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Rogers' Farmstead Survey Otago Peninsula

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Introduction

Rogers' farmstead (NZAA site I44/415) is located at Harbour Cone on the Otago Peninsula (Figure 1) and includes a farmhouse and a traditional cow byre that probably was built in the late 1860s. The site is part of a 324 hectare block of land that was purchased by the Dunedin City Council in 2008 to protect its heritage, natural and recreational values, and the property is managed by the Hereweke Harbour Cone Trust (HHCT). In May 2016 the University of Otago Anthropology Society (OUAS) was invited by the HHCT to carry out a survey of the site to produce a site plan of the farmstead area and floor plans of the cow byre and farm house, to assist in the management of the historic features. The exercise also provided students with a learning opportunity involving mapping and surveying skills, as well as being given the chance to observe an early agricultural site.

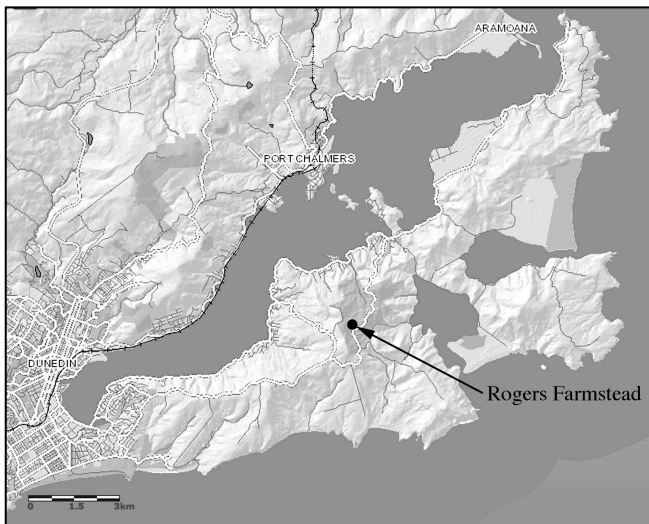


Figure 1. The location of Rogers' farmstead on the Otago Peninsula (DCC Webmap).

Brief history of Rogers' farmstead

The Otago Peninsula has a long human history, and a number of archaeological finds underline how important the area was to the prehistoric Maori inhabitants of Otago. Major moa hunting sites exist at Papanui Inlet, Little Papanui (lower level) and Harwood (Anderson 1983: 7; Hamel 2001: 19). Occupation of the area was unbroken into the historic period, and early European visitors to the Otago Peninsula observed villages with about 40-50 houses in the 1820s. The first European to observe the Otago Peninsula was James Cook in February 1770, and the first visitors were probably sealers (Hamel 2001: 103). The first permanent European settlement was the whaler's base at Wellers Rock in 1831.

European activity in the Hereweka/Harbour Cone area extends back to the mid-19th century, after the majority of the Otago Peninsula was purchased from Kai Tahu in the 1844 Kemp Purchase of the Otago Block. A survey of the Harbour Cone area in 1863 set out its subdivision into land titles, the boundaries of which can still be seen in places where there are surviving stone walls. At the time of the subdivision the Otago Peninsula was heavily forested with tōtara, rimu, and matai, and the efforts involved in clearing this bush in order to establish pastures suitable for dairy farming are recorded in the diaries kept by dairy farmer Walter Riddell between 1865 and 1871 (Middleton 2012: 36). Cleared timber was taken to Dunedin to be sold for firewood when possible, or used as material to build fences (Middleton 2012, 36).

The largest of the land holdings in the Harbour Cone area was granted to William Larnach (see Figure 2) (Middleton 2012: 36). Larnach's estate, including his 'castle,' serves as the modern focal point of the area, although the dairy farm holdings located behind Larnach's estate are at least equally as interesting archaeologically. Robert Rogers' Farmstead was one of numerous relatively small dairy farm holdings that were created at the same time, and he took up his grant of 116 acres in 1866. By the 1890s it was the largest and most valuable dairy farm in the Hereweka/Harbour Cone area.

In late 1877 the Harbour Cone Cheese Factory began operations, providing a consortium of dairy farmers with an income until its destruction by fire in 1881. The fire destroyed a number of other buildings in the area and had a significant effect on the community (Middleton 2012: 38). The Cheese Factory was not rebuilt and the farmers had to rely on the butter which they produced on their farms as a sole source of income. In 1892 the Sandymount Creamery opened, one of a number of which were operated by the Taieri and

Peninsula Milk Company. These creameries separated the milk into cream, which was then transported to Dunedin to be made into butter, and skim milk, a share of which was returned to the farmers to be used back on the farm. The Creamery would have served as the community's focal point as farmers spent a significant part of each day there, waiting for their milk to be separated and skim returned (Middleton 2012: 38).

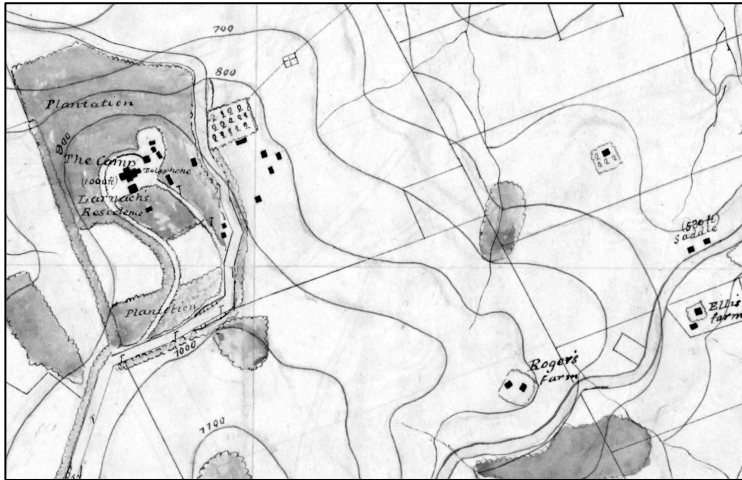


Figure 2. A detail from the W.T. Neil 1901 Military Survey Map of Dunedin, showing Larnach Castle (left) and Rogers' Farm (centre right).

Within a short distance of the site of Sandymount Creamery are the remnants of a school, post office, and other important buildings which linked the isolated community. At the peak of the Sandymount Creamery's operations, there were 30 dairy farms in the Hereweka/Harbour Cone area. By the time operations there ceased only six dairy farms remained in operation as sheep farming gradually overtook dairying on the peninsula. The Rogers' and surrounding properties were purchased by the Stewart family, who operated a neighbouring farm in the early 20th century. The Rogers' farmstead became the centre of the Stewart's sheep farming operations, and the Stewart family shifted into the house on the site during the 1930s.

The Survey

The survey day was held on 14th May 2016, under the instruction of Dr Peter Petchey. Dr Jill Hamel and Paul Pope of the Hereweka Harbour Cone Trust

also attended, and helped to interpret the site. Three plane tables and alidades (Figure 3) were set up across the site and the students split into three groups. The first group were centred in the cow byre, the second was focussed on the



main area of the farmstead (including the historic and modern buildings, fencing and stockyards), while the third group was positioned on the north-eastern side of the farmstead which encompassed stone walls, a concrete pad, modern fencing and an original windbreak. Additionally, later in the day a third mixed group measured a floor plan of the farmhouse. Figure 4 shows the overall plan of the farmstead site.

Figure 3. Fran Allen and Jozef Mendrun at one of the plane tables.

Cow Byre

One of the key elements of the farmstead is the traditional cow byre located in the centre of the site (Figures 5 and 6). Characterised by its cobbled brick floor and multiple stalls, the cow byre is likely to date back to the beginning of the farm in the 1860s, as it was typical of farming properties of the era (pers. comm. Jill Hamel 2016).

The brick floor has two parallel drains running the length of the byre and extends slightly into the stalls for drainage. The multiple stalls suggest that up to 12 cows were milked on the property, a considerable amount for the time. After a tidy up of some of the junk in the byre, further investigation into one of the stalls revealed an intact original wooden head gate and manger (Figures 5 and 6). Only one stall was completely intact, and accumulated junk in the rest of the building prevented close inspection to determine what parts of other stalls survived.

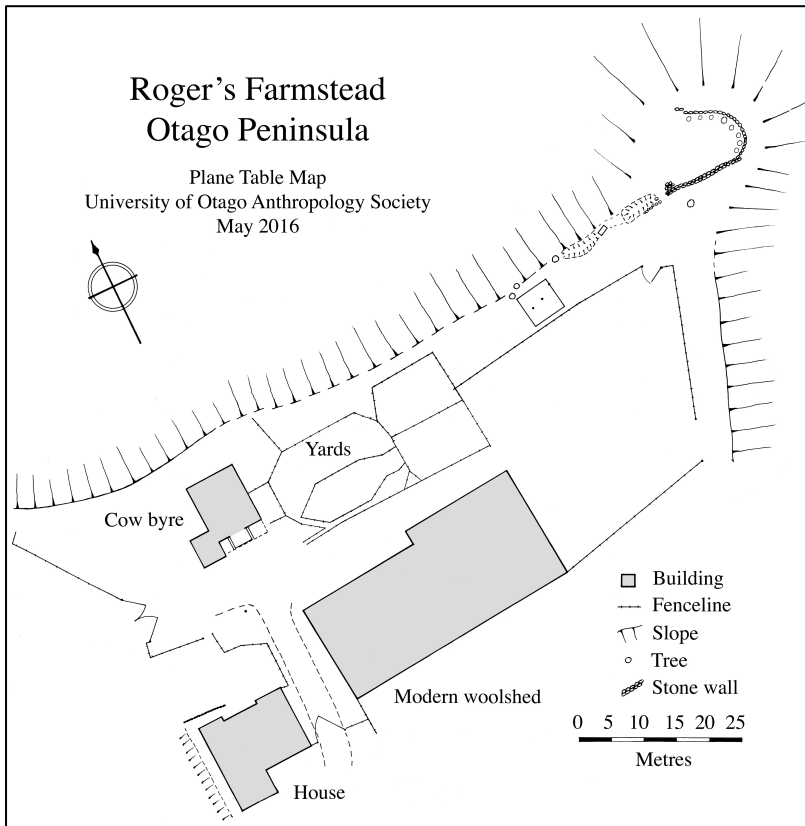


Figure 4. The 2016 plane table map of Rogers' Farmstead.

The wooden foundations of the byre were probably Totara, matching those in the farmhouse. Original parts of the wooden framing of the byre were identified as pit-sawn by Peter Petchey, who explained the different sawing methods and their means of identification to students.

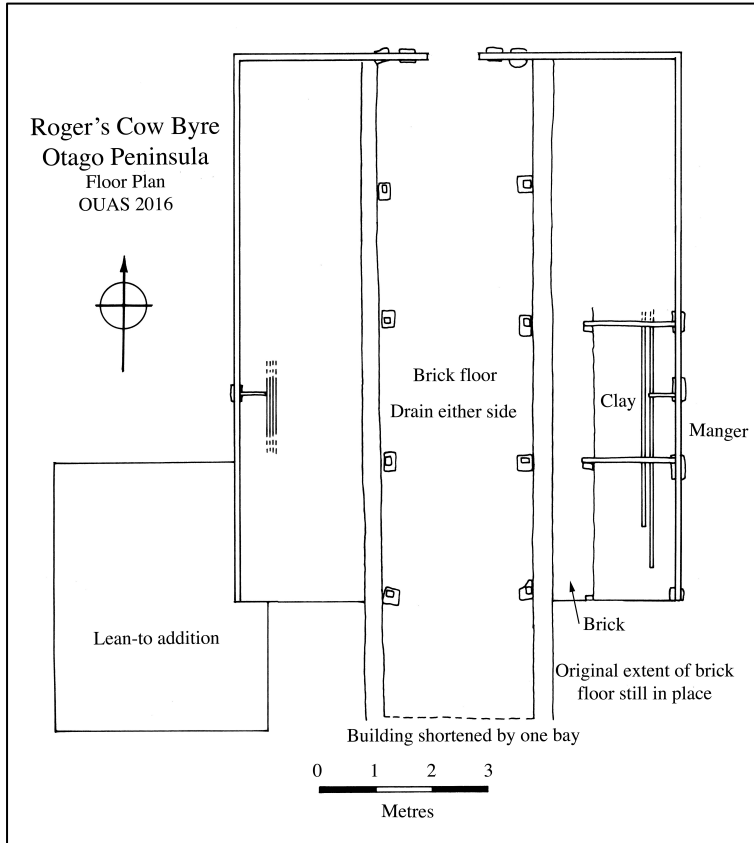


Figure 5. Plan of the cow byre. The interior layout is incomplete because much of the western side and the northern part of the eastern side were inaccessible due to later additions and accumulated junk

The cow byre has been modified since its original use in the 19th century. Once small scale dairy farming became uneconomical in the early 20th century the farm was converted to drystock and ran sheep. At some stage the front of the byre had been cut back, with one set of stalls removed and new front wall constructed. The original length of the building is shown by the extent of the brick cobbled floor which survives intact (Figure 5). The current layout of the byre reflects its use as a chicken run, as some stalls and the loft of the byre were adapted to house chickens. In addition an extension had been made on the front west side of the byre. Most recently the space has



been used for storage. Despite the adaptations to the building since its original construction, the byre provides an insight into early hand milking dairy farming methods and technologies, and represents a remnant of early agriculture in New Zealand.

Figure 6. The intact stall in the cow byre.



Figure 7. The rear of the cow byre, showing the original board and batten cladding.

The Surrounding Land

The second surveying group concentrated on west side of the farmstead. They mapped the locations of the farmhouse, cow byre, modern woolshed and the main fences in this area. Modern farm operations, including the construction of the large woolshed, meant that only a limited number of historic features have survived in this area. The most challenging task was to map the stone wall and bank on the west side of the farmhouse due to the overgrown gardens.

The third surveying group was focused on the north-east end of the farmstead, and mapped the extent of the fences, stone walls and surrounding features, such as the water trough, wool shed and a concrete pad (Figure 4). The west section of the stone wall was easily identified and mapped, but the north-east extension of the wall and bank proved more difficult to map due to the deflation of the slope over time. This caused the stone wall to fall down the north face of the bank, making it challenging to determine its original location. An area partially enclosed by the stone wall at the north-eastern end of the surveyed area appears to have been deliberately built up and enclosed, possibly for a pigsty (Jill Hamel pers. comm.).

Farm House

The third surveying group also completed a floor plan of the farm house (Figures 8 and 9). This is a wooden building with a corrugated iron roof.



Figure 8. The front of the farmhouse.

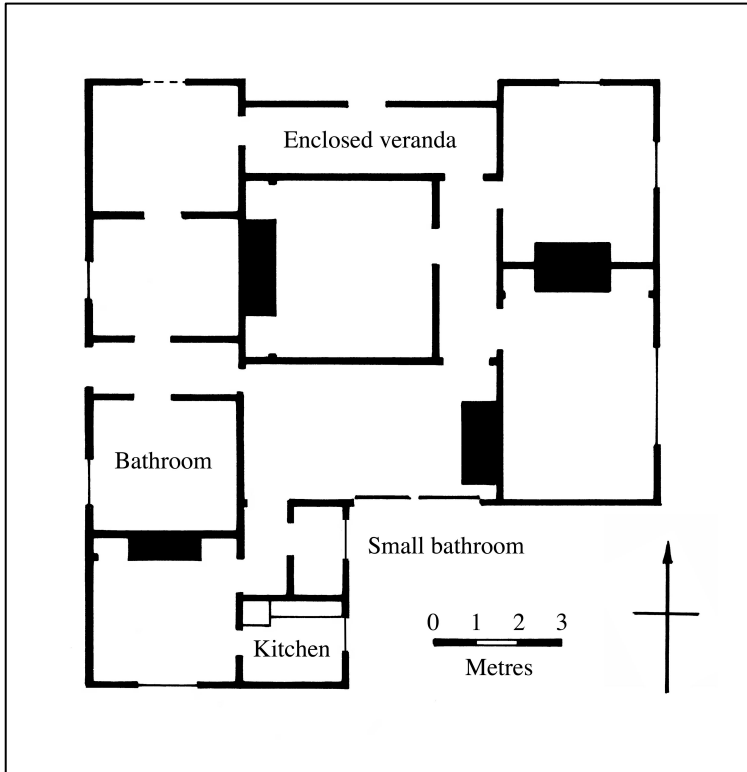


Figure 9. Floor plan of Rogers' Farmstead.

The plan produced the general dimensions of the house and allowed the group to observe some of the alterations and additions to the building made over time (although a more thorough investigation will be needed to fully interpret the building). Although the house has undergone various modifications the tōtara foundations (visible along the east wall) and some original windows still remain. Sadly, the house is showing signs of decay due to its lack of tenancy for almost 10 years. Several windows have been roughly cut out of the structure, leaving large holes in the walls, some of which have been boarded over with sheets of plywood.

Conclusions

The OUAS survey day was a success. We were in luck with the weather (which was fine but windy) and we produced a series of maps of the Rogers'

Farmstead site, further developing the understanding of the historical remains and relationship they had with the wider area. The site is a significant element in the area's dairy farming history and is amongst the most intact examples of early farmsteads on the peninsula. The maps prepared by the OUAS have been added to the New Zealand Archaeological Association site record file.

Secondly, the surveying trip was a great opportunity for students to learn and practice mapping methods in the field, while also introducing them to the rural archaeology of Otago. The early dairy farmsteads are not only an important aspect of Otago's historical archaeology, but also New Zealand in the broader sense, as they represent the pioneering era of one of the backbone industries of our country.



Figure 10. The OUAS survey day participants (Paul Pope).

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Hereweka Harbour Cone Trust, with special thanks to Jill Hamel and Paul Pope for information and access to the site. We would also to thank Southern Archaeology's Dr Peter Petchey for leading the surveying trip and providing the surveying equipment. The survey participants were Naomi Woods, Cameron Olsen, Noelani Grandona, Dylan Gaffney, Jozef Mendrun, Clara Watson, Greg Hil, Baylee Smith, Franchessa Allen, Teina Tutaki, Jitlada Innanchai, and the authors.

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Alix Muir and Clara Watson on the windswept Otago Peninsula during the Rogers' Farmstead survey.