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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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# NEW ZEALAND HISTORIC PLACES TRUST NATIONAL RESEARCH FRAMEWORK: DISCUSSION PAPER

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Over the last 12 months the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (HPT) has been developing a National Research Framework to act as a guide for undertaking archaeology in New Zealand. This project was mentioned during the New Zealand Archaeological Association Conference in Hanmer in June 2007, to advise the archaeological community that it was underway and that the HPT would soon be seeking input to the Draft Framework. In July 2007 the Draft Framework was published on the HPT website but has, to date, only drawn two responses. We would like to think that this is not because people are not interested in the issue, but because people were not aware that it had been posted.

This paper contains an edited version of the text of the Draft National Research Framework. The full text can be found at [http://www.historic.org.nz/heritage/gfx/gfx\\_archaeology/NRF.pdf](http://www.historic.org.nz/heritage/gfx/gfx_archaeology/NRF.pdf). The HPT asks that the archaeological community considers it and provides input towards the development of a final agreed position. Your feedback can be emailed to: [archaeology@historic.org.nz](mailto:archaeology@historic.org.nz)

## Issues

The New Zealand Historic Places Trust is the lead agency for the protection and management of New Zealand's archaeological heritage. The HPT is charged with the protection of archaeological sites in place, and where this is not possible, with the recovery and retention of archaeological information. One of the primary values of our archaeological heritage is the potential of a place to provide evidence of the history of New Zealand (Gumbley 1995: 104; Walton 2002: 221). This potential is framed within the existing body of ar-

chaeological knowledge, and current research questions about New Zealand's past.

In the last twenty years the context for archaeological fieldwork and investigation has changed dramatically as archaeological research programmes carried out by archaeological societies, HPT and universities have, to a large part, given way to development-driven projects focused on archaeological investigation and recording, often in advance of site destruction. There is a growing concern among New Zealand archaeologists that archaeological work carried out for development projects has come adrift from archaeological research aims and is in danger of becoming a mechanical process largely limited to the recording of information, rather than the application of that information to the development of our understanding of New Zealand's past.

One of the primary aims of the HPT in the formulation of the National Research Framework is to address these concerns and provide a framework for archaeological work that can be utilised by archaeologists working in New Zealand, regardless of their circumstances. The framework will also provide an important tool for the HPT in its administration of the authority process and determining its own research priorities. It is hoped that the framework will facilitate an integrated and collaborative approach to the study of New Zealand's past.

Consultation on this discussion paper is widely sought, and the archaeological community will be invited to make submissions. If required, workshops may be held at which time more general discussion about the document will be invited. The end result must be a framework that the archaeological community collectively owns and is prepared to work to. The final version will then be posted on the HPT website.

### *Rationale*

The current situation in New Zealand parallels that elsewhere in the world, where there has been a shift from research-based archaeological programmes undertaken primarily by universities to development-driven archaeology carried out by a growing private sector. This is not to say that universities do not engage in archaeology in New Zealand. This is far from the case; it is rather that the volume and scale of archaeological work carried out is now increasingly dominated by that undertaken by the private sector. Universities are also participating in development-driven archaeology in addition to 'pure' research.

Iacono (2006: 81) notes, from an Australian perspective, that developers and landowners generally associate value for money with archaeological investigations that adequately comply with compulsory statutory require-

ments (and usually at the best possible price), rather than with those that contribute towards research aims (this observation could equally apply to the New Zealand context). However, this approach is not necessarily the most cost effective. ‘Cost effective’ archaeology depends on investigation projects having a sound research base. The benefits are two fold. Costs associated with unnecessary investigations that would contribute little to the knowledge base can be avoided or reduced. When linked to research aims, worthwhile investigations can be carried out in manner that ensures the project adds to the knowledge base and thus has benefits for the wider community. Iacono (2006: 81) also suggests that in Australia stronger emphasis needs to be placed on the social responsibility of developers and landowners to fund targeted research and analysis when the wider community is to lose irreplaceable resources.

Australia is also facing a crisis in the management of archaeological collections (Schacht 2007), and again this issue is relevant for New Zealand. As a consequence of state and federal legislation protecting archaeological sites, many hundreds of sites have been excavated which have resulted in a rapidly increasing number of collections to be stored and conserved. It is no longer possible to preserve every object in perpetuity, and informed decisions have to be made about what to curate. Deakin University and Heritage Victoria have initiated a research project to develop a national framework to assess the significance and research potential of collections from historic sites to inform the collection policies of museums.

Issues that have been identified in New Zealand include:

- the backlog of excavation reports that have not been adequately written up, or written up at all, resulting ultimately in the loss of irretrievable information;
- the accumulating body of information in grey literature generated by development-driven archaeology. This can be inaccessible, or in a non-standardised format, which prevents future comparative analyses and syntheses;
- allocation of resources based on development projects, rather than research aims. Significant resources are directed at sites with low archaeological potential, for little gain;
- lack of coordination of archaeological research generally – potential for duplication, repetition, or missed opportunities;
- little or no creation of new knowledge from development-driven projects;
- a perception that archaeological information is the province of ‘experts’ and of little value to others, and that there is little or no trans-

mission of information in an appropriate format to the community or wider public;

- the lack of curatorial facilities for archaeological material. Often this is the only physical evidence salvaged from a site before its destruction;
- a growing focus on excavation in advance of site destruction, however, this is just one aspect of archaeological research.

The HPT is actively addressing some of these concerns, for example, regularly reviewing outstanding authority reports and establishing a digital library of authority reports. The HPT has also participated in large-scale collaborative projects with consultancy firms and the University of Otago. However, the archaeological community as a whole needs to work together to achieve better outcomes.

The National Research Framework has the potential to be an important tool to ensure archaeological work carried out in New Zealand makes a meaningful contribution to every New Zealander's understanding our past.

It is important that the framework is not viewed as a prescriptive document. Rather it should provide a context for archaeological research in New Zealand that enables high quality, relevant research to be undertaken, and the results shared among the archaeological and wider community.

The framework has a number of aims:

- to identify priorities for archaeological research;
- to identify opportunities for the creation of new knowledge and innovative directions in archaeological research;
- to integrate the potential of development-driven archaeological work into a national research agenda;
- to encourage collaboration and partnership across the various groups and organisations involved in archaeological research;
- to promote high standards for archaeological research;
- to encourage the dissemination of archaeological knowledge to a wide audience;
- to increase public understanding and appreciation of New Zealand's archaeological heritage.

The HPT is the lead agency for archaeological heritage management and protection, however there are many other groups and organisations with potential roles in the implementation of the framework. The heritage sector to some degree remains fragmented, as identified by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment in 1996, with little overall structure and cohesion. This has implications for archaeological research as various organisations may routinely allocate funds for research or undertake research, which may take place in isolation and without reference to others.

In England, the formulation of research frameworks is seen as an ongoing process, and that the process may be as important as the framework itself. It has been suggested that making people think about the research problems could create a 'research culture' and serve to bring back together the different strands of British archaeology (Bird 2006: 4).

The following groups and organisations are currently involved in archaeological research, at varying levels, in New Zealand:

### New Zealand Historic Places Trust

From an archaeological point of view, the HPT is currently primarily involved in the regulatory aspects of administering the provision of the *Historic Places Act* 1993. The HPT's archaeological staff are encouraged to undertake, or participate in, archaeological research if, and when, they have the capacity to do so. The HPT tends to engage in collaborative research programmes with a range of providers, such as universities, iwi, and private consultants, to achieve broader outcomes.

During the 1980s the HPT had a strong research group and was responsible for significant research projects in the Auckland region. In addition, an archaeologist was working in Central Otago, seconded to the Ministry of Works for their Clutha Valley Development Project. This research group was disbanded in 1988 when all of the HPT's archaeologists transferred to the newly established Department of Conservation. During the early 1990s the HPT maintained a small fund to assist with small-scale field surveys and excavations, primarily to assist students undertaking work that might contribute to research projects.

### Department of Conservation

At the time of its formation the Department's primary research delivery mechanism for archaeology was through the team employed in the Science and Research Division, the former HPT staff archaeologists. Over the years this team has been significantly reduced and today archaeological research is fulfilled by the Research, Development and Improvement section. This research is undertaken by both the permanent staff and through the use of contractors working on specific projects. There is very little research work undertaken in the Conservancy or Area Offices.

### Universities

There are two universities in New Zealand where archaeology is taught (although both are part of broader anthropology departments), Auckland and Otago. The focus on New Zealand archaeology differs between the two de-

partments. Auckland has a much greater research focus on the Pacific and Island South East Asia, whereas Otago is more focused on New Zealand. Otago University has also moved to create a specialised research facility, known as Southern Pacific Archaeological Research.

### Archaeological contractors/consultants

Most archaeological consultants are engaged in the provision of professional services to ensure compliance with the conditions of archaeological authorities issued by the HPT for the modification, damage or destruction of archaeological sites. Much of the reporting of this work has previously consisted of descriptive accounts with little or no analytical considerations or reference to broader research questions. Approximately four years ago the HPT introduced a requirement for research strategies for those authorities that would require detailed archaeological investigations. These strategies were intended to establish questions that the subsequent investigations could then attempt to answer. This requirement is now extremely common, and many consultants now routinely include a research design/strategy with an authority application.

### New Zealand Archaeological Association

The NZAA is involved at a peripheral level in archaeological research in New Zealand, through the maintenance of the Site Recording Scheme. This is the only national inventory of archaeological sites and currently holds around 59,000 records. This serves as the primary source for all information relating to the archaeological resource in New Zealand.

### Museums

A number of museums have been involved, and continue to be involved, in archaeological research. In the mid 20th century a number of museums had archaeologists on staff who were widely involved in research programmes, such as Auckland, Waikato, Taranaki, Dominion/National/Te Papa, Canterbury, Otago and Southland. Over the years the amount of research carried out has tended to drop away as specialist staff are not replaced. Auckland Museum is the only museum that still employs a specialist with resources available to undertake pure research.

### Maori organisations

Maori are increasingly participating in archaeological research, either in partnership with other organisations, or developing their own research projects. For example, Ngati Tahu is carrying out the South Island Maori Rock

Art Project and many iwi/hapu resource management units are developing GIS systems to capture and manage information about heritage places, including archaeological sites.

### Ministry for Culture and Heritage

The Ministry is primarily responsible for policy development, and undertakes very little operational work.

### Local authorities

Some local authorities have taken an interest in archaeology but only the Auckland Regional Council has a dedicated Cultural Heritage Team which includes archaeologists. This team has undertaken a wide range of research projects in the past as part of developing a greater understanding of the heritage aspects of the parks (in particular) that are managed by the Council.

### Foundation for Science, Research and Technology

This is one of the primary funding agencies for large-scale archaeological research in New Zealand. In conjunction with the Marsden Fund administered by the Royal Society of New Zealand, which funds 'blue sky' research, the Foundation funds multi-year projects of several hundred thousand dollars.

### *Sources of information*

The purpose of this section is to identify sources of archaeological information that contribute, or have the potential to contribute, to the development and implementation of the framework. This section is by no means an exhaustive list, and it is anticipated that additional important sources will be identified during consultation. The focus is on archaeological material, however, it is recognised that there is range of resources that are relevant to archaeological research, such as early cadastral information, aerial photography and oral history.

Although published over twenty years ago, the major synthesis of New Zealand indigenous archaeology remains Janet Davidson's *Prehistory of New Zealand* (1984). There is no commensurate publication on historical archaeology.

Prickett's (1982) collection of essays, *The First Thousand Years*, provides a series of regional overviews for Northland, Auckland, Coromandel and Great Barrier Island, Hawke's Bay, Canterbury and Marlborough, the West Coast, North and Central Otago, Fiordland and the Chatham Islands. In some regions, such as Hawke's Bay, little additional research has taken place

or been published. In others, archaeological research programmes have resulted in advances in our understanding of the human history of the region.

The archaeological research programme carried out by Foss and Helen Leach in the Wairarapa (Leach and Leach 1979) remains one of the largest regional studies undertaken in New Zealand. Other projects of a more restricted geographical area have also been undertaken. For example, the *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology* has published overviews of the archaeology of the Nelson-Marlborough region (Challis 1991) and of smaller localities such as Mahia (Jones et al. 2003). *Archaeology in New Zealand* also provides a vehicle for the dissemination of information about regional and local studies, for example, Barber's summary of research undertaken in eastern Golden Bay (1999).

Since the early 1990s the Department of Conservation has commissioned a series of regional archaeological resource statements. The statements were conceived of as part of a strategic plan for archaeology for use by the Department and the HPT (Sheppard 1989: 1). The plan set out a cycle that commenced with "an outline document (synthesis) of a conservancy's cultural heritage, describing its prehistory, history and the changing ways of life experienced by its peoples. The synthesis [was to identify] obvious gaps in the explanation of that heritage, and any subsequent conflicting evidence." The synthesis document could then be used to identify work programmes for research, management and public interpretation. The synthesis document, as conceived by Sheppard, is very similar to the resource statements that form part of the English Heritage research framework model.

To date statements have been produced for the following conservancies: Taranaki-Wanganui (Walton 2000), Wellington (Wairarapa, Kapiti-Horowhenua; McFadgen 1997, 2003), Nelson-Marlborough (Challis 1991), Canterbury (Challis 1995) and Otago (Hamel 2001). Statements for Northland and the Bay of Plenty are in preparation. The structure and content of the statements, however, have varied from the original concept, thus moving away from the English Heritage model.

There a number of recent publications which adopt a thematic approach to understanding New Zealand's past using archaeology as the primary means of inquiry. The Department of Conservation has commissioned and published thematic studies of shore whaling (Prickett 2002), sealing (Smith 2002) and Maori gardening (Fury 2006). Foss Leach's *Fishing in Pre-European New Zealand* (2006) provides an overview of this aspect of the Maori economy.

The New Zealand Archaeological Association Monograph *Change Through Time* (Holdaway and Furey 2004) provides a useful historical overview of a number of research areas in New Zealand archaeology, including

material culture, landscape studies, social organization and Polynesian connections. Contributors also comment on future research directions.

There is a large amount of potentially significant unpublished information relevant to archaeological research (both regional syntheses and thematic approaches) which is held in a variety of repositories. Sources include University theses and dissertations, field notes in archival collections and reports prepared for the HPT, DOC, and the former New Zealand Forest Service and Ministry of Works.

Research undertaken as part of university programmes is an integral component of the body of research carried out in New Zealand generally. The University of Auckland and the University of Otago publish abstracts from theses and dissertations periodically in *Archaeology in New Zealand*.

HPT now provides access to unpublished archaeological reports it holds via its Digital Library, ([http://www.historic.org.nz/heritage/arch\\_digitalibrary\\_reports.htm](http://www.historic.org.nz/heritage/arch_digitalibrary_reports.htm)). The Department of Conservation provides a list of site survey reports it holds, available via the NZAA web site, (<http://www.nzarchaeology.org/elec%20publications.htm>).

The NZAA Site Recording Scheme is the national inventory for archaeological sites. The Scheme is currently paper-based and holds over 59,000 site records. Records can include site and artefact descriptions, sketch maps, plans and section drawings, photographs and excavation reports. NZAA plans to convert the Scheme into a digital system, which will greatly enhance its utility for research purposes.

Museums in New Zealand house collections of artefacts and faunal material from archaeological sites around New Zealand.

### *Proposed approach*

It is proposed that a national research framework is developed for New Zealand that focuses on the elaboration of a research agenda, followed by an implementation strategy.

It is suggested that published and unpublished sources in New Zealand are sufficient to provide a general baseline from which a research agenda can be developed. A strong focus on the research agenda, as opposed to the preparation of stand-alone resource statements, will enable a dynamic approach where new and emerging information can be incorporated into research designs as it becomes available.

### **Draft National Research Framework**

This framework has been developed by the HPT to provide a context for archaeological research in New Zealand that enables high quality, focused

research to be undertaken and the results shared among the archaeological and wider community.

It is the HPT's intention, in collaboration with the archaeological community, to identify a series of overarching themes into which all archaeology being undertaken in New Zealand, whether it is purely research or driven by the authority process, can delve for guidance. It is envisaged that regional approaches can be derived from the national framework that will serve to guide work at a local level.

Although a general sequence of human settlement of New Zealand has been established, our understanding of what took place in some regions is less well developed. Chronologies from earliest to latest occupation have not yet been able to be clearly established at a regional level. Because the cultural sequence is not yet well understood, the loss or destruction of sites jeopardises the opportunity to reconstruct and understand the chronology of occupation and resource use in future. A key focus of the research agenda therefore is to work towards the development of regional sequences.

It is important that opportunities are taken to recover and retain information that contributes to the understanding of regional and local:

- chronology of occupation;
- settlement pattern – continuity and change;
- sequence of resource use;
- material culture – continuity and change.

The following themes and associated research aims are suggested as a basis for discussion.

### *Theme: Improvement and innovation in methodology*

It is important that developments in methodologies are shared across the archaeological community and that the most appropriate techniques are used, particularly if sites are to be destroyed post-excavation.

#### Research aims

- Increase the use of appropriate dating methods in key areas/sites.
- Encourage the identification and use of existing museum collections.
- Develop and implement standards for analysis and reporting, to enable comparison between sites/projects.
- Investigate the relationship between archaeological and historical sources of information.
- Develop and test methodologies to enable non-destructive investigation of archaeological sites.

*Theme: Constructing regional histories*

New Zealand is characterised by diverse environments and people's varying responses to those places and conditions. Although a general sequence of human settlement of New Zealand has been established, our understanding of what took place in some regions is less well developed. This may be attributable to a lack of synthesis of recent archaeological work, gaps in the record (are these 'real' or otherwise) or poor or no dating of sites that have been excavated.

**Research aims**

- Encourage works of synthesis and publication of results.
- Ensure adequate dating of excavated sites.
- Address 'gaps' in regional sequences, are they meaningful or due to biases in current knowledge.
- Identify, complete and publish results from important excavations that have not been written up.

*Theme: Understanding early settlement*

Although the date of first settlement has attracted some heated debate in New Zealand archaeology, what actually happened when people made landfall is not well understood. Archaeological knowledge of early settlement is not comprehensive, yet it is from this baseline that subsequent adaptation, change and continuity is measured.

**Research aims**

- Investigate distribution of early settlement sites; are regional 'gaps' real or biases in current knowledge?
- Improve understanding of known sites.
- Address questions of regional and/or temporal variation.

*Theme: People and the environment*

Human–environment interactions have been an enduring theme in New Zealand archaeology since the early interest in extinctions. As well as providing information about how people lived and their interactions with their environment, environmental studies can inform current and future debate about human impact on the environment.

**Research aims**

- Improve our understanding of the timing and nature of avifaunal extinctions.

- Increase our knowledge of the adaptation of Polynesian cultigens to New Zealand conditions.
- Impact of climate change.
- Improve our understanding of the role of the environment in cultural adaptation and change.

*Theme: Sense of place*

Archaeological sites do not exist in isolation and may be part of complex cultural landscapes. Defining and understanding these landscapes can be challenging and protecting them is even more difficult. Landscape studies and settlement pattern analysis are vital to gaining a better appreciation for the way people shape and use the landscape.

Research aims

- Improve our understanding of Maori trade and communication networks.
- Improve our understanding of Maori settlement patterns and site function, e.g., the role of pa.
- Improve our understanding of important post-contact landscapes, e.g., pastoral.
- Utilise surviving buildings and historical records to better understand the establishment and development of early towns.
- Improve our understanding of important cultural landscapes in order to protect them.

*Theme: The archaeology of identity*

Archaeology provides a means of investigating questions about who we are as New Zealanders and what forces have shaped our identity.

Research aims

- Utilise archaeological evidence to better understand the development of New Zealand's distinct or shared identities.
- Investigate initial and ongoing contact between Maori and Pakeha, and Maori responses and adaptation to Pakeha culture.

*Theme: Archaeology in New Zealand today*

This theme addresses the contributions that archaeological research may make as a 'public good', the dissemination of information, the role archaeological heritage plays in informing a sense of place and local/national identity, and issues of stewardship and the care of our archaeological heritage.

## Research aims

- Improve the ways by which we share the outcomes of archaeological research with the wider public.
- Improve our understandings of how people experience and value archaeological heritage places.
- Investigate methods for the management and protection of archaeological heritage.
- Encourage greater education about archaeology in schools.
- Encourage greater participation of iwi/hapu in archaeological research.

## Implementation strategy

It is anticipated that the strategy to implement the framework will to a large degree flow on from submissions and discussions about the research agenda, as key stakeholders identify in what ways they may be able to progress research aims.

Possible future initiatives include:

- identify and collate key sources for regional/thematic studies;
- establishment of programme to address unwritten excavations backlog;
- establishment of dating programme;
- digital Site Recording Scheme (NZAA);
- standards for reporting;
- improve support and access to specialist facilities (e.g., the Archaeozoology Laboratory at Te Papa);
- develop repositories for collections from archaeological sites;

The strategy should also establish a review period for the framework.

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