

# The Putangirua Pinnacles: testament to the Flood account

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The Putangirua Pinnacles are located on the south-east coast of the North Island of New Zealand, in the Wairarapa region. They are named ‘pinnacles’ because the process which has eroded them has produced a large number of rock towers of varying sizes, shown in figures 1 and 2. According to a *Dominion Post* article, “some resemble slender posts, others are fat and squat with a mop of vegetation on top, while still others are incorporated into great walls of stones, like the ribs of some ancient fossilised creature”.<sup>1</sup> Some of the pinnacles are up to 60 m in height. The Pinnacles were used by Director Peter Jackson in *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* for shooting the scene along the Dimholt Road, i.e. The Paths of the Dead.<sup>1</sup> The landscape attracts many visitors to the region and is a unique environment.

Limited data constraining the stratigraphic age is found in the secular literature,<sup>2</sup> and it appears the explanation is based on a uniformitarian assumption rather than any data. When comparing the uniformitarian model with flood mechanisms and stages such as those published by Walker<sup>3</sup> and Oard<sup>4</sup> the biblical framework provides a better explanation for their formation and exhumation, as well as providing tentative dates for their stratigraphic age.

## Geologic setting and uniformitarian explanation

There are widely varying opinions on the deposition of the sediments

which make up the pinnacles. According to publicly available sources the gravels which make up the pinnacles were deposited about 7–9 million years ago.<sup>5</sup> However, Bertaud-Gandar *et al.* note: “the age is not well constrained”, and they assume the sediments are 10–12 million years old based upon the age of overlying formations. According to the formal Geological and Nuclear Sciences definition, the conglomerate forms part of the Palliser and Soren groups, which comprise “massive, or interbedded, mudstone, siltstone and sandstone with minor conglomerate, limestone and tuff”.<sup>6</sup> According to Leach:

“The coastal platform of Palliser Bay is a narrow unstable strip about 200 m wide, with only occasional outcrops of the rocky basement. The sediments are largely redeposited gravels from the Aorangi mountains. They have been produced by massive erosion processes which characterize the area and have been thrown up against the cliffs and foothills. In the Putangirua,

Pinnacles, and Hurupi area, the sediments are of marine Miocene origin.”<sup>7</sup>

The clasts contained in the gravel are very coarse, and range up to cobble and boulder sizes. The material is soft and can be easily broken up by hand



Figure 1. View of Putangirua Pinnacles from Putangirua Stream bed showing sharp relief

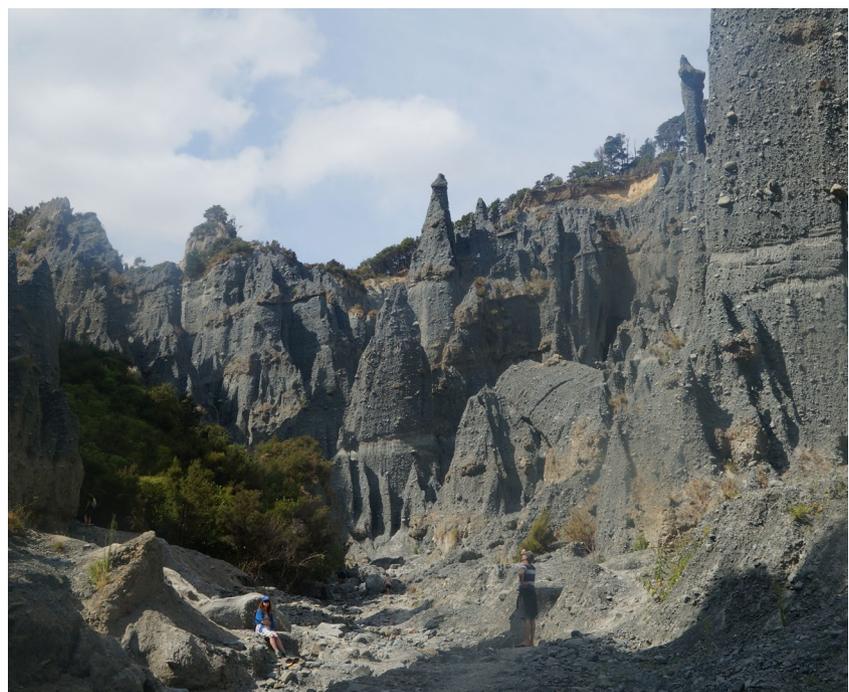


Figure 2. Further view of Pinnacles and large scale collapse of Pinnacles in distance

with little force required. Additionally, the faces of the pinnacles are steep and, as shown in figures 1 and 2, form very sharp edges.

The uniformitarian (and publicly broadcast) explanation for the formation of the Pinnacles relief varies widely. For instance, an article in the *Christchurch Press* stated the Pinnacles were “carved into enormous pipe-shaped towers over the last six to nine million years by heavy rainfall and running water”.<sup>8</sup> Other sources such as the *Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand* website state that they are at a minimum 1,000 years old,<sup>9</sup> but an actual date is not given. Thus, it appears there is no definitive date for their formation.

### Uniformitarian explanation falls short

When examining the public and published material on the Pinnacles in terms of their deposition and their formation, it is easy to see there are

several ways in which the uniformitarian explanation falls short. They include:

1. As stated earlier, nowhere is a basis provided for the ‘date’ of the gravels. This is just assumed, and it appears this is done purely based on the accepted secular geologic history of New Zealand and the Wairarapa region. There is no independent evidence from the rocks that they are this old.
2. According to the secular history, this area was laid down as marine gravels from the Aorangi mountains. These have been uplifted and exposed sometime between the time of their deposition and today. However, since the assumed time of the deposition there have been several cycles of sea level rise and fall: “During the Pleistocene the alternate locking up of vast quantities of sea water to form ice caps, followed by its release in interglacial episodes, caused sea level to rise and fall hundreds of feet all over the world.”<sup>10</sup> Hence, to expect that these

gravels, which have been exposed and inundated and re-exposed to the elements, have lasted over that time period is highly implausible.<sup>11</sup>

3. The shape and sharp relief of the pinnacles themselves testify to their rapid exhumation and of the massive amount of water required to carve their shapes in a very short period of time. A long period of exhumation and coastal erosion over long geological timescales would have disintegrated all the soft and friable material and removed all of these structures.

### Flood geology provides the answer

An origin based upon creationist literature provides a much more satisfactory answer to the question of the Putangirua Pinnacle’s formation. Within the Flood geology model proposed by Walker<sup>12</sup> the formation of the gravels would have occurred during the mid-Recessive phase of the Flood, as run-off of the Aorangi mountains to the north and east of the Pinnacles. Observations of the bedrock underlying the gravel support this. It features large-scale deposition of marine fossils, and fine-scale laminations (figure 3). As the floodwaters receded off the uplifting land mass, the pinnacle channels were rapidly eroded. This indicates the Pinnacles were formed only thousands of years ago, consistent with the publicly available information. Following their exhumation and exposure they have assumed largely their present configuration, with occasional storm events causing some pinnacles to fail catastrophically. Indeed, evidence of this is readily apparent in the Scenic Reserve, particularly at the northern end of the riverbed, where catastrophic failure has led to some pinnacles resting on top of each other.

This explanation would also fit with the sharp relief, which would still be present after only thousands of years,



**Figure 3.** Fine-scale laminations and graveyard of shells in exposed bedrock underlying the pinnacles, indicating catastrophic deposition

and the friable nature of the pinnacle material, which could only maintain the sharp features within a biblical timescale.

### Conclusion

The Putangirua Pinnacles are not explicable according to secular geologic timescales and the principle of uniformitarianism. To expect that the material making up the Pinnacles has survived exhumation, storm events, re-inundation, and re-exhumation is a leap in logic and another example of evolutionary storytelling. The explanation of how the ‘Hoodooos’<sup>1</sup> (so named by locals) came to be in their present condition is not a mystery to creationists, who have a satisfactory and elegant solution. The Putangirua Pinnacles show the reality of the Flood account, bring glory to God’s word, and bring glory to Jesus Christ. When visitors and sightseers stand amongst the Putangirua Pinnacles the only logical response should be to quote the Psalmist who declared: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1–2). However, as with many other sites across the world Satan has provided a lie which fails to adequately explain the formation of the Pinnacles, and allows people to worship the creature, rather than the Creator (Romans 1:25).

### References

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