



NEW ZEALAND  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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RAKAUTARA - A CAVE SITE ON THE

KAIKOURA COAST (S49/3)

J. R. Eyles

The limestone sea caves of the Kaikoura coast have long been a profitable hunting ground for semi-professional fossickers. Large numbers of one-piece fish-hooks, composite bone fish-hook points, bird-spear points and various nephrite artifacts are typical hauls. Genuine archaeological investigation has usually been of a salvage nature, invariably after much disturbance of the cave floor. In this instance a thick layer of sheep and cattle dung had sealed in the occupation layers. Then in the 1930s, after construction of the railway, the portal of the cave was blasted off, effectively filling it with rubble and large chunks of rock. Vegetation subsequently concealed the now uninviting cave. On the 23rd January, 1972, the Eyles family, at the invitation of the owner, Mr Peter Moore, investigated a large, much fossicked cave nearby and it was during this visit that this smaller cave was discovered. A small area of floor at the back yielded a small polished 2B adze in Ohana argillite and a composite fish-hook point. Removal of large rocks and further sampling produced promising material for further investigation.

During the weekend 26th-27th February, 1972, the Nelson Museum Archaeological Group with the Moore family commenced a systematic clearance of the back of the cave, removing large quantities of rock. Occupation material was carried in buckets to the entrance of the cave and sieved there as the light inside was too dim and space too restricting. By now it was apparent from the material that a much more comprehensive assemblage of cave artifacts was being obtained than from any single cave previously dug. A profile had now emerged and working space cleared. This was carefully covered with polythene sheeting and camouflaged with rocks.

The group returned at Easter for further work during 1st, 2nd, 3rd April, 1972. In the meantime, curio seekers had been busy with a shovel destroying much of the exposed face. Fortunately we believe they found little as they were digging in ash and did not persist too far. We re-established the face, drew and photographed profiles with much difficulty in poor light. Working from the back to the front with a high bank of rubble at the entrance made hard work and eventually a stage was reached where further progress could not be made without

mechanical aid. The profile was again covered and hidden under rock. All material, i.e., artifacts, bone, shell, soil samples, vegetable matter and charcoal, was processed and stored in the Nelson Provincial Museum for further study and with a view to ultimate display. However, it has now been decided to house this in the Canterbury Museum.

About June 1972, rock for river protection at the new Clarence River bridge was removed from above the cave, from the adjoining hillside and from in front, virtually destroying the cave as such. Hopefully the bulldozer blades have spared the untouched occupation layers which are now quite accessible to further archaeological processing.

Generally speaking, the layering was in this sequence:

1. Surface - dung from European stock penned in cave.
2. Occupation - dark brown with some charcoal - friable, gritty, containing crushed shell, fish-bone, vegetable matter (some sedge).
3. Ash - grey with virtually no charcoal: shell altered to burnt lime.
4. Midden - (mainly at sides) - small quantities of shellfish:  
limpet, mussel, cook's turban, winkle,  
paua.  
- fishbone, dog, seal.
5. Ash.
6. Occupation - containing charcoal.
7. Brown - probably decayed vegetation - some wood.
8. Base - natural limestone pebbles.

The profile in the accompanying diagram is a typical one based on a series drawn at various stages.

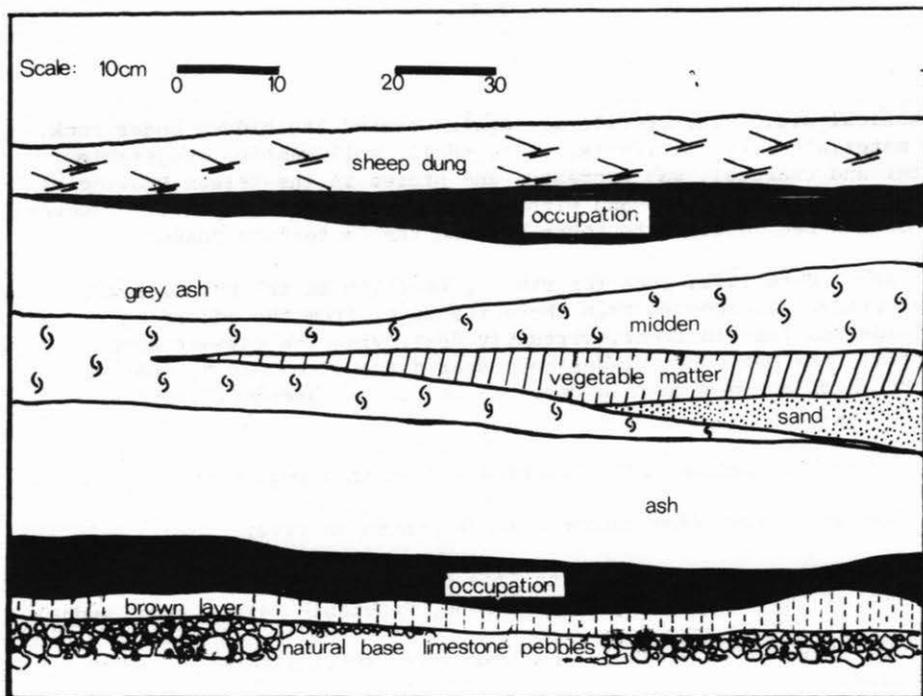


Photo No. 1. Utility material made mostly from bird bone comprising spear points, needles, awls and fish gorges. The long spear point at the bottom is 123 mm long.

Throughout the centre of the cave, hearth fires were found. At the entrance was a large enclosed fire within boulders about 1.5 m across. It seemed that bone material had been taken into the cave for utilisation rather than food and the cave was therefore not essentially an eating place. The cave's dimensions were as follows:

Length	-	6 m
Width at mouth	-	5.5 m
Height above hearth	-	2.5 m
Width in middle	-	2.5 m

Proximity to the Ngati Mamoe Pa and its subsequent sacking by the Ngai Tahu around 1650 would tend to place the occupation at a period immediately prior to this date. That the cave was not re-occupied in Maori times except by occasional travelling parties is demonstrated by the absence of artifacts except a few drilled human teeth in the top layer. The early classic period of steady occupation is shown by the following:

1. An unbarbed one-piece fish-hook in mussel shell.
2. A composite bone (probably human) hook with unbarbed point, spliced joint and base lashing.
3. Small amount of nephrite of inferior quality found in the rubble spilling from cliff face.
4. Slate knife.
5. Barbed bird bone spear points.
6. Barracouta lure points present but not common; probably of human bone.
7. Barbed bone fish-hook points.
8. Small quantity of human bone used in fish-hook manufacture.

Sporadic European occupation is in evidence up to at least 1885.

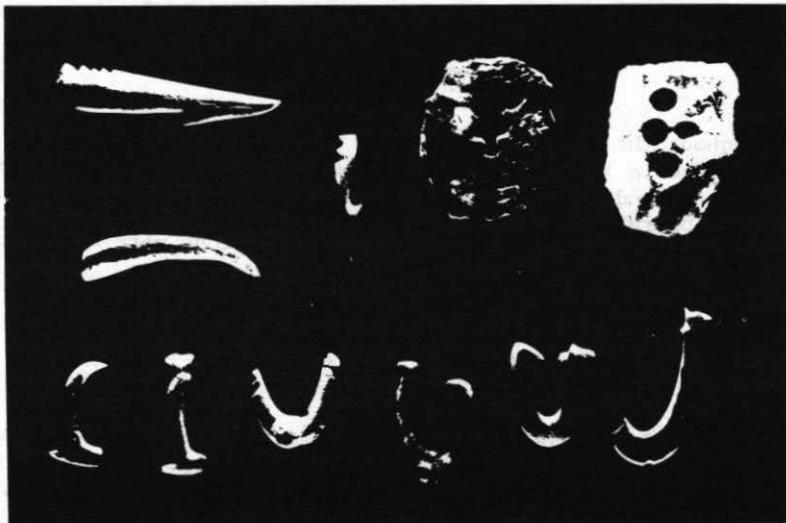


Photo No. 2. Fishing material - Barbed composite hook points, unbarbed bone point from Barracouta lure, two-piece bone hook with splice joint to fasten point to shank leg (which is unfortunately facing the wrong way), bone hook shank leg and bend with notch for point attachment, mussel shell hooks complete and broken, drilled tabs of *perma canaliculus*. The point top left is 57 mm long.

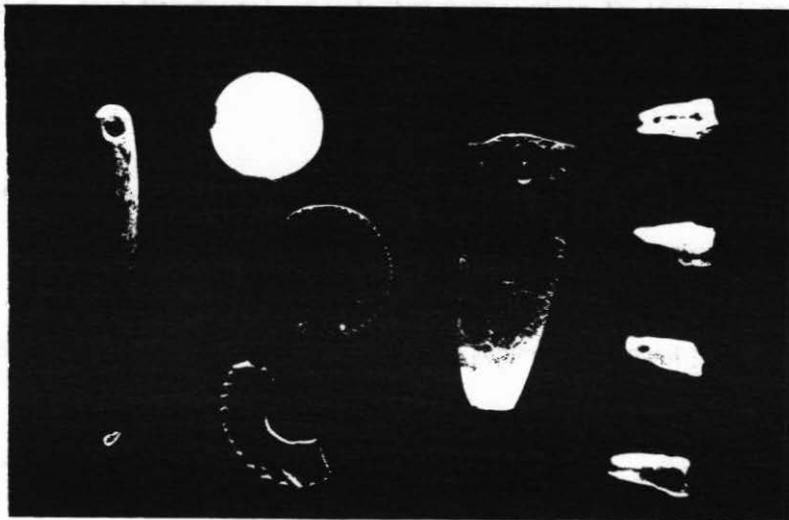


Photo No. 3. Ornaments - Human bone pendant, cluster of perforated human teeth (one with caries), serrated discs of paua shell and cockle, pendant of paua shell drilled for suspension. This pendant is 67 mm long.

Artifact list

At least 15 paua shell holders for kokowai; 10 pestle and two mortar stones. (These were more common at the back of the cave.)

Chert drill points - 12

Sandstone files - 5

Obsidian flakes: green - 6; grey (small) - 3

Chert - many broken nodules with some good examples of flesh knives.

Orthoquartzite - one flesh knife.

Nephrite - five fragments (three slightly ground - 1 skew-edged adze (kawakawa), 72 mm long 40 mm blade wide.

- one gouge-like, round-sectioned (probably broken pendant), 63 mm long 7 mm thick.

- one small poor quality adze 67 mm long 32 mm blade wide.

Pressure-flaking tools (?) of chert and chertaceous limestone - 4

Slate knife (10 cm x 7.5 cm) - one

Argillite adzes - one complete small polished 2B - Ohana grey.

- two broken portions - black.

- one fragment - coarse grey.

Cutters - three limestone, nine greywacke.

Hogback chisel - burnt fine mudstone.

Hammerstones - three complete spherical - greywacke.

- one broken ovoid - agate.

- one broken ovoid - greywacke.

Shell fish-hook tabs - eight rough-worked cook's turban.

- two drilled hole in centre cook's turban.

- six shield-shaped mussel shell.

- 11 (10 broken) drilled mussel shell.

- two winkle (lunella).

- Shell fish-hooks (1 piece) - 11 broken in mussel shell.  
- four broken in paua shell.  
- one complete in mussel shell.  
- one near complete in eroded cook's turban.  
- one complete in-turned barb in mussel shell.  
- one broken in cook's turban (?)
- Shell fish-hook blanks - nine (one drilled) in mussel shell.
- Bone fish-hooks - one broken shank leg in ivory.  
- one complete composite hook in human (?) bone.  
- one broken shank leg in sub-fossil moa.  
- one fragment in burnt human skull.  
- one shank leg, bend and point leg without point - two-piece hook in human (?) bone.  
- one shank leg in unknown bone.  
- 7 complete barbed points for composite hooks ) Mostly bird bone  
- 3 broken barbed points for composite hooks ) one possibly human
- Barracouta points - one complete; four base portions broken.
- Weathered moa bone - seven pieces.
- Dentalium nanum - 16 shells (no evidence of necklace).
- Circlet of bivalve highly polished - 1
- Comb-top portion broken on three sides, bone unknown - 1
- Awles in bird bone - 8
- Needles in bird bone - 4 complete (2 drilled eyes, 2 sawn eyes)  
- 4 broken
- Needle tab undrilled - 1
- Needle-like pendants - 1 large in human bone ) Complete with eyes  
- 1 small )  
- 1 broken, curved - bottom portion
- Bird spear-points in bird bone - 3 complete; 2 unfinished; 2 broken bases;  
2 broken points.

- Human teeth - 3 drilled found together.  
- 1 worked as possible fish-hook point.  
- 1 unworked showing tooth decay.
- Tattooing chisel in bird bone; blade reshaped - 1
- Fish gorges - 2 split bird bone; 1 sharpened whole bird bone.
- Broken bone points (gorges or needles) - 7
- Bone tabs (needles ?) - 2
- Splinters of bird bone (sawn or notched) - 43
- Albatross (proximal end sawn) - 1
- Mammal bones worked (including dog and human) - 10
- Paua shell eyes - 1 disc with serrated edges  
- 1 broken ring (1/3) with notched edges  
- 1 disc blank  
- 2 tabs
- Paua shell pendants - 1 tongue-shaped with drilled suspension hole.  
- 1 rectangular tab undrilled.
- European material - 1 brass signet ring.  
- 1 1863 penny.  
- 1872 five centime piece - perforated  
- 1 brown bone button - 4 holes  
- 1 1885 threepence  
- 1 pearl shell button  
- 1 brass alloy broach - horseshoe shaped.  
- 1 clay pipe stem - mouthpiece reshaped.