NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

NEWS FROM AUCKLAND

By Janet Davidson

During the past year we were pleased to welcome two new lecturers in prehistory, Mr. Green, who replaced Mr. Golson in June and Mr. Shawcross, who arrived in October to take up a newly-created position. The prehistory section of the Anthropology Department has moved into a separate building with its own lecture room and vastly improved facilities for storage and processing of archaeological materials.

Membership remained high and a full programme of activities was carried out. Regular monthly meetings were held and among the topics covered were reports on the 10th Pacific Science Congress by Mr. Green, and on the N.Z. Archaeological Association extended A.G.M. by members who had attended it, a report on excavations in French Polynesia by Mr. Green and a discussion of the relationship of pedology to archaeology by Dr. Dalrymple. The first meeting this year, at which the results of the summer excavation were reviewed, was particularly successful, with a large attendance of both old and new members.

During the winter two study groups were held, both relating to projects of the Association. One dealt with problems raised by the artefact record form and the terminology and description of adzes, the other with the compilation of a list of sites in the Auckland area which have been or are about to be destroyed.

During November of last year the Society conducted a salvage excavation on Mt. Roskill, one of the volcanic cones on the Auckland isthmus. Members of the Society had already made a survey of this site and when it was learned that a reservoir was to be constructed on the site the Mt. Roskill Borough Council was approached and asked for assistance. It generously gave £200 to finance the work and a further £200 was made available through the generosity of an anonymous donor. With this assistance a sufficient portion of the site could be excavated in the short time available to supply some interesting information about occupation on one of the Auckland volcanic cones.

This summer the Society returned to Kauri Point, Katikati, to continue work on the site begun the previous summer and the excavations, directed by Mr. Ambrose, were well attended and successful. New areas opened up this season, and particularly the swamp below the pa, proved very interesting and some of the theories postulated after one season's work will now have to be revised.

Members

Les and Rosemary Groube, both past secretaries of the Society to which they devoted much time and effort, have left Auckland to take up a teaching position on the East Coast. Another committee member, Dave Simmons, has taken a position at the Otago Museum. We are sorry to lose these members, and wish them well in the future.
Wilfred Shawcross and Kath Clemow were married recently. To them we extend our congratulations and best wishes.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL INFERENCE

P. Riddick

In archaeology, more so than in other sciences, where investigation does not entail destruction of the raw data, the excavator has a duty to extract the maximum information from any given site. An area once dug can tell us no more.

The information that a dig can give is limited by two factors, the kind of questions which the investigator wishes to examine, and his ingenuity in finding ways of answering these questions. If one is, for example, interested in the diet of pa dwellers one could investigate representative samples of midden material and compare the proportions of shells of different species found there with those of present-day samples taken from the regions from which the fish are believed to have come: only if there is a reliable difference between the two is one entitled to make any suppositions about dietary preferences, climatic change or the like, in the absence of independent evidence. Or, if it is believed that a site was abandoned because of increasing scarcity of food, one could take samples at suitable intervals throughout a bed of midden material and compare, say, size of shells of the same species throughout the sequence. One needs, of course, all the relevant information that can be obtained: the climatologist and geologist can perhaps provide information about climatic or geological change such as a change in the course of a river: but the point is that these questions can be examined objectively.

Archaeology is in rather a different position from the experimental sciences, in that experimental method cannot be