

Researchers report possible location of famed lost Pink and White Terraces of New Zealand

June 14 2017, by Bob Yirka



A pair of researchers, one referring to himself as an independent researcher, the other with the National Library of New Zealand, has found the possible location of the famed lost Pink and White Terraces of New Zealand. In their paper published in *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, Rex Bunn and Sascha Nolan describe their work examining a diary left by Ferdinand von Hochstetter, who detailed the location of the terraces back in 1859, and explain why they believe it shows the location of the terraces.

For many years, the terraces near Lake Rotomahana and Mount

Tarawera were famous for their unique shape and color—white and pink staircases with pools of cascading water. Some had even referred to them as the eighth natural wonder of the world. But in 1886, a volcanic eruption drained the lake and covered the surrounding area in ash. Most believed the famed terraces had been destroyed. Bunn and Nolan disagree—they believe they have found evidence that instead of being destroyed, the terraces were covered with 10 to 15 meters of ash. And that means, they claim, that the terraces could not only be found, but could be restored to their former glory.

One of the odd facts surrounding the Pink and White Terraces was that no one had ever thought to officially log their exact location—thus, when they disappeared, there was no real record of where they had been. For 130 years, the assumption was that they were either destroyed or lost for good. But seven years ago, Bunn came upon a diary by von Hochstetter, a geologist doing research in the area in 1859, just 27 years before the terraces were lost. His field notes described a compass survey of the area around Lake Rotomahana. Bunn sought the assistance of Nolan, and together, the two spent weeks studying the survey and comparing it with modern charts and graphs. They report that their study suggested that the terraces were not destroyed, but because they were located beside the lake, were covered in ash instead. To bolster their claim, the pair consulted with the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences, a New Zealand Crown Research Institute. They have also received permission to excavate from the Iwi people who own the land, and the researchers hope to begin digging soon.

More information: Rex Bunn et al. Forensic cartography with Hochstetter's 1859 Pink and White Terraces survey: Te Otukapuarangi and Te Tarata, *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand* (2017).

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