



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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/>.

TAKAMATUA SALVAGE, BANKS PENINSULA

Michael M. Trotter

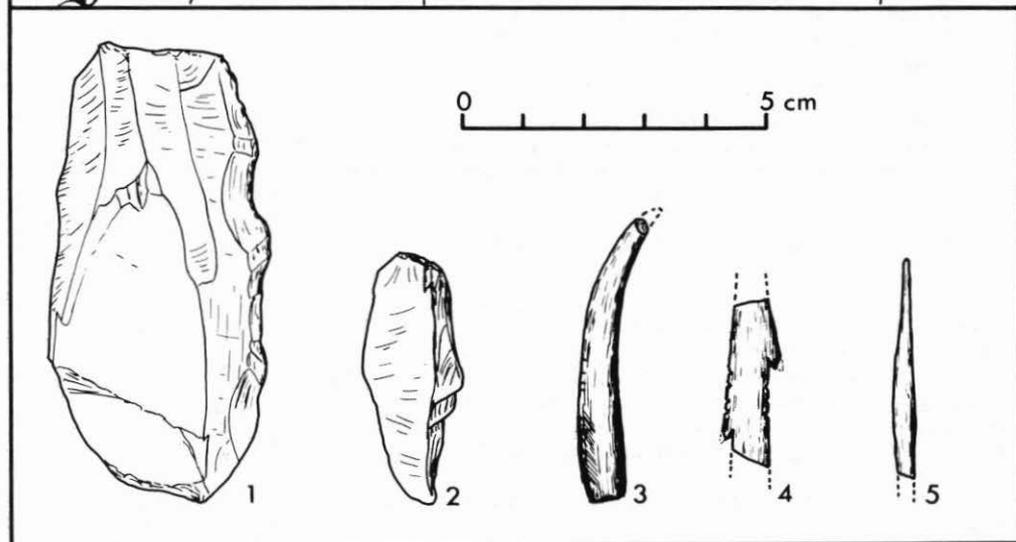
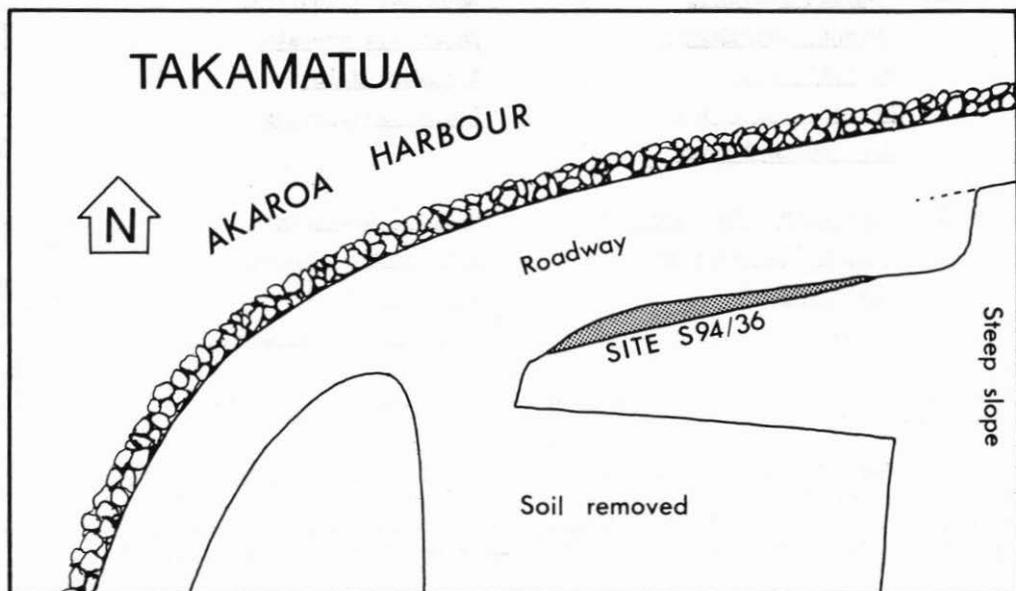
In May 1969 workmen of the Akaroa County Council (Banks Peninsula) were levelling a small section of roadside land for use as a car park when they uncovered prehistoric midden material. The County Engineer, Mr F. Stone, telephoned me at the Canterbury Museum, and offered to stop the work until I was able to investigate the site.

The locality where the Council men and machines were working is known as Takamatua, and is on the eastern side of Akaroa Harbour, some 70 kilometres by road from Christchurch. It is a popular boating, fishing and picnicing place, hence the Council's wish to provide a parking area.

The site (S94/36) had been on the end of a small spur running down to the beach, but had been mostly destroyed by sea erosion, by the existing road which followed the coast around the end of the spur, and by European occupation which had included levelling the top of the spur to provide a flat area for house and garden.

Further levelling had exposed shells, bones, stones and charcoal at a depth of about 60 centimetres, overlaid by clay (derived from higher up the slope) with European midden material near the surface. This latter material did not appear to be of any importance, and because time was short it was cleared away and the prehistoric deposit trowelled through to salvage what material and data could be obtained before bucket-loader and grader completed their work. I spent one and a half days at the site being assisted by four N.Z.A.A. members, Elaine Freeborn, Bev McCulloch, Margaret Prebble and Ron Scarlett, and a Council employee, Mr Alex Smith. The somewhat inclement weather, which quickly converted all exposed clay and soil into slushy mud, provoked some rather pertinent comments.....

Although the occupational deposit was exposed for almost 15 metres in the freshly cut bank, it was found to extend undisturbed inwards for a maximum distance of only one and a half metres, mostly about half that or less. For the most part it comprised a black, charcoal-rich layer up to 30 centimetres thick containing burnt stones and with shells and bones towards the western end. Apart from three shallow depressions which may have been scoop hearths, no evidence of any prehistoric structures was obtained. Faunal material comprised:



Shells:	<u>Lunella smaragda</u>	<u>Amphidesma australe</u>
	<u>Chione stutchburyi</u>	<u>Amphibola crenata</u>
	<u>Haliotis iris</u>	<u>Mytilus edulus</u>
	<u>Maoricolpus roseus</u>	<u>Perna canaliculus</u>
	<u>Buccinum lineum</u>	
Bones:	<u>Cephalorhynchus hectori</u>	<u>Canis familiaris</u>
	<u>Gnyptherus blacodes</u>	<u>Stictocarbo punctatus*</u>
	<u>Thalasarche*</u>	<u>Haematopus*</u>
	<u>Cygnus*</u>	<u>? Falco novaeseelandiae*</u>

(*Determined by R. J. Scarlett. One piece of Thalasarche had cut marks and dog tooth marks.)

Artefacts were associated with the faunal remains, that is they were concentrated towards the western end of the strip of occupational deposit, except for a blade of orthoquartzite which was right at the opposite end. The total list of artefacts obtained is as follows:

- Blade of orthoquartzite (Figure 1)
- Flake of orthoquartzite (Figure 2)
- Flake of porcellanite
- Flake of chalcedony
- Flake of obsidian (Mayor Island)
- Three ground flakes of basalt, from three different adzes
- Baracoutta type fish-hook point of bone (Figure 3)
- Barbed bird-spear (or possibly fish-hook) point of bone (Figure 4)
- Two pieces of pointed sliver of mollyhawk bone (Figure 5)
- Piece of mica schist (foreign to area)

A single radiocarbon date of 666 ± 52 B.P. (N.Z. 1539) is a little earlier than expected, although other sites of similar radiocarbon age have similar artefacts, the hook points and the orthoquartzite blade being particularly diagnostic. This date was obtained from a sample of Chione shell, which was checked for recrystallisation before processing, and is expected to be of good reliability. The date is calculated in respect to New Zealand shell standard.

Although the roadway and other European ground modifications make it impossible to tell exactly how large the site was, it is likely that the prehistoric occupational deposit covered an area of at least

100 square metres, possibly several times that amount. It appears to have been a small living area that was occupied about 600 years ago. The presence of what appears to be a piece of extinct swan bone (Cygnus) and moa bone points suggests that these species were extant at the time.

The finding of a trolling fish-hook point and bones of ling (Genypterus) and dolphin (Cephaloryhynchus), suggest that the occupants of the site had the use of a canoe. All other foods represented in the midden could have been obtained in the immediate vicinity. Although varied, faunal remains were sparse - the total weight of shells and bones recovered weighed less than one kilogram - much less than might be expected from the amount of occupation indicated by the thickness and extent of the charcoal blackened layer. This could be accounted for by the main midden area being outside that portion of the site that was investigated. The occupational material comprised predominantly the remains of fires - charcoal and burnt broken stones - probably used for cooking food. The homogeneity of the deposit suggests that it was laid down during a single occupation, or if by more than one occupation, with only a short period of time between them.

Flakes of adzes made of three different varieties of basalt were found; they could all be of Banks Peninsula origin. The chalcedony and 'porcellanite' are also probably local stones. Orthoquartzite, however, is of inland origin, probably Grays Hills some 220 kilometres to the south-west. The piece of schist, too, must have been obtained inland, and the small flake of obsidian is the type generally considered to be from Mayor Island. Thus it appears that the occupants of the site had knowledge of local resources and access to materials from further afield.