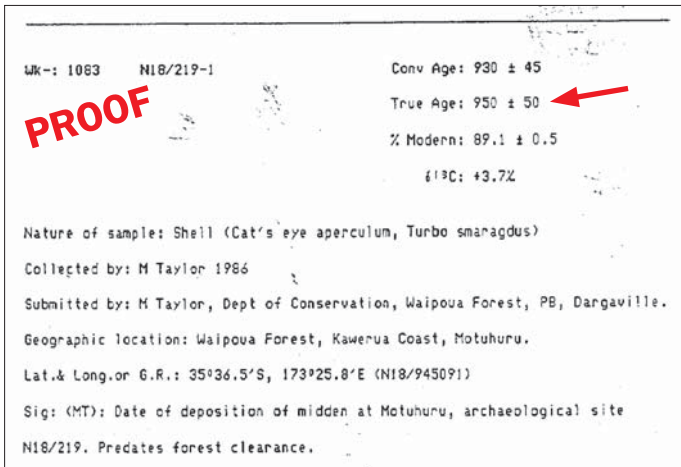


TO GOVERNMENT UNDER SIEGE PART III



Radiocarbon report on ancient Waipoua Forest midden

member of the local iwi, Te Roroa and lifted in 1996. Until then, I understand, only persons with written permission from the Pahi-nui Marae, near Dargaville, could gain access to the archival material. This has not been the case since 1996. In summary, the papers referred to in the recent documentary are readily available. The copies lodged with National Archives were released from formal embargo in 1996."

But the files finally released were incomplete. There was a vital report missing from samples tested at the Radiocarbon Testing Laboratory at the University of Waikato. Data already released showed material from the excavation fell within the known occupancy of modern Maori. (The official Government date for the arrival of the first people, from Eastern Polynesia, is the late 13th century. Kupe is said to have featured in the 14th century.) But there was no sign of the data showing the much earlier date. Then, in a strange twist, this file surfaced, sent anonymously to Hokianga historian Joan Leaf, who with Noel Hilliam, had complained about the lack of access to the information in a Radio Pacific interview in 1996. The data from a food midden at Motuhuru showed a True Age date of 950 plus or minus 50. This was the missing report exclaimed over by Ned Nathan, on a 1000 year old cat's eye shell, collected from a midden by Michael Taylor in 1986. The readings confirmed there were people living in the area now called Waipoua Forest when the ancestors of modern Maori arrived. On the same file was another reading of a pipi shell, collected from a midden excavated at Kokohuia, Omapere by Michael Taylor. It also carried the radiocarbon date of 900 plus or minus 50 years.

The figures are finally in but the truth is still out. Out of the public eye and out of official, public acknowledgement of the huge historic site that is sheltered by the Waipoua Forest. What lies hidden there speaks of a long ago race of stone builders and the ancient Waitaha Tawhito who followed and integrated to form one people.



Archaeological excavation underway 1985

Even with many stone structures buried in a deep humus layer, the vast area where the ancient people lived is awe inspiring. At one site alone, an extensive garden area is surrounded by collapsed stone dwellings and places of worship, speaking of thousands living there in peace for a great length of time. Boundary markers separate various garden plots, with stone cairns set at even distances to provide growing places for yam. The gardens run down to the Waipoua River, where a unique microclimate and soil types would have encouraged kumara and gourd to thrive.

Amid the gardens, an astonishing discovery was made, a massive stone bearing a rectangular pattern of deeply cut grooves. At the base of the stone is one single curved line. The straight lines could have been caused by natural weathering and cracking, but this curved line was clearly shaped by a human hand. What does this ancient petroglyph signify? It looks uncannily like the carved shape of a sailing ship with its curved base and extended masts. But there is another possible explanation, proposed by Australian archaeo-astronomer Alan Seath. Alan took sightings through a compass and said that the petroglyph was a plan of the gardens, with the curved line indicating the western boundary. He indicated a direction as to where the boundary markers would be found. Within 20 metres a line of

cont. page 24



What does the petroglyph on this Waipoua Forest stone signify?