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ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE WAIKATO: SOME HISTORY

Owen Wilkes
Hamilton

Early in 1994 the Waikato Museum Archaeological Society (WMAS) was wound up and formally ceased to exist. The Society had long been moribund, consisting of only a few members, most of whom considered themselves too old to undertake fieldwork. This sad little event marked the end of nearly five decades of organized amateur archaeology in the Waikato. What follows is an attempt to relate the history of archaeological activity in the Waikato over those five decades, with an emphasis on the role of the amateurs. The geographic area covered is roughly that of the Waikato NZAA filing district, described elsewhere (Wilkes 1997).

BEFORE THE 1950s

The first archaeologist to work in the Waikato was Gilbert Archey of Auckland Museum, who investigated a large pa and some rock paintings in the upper Waikato in the late 1920s. Soon after, Leslie Kelly, a railway engine driver, later to be author of a controversial history of the Tainui peoples, began writing a series of short papers describing pa in the middle Waikato. In the same period Geological Survey workers located and sometimes named over 100 sites, mostly pa, in the course of preparing bulletins on the Mokau, Huntly-Kawhia and Te Kuiti districts.

Systematic recording of archaeological sites began in 1935. The foundation meeting of the Te Awamutu Historical Society resolved, amongst other things, "... to prepare a map of the upper Waikato district and mark thereon all ancient paha, settlements, battlegrounds or places of tribal or historical interest with tribal boundaries and land marks, eel weirs, burial grounds and tracks, [and] to mark out the important Maori paha and battlefields on scale plans prepared as accurately as possible, the present day appearance to be

preserved by photographic records" (Robertson 1975).

A mapping committee was set up, and over the next ten years a considerable number of pa sites were cleared and mapped, with a lot of the labour being provided by a local boy scout troop under the command of the Rev. S.R. Waring, a member of the Society's mapping committee. Some site descriptions were published in the Society's journal, the remainder of the information is preserved in the Society's archives.

SCIENTIFIC ARCHAEOLOGY ARRIVES IN 1958

The NZAA site recording scheme (SRS) was established in 1958 and in the same year Jack Golson of Auckland University gave an illustrated address to the Waikato Scientific Association (WSA) in which he called for the establishment of an amateur archaeological organisation in Hamilton. Cyril "Grump" Hunt, a main-street jeweller and amateur naturalist, took up the challenge and an archaeological section of the WSA was established 18 months later. Hunt, son of a British Army officer in India and himself a veteran of World War 2, set up the group on military lines, with himself as "director of operations". Other appointments within the group included recorder and Maori translator.



Auckland University's Jack Golson demonstrates the finer points of trowelling to novice Waikato archaeologists (1959).

Immediately after its establishment the group was forced into crash mobilization - Te Rapa pa (S14/34) on the outskirts of Hamilton was to be destroyed by highway development. Working bees were immediately organized to make all the necessary excavation paraphernalia, and Auckland University was approached to provide instruction in the techniques of scientific excavation. Only one weekend was available for a salvage dig, and work began early on the Saturday morning. By 10 am a track had been slashed in to the site, a small stream bridged, a stile erected, and, as recorded by Hunt, "Suitable necessaria were built - one for the ladies and one for the men". The locals then managed to have the billy boiling just in time for the arrival of Jack Golson, Les Groube and other Aucklanders. The combined group then cleared the site, mapped it, and excavated several squares. Late on Sunday the squares were refilled so that the site could be used for a girl guide camp the next weekend.

This set the pattern for group activity. Small numbers of relatively spectacular sites were selected for intensive recording. This was a weekend activity carried out in small groups. There was always a few slashers, a spade and a mattock in the car boot, and a few test pits would invariably be dug. Auckland University provided sporadic professional input. Activity was concentrated on the coastal hills north of Raglan harbour, mainly because the group had good contacts with farmers in that area. Field trips were often reported upon at length in the *Waikato Times*.

In its second year of activity what was now the Waikato Archaeological Society "fell rather into the doldrums", so, "realizing that field days were the lifeblood of the group", it was decided to organize "three splendid ones". The third of these was publicly advertised to attract new members, and 150 people turned up in 38 cars.

WAS hit the headlines in 1962 by identifying what was thought to be the stump of an adze-felled tree underneath Taupo pumice in a sandpit. It took some time for the Society to accept expert opinion that the "adze marks" had been created by the contractor's digger. Tempers were not helped by someone planting a broken adze alongside the stump half way through the acrimonious debate.

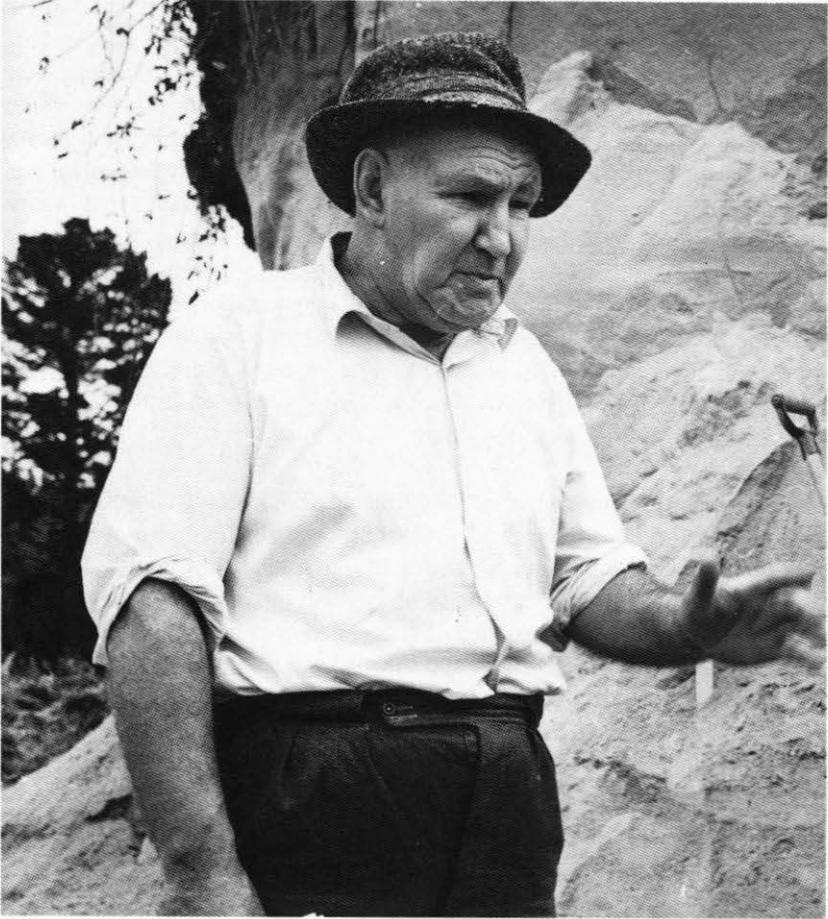
Other WAS projects in this period included excavation of house floors at Tamahere pa (65/30) near Hamilton, and a rescue excavation in a school



Waikato Archaeological Society volunteers search for more adzed tree trunks under Taupo ash (1960). Photo: Waikato Times

playground on the shore of Raglan harbour. North of Raglan kumara pits within 500 metre long Kotare pa were investigated, with Aucklanders participating. A couple of rockshelters were investigated. Waikato amateurs assisted in early 1963 with Roger Green's excavation of the fortified kumara storage site at Taniwaha in the lower Waikato.

In its first 6 years the group recorded 200 pa as well as numerous battlegrounds, redoubts, flour mills and mission stations. Besides that at Te Rapa, they carried out rescue digs on a pa at Mystery Creek about to be levelled to make a golf course, and on a burial ground in what is now Hamilton airport (Pick 1966).



Grump Hunt directing operations at the site of the 'adzed' tree stump under Taupo ash (1962).

Photo: Waikato Times

In the mid 60s Grump Hunt, now retired, withdrew from field archaeology and put two years of 'massive effort' into founding the Waikato Museum, which he ran himself for two years as honorary curator. He died in 1969.

Doug Pick, an orchardist and nurseryman of Rukuhia (south of Hamilton) took over leadership of the Archaeological Society, and shifted the focus of Waikato archaeological activity inland to the Waikato-Waipā lowlands by drawing attention to the numerous unique swamp and lake pa found near and south of Rukuhia. Around some of these pa palisade posts still stood up to 3 m high, their butts preserved by the tannin-rich groundwater. A borrowed farm tractor was used to pull out several so that their bottom ends could be examined. Eel weirs, canoes, and "canoe harbours" were all preserved by dark amber lake waters. When a Lake Ngaroto pa was probed it showed deep stratigraphy and 50 distinct occupation layers - unique in New Zealand archaeology. Realizing the importance of this, the Waikato Society called in Auckland University. Wilf Shawcross took over direction of the Ngaroto excavation, and showed that occupation had been continuous for 300 years. On looking at another lake pa, at Mangakaware, the Society found hundreds of wooden items on the lake bed immediately offshore from a pa. Peter Bellwood directed excavations here and was able to match timbers from the lake floor with house sites in the pa. The Ngaroto dig was written up at length in the *Waikato Times* by Michael King, vice president of the Society and a young reporter with the *Times*.

Another inland phenomenon which attracted archaeological attention in this period was the enormous area - about 28 square kilometres - of Maori-modified kumara soils along both sides of the Waikato between Ngaruawahia and Cambridge, and the thousands of borrow pits from which some three quarters of a million cubic metres of gravel had been extracted. The modified soils had already been identified and mapped by the Soil Bureau. The borrow pits had been earlier noted by the Geological Survey, but their human origin had not been recognised. Pick, drawing on Maori information and his own horticultural background, seems to have been the first to recognise these borrow pits for what they were. While working for an engineering firm which was testing soil foundations for proposed stop-banks on the Waikato Gary Law [1968] confirmed the widespread presence of modified soils.

The Kapuni gas pipeline to Auckland also helped focus attention inland - its projected route from Taranaki lay through the Waipā and Waikato basins. Ken Gorbey from Auckland was hired by the Ministry of Works to do an archaeological survey of the route. This was the first professional site recording in the Waikato. Meanwhile Richard Cassels of Auckland University began the recording in the Waipā area which led to his human ecology publications.

The Waikato amateurs were also active outside the Waikato. The site recording filekeeper, Hans Pos, a Ruakura agricultural scientist, did the first site recording on Mayor Island, and was responsible for first bringing the Tahanga basalt workings to the attention of the Auckland University Society. Some members also got caught up in amateur investigations in Hawkes Bay of an alleged pre-Taupo ash human occupation layer, and the mapping of so-called "moa roads" which the trained eye was supposed to be able to detect running along Hawkes Bay ridgetops.



Doug Pick (left) and Hans Pos (centre) inspect excavation progress at the Taniwha fortified storage site.

A GOLDEN AGE

Waikato Museum hired Ken Gorbey as assistant director and archaeologist, and the Museum started taking over direction of excavations. The Waikato Archaeological Society became the Waikato Museum Archaeological Society. Gorbey persuaded Hamilton City Council to fund a landrover for site recording. Initial plans were that it should tow a mobile archaeological

laboratory. At the same time the shift in the centre of gravity of archaeological initiative from Waikato Museum and its Society to Auckland academics continued. The net effect of these shifts was that Waikato archaeology was becoming professionalised, and there were less roles for amateurs to play, except as volunteer workers on professionally-led digs.

Early in the 1970s the focus shifted back to the coast, partly in the hope of finding early sites.

Cassels used students to record sites over considerable areas near Aotea (1973-5) and Raglan (1976), and excavated at Aotea. A large number of middens were sampled and analyzed. Tony Walton looked at kumara soils and borrow pits in the Aotea area. A small unfortified cluster of terraces and pits was excavated by Cassels and later written up by Aileen Fox.

In 1972-73 Gorbey directed excavation of a coastal headland pa at Raglan - in part as a way of keeping the Waikato Museum Archaeological Society alive. Little of interest was found, although the dig is fondly remembered by participants. Dante Bonica, a technician at the Museum, excavated an archaic/moahunter site in the sandhills nearby.

The prospect of blacksand mining in the Taharoa sandhills also helped focus attention on the coast. Jim McKinlay undertook site recording and excavation there in 1970 - seemingly the first involvement of the Historic Places Trust in the Waikato. Wellington amateurs worked on the dig. Later, with mining underway and sites, some of them early, disappearing at a rapid rate, Sue Bulmer and Auckland University students undertook intensive site recording at Taharoa. This was only the second intensive recording project to be carried out in the Waikato. Somewhat earlier John Coster and Gabrielle Johnston had carried out intensive recording of a small area at Te Maika on the south side of Kawhia harbour for the Kawhia Preservation Society. In 1977 they did a similarly intensive survey in a somewhat larger area on the north side of Kawhia harbour for the Forest Service. The rest of the Waikato/King Country west coast, stretching for 150 km from the Auckland boundary at Port Waikato to the Taranaki boundary near Awakino, remained more or less untouched apart from several forays in the south by Taranaki's amateur filekeeper, Alistair Buist.

While all this was happening on the coast the Waikato Museum continued to record inland sites. Gorbey and others did site recording in particular in the

Te Awamutu-Te Kuiti districts from 1972 on. Alan Clarke, an Auckland student, recorded sites along the Waikato and Waipa rivers and attempted to integrate the site data with historical records.

From about 1975 onwards the energy and enthusiasm of the Waikato Archaeological Society began to wane. The Historic Places Amendment Act 1975 was seen as sounding the death knell of amateur excavation. In early 1976 WMAS president Neil Laurie "seized an opportunity" to talk with McKinlay of the HPT about the legislation. McKinlay was, as related in the WMAS newsletter, "quite definite that the most important priority for the Trust is the recording of old sites, and stressed that this should be the main job of our Society.... he was pretty definite that no permit would be issued for a piecemeal dig of say, one day per month, such as we might have expected to do. There might be a remote possibility of our group being called on to do a salvage dig". The WMAS 1980-1 president's report of Val Gilchrist (a librarian) noted that the Act "has, I think, led to a falling-off of interest by members".

In 1980 the WMAS began compiling lists and maps of archaeological sites on behalf of local governments, and claimed to be the first local archaeological group to initiate such a project. They started with Hamilton City Council. This marked a shift in focus from investigating sites to facilitating protection of them. The Society had earlier worked unsuccessfully to have Nukuhau pa on the edge of the Waikato just upstream of Hamilton made into a reserve. It was one of the largest and most spectacular of all Waikato pa, with a half-completed waka lying in a nearby swamp.

At the Museum archaeology continued to become more professional with Ken Gorbey now director and Steve Edson hired as archaeologist in Oct 1976. Between 1977 and 1979 a rescue excavation at Te Miro swamp consumed 980 person-days, mainly of WMAS volunteers and paid students, and produced "staggering quantities" of wooden artifacts. It was never written up.

Gorbey also had a longstanding interest in the use of aerial photography for site recording, and saw the technique particularly appropriate for the huge job of recording the large numbers of pa widely scattered through the inland Waikato. In 1977 Steve Edson with WMAS assistance spent 4 months poring over hundreds of Lands & Survey aerial photographs which had been taken in the early 1940s (in case topographic maps were needed to help oppose a Japanese invasion). Flown at relatively low altitude (10,000 feet), the old

photos had better resolution and contrast than more recent aerial photography. More importantly, many of the earthworks were in far better shape in the 1940s than they were 30 years later, and in many areas there was far less land reverted to scrub than in the 1970s - and far less land in pine plantations than there is today. Over 600 sites, mostly fortifications or pit clusters, were identified and located from the photos. Middens were rarely identified and borrow pits were ignored.

Gorbey next secured a grant of \$1800 from the Historic Places Trust to re-photograph these sites. In the winter of 1978 Edson and the museum's photographer, Kees Sprenger, made seven flights totalling 21 hours in a small aeroplane. They managed to get both colour and black-and-white aerial oblique shots of 350 sites - one every four minutes - including 60 sites fortuitously discovered while in the air, over an area of 3000 sq km centred on Hamilton. No attempt was made, unfortunately, to photograph coastal sites. Costs worked out to \$5 per site photographed. Some of the photographs, especially the black and white enlargements, can only be described as exquisite. It is obvious that a lot of effort was put into exploiting low sun angles and long shadows to maximise surface relief expression.

Edson was also active in the field. A considerable number of sites detected from air photos were inspected on the ground over the next few years, and, with assistance of WMAS members, a number were surveyed with a planetable and autoreduction alidade WMAS had purchased.

In Aug 1984 Edson presented a paper to the WMAS entitled "Whither Archaeology in the Waikato". Still unpublished, this paper remains the only attempt to quantify the rate at which sites are being destroyed in the Waikato. Edson looked at the 1980 condition of 447 sites known from pre-1945 air photos. His results were not encouraging:

destroyed	20%
largely destroyed	27%
intact, poor condition	6%
intact, fair condition	29%
intact, good condition	17%
excellent condition	1%

ARCHAEOLOGY IN DECLINE

Archaeological work at the Museum went into rapid decline after the

departure of Gorbey in 1984 and Edson in 1985, for reasons which are now hard to elucidate. The magnificent promise of the excellently begun aerial recording project never came to fruition, and today there are still about 400 of the aerially recorded sites which have never been investigated on the ground.

In 1982 WMAS excavated a kumara pit near Tirau. The last dig of the WMAS was at Pukerimu redoubt near Cambridge in 1983, prior to its destruction by horticultural subdivision.

The NZAA site record files have been central to archaeological activity in the Waikato. Up until 1972 the position of NZAA filekeeper for the Waikato (see Table 1) had remained in amateur hands. For the next thirteen years the Museum supplied the filekeeper. In 1985 the files returned to amateur custodianship, being looked after until 1995 by Neil Laurie, a professional surveyor and later a farmer. Laurie and a few other WMAS members continued to make weekend forays, mostly to the south of Hamilton, and considerable effort was put in particular into field recording sites previously known only from aerial photos. Special effort was put into recording early water-mill sites and such oddities as the remains of eel-catching weirs. Laurie also landed most of the job, between 1983 and 1991, of converting all the records and index maps from inch-to-the-mile to metric. The files were shifted from the Museum to the Hamilton office of DoC in March 1988.

By the mid 1980s what little site recording that was being done was done mostly by the Historic Places Trust, and generally in response to some specific development threat - for example the surveys of the Ohinewai coalfields and Huntly thermal power station sites. The Trust also sponsored some much-needed and overdue systematic site recording of historically important but vulnerable and threatened areas along the banks of the Waikato and Waipa rivers, much of it by Peter Morgan. There was an excellent systematic survey of the lower Puniu river by Ann Leahy and Wendy Walsh in 1980. The Trust also sponsored several small rescue excavations in the mid 80s, mostly of redoubt sites.

The Forest Service continued to sponsor site recording in small areas scheduled for pine planting. Records by John Coster and Gabrielle Johnston were of particularly good quality. No recording had been done however, before enormous areas of forest around Tokoroa were planted.

In 1985 Janet Leatherby spent several months in the Waikato compiling a Waikato Regional Assessment for the Historic Places Trust, which resulted in a number of new site records. The Trust viewed the Waikato, along with Bay of Plenty, Northland and Auckland as one of the areas where archaeological heritage was most vulnerable. Leatherby produced a massive report in which she matched development plans with site distributions, and made a number of detailed recommendations about remedial work that needed to be done. Very few of the recommendations were ever acted upon, and the report is now difficult to use because of the obsolescence of both the local body terminology (counties and boroughs) and the pre-metric site numbers.

By 1988 even the Trust-sponsored activity had almost ceased, and only a few dozen site records a year were being added to the Waikato file. Neville Ritchie was appointed DoC regional archaeologist in the Hamilton DoC office in 1987 but, apart from recording coalmining sites in the Huntly area, most of his fieldwork has been in the Coromandel area, which, although part of DoC's Waikato conservancy, is outside the Waikato file district. In 1991 Ritchie and Warren Gumbley carried out rescue excavation of a British redoubt in downtown Te Awamutu.

Completely outside the archaeological mainstream has been the work of Otorohanga lawyer Fin Phillips. He has done an enormous amount of historical research on the Tainui tribes of the Waikato and the King Country, and at his own expense has taken thousands of photos of hundreds of Tainui pa and other major sites, mostly from the air. He has so far published two volumes of text and photos (in 1989 and 1995), and has a third volume in preparation. Unfortunately he has made very little use of or contribution to the SRS, so he has duplicated a lot of earlier work, and he has not used SRS site numbers.

In April 1994 the last meeting of the WMAS was held, and it was resolved to go into recess. Chairperson Barbara Proctor justified the decision on the grounds that "the advent of professionalism into archaeology in the Waikato has largely reduced the need for untrained members to participate in this work."

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Amateur archaeology in the Waikato has a number of achievements to its credit.

The Te Awamutu Historical Society introduced the idea of systematic field recording of archaeological sites in advance of their gradual destruction. When the NZAA SRS was established the Waikato Archaeological Society (WAS) established a local file, was the sole contributor of records to it for the first ten years, and provided filekeepers for the first 15 years.

WAS's first dig in 1960 was also the first scientific excavation in the Waikato and the first rescue excavation. Over the next ten years WAS, later WMAS, dug at a dozen or so sites, mostly in the Hamilton area. WAS facilitated the activity of Auckland University archaeologists in the Waikato, and WAS investigations located important sites which were later investigated on a much larger scale by Auckland academics, usually with a significant amount of the labour being provided by WAS. A WAS amateur founded the Waikato Museum. Amateurs contributed 27% of the information in the Waikato site records file, including a large proportion of the better-quality records (Wilkes 1997).

When Waikato Museum hired professional archaeologist a 10-year "golden age" of Waikato archaeology resulted from the synergistic mixture of inspired Museum professional leadership and enthusiastic amateur involvement. Site recording, excavation, scholarly publication and newsmedia publicity about archaeology (as indicated by the Hamilton library index to the *Waikato Times*) all peaked in this period. This was blighted by a shift in Museum goals away from traditional museum curation toward provision of infotainment and art exhibitions, by the Historic Places legislation, and by increasing professionalization and bureaucratization of the archaeological scene in general - in step with a shift of emphasis from investigating sites to administering them.

There was a continual downgrading of the role of the amateurs. In the 1960s they had been in charge of the local archaeological scene. In the 1970s they were reduced to being an unpaid labour force for the academics, and by the mid-1980s, with the Historic Places Trust apparently in charge, they were hardly wanted at all. The amateurs began supplying data for local body planning purposes, but the Trust took over that too.

Ironically enough, not long after the amateur activity almost ceased, government funding cuts and maybe other causes resulted in a near cessation of professional/bureaucratic archaeology in the Waikato too. By 1994 there was only one professional fulltime permanent archaeologist - at the

Department of Conservation - plus a few consultant archaeologists. Barbara Proctor was twice wrong in 1984 when she said that "professionalisation ... has largely reduced the need for untrained members". Professionals are in short supply and amateurs are needed more now than they were ten years ago. And most members of the WMAS, including Proctor herself, could hardly be called untrained. They also had a good mixture of academic qualifications, skills, experience and local knowledge. All that was lacking was official encouragement and support.

In my opinion there is a continuing need for a vigorous amateur archaeological movement. In particular there is far more recording and monitoring of sites to do than can be done by a few professionals. Archaeology as a research discipline has barely begun to elucidate the prehistory of the Waikato, and the window of opportunity for doing so, wide open in the 60s, is closing as sites disappear.

Hodge (1995) found only 5% of Aucklanders perceived archaeology to have a local context or knew anything about archaeology in New Zealand. Only 7% could name an archaeological site in Auckland. I think if Hodge had carried out his phone survey in Hamilton in, say, 1980, he would have got much larger positive percentages. In those days local archaeological projects got frequent mention in the local newspaper (under such headlines as "Striking it rich in archaeology"), and local archaeological finds went on display in the local Museum. School parties visited local digs. The public knew that archaeology was something which was happening locally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

This paper draws heavily on a bibliography of Waikato and Coromandel archaeology compiled by Neville Ritchie. Sally Petchey of Waikato Museum provided access to WMAS newsletters and minutes. Other sources included the Doug Pick papers in Hamilton Public Library, early issues of the *NZAA Newsletter*, *The Journal of the Te Awamutu Historical Society* and NZAA site records.

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Table 1**NZAA site record filekeepers, Waikato filing district**

1960 - 1966	Hans Pos	Waikato Archaeological Society
1966	David Rosenberg	Waikato Archaeological Society
1967 - 1970	Fay James	Waikato Archaeological Society
1971 - 1975	Ken Gorbey	Waikato Museum
1976 - 1983	Steve Edson	Waikato Museum
1984	Ngahuia Te Awekotuku	Waikato Museum
1985 - 1995	Neil Laurie	Waikato Museum Archaeological Society