



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



This document is made available by The New Zealand  
Archaeological Association under the Creative Commons  
Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

To view a copy of this license, visit  
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/>.

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.
- 

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.

The body is that of a woman who was probably about forty or fifty years of age when she died. After death the body has been trussed with knees drawn up to the chin, hands on abdomen. The whole body has been wrapped with a flax cloak ornamented with (?) weka feathers at the neck. Vines have been used to tie up both cloak and body. The body was originally placed in a sitting position with the upper hem of the cloak covering the mouth, but has gradually slumped until the legs have broken free pulling the cloak apart and exposing the pelvis.

The cloak in which the figure is wrapped is of particular interest in that a half-hitch weave has been used. The down threads are twisted three-ply cords as thick as common baling twine, the cross threads are finer three-ply cords. The half-hitch weave is produced by carrying one cord behind the down threads and looping another around the down threads, half-hitching it to the back thread between each pair of down threads. At the neck a bundle of cords about an inch and a half thick have been gathered together by binding with another cord. Feathers, possibly weka, have been caught into this band. As far as could be seen without disturbing the cloak, the sides have been finished by carrying the cross threads out past the down threads and plaiting them together to produce a type of lace edge. It is possible that the bottom was finished in the same way.

A fragment of a cloak of similar weave, preserved in Otago Museum, was found in the Strath Taieri region late in the last century wrapped around the skeleton of a woman and child. Inside this cloak was another made of weka skins which had been oversewn with strips of moa skin with the feathers still attached. The Strath Taieri fragment is more coarsely made and is presumed to predate the Hauroko example. On this basis it is possible to suggest that the Hauroko burial was made sometime between 1550 A.D. and 1750 A.D., or more probably in the late 16th century or early 17th century.

The importance of the burial as a cultural item cannot be over-emphasized. Neither can the desirability of not removing a status burial of this type. In view of this, I would suggest the following course of action:

1. The temporary wire grille placed over the mouth of the cave by the Fiordland Park Rangers be replaced by a permanent iron grille. A grille is preferable to complete sealing as the present atmosphere of the cave needs to be maintained. Any large block could induce a damp atmosphere which could cause rapid deterioration. It is also desirable that the remains can be viewed by interested people.

2. Before final placement of the grille, I would like permission to return to the cave to conduct a more thorough investigation with the following purposes in mind:

- (a) An exact record of details of construction of the cloak. This would entail some slight unwrapping of the neck region, but such disturbance would be kept at a minimum. Some details of the weave and finishing of the neck and one side have already been recorded from superficial examination. Further details are needed so that an exact replica of the cloak can be made and the knowledge of it thus made available without the further need to disturb the burial. The Maori Women's Welfare League of Dunedin has offered its assistance in preparing the shitau and making the cloak.
- (b) Exact dating of the burial is important and it is suggested that one of the barricade stakes at the entrance or a piece of such which is still in the ground could be taken for carbon dating. Failing a suitable piece of the barricade, a portion of one of the back support stakes which has fallen to the ground could be utilized for this purpose.
- (c) In looking at the cloak as suggested, it will also be possible to determine whether any other garments have been placed on the body. This could be important in view of the Strath Taieri use of both bird skin and woven cloaks to wrap a burial.

(This report was presented to the Murihiku Tribal Executive on 20 April 1967.

Editor)