



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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LETTERS TO THE EDITORMore on taro

Dear Sir,

In my Newsletter article, "Taro", I wrote; "Taro grew well in both these areas (dry-garden and stream) but in the shrubbery it later died as the shrubs expanded their growth and crowded it out."

The part of the shrubbery where the taro once flourished was originally planted with three trees, a flowering plum (*Cerasifera nigra*), a variegated holly (*Euonymus japonicus*), and a camellia (*Sasanqua*). In the centre of this group I roughly planted some taro corms which I had removed from the clump growing in the garden.

Some years later we planted underneath these trees a hebe hybrid, Lavender Lace, and two species of fuschia. It was these that over-topped and finally 'killed' the taro in 1980 leaving only the empty shells of the larger corms above the ground. In August 1983 we decided to heavily prune the trees and shrubs with the result that the ground was once more exposed to the sunlight.

By December 1983, young leaves of the taro appeared above the ground, and aided by the comparatively wet summer, they survived and are now showing slow but steady growth although the corms received no encouragement in the form of cultivation or manuring.

The new growth has come from three cormels which are attached to the base of the shells of the rotted corms. The cormels average 12 mm in diameter and are buried some 35 mm below the surface of the ground. In May 1984, there were nine leaves varying in size from 110 mm long by 80 mm wide, up to 150 mm by 120 mm, while the average height was 190 mm long by 80 mm wide, up to 150 mm by 120 mm, while the average height was 190 mm. For first year growth under poor conditions, their small size is not unusual.

This regrowth suggests that cormels are able to remain dormant for at least three years if left undisturbed in the ground and are capable of regrowth after that time if conditions improve.

Along with the other inferences mentioned in the 1982 article, this ability to survive with or without cultivation and the edibility and palatability of both corms and leaves,

taro may well have been used in prehistoric times as an easily prepared, virtually all the year round, food to a far greater extent than at present recognised.

Jack Diamond
Glen Eden
Auckland

Reference

Diamond, J. 1982 Taro. N.Z.A.A. Newsletter, 25:195-198.

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Dear Sir,

Sarah's Gully adze

In view of renewed interest in the Sarah's Gully site as shown by Brenda Sewell's talk at the Oamaru conference I wonder if you would publish these photos in the Newsletter.

They depict a partly finished adze - a surface find at the Cross Creek midden, Sarah's Gully, picked up by me in 1965. The stone is Tahanga basalt. The adze is about 25 cm long.

R.G.W. Jolly
Papakura

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More replies to editorial

Dear Sir,

Like most archaeologists, I am concerned that the results of archaeology should get to the public in digestible form. However, I wonder if the suggestion in your editorial, that the N.Z.A.A. Newsletter is a suitable vehicle, is realistic. There is a confusion here between a publicity vehicle, and a service vehicle.

The Newsletter is widely respected here and overseas as a means of communication between professionals (among its other functions); and despite the existence of the New Zealand Journal of Archaeology, it is an important publication of record - see the references in The First Thousand Years.

If I were to select a magazine in which to place material written for wide access, it would be Historic Places in New Zealand, or the Air New Zealand magazine, or the Listener, and so on. The Newsletter will never reach more than a tiny fraction of the readership of these other magazines where

attractive formats are only possible because of a steady, large circulation (greater than 15,000).

The Newsletter will never be a means of greatly improving the Archaeological Association's public profile - that is better done through the mass media, e.g. advertisements in Historic Places in New Zealand.

So please, a plea for the Newsletter to fill a primary function for those already interested in New Zealand and Pacific archaeology!

Kevin Jones
20 Rotherham Tce
Wellington

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Dear Sir,

I was interested to read your editorial, although I believe I have heard it before - on the 'Monowai' in 1978 as we were wallowing at less than 4 knots back to Enzed where you were about to take up the editorship. Still, I do agree with the points you make and I would like to make a couple of suggestions.

What I miss in the Newsletter is mainly news. Archaeologists are, in general, poor correspondents and many of us have a strong tendency to be fairly close about our current projects; a legacy from our treasure-hunting past perhaps. To some extent the "Notes and News" section helps but I would like to see it greatly expanded. One way to do this might be to ask a representative from each of the main institutions (the two Anthropology Departments, the Trust archaeology section, A.G.M.A.N.Z. etc), to undertake to supply a page of news for each issue, or more if they want to. I am prepared to do this, for the next year at least, for Otago if you think the idea is worth trying.

The second thing I miss in the Newsletter is comment and discussion. Archaeologists have a reputation for being a pretty argumentative lot but you would not know it from reading the Newsletter. There are many issues which concern us, even if some are trivial (like whether there is actually an archaeological site at Hamlin's Hill), and the Newsletter is the place to poke them about. As in the case of news I suspect that the only way in which they will be raised is by providing a formal structure and I would like to suggest that you invite quest editorials, and not only from archaeologists - lets hear an opinion from a kiwifruit grower in the Bay of Plenty, as well as the outrageous views of our colleagues.

Atholl Anderson
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Dunedin