



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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	119	
Natural plus human	49	28
Agricultural	5	5
Human agency	32	23
<u>Total disturbed sites</u>	111	63
Undisturbed	7	3
Total	<u>118</u>	<u>66</u>
Percentage fossicked	28	

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I wish to thank Les Lockerbie, Hardwicke Knight and Michael Trotter for information on Otago sites.

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RECORDING AND RESCUE WORK IN CANTERBURY AND NORTH OTAGO

Michael M. Trotter, Canterbury Museum

The increase in public works during the last ten years, a period in which systematic archaeology became well established in New Zealand, has resulted in much recording and salvage work of prehistoric sites. In Canterbury and North Otago major works have been the construction of hydro-electric power dams and Bormore and Aviemore with resultant formation of lakes in the upper Waitaki River valley.

A number of sites were known in this area: several were located by musterers and shepherds of the large sheep stations on either side of the river. In 1947 G.B. Stevenson of Oamaru published descriptions of two areas of rock drawings, and it was locally known that there were more in the vicinity. Even at this time the drawings in sheltered overhangs of the upper Waitaki region (like those of other areas) had been subject to

increasing deterioration caused by stock rubbing and visitors' defacing the rock faces. Many drawings had been retouched with charcoal, paint, crayon, in some cases, unfortunately, by Theo Schoon, who was attempting to make a survey of all he could locate in New Zealand. He had become interested in these drawings after seeing some, which had been removed intact by Dr. Ellmore, in the Otago Museum. These, unfortunately, were from shelters not threatened with destruction. Although Schoon did much valuable work in recording and publicising rock art, he found that with his extremely limited equipment and resources it was often necessary to restore the drawings before photographing them (Schoon 1962: 124-26). He was genuinely concerned at their rapid deterioration, and it is a great pity that he may have destroyed the archaeological evidence he was trying to preserve by retouching the drawings. (Ambrose and Davis 1958: 11). Both Stevenson's and Schoon's records are somewhat subjective in their interpretation, and both workers omitted a few drawings which they either overlooked or did not consider important. While much of the earlier despoliation may be attributed to ignorance of the pre-historic value of the sites, it is unfortunate that it continues on existing sites at much the same rate.

With the creating of Benmore Lake imminent, recording work was started when the N.Z. Historic Places Trust in 1957 invited Wallace Ambrose and Frank Davis, who had done similar work in the North Island (Davis and Ambrose 1957: 13-20), to record the known drawings in the area and seek further sites (Ambrose and Davis 1958). They found seven rock shelters containing drawings (S.109/5-7; S.117/4,5,7,8.) and were told of another, which they could not locate at the time, by a runholder in the area. This and yet another (S.109/8 and 9) were found in 1965 by members of the Canterbury Museum Archaeological Society and others, working with the aid of a N.Z. Historic Places Trust grant.

In investigating these sites the procedure adopted by Ambrose and Davis was generally to trace any drawings on clear plastic sheeting using china-graph pencils of the same colour, and to mark the position of the tracings on a diagram of the shelter. They also photographed them in colour, black and white, and on infra-red sensitive film which often revealed markings not otherwise visible.

Roger Duff and Michael Trotter, who went with Ambrose and Davis to their first site, near Shepherds Creek (S.109/5), excavated the floor of the shelter and found in the sparsely distributed occupational material, a shaped 'crayon' of haematite which had doubtless been used for drawing on the rock face. Wherever possible excavations were also made by the other workers on the rest of the sites investigated. The Ministry of Works helped with transport and in the removal of some of the drawings. The whole operation, spread over several years, was an example of the cooperation possible between the N.Z. Historic Places Trust, Government Departments, Provincial Museums, and amateur archaeologists. A detailed report is in preparation and should be published shortly (Ambrose 1966).

Similarly, but on a much smaller scale, the Canterbury Museum and the North Otago Scientific and Historical Society combined in 1965 to make a record of any sites threatened by a Hydro dam at Aviemore, immediately downstream from Benmore, and help was also received from the Otago Anthropological Society.

One camping area, now completely destroyed by earthworks, was on the north-eastern end of the dam site itself (S.117/1). Here a number of hollows in the ground containing burnt and broken stones denoted ovens, but nothing was recovered from them. Further upstream, in the vicinity of a gravel screening plant, was another camping place partly eroded by the river, but now mostly covered with stockpiles of gravel (S.117/2). Some years ago a musterer picked up a sub-circular slate knife here. In shape it was typical of those made by the Moa-hunters in South Canterbury, Otago, and Southland, but this particular specimen had a stylised figure marked on it - probably a fish or a seal. Unfortunately it was sold in an hotel bar for 10/- and cannot now be located. There was at least one oven or cooking place at this site, and we found a small flake of 'orthoquartzite' on the surface (E.165.568). Moa bones nearby in the bank of the Stoney Stream were found to be of natural origin.

A reported 'orthoquartzite' quarry on the hilltop above this site was investigated, but was found to be an outcrop of a type of quartz not highly suited to tool manufacture, and the many flakes lying on the surface had been produced by weathering and the action of a bulldozer making a farm roadway.

Further up the valley toward Bermore the remains of a large Moa-hunter camp site were found on Woolshed Flat on the edge of the river (S.117/3). Lying on the surface were many burnt stones which had been left when the soil was eroded away from cooking areas by river floods and the westerly winds that howl down the valley. A surface search revealed small fragments of flaked stone knives, Moa bone and eggshell, and fresh-water mussel shell. Some two to three feet below the surface in one corner of the flat, however, was an undisturbed part of the occupational layer containing many Moa bones, oven stones and knives, and several days were spent in excavating 120 square feet of this near the river bank. A thick layer of black loam lying on compact clay, beneath six layers of river-deposited silt and loam, had been the surface soil at the time of occupation. On a two inch deposit of charcoal in a circular depression which had been dug into this underlying clay was a layer of 102 heat stained river stones weighing 76 pounds. Such unbroken stones were not found elsewhere in the excavation, but directly above them was a layer of broken burnt stones with some unburnt Moa bone and gizzard stones. The small size of the broken stones (due to heat) is indicated by a 76 pound sample containing 324 stones as compared with 102 from the unbroken layer. Five feet in the centre of this oven depression the concentration of stones and bones had dropped to one quarter, and further away became very sparse. Bones of three species of Moa (*Pachyornis elephantopus*, *Megalapteryx didinus*, and *Euryapteryx gravis*), dog, and small bird (not yet identified), were obtained from the occupational deposit, as well as numerous flakes of chert and 'orthoquartzite', a broken grindstone, and a hammer. About twenty years ago the river was two or three chains further out and it would appear that the main area of the site had already been eroded away. The Canterbury Museum has a large slate knife (E.148.78) which was found by the previous owner of the property in the 1920's. At this time river flooding had exposed quantities of Moa bones, tracheal rings, and flakes, on the flat.

Most of the well known coastal archaeological sites in North Otago and Canterbury are situated on arable land and have been ploughed and cultivated for many decades. These include the large Moa-hunter camps at the mouths of the Waitaki (S.128/3) and the Rakaia Rivers (S.93/20), which have figured prominently in discussions of South Island Moa-hunter culture.

Earlier this year, members of the Canterbury Museum Archaeological Society spent three weeks excavating part of a site at Omihi (S.49/37) near Kaikoura. Although the upper portion of the site had already been damaged in farming operations, the reason for this salvage dig was that the owner planned to level the ground in preparation for buildings. Incidentally the Society had, in 1959, done some salvage work on another part of the same site while it was being bulldozed level for a camping ground.

A grid of five foot squares was laid over the area to be built on, which was largely in the owner's sheep yards, and excavation started in alternate squares in a north-south line across the centre, and extended to clarify initial problems of stratigraphy and interpretation of the occupational evidence. At the end of three weeks' work, during which some 2,000 man-hours were spent in the field, only part of the site had been sampled, but we consider this to be representative of the area that will be levelled, and the paucity of material and data available, together with the extent of previous disturbance do not warrant much further work here. In general, a layer of loam, containing angular stones from the hillside above, lay upon ancient brown gravel of a raised beach. Specks of charcoal and other occupational material - mainly flakes of flint and broken burnt stones - occurred sparsely throughout the top layer and into the beach gravel, and their even distribution suggests pre-European disturbance such as might have been caused by cultivation of kumara. One large oven, ten feet in diameter, was excavated and another adjacent to it partly uncovered. Both contained large quantities of charcoal and burnt broken stones to a depth of 2' 10" below the surface, overlain by unbroken heat-stained stones. There were only odd fragments of mammal and fish bones in the ovens, and indeed faunal remains of any kind were rare throughout the area excavated. The few distinctive artifacts obtained (mainly pieces of worked greenstone), were of Classic type, and this supports traditional evidence that the site was first occupied in the seventeenth century. The most interesting feature was the number of pits, now all filled in, that had been dug into the gravel at the time of Maori occupation. Some were three feet across and more than two feet deep, while others were only a few inches in each dimension. One has been carefully covered over with large water-worn stones, but none contained anything but dark stained soil, a few specks of charcoal, and some flakes of flint.

The most annoying (and hardest to control) agents of site destruction are the fossickers and curio-hunters who completely destroy archaeological evidence in their quest for certain types of artifacts. The important site that has escaped their attention is the exception rather than the rule in this area.

The Canterbury Museum has done much work in recent years salvaging material from such sites as Moa-bone Point Cave (S.84/77), the floor of which had been dug before Julius von Haast's investigations in 1872. Although only an extremely limited amount of data can be obtained from the churned up deposit of Maori and European occupational refuse, the occasional patches of undisturbed material and the salvage of many valuable artifacts previously overlooked, have made the continuation of this project well worth while. Many of the finds were of perishable materials - hair, flax, leather and wood - which would not have survived in a site exposed to the weather. The extent of disturbance can be gauged from the finding of a newspaper dated 1954 beneath five feet of predominantly shell midden containing odd pieces of well preserved Moa bone, artifacts, and pieces of European crockery.

A very well preserved site (S.42/2) near the Clarence River which has been untouched until two or three years ago is at present being dug for curios. It is a small pa of shallow triangular shape, some 370 feet long by 110 feet wide in which use has been made of natural topography to aid defences on all sides. There are thirteen more or less circular level and raised-rim pits in groups at either end, and these range in size from six to fourteen feet in internal diameter. Where digging has taken place on a level section between the pits, remains of squared timber and a stone fireplace appear to indicate house sites. It has not been possible to deter the curio hunters, and efforts to encourage them to use more acceptable methods of excavation and to keep a record have not met with much success. The only solution to this problem seems to be to carry out a rescue excavation with the object of obtaining as much material and data as possible before it is all destroyed.

To summarize the position of destruction and salvage in the coastal portion of the Canterbury Site Recording district only, 280 sites have been recorded. Of these 51 have been subject to natural erosion by wind or water, 47 to damage

by curio hunters, and 86 by other human operations. Thus 65% of the recorded sites in this district have been destroyed or damaged in some way. Salvage work has been carried out on 10 of these, and 4 other sites have been excavated for reasons of research.

Where Public Works are concerned, close co-operation is generally received when bona fide workers wish to make an investigation of any prehistoric remains affected. In the case of sites destroyed by farming or similar private works, the land owner often does not recognize the site and if he does, does not realize its significance. However, when approached most land owners are very co-operative, and I am strongly in favour of a simple circular being distributed, especially to farmers, drawing their attention to the importance of reporting any evidence uncovered. Perhaps the most important aim of this would be to seek their co-operation in referring back to the appropriate archaeological authority, (whether the local N.Z.A.A. site recorder, the Regional Committee of the N.Z.H.P.T., or the Provincial Museum) any application by any person or group to excavate the site concerned. Such an authority could advise on the bona fides of the applicant and, in particular, exclude the curio-hunter. I am sure this would enable us to carry out much recording and rescue work before sites are completely destroyed.

Public and private works do, of course, benefit the country in some way. The third cause of destruction to prehistoric sites, the curio hunter, benefits no-one but himself, and rescue operations mean that volunteers who could otherwise be employed in a valuable programme of archaeological research are forced to excavate a site that would be better left alone if some form of protection could be enforced. Here again it is generally profitable to encourage the co-operation of land owners, but in many cases we do not hear about the fossicking until it is too late to do anything about it.

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VIEW OF THE MINISTRY OF WORKS.

A. McG. Peart (Planning Engineer, M.O.W.)

THE STATE AS GUARDIAN OF THE PAST.

Most people think of 'State' as a nebulous sort of monster which has an inexhaustable supply of funds for a wide variety of purposes. In this paper I shall confine my comments to the interpretation of 'State' as a State Department. After all, it is the State Departments (or the personnel employed by them) which physically carry out the Government works which have an effect on archaeology and change the face of the countryside.

Before one can expect a sympathetic understanding of archaeology from a layman (and the vast majority of Departmental officers are laymen), one must be sure he knows what archaeology is, what its meaning to New Zealand is, and particularly how important its pursuit is. This goes much further than persuading some Departmental officer that the State should support archaeology. State servants must also be imbued with a realization of its importance, and this means education. The first point of view that I should like to stress, then, is that the average Departmental officer is probably very sympathetic to the views of archaeologists, but for him to be active in assisting archaeology the archaeologists must sell their interest - a sort of public relations exercise.