

## Rediscovery of Pareora Rock Art Sites, First Records and Analysis

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This article is written to mark the recent centenary of the rediscovery of significant rock art drawings at archaeological sites J39/1, J39/2 and J39/17 in the Pareora catchment. In 1921, Benjamin Evans and his young sons explored Craigmores Hill, Gordons Valley and Limestone Valley in order to locate local rock drawings. They located drawings of three moa with a seal (J39/1), a headless dog (J39/2) and three birdmen with a fish (J39/17). Evans immediately consulted Hugh McCully on what to do. The drawings were photographed and traced by Evans and McCully and interpreted by McCully within a now superseded pre-history paradigm promoted by Elsdon Best (1915) and Te Rangi Hiroa (1925). These first Pākehā efforts to document and analyse some of the rock art drawings in J39/1, J39/2 and J39/17 are presented here. Contemporary research findings and Ngāi Tahu perspectives provide lenses through which McCully's interpretations can be viewed. This personal commemorative account is by McCully's granddaughters who draw on historically important, unpublished images from the Evans, Hornsey and McCully family records dating from 1921 onwards.

**Keywords:** birdmen, Evans, Hornsey, McCully, moa, rock art

### Introduction

#### Local Historical Context to the Rediscovery

In 1864, Alexander Mackay was appointed Commissioner of Native Reserves in the South Island and he recorded:

*In Lyttelton Harbour there is a cave which formed the retreat of a small tribe [of Ngāti Māmoe]; near Ti-maru there are several, the sides of which are covered with rude images of men, fishes, &c., which in like manner afforded shelter to this unhappy people. (Mackay 1873: 45).*

This brief information was repeated by White (1887: 305) and Smith (1898: 5). However, the exact locations of these rock art caves near Timaru, which were known to Ngāi Tahu in the 1860s, were unknown to Pākehā until 1921.

In 1916, American rock art enthusiast J L Elmore toured New Zealand tracing rock art and he “did a great deal to revive public interest in what the newspaper reports variously termed ‘rock drawings’, ‘pictographs’, ‘mystic symbols’ and ‘petroglyphs’” (Beattie 1918: 155). A judge of the Native Land Court (South Island) wanted to see some rock art and so Henare Te Maire (1844–1927), James Rickus and Hugh McCully, who had traced rock art with Elmore in 1916 (*Timaru Herald*, 4 October 1916: 9), accompanied the judge (Beattie 1918: 155; *Timaru Herald*, 18 January 1916: 4).

No Pareora rock art sites were visited by the judge's inspection party even though, according to Beattie (1918: 155), Henare Te Maire knew of the existence of rock art sites in the Pareora catchment at the time. Why he did not take the judge's party to the rock art sites in Craigmores Valley (Valley of the Moa) or Frenchmans Gully (Te Manunui) is unknown. And so, until 1921, the general public and ethnologists like William Henry Skinner (*Ashburton Guardian*, 2 May 1918: 3), continued to eagerly await:

*... the discovery of the old time artists' delineation of Dinornis, rude maybe, but drawn by one who had actually taken part in the stalking of the giant bird, and had assisted at the killing and had partaken of the feast that followed.*

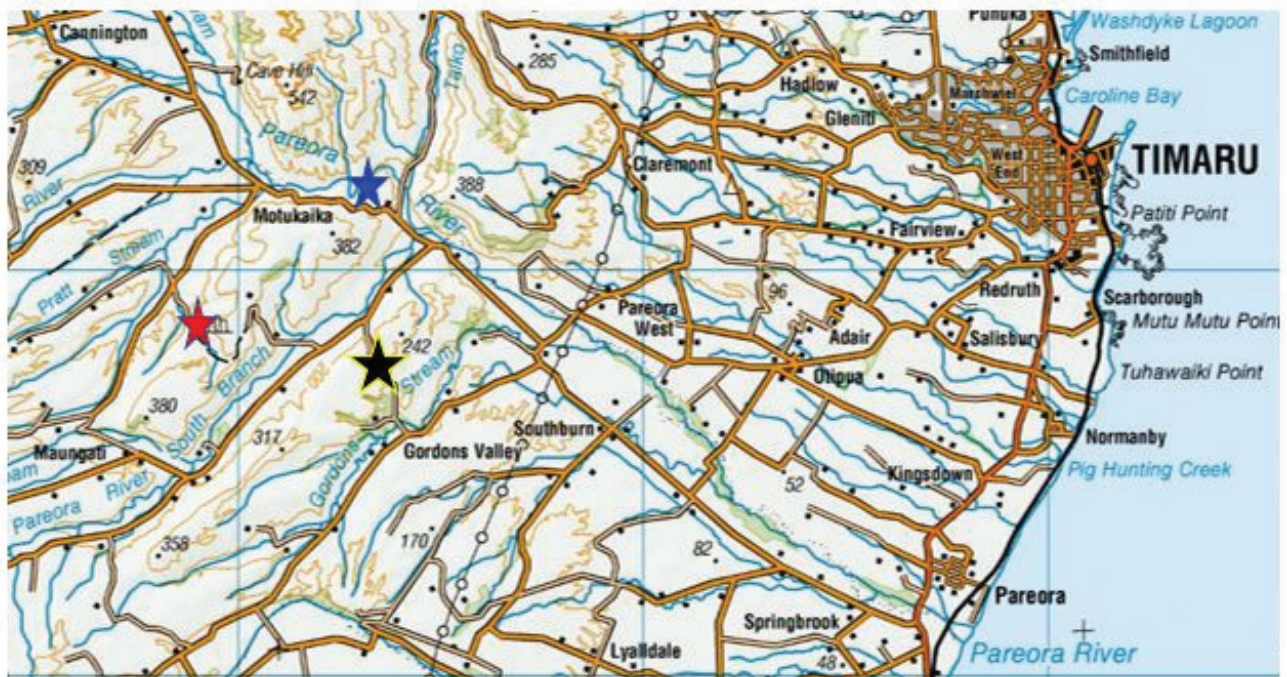
In 1921, Benjamin Evans and his young sons located three such delineations of moa about 5 km in a direct line from where they lived (Fig. 1).

#### Labels and Interpretations

A century ago, no official register of archaeological sites and no commonly accepted recording system existed. On first sighting the rock art in Craigmores Valley and Frenchmans Gully in the Pareora catchment in 1921, Ben Evans and Hugh McCully applied various names to the drawings at sites now having New Zealand Archaeological Site Recording Scheme reference numbers J39/1, J39/2 and J39/17.

Evans and McCully referred to the rediscovered rock art sites by location (e.g. Frenchmans Gully [J39/17] and Craigmores Valley [J39/1 and J39/2]), or by their perceptions of the drawings' subject matter (e.g. a headless dog [J39/2], a seal with three moa [J39/1], and birdmen with a shark or fish [J39/17]). Henare Te Maire also applied subject matter descriptors such as birds, reptiles, men and fishes to refer to rock art motifs (Beattie 1918: 155). These subject matter descriptors continued to be used for decades by Henry Devenish Skinner (1933: 193, 195), Roger Duff in the late 1940s (*Fieldbook* 2: 50–55) and Tony Fomison (1969: 138).

What cultural messages are encoded in rock art drawings is unknown. Pohio (2019: 96) explains that “due to the loss of cultural memory caused by our colonial history, it is difficult to be definitive as to what they represent”.



**Figure 1.** Map of Pareora catchment. Scale: 10 km grids. The red star marks the location of J39/1 and J39/2 on Craigmore Station. The black star marks the site of J39/17 in Frenchmans Gully Road. The blue star marks Ben Evans' farm. 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. Image taken from <https://www.linz.govt.nz/products-services/maps/new-zealand-topographic-maps/topo250-map-chooser> [accessed 18 March 2023]

The authors use the labels moa and fish/shark because the subject matter is reasonably apparent. They apply the labels headless dog, seal and birdmen to other drawings, not because that is what is conclusively represented or encoded, but because of the long history of the application of these labels to these motifs.

Pohio (2019: 96) distinguishes between “drawings (made with charcoal) and paintings (in ochre pigment and shark oil)”. The authors use the term drawings simply because Trotter and McCulloch (1971: 30) and Fomison (1962: 119) do so. Paintings may be a more appropriate term because of the penetration of pigment colours into small indentations on the limestone surface. This penetration has ensured the survival of motifs now invisible to the naked eye because of fading or erosion by rain. Spraying with water reveals them, but can encourage salt extraction and is not recommended (Brian Allingham pers. comm. May 2023).

#### Updating the 1921 Pre-history Paradigm

When the Pareora drawings were rediscovered in 1921, a paradigm of New Zealand's pre-history quite different from today's prevailed among ethnologists. C<sup>14</sup> had not yet been used to date archaeological objects or events. When McCully first viewed and analysed the moa drawings, he subscribed to Te Rangi Hiroa's (1925: 38, 53) now superseded pre-history paradigm that New Zealand had been settled “a fairly long time before 1150 AD” by “at least two distinct waves of pre-Toi peoples”, and possibly even before Kupe arrived in 950 AD. McCully did not know that Early Eastern Polynesians (moa-hunters) apparently first arrived in the North Island around 1250–75 AD and later in the South Island around 1280–95 AD where moa-hunting commenced

c. 1300 AD (Bunbury et al. 2022: 1). This shortened C<sup>14</sup> dated chronology of arrival “disarticulated relationships assumed hitherto between phases and processes” (Anderson 2016a: 3).

By 1345–65 AD, Māori had penetrated the South Island's southern hinterland and human coprostanol entered the sediments of lakes Diamond and Patrick in the Wānaka-Queenstown area (Argiriadis et al. 2018). The “first and most devastating phase of deforestation” commenced and proceeded until 1450 AD, and “when moa became extinct about 1450 a re-orientation of subsistence economy toward fishing and foraging was necessary” (Anderson 2016a: 5) in the southern regions of the South Island. Varves in Lake Ōhau indicate that, shortly after their arrival, the climate in southern South Island regions became cooler between 1385 AD and 1710 AD because of a shift from “westerly (Zonal) conditions to predominately southerly (Trough) conditions” (Roop 2015: 109, 113).

In 1921, it was thought that between 19 (Richard Owen from 1839 on) and 26 (Frederick Hutton in the 1890s) species of moa had once existed. The Evans children, who collected great quantities of moa bones (Teviotdale 1932: 83), did not know that DNA analysis would reveal that only nine moa species had existed and been hunted to extinction (Bunce et al. 2009: fig. 1). These K-selected birds apparently lived in stable populations at or near the carrying capacity of the landscape which was between 2.02 to 9.66 birds per km<sup>2</sup> (Latham et al. 2019: 1). Around four species were available on the Canterbury Plains while in the Mackenzie Country six or seven species could be caught (Latham et al. 2019: fig. 2(A)).

McCully (1957) thought the moa-hunters remote ancestral origins lay in India, not Taiwan (Howe 2005), and that they then traversed Malaysia/Indonesia. DNA research shows that “96 per cent of Polynesian mtDNA has an Asian origin, as [does] one-third of Polynesian Y chromosomes” and the remaining two-thirds of Y chromosomes are from New Guinea and nearby islands (Anderson 2016b: 20). Having voyaged as far as Samoa-Tonga, C<sup>14</sup> dates indicate Polynesians settled other Pacific archipelagos in two phases, 1025–1120 AD and 1150–1280 AD, New Zealand being reached during the second phase (Wilmshurst et al. 2010).

Formal study of archaeology as a discipline only commenced in New Zealand in 1919 with Henry D Skinner’s appointment to Otago Museum and McCully’s generation did not have the benefit of such training. McCully drew upon the mainstream authorities of the time (Best 1915; Te Rangi Hiroa 1925) and analysed the moa drawings according to the now superseded pre-history paradigm they advocated.

#### Location and Description of Rock Art Sites J39/1, J39/2 and J39/17

Rock art sites J39/1, J39/2 and J39/17 are located in the 539 km<sup>2</sup> Pareora catchment south of Timaru, in South Canterbury (Fig. 1). Several other rock art sites have been found since these were located in 1921. J39/17 and J39/2 contain other drawings but only one composition from each site is discussed here. J39/1 and J39/2 are located in the Valley of the Moa (formerly Craigmere Valley). J39/17 is in Frenchmans Gully Road, a former ara tawhito (traditional pathway) between Gordons Stream and the Pareora River South Branch. The Frenchmans Gully

rock art site was re-labelled Te Manunui (great bird) in 2007 because Ngāi Tahu “believe the bird figure ... represents New Zealand’s now extinct pouākai or Haast eagle (*Aquila moorei* previously *Harpagornis moorei*)” (<https://www.heritage.org.nz/list-details/7826/Te-Manunui-Rock-Art-Site> [accessed 23 May 2023]).

A detailed survey of the Pareora catchment was completed just before 1921 by Gudex (1918: 257) who described the limestone anticline that forms Craigmere Hill and the asymmetrical, steeply dipping Valley of the Moa on its northwest side (Fig. 2). Sites J39/1 to J39/5 and J39/8 are situated partway up the distinctive limestone bluffs edging the Valley of the Moa. Michael Gudex (1887–1964), who was Hugh McCully’s (1878–1967) nephew, reported that within the catchment there were “numerous limestone caves, which sometimes contain bones of extinct birds, such as *Harpagornis*, *Cnemiornis* and *Dinornis*” (Gudex 1918: 249), but he made no mention of sighting any rock art treasures in these caves.

J39/1 is a small, south-facing limestone niche situated on a steep slope, about 20 yards up-valley from J39/2, according to Roger Duff (*Fieldbook 2*: 54). On its limestone surface are life-like drawings of three moa all outlined in red ochre (haematite) and partly in-filled with black lines. A seal, not outlined in finely painted red, separates the middle moa from the right-side one. The right-side moa measures 80 cm on the diagonal (Brian Allingham pers. comm. 2021). Above and to the right of the right-side moa is a small human figure outlined in red ochre which Roger Duff (*Fieldbook 2*:



**Figure 2.** Hugh McCully’s 1921 photograph of the Valley of the Moa looking up-valley. He framed this photograph so that Birdsheed Rock (left, centre) pointed at J39/1 and J39/2. Remnants of podocarp forest cling to the limestone bluff. MS-582-F-13-001 reproduced with permission of Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago

55) described as “russet”. McCully (1960) noted it, but did not transfer it to his tracing scroll. Allingham thought that:

... given the generally steep ground at this site it is unlikely to have been occupied much beyond those who executed the art-work. Far more effective and comfortable shelters occur in very close proximity, where occupational evidence is clearly defined. Allingham (2014: 4).

J39/2 is just down-valley from J39/1, is larger, north-facing, and capable of sheltering several people. It contains multiple rock art drawings and the cave floor and immediate surrounds have been excavated (McCulloch 1984; Allingham 2014). Near J39/2, Allingham (2014: 3, 5) unearthed “cultural material of Māori origin” and bones which appeared “to have cultural associations”. Heat-broken greywacke umu stones, some stone flakes produced during tool manufacturing and a piece of red ochre were found (Allingham 2014: 5). In addition, Allingham found a few *Megalapteryx didinus* (Upland moa) green egg shell fragments.

J39/17 (Te Manunui) is a springs-rich limestone shelter (Fig. 3) located in Frenchmans Gully Road; this ara tawhito first traversed blue clays and then limestone (Gudex 1918: 252). Springs once filled the water trough in Figure 3. Another spring feeds a small stream flowing from the base of the rock art shelter and a third spring rises across the road on the opposite valley wall. The rock shelter contains several drawings other than the unique composition of three birdmen and a shark/fish and is capable of sheltering several people – but there is no evidence the site was occupied (Brian Allingham pers. comm. May 2023). Orchard-like groves of *tī kōuka* (*Cordyline australis*) grow along the former ara tawhito between Gordons Stream and the Pareora River South Branch.

#### Moa Fever and the Quest to Locate Rock Art Sites

The first Benjamin Evans (1841–1918) bought 50 acres along the Pareora River in 1870 and by 1918 the second Benjamin Evans (1880–1970) (Fig. 4A) owned 1,000 acres (Evans 1975: 202, 211). The latter’s sons, Lindsay, Alwynne and historian Allister (Fig. 4B), were “infected with moa fever” (interview Gary Evans 14–15 February 2023) because they had found rock art and numerous moa bones on their farm. A quest to locate some of the catchment’s other rumoured rock art sites was embarked upon. They made:

... a detailed survey of all the limestone areas of Craigmore, Gordons Valley and the Limestone Valley in Taiko, where they discovered all the shelters containing Moa Hunter art, in the form of black drawings on the rock. These finds were kept secret, because of the destruction which had already taken place of the drawings at Hanging Rock, on the Opihi River. However, Hugh McCully was notified about these finds.... (Evans 1975: 1).

Ben Evans consulted Hugh McCully (Fig. 5) because of his well-known interest in rock art (*Timaru Herald*, 4

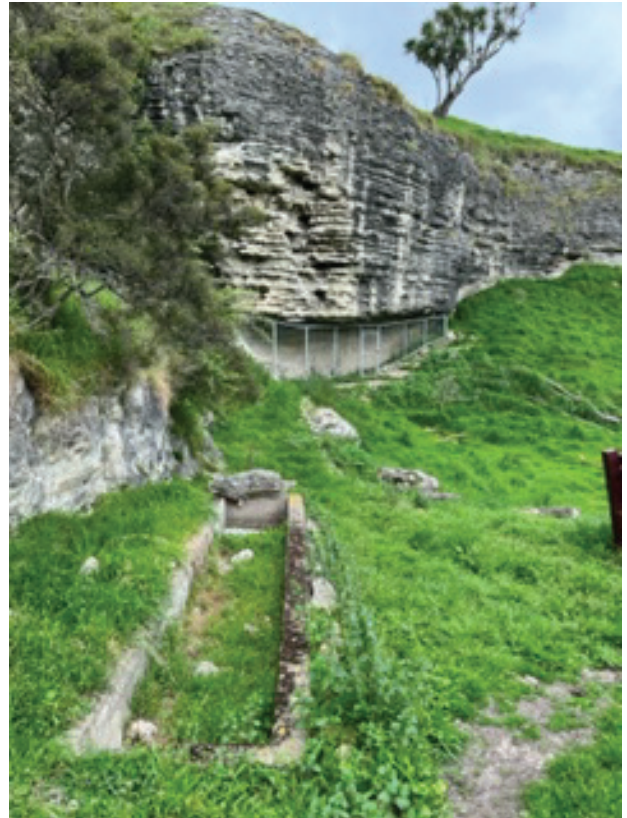
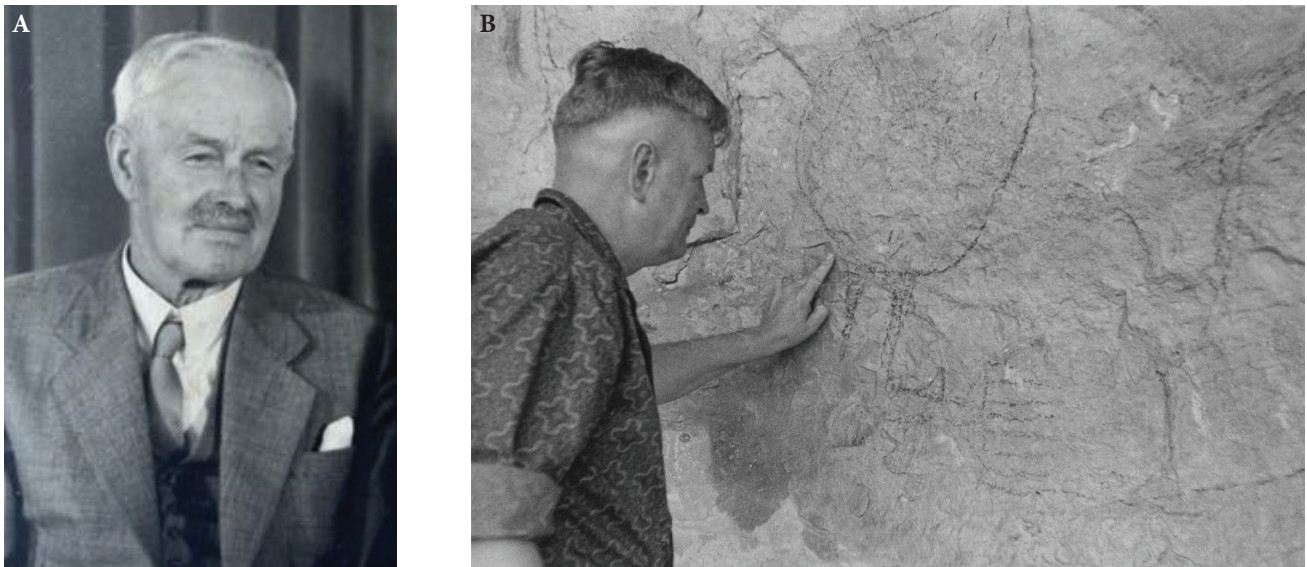


Figure 3. Te Manunui rock art site in 2022. Photograph by Rosanna McCully McEvedy. All Rights Reserved

October 1916: 9) and pro-protection stance. At a time when limestone outcrops containing rock art were being mined, and drawings defaced and excised, McCully took a reporter around some South Canterbury rock art sites and the reporter wrote the drawings “ought to be ‘tapu’ to present and future generations” (*Timaru Herald*, 10 July 1917: 3). In 1951, the South Canterbury Historical Society (SCHS) visited some rock art sites (SCHS 1991: 32), and McCully was still complaining about the “enterprising American” Elmore who “chiselled out” rock art drawings because “out of [their] setting the value is lost” (*Timaru Herald*, 18 January 1951: 4). McCully understood that the landscape, the rock art in it and the people who made it were bound together. Ngāi Tahu archaeologists believe that “rock art is more than just pictures – it’s a vital window on indigenous peoples’ relationship with the whenua [land]” (*Te Karaka*, 2017: 38).

In 1921, McCully immediately appreciated the artistic merits and archaeological significance of the moa drawings. Canterbury and Otago Museums were advised. In line with Best’s (1915) and Te Rangi Hiroa’s (1925) now discredited (Simmons 1969) Kupe-Toi-Great Fleet paradigm of New Zealand’s pre-history, McCully thought “moa-hunters” were Te Rangi Hiroa’s (1925: 31) “tangata-whenua” who possibly arrived before Toi in 1150 AD and definitely arrived several centuries before the Great Māori Fleet of 1350 AD. Because Māori did not arrive until 1350 AD, in this superseded version of New Zealand’s pre-history, McCully thought the moa drawings in J39/1 were pre-Māori and therefore non-Māori, but not necessarily non-Polynesian. All his



**Figure 4.** A. Benjamin Evans (1880–1970). B. Allister Evans (1911–1977), son of Ben Evans, c. 1959. Photographs reproduced with permission of Gary and Peter Evans. All Rights Reserved

life McCully believed there was a “moa-hunter period before the Maoris came to New Zealand” (*New Zealand Free Lance*, 2 February 1958: 17).

#### 1921 Tracings of the Three Moa

The Evans family and McCully immediately traced the moa drawings (Evans 1975: 1). At J39/1, McCully traced the moa on to several sheets of butter (baking) paper, then at home put the jigsaw together, flipped it over, heavily hatched the outline in soft lead pencil, flipped the jigsaw right-side up on to calico and traced around the outline, thereby producing a carbon copy (Fig. 6). McCully filled in each moa with short, disconnected, black parallel lines to indicate the patchy nature of the in-fill but did not outline them in red. The Evans’ scroll (Fig. 7) was produced in a similar manner to McCully’s.

On 18 March 1931, McCully took David Teviotdale (Diary entry 18–25 March 1931) (Fig. 8) to see the moa drawings and to “call on a Mr Evans ... [whose] boys it was who discovered the moa paintings”. Teviotdale wrote the charcoal in-fill on the drawings appeared to be “dotted in” because it had only caught on the higher limestone surfaces within the drawings (Fig. 9). At the same time, “Mr. Evans showed me the bones of some twenty moas his sons had taken from a fissure in the rock on his farm. With them were bones of *Aptornis* [extinct adzebill] and *Cnemiornis* [extinct goose]” (Teviotdale 1932: 83).

In 1932, Teviotdale asked McCully to supply a photograph to illustrate his article on The material culture of the moa-hunters in Murihiku in which he definitively linked ‘moa-hunters’ and Māori “racially and culturally” to Polynesia (Teviotdale 1932: 119). McCully supplied a photograph of the Evans’ scroll and so Teviotdale (1932: 104) illustrated his article with a drawing (Fig. 10) based on the now lost Evans’ scroll. He solidly filled in all three moa even though he had noted in his diary the filling was “dotted in” (Fig. 8).



**Figure 5.** Hugh McCully (right) and Te Rangi Hiroa (left) meet in late January 1926. Eight months later, in spring 1926, McCully identified the 150-acre Waitaki moa-hunter necropolis site on J B Chapman’s farm. In July 1927, Te Rangi Hiroa left New Zealand to take up a position overseas (*Timaru Herald*, 4 July 1927: 3). Seymour collection. All Rights Reserved



**Figure 6.** Hugh McCully’s 100-year-old moa scroll held by granddaughters Marion Seymour (left) and Anthea McCully (right). Photograph by Rosanna McCully McEvedy, 2019. Seymour Collection, All Rights Reserved

**McCully’s Views on the Moa Drawings**

McCully (1960) thought the three moa depicted in J39/1 were at rest, stationary prey accurately depicted by an observant hunter-artist in a “camera” snap-shot:

*Bird watching for pleasure may be an innocent and pleasant pastime but as practised by the Moa Hunter it boded ill for the bird. The Moa Hunter did not have a camera but in a rock shelter in Craigmere Valley ... he portrayed a group of Moas in a rest or sleep posture ....*

*The drawing is a good example of Moa Hunter art. The spur on the leg of the complete bird was a pleasing detail [Fig. 11].*

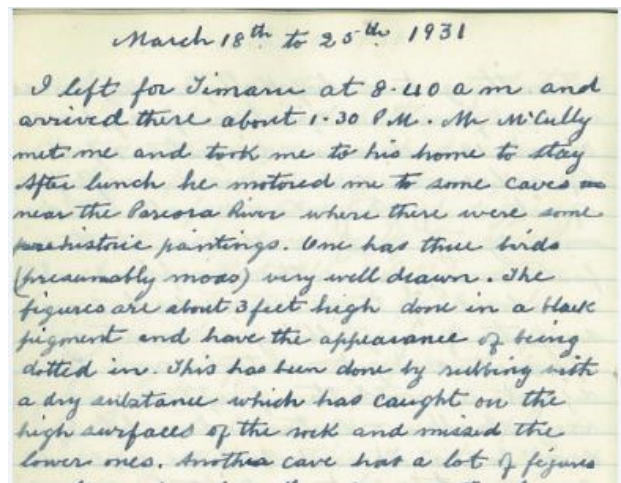
*The small figure [not depicted in Figs 6 and 7] is part of the drawing. In other drawings it appears in different forms, its purpose not clear ....*

*The drawings depict Moas in a rest or sleep posture – the posture of the birds prior to the arrival of the hunter [Figs 12A and 12B] .... As far as can be seen at present that is what the artist had in mind when he made the drawing.*

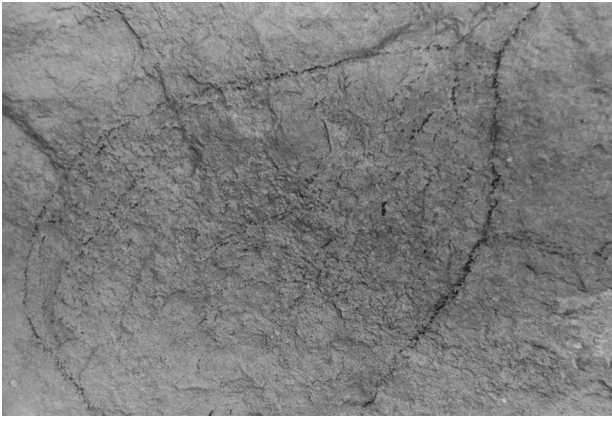
In addition to daytime snaring, clubbing and ambushing of moa, McCully thought moa-hunters killed roosting moa at night. “No chasing of relays of men are suggested” in J39/1 (*Timaru Herald*, 18 January 1951: 4). Moa were



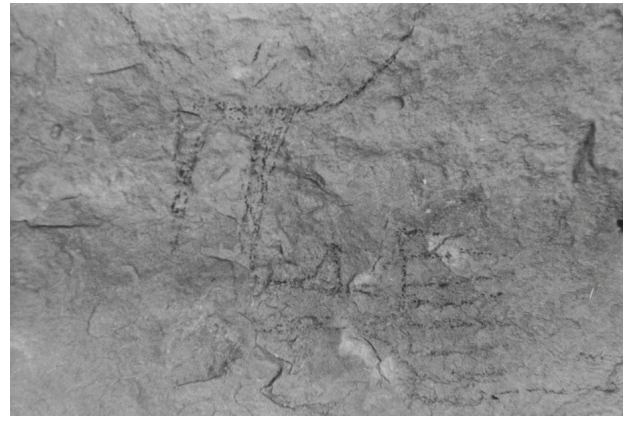
**Figure 7.** McCully’s 1921 photo of the now lost 1921 Evans’ scroll. Photograph by Rosanna McCully McEvedy 2019. Seymour Collection. All Rights Reserved



**Figure 8.** Extract from David Teviotdale’s diary entry 18–25 March 1931 recording his visit to Craigmere Valley with McCully. Reproduced with permission of Hocken Collections, Uare Taoka o Hākena, University of Otago



**Figure 9.** Middle moa's body showing its relatively dense red haematite outline and patchy black in-fill. Photograph by Allister Evans. All Rights Reserved



**Figure 11.** The spur on the left leg of the middle moa which so pleased Hugh McCully. Photograph by Allister Evans c. 1959. All Rights Reserved



FIG. 1.

Painting on rock-face of tributary of the Pareora River, near Timaru.

**Figure 10.** Teviotdale's illustration based on McCully's photograph of the 1921 lost Evans' scroll. Courtesy of the Editor, *Journal of the Polynesian Society*

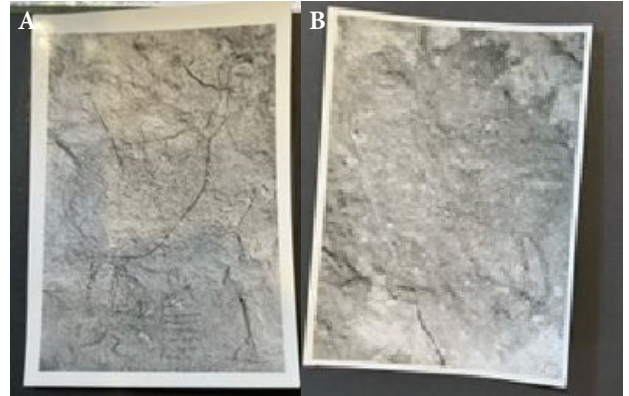
flightless, could only roost on the ground, and so were easy to surround and kill when asleep. Allingham (2014: 1) is of the view that:

*There seems to be little doubt that the moa group were painted by someone who observed these birds alive, which would make this work date from around 400–500 years ago at least, and possibly much older.*

### The Headless Dog in J39/2

In 1922, McCully took Arthur George Hornsey (Fig.13) to the Valley of the Moa and Hornsey traced the headless dog in J39/2. Hornsey transferred his original tracings onto art paper, not calico, and photographed them in 1922. The authors developed seven of his old negatives in 2019, including one of the headless dog (Fig. 14). McCully first met Hornsey in 1907 when McCully joined the South Canterbury Acclimatisation Society. Both were members of the SCHS from its establishment in 1941, and were on its committee in 1945 when Roger Duff was asked to report to the SCHS on 15 or so rock art sites in South Canterbury and make recommendations about protecting them. Hornsey and McCully remained life-long friends.

In October 1945, Roger Duff (*Fieldbook* 2: 53–55) inspected Hornsey's tracings, recorded Hornsey had not traced the moa in J39/1, and accepted Hornsey's tracing of the headless dog as "adequate". Duff recorded the dog



**Figure 12.** Roosting or resting moa. A. The middle moa. B. The right-side moa. Its haunches and neck were barely discernible to the naked eye in 1959 and have faded since then. Photographs by Allister Evans c. 1959. All Rights Reserved

was outlined in a "rusty yellow shade" and was headless because of accidental flaking of the limestone surface at its neck.

### Dating Rock Art

Henare Te Maire used colours to distinguish older from younger rock art and told Beattie (1918: 148, 149) "only the designs done in black are Waitaha work" and the red drawings "were done many generations later than the black, and were the work of Kati-Mamoe, who simply copied the Waitaha figures". O'Regan (2016: 17) notes the "vast majority" of rock art is executed in black. In 1959, Fomison was commissioned by the South Canterbury Regional Committee of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust to survey 185 rock art sites and report on what protection and sign-posting was needed (Fomison 1960: 14). McCully was a member of that Trust committee and accompanied Fomison to some sites (Fig. 15). Like Henare Te Maire, Fomison (2013: 83) noted "a greater use of red" occurred in later Classic Style rock art than in Early Style drawings, and he proposed that Early Style rock art was characterised by certain design features such as the "internal blank", particular motifs such as "dog-men, seal-men and bird-men", "ancestor compositions" and compositions where different subjects, fully drawn, were linked to each other (Fomison 2013: 61–67). Fomison (2013: 68–72) thought



**Figure 13.** Arthur George Hornsey c. 1951. Hornsey collection. All Rights Reserved



**Figure 14.** Hornsey's 1922 unpublished tracing of the headless dog in J39/2. Hornsey collection. All Rights Reserved

the headless dog, moa and birdmen were among some of the earliest rock art drawings.

Bain (1982: 46, 54–55) conducted a computer-based discriminant analysis “to test Fomison’s chronological sequence” of three styles (“Early”, “Classic” and “European Contact”) and concluded “Fomison’s temporal sequence appeared to be quite a realistic assessment of the drawings” (Bain 1982: 98). But Fomison’s use of stylistic variability to construct a relative chronology of rock art is not fully accepted; O’Regan (2016: 17–19) canvasses authors who interpret the stylistic variations in other ways.

In 2019, attempts to date rock art using  $C^{14}$  were compromised by Theo Schoon’s over-crayoning of rock art motifs and this led to “unexpectedly early” dates quite incongruent with the timing of Māori settlement of New Zealand in the thirteenth century (O’Regan et al. 2019). If the  $C^{14}$  dates of arrival proposed by Bunbury et al. (2022) are accepted, then rock art in the South Island is no older than around 743 years.

### Te Manunui (the Birdmen)

In 1921, McCully and Evans traced the birdmen composition in J39/17 and photographs were taken.



**Figure 15.** Hugh McCully (left), Tony Fomison (centre) and Mrs Airini Woodhouse (right) at Hazelburn, 1959, at the outset of Fomison’s survey of 185 rock art sites which allowed him to construct his “Early”, “Classic” and “European Contact” chronology of rock art. Photograph by Langford Studios, Timaru. South Canterbury Museum ID 2014.107.327. All Rights Reserved

McCully’s birdmen yard-square (91.4 cm by 91.4 cm) scroll went missing around 1963. The Evans’ scroll still existed in 1970 but is now lost (Gary Evans interview 14 February 2023). However, in 1933, Henry D Skinner (1933: 193) wrote a series of articles for the *Journal of the Polynesian Society* on Māori amulets and illustrated his third article with a tracing (Fig. 16) of the birdmen taken off a photograph supplied by Hugh McCully. McCully’s early photograph is still in Otago Museum and has tracing indentations on its surface. An early Evans’ photograph exists (Fig. 17) but the shark’s tail is cut off. H D Skinner (1933: 193) thought:

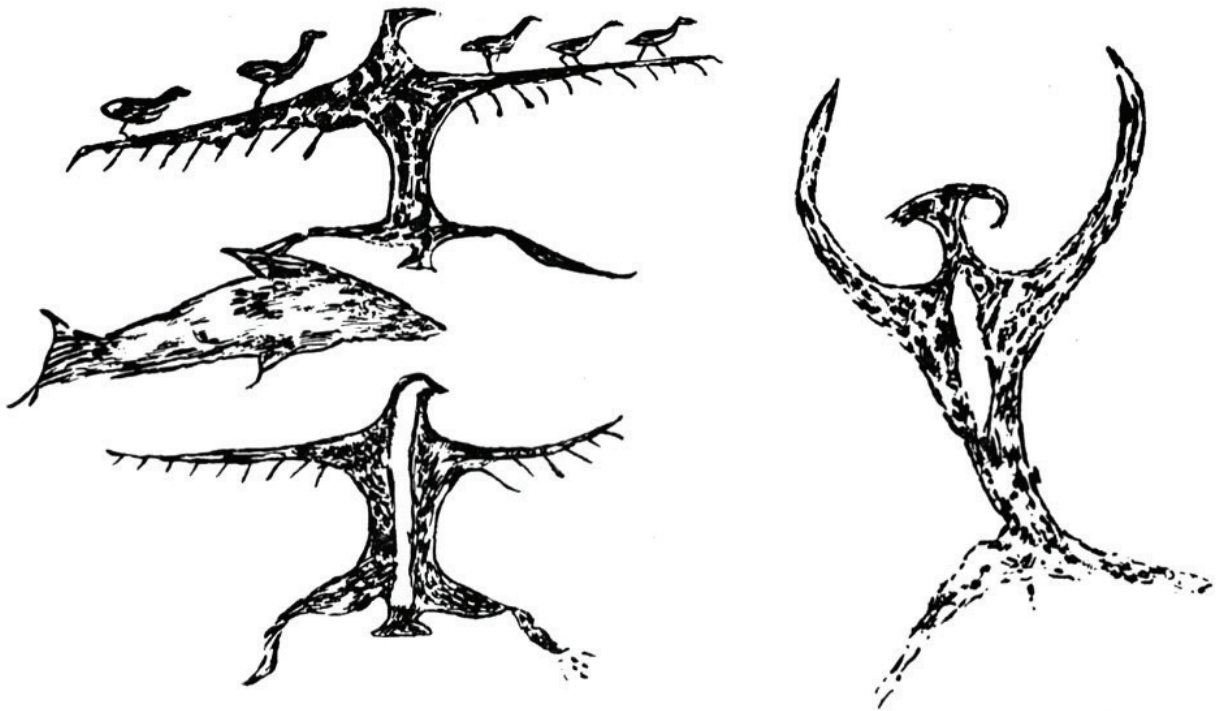
*Owing to its superposition I believe that the drawing of the fish is of later date than the three other figures; it may, therefore, be disregarded in the present discussion. The three other figures are apparently bird-men, the bird element being more strongly emphasized than is usual. It may be suggested that here we have Tane represented specifically as guardian and god of birds. If there were any evidence of the existence among the Maoris of a Tane priesthood these drawings might be held to represent masked priests; but there is no evidence of such a priesthood in New Zealand or anywhere else in Polynesia.*

Theo Schoon (*Otago Daily Times*, 13 September 1947: 9) thought pre-European Māori rock art had a spiritual or magical purpose but Fomison (2013: 85) dismissed this idea, stating the meaning and function of rock art were unknown. Trotter and McCulloch (1971: 75) noted that birdmen and birds were “commonly classed as two separate forms” but dismissed this distinction and claimed they were “of one order”.

### Restoration

In 1923, McCully noticed the birdmen composition was deteriorating and restored it with Indian ink. On 2 October 1945, he admitted to Duff he had restored it (Duff, *Fieldbook* 2). Fomison (1969: 138) noted that McCully’s retouches were done in a manner that allowed “traces of the original colouring [to be] still visible





**Figure 16.** Henry D Skinner's illustration traced off McCully's early photograph of the birdmen. Courtesy of the Editor, *Journal of the Polynesian Society*. All Rights Reserved

beneath both the ink on the 'birdman' and on the birds". McCully did not completely obliterate the original rock artists' colouration or change their designs. Duff (*Fieldbook 2*) recorded McCully left another bird figure on the "roof [ceiling] of the shelter", similar to the one on the right in Figure 16, completely untouched.

Subsequent finds of small birds on the outstretched wings of a larger bird at Hazelburn (South Canterbury) and Ngapara (North Otago) confirm the accuracy of retouching of the birdman group at Frenchmans Gully (Brian Allingham pers. comm. May 2023).



**Figure 17.** Evans' early 1920s photograph of birdmen. Gary Evans collection. All Rights Reserved

McCully set out his approach to restoration in his letter of 22 September 1946 to William Vance of the Department of Internal Affairs, Timaru: “Restoration merely means restoring [drawings] to their original clearness and nothing more”. Advocating a patch-up approach to conservation to address intermittent damage caused by sunlight, lichen, rain or flaking, McCully (22 September 1946) wrote, “I would rather call a doctor than let the patient die of neglect”. He did not want drawings to degrade beyond recognition, as has now occurred with some previously recorded ones (O’Regan 2016: 16).

Heritage New Zealand states, “The rock art at Te Manunui is clearly visible, in good condition and contains complete figures” (<https://www.heritage.org.nz/the-list/details/7826> [accessed 23 May 2023]). McCully (letter dated 22 September 1946) wrote “for the full appreciation of a work of [rock] art it should be seen [from] as far as possible in the setting for which it was created”. McCully wanted to maintain the link between visibility, whenua (landscape) and subject matter (motif) and, rightly or wrongly from today’s perspective, attempted to keep the visibility of the birdmen composition alive when he applied Indian ink to it in 1923.

Theo Schoon’s restorations were qualitatively different. He used “large grease [sic] crayons”, “was inaccurate”, “did not attempt to cover mark for mark”, failed to recognise when drawings were superimposed on each other and “often amalgamated a sequence of drawings over-lying one another into one incomprehensible image” (Fomison 1987: 159–160). Allingham, who surveyed and inspected over 600 rock art drawings for the Ngāi Tahu South Island Māori Rock Art Project (Low 2015: 28), confirmed that when Schoon retouched rock art motifs he often redesigned them mostly through omissions to meet his personal aesthetic bias and that McCully’s restoration of the birdmen respected the original artists’ designs (Brian Allingham pers. comm. May 2023).

### Art, Not Doodles

McCully admired the two koru-like whorls formed by the blank spaces between the head, neck and wings of the 33 cm high birdman on the right (Fig. 16). The authors recall McCully holding up his calico birdmen scroll and discussing features on it in the late 1950s. McCully thought these whorls were intentionally incorporated design features. Taylor (1952: 92) recorded that:

*During January 1931, Professor Speight and the writer’s friend H. McCully inspected the various sites of moa hunters’ camps, and places with rock paintings. Some of the places were Waitaki Mouth, Kakahu, Otaia [sic], Gray Hills [sic], Temuka and Upper Pareora.*

McCully took Robert Speight to J39/1, J39/2 and J39/17. Speight thought “the drawings were like the work of a child” (*Nelson Evening Mail*, 29 January 1931: 11). Despite having opposing opinions about the artistic merit of rock art, Speight and McCully remained cordial

throughout their five-day tour (*Nelson Evening Mail*, 29 January 1931: 11).

Henare Te Maire told Beattie (1918: 155) the rock art drawings “were not aimless objects, but recorded Waitaha history, and were drawn when they came to the South Island. They represent men, and also the birds, fishes and reptiles they met on their voyages”. McCully thought the rock art drawn by moa-hunters (Early Eastern Polynesians) followed a set of artistic principles which they brought with them to New Zealand and he proposed that some rock art drawings communicated ancient cultural information and experiences acquired during their ancestors’ journey out of “the forest of India, and the East Indies” (McCully 1957). McCully thought moa-hunters and Māori had distant Southeast Asian origins, but moa-hunters had reached New Zealand earlier than the Great Fleet Māori settlers, and their traditions entered Māori culture and “survive today in countless Maori stories which have become localised in New Zealand” (McCully 1957). In 1957, he wrote, “I regard the drawings as tradition rendered pictorially”. He believed New Zealand’s rock art drawings had artistic merit, were of archaeological importance, conformed to culturally derived aesthetic principles, and should be respected. “They are examples of primitive art comparable with those of Spain and France, notwithstanding differences in style,” he said (*Timaru Herald*, 18 January 1951: 4).

In the early twentieth century, rock art was often judged according to perceived artistic merit. Elmore thought Bushman (San) rock art was “of a much higher order than the Australian” (*Press*, 20 July 1916: 10) and that Māori rock art paintings were “very crude in comparison with the rock art paintings that are found in many parts of South Africa” (*Dominion*, 1 December 1916: 8). McCully’s opinions differed from Elmore’s and those held by respected ethnologist William Henry Skinner, President of the Canterbury Philosophical Institute, who thought the then currently known “crude paintings on the rock shelters of Canterbury and North Otago” could not claim “to have the same archaeological value as those in south-west Europe” (*Lyttelton Times*, 2 May 1918: 6).

McCully also disagreed with Roger Duff (1946: 1) who reported to the SCHS that “relatively few of the drawings would be beyond the artistic powers of a pre-school European child”, were the result of “doodling” by passers-by, were “caricature human figures, fish, lizards, insects, seals and birds” lacking artistic merit, and were mere charcoal “scribbles”. McCully thought Duff’s opinion was wrong but did not pursue changing it because Duff ended up recommending that South Canterbury’s rock art should be preserved (Duff 1946: 2–5), and that was the objective the SCHS committee, which included McCully, wanted to achieve.

### Final Words

This personal account of the rediscovery of the remarkable rock art drawings in J39/1, J39/2 and J39/17

by the Evans family in 1921 presents early photographs and tracings from the Evans, Hornsey and McCully families' records with the intention of supplementing information already known about these sites by archaeologists. It sets down Evans family lore about "moa fever" and presents views held by Hugh McCully (1957; 1960) who, in 1921, subscribed to Te Rangi Hīroa's (1925) and Elsdon Best's (1915) now superseded paradigm of pre-history.

The Evans-McCully archaeological relationship continued for decades after 1921. The authors end this account with a photograph taken in 1959 (Fig. 18) of Ben Evans, his son Allister and Hugh McCully at the Waitaki moa-hunter site, at Korotuaheka on the south bank of the Waitaki River. In spring 1926, McCully stood with Raniere Martene in a ploughed paddock near Te Maihāroa's former 1879 settlement on J B Chapman's farm where Chapman had ploughed up two adzes. McCully was in pursuit of adzes, not moa bones, but he picked up a bone, examined it, and realised a 150-acre "necropolis" of moa bones, moa ovens and middens lay before his eyes (Buick 1937: 163–164; McCully 1951). This was another important event in the history of archaeology.

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Hugh McCully with Tony Fomison and Airini Woodhouse. Gerard O'Regan facilitated much appreciated access to Hugh McCully's collection of artefacts in Otago Museum and showed the authors McCully's early birdman photograph. Hocken Collections are thanked for providing access to Hugh McCully's records.

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**Figure 18.** Hugh McCully (left), Ben Evans (middle) and Allister Evans (right) at the Waitaki moa-hunter site, Korotuaheka, 1959. Photograph by Stewart Willetts. Gary Evans Collection. All Rights Reserved

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