



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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Hearings before the Maori Affairs Committee of the House of Representatives on the Antiquities Bill and the Historic Places Trust Amendment Bill were completed before the House resumed in March. N.Z.A.A., several local archaeological societies and a good number of individuals went to a lot of effort in preparing and presenting submissions which will hopefully lead to the Bills being reported back to the House in well polished form. Reporting for the next reading is believed to be imminent at the time of writing. One pleasing aspect of the submissions was the support for the aims of the Trust Bill by New Zealand Federated Farmers.

The Association's membership has been growing steadily in recent years after remaining static for most of the 'sixties, providing evidence of the increasing vigour of New Zealand archaeology. The number of local seminars being held and the support for them is a further indication. The second Moumoukai seminar series was held in March, and provided a valuable venue for the discussion of summer field work by Auckland archaeologists. Otago held a similar seminar over Easter with contributions elicited on as yet unpublished excavations. Auckland's seminar next March is tentatively proposed for a long weekend on Little Barrier, an island in the Hauraki Gulf with archaeological sites which almost rival the birds and the scenery of this island sanctuary. Auckland and Waikato society members will be notified closer to the event. Anyone else wishing to be notified should contact Garry Law.

Council, meeting in Wellington in March, fixed a date and venue for the seminar on the future of New Zealand archaeology. It will be in a lodge built for school nature trips, at Lake Rotoiti, Marlborough, on the weekend of the 15th and 16th of November this year. Further details will be circulated to members later. Council is pursuing several possible sources of grants to enable fares to be subsidised.

The Auckland Regional Authority Planning Division in 1974 requested a report from Janet Davidson on the Region's archaeological sites and their protection. Janet substantially completed this before she departed and Aileen Fox and Roger Green have seen it through its final stages. Published in letterset by the A.R.A., the report, "Archaeological Sites in the Auckland Region, 1975", is available from the Planning Division, 4th floor, Regional House, Hobston Street, Auckland (use Wellesley Street entrance), or by mail (Private Bag, Auckland, 1). The cost is \$2.50.

Agnes Sullivan continued her research on Auckland Isthmus horticulture with an excavation on Brown's Island in Auckland Harbour over Easter. She was concentrating on a field system.

N.Z.A.A. monograph No. 6 by Lady Fox, "New Zealand Pa and Defensive Fortifications" should be available by mid-year. N.Z.A.A. will not be holding stocks in the usual way after publication, and any post-publication purchases will have to be through retail bookshops. We will however have a limited number at publication for sale to members only. This will be at a discount price giving a hard cover edition at the retail soft cover price of \$3.95. Aileen has offered to autograph these copies. Copies should be reserved with Mrs A. Sullivan, Anthropology Department, University of Auckland, Private Bag, Auckland. Payment is not required at this stage.

Karel Peters, the archaeology technician at Auckland University, has been awarded a Churchill Fellowship for a study trip to Europe during the winter.

A traditional hollow metal cylinder decorated with two equally spaced circumferential ridges, recently found in Lybia, has been reported to the Moumoukai Epigraphic Society. The following, obviously ancient Maori inscription, was found engraved on the side. The translation must have astounding implications for Polynesian origins. A prize of a lifetime's supply of site record forms for the most sensational translation. (Readers suffering from a knowledge of Polynesian linguistics, or lacking imagination may find a mirror helpful.)

The image shows a handwritten Maori inscription and a drawing of a bird. The inscription is written in a stylized, cursive Maori script. It consists of several lines of text, including the words 'U2 + aib', '9x', and '9x'. To the right of the main text is a vertical line of text that reads 'Coveni 808 i uam'. Below the main text is a drawing of a bird, possibly a duck or a similar waterfowl, facing left. The drawing is simple and appears to be a sketch or a stylized representation of the bird.

NEWS EXTRA

Safety in holes

Excavations can be dangerous. In 1970 an archaeologist in Britain was killed in a trench collapse. Every year several New Zealand workmen are killed in a similar manner. While most New Zealand archaeological sites are shallow, some are deeply buried in sand, and at least one (Ngaroto) reaches quite a respectable depth entirely in occupation build-up. Excavators based in New Zealand but working elsewhere are excavating deep sites frequently. Safety from collapse is a requirement which cannot be ignored.

When are excavations dangerous?

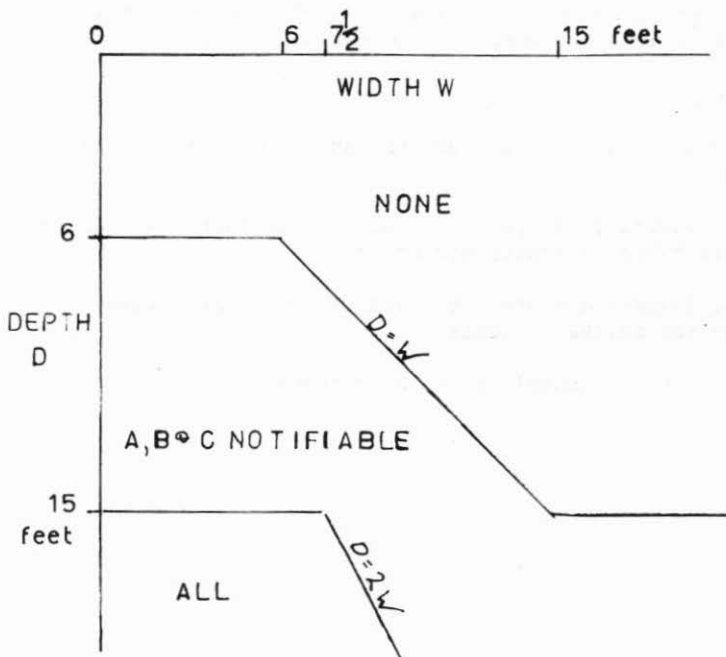
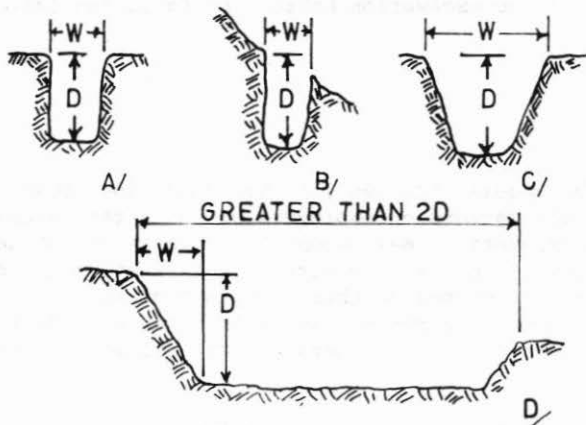
Archaeologists like to excavate with vertical faces. In cohesive (or "clayey") materials vertical faces have a limited height before they are liable to collapse. This depends on the soil strength; the stronger the higher. No engineer would make an assessment of a safe height without the material being excavated into being consistent over fairly wide areas and either having had prior experience with the type of material in excavations, or laboratory tests on samples. Deposits in an archaeological site cannot be relied upon to be consistent. The safety of a face could depend on soil which is entirely out of sight. Experience in one part of a site should not be thought to prove the whole site is safe.

Theoretically, trenches cut in sandy, gravelly or shelly materials should not stand vertically. When they do it is because the particles are interlocked in some way or the soil is slightly cohesive. In sands particularly this cohesion is caused by moisture and can vanish entirely as the face dries. Men have been killed in sand trenches which were only four feet deep.

As a rule, all vertical faces over five feet high must be regarded as dangerous.

If you must dig deep, it is suggested that the following be done:

1. If possible, keep the excavation twice as wide as it is deep. This gives a better chance of escape in the event of a collapse.
2. Keep spoil heaps, vehicles and crowds away from the tops of faces.
3. If you wish to go below a safe depth, record the section to that depth and then either: (a) timber and prop the walls, or (b) excavate the adjacent baulks and squares to the same depth before continuing.



Construction Regulations Notifiable Works

4. From the start of the excavation batter the faces and leave benches.
5. Obtain advice.

Teeth

The Construction Regulations 1961, issued under the Construction Act 1959, place certain obligations on employers who undertake excavations. Some archaeological excavations may become "notifiable works" under the Act. The limits to which one may go without notification are shown in the figure. Excavations exceeding these limits must be reported to the local branch of the Labour Department, who will often arrange for a safety inspector to call. He has powers to halt all work if he considers fit.

The Labour Department are very active in the safety field and give freely of advice and pamphlets giving details of safe practices. Their pamphlets on excavations are very easy to follow.

Some other hints

1. Don't excavate alone, or with all the able-bodied people in the one excavation.
2. Keep some excavating equipment on the site in such a way and place as it is available as rescue equipment.
3. Deaths in collapses are often by suffocation. Artificial respiration may revive a victim.
4. The patron saint of tunnellers is St Barbara.