

# Coandă and Venturi Effects at the Eighth Wonder of the World— the White Terrace

A Rex Bunn

## Abstract

The grandest geotourism attractions in the southern hemisphere, in the nineteenth century were the siliceous *Pink and White Terraces*, the lost New Zealand *Eighth Wonder of the World*. In 1886, the Tarawera eruption buried the terraces. In the absence of a government survey or evidence of their locations; public debate over their survival ensued until the 1940s. Recently, a unique survey was uncovered and led researchers at last to the Terrace locations.

Early colonial visitors were told by traditional landowners, that the major White Terrace spring erupted in strong easterly winds. Having researched the Pink and White Terraces for some years, this 1859 report puzzled me, as it did Ferdinand Hochstetter to whom the first report was made in 1859. From previous studies in *automotive crankcase ventilation*, I could see a potential causal pathway for these east-wind spring eruptions. After examining the topography of the White Terrace spring, embankment and apron: I suggest the puzzling eruptions were a product of three phenomenae: the Venturi and Coandă effects, with Bernoulli's principle. This paper presents the evidence for the presence of Venturi and Coandă effects at the Lake Rotomahana Basin. More importantly, it discusses how these effects contributed to postulated spring eruptions during the 1886 eruptions; which created so far unexplained water ponding around the Pink, Black and White Terrace locations. These surface waters contribute to the new paradigm for the Rotomahana Basin during the 1886 eruptions; where the topographic changes lead today's researchers to the lost Terrace locations around the shores of the new Lake Rotomahana.

## Introduction

In the nineteenth century, the greatest geotourism attractions below the equator were the *Pink and White Terraces*, the *Eighth Wonder of the World*. American and European tourists took the long sea voyage to New Zealand where the siliceous Terraces astonished a global audience. The Terraces were buried in the 1886 Rotomahana Basin eruption and assumed lost, until recent research rediscovered their locations (Bunn, 2022a, b, and c).

During the only survey of the Pink and White Terraces in 1859 by Ferdinand Hochstetter (1829–1884), his indigenous Māori guide Akutina Rangiheuea (?–1886), told him of strange eruptions at *Te Tarata*, the great White Terrace boiling spring. The “whole mass of water is suddenly thrown out with an immense force ... such eruptions are said to occur only during violent easterly gales.” To Hochstetter this could mean “the Tatarata spring is a geyser, playing at long intervals ... the mass of water thrown out, therefore, must be immense” (Hochstetter; 1867, 411). From Hochstetter's measurements, the great White spring erupted  $\geq 3$  ML of water compared with for example, Old Faithful geyser at Yellowstone, erupting 0.014-0.032 ML.

This report by Tūhourangi guide Akutina Rangiheuea, fascinated me since reading it in 2014, for a conventional geological view is “strong winds cool the surface waters and delay geyser eruptions” (Witze, 2018). This explanation appears simplistic for air like gases generally, is a poor conductor of thermal energy. There had to be more to these east-wind eruptions.

From my seminal study of *automotive crankcase ventilation*, I was struck by the similarity of the 1886 Rotomahana Basin phreatic eruption to the operation of an inverted *internal combustion engine* (Bunn, 2013). At Lake Rotomahana the process is also adiabatic. The lake floor serves as a piston, the lake as the crankcase, the geothermal system beneath the lake floor as the combustion chamber, with its water-steam fuel charge heated by magma and a magmatic or decompression event as the spark plug. The engine first fired on June 10, 1886 (Luketina, 2022). I have noted Venturi and Coandă effects in automotive crankcase ventilation.

As I recall, only one later, frank eruption from Tarata spring is recorded in the 1870's. Thus, it seems unlikely the White Terraces spring could be classed as a geyser and yet geophysicist Ron Keam labelled it as one (Keam, 2015). The question remains unanswered, why should an easterly wind cause the Tarata spring to suddenly erupt? My automotive engineering research suggests the eruptions were caused by a combination of three phenomenae: the Venturi and Coandă effects, and Bernoulli's principle. These acting severally or in unison explain the phenomenon reported to Hochstetter. To my knowledge, this remains otherwise unexplained. More importantly for the study of the Pink, Black and White Terraces, these factors also explain the para-eruption water flows from White Terrace spring during the 1886 Rotomahana Basin eruption (Bunn, 2022b, and c).

### **Tarata Spring topography formed a Venturi**

The architecture of the Tarata spring and its embankment created the topographic conditions for a Venturi to form. The spring was enclosed by a horseshoe-shaped, 20-25 m high embankment, opening to the west. Two peaks extended and elevated the embankment either side of the relatively narrow entrance, as in Figure 1. In easterly winds, a Venturi would form as airflow passed over the embankment and down and across the spring platform, exiting between the peaks. The airflow was constricted as it passed between the banks and entrance peaks. Its velocity would increase while air pressure fell, under Bernoulli's principle. This phenomenon is well known in urban geography and see:

<http://thebritishgeographer.weebly.com/urban-climates.html#:~:text=The%20Venturi%2DEffect%20is%20a,net%20of%20high%2Drise%20buildings.>



**Fig. 1. Coandă effect and Venturi topography of Tarata Spring embankment (Bunn, 2017).**

In a Venturi, fluid (or gas) flow accelerates and pressure falls: in this case across the spring and Terrace platform surface. The air pressure above the geothermal spring falls and this encourages the already boiling spring to erupt. The Tarata spring temperature was 84C at the margin and boiling in the center (Hochstetter, 1867). Allowing for altitude, water there boils at ~98.9C. For example, a 10% drop in air pressure over the spring brings this down to ~96C, extending the spring area at boiling point (Wooten, 2011). The strength of the effects would depend on how the Venturi formed over the spring, platform and upper Terraces. At some point, the spring would erupt. *Lucy's Isle* in the platform between the peaks, may have divided the Venturi or formed a pair of Venturis: one forming in a southeast wind and a second in a northeast wind. It is significant that a southeast wind was recorded during the short Rotomahana Basin eruption (Nairn, 1979).

### **Coandă effect over the White Terraces**

In easterly winds a synergistic effect, unknown in Hochstetter's' day would emerge over the White Terraces— the Coandă effect. The airflow passing over the embankment would be attracted to the convex banking surface under the Coandă effect, deflecting down and across the spring platform and upper Terraces. The easterly airflow striking the embankment would form low-pressure vortices inside the embankment. These would deviate the airflow down to adhere to the spring platform. *Lucy's Isle*, between the entrance peaks in the centre of the platform (I now believe it was named after Guide Sophia Hinerangi's (c.1834–1911) sister, Lucy Takiora Lord (1842 – 1893): may have contributed to the vortices and low pressure via transverse currents (Brookes, 2016: Cowan, 1885).

The curving embankment and terrace surfaces would cause acceleration of the air stream under the Coandă effect and from Bernoulli's principle, a lower pressure between the air stream and the spring surface, causing more extensive boiling (Camuffo, 2019). American Frank Cowan's (1844–1905) evocative description of a *white rainbow* over the White Terrace spring, may reflect his unknowing view of the Coandă effect:

*Above the sapphire cauldron; and above  
The halo, overspreading half the pool,  
A radiant arch of white—a rainbow blached—* (Cowan, 1885. p. 23).

### Surviving Evidence

I can find no surviving photographs witnessing this Coandă effect phenomenon, probably because the accompanying strong easterly winds would prevent canoe transport of the heavy cameras, (and prior to the mid-1880's), the bulky portable darkroom required on site at the Terraces. These items had to travel east by dugout canoes (with little freeboard) across Lake Tarawera, to the Kaiwaka Channel and up it to Lake Rotomahana. Also, the longer exposure times of wet-plate cameras in the earlier tourism period at the Terraces, would anyway preclude the effect being recorded (Bunn, 2019). In Figure 2, the effect of a north wind is shown across Tarata Spring, in a photograph taken on a later, dry-plate camera. The steaming-fog is blown from left to right across the embankment entrance and down over the southern Terraces. There is possible evidence of a Coandă effect over the upper Terraces, but this may also be localised steaming-fog over a hot waterfall recorded there.



**Fig. 2. White Terrace, under a strong north wind (cropped). Steaming-fog may be blowing across the southern Terraces. 1885, Burton, Te Papa (C.014925).**

Years ago on the *Tongariro Crossing* (acknowledged as the best one-day walk in New Zealand), I witnessed a similar Coandă effect. On the saddle between Mts Tongariro and Ngauruhoe at ~1900 MASL, a strong east wind blew and low cloud descended around us. As the wind crossed the saddle the cloud acted as an *airflow witness*, like the steaming-fog in Figure 2; curving down, adhering to the ridge around me and forming vortices. At the time I was unaware of the Coandă effect and the mountain-top phenomenon was preternatural.

### **Base surge interaction**

We should next consider the surge effects during the 1886 eruption. From Ian Nairn's cross-bedding analyses, 20 of 23 base surges from the Rotomahana Basin eruptions were directed from the east i.e. from Great Crater Basin (Nairn, 1979). The hot surges were "steam-fluidised debris flows ... in hurricane-velocity (>40m/s), ground-hugging turbulent clouds" (Nairn, 1979). The Coandă effect and Bernoulli's principle would operate on the fluidised surges as they passed over the Pink and Black Terrace springs. Some probably passed over the White spring. One at least directed NNW over it (Nairn, 1979). Given the high surge temperatures, the three spring temperatures would spike, while pressure fell. The three phenomenae would rapidly lower air pressure over the three springs, to a greater extent than during easterly winds; causing the eruptions Rangiheuea described. No one survived to report these in 1886. Sadly, Rangiheuea and his family died in the 1886 eruption.

We now have a *chain of evidence* to explain how and why Tarata, the White Terrace spring erupted between 3.30-5.30 AM on June 10, 1886 during the Rotomahana Basin eruption. The spring water first percolated up through and then surfaced over the thick ejecta, *inter alia* creating pooling around the Pink and Black Terraces and a watercourse from ~300 m below the crater rim and carving out the great watercourse under Pukekiore Hill (Smith, 1887). This supports recent published findings on topographic changes to the Rotomahana Basin, during the 1886 eruptions (Bunn, 2022a, b, and c).

### **Conclusions**

In summary, there is a logical engineering explanation for Rangiheuea's 1859 report to Hochstetter of easterly winds causing Tarata spring to erupt. The topography of the Tarata spring and its embankment enabled Venturi and Coandă effects to form during easterly winds. These wind conditions existed on the night of the 1886 Tarawera eruption. More importantly, similar effects are likely to have taken place during the 1886 Rotomahana basin eruption base surges; providing an explanation for otherwise unexplained surface water and watercourses around and below the three Terrace springs. Today, these contribute to a new topographic paradigm for the Rotomahana Basin, which confirms the location of the White Terraces.

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## Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflicts of interest to declare and there is no financial interest to report. I certify that the submission is original work.

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