



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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The Golden Pharaoh, Karl Bruckner. Burke, London.
Price 15/6.

Bruckner describes the activities of tomb robbers 3,000 years ago, early Egyptology, and Howard Carter's search for, and opening of the tomb of Tutenkhamen.

BOOKS FOR THE FIELD WORKER by J. Golson.

The Archaeological Association has set as one of its aims in helping the development of archaeology in New Zealand, the provision of handbooks for the archaeological field worker. One of these, on field archaeology, has been produced already. It is to be hoped that the discussions and demonstrations of excavation technique and interpretation held at Rotorua and Wellington conferences will result in the appearance of a second handbook.

These books are essentially adaptations to New Zealand conditions of the methods and principles of archaeological research evolved in other parts of the world. They are needed because they can translate general archaeological methodology into New Zealand terms. At the same time, this general body of archaeological method on which the handbooks build cannot be ignored, and the handbooks to be kept within reasonable compass must take some acquaintance with it for granted.

This article aims to provide a short list of books that can be considered essential from this point of view.

Field Archaeology

O.G.S. Crawford, Archaeology in the Field, Phoenix House, 1953.

This book is not a manual. It is a highly individual discussion of the aims, methods and data of field archaeological research by one of the most inspired field archaeologists of all time. Beyond the intrinsic interest of the material with which it deals, the importance of the book lies in its demonstration that field archaeology is just as important a part of archaeological research as excavation and that valuable results can be

achieved by its practitioner.

Excavation

Sir Mortimer Wheeler, Archaeology from the Earth. First published by Oxford University Press in 1954, this book: has been issued as a Pelican.

Archaeology from the Earth is more than a manual. Though replete with practical information derived from 30 years experience of excavation procedure, the book is a brilliant exploration of not only the how, but also the why of such procedure. It may be considered a basic document for all who contemplate digging -- to instruct, but also to forewarn. Some of Wheeler's prerequisites for excavation may be considered Utopian: and in New Zealand conditions impractical. But the general message cannot be too strongly recommended.

Valuable work can be accomplished by archaeologists working on a much more modest scale than that contemplated by Wheeler, and there do exist manuals by which these efforts can be guided. Of these, I shall mention two which are obtainable.

1) R.J. Atkinson, Field Archaeology, Methuen, 2nd edition, 1953.

Atkinson has addressed his work explicitly to the non-professional and the beginner. He takes his reader step by step through the complete process from the selection of a site for excavation to the first publication of the material. The result is a handbook indispensable to non-professional and professional alike.

2) A Guide to Archaeological Field Methods, third edition 1959, published by the National Press, Palo Alto, California, and edited by R.F. Heizer, is the American equivalent to Atkinson. Perhaps the major difference in emphasis between the two books is the attempt made in the American work to provide standardised procedures for the recording of all the data of excavation on a number of specially constructed forms. These are of the same kind as the Site Record Survey forms used in our own Field Recording scheme. Indeed, our own forms were partly modelled on their Californian equivalents. Some of the Californian excavation forms may prove valuable to us in the production of our own excavation handbook: particularly that relating to the analysis of shell middens which are a major feature of both Californian and New Zealand archaeology.

There are deficiencies in the Californian handbook, however, which are not present in Atkinson. Because it is a series of contributions from different authors, the American work lacks the unity of the English one, which treats selection of site, site survey, excavation, recording, interpretation and publication as an integrated process. Also, the American book is, I think, weaker on excavation procedure. In sum, the two works are interesting examples of the different emphases of British and American archaeology and ideally, both should be read to supplement each other.

General

Discussion of the techniques of archaeological research cannot be divorced from consideration of the aims of archaeology. Though the works discussed above have all a practical bias, and have been selected for discussion here for that very reason, they all, in greater or less degree, pay regard to the wider issues. Similarly, this section would not be complete if it did not do the same. But I shall cite only ~~one~~ work here, for the country we are now entering warrants a guide book in its own right.

The single book I want to cite is Graham Clarke, Archaeology and Society, Methuen, 3rd edition 1957. This, I think, is the best and fullest introduction to the subject of archaeology, its aims, its methods, and its limitations; and since it relates the practical activities of archaeologists to their wider purposes, it can serve well to initiate consideration by all of us of what in our archaeologising we are really doing.
