

# MOERAKI BOULDERS

## Warning

This information was published in 1966 in *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, edited by A. H. McLintock. It has not been corrected and will not be updated.

Up-to-date information can be found elsewhere in [Te Ara](#).

The Moeraki Boulders are situated on Koekohe Beach at a place named Kumara, midway between Hampden and Moeraki townships in North Otago. Access to them is gained by a small one-way side road, 1 mile north along the main road from Hillgrove railway station. The boulders are grey-coloured septarian concretions, which have been eroded out by wave action from the cliffs of soft, black mudstone that back the beach. In places, partially exposed concretions can be seen in the cliffs. They originally formed on the sea floor when the mudstone was accumulating during the early Tertiary period some 60 million years ago. The largest concretions are traversed by cracks, filled by yellow calcite. In some the upper part is worn away; only a shell remains, looking like discarded segments of orange peel. The concretions weigh several tons and are up to 12 ft in circumference. Similar concretions are known on the north-facing foreshore of Shag Point, some 12 miles further south, but these are derived from older (upper Cretaceous) mudstone.

According to Maori legend, the origin of the boulders dates from the loss of the *Araite-uru*, one of the large sailing canoes that came from distant Hawaiki. On her quest south for the precious greenstone, the canoe was wrecked near Shag Point (Matakaea). The reef which today extends seawards is the canoe's petrified hull, while close by, in the shape of a prominent rock, stands the petrified body of her commander. Strewn along the beach are the boulders which represent the eel baskets, calabashes, and kumaras washed ashore from the wreck. The name Moeraki (Moerangi) means "drowsy day".

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