



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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CONCLUSION:

We found that these methods of recording had several advantages. Firstly, it was easy to keep track of all the finds, prepare provisional lists of distributions, and ensure that no dross was retained. Secondly, the constant check prevented any undue accumulation of "unprocessed" finds, especially faunal material. Thirdly, and most important, these procedures, though basically simple, were found to be capable of flexible modification to fit the various needs of the excavation as it progressed. Overall, they encouraged a disciplined approach to recording which matched that required in the actual digging, and they will of course be reviewed and modified as necessary.

Finally, there were a number of other, more unexpected benefits. As teams took pride in the detail of their work, the team leader was better equipped to contribute suggestions to the regular reviews of digging progress held for all members of the excavation. These reviews took place both on the site, where mainly stratigraphical problems were discussed, and in the evenings at the camp. The latter sessions were concerned primarily with discussions on the finds, including specialist contributions on artefacts, faunal remains and so on, and were designed to improve the general knowledge of the excavators about the whole site. It was found that this wider appreciation was especially valuable in connection with our dealings with the general public, when students were asked to act as guides for groups of visitors and were expected to know the details of the various operations being undertaken. Furthermore, the visitors, seeing the nature of the recording employed as a matter of routine, appreciated more readily that excavation was not simply a process of digging.

Reference:

Mackay, S. and Trotter, M.M., 1961. "Pa a Te Wera, Huriawa Peninsula, Karitane", N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 4, No. 3: 26-29.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND ADULT EDUCATION: SOME EXPERIENCES IN OTAGO

P. Gathercole

In its latest report on site preservation, the scheduled site committee of Council has drawn attention to the value of adult education classes in archaeology. This note discusses some developments in this field in Otago in recent years, where a scheme has evolved with the full co-operation of the Adult Education Department, University of Otago. Adult Education Classes in archaeology have been held in the Province for a good many years notably those run by Mr. L. Lockertie, and several people drawn into this scheme received their introduction to the subject under his guidance. The

main difficulty attending success in adult education work, I think, is how to hit on means of extending it beyond the introductory level, especially as one cannot control, except perhaps indirectly, the number and quality of enrolments in each session. One way of dealing with this difficulty is here considered.

While working at Birmingham City Museum between 1954 and 1956, I was drawn into an adult education scheme where small archaeological groups were created in towns in the West Midlands by carefully planned weekend schools and winter courses, the aim being to recruit the students for the excavation of Roman sites, often on their own doorstep. This scheme related to a research project being undertaken on a shoestring by a member of Birmingham University, who was interested in the conquest of the West Midlands by the Romans in the first Century A.D. The students did not resent being used in this way. All excavations were undertaken with deliberation, and even the least expert felt that to wheel a barrow on Saturday afternoons was at least a small contribution to the solution of a problem significant for local history.

The success of this scheme suggested that something similar might usefully be developed in Otago, and in recent years an attempt has been made to plan the annual winter courses into an integrated sequence, involving a progressive specialisation for continuing students, while new members were grounded in first principles in introductory classes. On two occasions, also, we have organised fieldwork training schools during the summer, run by the Otago Anthropological Society in association with the Adult Education Department. It has been fortunate that the winter courses could be held at the Otago Museum, where, with the permission of the Museum Trust Board, suitable lecturing facilities were available, and teaching material of all descriptions could be borrowed from the relevant collections.

This scheme really began in 1960 with a simple course in general Polynesian archaeology. It was intended to follow this up with another the following year on the archaeology of New Zealand, with some simple fieldwork included in the syllabus. This was wise, because most of the members had only a hazy knowledge of recent developments in New Zealand archaeology and lacked experience in systematic fieldwork, while an understanding of methods of archaeological interpretation was quite absent.

In 1961, therefore, five lecturers, each possessing some experience of different aspects of field archaeology, provided a course which began with an examination of the methods of site recording, and passed to a review of excavation techniques and ways of analysing finds. The twelve sessions were obviously too limited to allow for the inclusion of much detail, but the course did involve three visits to local sites, and we also discussed the effectiveness of the Artefact Recording Scheme, previously considered at the N.Z.A.A. extended A.G.M. in June of that year.

In the following January, the first summer training school was held, at Tai Rua (Bridge Point), Otago. This was designed to give some first hand excavation experience at a coastal dune site, so common in the district, where previous work, mainly by Mr. M.M. Trotter, had indicated rich artefactual and faunal remains as well as structural evidence. This excavation was not without its mistakes. Digging in sand requires tight control, particularly when dealing with postholes, and we soon realised that it was necessary to improve our recording procedures. Similarly, we took steps to increase facilities for student participation in the identification of finds and the analysis of results, particularly by encouraging the students to work on the material after the excavation, although at the time laboratory space at the Otago Museum was very restricted. Finally although this was not readily apparent until about half way through the following winter course, there emerged a very real need to extend our overall knowledge of local prehistory, particularly in the coastal area.

In the winter of 1962, therefore, while the processing of material from the previous excavation was under way, a course was held reviewing the reliable evidence of local prehistory. Our biggest difficulties, of course, were that well provenanced finds were remarkably few and published evidence limited. The course finished just before the holding of the N.Z.A.A. Christchurch Conference, and it had already been mooted that we should next turn our attention to sites possessing obvious structural evidence, and perhaps begin the excavation of one of these. The value of the excavation of such sites was obvious from the papers of Green, Parker and Groube at the Conference, with their emphasis on the study of evidence which revealed a sequence of culture change. It was not surprising therefore, that our next summer school should take place at Karitane, where, on the Huriawa Peninsula, was at least one pa site with marked surface features.

This type of site, having postholes in clay and artificial build-up of terraces and defence works, was quite new to almost all of us. Excavations were slow, and recording methods extensively modified from those used previously, with an emphasis on the decentralisation of responsibility to team-leaders (See Article by Gathercole and Knight, 1964). Probably, we could have excavated more quickly, and so left fewer problems for investigating in subsequent seasons. Certainly, it has now become clear that the pattern of activity which emphasises fieldwork training rather than research per se needs to be modified, and the Karitane excavation planned for January, 1964, will be an explicitly research operation run by the Anthropological Society alone, and not organised as a training school.

Indeed, the pattern of adult education classes in the winter of 1963 itself foreshadowed this development. With more tutors available, it was possible to operate more widely and at the same time run two courses at the Otago

Museum: the first was an introduction to Oceanic archaeology, the second a series of advanced classes which analysed the published reports of recent excavations in tropical Polynesia, and discussed the use of non-archaeological evidence as an aid to archaeological interpretation.

Outside Dunedin, a short course in Polynesian Anthropology was held at Oamaru, leading to the formation of a small, informal group to carry out site-recording, which has not yet been greatly developed in Otago or Southland. There have been a number of very encouraging activities in the latter area, however, where a whistle-stop lecture tour by Mr. D.R. Simmons was followed, at Labour Weekend, by a school in general archaeological principles run by Mr. L.M. Groube. This was most successful, and led directly to the formation of the Southland Archaeological Society, and the organisation of an excavation, in January, 1964, at a quarry site near Riverton.

Complementing these activities, the Anthropology Department plans to carry out a survey of sites in Central Otago over the next few years. Taken as a whole, this means that there is now some prospect of establishing a more exact and comprehensive knowledge of the archaeological potential of Murihiku.

What has been achieved? Firstly, there is now a group of about a dozen well trained excavators based on Dunedin and double that number possessing some excavation experience at more than one type of site. Secondly, there is a more widespread appreciation of the importance of archaeological theory, and the need to match field work with reading and organised discussion, partly through the medium of adult education classes. On the other hand, our preoccupation with techniques and methods at the expense of research into specific and clearly stated archaeological problems has led to difficulties which will take some time to overcome. We are as yet in no position to generalise from our conclusions, even in terms of the local area, partly because at no one excavated site have we yet answered satisfactorily the questions posed by both surface and subterranean evidence. This has inhibited the publication of results, even in provisional form in the Newsletter, and made us unduly cautious in the formulation of those conclusions. On the other hand, our practice of following up excavations with lengthy periods of detailed work on the finds, in which numbers of our excavators take part, enables us to decide what our next objectives are, and plan the following round of excavations in ways to achieve them. From our experience, this several sided activity can provide many satisfactions to persons brought into archaeology through the adult education movement, because these individuals are thereby involved at first-hand in creative work of a kind widely removed from their day-to-day existence.