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Geophysical study of the Taharoa ironsand deposit, west coast, North Island, New Zealand

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Abstract The Taharoa prospect is one of the many beach and dune deposits of titanomagnetite sands ("ironsands") along the west coast of the North Island of New Zealand. Various geophysical methods were used to determine which of these is suitable for delineating titanomagnetite concentration patterns in the deposit, which covers an area of c. 15 km$^2$, and whether a reliable estimate of the total mass of titanomagnetite ore could be obtained.

Seismic refraction studies provided a detailed structural model of the deposit. Interpretation of these data, controlled in part by a few deep exploratory holes, defined an upper horizon of unconsolidated, titanomagnetite-rich sands (Nukumiti and Paparoa Sands Members) reaching a maximum thickness of 60 m. It is underlain by a weakly cemented, saturated sand layer (Te Akeake Sands Member) up to 100 m thick, with an average titanomagnetite concentration of about 18%. The two horizons are separated by a 42 ka old layer of tephras and paleosols up to 15 m thick. The compressional-wave seismic velocity of the upper, dry, enriched sands is very low, and increases linearly with depth from about 0.24 km/s to a maximum of 0.65 km/s, with a rate of increase between 18 and 32/s. The velocity of the lower horizon is almost constant at 1.7 ± 0.1 km/s. Mesozoic greywacke basement with a velocity of 4.1 ± 0.7 km/s underlies the deposit.

The concentration of titanomagnetite within the seismic model was determined by detailed interpretation of airborne magnetic surveys flown at altitudes of 185 m and 370 m above sea level. Residual anomalies were obtained after reducing the magnetic effect of the entire deposit, assuming a homogeneous induced magnetisation of 6.7 A/m (equivalent to that of sand with 18% by weight of titanomagnetite). The residuals were interpreted in terms of an array of vertical prisms representing the enriched Nukumiti and Paparoa sands. Magnetic susceptibilities of up to 0.75 were interpreted, corresponding to a titanomagnetite concentration of 54% by weight.

INTRODUCTION
Titanomagnetite sands (ironsands) form coastal dune, beach, and deltaic deposits along many parts of the circum-Pacific margin (Ohmachi 1960). The ironsands are derived from weathering of Cenozoic volcanic rocks associated with volcanic arcs. Some deposits of Tertiary age occur in Japan (Hattori 1960); other large deposits accumulated in the North Island of New Zealand during the Pleistocene (Williams 1974). A few deposits are of Holocene age and some are still aggrading. The most important constituent mineral in many ironsand deposits is titanomagnetite, FeO(Fe, Ti)$_2$O$_3$, which may comprise up to 80% by weight of some beach deposits (Kear 1979). Since pure titanomagnetite contains 60% Fe by weight, many ironsand deposits are important iron ore resources. This has long been recognised in Japan, where ironsand mining commenced in the Izumo region in A.D. 733 (Hattori 1960).

In New Zealand, titanomagnetite sands occur along much of the west coast of the North Island, from Wanganui in southern Taranaki, to Kaipara Harbour in Northland (Fig. 1). From 1940 to 1947, reconnaissance geological investigations of iron sand deposits south of New Plymouth were undertaken and quantities of titanomagnetite were estimated from stratigraphic data (Hutton 1940, 1945; Fleming 1946; Beck 1947). Nicholson & Fyfe (1958) made a survey of the coastline from New Plymouth to the Kaipara Harbour, and they noted significant iron sand deposits at Mokau, Marakopa, Taharoa, Kawhia, Aotea Harbour, Raglan, Waikato Heads, Manukau Heads, Piha, and Muriwai (Fig. 1). Most of these deposits were subsequently investigated with shallow (up to 7 m deep) drillholes.
The Taharoa deposit is highlighted.

Fig. 1 Distribution of titanomagnetite sand deposits, North Island, New Zealand. The Taharoa deposit is highlighted.

Between 1957 and 1962, a comprehensive study was undertaken by the New Zealand Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR) for the New Zealand Steel Investigating Company (Kear 1979). As part of that project, extensive scout drilling programs tested many of the North Island west coast iron sand deposits. Kear (1979) calculated total reserves of $570 \times 10^6$ tonnes (t) of titanomagnetite, of which $190 \times 10^6$ t were proven by drilling, and the remainder were inferred reserves above sea level.

Ironsands offshore from the west coast were investigated by McDougall (1961) and Carter (1980). Generally, they found low concentrations (1–5%) in surficial seafloor sediments on the continental shelf, with local, richer concentrations near Patea, New Plymouth, and Waikato Heads (Fig. 1).

Before the present study, the exploration of coastal iron sand deposits had been based mainly on drilling and mapping to predict the volume and grade of the titanomagnetite sands. Whether a representative mean of the titanomagnetite concentration can be obtained by an irregular array of exploration drillholes is a fundamental problem of iron sand exploration. Drilling results reported by Kear (1979) and Waterhouse (1969) showed significant lateral and vertical variations in the concentration of titanomagnetite in the deposits tested.

The primary goal of this study was to assess the applicability of geophysical methods for delineating the vertical and lateral concentration patterns of titanomagnetite in New Zealand iron sand deposits. In addition, we attempted to determine whether the geophysical studies could provide reliable estimates of titanomagnetite ore reserves.

Geophysical exploration of iron sand deposits has in the past been limited to ground magnetic surveys, designed to assess the lateral extent of near-surface magnetic sands; the data were not used to obtain quantitative estimates of ore reserves. A survey by Coss (1959) in New South Wales, Australia, indicated that magnetic anomalies occur over heavy mineral beach concentrations containing zircon, rutile, ilmenite, and magnetite. Total force ($\Delta T$) magnetic surveys were used to locate magnetite placer deposits offshore in Japan (Hattori 1960). In New Zealand, vertical magnetic intensity ($\Delta Z$) surveys were made by the DSIR over iron sand deposits at Waikato Heads, Raglan, Kaia, and New Plymouth (Kear 1979). However, no quantitative interpretation was made apart from some simple model calculations to explain anomalies caused by near-surface titanomagnetite enrichments. Untung & Hanna (1975) reported the results of a geophysical study of coastal titanomagnetite sands in East Java, where magnetic, gravity, resistivity, and seismic refraction surveys were made over 2.5 km$^2$ of coastal sands near Lumajang. They concluded that magnetic surveys, together with boreholes, can be used in delineating shallow iron sand deposits, and that gravity, resistivity, and seismic surveys can provide information about deeper structures. Integrated geophysical studies over heavy-mineral deposits in Australia were also reported by Robson & Sampath (1977) and Hone (1986).

Iron sand deposits at Taharoa, Waikato North Head, and Raglan (Fig. 1) were selected for our geophysical studies. The field surveys, undertaken between 1974 and 1977, were complemented by laboratory measurements which showed that the density and magnetic susceptibility of iron sand samples are closely related to the concentration (weight percent) of titanomagnetite (Lawton & Hochstein 1980). All studies have been described in detail by Lawton (1979). The present paper, as opposed to Lawton (1979), deals specifically with the geophysical surveys of the Taharoa deposit. A summary of some of the geophysical results was reported by Stokes et al. (1989).

**GEOLOGY OF THE TAHAROA DEPOSIT**

The geology of the Taharoa district is described by Henderson & Grange (1926) and Marwick (1946). The coastal cliffs north and south of Taharoa (Fig. 2) are formed by eastward-dipping greywacke of the western limb of the New Zealand Geosyncline. The northern boundary of the Taharoa iron sand deposit is made up by stocks of upper Miocene Orangiwiao Dacite (Martin 1967). In coastal areas, eolian, littoral, estuarine, and shallow-marine sediments of Quaternary age have infilled embayments and low-lying valleys, forming sandspits, bars, and active dune-fields. Tephra and associated paleosols are distinctive marker horizons within some of the Recent eolian deposits. The upbuilding and inland encroachment of eolian sand has caused ponding of streams which drain the hinterland, resulting in the formation of Lakes Taharoa, Nukumiti, and Rotoroa (Fig. 2) as well as swampy areas.

The stratigraphy of the Quaternary sands is summarised in Table 1 and the geology of the deposit is shown in Fig. 2. Brothers (1954) included the sands of the Taharoa deposit in the Kaihu Group. This group was enlarged and subdivided by
Fig. 2 Geological map and surface topography of the Taharoa titanomagnetite sand deposit.
Kear (1965) to include all Pliocene–Quaternary formations of coastal facies along the western coastal strip of the Auckland Province. At Taharoa, the younger sands became part of the Mitiwai Formation; the older, slightly compacted sands were placed in the Bothwell Formation. The Quaternary geology of the southwest Auckland coastal area was revised by Chappell (1970), who subdivided the Mitiwai Formation into “older” and “younger” dunes. He also introduced the Waiau A Formation, and dated the Waiau B Formation (c. 100 ka; cited in Chappell 1975) which correlates with Kear’s Bothwell Formation (Table 1).

Pain (1976) recognised two distinct eolian sand members within Kear’s Mitiwai Formation and named them Paparoa and Nukumiti Sands Members, which correlate with the “older” and “younger” dunes of Chappell, respectively. Pain found that the Paparoa Sands are underlain by a thin layer containing Rotoehu Ash (age 42 ka, according to Pullar et al. 1973) and other weathered tephras. Beach deposits of Chappell’s Waiau B Formation overlie greywacke basement immediately north of the Taharoa deposit; these littoral deposits are covered by slightly cemented eolian sands named by Pain (1976) as the Te Akeake Sands Member of the Waiau B Formation. This member is overlain by the layer containing Rotoehu Ash. The sedimentology and stratigraphy of the Taharoa sands, particularly the Te Akeake Sands Member, was studied more recently by Stokes (1987). In this paper we use the stratigraphy of Pain (1976) to describe the sands of the Taharoa deposit (Fig. 2).

Analysis of Te Akeake sands from several localities within the deposit indicate that this member has a titanomagnetite concentration of c. 18%. The sands are light grey, occasionally compacted, and, in places, weakly cemented by limonite (Pain 1976). Sands of the Paparoa Member are loose, grey-black in colour, and relatively rich in titanomagnetite (25–50%). Parabolic and longitudinal dune forms are common, with a well-defined inland margin which formed as the sand encroached over the older Te Akeake Sands and became fixed about 400 m west of Taharoa village (Fig. 2). The upper boundary of the Paparoa Sands is weakly defined by Parangi soils (Pain 1976), which contain pumice fragments derived from the Taupo Pumice Formation. The Nukumiti Sands Member includes the youngest eolian deposits at Taharoa. Grey-black, loose sands of this member form active transverse and barchan dunes, which still drift across the area with the prevailing southwesterly wind. Nukumiti sands are partly derived from the reworking of Paparoa and Te Akeake sands, and in many places the Parangi soils have been eroded. Analysis of drillhole samples indicates that the Nukumiti sands have a titanomagnetite concentration slightly higher than the Paparoa sands, with values of up to 55% titanomagnetite by weight.

About 0.5 km south of the Taharoa deposit, a small outcrop of weathered iron sands occurs at an elevation of c. 150 m above sea level, on a terrace cut into the greywacke (Fig. 2). It is known as the Harihari deposit and was first described by Henderson & Grange (1922). The sand in the Harihari deposit is medium grained, well bedded, and is strongly cemented and stained with limonite. Kear (1979) considered these cemented sands to be a higher level remnant of the Awhitu Formation.

### GEOPHYSICAL SURVEYS SELECTED

Although mining operations had started at Taharoa in 1972, there was little information available that indicated where gross ore concentrations occur outside the central area. When we began geophysical surveys in 1974, concentration patterns ahead of the dredge path of the mining activities were assessed from closely spaced (100 m) drillholes that all terminated in tephras and paleosols near the top of the Te Akeake Sands Member. Little was known about the thickness of these sands or the depth to greywacke basement.

Initially, we tested several geophysical methods. Electrical methods were used to check whether known concentration patterns were detectable by electrical conductance anomalies. The seismic refraction method was used to determine whether the concealed greywacke basement could be mapped. Other, similar tests at Waikato Heads (Fig. 1) showed that gross concentration patterns could be recognised from airborne magnetic surveys and sometimes by detailed gravity surveys (Lawton 1979).

Out tests at Taharoa showed that the titanomagnetite sands are nonconductive and that DC resistivity, IP, and EM methods are not suitable for delineating ore concentration patterns. DC resistivity soundings, however, indicated that the depth to the conductive, clay-rich, saturated paleosols at the top of the Te Akeake Sands Member could be assessed, although the interpretation suffers from equivalence problems (Lawton 1979). The seismic tests were encouraging because

| Table 1 | Stratigraphy of the Taharoa Quaternary sands (after Pain 1976). |
|---|---|---|
| Coastal formations | Tephras | Age (yr B.P.) |
| Mitiwai Formation | ‘younger dunes’ | Nukumiti Sands Member | post-Maori occupation |
| | | Parangi soils | Taupo Pumice Formation | c. 1850 |
| | | ‘older dunes’ | Paparoa Sands Member | |
| | Late Quaternary tephra with Rotoehu Ash | 41 700 ± 3500 |
| Bothwell Formation | Waiau B Formation | Te Akeake Sands Member | < 83 000–c. 107 000 |

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Generally, the first arrivals observed were sharp, but severe
geophone interval of 25 m. Single, 30 Hz geophones were
recording system. Each spread was 575 m long with a
refracted arrivals from the greywacke basement were
recorded.

After evaluating the results of the test surveys at Taharoa
and Waikato North Head, we decided to investigate the
Taharoa ironsand prospect by using detailed seismic,
DEFRACTION SEISMIC SURVEY
The refraction seismic survey was undertaken to determine the
magnetic, and gravity surveys. The results of these surveys are
described in this paper.

The refraction seismic survey was undertaken to determine the
ground geometry of sand bodies within the deposit, and to obtain
depth constraints for the interpretation of magnetic and gravity
data. Profiles were selected to cross scout boreholes through-
out the deposit; additional control was available from closely
spaced (100 m) drillholes in the active mining area south of
Wainui Stream. The seismic lines and drillhole control are
shown in Fig. 3. A total of 12.5 line-kilometres of data were
acquired using a 24-channel Texas Instruments DFS II
recording system. Each spread was 575 m long with a
trace of seismic results are shown south of
Wainui Stream. The seismic lines and drillhole control are
shown in Fig. 3. A total of 12.5 line-kilometres of data were
acquired using a 24-channel Texas Instruments DFS II
recording system. Each spread was 575 m long with a
geophone interval of 25 m. Single, 30 Hz geophones were
used, buried c. 0.5 m below the ground surface to improve
energy coupling.

Seven shots were fired into each spread, comprising five
shots spaced equally along the spread and two shots offset
600 m from each end. Most shot holes were 1.5–2.0 m deep,
and the near-surface P-wave velocity was obtained by placing
an geophone adjacent to the shot hole. The energy
source was AN Polar 60 gelignite with charges of 0.3–0.5 kg
used for in-spread shots, and up to 2.0 kg for the offset shots.
Generally, the first arrivals observed were sharp, but severe
energy attenuation was noticeable over the higher sand dunes.
Seismic data were recorded on photographic paper and stored
on digital magnetic tape.

Velocity structure of Nukumiti and Paparoa sands
Analysis of the traveltime times of most shots yielded an average
velocity of 240 ± 40 m/s for the unconsolidated surface sands.
However, first-arrival traveltime data on the near traces of
seismic records showed a nonlinear behaviour, indicating that
the compressional-wave velocity in the unconsolidated sands
increases with depth. This velocity-depth relationship was
investigated in two borehole velocity surveys.

The first borehole was located on a high dune in the central
area of the deposit, 100 m southwest of shot point A13
(labelled “Q Line Uphere” in Fig. 3). It was drilled to a depth
of 38 m, ending at the water table in Paparoa sands. For the
experiment, charges of 0.2 kg were fired successively at 3 m
intervals in the hole. Recorded uphole times are plotted versus
depth in Fig. 4. The scatter in the traveltimes for shallow
charges is caused by the disruption of uncompacted sand
around the borehole during drilling. Projected traveltimes
from geophones offset 10 m from the borehole collar show
significantly less scatter. At shallow (<20 m) depths, the
traveltime data in Fig. 4 can be fitted by assuming a linear
velocity increase with depth, given by:

\[ V_z = V_0 + kz \]  \hspace{1cm} (1)

where \( V_0 \) is the surface velocity, \( z \) is the depth, and \( k \) is the rate of
velocity increase with depth (k-factor). It can be shown
(Lawton 1979) that the one-way time, \( T_z \), to a depth \( z \) is given by:

\[ T_z = \left( \frac{1}{k} \right) \ln \left[ \frac{V_0 + kz}{V_0} \right] \]  \hspace{1cm} (2)

Using a surface velocity \( V_0 = 240 \text{ m/s} \), the data in Fig. 4 fit
a theoretical curve generated using a k-factor of 18.5/s in
equation (2). At depths >21 m, the observed traveltimes indicate a constant velocity \( (V_{\text{max}} = 650 \text{ m/s}) \).

A similar analysis was undertaken for the velocity test in a
second borehole, which was located near shot point R14
(designated “R Line Uphere” in Fig. 3). A k-factor of 28.5/s
was obtained for the unconsolidated sands, and again a
constant velocity of 650 m/s was observed, in this case, below
a depth of 16 m.

Analysis
Ewing & Leet (1932) showed that the raypaths of waves obeying a linear velocity-depth function are circular, and that the traveltime, \( T_n \), along a ray emerging at a distance \( x \) from the shotpoint is given by:

\[ T_n = \left( \frac{2}{k} \right) \sinh^{-1} \left[ \frac{kx}{2V_0} \right] \]  \hspace{1cm} (3)

Using equation (3), theoretical traveltime-distance curves
were calculated for a range of k-factors. These curves were
matched with observed traveltime data and showed that the k-
factor varies from 18–32/s between different areas of the
deposit. The lowest values were observed over the highest sand dunes, which implies that the k-factor is related to
compaction of the sand.

As examples of the data analysis, observed first-arrival data and interpreted sections along profiles A and R are shown
in Fig. 5 and 6, respectively. Clearly, the traveltime data (Fig.
5A, 6A) are distorted by the effects of topography and the low
near-surface velocities. To assist the analysis, the effects of
topography were removed by reducing the observed travel-
times to values which would have been observed if the shot
points and geophones were placed on a datum plane that was
chosen to coincide with the water table. For the reductions, the
k-factor in the upper layer was determined at each shotpoint
using curves generated from equation (3). An average value of
24.2/s was obtained along profiles A and R and ranged from
18.5/s over the highest dunes, to 28.5/s in lower lying areas
where the sand is more compacted. The k-factors at geophone
stations between shot points were obtained by interpolation.
Analysis of the reduced data proceeded using standard delay
time (Gardner 1939) and plus-minus (Hagedoorn 1959)
methods.

Interpretation
For the interpretations shown in Fig. 5B and 6B, the surface
layer of sand with a linearly increasing velocity with depth is
designated layer 1, and the dry, compacted sands with a
constant velocity \( V_2 = 650 \text{ m/s} \) are combined into layer 2.
Underlying the dry sands is a refractor (layer 3) which has a
lithology and velocity that varies considerably over the
deposit. At the western end of profile A (Fig. 5B), layer 3 is
actually exposed at the surface, where it is comprised of a clay-
bound, damp Te Akeake paleosol with a velocity \( V_3 =
800 \text{ m/s} \). To the east along profile A, the velocity of this layer
increases, due probably to increasing compaction and water
saturation, reaching 1120 m/s near shotpoint A17 (Fig. 5B).
In contrast, along profile R (Fig. 6B), layer 3 has a constant
velocity \( V_3 = 1500 \text{ m/s} \), and its lithology is interpreted to be
saturated, unconsolidated Paparoa sands. The refracting
interface in this area is the top of the water table which is at an
elevation close to that of Lake Taharoa (11 m above sea level).
Fig. 3  Refraction seismic profiles, drillhole control, and the topography of the top of the Te Akeake Sands Member.
Fig. 4 Results of the Q-line borehole velocity survey. Open circles are observed uphole traveltimes; crosses are uphole traveltimes projected from 10 m offset; the solid line represents the relationship \( V_s = 240 + 18.5 \, z \) (m/s); the dashed line represents a constant velocity of 650 m/s.

Although the saturated, unconsolidated sand and weathered clay-bound sand components of layer 3 are stratigraphically different, they cannot be distinguished by the seismic analysis. Layer 3 is underlain by layer 4 which has a velocity \( V_4 = 1600-1800 \) m/s. It is composed of massive, weakly cemented Te Akeake sand. Greywacke basement, with a velocity \( V_5 = 3400-4800 \) m/s, underlies layer 4.

A contour map of the top of Te Akeake sand is shown in Fig. 3. In areas between the seismic profiles, some drillhole data were available, and outcrop control (Fig. 2) was also used to assist in construction of this map. To the south of Wainui Stream, the top of the Te Akeake Sands Member forms a north–south-trending ridge along the western side of the deposit, where it attains elevations of up to 50 m above sea level. East of this ridge, near Lake Taharoa, the top of Te Akeake sand drops to 10 m below sea level. Between Wainui and Mitiwai Streams, this interface rises from the coast to a general elevation of about 40 m. Ancient dunes with a northeasterly trend are apparent in this region (Fig. 3) and are still visible in the present topography (Fig. 2) where the younger sands thin. A depression in the top of the Te Akeake Sands Member immediately south of profile E is interpreted to be an ancient stream channel.

The morphology of the greywacke/Te Akeake sand interface was defined using a combination of gravity and refraction seismic data and is discussed later, following the gravity analysis.

Errors

Observed first-arrival traveltimes in the seismic records could be picked to within +1 ms. Errors in both \( V_0 \) and the \( k \)-factor tend to cancel because an erroneously high surface velocity is compensated by a low \( k \)-factor. However, because the velocities of layers 1 and 2 are so low, errors in the computed thicknesses of these layers will have an effect on the interpretation of deeper structures. For example, given a nominal thickness of 20 m for layers 1 and 2, an error of \( +20 \) m/s in \( V_0 \) and \( \pm 2/s \) in the \( k \)-factor results in an error of about \( \pm 4 \) ms in traveltimes reduced to the datum level. For average velocities \( V_4 = 1750 \) m/s and \( V_5 = 3500 \) m/s, this results in an error of c. \( \pm 6 \) m in the level of the \( V_3/V_4 \) interface and \( \pm 12 \) m in that of the \( V_4/V_5 \) interface. These errors may be slightly greater between shot points where the \( k \)-factors were obtained by interpolation.

AIRBORNE MAGNETIC SURVEYS

Airborne magnetic surveys were conducted over the Taharoa deposit at elevations of 185 ± 20 m and 370 ± 20 m above sea level. The two flight levels were surveyed to obtain additional...
depth control of the magnetic masses. An ELSEC proton precession magnetometer mounted in a fixed-wing Beechcraft aeroplane was used for the surveys; to eliminate the interfering magnetic effect of the aeroplane, the sensor was slung on a cable and tracked about 20 m below and 30 m behind the aircraft. Sensitivity of the instrument was ±1 nT, and the total magnetic field intensity was sampled at intervals of 2 s, corresponding to a ground separation of about 80 m between readings. Data were recorded on punch tape and on analogue records. Navigation was visual, along profiles about 0.5 km apart, which had been selected on the basis of scout drilling programs over the deposit. Flight paths were recovered from vertical photographs which were taken at 4 s intervals for the low-level flights and at 8 s intervals for the high-level flights. For both surveys, readings at tie-line intersections were within 20 nT. A base station was operated at Bridge Pa, Hastings, to record diurnal variations which were later removed from the field data.

Regional magnetic field

The mean undisturbed regional field intensity observed over nonmagnetic sediments during the Taharoa survey was 56 030 nT, a value similar to that reported by Hunt et al. (1975). In view of the rather short flightlines (<10 km) and the large magnetic anomalies caused by the ironsand deposit, the small effect of any horizontal gradient in the regional field could be neglected. First-order residual magnetic anomalies were obtained by subtracting a constant value of 56 030 nT from the data after diurnal corrections had been made. These residual anomalies have zero values over the outcropping nonmagnetic sediments to the south and east of the deposit.

Interpretation

First-order residual anomalies range in value from ~600 nT to +1600 nT in the low-level survey, and decrease to about one-half of this amplitude range in the high-level survey. Flightpaths and contoured total-force residual anomalies at 370 m and 185 m elevations are shown in Fig. 7 and 8, respectively. Both maps show similar trends, with large, positive anomalies occurring along the eastern side of the deposit, where the Nukumiti and Paparoa sands reach maximum thickness. The high spatial frequency of anomalies in Fig. 8 results from the magnetic effects of individual dunes and local titanomagnetite enrichments; the contouring of these anomalies between the relatively widely spaced profiles is rather subjective. A small, negative anomaly (~500 nT) on line B (Fig. 8), south of the Wainui Stream, indicates the location of the dredge-pond of the ironsand mine at the time of the survey (June 1974).

Measurements of the remanent magnetisation of iron-sands were reported by Lawton & Hochstein (1980). The Koenigsberger ratio was found to be <0.1, and it was concluded that the remanent magnetisation vectors of grains in the deposit are randomly oriented. Hence, the magnetic anomalies were interpreted in terms of induced magnetisation. Forward modelling was preferred to inversion methods for interpreting the data because the geometry of the magnetic masses had been established by the seismic interpretation and was controlled by drilling data. Two-dimensional magnetic modelling was found to be unsatisfactory because of the lateral variability in the concentration of titanomagnetite in the sands of the deposit.

Three-dimensional modelling was undertaken in three steps. Firstly, a topographic model of the entire deposit was constructed from digitised surface contours (10 m interval), with the base of the model placed at sea level. Theoretical total magnetic force anomalies ("topographic anomalies") of this model were computed by assuming a constant magnetic susceptibility (k) of 0.15 (induced magnetisation = 6.7 A/m), equivalent to that of the Te Akeake sand with a known titanomagnetite concentration of 18% (Lawton & Hochstein 1980). This average concentration was determined from analysis of outcrop and drillhole samples of the Te Akeake Sands Member. The polygonal lamina method of Talwani (1965) was used for the computations. Examples of first-order residual and calculated topographic anomalies are shown in Fig. 9A and 9B for profile A and in Fig. 10A and 10B for profile R, at the high and low survey elevations, respectively.

Fig. 6 Refraction seismic survey, seismic profile R. A, First arrival traveltimes versus distance. B, Interpreted cross-section. The test drillhole confirmed the seismic interpretation and is the location of regional gravity station G6. For location of profile, see Fig. 3.
Fig. 7 First-order residual total magnetic intensity anomalies at 370 m elevation.
Fig. 8  First-order residual total magnetic intensity anomalies at 185 m elevation.
Generally, the amplitudes of the topographic anomalies are about half of the first-order residual anomalies.

In the second step of the interpretation, the magnetic effect of Te Akeake sand below sea level, to a depth of -40 m, was computed, again assuming $K = 0.15$. Results from the refraction seismic interpretation, as well as test drilling, showed that the Te Akeake Sands Member extends at least to this depth throughout the deposit. It was found that the position of the lower boundary had little effect on the calculated anomalies; that is, there is little contribution from Te Akeake sands which might occur below -40 m. The model was extended 2 km offshore to avoid spurious edge effects. Anomalies calculated for the topographic and basal Te Akeake sand models were then subtracted from the first-order residual anomalies to yield second-order residual anomalies which were interpreted to be caused by the magnetic effects of enriched sands at the surface of the deposit.

In the last step of the magnetic interpretation, the enriched upper sands were modelled as an array of vertical, rectangular prisms with horizontal tops and bases. The array, shown in Fig. 11, is given by a $33 \times 13$ matrix of square prisms, each with a side-length of 200 m. This was considered to be a suitable dimension without causing spatial aliasing, given the flight line spacing of the survey. The elevation of the top of each prism was taken from surface contours, and the base level corresponded to the top of the Te Akeake Sands Member (Fig. 3). The grid did not cover the northern part of the deposit because the topographic anomalies indicated that no enriched sand exists in this area.

The magnetic effect of the prism array was computed using the method of Plouff (1976). In an iterative process, the magnetisation of each prism was varied until an acceptable fit was obtained between the calculated and second-order residual anomalies along all profiles at both survey elevations. Examples of the second-order residual anomalies and calculated magnetic effect of the prism array are shown in Fig. 9C and 9D (profile A), and Fig. 10C and 10D (profile R) at elevations of 370 m and 185 m, respectively. The interpreted cross-sections for profiles A and R are presented in Fig. 9E and 10E, respectively. In each example, the prisms which occur directly below the flightline are shown in the cross-section, along with the best-fit magnetic susceptibility of each prism. During the interpretation, it was found that the negative residual anomaly south of Waimui Stream (Fig. 7, 8) could be modelled only by reducing slightly the magnetic susceptibility of the basal Te Akeake sand to a value of $K = 0.05$ over a 500 m wide strip across this region.

Figure 11 summarises the final data of the prism array which provided the best-fit solution to modelling. Ore reserve calculations (bottom figure of each prism) are discussed later.

Errors

Errors in the topographic model are small due to the high quality of contour maps available. Small errors were introduced by the assumption of $K = 0.15$ for the Te Akeake Sands Member over most of the deposit and because of the uncertainty in the extent and thickness of the basal Te Akeake model. However, these are estimated to be $\pm 30$ nT. Other, small errors in the prism model were introduced by the use of stepped surfaces, but tests showed that these were $\pm 20$ nT. Some short-wavelength anomalies were difficult to match because of the assumption of homogeneous magnetisation in each prism. With reference to selected drillholes, it was estimated that the actual concentration of titanomagnetite may vary locally by up to 10% from that deduced in the magnetic interpretation.

GROUND MAGNETIC SURVEY

Magnetic measurements at ground level are strongly affected by surface and near-surface sources. The high variability in the titanomagnetite content of Taharoa dune sands causes irregular, short-wavelength magnetic anomalies at ground level, which obscure the effects of deeper magnetic sources. For this reason, extensive ground magnetic surveys were not undertaken. Instead, such measurements were made to examine the concentration pattern of titanomagnetite along the beach.
The profile crossed the beach at the western end of profile A (Fig. 3). Relative vertical force (ΔZ) measurements were made with an Askania GFZ torsion magnetometer at intervals of 15 m. An arbitrary zero level was defined with reference to a base station located on Te Akeake sand outcropping nearby; the anomalies therefore indicate titanomagnetite enrichment relative to the Te Akeake sand. The vertical force magnetometer records a negative anomaly over enriched sands, whereas the total force magnetometer, used for the airborne surveys, records a dipolar anomaly at this latitude. Results of the ground magnetic survey are presented in Fig. 12 and show large negative ΔZ anomalies above the high-water mark and also at the low-water mark. The qualitative interpretation of the ΔZ data (Fig. 12B) is that the greatest concentrations of titanomagnetite occur at the high and low water regions of the beach, and the intertidal area is less enriched in titanomagnetite. A similar distribution was found by Ross (1963) who studied the magnetic permeability of ironsands along the Taranaki coast. The back beach enrichment of titanomagnetite indicates a primary depositional process since no reworking of older deposits is necessarily involved. Unfortunately, the rate of accumulation of fresh titanomagnetite sands on the Taharoa beach is not yet known. The sands deposited at high water dry out as the tide recedes, and are then picked up by prevailing onshore winds and deposited in small dunes up to 20 m inland from the beach. During storms, wind velocities often exceed 30 m/s (New Zealand Steel Mining meteorological data), and the sands are blown further inland, forming parabolic and transverse dunes of the Paparoa and Nukumiti Sands Members. This inferred local source for the enriched surface dunes is supported by studies of Christie (1975) who found little difference between the beach and dune sands in several ironsand deposits between New Plymouth and Taharoa. Concentrations of c. 60% titanomagnetite were measured in samples from dunes near the beach, but reduced to 45% in surface dunes on the eastern side of the Taharoa deposit. The apparent dilution is the result of erosion of older, low-grade Te Akeake sands exposed within the deposit.
Fig. 11  Summary of the magnetic interpretation and distribution of titanomagnetite ore reserves in the Nukumiti and Paparoa Sands Members of the Taharoa deposit.
GRAVITY SURVEY

Gravity measurements were made with a Worden Pioneer meter at 100 m intervals along 13 profiles, covering a total distance of 30 line-kilometres (Fig. 13). A base station was established at the intersection of profiles E and O (Fig. 13) and was re-occupied every 2 h during the gravity survey to record instrument drift and diurnal changes caused by earth tides. Simultaneous elevation surveying, to a precision of ±0.05 m, was undertaken to minimise elevation changes caused by mobile, drifting sand. Upbuilding or erosion rates of sand dunes in the Taharoa deposit can be as high as 0.2 m/day during stormy weather. The observed gravity data were reduced to Bouguer anomalies using a density of 2670 kg/m$^3$. This value is the average density of greywacke rocks (Hatherton & Leonard 1964) which form the local basement. Latitude corrections were included with respect to distances north and south of the base station. Topographic reductions were calculated using the method of Hammer (1939); zones B and C were estimated in the field. Compartment elevations out to Hammer zone M were determined using graticules and contour maps. The maximum topographic reduction was 4.7 μm/s$^2$, whereas typical values were in the range 1.5-2.0 μm/s$^2$, with a maximum error estimated to be ±0.5 μm/s$^2$.

Regional field

It was not possible to determine the regional field from the published 1:250 000 Bouguer anomaly map (Woodward 1971) because of the sparsity of DSIR gravity stations in the Taharoa area. Since the density of New Zealand greywacke rocks is rather homogeneous, a local field was instead defined from gravity stations which were located on greywacke outcrops (Fig. 13, stations G1, G3, G7) and at stations where the depth to unweathered greywacke was known (Fig. 13, stations G2, G4, G5, G6). At the latter group of stations, values of the local field were obtained by reducing the gravitational effect of the low-density sediments overlying the basement. A trend surface analysis of the gravity data at these regional defining stations was made using the method of Esler et al. (1968). A third-order polynomial was chosen to represent the regional field, as shown in Fig. 13. Residual Bouguer anomalies were calculated by subtracting this field from the observed Bouguer anomalies; a residual Bouguer anomaly map is shown in Fig. 13.

Interpretation

All residual Bouguer anomalies (Fig. 13) over the deposit are negative, indicating that the average density of the Recent and Quaternary sands is less than that of greywacke. Amplitudes of anomalies range from zero to about -30 μm/s$^2$, with minima commonly occurring over high dunes in the central region of the deposit between Wainui and Mitiwai Streams. It is expected since the density of dry, compacted sand with a titanomagnetite concentration of 50% is only 2300 kg/m$^3$ (Lawton & Hochstein 1980), which is significantly less than the density of 2670 kg/m$^3$ used for the reductions of the gravity data.

At the beginning of the project, it had been anticipated that residual gravity anomalies could be interpreted in terms of density variations in the enriched surface sands, and that these anomalies might also outline titanomagnetite concentration patterns in the deposit. However, initial interpretation indicated that the gravitational effects associated with the irregular morphology of the greywacke basement dominates the residual gravity anomalies. Hence, interpretation of the gravity data was made with the revised aim of obtaining better control of the depth to greywacke basement away from the seismic profiles.

Two-dimensional modelling was undertaken using a method modified from Talwani et al. (1959). For the interpretation of the gravity data, the Quaternary sands were subdivided into polygonal bodies and were assigned density contrasts with respect to greywacke, based on the average titanomagnetite concentration and degree of water saturation of the sand in each body. The lower boundary of the basal Te Akeake sand body was adjusted iteratively until an acceptable agreement was obtained between the computed and residual Bouguer anomalies.

Figure 14 is an example of the interpretation along profile A (Fig. 13) and shows that the gravity model of the top of the greywacke is consistent with that obtained from the seismic interpretation. The values shown in each body of the model (Fig. 14B) are density contrasts (in units of 10$^3$ kg/m$^3$) with respect to greywacke. Three-dimensional (3-d) modelling was undertaken for the central area of the deposit between Wainui and Mitiwai Streams, where surface and subsurface control was good. The Quaternary sands were modelled using a horizontal, polygonal laminae method modified from Talwani & Ewing (1960). Results of 3-d modelling are also included in Fig. 14 and show only minor deviations in comparison to the greywacke surface defined by the seismic interpretation and 2-d gravity modelling. Similar consistency was found along other lines in the central area, indicating that 2-d modelling was acceptable for the interpretation.

The Te Akeake sands/greywacke interface

To complete the investigation of the depth to greywacke basement beneath the deposit, 2-d modelling was undertaken to interpret the remaining gravity profiles along which there was no seismic control. The density contrasts for the enriched sand bodies were obtained from the average titanomagnetite concentrations determined previously from the magnetic interpretation.

A subsurface contour map of the top of the unweathered greywacke basement is shown in Fig. 15, based on the gravity
Fig. 13 Gravity profiles, the regional gravity field, and contoured residual Bouguer anomalies at Taharoa.
and seismic interpretations. Ridges of greywacke separate the three lakes and extend to the northwest beneath the deposit, almost reaching Wainui Stream. Another ridge trends in the same direction from the southern end of Lake Rotoroa and extends beneath profile C. A high-standing plateau occurs west of Taharoa village and ends in a sharp spur beneath the intersection of profiles A and Q. The greywacke block exposed on the coast at the northern end of the deposit is interpreted to extend to the south, terminating in an outcrop west of the midpoint of profile M (Fig. 15). To the north of Mitiwai Stream, a valley in the greywacke trends to the northeast, and it is interpreted that this now-concealed valley extended beneath the deposit to the north, terminating in an outcrop west of Taharoa village and ends in a sharp spur beneath the intersection of profiles A and Q. The greywacke block exposed on the coast at the northern end of the deposit is interpreted to extend to the south, terminating in an outcrop west of the midpoint of profile M (Fig. 15). To the north of Mitiwai Stream, a valley in the greywacke trends to the northeast, and it is interpreted that this now-concealed valley contained Mitiwai Stream prior to the accumulation of Te Akeake sediments. Similarly, a valley and saddle below profile E outlines the course of the ancestral Wainui Stream.

ASSESSMENT OF ORE RESERVES

The total ore reserves of titanomagnetite calculated for the Taharoa deposit are summarised in Table 2. Previous estimates by Nicholson & Fyfe (1958), Kear (1965, 1979), and Waterhouse (1969) are included for comparison.

Nukumiti and Paparoa Sands Members

The average titanomagnetite concentration of these sands (38%), which we designate as the upper ore body, was obtained from the best-fit magnetic model, summarised in the prism array of Fig. 11. In each prism, the mass of titanomagnetite calculated from the geophysical data was estimated to be up to ±0.5 μm/s², may arise by neglecting partial compaction in the uppermost sand layer. The total error in the gravity analysis is thus c. ±3.1 μm/s², which translates to an error of ±20 m in the interpreted depth to greywacke basement.

Errors

Errors in the drift-corrected gravity readings are estimated to be ±0.1 μm/s². Combined with errors of ±0.1 μm/s² in the elevation correction (due to levelling errors), and an estimated uncertainty in the terrain correction of ±0.5 μm/s², the total error in the observed Bouguer anomalies is thus ±0.7 μm/s². A greater error occurred in determining the regional field and the subsequent calculation of residual Bouguer anomalies. Due to the scarcity of stations on accessible, unweathered greywacke outcrops, the regional field could be defined at only seven field points. The maximum error of this field is ±1.5 μm/s², resulting in a total error in the residual Bouguer anomalies of ±2.2 μm/s².

Errors in the density contrasts and thicknesses of the near-surface sand bodies, taken from the magnetic and seismic models, also propagate into the gravity models. For example, an error of ±5% in the titanomagnetite concentration of a sand body 20 m thick results in an uncertainty of ±50 kg/m³ in the assumed density, and a subsequent error of ±0.4 μm/s² in the computed gravity anomaly. Further possible errors, estimated to be up to ±0.5 μm/s², may arise by neglecting partial compaction in the uppermost sand layer. The total error in the gravity analysis is thus c. ±3.1 μm/s², which translates to an error of ±20 m in the interpreted depth to greywacke basement.

Fig. 14 Gravity interpretation, profile A. A, Residual and calculated Bouguer anomalies. B, Cross-section of interpreted density model. Numbers within the bodies are density contrasts (in units of 10^3 kg/m³) with respect to greywacke.
Fig. 15 The subsurface topography of the top of unweathered greywacke basement at Taharoa, based on the seismic and gravity interpretations.
further drilling, and the total mass of titanomagnetite concentrate which he calculated (208 x 10^6 t) is very similar to that determined from this study.

**Te Akeake Sands Member**

The volume of these low-grade sands above sea level (450 x 10^6 m^3) was calculated by subtracting the total volume of the prism array (255 x 10^6 m^3) from the total volume of the topographic model (705 x 10^6 m^3). An average titanomagnetite concentration of 18% was used in the estimates, based on the magnetic interpretation and analysis of several samples of Te Akeake sands. A possible error of ±15–20% in the calculated ore reserves of these sands reflects the uncertainty in the assumption that the titanomagnetite concentration is uniform throughout the Te Akeake Sands Member. The total titanomagnetite reserves in the low-grade sands above sea level (160 x 10^6 t) are only slightly less than the ore reserves in the Nukumiti and Paparoa Sands Members, although the total volume of sand is much greater. Nicholson & Fyfe (1958) did not recognise the potential of the low-grade sands and consequently they gave no estimates for Te Akeake sand reserves. Kear (1979) based his estimates on three scout boreholes drilled during an early exploration program. His estimate of 137 x 10^6 t of titanomagnetite was obtained by assuming that sand with a concentration of 27% titanomagnetite extends to sea level.

In addition to the reserves above sea level, the interpretation of the geophysical data shows that the Te Akeake sands extend to at least 40 m below sea level. This resource has now been partially proven by drillholes. However, the error in the estimated titanomagnetite reserves in these basal sands is at least ±20% because of the poor control of the lower boundary and the uncertainty in the average concentration of 18% titanomagnetite in these sands. Since these sands extend beneath most of the Taharoa deposit, a subtotal of about 200 x 10^6 t of titanomagnetite is indicated for this deep resource. This contribution to the Taharoa reserves has not been included in previous resource assessments.

**DISCUSSION**

Our study has shown that low-level airborne magnetic surveying is the most useful geophysical method for delineating the titanomagnetite concentration patterns within the Taharoa deposit. An important step in our magnetic interpretation was the computation of magnetic topographic anomalies. Allowing also for the magnetic effect of low-grade sands below sea level, second-order residual anomalies were derived which were interpreted to be caused by the titanomagnetite concentration patterns in the enriched, surface sands of the Nukumiti and Paparoa Sands Members. Gravity, seismic, and drillhole data provided the necessary structural control to enable a quantitative interpretation of the second-order residual magnetic anomalies to be made in terms of an array of vertical, rectangular prisms, with variable magnetic susceptibility. Ground magnetic measurements showed that beach concentrations of titanomagnetite occur above the high water mark and at the low water mark, with lower grades in the intertidal zone.

The gravitational effect of the titanomagnetite concentrations is small and is overwhelmed by the effect of the irregular morphology of the greywacke basement underlying the deposit. It was difficult to separate density variations caused by gross changes in titanomagnetite concentration from those caused by compaction and saturation of near-surface sands. Hence, interpretation of gravity anomalies gave essentially only the total thickness of the Quaternary sands in the Taharoa deposit. Two-dimensional modelling was found to be adequate for this purpose. In contrast, the gravity data from a similar study at Waikato North Head (Lawton 1979) could be interpreted directly in terms of gross titanomagnetite enrichment patterns, since the problem created by shallow, irregular basement does not occur there. Thus, the effective use of the gravity method in ironsand exploration depends on the regional geology of the particular area.

The seismic velocity structure of the Quaternary sands at Taharoa is complex, but careful analysis and interpretation of the seismic data provided an important depth control for the base of the enriched surface sands. It was found, for example, that the Mitwai Formation (made up of the Nukumiti and Paparoa Sands Members) attains a maximum thickness of c. 60 m in the central and eastern parts of the deposit. It decreases in thickness to c. 10–15 m in the western area, near the coast. Since the physical properties of the Nukumiti and Paparoa sands are similar, these sands cannot be separated in the seismic interpretation models.

The seismic refraction survey confirmed that the Te Akeake sands are separated from the overlying, unconsolidated Nukumiti and Paparoa sands by a sequence of late

### Table 2: Reserves of titanomagnetite in the Taharoa deposit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>V</th>
<th>VI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nukumiti and Paparoa sands&lt;br&gt;(enriched surface sands)</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>±15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>42*</td>
<td>209*</td>
<td>418*</td>
<td>175*</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41†</td>
<td>45†</td>
<td>102†</td>
<td>42†</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35‡</td>
<td>297‡</td>
<td>59‡</td>
<td>208‡</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Akeake sands above sea level</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>±15-20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>27†</td>
<td>244†</td>
<td>509†</td>
<td>137†</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Te Akeake sands below sea level</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>560</td>
<td>1115</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>±20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal of enriched, near-surface sands:</td>
<td>255</td>
<td>545</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>±15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal of possible reserves above sea level:</td>
<td>1445</td>
<td>365</td>
<td>±15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total resources, including reserves below sea level:</td>
<td>1265</td>
<td>2560</td>
<td>565</td>
<td>±20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**I** Stratigraphic member<br>**II** Average concentration of titanomagnetite (%)<br>**III** Total volume of sand (x 10^6 m^3)<br>**IV** Total mass of sand (x 10^6 tonnes)<br>**V** Total mass of concentrate (x 10^6 tonnes)<br>**VI** Estimated error in mass of concentrate (%)

Quaternary tephras and associated paleosols, interbedded with titanomagnetite sands. The base of this sequence is a well-developed, coherent paleosol which formed beneath the Rotoehu Ash (Pain 1976). This sequence is locally rather thick (up to 15 m), and we propose that this horizon at the top of the Te Akeake Sands Member should become a new, additional member of the Waiau B Formation. The largest thickness (>100 m) of the Te Akeake Sands is one of the important findings of our geophysical surveys. This layer was found to be a large, low-grade subdeposits of titanomagnetite, and its potential as an ore resource had not previously been recognised.

Integrating all existing, deep drillhole data and the seismic, magnetic, and gravity interpretation models, we found that the Taharoa ironsand deposit consists of a rich, upper ore body made up of the Nukumiti and Paparoa Sands Members. These sands have an average titanomagnetite concentration of 38% (by weight) and contain about 205 ± 30 × 10^6 t of titanomagnetcite. They accumulated during the last 40 ka from beach deposits at high tide level, and significant deposition of titanomagnetite at this level of the beach still occurs today. The upper sand ore body is separated by an upper 15 m thick tephra/paleosol layer from deeper, lower-grade, slightly cemented sands (thickness >100 m), of the Te Akeake Sands Member. The titanomagnetite concentration in this layer is low, c. 18% (by weight), this figure being based on analyses of numerous samples from surface outcrops and from deep drillholes, as well as from our best-fit magnetic model. The Te Akeake sands were deposited c. 100 ka ago and can be correlated stratigraphically with the Waiau B Formation of Chappell (1975). The total reserves of titanomagnetite in this lower grade sand body are 360 ± 65 × 10^6 t of titanomagnetite, although it is doubtful that this concentrate can be economically recoverable (Stokes et al. 1989).

The total reserves of the Taharoa deposit are therefore 565 ± 120 × 10^6 t of titanomagnetite. The magnetic interpretation model presented here can be used for management not only of the Nukumiti and Paparoa Sands Members, but also of the Te Akeake Sands Member, whose full potential was only recognised by this study.

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