NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

CORRESPONDENCE. re. CLAY PIPE DATING

Sir,

I would be grateful if you would allow me to comment on the note on clay pipe dating by J.B. Palmer in your No.3 of Volume V.

The system of stem bore dating really arises from a remark of mine to Harrington, made years ago, that the stems of pipes increase in length fairly steadily until about 1800 and that hence the bores tend to to get smaller since it is clearly easier to pass a thin wire down a long stem than a thick one. He cleverly evolved a dating system which applied to large quantities of material and produced results which fitted broadly into the typological and chronological system propounded by myself (see Arch. Newsletter, 1951, Vol. III, 10. 1955, Vol. V, 10, 11, 12, Connoisseur Encyclopaedia of Antiques, Vol. IV, Archaeology & Economic History of English Clay Tobacco Pipes, Journal of the British Arch. Association, Vol. XXIII, 1960). With two independent dating systems thus dovetailing, and also fitting with the dates of known makers, clearly Harrington's steps were the right ones. However, he was violently attacked by Chalkley and the latter had some right on his side if his arguments were applied to single pipes or small groups. The mathematical methods of Eaton and Binford are not really valid for anything but very large groups and then should be used with + or - errors. For instance pipe makers at Broseley were producing almost exactly the same type of pipe in the early 19th Century as in the late 17th century, and samples of stems from the former might quite well yield a 17th century date in Harrington's system and perhaps the "first of July at 9.30, 1683" on the other two.

Clearly what is needed is a combination of all methods. Reliance on one alone may cause gross error and reliance on any statistical method without large groups (and I would suggest a figure of 100 as a minimum) must be used with the greatest caution).

This is brought out in a paper by D.B. Whitehouse on 'Pipes from Castle Hill, Cambridge' (in the press). Here the type series agrees well with the stem bore dating except for the first half of the 18th century for bores of 7/64 and for those of 5/64 from 1700 onwards. The bores 6/64 and 4/64 follow a steady curve and appear reliable. The unreliable bores occur in the smaller groups of samples.

It would appear quite clear that at present the safest grounds of dating are:

(1) Identification of makers' marks with known makers.

(2) Typology.

(3) Statistical methods.

in that order of validity. Obviously a combination of all three is desirable.

Yours faithfully,

Adrian Oswald.

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THE ROLE OF THE AUCKLAND MUSEUM IN THE COMMUNITY.

By V. F. Fisher

The object of this article is to present a brief statement of the work of the ethnological department of the Auckland Museum in the community. First a concise declaration of the aims and objects of a museum may place what is said later in its proper perspective. The major functions of a museum are;- to collect and to preserve; to classify, to study the collections and using the collections, to educate. Education, of course, includes the exhibition of material - the displays, special exhibitions - and many other facets of instruction as well. In particular we shall elaborate certain angles of the work, which are important for readers of the Newsletter, and merely mention other sides of the work which are no less important in any consideration of the total picture.

Obviously once collections have been acquired much time is devoted to the classification, sorting, recording, accessioning, processing and generally caring for the specimens. They must be stored according to some recognized plan, so that they are in good order, are readily accessible and can be located quickly when required. All this occupies much time and really is one of the continuing major tasks to which there is no end. At the present time the ethnological department possesses some 40,000 specimens, with a representative series displayed in the public galleries, while behind the scenes in the research room are many thousands carefully registered, tabulated and stored according to geographical regions. This material is not restricted to archaeological collections recovered from the soil, but includes ethnographical specimens obtained directly from the people who made and used the objects.

It is the policy of the Museum to specialise, firstly, on New Zealand and secondly on the Pacific area. For the remainder of the world a cross-section of material sufficient to give a hint of the culture of any area is attempted. Always, as there must be in any collection, there are gaps. Now let us scan some of the areas re-