

Hugh Simms McCully, the Grays Hills Silcrete Quarries and the Missing Anvil

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Hugh Simms McCully (1878–1967) was the grandfather of the authors. He was a Canterbury farmer and amateur archaeologist who invented 11 agricultural machines. This is a personal account of his association with two Māori silcrete quarries located at Grays Hills in the lower Mackenzie Basin and an anvil described as missing in 2017 (Moore et al. 2020: 12). A recent paper that suggested James Robert Irvine was the first to write about the Grays Hills quarries (Moore et al. 2020: 5) caused us to search Hugh McCully's photographs and documents and review our grandfather's association with the Grays Hills quarries. Here we publish hitherto unpublished historical photographs of "Quarry No 1" in 1936 and 1953 and of the missing anvil stone. We also discuss references to the sites and anvil by Buick (1937) and Irvine (1943).

Keywords: anvil, Grays Hills quarry, Hugh McCully, "moa-hunters", silcrete

Location of the Grays Hills Quarries

Grays Hills Station is a high country run in the lower Mackenzie Basin, the first Pākehā occupier of which was William Arthur Gray (1837–1880) in February 1858 (Pinney 1971). Gray soon departed but left his name on Grays Hills, a low range of hills that rises to 943 metres above sea level. Two Māori silcrete quarries (New Zealand Archaeological Record Numbers I38/1 and I39/1) are located in the vicinity of Grays Hills Station homestead (Fig. 1). In his 1953 publication, Hugh McCully (1953: 410) called them "Quarry No 1" and "Quarry No 2", respectively.

Why Hugh McCully visited Quarries 1 and 2

Hugh McCully did not discover Quarry No 1 in 1930, as claimed by Simmons and Wright (1967: 73), nor was James Robert Irvine the first person to write about it (Moore et al. 2020: 5). Frederick Chapman (1884) and Lindsay Buick (1937) wrote about the quarry before

Irvine (1943) did. We have in our possession, Hugh McCully's copy of Frederick Chapman's 1884 article titled "Notes on Moa Remains in the Mackenzie Country and other Localities". McCully marked up six pieces of information, one of which mentioned "an old Maori chert quarry, at Grays Hills Station" with debris thrown up at the side, and alongside were "several well-preserved fragments of bone [which] were so broken and so situated as to leave no doubt they had been left there by Maoris working at the quarry" (Chapman 1884: 175). This "old chert quarry" is Quarry No 1 (I38/1) which McCully first visited in 1913. In his own words, McCully (1953: 410) describes how he came to visit Quarry No 2 in 1953:

RAURU appears on a sketch map of the Waitaki River drawn by Te Ware Korari for Mantell in 1848; a copy may be seen in Johannes Andersen's Jubilee History

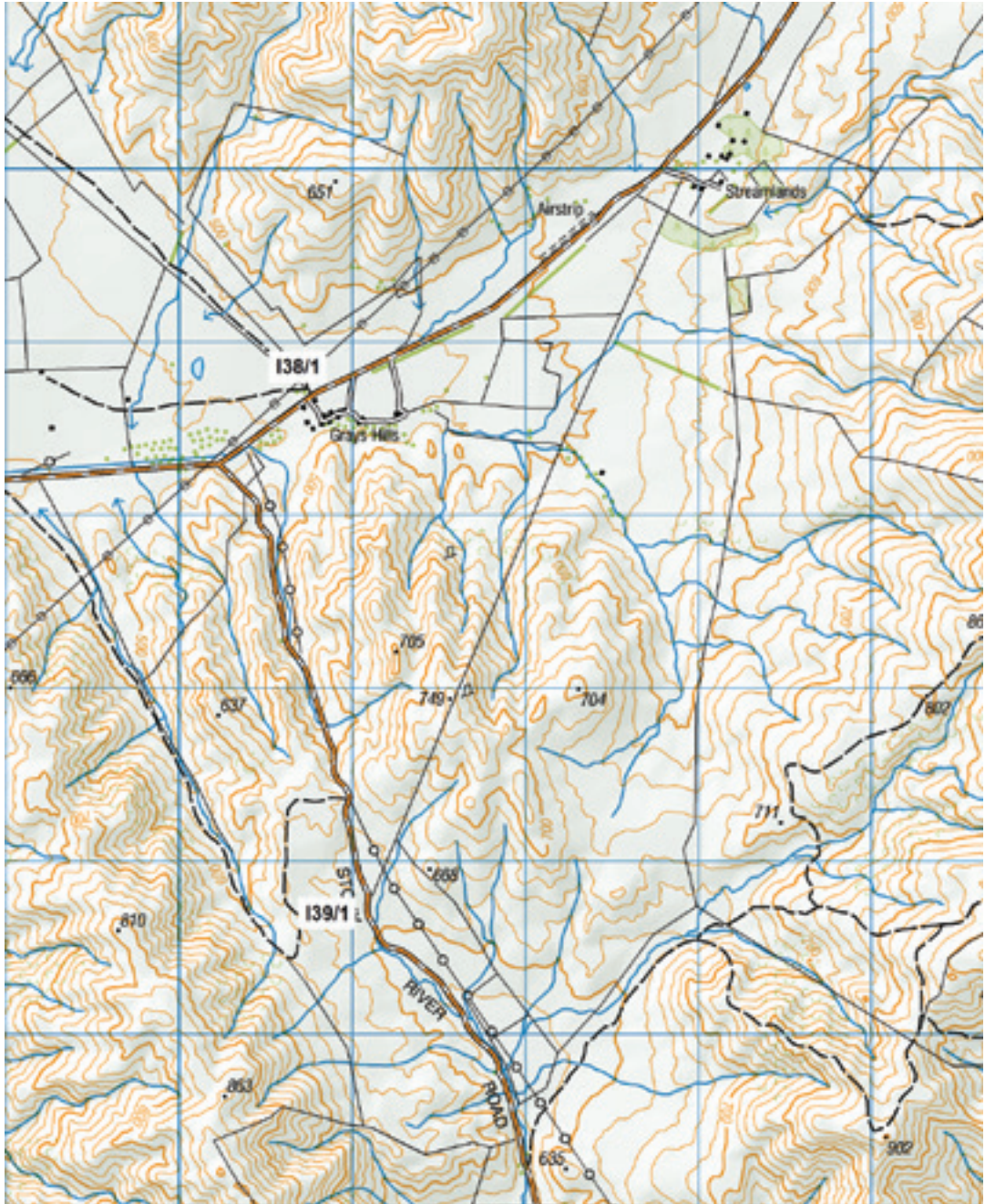


Figure 1. Location of Grays Hills quarries. Site I38/1 (Quarry No 1) is opposite Grays Hills Station homestead. Site I39/1 (Quarry No 2) is on Stony River Road. This work is based on/includes Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand data which are licensed by Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand for re-use under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International Licence. For more information refer to Moore et al. 2020, Fig. 1



Figure 2A. Grays Hills Quarry No 1. 1953. Hornsey collection. Standing immediately beside the small anvil is an Urquhart brother (left), Hugh McCully (centre) and Arthur Hornsey (right). Courtesy of Sue Hornsey, All Rights Reserved

of South Canterbury, page 39, where it is described as “an ancient settlement”. For many years the writer has wished to locate Rauru, and a few weeks ago along with a friend, another exploratory journey was made.

The trip was made with Arthur George Hornsey and here we publish for the first time a photo taken during that trip (Fig. 2A). They visited Quarry No 1 and Quarry No 2.

McCully takes Buick to Grays Hills, 1936

In April 1936, when Hugh McCully took the well-known anthropologist Lindsay Buick to Quarry No 1, an anvil stone was found alongside the silcrete pit (Fig. 2B).

In the paddock opposite the homestead, Buick (1937: 155) found:

... the bed of quartzite protruding in successive hummocks above the almost level ground. Beside each of these outcrops holes had been dug, suggesting that the experienced

quarrymen had discovered that the stone lying beneath the surface was of better quality than the weathered material above. To secure the better stone they had excavated spaces several feet deep ... lusty willow trees ... have taken root in these excavations”.

Figure 3 is a photograph taken by McCully during the visit showing the scene exactly as Buick describes.



Figure 2B. Detail of Figure 2A revealing the now missing anvil at Quarry No 1



Figure 3. Hugh McCully's photo of a willow growing in one of the pits at Quarry No 1, Grays Hills. Quarried materials were still visible in the pits in the 1930s. Seymour collection. Courtesy of Marion Seymour, All Rights Reserved

McCully and Irvine at Grays Hills, 1938

Two years later, during Easter 1938, McCully took James Robert Irvine and a Mr B Beck from Southland to Grays Hills. They excavated a small shelter (which they described as a little round "moa-hunter" hut) and also examined three large trenches from which they estimated 100 tons (90.7 tonnes) of silcrete had been removed (Irvine 1943: 90). Irvine wrote:

Mr McCully drew our attention to a stone set in the ground ... which he thought may have been used as a chipping platform or anvil; it certainly seems to have been purposefully placed in position (Irvine 1943: 90; fig. 3)

McCully and Hornsey Pose Beside the Anvil at Quarry No 1, 1953

In 1948, McCully (1953: 410) learned from his friend James Grant, the previous owner of Grays Hills Station, about a new site on Stony River Road which "was 3½ miles [5.6 km]

from the homestead, where flakes were very numerous". In 1953, Hugh McCully and his good friend Arthur George Hornsey visited Quarry No 1 at Grays Hills, posed themselves beside the anvil for a photograph (Fig. 2A), and then continued down the road to attempt to fulfil Hugh McCully's dream of locating Rauru. Disappointingly for McCully, they only found Quarry No 2 and no sign of any settlement. McCully and Hornsey were both aged 75.

Summary

Hugh McCully made frequent visits to Grays Hills Quarry No 1 (I38/1). McCully was considered by Roger Duff (1977: 102) to have established the frequent use of Quarry No 1 by "moa-hunters", but McCully did not discover this site. McCully took a number of people to the Grays Hills sites, several of whom published their findings. Despite its proximity to the fabled Rauru marked on a sketch map of the Waitaki River drawn by Te Ware Korari, Hugh McCully firmly believed Quarry No 2 was not Rauru. He believed that Rauru was an important site

that had not as yet been found and his final published words on the subject were “the quest goes on” (McCully 1953: 411).

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