



NEW ZEALAND
ARCHAEOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: R.J. Scarlett, Canterbury Museum, Christchurch.
EDITOR for this issue: Peter Gathercole, Keeper in Anthropology,
Otago Museum.

DEAR FELLOW-DIGGERS,

This issue is produced by Peter Gathercole and Otago. May it at least equal the standard set in the last by Sue Hirsh and Auckland. As Editor-in-chief, I felt really pleased with that issue. The idea of regional issues, which came from Jack Golson, is a very good one, and the Newsletter is at last becoming something nearer what I had hoped, for much better than when I had to do it all myself, because the people who promised me contributions did not produce them.

Last issue, I mentioned the work which Roger Green had done for and with us. This time I say, personally, and on behalf of all of us who know and love them, Haere ra and Godspeed to Roger and Kaye, who departed for the Pacific on June 10th. May they have a very successful time, and may they return to us before very long. We need them.

R. J. SCARLETT,
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF.

A NOTE FROM OTAGO:

This number is mainly concerned with Conference (fully reported by R.J.S.), but, following the pattern set by Sue Hirsh in the last issue, we have included as the other major item an account by Michael Trotter of his work in North Otago. Mr. Trotter is a farmer, and has been digging in the area for a number of years, his work being a model of careful excavation. In the South of the Province, Leslie Lockerbie has been excavating again at Pounawea (S 184/486975) and Papatowai (S 184/305865), as well as carrying out survey work at a number of other coastal sites nearby, (Tautuku, King's Rock, Pillan's Beach, Long Point, Jack's Bay, Hina Hina, False Island, Cannibal Bay and Sandy Bay). At Pounawea, he reports the recovering of interesting stratigraphic and cultural data similar to that already outlined to the Association. A like

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confirmation of existing conclusions was made at Papatowai, where a further section was excavated. This extended to a depth of about eight feet, and moa-bones and artifacts were obtained from clearly defined strata. Mr. Lockerbie will be well-known to members, and the importance of these sites in the study of the Moa-hunter Culture hardly needs stressing.

This is a time for considerable growth in Otago. The Museum extension is under way, Anthropology is being taught again in the University, and people are coming forward for our digging programme next summer, organised soon (we propose) as a proper group. While it would be a mistake, I feel, to make each issue of the Newsletter solely a progress report from each of the four centres, we hope to be able to tell of yet more interesting developments next year.

P.G.

MEMBERS DOINGS:

Twenty-two members of the Canterbury Museum Archaeological Club had a successful dig at Wairau Bar, under the leadership of Dr. R.S. Duff and Mr. Alan Eyles. This, I hope, will be reported fully in the Canterbury issue.

John Yaldwyn and Ron Scarlett spent a few happy days after Conference, excavating Moa and small bird bones from caves and rock-shelters, with our host, Bill Hartree, 30 miles from Napier. This, although not directly archaeological work, does impinge upon it, because Moa and other birds occur in some of our sites, and the more we learn of them, the better we are able to interpret the archaeological material.

R. J. S.

REPORT ON CONFERENCE:

This year's Conference at Rotorua was a good one. After registration and morning tea, in St. John's Hall, Dr. R.S. Duff spoke to us on Archaeology and the Maori People. He mentioned the explosive expansion of the

Association since its foundation in 1955, and the three previous successful Conferences at Auckland, Dunedin and Whanganui. There was a danger of members' enthusiasm outrunning their training, and therefore the purpose of the Conference to demonstrate field methods at the excavations at Pakotore, and to inculcate an archaeological ethic, was a good one. We did not wish the Association to spawn a horde of private curio-hunters in the old sense. He welcomed the action of the Council in requiring members to sign the ethical declaration.

After a hundred years of settlement, the pakeha majority was becoming aware of our history, and also of Maori history. At the present the pakeha was indeed actually reversing the process by which the first generation caused the Maori to be ashamed of their past, and seeking to undo the effects of the earlier repression, but in the meantime a great deal of Maori knowledge had been lost because of the earlier attitude. Typical of that old attitude was the prescription of the Maori language in public primary schools until the 1930's. Hence the present shortage of teachers of Maori.

A truly national New Zealand culture has not yet developed, but it will be distinctive, unique, and important to the extent that we allow the Maori genius to contribute to it. Archaeology is a particular aspect of our national life where the Maori genius will come into its own.

If archaeological sites are to be regarded as perhaps the most important part of the national heritage which will shape the New Zealand culture of tomorrow, it is obvious that they belong in a special and peculiar sense to the Maori people, and the Maori are entitled to protest if they are desecrated or wantonly interfered with by persons not acting in the public or national interest. At the same time, without the light thrown by archaeological investigation, Maori history remains short, distorted and confused.

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As an example of the vagueness of tradition, Dr. Duff dealt with the Moa. Until Owen in 1839 revealed its former existence, no Maori tradition volunteered information about it. After that, vague allusions to the Moa, Manuwhakatau or Kuranui were remembered, e.g. Ka ngaro i te ngaro a te moa (lost as the moa is lost); Te Koromiko ko rakau i tunua ai te moa (Koromiko is the firewood the moa was cooked with) and Te moa kai hau (the wind-eating moa).

From tradition alone it was impossible to tell whether the Moa was killed in pre-Fleet times in the North Island, which supplied most of the references, and Tregear plausibly argued that these references were to the domesticated fowl of Polynesia, still called Moa in the islands.

Without archaeology, we could have argued forever whether the Moa was or was not killed by man. Archaeology had, however, demonstrated that the Moa was hunted by man. Most of the sites known which proved this were in the South Island, but work at present in the North Island was attempting to demonstrate moa-hunting there.

It was more difficult to decide whether the Moa-hunter culture differed from the 18th century Maori, chiefly because of a false interpretation given to a doubtful tradition (very doubtful indeed! Editor) introduced about 1913, which said that the first settlers in New Zealand were Melanesians, variously known as Maruiwi, Mouriuri or Mooriori, who were subsequently killed by the Polynesians. Credit for scotching the Melanesian myth goes to Dr. H. D. Skinner of Otago Museum, who showed that the Chatham Is. (Mooriori) people were peculiarly Polynesian, with a culture allied to eastern, rather than western Polynesia. Dr. Skinner and Messrs. D. Teviotdale and L. Lockerbie had demonstrated that the rich

Otago pre-fleet sites contained no Melanesian elements, without stating whether the Otago Moa-Hunter sites contained a culture differing from the Otago culture of the late seventeen hundreds.

Jim Eyles' discovery in 1939 of the Wairau Bar site resolved this difficulty by revealing a culture sufficiently like 18th century Maori culture to be regarded as that of a people essentially similar to the post-fleet Maori, but different enough to be considered as ancestral and originating in pre-fleet times. This had been confirmed by radio-carbon dating, from Wairau Bar and Otago, which gave dates from the 11th to the 16th century A.D. Thus archaeology had opened up a new, long chapter in Maori prehistory. Numerous discoveries in the South Island have since confirmed the existence of these early Polynesian settlers, superb craftsmen, peaceful fishers and fowlers, with a highly mobile sea-born culture.

The Maori people need no longer be self-conscious about the pre-fleet Tangata whenua, now revealed as a pure Maori stock from the Hawaiki which sent all Polynesian migrations to New Zealand-Tahiti.

Dr. Duff then said that although he thought that post-fleet traditions should be treated with great respect, we could not expect pre-Fleet traditions to be still accurate. He then dealt with the extinct swan and eagle traditions, but emphasised that archaeology was not hostile to Maori tradition, its purpose being to fill out and amplify it.

He quoted Te Rangi Hiroa's remarks on the reconstructed Moa-hunter burial from Wairau Bar, exhibited at the Canterbury Museum, and then dealt with the Museum relations with the Rangitane people at Wairau pa, and their apprehensions when they heard of the great quantity of bones found at Wairau Bar. These were later allayed when they found, on a visit in 1950, that the bones were of moa, dog, seal, etc., and that the purpose of the excavations was to reveal a lost chapter in their ancestors' history. Since then, they have been notified of all digs, and have been firm friends to excavation.

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When Maori people become aware of the scientific and historic purpose of excavation, they can be counted on to approve and participate. They are making increasing use of Museums as repositories of the Taonga (Treasures), being able to get them for family use as required, and then returned for safe-keeping. Museums also safeguard canoes, meeting houses, etc., which might otherwise have perished. The sight of the Taonga, and the inspiration it gives the descendants of the makers, revives the tribal mana.

The recent Waitara swamp discoveries of stone-age carving was then discussed. Such things were an inspiration and challenge to the Maori people. Such hiding places should be opened up on their initiative and authority.

There are too few areas in our life where Maori people can express their native talent and leadership, being mainly confined to the Church, Teaching, Sport and Popular Music, but in joint archaeological projects a great field is opened up, with limitless possibilities for Maori leadership.

Mr. P.W. Gathercole, of the Otago Museum, followed Dr. Duff, speaking of Archaeology as a Scientific Discipline.

He said that the same archaeological principles were applied in England as they would be during the excavations at this Conference. New Zealand archaeologists could learn from mistakes made in England. Our recent Handbook was in advance of anything available in England. New Zealand archaeologists should not be apologetic about their work. They had also benefited in recent years from visits from American colleagues, and in some ways were more aware of the work being done in the New World, than were English archaeologists.

A discussion on ethics should be profitable. Our approach to a site should be ethical not only to the Maori people, but to our archaeological colleagues. We should remember that a site can only be dug once. All excavation should be carried out in an ethical fashion, and systematic excavation and recording is fundamental. We must see the overall significance of our work, for we do not have discipline for itself alone. Archaeological method is a technique for the recovery of vestigial remains, not just artifacts, but layers, stratigraphy, position, etc., in which they are found. We do not reconstruct, but construct an approach as nearly as possible to the original. To some extent, abstraction and thereby a projection of our own personality may creep in.

He dealt with circumstances conditioning survival of our evidence. We are limited historians, and cannot view pre-literate societies with the completeness that we can historic societies.

Mr. Gathercole illustrated his talk with slides, beginning with one of a stone building in Ida Valley, Central Otago, the history of which is known. Pointing out the various materials of which it is made, he said that the approach to it was essentially the same as to archaeological evidence.

The succeeding slides, from New Zealand and overseas sites, illustrated the theme of Mr. Gathercole's talk, and drove home his points.

The afternoon session began with a talk on a recent "excavation" by Mr. Frank Davis, also illustrated with slides. This alleged excavation, beginning with references to testing of the site with posthole borers, then showing a slide of a muddled trench, through a shell heap, then slides of strata tilted diagonally, while the interpretation was in terms of an artificial horizontal horizon, soon caused some of us who know the work of Frank, and Wal Ambrose, who was alleged to have taken part in it, to

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suspect a very dark-complexioned gentleman in the wood-pile. It was, of course, a hoax, designed to test archaeological knowledge, and to show some of the things we should not do. I think, from comments made, that some people were taken in. I'm not sure that the experiment was a success, but, anyway, congratulations to Frank for keeping a straight face during the whole performance.

After that little amusement, we had the final talk by Mr. Jack Golson. Jack began by saying that as we had only two days on the site, we must be clear as to what we were doing. A whole gamut of effort was possible to us as archaeologists, from full-scale to week-end excavations. We must remember basic principles:

1) We must remember that our sites were part of New Zealand, particularly Polynesian history. 2) We must be as detailed and careful as possible in our work. 3) Choice of dig. Why choose a particular site?

Excavation was the only way of investigating the past, where there was no historical record, and all we had was material left by people in the last. 4) Why dig? From curiosity? To find if there were Moa-hunters in the North Island? To find the relationship between Moa-hunter and later Maori? The traditions etc., of many later pa sites were known. Excavation could reveal how they were built, how long they were occupied, and so on. The choice of site depended on what we wanted to find out, and its place in the total scheme. We must also cut our coats to suit our cloth.

Jack then illustrated his theme by a number of slides, saying that not all questions would necessarily be answered by one site, and that unless an artifact was properly excavated in its cultural context, from an archaeological viewpoint it had little value. For example, Wairau Bar placed Moa-hunter material in its proper context, and our excavations mean much more because of it. Different things, in the same context, supported each other as evidence. Cyril Fox had demonstrated early Bronze Age religions largely from robbed barrows. Soil analysis, etc., was a great help.

A recent excavation by Roger Green had no artifacts, but nevertheless told us a lot concerning the climatic sequence of the site.

Jack then dealt with the reasons for choosing Pakotore for the Conference dig. There were many things on it, middens, embankments, possible house-sites, postholes, showing in the road-cutting, a dated ash-shower, etc.

Methods of excavation were then illustrated by further slides. He made the point that in many sites full excavation was impracticable, and modern practice was to leave some portions for future workers with new and refined techniques. In the discussion following, Mr. Golson and Dr. Duff debated the merits of horizontal and vertical excavation, and Ron Scarlett demonstrated the advantages of vertical excavation in the non-archaeological site of the Pyramid Valley Moa swamp. (I hasten to add that I prefer the horizontal approach to an archaeological site).

In the evening, members of the Conference were given a welcome in the Ohinemutu Whare-runanga by the Ngati-Whakaue Maori people. Mr. P.T. Rika and Mr. Dan Kingi welcomed us, the Rev. Manu Bennett acted as Interpreter. Mr. Bruce Palmer, our then President, Dr. Duff and Roger Green, the first two speaking in fluent Maori, spoke on behalf of the Association. Mr. Kingi said that the younger people - "the new net" - of the Maori, were those who would benefit most from the work of archaeology.

In the course of Mr. Palmer's speech, he read letters written several years before the formation of our Association, in which Sir Apirana Ngata discussed the future of archaeology in New Zealand. Dr. Duff included a traditional chant in his talk. Roger Green spoke of his work in the United States, and the attitude of people there to archaeology, and drew an analogy with N.Z. Conditions.

A feature of the reception was the singing by St. Faith's Youth Group, under the leadership of Mr. H. Winiata, and Soloist Miss Martha Wharerahi. These smiling, happy young people who had just returned from a big weekend gathering,

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interspersed the programme with many waiata, very gracefully performed, despite the coldness of the night, which, as they wore traditional costume, must have affected them considerably. They added greatly to the success of the evening, and were much appreciated.

In the concluding speeches, Mr. Kingi and Mr. Rika spoke of their pleasure in welcoming us, and their appreciation of our attitude towards our studies, and the care we wished to exercise in our work.

The next two days, fortunately fine ones, were spent excavating at Pakotero. Some of the Auckland members, Jack Golson, Sue Hirsh and others, and some of the local people had spent the weekend before Conference pegging out the site, turving a few squares, and so on. I won't say much about the actual digging - some nice house sites were uncovered - as work is still to be carried on by the local group, and no doubt a report will be given later. We were fortunate to have two soil scientists with us to assist with the interpretation of the volcanic ash showers. I do wish, however, to state two things: 1) The preparatory work was excellent. When I first saw Pakotero, and the pegged sites, early on Wednesday morning, I was very greatly impressed indeed. 2) It was amply demonstrated that with a sufficiently large site, over sixty self-disciplined people could do a good dig without getting in each other's way, wandering around, etc. It was a very happy time, and I think most of us learned a lot. On Wednesday evening Roger Green gave an excellent lecture to a joint meeting with the Rotorua Branch of the Royal Society, entitled "From Prehistory to History in the American South-west." Friday morning was given to the Annual General Meeting, which this time I shall not report, as details will be circulated anyway.

In conclusion, we owe much to the Auckland folk who came down early, and to Don Stafford and the local group who prepared so efficiently for the Conference.

R. J. S.

A NEW MEMBER'S IMPRESSION OF THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE:

As a new member of the Association with little beyond the brand of initiation, a blister on my trowelling and shovelling hand, I felt hardly eligible to attend the Annual Conference at Rotorua. It was, therefore, with some trepidation that I looked forward to mingling with experts on the subject and the thought of discussing Dinornis maximus over morning tea. However I was already a confirmed victim of this Digging Disease and delighted to learn that one of the main items on the programme would be a demonstration excavation at the old Arawa pa site of Pakotore. Members with hazy ideas on recording such as I had would be introduced to the method, technique and ethics of excavation.

A day of lectures were an enlightening "warm up" to the dig. What little knowledge I possessed of archaeology enabled me to doubt the methods employed by Wal Ambrose and Frank Davis when the latter gave a poker-faced description of an independent dig they had carried out. The casual mention of 'testing with post hole borers' confirmed my suspicions. Like many other newcomers present I dare not question the word of these veterans, at the same time feeling puzzled about the strange code of archaeological ethics they were practising. Squirring with embarrassment when the awkward questions began to fly, I was immeasurably relieved to discover it was a grand hoax.

The welcome at the Ohinemutu Meeting House was most impressive - the Maori Elders seemed delighted to be addressed in their native tongue by two of our Pakeha members. I was amused at the subtleness with which one of the Maori Elders good humouredly referred to the word "digging" suggesting that perhaps "unravelling" might be a word less likely to arouse the suspicion of the Maori people.

The highlight of the proceedings was the dig at Pakotore and those present must have been impressed with the organisation preceding the two days excavation. To the

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passing motorist the site must have resembled a Giles Cartoon - dozens of people engrossed in their neatly cut squares and busily turfing, scraping, digging, filling and emptying barrows, climbing cabbage trees to photograph proceedings. Everyone clothed in an amazing variety of garments for protection against the wind and threatening rain. Fortunately the weather was fair and we relaxed in sunshine when the gong rang for lunch breaks with our host, Don Stafford, ladelling out hot tea from his steaming Heath Robinson stove. Groups that had been scattered over various parts of the pa site enthusiastically compared their excavations - the unusual changes in soil colour and the much envied post hole.

The intrigued visitors who ventured on to the site were escorted on a tour and enlightened with the interpretations of the volcanic evidence revealed. No one lost patience with the hundredth curious person to peer in from an ever increasing height to ask "Found anything yet?", and back came the polite but far from reassuring reply .. "Well, we really didn't expect to find anything .. This is only an exercise in excavation method..." etc. etc. I have the uneasy feeling that more than a few visitors climbed the stile to their vehicles with a puzzled glance in the direction of the archaeologists who didn't expect to find anything.

There must have been many people who considered our activities strange, including the hotel guests who raised startled eyebrows over their "after dinner" coffer cups as we made a windswept entrance, trailing Kaharoa Ash behind us and hurrying to change before dinner was declared "off".

The first day of the Conference had seemed bewildering with endless introductions to Members, no longer strangers on the day of departure. My last impression was that those who had worked so hard to make the Conference a success could be well assured that everyone had gained a great deal of knowledge and enjoyment.