



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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LETTERS TO EDITOR:

Sir

Buried in the paper by Pullar et al.(1977) is an observation by J.E.Cox (p.705) to the effect that Taupo Pumice was found overlying small burnt stumps of manuka on the lower slope of a sand dune bordering a swamp at Pataua in Northland (site 7, Fig. 1). He said that ... "scattered burnt stones from a Maori oven were enclosed in the ash in places. These and the charred manuka stumps suggest that man was living in the vicinity before the Taupo Pumice eruption, but no intact oven could be found to confirm this...."

I think this observation ought to be followed up by archaeologists.

signed

W.A. Pullar

REFERENCE

Pullar, W.A.; Kohn, B.P.; Cox, J.E. 1977: Air-fall Kaharoa Ash and Taupo Pumice, and sea-rafted Loiels Pumice, Taupo Pumice, and Leigh Pumice in northern and eastern parts of the North Island, New Zealand. N.Z. Journal of Geology and Geophysics Vol. 20, No.4: 687-717.

Sir

INFORMING THE PUBLIC

The explanatory statement to the list of articles on New Zealand prehistory oriented to the general public (Green & Park, 1976) has excluded the category under newspaper articles. I consider this kind of material to be most important for stimulating the imagination of the general public. For example, the reporting of the Kohika Pa site excavation on Rangitaiki Plains in the local press both in Rotorua and Whakatane has got everybody interested.

The category of papers listed by Green & Park refers more to a selective but informed audience coming within the purview of education in the round traditionally accepted in New Zealand.

The matter is of interest to other specialists like myself who find difficulty in purveying their wares in the market place. Is it possible to research an audience class to see what real impact we have made on peoples thinking and on adding to their corpus of knowledge?

signed

W.A. Pullar

REFERENCE

Green, R.C.; Park, G.S. 1976: New Zealand prehistory: informing the public. New Zealand Archaeological Association Newsletter Volume 19, No.4: pp. 187-192.

Sir

THE DEMISE OF THE AMATEUR ARCHAEOLOGIST

In thumbing through issues of the Newsletter over the past 20 years or so I detect a gradual and perhaps not too subtle a change in the presentation of reports ranging from the chatty, highly informal style of the late 1950s to the more formal professional format of the later 1970s. The whole archaeological metier changed abruptly with the report on the interpretation of the Historic Places Amendment Act 1975 (McKinley 1976). Heretofore, we moved about quite freely and without let or hindrance on the field and with easy communication with each other and good rapport with the public. But now we have a lot of rules and regulations sufficiently irritating to get one's back up.

I shall never forget the halcyon days of that charismatic feller, Jack Golson, who seemed to be able to draw out of the amateur abundant streams of energy and enthusiasm he or she thought they never possessed. Now we are entering the era of the planner with his impersonal data-bank whose main forte as far as I can see is to retrieve stored information quickly. At one time we cultivated the art of bringing to bear our own judgement arrived at by long experience in the field but now we will become straight book-keepers and mechanics. It may even be that Quarternary field research will come to a sad end as we will have no spare time left after running errands for the planner at the double.

Archaeology in New Zealand has become professional and I am getting out of the amateur fringe. Perhaps a group by the name of "Friends of the Human Being" might be more to my liking.

signed

W.A. Pullar, 33 Pegasus Drive, Sonnybrook, Rotorua

REFERENCE

McKinley, J.R. 1976: The New Zealand Historic Places Trust and the new legislation. New Zealand Archaeological Association Newsletter 19(1): pp. 38-65.

Dear Sir,

In the Newsletter of September 1977 (Vol 20 No 3), I.W. Keyes reviews a paper on the classification of moas, by J. Cracraft. I feel that Keyes has overrated the practical value of this paper. All those fully conversant with either the problems of moa taxonomy or statistical techniques, will appreciate that Cracraft greatly over-simplifies the situation.

Although Cracraft tries to superimpose modern ecological concepts onto a field dominated by morphology, the paper must be recognised as a purely preliminary work.

My major objection is to the actual classificatory procedure. Cracraft works with previously designated species groupings, within which individuals are by no means well defined. He then subjectively groups certain taxa, based on the numerical value of their combined variability. This is a very dubious statistical technique for grouping data. Much better is the multivariate analysis of data collected without judgement as to species.

Another problem, is that although Cracraft purports to be incorporating the concept of 'biological species', he fails to consider adequately distribution. This has led to major discrepancies, which are probably attributable to small sample size and lack of familiarity with the available material.

This paper therefore, is of limited use to practising archaeologists and osteologists, since it poses as many problems as it pretends to resolve. The real value of this work is not in the resultant classification, but rather in the revitalization of a somewhat stagnant field of study, by the introduction of new ideas and a statistical approach. It provides a great stimulus to future work on moa taxonomy using comprehensive multivariate techniques on a statistically valid sample size.

Yours faithfully,

signed
Bruce McCulloch
Zoology Department
University of Canterbury