



NEW ZEALAND  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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SOME PETROGLYPH SITES IN THE NORTH ISLAND, NEW ZEALAND

R. Garry Law

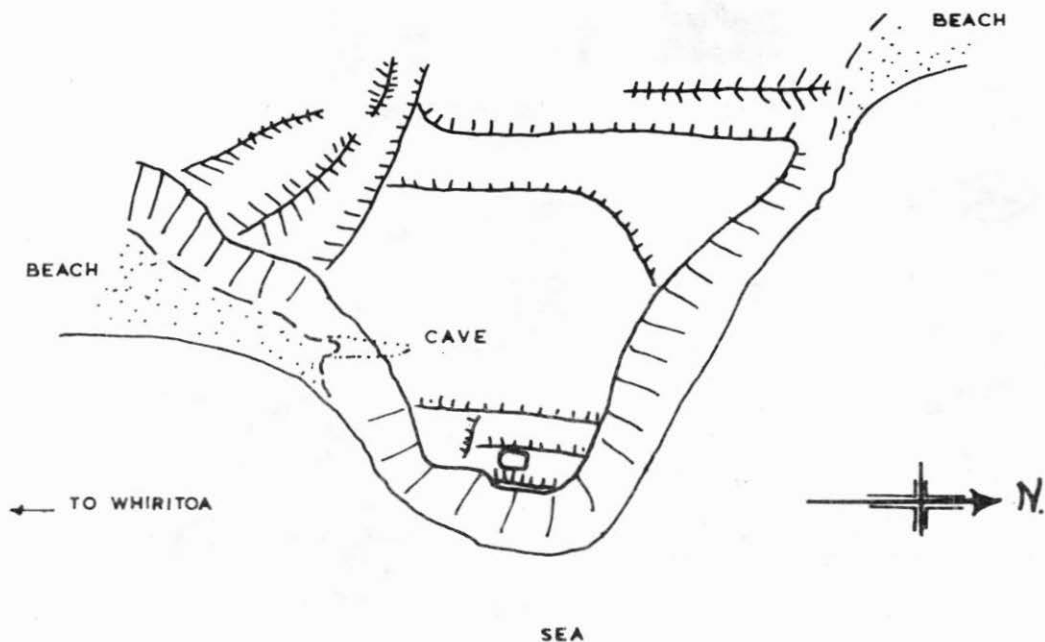
This is the first of a short series of notes on some recently surveyed sites. Readers are invited to contribute.

WHIRITOA NORTH CAVE, COROMANDEL PENINSULA

This site consists of a sea-cut cleft in the rock, cutting into a small headland about one mile north of Whiritoa Beach. The beach abutting the headland is named Waimana Bay. The headland is a pair of average size, and several other pit and terrace sites occur in the immediate vicinity. The cave is cut in Tertiary Minden rhyolites, and in plan the cave is 51 feet long, tapering from 9½ feet wide at the entrance. Its roof is about 15' above the floor, which is washed in high tides. Its walls are extensively covered with graffiti, but in three areas, clear petroglyphs remain which have been recorded. A fourth area has an interesting remnant of a glyph. The other areas indicated in Figure 1 probably all held petroglyphs formerly, but these are no longer sufficiently intact for any sense to be made from them.

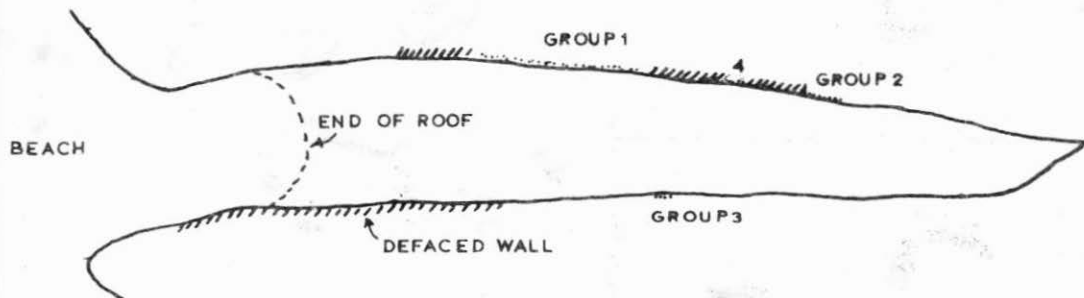
The Carvings

Apart from one crudely incised double spiral, the recognisable motifs in the cave consist of at least 21 faces and figures. The faces emphasize the eyes, although the other features of the face are present on most of the examples. The figures emphasize the genitals, and some take the form of the well-known Tiki figure, the most common portable stone rendering of a human figure. The figures in the cave have poorly detailed faces. Several methods of rendering the faces, and in particular the eyes, occur in the cave. The half-moon rendering of the eyebrows occurs incised, and in the negative relief. In this method the eyes themselves are not shown. The most common rendering of the eyes, is pairs of slanted hollows, sometimes curved, some of the hollows being asymmetric in cross-section so as to form a distinct eyebrow. In some glyphs, the eyes are rendered by incised circles, but generally on the figures, holes are used. The figures are for the most part crude, and some doubt must be entertained as to the authenticity of the three large figures at the left-hand side of the centre of group 1. The remnant of a glyph No. 4 is interesting in that it is close in form to the renderings of the mouths and tails of whales in the South Island shelter paintings. However, in its highly destroyed state, a definite

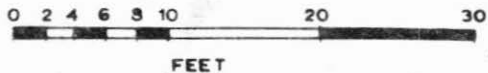


PLAN OF PA

AFTER SKETCH C. NORTHCROFT



FLOOR PLAN OF CAVE



TAPED PLAN R.G.LAW

Figure 1

PETROGLYPH SITE, WHIRITOA NORTH

rgl

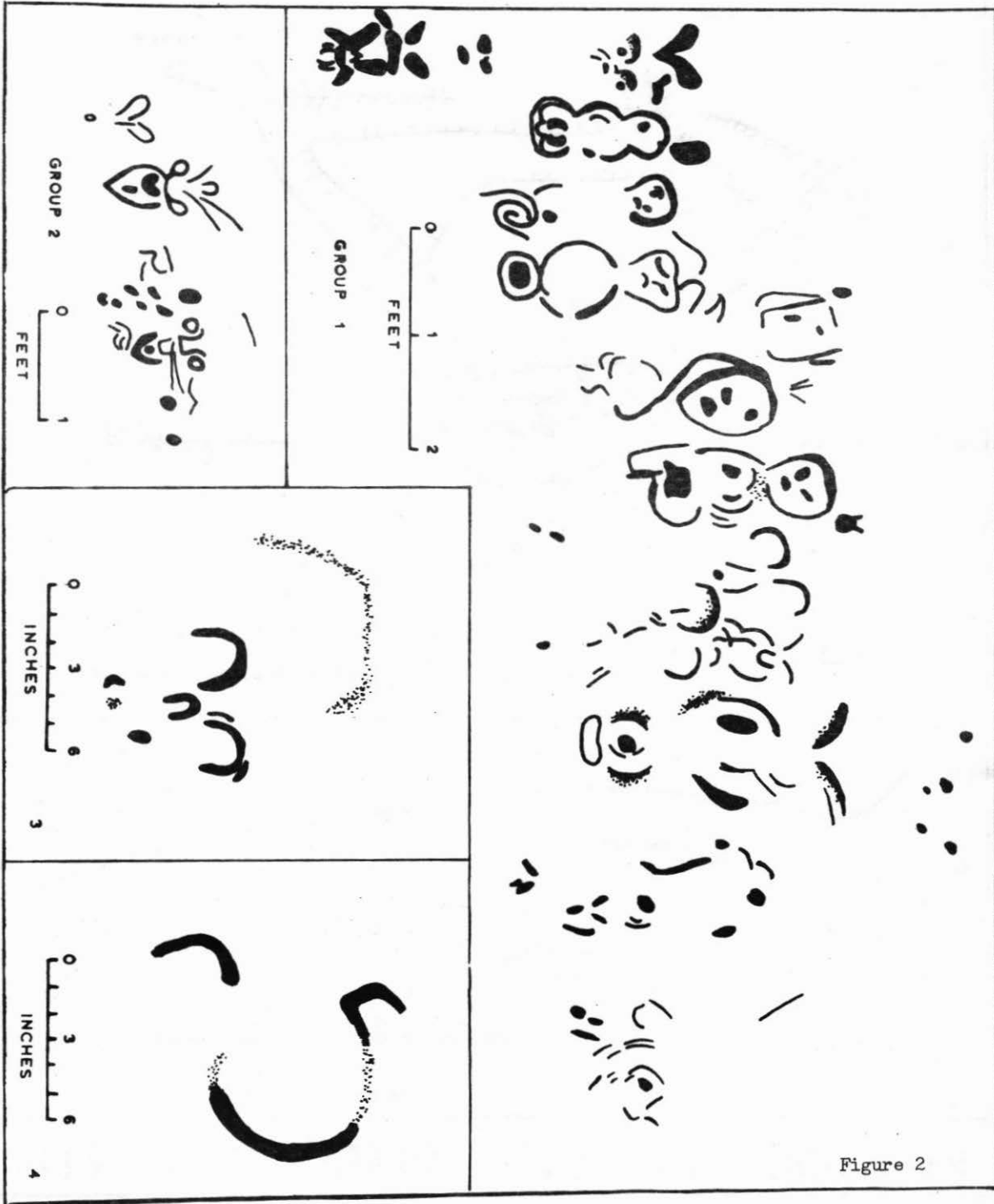


Figure 2

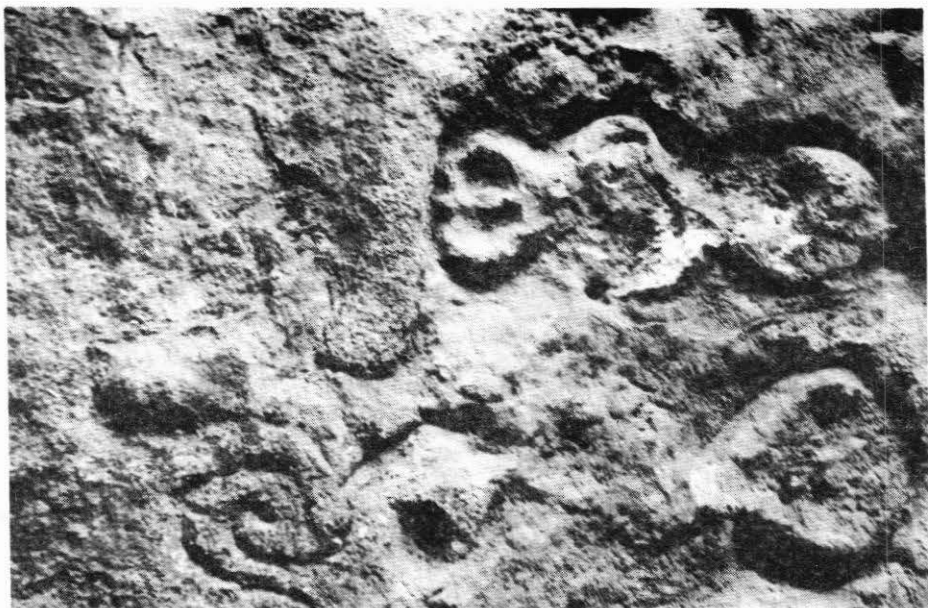


Plate 1



Plate 2

interpretation is not possible. The treatment of the mouth in the faces in group 4 is reminiscent of the petroglyph of a face recorded at Whitianga by the author (N 44/60, Law, 1966, p. 502).

### Dating

The Coromandel Coast has good evidence of archaic occupation (Green 1963; 49). At Whiritoa Beach (N 53-54/4), recent excavations on several occasions have produced archaic artefacts (Foreman and Jolly 1965; 149), (Crosby 1963; 46), (Green 1963; 55), and in the thirties, Mr Duffy now of Mount Maunganui, obtained a large amount of archaic material which is in his collection. With an apparently large and early population centre near the cave in question, it would be unlikely that it was not used occasionally as a shelter. It would not be surprizing if some of the carvings dated from the archaic, but this is of course impossible to prove.

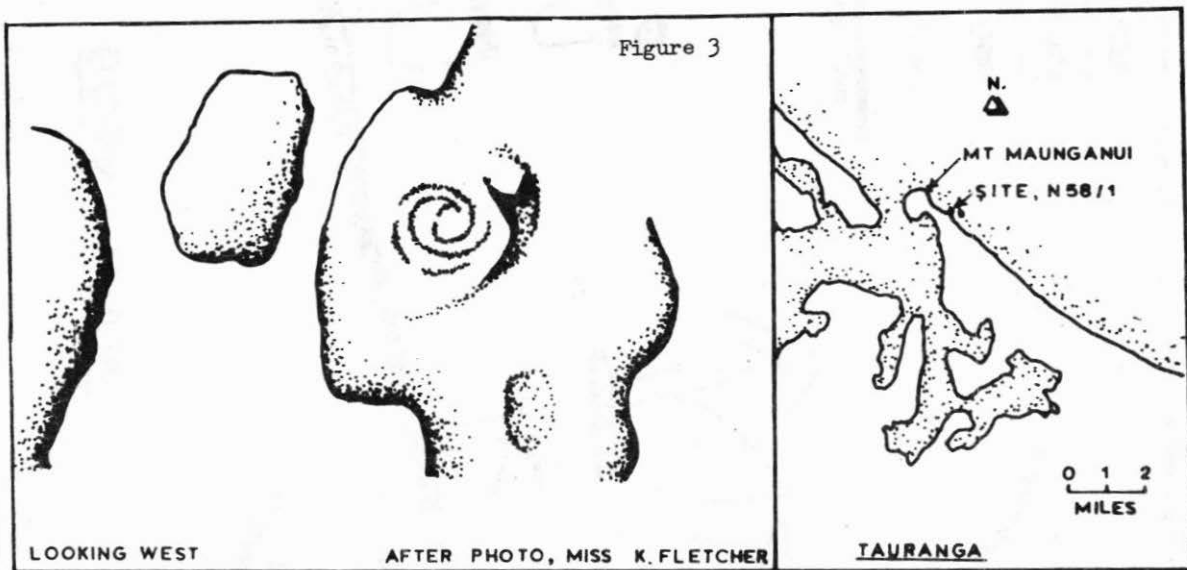
However, the proximity of the pa and other pit and terrace sites which are presumably classic, makes a late date for the carvings equally likely. There appears to be some diversity of style in the carvings, but little evidence for over-carving. While this diversity may be entirely contemporary and the lack of over-carving may indicate a short period, style change in a time scale as long as New Zealand's prehistory, cannot be ruled out, and this site is as likely as any to reflect it. The cave and the pa are filed as Site No. N 53-54/47, Auckland file. A complete coverage of photos is included in the site records.

### THE BLOWHOLE AT MOUNT MAUNGANUI

To the south of Mount Maunganui proper on the seaward side of the tombolo, extending to the Mount, there is a small rocky projection known locally as "The Blowhole". It is a volcanic remnant of Quaternary acidic rock. The landward end of this small peninsula is taken over by a marine zoo, which has destroyed part of a pa which once occupied the site (N 58/1, Rotorua, Bay of Plenty file). About halfway to the end in a grassy area a few low outcrops of the rock occur. (See Figure 3)

On the surface of one of these rocks there is an incised petroglyph of a double spiral, shown in the figure. Its diameter is approximately  $7\frac{1}{2}$  inches. The spiral is now very indistinct, as it has been badly worn by foot traffic. On the surface of this and the adjacent rocks, several artificially ground hollows occur, one of which is shown in the figure. These are probably stones used for grinding or sharpening stone tools (hoanga). Several similar grinding sites are

known for the Bay of Plenty and in the Waikato (Delph and Archey 1930: 68).



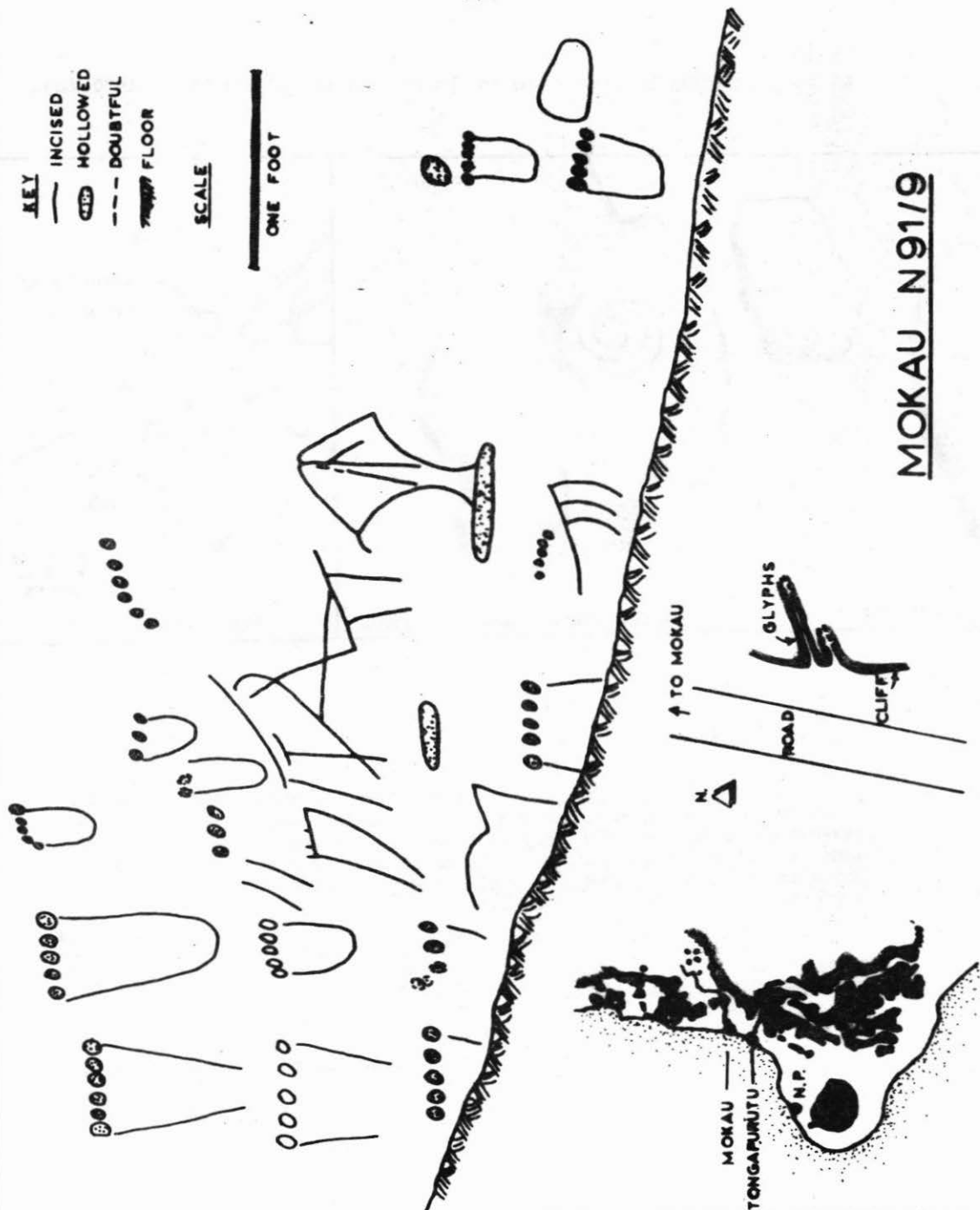
Mokau, North Taranaki

A short distance south of the bridge over the Mokau River, near the coast on the road to New Plymouth, the road skirts around the base of a sea-cut cliff cut into Tertiary siltstones. At the base of this cliff some sea-cut notches occur. On the north wall of one of these notches, which is only large enough for one person to move freely, are some petroglyphs. These are partly covered by the floor, which slopes down steeply from the entrance. It is possible more glyphs occur on the wall below this floor. The accompanying drawing of the glyphs was done in poor light, making any accurate copying difficult. The positions and relative sizes of the glyphs are, therefore, probably inaccurate. However, this inaccuracy does not seriously detract from the value of this record as the nature of the glyphs does not demand any great precision. The entrance to the cave has been closed by a recent slip.

- KEY**  
— INCISED  
○ HOLLOWED  
- - - DOUBTFUL  
▨ FLOOR

**SCALE**

ONE FOOT



**MOKAU N91/9**



## THE CARVINGS

The glyphs consist entirely of incised motifs. As at the nearby sites of Mohakatino (N.100/22) and Tongapurutu (N.100/7), (Delph 1939, p. 116), feet predominate in the carvings. The only other clear glyph is of a flatfish. Judging from the shape of the tail, it is probably a flounder (*Rhombosolea* sp.). Flatfish are readily netted or speared in the Mokau estuary. Remarkably common stone sinkers recovered from around Motutawa Pa on an island in the estuary (N.91/9) suggest that netted flounder may have been a valuable local resource. The proper interpretation of the other lines on the wall is not clear.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I should like to thank Mr G. Cooper of Tongapurutu for showing a small party to this and the Tongapurutu site.

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