



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Dr. Roger Duff (Director, Canterbury Museum).

This Conference opens at a critical point in the growth of national awareness of the importance of Maori culture and its prehistoric past in our development of a distinct and unique nationhood. And in this lies much of the problem. The very increase in awareness of our past, which brought the New Zealand Archaeological Association into being, has increased the number of curio-hunters, who claim the right to extract artefacts from any site, and who need only impress the landowner with their enthusiasm to obtain permission to do so.

Our Association, which is now ten years old, has succeeded in its aim of enlisting all responsible archaeological institutions: Universities, Museums, affiliated local groups, the professionals and many amateurs of good will who hold to our credo, which I would express this way:

ALL ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES ARE TO BE REGARDED AS A PRECIOUS PART OF OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE TO BE PRESERVED EITHER AS MONUMENTS FOR THE INSPIRATION AND ENJOYMENT OF THE PUBLIC, OR AS CHAPTERS IN THE BOOK OF MAORI PREHISTORY WHICH, INEXPERTLY OPENED, CAN NEVER BE READ AGAIN; AND WHOSE OPENED PAGES, PEREECT OR IMPERFECT, MUST BE PRESERVED IN PUBLIC REPOSITORIES WHERE THEY MAY BE ASSEMBLED IN PAGE ORDER, AND SO DECIPHERED.

To this end we have:

1. INSTITUTED our National Site Survey to establish priorities in permanent protection from unauthorized excavation, while our own members and groups must seek Council permission to excavate Category 1 sites.
2. REQUIRED all groups and individuals to keep records, with a view to publication, and to deposit records and material in permanent public repositories.

3. AIMED to educate the public conscience, starting with our own members, concerning the solemn responsibility of wantonly dissipating our archaeological heritage.
4. SOUGHT ASSISTANCE FROM ALLIES such as Government Departments, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and Maori people, who share our interest in preventing despoliation of sites.

BUT THIS IS NOT ENOUGH

Never before have archaeological sites suffered destruction at such a rate from agencies whose menace I list in the order in which they affect the Canterbury Site Recording area:

1. Curio-hunting and unskilled excavation,
2. National Power and Works projects,
3. Roading and housing developments, including holiday bach subdivisions,
5. Continued obliteration by ploughing and farming.

(Dr. Duff then listed the specific terms of reference for Conference discussion as follows):

1. To what extent our scheduled sites can be protected by legislation and by a system of close liaison with landowners.
2. The organizational problems of finding the skilled labour force and funds necessary for salvage, recording and excavation.

(Dr. Duff concluded by suggesting that at some later Conference it might be worth considering 'Treasure Trove' legislation to remove the element of profit from Maori artefacts, which leads to the pillaging of archaeological sites for gain.)