



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

I am delighted to see so many radiocarbon date lists appearing in recent issues of the Newsletter. It is an ideal medium for rapid dissemination of such primary data. With almost every C14 laboratory in the world well behind in publication of official date lists in Radiocarbon we must depend on the information published by the submitter of the sample as the basic reference where checks can be made, and further information can be sought. While I would not like to see the Newsletter adopting a restrictive format for these publications (as Radiocarbon does with an obviously adverse result) some unevenness of standard has been noticeable in recent lists. Can I appeal to authors to be as thorough as possible in describing their samples, their positions in the sites, and the relevant laboratory data?

In particular, the character of charcoal samples is critical to assessment of the reliability of the dates, as it is with wood samples. For the latter the laboratory will usually comment on the part of the wood used for the date. For instance, the comment "whole wood" means that no chemical differentiation of parts of the wood was carried out, and passing on this information is vital.

New Zealand laboratory is now supplying both the date calculated by standard methods, and an adjusted date to attempt to correct for known errors not allowed for in the standard method. Such corrections are likely to change as better data becomes available. The temptation to publish only a corrected date if it 'agrees' better should be strongly resisted. All corrected dates should be clearly differentiated and the nature of the correction specified.

As to publishing the date as A.D./B.C. or B.P., unlike Trotter and McCulloch, I prefer the former. Admittedly C14 years only approximate to calendar years but the implication of exactitude which supposedly occurs on conversion from B.P. to A.D. was surely Libby's in converting a sample activity to years in the first place. Archaeologists who, like myself, think in years A.D./B.C., not years before a new arbitrary time base, can point to a long local tradition of conversion of dates.

Lastly, some lists of New Zealand dates are appearing with only the laboratory run numbers, that is numbers beginning with 'R'. Quite soon after running the sample the laboratory assigns the official N.Z.

numbers and will promptly inform any inquirers of these. If a date has been published elsewhere, referred to by its R number, this should be included with the N.Z. number in a subsequent list to remove any possibility of confusion.

GARRY LAW

Dear Dr Buist,

I would like to announce to the NZAA via the Newsletter that our publication, Archaeology on Kaua'i, is available, without cost, to anyone interested in receiving it.

The Newsletter, Archaeology on Kaua'i, covers a wide range of topics, including history, cultural items, ethnic studies, anthropology and archaeology, and principally concentrates on the island of Kaua'i, Hawaiian Islands. Ours is a joint endeavour of editors William K. Kikuchi, Francis Ching Jr., and Catherine Stauder, all associated in anthropological research on this island. The publication is published (mimeographed) by the Business Division of the Kaua'i Community College as a practical job experience. To be placed on the mailing list, write to:

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c/o William K. Kikuchi,
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Thank you very much for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

Dr William K. Kikuchi, Instructor.