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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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TE RANGATAPU SITE (WAINGORORO RIVER)

by T.C. Canavan

In the NEWSLETTER vol.3 no.4 (September 1960), a preliminary report of the excavation of two 8' squares was made. A further square was opened to the north and three ovens were exposed. These differed from the ovens previously mentioned in that each was stone lined. Burnt moa bone was found in the largest of these ovens, bone fragments around another, and the third was a comparatively shallow depression containing paaua shell. When two quadrants were opened further north on a steeply sloping bank, and the eroded areas near the river had been examined, it was clear that this complex needed no further investigation.

It was decided to expose an oven visible in the bank several yards up the river with the possibility of tying it in with the oven complex. The situation was interesting in that apart from its sand overburden the oven was sealed in by a concretion equivalent to the steep face of the opposite river bank. A burnt sinker was found but the occupation layer petered out to loose dune sand. The next square was opened inland so that the extent of the rocky seal could be determined and the occupation layer re-established. The overburden on the north face rose steeply, light dune sand giving way to a heavy earth and sand charcoal impregnated layer, followed by a consistent band of rock and clay varying from 2' to 2' 9" thick. A light sprinkle of dune sand overlay the occupation layer near the oven, but the occupation layer itself (about 2" thick) disappeared 2' from the baulk, sand reappeared and natural was determined as the familiar clay base. This base dropped steeply inland, the clean sand above it widening from 3" to 3'. $6\frac{1}{2}'$ from the baulk and $2\frac{1}{2}'$ below the rock and clay seal, an occupation layer reappeared. This contained fishbone, shell and charcoal. Natural was established $8\frac{1}{2}'$ below the surface. At this stage the solid seeming east face despatched several hundredweight of sand and earth over the square. No conclusions can now be reached as to the relationship of the two occupation levels except that both were sealed in by an undefined disturbance. The lower occupation appears to have utilized the natural slope of the land, and undoubtedly continues further inland. However the quarry road, almost directly above, precludes further investigation.

I am indebted to Mr R. Scarlett for determining the bone samples sent to him.

Moa bone:- Pachyornis Mappini Archey
 Euryapteryx Exilis Hutton
 Euryapteryx Geranoides (Cwen)
 Euryapteryx Curtus (Owen)
 Dinornis Giganteus Owen

Other faunal material included little grey kiwi, little blue penguin, North Island kaka, North Island weka, petrel, dog, rat and fish.

In comparison with the Ohawe site quarter of a mile away Te Rangatapu has not produced the range of moa species and small birds. A great amount of recovered bone has been too fragmented and friable for identification. No chert was found and the total area yielded 16 pieces of obsidian. The most consistent feature was the phenomenal number of dog droppings in and around the ovens. A sample of droppings has been analysed and found non-parasitic.