



NEW ZEALAND  
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**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER**



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BOOK REVIEWS

B. Foss Leach and Helen M Leach (editors). Prehistoric Man in Palliser Bay. Bulletin 21 of the National Museum of New Zealand, 1979. 272 pp, numerous figures. \$12.

Prehistorians are usually rather guarded in their praise of colleagues, but I think I am quite justified in saying that this book presents the results of the most important field programme ever to be undertaken in New Zealand archaeology. The work was carried out in the Palliser Bay region of the Wairarapa by Foss and Helen Leach, together with graduate students from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Otago. The volume contains 14 papers written by Foss and Helen and seven of their co-workers, and many of the chapters are based on completed graduate theses at the M.A. and Ph.D levels.

The results of the Palliser Bay research are certain to cause major changes to the basic structure of New Zealand prehistory. Instead of the old view, now obsolete for many years, of horticultural Maoris replacing (or evolving out of) a purely hunting and collecting initial population, we now have a much more logical picture of widespread coastal horticulture right from the start of New Zealand settlement, at least in the North Island. Between 1150 and 1400 the Palliser Bay coastline was inhabited by a sizeable horticultural population who have left behind a range of walled fields, pits, terraces and middens. However, by 1650 the area was almost deserted, and the fields abandoned. Foss and Helen Leach and their colleagues have been able to document this surprising case of environmental degradation by very detailed analyses of not only the archaeological remains, but also the marine resources, landsnails, birds, and an increasing body of evidence which indicates that New Zealand underwent a 'Little Ice Age' after 1600. Rough seas and decreasing resources on this rather exposed southern tip of the North Island evidently had rather disastrous effects on the human inhabitants.

Foss and Helen Leach have contributed the greatest number of papers to the volume, writing singly or jointly, and they cover the background to the project, the excavations in the very important stone-walled gardens and in the Washpool midden site, burial positions, environmental change, early horticulture, and the excellent summary chapter at the end which is most graphically illustrated by Linden Cowell (as is the cover of the volume). The other papers are by G. Mair (Proto-historic Wairarapa), N.J. Prickett (an important excavated 12th century house floor), A.J. Anderson (coastal middens at Black Rocks), K. Prickett (changing trade configurations in the stone resources used in Palliser Bay), D.G. Sutton (analysis of burial groups), I.W.G. Smith

(sea mammals) and R. Wallace (landsnails). All these chapters provide results which mesh together to support the picture of rather dramatic prehistoric change which I have outlined in the previous paragraph.

The field work in the Wairarapa was carried out in 1969-1972, and since then it has been difficult for prehistorians without access to Otago graduate theses to get a good overall picture of the scope of the research, despite publication of a number of short articles in the intervening years. This volume brings everything together, and it is hoped that the more recent Otago research in the Chathams will be published in similar format. The Wairarapa volume is also well-produced from a technical viewpoint, except that my particular copy is very poorly bound and has now virtually fallen apart. I hope other readers don't find the same problem.

Peter Bellwood

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Aidan J Challis, Motueka: An Archaeological Survey. Longman Paul, Auckland, 1978. N.2.A.A. Monograph No.7. 118 pp., 52 figures, 3 appendices, index. \$6.50.

Don't be misled by the insipid and uninspiring dust jacket of this book - all else is highly informative and a welcome addition to the meagre library of the Nelson provinces prehistory.

In Motueka: An Archaeological Survey, Dr Aidan Challis has produced a remarkable book. Although primarily a survey of the evidence of Maori occupation in the Motueka district of the Nelson region the author reaches more widely into the broader issues of Polynesian prehistoric occupation of New Zealand.

Much of Dr Challis's writing is based on his own thorough examination of local artefact collections, the still limited files of the New Zealand Archaeological Association and the Historic Places Trust and the excavation reports and findings from closely associated districts. Regrettably he has been unable to call on the results of controlled excavations in the Motueka district as there have been none to date but this forthright and well considered interpretation of the available evidence leads one to believe that such excavation may merely confirm his deductions rather than counter or complement them.

Four chapters cover 'Archaeology, Environment and Tradition', 'Settlements and Structure', 'Artefacts and Chronology' and 'Subregional Characteristics'. The fifth chapter, 'Conclusions', rounds off the

study. Based as it is on largely non-excavational evidence the book deals extensively with the material evidence of Maori occupation. Structures such as pa sites, middens, cultivation areas, pits, burials and quarry pits are described and discussed. The Nelson area is well known for the extensive geological resources available to the Maori and a considerable section of the book is devoted to the artefacts manufactured from locally derived and more distant sources.

The author has acknowledged the need to provide a meaningful text for the casual or less informed reader and has supported his regional findings with basic background information which will encourage the average reader to continue. Little of this however, has been done at the expense of a specialised text. Readers more familiar with sophisticated archaeological papers will also be completely at home with this work. Constant reference is made to the resources available to the author and a thoroughness and intelligent interpretation of the facts available make for a very convincing regional survey.

The quality of this publication deserves a wider audience than I feel it will receive. Had the author had the time and opportunity to broaden the base of his study to directly include other significant settlement areas in Tasman Bay the publication would, I feel sure, have far wider appeal. The limitations set by the title and region will undoubtedly restrict the potential reading public but clearly this book covers a number of the wider issues of New Zealand prehistory as well and should be viewed as such by readers outside the area.

It is unusual for a writer of Dr. Challis' ability to be accomplished also as an illustrator. The pen and ink drawings of artefacts are admirable and enable the reader to readily test some of the author's statements against the visual evidence provided. The fifty-two illustrations (some by K.M. Peters) are pertinent to the associated text and complement it admirably. There are three appendices, the most important of these being a catalogue of archaeological sites of the area, described in abbreviated form. The list of references is extensive and well detailed and an adequate index helps to make this a useful text for study or reference. For reference purposes a book of this nature is as good as its retrieval systems will allow and several random checks rapidly confirmed my original impression of a meticulously compiled work of reference.

In his concluding pages the author states the case for preservation and control of our archaeological heritage. He briefly outlines the existing legislation as it applies to archaeologist, fossicker and farmer and makes a strong plea for a responsible approach by all people

involved in modification of archaeological sites. Supported as it is by a wealth of well presented evidence in the preceding pages Challis' plea is forthright and convincing but regrettably unlikely to be read by politicians or regional authorities.

I enjoyed this book, have referred to it a number of times since first reading it, have admired the detail and the extent of the illustrations and believe it deserves shelf space in the library of anyone with more than a passing interest in New Zealand prehistory.

Don Millar

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Frances Porter, A Sense of History: a commemorative publication for John Cawte Beaglehole, O.M., about James Cook's landing sites in New Zealand. Government Printer, Wellington, 1978. 90 pp. \$9.45.

Hardwicke Knight, Otago Peninsula : a local history. Published by the author, Broad Bay, 1979 (second edition). 158 pp., appendices, bibliography, index. \$22.50.

In A Sense of History Frances Porter sets out to give a history of the James Cook landing sites in New Zealand and an account of recent efforts to erect monuments or plaques at these places to commemorate their part in our history. The book was conceived to honour the memory of Professor J.C. Beaglehole whose efforts on behalf of Cook need no elaboration here. Much of the book is concerned with Beaglehole's work for memorials befitting the great man at the various landing sites.

To the archaeologist with a sense of geography and a feeling for place A Sense of History is most unsatisfying. There is no map. The author has apparently not visited the sites she discusses. There are few illustrations to give an idea of the landscapes seen by Cook or the modern setting for the monuments which are the chief concern of the book. The landing sites are in fact very different and each is evocative in its own way. They deserve the kind of sympathetic and imaginative eye which the Beggs so well convey in their James Cook and New Zealand. Surely in a topic such as this the historian needs to look up from the written word and look around.

I am sorry to see that the Cook anchorage and landing place on D'Urville Island is still undiscovered (p.61). In a 1970 article in the Journal of the Nelson Historical Society Elsie King-Turner identified this from a range of topographical and historical evidence as Whareatea Bay. Early in 1976, during an archaeological survey of the

area south of Old Man Point, and armed with Cook charts and journal and a modern map, we satisfied ourselves that indeed the landing site could have been nowhere else and that the watering place was the stream which runs into the north end of the bay. Since then the Historic Places Trust has made some moves towards placing a commemorative plaque there.

What a contrast is Hardwicke Knight's Otago Peninsula: a local history. This book breathes a love of the people and landscape of a unique and marvellous corner of New Zealand. As befitting a photo-historian of the first rank the author has assembled a superb collection of early photographs of people and places of 'The Peninsula' and has complemented these by his own pictures of the present day landscape and its archaeological features.

There are over sixty pages of photographs - all of them full of interest. I especially like the pictures which depict the old creameries at Sandymount, Otakou and Wickliffe Bay and the page showing something of the beautiful stone walls and mortised broadleaf fence posts which are still a feature of the district.

The book suffers from a lack of professional design. The outstanding photographs deserve a better layout and the captions being apart from the pictures is somewhat annoying. The book is encyclopaedic in approach: personalities and places are given separate treatment at the expense of historical development. This approach leaves undeveloped the possibilities presented by the Peninsula landscape which lends itself quite unusually to archaeological exploration of long term changes in the landscape, society and economy of rural New Zealand.

Having lived for three years in the shadow of Harbour Cone I have spent many evenings and weekends walking the paper roads and beaches and exploring the world so lovingly described by Hardwicke Knight. On every page familiar views are given new interest. But everyone interested in the development of rural landscapes in New Zealand will get something from this book which must surely have wider than local interest and importance.

Otago Peninsula is available from the author, 15 King George St., Broad Bay, Dunedin, at \$22.50.

Nigel Prickett