last thirty or forty years - most of these are, as far as I can gather, in private collections. On the south side of the Lagoon mouth beneath several feet of sand are three occupational layers interspaced with clean sand. The top two are fairly sparse bone, shell, burnt stone and charcoal

midden with odd artefacts such as small flakes, sinkers, hammers, and cut bone, which are in no way culturally distinctive. The bottom layer, however, is much thicker and has yielded material of late Moa-hunter type (S.146/2). It has been radiocarbon dated early Fourteenth Century. An account of investigations here has been published (Trotter, 1955: 295-303), the cultural traits discussed (Trotter, 1965a: 351-52) and the faunal remains described (Trotter, 1965b: 176-178). Artefactual material is in the Otago Museum's Trotter Collection. On the opposite site of the mouth of an oven and scattered midden (S.146/23) contained shells, burnt stones, indistinctive artefacts, and bones of man, fish, seal, and Dinornis torosus, (though I suspect the latter is a secondary association). When the valley north-west of this site was ploughed about 1953, numerous pieces of chalcedony could be seen on the surface. This was a natural occurrence and may have been a source of the large quantities of chalcedony flakes in the Waimataitai Moa-hunter site, though there are several other occurrences of it along the coastline between Katiki Point and Hampden Beach (e.g., S.146/457318).

The next site to the north is Black Sandy Bay (S.146/1) where both burials and midden have been found amongst the sand hills. Like those of the Katiki Beach sand hills, these occupational remains seem to have been Classic as far as I can tell from descriptions by the finders, though most of the material has been lost or destroyed. In the cliff-top behind the bay are traces of midden, mostly fish bones and flakes of porcellanite, but with some shell, bird bone and obsidian (S.146/29). Porcellanite (a baked mudstone), occurs in several places between Katiki and Moeraki, and was used extensively on many sites throughout Northern Otago for flaked knives and scrapers. The main source is in the cliff face at the junction of Black Sandy Bay and Katiki Point (S.146/30). Here the stone is white to green in colour, but black and other colours of porcellanite or buchite which have poorer flaking qualities were obtainable from several localities nearer to Moeraki (S.146/458313, 457317, 456318, 453340, and 451347). A green chalcedonic quartz, plasma, which was used for flake tools on at least two local sites was obtained from S.146/453340 near some baked mudstone.

Katiki Point itself was a large terraced pa (S.146/4) probably occupied about the mid-Eighteenth Century and traditionally Ngaitahu. A considerable amount of fossicking has been done here and some of the material is housed in the Dominion Museum (Bollons Collection) and the Otago Museum (Teviotdale and Murdock Collections). In 1954-56 and again in 1964 I carried out small investigations of parts of the site, being helped by members of the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society on the latter occasion. An account of the investigations has been published (Trotter, 1967b). All cultural material obtained is Classic - greenstone adzes in particular - and is in the Trotter Collection at the Otago Museum. In the valley immediately north of Katiki Point (S.146/3) curio hunters in 1956 dug up bones of dog, moa and other birds, flakes of orthoquartzite, chalcedony and porcellanite (both Katiki and Moeraki varieties), fish-hook pieces and other artefacts, none of which are culturally similar to those



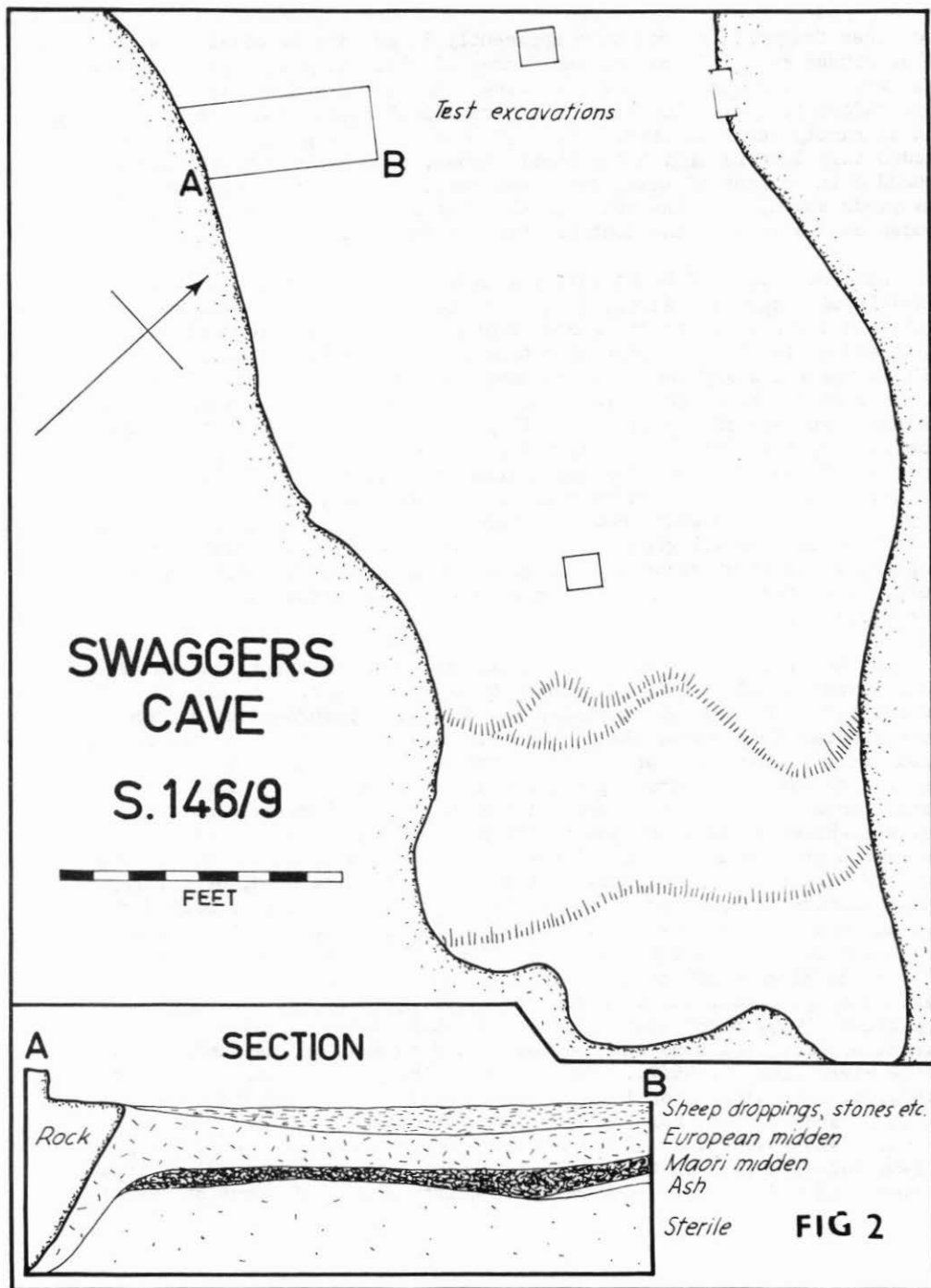
from a pa site.

The Moeraki Kaika (S.146/6) is the site of a post-European village settled by Kaiapoi Maoris about 1838 (Moeraki Centenary Souvenir, 1936) and was on the neck of the Tawhiroko headland. Midden here contains pieces of clay pipes, crockery, etc., but on the adjacent beach to the south, Tutakahiku, midden appears to be all pre-European. Stevenson, (1947: 87) believes that Mantell recorded an area of land enclosed by rocks at the southern end of this bay as an ancient burial ground, but on a map commissioned by Mantell and dated 23rd November 1848 the burial ground is further north, adjacent to the village (Fig. 3). This same map shows graves on Tikoraki Point, the first minor promontory to the north, and Matuatiki Pa in the bay north-west of it. There are a few signs of sparse midden (S.146/31) in the bank near the creek mouth between these two, a place where the Lands and Survey Department record graves. Moa bones occur in the loess cliff between Tawhiroko and Tikoraki and, although worked moa bone artefacts have been found at the Kaika, it is unlikely that this was a source. In common with other bones found in loess, they are generally too brittle for artefactual use.

In the foreshore directly west of Maukiekie Island in the next bay can be found various grades of chalcedonic quartz and baked mudstone, at least some of which was used on sites in the Moeraki locality. A few chains north there is a sparse midden in the bank (S.146/32).

Moeraki Point is the north-eastern-most point on the peninsula and in the bay south of it quite an extensive midden (S.146/18) with an oven was exposed in the bank in 1957. Midden included burnt stones, haematite, half a dozen species of shells, and bones of seal, penguin, bird and fish. The present-day Moeraki village in Orereto Bay is on the site of the 1836 whaling station, and there is no European record of a Maori encampment here. The bank behind the beach contains midden however (S.146/19), and the bulk of the Jack Edmonston Collection in the Otago Museum is said (by his sister) to have been dug up here. Further along the beach below the Moeraki Hall (S.146/22) a large predominantly shell midden can be seen in the base of the bank. In 1876 an unsuccessful railway was constructed from Hillgrove to Moeraki, the embankment running over the top of this midden, which accounts for its being so far beneath the surface.

At the southern end of Hampden Beach is a small knob, Pukemata (S.146/10), where both moa bone and chalcedony were obtained for artefact manufacture. Herries Beattie was told by a Maori informant that the chalcedony or "flint" was used for producing sparks to light a fire (Beattie, 1944: 17). During a trial excavation in 1951 I obtained a small greenstone chisel, and quantities of naturally deposited moa bone and chalcedony here. In July 1955 heavy seas uncovered a site on the south bank of the Waiwherowhero stream (S.146/20) part-way along the Hampden Beach. Present in the midden were a broken moa pelvis, vertebrae



and other fragments of moa bone apparently in primary association with other midden material, ovens, and flakes of chalcedony and porcellanite. The owner of the land told me two fish-hooks had been found there a few days before my visit, but this is a "tradition" associated with many sites, and is rarely substantiated. By 1957 most of the exposed midden had eroded away leaving only a few burnt stones, charcoal and bone fragments embedded in a floor of heavy clay, and remains of two or three ovens a few yards south. At the mouth of the next stream to the north, sparse midden can be seen in the southern bank (S.146/35).

Numerous signs of Maori activity have been found in and around the township of Hampden. Adzes, ranging in type from 1A and hogbacked (of argillite and basalt) to small greenstone 2A, have been ploughed up on flats and hills without apparent pattern. Beattie (1954: 121) records a Maori track leaving the coast at Hampden. The largest site is a moa-hunter camp on the beach between the Little and Big Kuri streams and on the northern bank of the latter (S.146/16). A salvage excavation was made here by the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society in 1965 (Trotter, 1967a) and the site was radiocarbon dated as early Fifteenth Century. Near the western boundary of the township, an area of about a quarter of an acre scattered with burnt stones and shells was ploughed up in 1956 and a small greenstone adze found (S.146/12). Just north of Hampden, an apparent secondary burial was found in 1965, comprising a skull, tibia and fibula of a female aged about 45 years, with a greenstone adze (S.146/33).

In the vicinity of the Bluff and Waianakarua are several known sites, and a number of adzes have been found by local farmers. On the flat at the south-eastern side of the Bluff (S.146/13), a ploughed out midden shows scattered moa bone, shell, burnt stones and artefacts on the surface. Immediately behind the beach in the first cove to the north is the "Greenstone Lagoon", a small pond, where, it is said, the ? local Maoris threw their valuables when attacked. This story is common to many well-known sites along the northern Otago coast and has not in any one case been substantiated. There is midden (seal bones, shells, some fish and bird bones, artefacts) in the vicinity of the pond, especially beneath native trees to the north (S.146/14). The next bay, Boat Harbour, also has midden of a similar nature behind the beach (S.146/15); both these have been dug by curio hunters. On the southern bank of the Waianakarua River mouth an important moa-hunter site, with an area of at least 20 by 30 yards, has been exposed by ploughing. At the time of inspection (1959) burnt stones, flakes of chalcedony, greywacke, ortho-quartzite, etc., moa bone and charcoal could be seen on the surface and in the river bank (S.146/7). The owner of the property has a number of artefacts, including several large flaked adzes and one ground adze from the site, and more are held by a private collector in Oamaru. On both the north and south banks of the mouth of Bewley Creek (S.146/8) ploughing in 1960 revealed (and at the same time almost totally destroyed) an area of ovens and midden. There were about thirty groups of burnt stones with

decomposed charcoal scattered over an area of at least three acres. Some had shell and bone fragments associated with them. There were two mussel shell middens on the southern bank, together with odd flakes of chalcedony, obsidian and orthoquartzite (cf. Nenthorn source - Trotter, 1961). On the northern bank the only faunal remains were mussel shell keratin, probable moa crop stones and one fragment of moa bone. The soil is slightly swampy and presumably other remains have dissolved.

Nearly all the sites described here are on or near the coast. Only few have been recorded inland - there are records of some ovens and other occupational evidence near Government Hill, south-west of Herbert (S.146/36 - 39), and there have been reports of an occupational cave, containing Maori rock drawings, in this vicinity.

Further inland still are reports, unsubstantiated, of ovens and other sites in the Dunback locality, twelve miles up the Shag River.

These areas in particular will require investigation before we know much of the inland utilization of the S.146 district.

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