



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION
AND NEW ZEALAND HISTORIC PLACES TRUST
SUBMISSION TO MINISTERIAL WORKING GROUP
ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY - AUGUST 1986

This submission, primarily relating to archaeology, is made by the New Zealand Archaeological Association in conjunction with the Archaeology Section staff of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust. The Association is in its 30th year and has some 500 members that includes both amateurs and practicing scientists employed by various institutions, all of whom are concerned with advancing an understanding of our cultural heritage through archaeology. Archaeological knowledge is an inter-related part of the body of scientific knowledge, and shares with other scientific disciplines a common methodology and approach to research. Many of our comments relating to archaeology are therefore relevant to the physical and natural sciences generally, and in making them we draw wider implications where we feel it is appropriate.

Summary of points made

1. Scientific research is not compatible with the user-pays principle.
2. Except for research where cost recovery is already in place, archaeological research should be fully government funded.
3. Increased funding is urgently required for university and museum research and increased resources for government research.
4. Contract archaeology should be structured to allow continuity of employment, time for assimilation and publication of results, and time for proper reflection and thought.
5. Government agencies should not charge each other for information that is, essentially, public property.
6. Collaboration between scientists and scientific institutions should be encouraged.

Scientific value of archaeology

Archaeology is a branch of anthropology and provides scientific information on:

1. Factors affecting the development of culture: New Zealand is uniquely placed to study the adaptation of a tropical Polynesian culture to a temperate environment; cultural change

within a prehistoric community isolated from other cultural influences; and cultural change within a prehistoric community resulting from contact with western culture.

2. Environmental history: in particular, on the effect of man on the environment. Since first human settlement, New Zealand's environment has undergone considerable change as a result of both natural and cultural influences. It is important to understand these changes if we are to predict the consequences of future changes on our own society, and if we are to manage the environment effectively for the future.

3. New Zealand history since European contact: many aspects of Pakeha settlement of New Zealand in the late 18th and 19th centuries are poorly documented. Historical and industrial archaeology are primary sources of information about the different communities that settled here and of the technological innovations that were made in developing the country's resources.

Value of archaeology to New Zealand

We wish to draw attention to what we perceive as some actual and potential benefits arising from archaeological research.

Social benefits. Archaeology should lead to a better understanding by all New Zealanders, of the nature and achievements of the Maori people who lived in and developed New Zealand in the 800 years before the arrival of Europeans, and of the endeavour and enterprise of the Pakeha settlers who continued that development. Such understanding should enhance both national and cultural self-esteem.

Economic benefits. The unique nature of New Zealand's Maori culture is important for tourism. Sympathetic and accurate presentation of selected sites portrayed through the medium of ongoing research has proved an effective tourist attraction overseas (e.g. Stonehenge). There are New Zealand archaeological sites of world significance (e.g. the pa sites on the Auckland volcanic cones - One Tree Hill, Mt Eden, etc.) which could be presented with equal success.

Recent archaeological research into Maori ovens in southern New Zealand has drawn attention to the high sugar (fructose) content of cabbage trees, a result which could have economic benefit for New Zealand.

Reduction in the size of crayfish and some shellfish over an 800 year period of human exploitation has been docu-

mented from archaeological sites and inferences have been made about the times taken for the stocks to recover. Prehistoric shell middens (rubbish heaps) contain the remains of a variety of animal species used by the Maori as food. Some of those same species today have economic value, and such information may be useful in working out sustainable levels of exploitation.

Environmental benefits. Development of a method of geological dating for archaeological sites provided unexpected data about erosion and deposition in New Zealand. If the data are supported by future research, they may contribute to the better management of river catchments and protection forests for erosion control.

Organisation of archaeological research

There are three main sources of archaeological research: universities, museums and government.

1. University research is carried out at Auckland and Otago Universities. It has made substantial contributions to archaeological knowledge in New Zealand, including both theoretical issues and methodology. The two universities are the main sources of trained archaeologists employed in research.
2. Only two major museums (Auckland and Canterbury) have posts specifically for archaeological research. There is no archaeological post at the National Museum. Research is broadly directed to the study of regional prehistory in New Zealand.
3. Government research is carried out within the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and New Zealand Forest Service. It is related to mitigation, being surveys to locate archaeological sites and investigations to recover information from sites under threat of destruction.

Requirements for effective archaeological research

Funding. Legislative archaeology: archaeological investigations arising from site destruction by land development are, with some statutory exceptions, cost-recoverable under the Historic Places Act 1980. It should be noted however that this cost recovery is not 'user-pays' which implies a willing user but is a charge on a developer for recovery of information from a site threatened with destruction. Basic site surveys are not cost-recoverable but are essential for site protection.

Despite the cost-recovery provisions of the Historic Places Act however, the staffing and funding of the Historic Places Trust are inadequate to deal effectively either with site surveying or with the other main areas of Trust archaeological activity and need to be substantially increased.

Research archaeology: regular funding for basic site recording, university research and training, and museum research is virtually non-existent. Some \$600,000 annually is needed to support university and museum research, and basic site recording.

Contract archaeology. Because of the inadequate Historic Places Trust staff numbers and resources available, a large proportion of cost-recoverable work is let out to contract.

There are, however, considerable problems associated with contract archaeology:

1. Maintaining a trained labour force. Contract work is intermittent and largely seasonal. Trained people leave the profession because continued employment cannot be guaranteed. Where contract work is full-time, e.g. three archaeologists employed by New Zealand Forest Service, there is no job security.
2. Contract archaeology is producing large amounts of data at considerable cost which, through this source of funding alone, cannot normally be presented properly to the scientific community or to the public.
3. There is pressure against the reflection and thought which lead to significant discoveries.
4. There is no supplementary funding from other sources to fill the gaps where essential research is needed in areas not covered by contract work.

We understand that other disciplines have similar problems with contract work. Some way of overcoming the problems will need to be addressed if scientific contract work is to be increased.

Scientific servicing. Archaeology is a discipline which draws upon many other sciences to service its needs, such as charcoal identification, pollen analysis, bone identification, isotope studies, absolute dating, seasonal dating, chemical analyses, residue analysis, etc. We find that such servicing in the past has been on an ad hoc basis. There is, for example, no-one employed in government science able to identify bones from New Zealand animals. In our opinion a national archaeometry laboratory to research and develop new servicing techniques and provide essential scientific servicing is a priority for archaeology and would benefit not only archaeology but also the natural sciences generally.

Principle of 'User-Pays'. Archaeology is a multidisciplinary science and, in this respect, reflects science generally.

Archaeological research today covers many facets of science and draws on a range of disciplines such as geology, pedology, zoology, botany, chemistry, physics, nuclear physics and mathematics. To date, archaeologists have freely collaborated with scientists from other disciplines, to their mutual benefit, but the principle of user-pays is inhibiting collaboration, to the detriment of all. It is with considerable dismay that this Association now finds that the scientific servicing its members once received from government agencies through collaboration with practicing scientists, or in exchange for scientific information, is being charged for at commercial rates.

The New Zealand Archaeological Association accepts that 'user-pays' is government policy. In our opinion the policy is short-sighted and will have a severe adverse effect on scientific research generally in New Zealand. We can only stress that if 'user-pays' continues to be government policy it will shift all the costs to those involved and have the effect of driving people out of those areas where so much has been achieved in the past by co-operation and voluntary effort. Instead of getting a lot for very little the reverse will be the case, and user-pays will produce the opposite effect to that intended.