



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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A NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION OF PROFESSIONAL ARCHAEOLOGISTS

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Since the late 1970s, a small group of Aucklanders have been meeting to discuss the standards and conditions of work in the rapidly-developing and (for New Zealand) new field of public archaeology. Initially, most of these people were involved with contract site recording but they now include a number employed by universities and government departments. Concern had been expressed on a number of occasions at the unsatisfactory conditions available to people prepared to work as independent field archaeologists, outside the major institutions such as government agencies, universities and museums.

To many, it was also a source of concern that, partly as the result of low rates of pay, the field of public archaeology was open to workers who might not, through inexperience, be able to observe proper professional standards in their work. Although it was perhaps not explicitly stated, much of the interest shown in these meetings stemmed from recognition of the possibility of establishing in New Zealand a body of professional "contract archaeologists" who could function in co-operation with, and to the benefit of, an understaffed and overworked Historic Places Trust archaeology section.

Proposals for a professional association

By late 1981, discussions had proceeded to a point where it was proposed to set up an informal "Auckland Association of Consulting Archaeologists", based partly on Australian models (Furey, 1981). The main concerns of the proposed association included standards of work, pay scales, issues involving contract work in public archaeology, and the setting up of a register of professionals available as independent consultants or hired contractors to the Trust, government departments or private companies and individuals. Further meetings resulted in a comprehensive report (Coster *et al*, 1982) which proposed formalising the association as an incorporated society. This proposal was the subject of brief discussion at New Zealand Archaeological Association Conference in May 1982.

During the second half of 1982, a further series of meetings in Auckland worked toward establishing a national association of professional archaeologists. This association was seen as being necessary to provide a voice for the growing number of professional contractors in public archaeology. Its

functions were to be threefold: firstly, to act as an advocate on behalf of private contracting or consulting archaeologists; secondly, to provide a "clearing house" for employers and potential employees, by setting up the proposed register; thirdly, to maintain the standards of work in public archaeology through adherence to a defined code of ethics.

It was felt at this time that neither the N.Z.A.A. nor the Historic Places Trust were fulfilling the foregoing functions. Hence it was seen that there could be advantages in setting up a separate organisation which would cater for those who wished to earn a living in some field of archaeology but who were not salaried professionals employed by major institutions.

A draft constitution for the proposed association was prepared and presented to an open meeting held during the N.Z.A.A. Conference in Napier last year. Reaction to the proposal was mixed and discussion heated. The meeting resolved in principle that a New Zealand Association of Professional Archaeologists should be formed as an incorporated society, but it also resolved that the association should not be formally constituted until the draft rules had been re-submitted to a further open meeting. This meeting is to be held during the forthcoming N.Z.A.A. mini-conference in Oamaru this June.

A steering committee for the proposed association was also set up at the May meeting. This committee called for submissions from interested people on the draft rules, the submissions to be taken into account in revising the rules. A total of nine submissions were received. Two of them opposed formation of the association, three were strongly in favour and four were either neutral or in favour but with some reservations. No submissions were received from either the N.Z.A.A. or the Historic Places Trust. The remainder of this note discusses some of the more contentious points involved in setting up the association.

#### A breakaway group?

It has been argued that the formation of a second association of archaeologists within New Zealand will drain much-needed energy and personnel from the N.Z.A.A. The steering committee is well aware of this possibility and has considered ways in which the N.Z.A.A. might take on the role of the proposed association, but without reaching any satisfactory conclusion. It would in many ways be preferable for either the N.Z.A.A. Council or the Historic Places Trust to take over the functions of the proposed Association of Professional Archeol-

ogists (A.P.A.) but neither body has shown any inclination to do so. The problem exists that the number of people who would benefit directly from formation of the professional group is a small proportion of the total N.Z.A.A. membership. It is questionable in fact whether the N.Z.A.A. should be asked to devote what would, of necessity, be a large part of its resources to the interests of such a small group of people.

The present steering committee does not in any way wish to be seen as engendering a split within the N.Z.A.A. This consideration is embodied in the draft constitution, which provides that all members of the proposed association will be members of the N.Z.A.A. also. The A.P.A. is seen as being very much a junior body and it is to be hoped that it might function to some extent under the wing of the N.Z.A.A. The proposed structure of the new association is similar to that of the N.Z.A.A. and the timing of annual meetings, for example, would be tied in to those of the N.Z.A.A.

#### The name

As set out in the draft rules, membership of the A.P.A. would be open to people who earn, or are capable of earning, or who wish to earn a living through the practice of archaeology. It has been argued that professionals already employed by the established institutions would derive no benefit from membership of an association which is essentially a "union" for the benefit of contractors and independent consultants. It has also been suggested that the use of the term "Professional" in the association's name could be taken to imply that non-members are thereby not to be thought of as professionals. The suggested alternative is to set up an association of "Contracting" or "Consulting" archaeologists, who would be a separate group from the institutionalised "Professionals".

While the steering committee is aware of these points, it felt that the proposed association would be better to start with the widest possible membership. To a large extent, the proposal to set up the association is based on the assumption of goodwill within the archaeological community, and the proposals would not have progressed as far as they have without the support of a number of salaried professionals. It would be easy enough to set up an association of contractors alone but such a group could well be too small to carry much influence. The bringing of all who earn their living through archaeology into the one body would give it a great deal more credibility as an association. It would also contribute

substantially to the exchange of ideas within the field of public archaeology.

It is true that the people with the most to gain from the A.P.A. at first are the contractors, but there is no reason why benefits should not be more widespread in the future. The proposed rules make it clear that the fostering of professional standards and ethics would be a primary function of the association, and this is an area which concerns all archaeologists. The association would also be concerned with protecting the interests of employers by maintaining standards of work in the profession. The steering committee has kept in mind the need for the association to avoid any suggestion of being elitist or exclusive. There is obviously nothing to be gained by not catering for those who have already established themselves as professionals within either an institutional setting or as individuals.

#### A national body?

Since the impetus for the A.P.A. has come from Auckland, it has been suggested that the Association would be better set up as a regional body rather than a national one. It is quite possible that the A.P.A. would be based in Auckland for some time but this need not prevent it catering for those members in other centres. Once again, it is felt that the association's credibility (and hence its effectiveness) will be greatly increased if it can be seen to speak on behalf of the majority of the country's professional archaeologists.

#### The next step

It is intended to hold yet another meeting to set up the A.P.A. during the mini-conference in Oamaru at Queen's Birthday Weekend. The steering committee is in the process of finalising a revised constitution. Copies will be available at the conference in June and may be obtained in advance, at a cost of \$2, from Caroline Phillips,  
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 University of Auckland,  
 Private Bag  
 Auckland.

#### Acknowledgements

Written submissions on the formation of the proposed Association of Professional Archaeologists have been received

from Atholl Anderson, David Butts, Janet Davidson, Kevin Jones, Foss Leach, Helen Leach, Beverley McCulloch, Doug Sutton and Tony Walton. The steering committee set up in May 1983 comprised John Coster, Simon Holdaway, Ian Lawlor, Caroline Phillips, Neville Ritchie and Ian Smith.

### References

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- Furey, Louise 1981 Auckland Association of Consulting Archaeologists. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 24:139-140.