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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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EARLY POLYNESIAN OCCUPATION NEAR WHAKATANE - AN OPEN QUESTION?

W. A. Pullar

On Moore's farm at Thornton near Whakatane (Pullar, 1961), I made the observation that ... "Kaharoa Ash occurs as a distinct covering layer..." over fragments of charcoal and a nest of haangi stones; but despite subsequent probing of the site on numerous occasions I have never been able to reproduce the profile described in my first report. This in itself is suspicious that my identification of Kaharoa Ash is at fault. In 1965 I submitted a sample of Tarawera Ash and underlying white pumice grains to Dr J. W. Cole, then Nuffield Fellow at Victoria University of Wellington, and he reports as follows: "I have briefly examined this sample and apart from the sand grains it is mainly small basalt lapilli (Tarawera). There are a few rhyolite lapilli but it would be impossible to say for certain if these were Kaharoa. The Tarawera eruption threw out a good deal of rhyolite (which was picked up by the lava en route to the surface) and this could well account for the lapilli. I think, therefore, it would be very dangerous to base any assumptions on the deposit.."

This is not to say that Kaharoa Ash is not present somewhere on the dune - it has been noted on the right bank of the Rangitaiki River near the mouth and 40 ch. seaward of Moore's farm and also near the coast on Golf Course Road close to Whakatane. But it is not clearly seen at the site described in my first report. Early occupation is therefore suspect. This conclusion is also arrived at by Shawcross (1965) who from a limited excavation in another site nearby suggested that the cultural deposit was of a late age.

The dune at Moore's farm is now found to be older than the Taupo Pumice eruptions of AD 130; at the farmhouse, airfall Taupo Pumice was discovered three feet from the surface, and at many points from Matata to Whakatane, Taupo lapilli have been noted near the surface. On the tombolo at Mount Maunganui, Mr J. D. Cowie and I observed that soil profiles with airfall Taupo Pumice have rusty subsoils from iron oxide movement while younger profiles have no such striking colours. This arrangement is also confirmed on the Rangitaiki Plains.

Thus shorelines in my first report will have to be moved seaward by at least 40 ch. - the Taupo Pumice shoreline now passes along the foot of the dune on Moore's farm through the point of excavation of Shawcross

and the Kaharoa near the present shoreline. For these new lines I have to thank Mr W. G. Tuddenham, Geography Department, University of Sydney, who first proffered the suggestion, and Mr Alan Moore who found the Kaharoa Ash at the mouth of the Rangitaiki River.

References

- Pullar, W. A.            1961:    Early Occupation near Whakatane, Central Bay of Plenty. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter 4 (2); 42 - 5.
- Shawcross, F. W.       1965:    Report on Archaeological Investigations at Thornton, Whakatane, Bay of Plenty. Hist. Rev. XIII (3 & 4); 186-192.
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THE LAKE HAUROKO BURIAL: PRELIMINARY REPORT

D. R. Simmons  
Otago Museum.

At the request of Gordon White, Director of Southland Museum, a party from Otago Museum made a preliminary investigation of the burial cave on Mary Island, Lake Hauroko. Permission to view the remains was first obtained from Mr R. H. Whaitiri, Chairman of the Murihiki Tribal Committee. The Otago Museum party was taken over to Mary Island by Mr P. Corkery of Tuatapere. The remains are resting in a cave on the eastern side of the island. The cave is a triangular shaped cleft some ten feet high and four feet wide at the base. The body has been placed on a bier six feet from the entrance. A semicircle of manuka stakes have been placed so as to form a sloping backrest, while two large stones and three poles have been made into a seat. The whole of the backrest and probably much of the seat was covered with fern leaves before the body was placed in position. It is likely that some form of plaited mat has also been placed beneath the body. About three feet in front of the bier a barricade has been placed so as to prevent access to the cave.