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ARCHAEOTRAMPS IN THE SEVENTIES

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The 1970s and 1980s saw a dramatic increase in the number of archaeological professionals, outside the universities and museums, earning a living through contract archaeology. This came about as a result of a demand for systematic archaeological surveys and investigations engendered by the passing of the Historic Places Amendment Act 1975. For the first time in New Zealand comprehensive legislative protection of archaeological sites was established.

A changed perception of cultural resources in New Zealand resulted. Major (and not so major) land developers and development agencies were led, many of them unwillingly, into a new concern for protection of the archaeological heritage (rationales for protection of non-archaeological sites of significance to Maori didn't come along until a bit later).

Ironically, since the New Zealand Archaeological Association had been a major proponent of these changes, the new legislation had a significant effect on its role as the organisation primarily responsible for advocacy of archaeological values. The changes to the Historic Places Act created a new lead agency in archaeology: the archaeological division of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. The fundamental imperatives for archaeological activity in New Zealand shifted from a base of academic and amateur research to one in which site protection and cultural resource management became major concerns. The NZAA was no longer, as it had been since its foundation, the prime instigator, along with the universities, of archaeological activity in New Zealand.

From 1974 onward archaeological field surveys became a source of paid work, funded by the Trust, land developers, government departments and, more recently, local authorities. The resultant increase in archaeological activity added dramatically to the numbers of records in the Association's site record files.

One of the first agencies to take up the challenge of incorporating archaeological assessment into its land management practices was the New Zealand Forest Service, at that time the government department responsible for planting and harvesting exotic forests, mainly *Pinus radiata*, throughout the

country. In 1974, as a result of approaches from the Historic Places Trust's senior archaeologist, Jim McKinlay, the Auckland Conservancy of the Forest Service sought advice about employing a field archaeologist. They approached Janet Davidson, then archaeologist at the Auckland Museum.

Thanks to Janet, Gabrielle Johnston and I, having recently formed a team for archaeological purposes, were interviewed and offered the job (I don't think there was anyone much else available at the time). Gaby was better qualified than I was, with a degree in anthropology and history, and recently returned from two years working in the archaeology lab at the University of Papua New Guinea with Sue Bulmer. While in Papua New Guinea Gaby had also collected traditional ceramics on behalf of the Auckland Museum. All I had was some units toward a BA and a few years experience of student and summer excavations with the Auckland University Archaeological Society under people like Les Groube, Wilfred Shawcross, Jim McKinlay, Richard Cassels and a few individuals, Pat and Rudi Sunde, Lawrie and Helen Birks among others, from the "Golson Gang" of an earlier period.

The work that Gaby and I undertook for the Forest Service spanned a period of significant change in archaeological activity in New Zealand. A gradual shift occurred from the collaborations of amateur and academic archaeologists, aimed at elucidating New Zealand's prehistory, which marked the first twenty-five years of the Association, to the gradual development of contract archaeology, focused on the legislative requirement to protect and salvage archaeological sites and information. A few rescue projects had preceded us (including the Waitaki and Tongariro power developments in the 1960s) as had the professionally-reported 1971 site surveys by Angela Calder at Mimiwhangata and Janet Davidson at Te Pahi. Calder's (1971) and Davidson's (1975) reports provided the models for those we developed for the Forest Service. Always behind our work, however, were the conventions and standards laid out in the second edition of the *Site Recording Handbook*, edited by John Daniels (1970). This, and the NZAA Newsletter, were the basis of whatever professional skills we were able to apply to the job.

Thirty years ago, in November 1974, we began work in Tairua State Forest, north of Whangamata, on temporary contracts as *Leading Hands Class 1*, the only way we could be fitted into the Forest Service's pay structure, at the then satisfactory rate of \$5 per hour.

For the next ten years we worked, on and off, for the Forest Service throughout the northern North Island; in the King Country, the Coromandel and Northland; recording the archaeology of areas destined to become pine forests and establishing procedures and protocols for archaeological survey in the context of state forestry (Coster 1979, 1980). We employed people like Gerry Barton,

now a museum conservator and novelist based in Germany; Rob Pollock, the actor; and the future cartoonist Chris Slane. Jill Pierce, Kate Olsen, Louise Furey, Ian Lawlor, Robert Brassey and others succeeded us until the Forest Service was disestablished in 1987.

It was great fun. The highlight was the Aupouri Project (Coster 1983, 1989), which allowed us to live at Houhora with baby Tim, a Toyota Landcruiser and a mandate to spend each working day walking over the endless dunes behind Ninety Mile Beach. Moral and logistical support were willingly supplied by the officer-in-charge of Aupouri State Forest, Des Ogle (see Coster 2002), who also fostered the working relationships with tangata whenua (in this case, Te Aupouri) which are now a fundamental part of any archaeological work and were then often neglected.

Living in such a faraway and archaeologically rich area meant too that, as well as attracting a number of student assistants, we were visited by various archaeologists in need of fresh air and open space – among them Aidan Challis, Anne Leahy, Bruce McFadgen, Caroline Phillips, Doug Sutton, Ian Barber, Ian Smith, Joanna Boileau, Mike Taylor, Reg Nichol, Richard Cassels, Stan Bartlett and Stuart Park. Others with archaeological interests, such as the artist Tony Fomison and Phil Dadson, founder of “From Scratch”, also visited. Then too, there were the special occasions such as seeing Jim McKinlay, Kevin Jones and Stan Bartlett simultaneously fording a stream at Te Paki in their underpants.

Much of the Forest Service work focused on the west coast dunes at Kawhia, Waiuku, South Kaipara, Pouto and Ninety Mile Beach, and led to a better understanding of the archaeology and pre-European vegetation of these isolated areas. Some of this came together at the NZAA Conference in New Plymouth, in 1982, in a “West Coast Dune Studies” symposium organized by Kevin Jones. By that time there were more archaeologists working for the Forest Service than for any other public body outside the Universities.

The defining feature of the Forest Service’s archaeological surveys was that they were not generally rescue projects so much as an ongoing management tool developed around existing management practices, designed to avoid both damage to significant sites and disruptions to ongoing planting programmes. The Historic Places Trust subsequently took up this approach, not always successfully, with Kevin Jones’ and others’ surveys of private forestry development in the eastern Bay of Plenty and East Coast during the 1980s and 1990s. The whole thing came full circle for me when I ended up a couple of years ago on the East Coast, working for the NZAA’s upgrade scheme, re-recording sites which had been planted in pines twenty years previously.

The experience of contracting, with its insecurity of tenure, led also to the formation of the Institute of New Zealand Archaeologists after the NZAA’s

Oamaru conference in 1984. That is another story, but it underlined the need in contract work for ethical standards and enough security of employment for fieldwork to be adequately written up. Again, the NZAA has taken up some of these concerns, addressing issues of best practice and compiling a register of practicing contract archaeologists. Throughout the development of contract archaeology over the last thirty or more years the NZAA has remained the national standard setter; New Zealand archaeology's primary source of ethical and professional guidelines.

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