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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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A Further Report on the OHAWE SITE.

by A.G.Buist

Two weekends have recently been spent in excavating a further three squares inland from the original oven (see J.P.S. June 1960). The 4-8ins. ash-charcoal occupation layer which surrounded this oven has been found to extend at least 24ft. inland and to contain many whole, and fragmented, bird bones (including moa), egg shell, heat-fractured stone and obsidian.

The excavations were made on an 8ft. grid, it being found practical to excavate only one square a day. Inevitably, near the end of the day, some find was made in the corner of the square or quadrant that had been the object of the dig, necessitating an extension of the grid the next day. After the first day a portion of a small stone-lined oven containing an Aptornis otidiformis tibio-metatarsal and fibula was found in the corner. The other interesting feature of this oven was that it was sealed by the main occupation layer. The second day's dig, which was directed at revealing the oven in its entirety, entailed first shifting a vast quantity of overburden sand dune. On this day two 4-8ft. quadrants were excavated but, as light was failing and sections were being drawn, a large Dinornis femur was found in the corner. This necessitated a further shifting of much sand early the next morning. A further 4-8ft. was laid out, later extended to 4-12 ft.

This quadrant contained the richest deposit of bone so far found on the site. There were some thirty large moa bones, complete femurs and broken tibia as well as a great quantity of smaller bird bone, obsidian, charcoal, chert and heat-fractured stone. This bone-rich midden must be similar to the midden from which Walter Mantell obtained his bones, catalogued by Lydekker, in 1847.

From the concentration of bone it is obvious that we are approaching a further area of oven complexes in the same occupation layer as the original one, but at least 24ft. away from it. Further excavation in the area, however, is precluded by the presence of a drift-wood garden fence of immense proportions and an elucidation of the remainder of the midden will have to await the inevitable erosion of the fence.

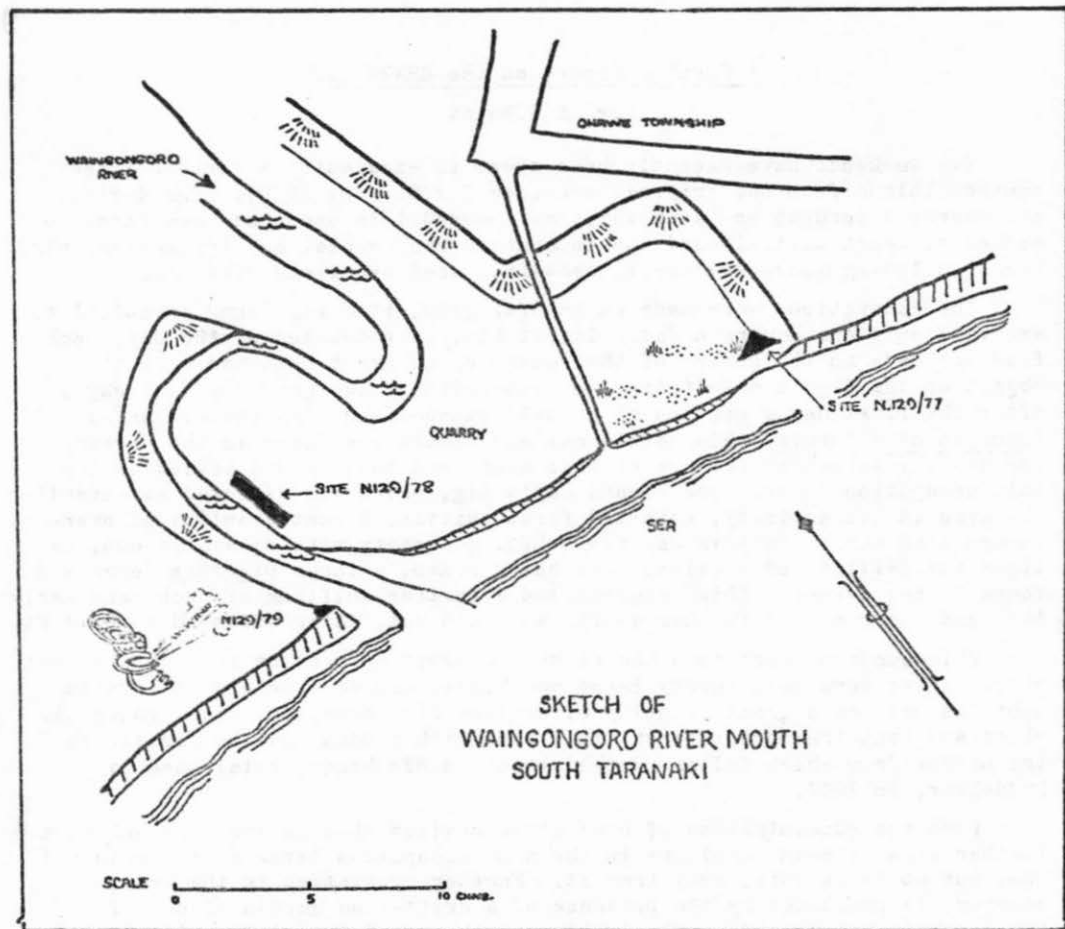
To date the only cultural material found in association has been obsidian - a great quantity of both purple and dark green - chert, and one broken moa-bone needle. No other worked bone has been found apart from a small ring cut from a round bird bone.

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Preliminary report on excavations at the TE RANGATAPU SITE (Waingororo River).

by Mrs. T. Canavan

Ohawe beach, five miles from Hawera, is situated in the South Taranaki Bight and is that area in which the Rev. R. Taylor (1843), W. B. D. Mantell (1847) and Sir. George Grey (1866) collected moa bones. There are two big pa sites here, Ohavetokotoko and Te Rangatapu. The former is on top of the cliffs a quarter of a mile east of Te Rangatapu and is separated from it by an ancient river basin. The Te Rangatapu pa is on the east side of the Waingororo River



and is being quarried away.

Excavations have been started directly below a quarry road leading to the beach. As the discovery has been made (January 1960) of an oven containing moa bones below Ohawetokotoko pa it has been decided to refer to that area as the OHAWA SITE and to the present excavations as the TE RANGATAPU SITE. Both sites are in the process of long term investigation.

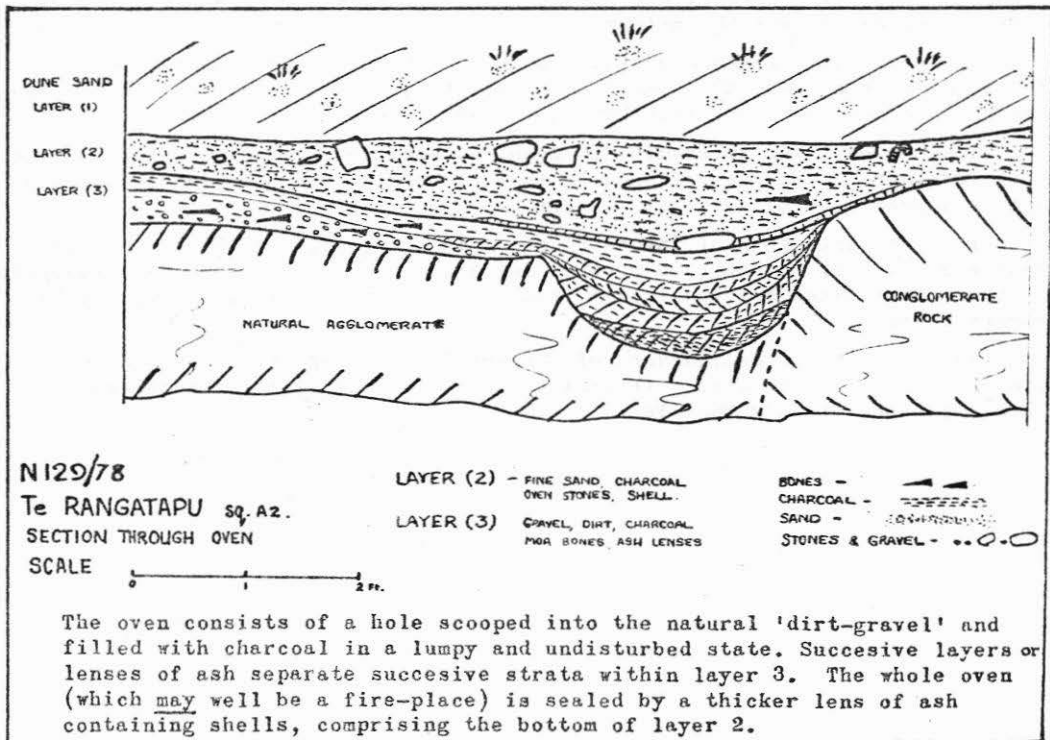
Along the east bank of the Waingorongoro River boxthorn and lupin grow on sand dune of varying depth. The river often runs high and the subsequent erosion led to the discovery, in January 1960, of moa and other bones on exposed clay and stones. Further upstream, part of an oven is exposed high in the bank. The two squares excavated so far give promise of extensive archaic occupation.

The overburden of dune sand is referred to as layer 1. To date this is up to 4ft. deep and, upon removal, gives way to a marked greasy black mixture

of sand and charcoal. This layer, number 2, has varied in depth from lin. at the eroded edge to 12ins inland. The heavy clay, dirt and sand mixture with a charcoal scatter is referred to as layer 3 and has varied in depth from less than lin. at the river edge to 6ins. inland. Natural has been established as a sand and pebble mixture. The proximity of the road has limited further investigations inland but it is obvious that the midden layer extends beneath it. Further squares will be opened upstream where a wider section may be obtained.

Investigations of the whole area have been carried out by A.G. Buist during 1959. It was decided to begin excavations in January 1960 when Mr. R.J. Scarlett and Mr. Buist had observed and recovered exposed moa bones. It was realised that the nature of the soil would make the recovery of whole bones difficult and uncertain. By working in an 8ft. square from the eroded area towards the road an undisturbed layer 2 was established and it became evident that the area contained a complex of ovens.

Layer 2, of square 1, yielded a scatter of burnt and fractured stone together with river stones. Faunal material was mainly bird and fish bone, especially fragments of moa bone, shell fragments, plentiful kuri droppings and a concentration of rat bones (legs and half jaws). Among a heap of fish bone the eye portion of a bone fish hook was found. The shank of another hook was found in charcoal above an oven. A small, worked, soft stone, possibly a hoanga, one small flake of obsidian and pieces of worked pumice



of varying sizes, represented the cultural material at this level.

In layer 3 fish and bird bone, halves of two sea lion jaws, large pieces of splintered bone, a large concentration of moa bone (including a pelvis) and two obsidian flakes, were exposed at the edge of the oven. Another obsidian flake and a thick shank of a bone fish hook gave further presumptive evidence of occupation at layer 3. The oven was approximately 3ft. by 2.ft.6in. and had been hollowed out from the natural below. Apart from a little burnt fish and moa bone, the oven was notable for its quantity of thick clean charcoal.

Excavation of square 2, while producing the same distinction between overburden and layer 2, gave less stratigraphical evidence of a separation of layers 2 and 3. A great scatter of burnt and river stones indicated another oven. Faunal material in upper layer 2 was again present, as in square 1, but larger quantities of shell were associated with fish and moa bone. Large pieces of moa bone were taken from the upper level of the oven, above an ash seal which extended beyond the oven and over part of the square toward the river. Kuri droppings were in and around the oven area. Four obsidian flakes with the point and shank of a bone fish hook, were found in the upper level of layer 2.

Layer 3 appeared in places to have been thrown up against low clay hummocks, possibly providing uneasy protection for the ovens against the Taranaki weather. Larger, and possibly identifiable, bones and a flake of obsidian appeared near the natural.

An interesting feature of the squares has been the presence of pumice in pieces varying from the size of a marble to a tennis ball. Some of these pieces have been worked. They have appeared in both layer 2 and 3.

Neither oven was stone-lined. Each had been cut below the natural. The oven in square 2 had been widened so that its edges were not clearly defined but it appeared to measure 3ft. by 3ft.

The greatest depth of layers 2 and 3, in square 1, was 18ins. and, in square 2, 12 ins. Both have produced an amazing quantity of midden material. Further excavations are required to establish a correct relationship between layers 2 and 3.

In May 1960 Mr. Ham.Parker, of the Auckland University Archaeological Society, visited the site. His assistance and advice will aid further investigations of TE RANGATAPU.