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IN THE BEGINNING: THE WELLINGTON CONNECTION

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At the time the NZAA was formed there was an infant but already thriving interest in archaeology in many parts of New Zealand. The origins of this went back many years, in some cases decades. The Wellington region was a case in point; early 20th century recorders and artefact hunters such as H.M. Christie and H.N. McLeod left records that are still valuable. Slightly later, Elsdon Best and Leslie Adkin added to the published record of the region's prehistory as part of their larger work. Later again, many people in Wellington's scientific and public service institutions were taking an active and informed interest in New Zealand's archaeology.

By the mid 1950s there was a network of Wellington people ready to play a key part in the formation of a national archaeological association. This account describes briefly how these people and their institutions contributed in those early years.

Wellington was uniquely fortunate as the home of national institutions able to provide leadership in the new archaeological venture. The key institutions spanned scientific, museum, library and more general public service agencies. They housed scientists, historians, archivists and librarians, as well as public servants with knowledge of government and its processes.

With the encouragement of the Dominion Museum's Director, Robert Falla, museum staff members were active in early archaeological work. Terry Barrow, Susan Davis, Frank O'Leary, Colin Smart, and Betty Richardson (later McFadgen) all played local and in some cases national roles. The Dominion Museum Archaeological Group formed in 1959 embarked on a major site recording programme that continued into the 1970s. Later excavations were conducted under the Museum's aegis. Other museum staff such as John Yaldwyn contributed important scientific backing. Parts of the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, particularly Geological Survey through Ian Keyes, and the Institute of Nuclear Sciences through Athol Rafter, made important contributions.

Staff members at Alexander Turnbull Library (Michael Hitchings, Phil Barton, and Sheila Williams) were active fieldworkers and researchers, as were Pam Cocks and Judy Hornabrook at National Archives. At the recently formed National Historic Places Trust, secretary John Pascoe provided important moral and financial support for the new site recording scheme. The Trust's research officer Maureen O'Rourke (later Hitchings) was an active field worker. Wellington Teachers Training College field group, under Bruce Palmer and later Barry Mitcalfe, ran field training and excavations.

The public service—that peculiarly Wellington institution—provided some amateurs who were active in the field and played national roles in NZAA. Geoffrey Blake-Palmer, later Director-General of Health, Winifred Mumford and John Daniels all had national roles in the early NZAA. Each of these was able to bring some knowledge of government processes and a range of contacts to their NZAA roles.

Then there was a community of active amateur archaeologists who predated NZAA, some inside the NZAA tent and some definitely outside. Prominent figures were Leslie Adkin, Keith Cairns (who was very active in the Wairarapa), Jim Nicholls, Ellis Sinclair and Wakahuia Carkeek, author of *The Kapiti Coast*.

A roll call of Wellingtonians who were NZAA office-holders in the early era comprises Leslie Adkin (Council), Geoffrey Blake-Palmer (President), John Daniels (Central Filekeeper), Susan Davis (Council), Michael Hitchings (Secretary), Win Mumford (Central Filekeeper), and Bruce Palmer (Council). Later, in the 1960s and 70s, Bruce McFadgen and Jim McKinlay all filled presidential and other positions.

To the enthusiast archaeologist the NZAA was the newsletter and the site recording scheme—the former told us what was going on elsewhere in the country, the latter kept us usefully occupied doing our bit for archaeology. Site recording was organised locally, first by the museum and training college groups, and later by the Wellington Archaeological Society which was formed in 1960. One Sunday every month there was a field trip to part of the Wellington coast to record sites, all on a voluntary basis—there were no hourly rates in those days—and for the occasional weekend site recording trip we paid our 10 shillings a day to cover food.

Usually between 6 and 12 of us would meet on a stretch of coast and record what sites we could find. Mary Oliver (later Knox) and Betty Richardson had studied anthropology or archaeology at University, as had Eleanor Crosby and Janet Davidson who sometimes came out when in Wellington, but in the early 1960s the rest of us were strictly amateurs. If it looked like a site, a record



Figure 22. Group at Flat Point conference field trip, May 1960. Leslie Adkin second from left, Winifred Mumford centre in checked shirt, Jack Golson, Trevor Hosking. Photo John Daniels.

was made; if we were wrong then someone else more knowledgeable than us would later remove it from the file.

In those days we felt the site records were primarily for research, with site protection and management in second place. Forty years later, with the Historic Places Act and focus on protection and management, the emphasis is different, and today we would be far more cautious about recording some sites. In retrospect, we should have been more adventurous with test excavations to look for more definite evidence, but the attitude instilled was that sites, even uncertain ones, were not to be disturbed except by fully competent people properly prepared, and that was not us.

Being essentially an amateur activity meant that people on site recording trips were from a wide range of backgrounds: teachers, librarians, geologists, physicists, chemists, public servants, carpenters and students, each with their own point of view. Some students went on to careers in archaeology or related fields: Roger Neich (ethnology), Rodney Grapes (geology), Eleanor Crosby, Janet Davidson, Bruce McFadgen (archaeology). Squadron-Leader Gerry Evatt (retired) could spot even obscure sites from 500 m away. Len Bruce (chemist), Bev Bruce (science teacher), and Fred Knox (physicist) brought a very scientific approach to the identification of sites. Ian Keyes had a useful knowledge of local rocks, and Ray Gilbert applied his drawing talent to producing first class sketches of archaeological sites. We all learnt a lot about the landscape, natural history, archaeology and Maori traditions. Harold Wellman, a geologist from Victoria University, came out on

one trip to Te Ikamaru Bay. This was shortly after publishing his two papers on the Holocene coastal stratigraphy of D'Urville Island and the North Island, and he explained some of the finer details of the very recent geology of the bay, and how to recognise some of the less obvious indications of human activity.

The essential quality was to be fit, because some trips were over very steep hills or pushing through thick undergrowth and swamps. Margaret Hall, the tiny librarian from the museum, rarely missed a trip and her experience of WAS field trips was undoubtedly very good training for her late 1960s walking tour through Greece. Some places were dangerous, although there was only ever one serious mishap (no OSH around then). Crossing a swamp behind Lake



Figure 23. Susan Davis and Winifred Mumford hamming it up in a whaling try-pot, Kapiti Island, March 1960. Photo John Daniels.

Kohangapiripiri east of Wellington Harbour an American Fulbright Scholar, Ann Gibson, broke through the matted vegetation in the middle of the swamp and fell forward onto her hand, breaking both bones at the wrist.

A lot of discussion on field trips revolved around the then divergent views of New Zealand's human history, as recorded by the Maori traditions on the one hand, and the new archaeology as espoused by the Auckland archaeologists led by Jack Golson, on the other. Were the first colonists people who arrived in a Great Fleet with its many canoes prepared for their new land or were they a few weakened individuals in the minimal one canoe that arrived by accident after a long drift voyage? Ian Keyes had been trained by Leslie Adkin and held the traditional view. Others of us thought we knew better. New Zealand archaeology has come a long way in 40 years—not, perhaps, as far as a Great Fleet but purposeful voyages by well-equipped colonists in several canoes over a number of years is now an acceptable proposition. And there were other issues to keep in mind: had there ever been a pit dwelling phase in New Zealand prehistory; and did the moa hunters grow kumara? Each was just as controversial then as the question of early rats is today.

Over about 15 years the whole of the Wellington coast from Turakirae Head to Pukerua Bay was covered. Some 200–300 sites were recorded, mostly at or near the sea. Earlier workers, including Leslie Adkin, Elsdon Best, H.M. Christie, Barry Fell and H.N. McLeod, had made records, in some cases more than half a century before, and checking their observations was a task that made us appreciate the importance of accurate location details. Even with the benefit of good topographical maps we still had to rely on distances to the nearest tree or fence post (where they existed), ephemeral objects at best. GPS has revolutionised location records. But a lot of sites had already disappeared, and they continue to disappear as Wellington, Hutt, and Porirua Cities grow. In several ways the late 1950s and 1960s were unique: archaeology was new and there were interesting ideas to follow up; it was largely an amateur pursuit, at a time when people had the leisure and the means to get out into the field, and a time when amateurs could, and did, make a significant contribution.