



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



This document is made available by The New Zealand
Archaeological Association under the Creative Commons
Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

PRELIMINARY NOTES ON A COASTAL MOA-HUNTER SITE
AT WARRINGTON, OTAGO

Brian Allingham
Seacliff
Otago

In June 1982, a survey of the Warrington area undertaken by the writer located an early site (I44/177) containing midden, moa bones and artefacts typical of the moa-hunter period. The site is midway between the estuary and the sea, where a large sandspit flanking Blueskin Bay meets a clay-loess rise to the north. The area is now partly covered with buildings and a pine plantation. Exposed evidence consisting mainly of blackened sand, heat shattered stones, shell and bone midden, and artefacts encompasses an area of approximately 1.5 hectares. Most of the site is on stabilised dunes, the remainder extends on to the northern clay-loess rise which was probably originally in forest.

Surface collections by the writer since June 1982 have recovered prehistoric material indicating a fairly wide range of activities over much of the site. This material was obtained from previously disturbed deposits. Where exposed, stratigraphy exhibits one prehistoric cultural layer, more or less exposed to the surface, but the depth of this and nature of underlying stratigraphy throughout the site has yet to be determined.

Artefacts recovered (Plate 1) include the blade portion of a triangular sectioned basalt adze rough-out (Duff Type 4A), a rectangular sectioned black argillite adze poll, broken portions of oval and sub-rectangular sectioned phonolite adze rough-outs, and flakes of local stone varieties indicating 'on-site' adze manufacture. Cortex removal flakes are quite common. Basalt was obtainable within .5 km of the site, the phonolite was collected from cliff outcrops and boulder beaches at Doctors Point, 2 km from the site and adjacent to the south end of Warrington Spit. Finished adze fragments occur in local stone, and in introduced varieties including black and grey argillites from northern sources. Other stone artefacts consist of hammers and abraders, silcrete (orth quartzite) blades, flakes and cores, and flakes of chalcedony and jasperoid. Several cockle shells with central perforations, and a section of unworked fossil Dentalium giganteum were recovered. Pieces of worked moa bone include an awl.

Midden remains consisted of moa bones (mainly from medium sized species) - vertebrae, phalanges, claws, limb portions; and a few bones of sea mammal, small bird, fish and dog. Shell midden was mainly cockle and pipi, but included tuatua, oyster,

trough shells, mudsnails, paua, whelk, Cook's turban and mussel, reflecting exploitation of the adjacent estuarine, sea beach and rocky shore environments.

During June 1983, an unfinished triangular-section minnow lure shank in petrified wood (15.6 cm long and weighing 100 gm) was found exposed on a scoured bank in a disturbed area of the site comprising a disused modern rubbish dump. This dump had been recently disturbed by a bottle collector and an Historic Places Trust permit (1983/11) was obtained to extract prehistoric cultural material from the disturbed spoil. Artefacts (Plate 2) included a rectangular sectioned basalt adze broken at the poll, several adze fragments, broken preforms and flakes of local basalts and phonolites, blade portions and flakes of silcrete, chalcedony flakes and a core, grey and brown chert flakes, and abraders of schist and mudstone. A piece of black slate sawn at one end and polished on both sides to a straight fairly sharp edge is possibly a knife or 'ulu' portion. Moa toe joints and numerous limb fragments along with previously listed shell species were representative of the middens.

Based on artefact types and midden recovered, I44/177 was occupied during the moa-hunter, or Archaic, period of New Zealand prehistory, and probably from an early time during that period in the South Island. An early site in Warrington was described by Reynolds and mentioned by Hamilton eighty to ninety years ago. Reynolds (1894:35) stated the site had, "some very interesting stone floors of Native construction" - the purpose of which could not be explained. Of present note is the frequent occurrence of fairly large, flat, smooth-sided volcanic rocks (many with flaked and bruised edges) scattered around the site and often incorporated in European structures. While locally available, the fairly high numbers evident over the site area may be more than co-incidental. Reynolds added, "the quantity of moa bones, moa eggs, and moa bone implements found here proves it to have been a settlement of the moa hunters or very ancient inhabitants of New Zealand." Hamilton (1904:24) recovered bones of takahe and extinct swan at Warrington, but no further details are given. Since these publications, the site location apparently became obscure, judging by the dearth of information and absence from the site records. It now seems fairly certain that I44/177 is the site referred to by Reynolds and Hamilton and from where typically early artefacts such as 1A and 4A adzes, harpoons, minnow lure shanks, slate knife portions, an unfinished bone 'reel' unit and silcrete blades, provenanced "Warrington" in the Otago Museum collection, were found.

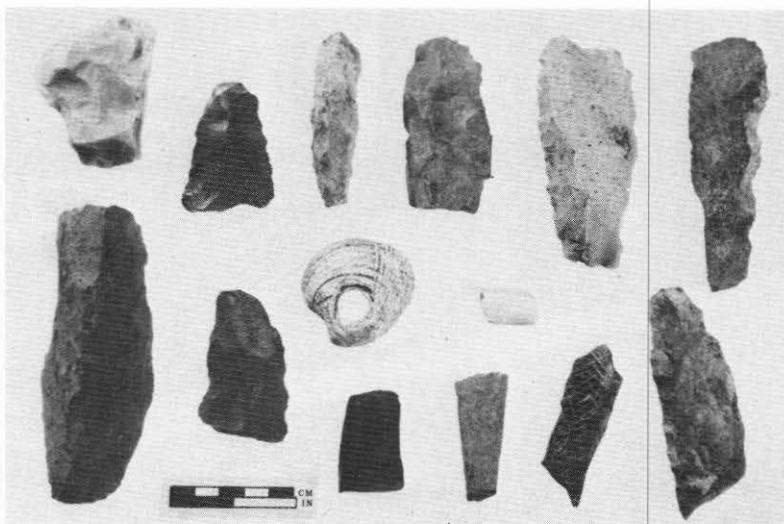
A midden site (containing mainly local shell species) at the northern end of Warrington beach is apparently late, and may be

the site from where numerous typically Classic Maori artefacts in the Otago Museum collection originated. A more detailed report on I44/177 and other sites in the Warrington district is in preparation. The artefacts recovered during this investigation are now in the Otago Museum. Midden remains are presently being identified.

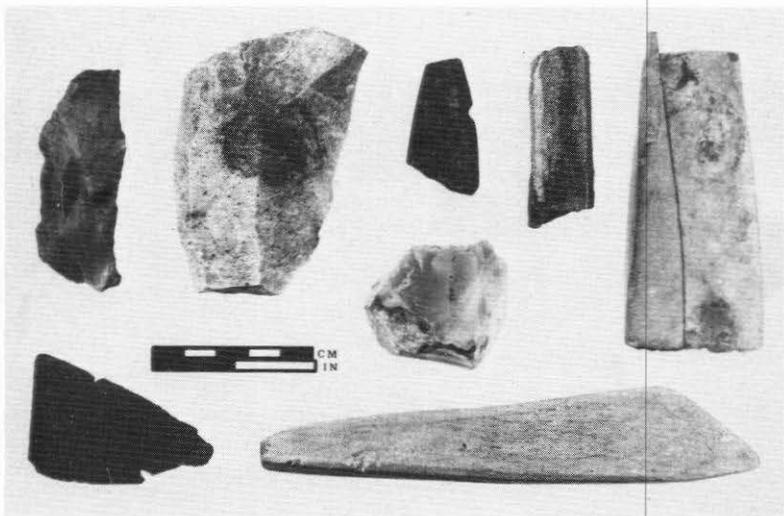
Thanks are due to the New Zealand Historic Places Trust for assistance, and to local landowners for their interest and co-operation.

References

- | | | |
|--------------|------|---|
| Hamilton, A. | 1904 | Notes on the southern Maori. <u>Dunedin and its Neighbourhood</u> . Dunedin, Otago Daily Times and Witness. |
| Reynolds, A. | 1894 | The coast from Otago Heads to the Pleasant River mouth. <u>Otago Witness</u> , 11 Jan. 1894. |



WARRINGTON Plate 1. 1982 finds. Top: scrapers (silcrete, jasperoid); drill point (silcrete); blades (brown phonolite — Doctors Point, silcrete). Centre: perforated cockle, *Dentalium*. Bottom: broken adze roughouts (basalt, phonolite), black argillite adze poll, schist file, moa bone and silcrete awls.



WARRINGTON Plate 2. 1983 finds. Top: scraper (buchite — Moeraki); flake knife (silcrete); file (siltstone); file (schist); basalt adze. Centre: chalcedony core. Bottom: knife-scraper portion (slate); unfinished minnow lure (petrified wood).