



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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BOOK REVIEWS

Atholl Anderson, When All the Moa-Ovens Grew Cold. Dunedin, Otago Heritage Books, 1983. 52 pp., illustrated, selected bibliography, index. \$9.95.

The author writes in his introduction that, "this booklet is designed for the general reader - providing the kind of historical information sought by the museum visitor, the first-year student of anthropology, and the many people who are interested in southern Maori traditions." It is a book designed for the interested public and not for the academic. It can nonetheless not fail to be of interest to academic and general public alike - anyone interested in archaeology or Maori history in New Zealand will enjoy this book.

The book is subtitled "nine centuries of changing fortune for the southern Maori." Its subject is the history of the people who lived in the southern half of the South Island (the Rangitata River is taken as the northern boundary) up to the arrival of the Pakeha. Three chapters are, predictably enough, "The Early Period: AD 900-1350", "The Middle Period: AD 1350-1550", and "The Late Period: AD 1550-1800". More than sixty illustrations, 13 of them in colour, include maps, excavation plans and views, and photographs of sites and artefacts.

The title of the book refers to the archaeological evidence for extensive hunting and cooking of moa and other now extinct birds in the opening centuries of human occupation of the southern South Island. The author puts together a fascinating story of changes in life style of the southern Maori - from intensive moa and seal hunting, to a more broadly based economy sustained by sea-fishing (especially for the barracouta), shellfishing and gathering and preparation of cabbage tree (ti) roots. With the arrival of the Pakeha in the early nineteenth century the potato was quickly adopted as a food staple, while barracouta, ti and other indigenous foods continued in use.

The treatment of changes in tool, ornament and other artefact types is well illustrated in the book and the more interesting lines of development are outlined. Very interesting to me is the admirable summary of the traditional history of the region which provides an excellent guide to the mass of less manageable material on the topic.

I can only repeat my recommendation of this book. It is available from the publisher, P.O. Box 5361, Dunedin.

Nigel Prickett

O.S. Nock, Railway Archaeology. Cambridge, Patrick Stephens, 1981. 192 pp.

In my mind the vital element in a definition of the term 'archaeology' is the requirement that excavation be the major means to uncovering past history. Using this criteria O.S. Nock's Railway Archaeology is really not archaeology but historical research. However this is perhaps splitting hairs; the fact that 'archaeology' was in the title was the sole reason the book caught my attention - not being especially interested in British railway history - and I suspect it was Nock's intention to expand his audience in exactly this way. The brief biography on the jacket says he is the author of over 100 titles on railway history and the fact that he has now entered the archaeological field can only be an asset to the science.

Although Nock's hand doesn't pick up a spade his prodigious knowledge of his subject provides much food for thought for those who contemplate industrial archaeology research. His descriptions of documentation available in public libraries and archives are an insight into the potential complexities of this type of archaeology. For example his work in tracing abandoned railway routes in Britain is an exercise requiring a methodical bent of mind I found daunting to contemplate. Among other material Nock combed are the maps made up by the Railway Clearing House before the nationalization of railways in 1948: these maps were used to divide and adjust traffic receipts where sections of route were shared by more than one company. To pull out the relevant material from these massive volumes must have required a single-mindedness of religious proportions. Such a task also clearly brought out a problem which industrial archaeologists have to face and that is the one of making sense of business politics in whatever industrial field they are researching. In Britain the routing of many railways across the landscape makes sense only if one knows which company built them, who that company was in competition against, who was the driving force behind the capitalisation of the company and what were the prevailing economic conditions. Topography was never the sole determinant of where a railway went. As an example of potential problems, how does an archaeologist make sense of the jumble that made up the London to Brighton Line? Four owners extracted tolls from this route of only 50 3/4 miles, a situation explicable only if one is familiar with the railway investment boom of the mid-19th century.

The closest Nock gets to archaeology of the dirt shifting variety is his study of the history of terminal stations such

as Euston and Waterloo. Constant enlargement of such stations has at times unearthed earlier stages of the track and platform layout and Nock uses such discoveries along with archival material to outline the development of these stations. Again, with this chapter he shows his judicious use of available evidence.

The book also concisely covers the development of steam locomotion from its antecedents of horse drawn mine trains, vanished edifices such as stations, viaducts, cuttings etc. and other railway miscellany. Railway Archaeology is a nice blend of erudite research and personal memories. Nock is a person who obviously cares deeply for his subject and writes about it well. The book is extensively illustrated with photographs, maps and plans and deserves to be read by anyone interested in industrial archaeology. To me, it seems an excellent model upon which to base one's own efforts in this difficult field of research.

Gerry Barton
