



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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A COASTAL SECTION BELOW THE PA SITE AT ONGARE POINT

by J.C. Schofield.

Mr. F.W. Shawcross, Anthropology Dept. University of Auckland drew my attention to the following section during the Easter Holidays. He thought there may be some evidence for past sea-level change. Although the exposures were not suitable for such evidence better exposures might be had as quarrying for shell grit continues. The following is a rather hurried description of the section as exposed 30/3/64.

Layer 1 (Top) (1' plus) midden with clayey matrix. Contact 1/2 sharp irregular.

Layer 2 (6') Mixed lumps of "clays" derived from old soils and from man-associated 'clay-glomerates' - individual fragments up to 1' plus. Lenses of midden are present - type A with clay matrix and appears disturbed; type B has charcoal, is free of matrix and is not disturbed. Contact 2/3 sharp and irregular.

Layer 3 (1" - 4") Grey midden with much burnt broken shell. No clay matrix. Contact 3/4 sharp and almost horizontal. Dug through at one place by shallow pan-like pit filled with layer 3.

Layer 4 (0 - 2") fine clay-glomerate. Contact 4/5 sharp regular.

Layer 5 (0 - 4") compare 3 Contact 5/6 sharp regular.

Layer 6 (0 - 2") a five-foot long lens of brown-grey clay with fine horizontal bedding, rare charcoal fragments and worm casts. Contact 6/7 sharp and almost horizontal.

Layer 7 (5" - 9") sandy midden with much broken shell, lenses of whole shell, clay fragments, charcoal common, grey pumice pebbles at base. Contact 7/8 sharp horizontal.

Layer 8 (1'9") "midden" or storm-ridge of clean whole shell, no matrix, charcoal moderately common. Contact 8/9 sharp and horizontal.

Layer 9 (1'3" plus) Mainly broken shell with sandy matrix. Probably beach. Top about 1' above high tide level.

Notes

None of the contacts showed any evidence of great time intervals between deposition of the layers. The material of layer 2 may have been deliberately dumped in place - certainly the middens of type B were placed in this manner without any further transportation - or the bulk of the material may have slid down the steep slope on the ocean side of the Pa, being deliberately thrown there by the Maories; or perhaps this

steep slope was made almost vertical during occupation of the Pa and the material of layer 2 may be derived during excavation of the vertical slope. The boulders of clay-glomerates quoted in layer 2 were derived from man-mixed clays formed during some earlier period of excavation and fill.

I would like to see more of layer 8 before being certain that this layer is natural or not. The charcoal present could be derived by erosion of earlier man-associated deposits.

### THE POOR KNIGHTS ISLANDS

by

A. Leahy & E.M. Nicholls

The Poor Knights Islands lie 16 miles North East of the Whangarei Heads and 15 miles from the nearest point on the mainland. The group consists of two large islands; Tawhiti Rahi, covering about 318 acres, and Aorangi, approximately 163 acres. There are several smaller islets including the group.

#### Botany and Zoology

Botanically and zoologically the Islands are very interesting, because of their isolation. They have a very restricted range of plants with pohutukawa as the dominant tree. They are one of the few remaining areas where the Tuatara survives and, until recently, were the only known breeding-ground of the rare Buller's Shearwater. Until about twenty years ago there were wild pigs on Aorangi, but these were exterminated by a Government party sent to destroy them. There is no evidence for pigs on Tawhiti Rahi.

#### Geology

The Poor Knights are of volcanic origin and are "composed of Rhyolitic lava flows, breccias, and tuffs. They possibly represent the northern part of the Tectonic line which, further south, is marked by rhyolite out-pourings at Moko Hinau, Great Barrier, Cuvier and Colville". (Sumich 1955-6 : 64)

#### General Description

Tawhiti Rahi consists of two plateaus, one occupying the southern end, and a higher one which rises by a steepish cliff and then slopes gradually down towards the north. The whole island is surrounded by cliffs and landing on the island is possible only at two, or perhaps three, places where there are small indentations in the cliff. It is entirely covered by bush and scrub and there are no tracks except for the recently cleared but indistinct Marine Department track from the Eastern landing to the new lighthouse on the North East coast.

Aorangi is more circular island; the central part consists of a basin, that tips towards the sea to the North East, and a semi-circular rim of high cliffs leading to a plateau on the South West side. The North East end of the basin terminates in a sheer drop to the sea and all along the edge of this cliff are extensive areas of flax which reach up to the bush-line that begins about 200 yards from the cliff edge.