



NEW ZEALAND
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NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER



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N.Z.A.A. SEMINAR, NELSON, MARCH 1976. A REPORT

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The N.Z.A.A. held a seminar on the direction and future organisation of archaeology in New Zealand at Kaiteriteri, near Nelson, on 13-16 March. The discussions were sufficiently interesting to be worth reporting at some length.

INTRODUCTION: THE POSITION OF THE LEGISLATION

Originally the seminar was expected to be a fairly concrete discussion on how to organise archaeology in New Zealand once the Antiquities Act and Historic Places Amendment Act came into effect on the first of April this year. It had been expected that at least some funds would be provided to help the Trust to carry out the new tasks created by the Historic Places Amendment Act (particularly the job of setting up a national register of sites, controlling the issue of permits for excavation, scheduling sites and inspecting or excavating sites threatened by destruction). It had also been expected that some Museums would receive extra funding to help them administer the registration of artefacts required by the Antiquities Act.

While it is clear that nothing can stop the Acts coming into force on 1 April, it is by no means clear whether any extra support whatever will be provided for the trust or Museums. The outgoing Labour Government, at a late stage, did allot extra staff for the Trust but the National Cabinet may not accept this. Further, no-one knows whether Mr Muldoon intends to seek any new amendments to the legislation, particularly on the sensitive issue of landowners or developers being required, under certain special circumstances, to contribute towards the cost of archaeological work. Further, Mr Muldoon's actions on the superannuation issue make it clear that *de facto* emasculation of legislation is not beyond possibility.

As a result of not knowing which way the cat might jump, one initial impetus for the seminar was somewhat dissipated and, as a consequence, a number of other issues emerged on the future of archaeology and the N.Z.A.A. These turned out to be of great interest.

Nevertheless, initially the discussion revolved around possible courses of action that the N.Z.A.A. should take, depending on what the Cabinet decided. To give shape to this discussion, it was phrased in terms of what the N.Z.A.A. would like its representative to say to the next meeting of the Historic Places Trust. This was decided because the meeting was unanimously agreed that the Trust should remain the central organisation dealing with archaeology in New Zealand in the future.

It was agreed that if there was any threat of altering the legislation in any major way, the N.Z.A.A. should once again go back to square one and use every political channel possible and obtain all appropriate publicity to oppose any move away from the kind of legislation it had sought and largely achieved. In particular, it would seem appropriate to direct attention at the National Party caucus, urging support for the principles of the legislation, pointing out, among other things, that both political parties had agreed to the principle(s) of the new Antiquities and Historic Places legislation when it was debated last year, and had argued only over details. Essentially the principle at stake is that the State recognise its responsibilities towards its archaeological cultural heritage. While the economic situation might restrict funding, this is no reason to withdraw the legislation that sets out the State's responsibilities. Until 1 April, New Zealand's lack of site protection legislation put this country somewhere near the bottom of the list of Third World countries in terms of such legislation. Now apparently we cannot provide resources (staff and money) for what is recognised world-wide as the responsibility of the State.

In the event of the next possibility, of the legislation coming into force but no extra funding being provided for the Trust, the meeting urged the Trust to accept the situation as better than having no legislation, and promised the full support of the N.Z.A.A. in helping the Trust to do the best it could with what facilities it had. It was felt that the introduction of the legislation represents a major gain for the N.Z.A.A. and nothing should be done that might jeopardise this.

Probably the most lamentable effect of lack of funds, which the N.Z.A.A. regrets most of all, is that the Trust would not be in a position to start on the vital task of the major upgrading of the N.Z.A.A. central site record file into a National Register of sites. The Trust would have to continue mainly as an organising body that managed to get most of its work done by contracting out. In particular, it is clear that the Trust would not be in a position to undertake salvage excavations on any scale and should publicise this whenever a case arises. Finally, the Trust will not be able to make much progress

towards the scheduling of sites.

One requirement of the new legislation that could however be met without extra funding is the issuing of permits to excavate, and Roger Green outlined the procedure that the Trust plans to set up for this purpose; the Archaeology Committee of the Trust will be the body that reviews applications for permits, and makes decisions; however, the full Trust Committee will have the final say. After Roger Green had outlined this procedure several people said that they considered that the provision of the power of veto for the full committee was unnecessary and inappropriate; apparently however the mind of the Trust is made up.

When considering applications for permits, the Archaeology Committee will require, among other things, a description of the institutional resources available to the applicant for the fieldwork and subsequent analyses; a clear statement of the reasons for wanting to excavate; and a clear description of the type and size of operation envisaged.

No-one at the meeting questioned the desirability of a permit system. Indeed, it is clear that power to control or prevent undesirable digging is one of the main things for which the N.Z.A.A. and the Trust have been fighting.

In the event of the legislation remaining in force but without provision of extra staff, the meeting suggested that the Trust might pick some opportunity to test the legislation and try to raise public support for the provision of extra staff for the Trust. Such a test case might be an important site which was going to be destroyed, but which the Trust maintained it could not excavate because of lack of staff. Such test cases would have to be chosen very carefully to make sure that they did not rebound on the Trust, but they could well crop up.

It was generally held that the operation of the Historic Places Amendment Act was the most important issue to discuss. It is hoped that the Antiquities Act will be able to be operated using the existing facilities of the Museums and the Department of Internal Affairs.

In the course of the discussion, a number of people reminded the meeting of how much had already been achieved without the legislation. Some government departments, particularly Forestry, have incorporated into their thinking and planning an awareness of archaeological sites and the desirability of preserving them if possible. In the Auckland area a great deal of co-operation has occurred and channels of

communication established between local bodies and archaeologists. In addition, some of the scientific government departments recognise the importance of archaeology and regularly co-operate with archaeologists. This kind of achievement cannot be undone.

SITE RECORDING

This topic probably received more discussion than any other in the course of the weekend. It was agreed after some debate that site recording was still a major priority for the N.Z.A.A. and the Trust at least for the next few years.

It was pointed out the Trust will not have any legal authority over site surveys, which can be carried out without permits provided they do not involve any excavation. The Trust will continue to be able to impose its own terms on people it itself is financing but cannot prevent outside organisations from hiring who they want to do site surveys; however it is expected and hoped that most requests for site surveys will be channelled through the Trust, and the legislation gives the Trust the power, under certain circumstances, to require a survey to be done to its own specifications. Nevertheless, a situation of people bidding for site surveying contracts is not inconceivable, and would have a number of regrettable aspects.

The meeting recommended that training programmes in site recording be set up (in some ways reviving an old N.Z.A.A. and local society activity); these programmes should be available to, and indeed actively solicit, amateurs as well as trying to achieve a higher and more uniform standard of recording among the professionals (or those students who had been funded by the Historic Places Trust). It was suggested that government departments be notified of these programmes and encouraged to send people to them.

A letter to the meeting from some Auckland students was read which, among other things, complained of the lack of research orientation in N.Z. archaeology generally, and particularly in the site-recording programmes funded by the Trust. As a result, funds are not channelled towards research-oriented archaeology. The reaction to this complaint was fairly vigorous, various people arguing that any archaeological work undertaken without some research problem in mind would be a waste of time and effort; that there was nothing to stop anyone using their site recording for research, and that indeed students should be encouraged to think about the implications of what they found and should be encouraged to incorporate this thinking in their reports to the Trust; it is hoped that reports to the Trust will become better and fuller through time and that the recorders will not limit themselves to simply copying the kind of reports produced from previous surveys. It was suggested that the Trust might consider various ways to encourage

its site recorders to contribute to research, for example by concentrating each year's efforts on neighbouring areas that should produce comparable results, or, conversely, different areas to see how different the results were. In effect, then, each summer's site recording could be organised so as to try to solve some specific problems, or test particular theories.

Further, it was suggested that the Trust might divert some of its funds for site recording to various kinds of analysis rather than sending out more and more expeditions to more and more areas. Examples of the kind of analytical work that the Trust could initiate are: (1) work on the central file, or regional files that need reorganisation; (2) rationalisation and/or standardisation of site recording procedures in the hope of ensuring a higher and more uniform standard of site recording; (3) a review of an area like the South Kaipara peninsula which has been the focus of several site recording projects, to summarise and pull together the results of the different surveys.

There was general support for a suggestion that 'de-briefing' sessions should be held in the main centres for all the people involved in each summer's site recording to meet, discuss their work, compare results and make recommendations.

There was a complaint that the published literature provided few stimulating ideas about what one can do with the data gathered by site surveys; there are few particularly vigorous analyses published. It is hoped that some efforts currently in hand might provide such a stimulus, indicating problems to investigate, appropriate research designs to carry them out and kinds of analyses to apply to the data.

It was suggested that the Trust, or site recorders, would do well to follow the example of Michael Trotter who has written up the results of his Marlborough Sounds site surveys for the people of the area and made copies available to them. While there clearly is the danger of some sites being destroyed as a result of their location being known, the meeting considered that this was more than compensated for by the goodwill engendered by such reports and by the boost the reports give to most landowners' appreciation of, or pride in, their own sites. On a more general level, the Trust was urged to make more efforts to get the results of its site surveys published.

The question was raised whether filekeepers were obliged to accept all site record forms, regardless of their standard. In the discussion following this, it was evident that for many areas we are now past the stage where any information is better than no useful

contribution. However, it is important that this should not deter anyone from making site records, since in most cases even a minimum of description is useful.

The meeting considered the question of whether to issue certificates to site recorders based on their successful completion of a number of required exercises. However it was felt that such a procedure would be more trouble than it was worth. In the case of people applying to the Historic Places Trust for funds to survey sites, they could continue to be evaluated on their experience including, if appropriate, attendance at the site recording training sessions which it is proposed to set up.

It was suggested that one advantage of a certification scheme would be that site recorders could reassure landowners by showing them their certificates. However the meeting considered that it was sufficient for the Trust to continue its practice of giving site recorders employed by the Trust a letter of introduction to landowners. If any other individual wants such a letter, he can write to the Trust and ask for it; if the Trust approves, it will send out an official letter of introduction, specifying the area to be surveyed, the dates of the survey and the kind of work to be undertaken.

Throughout the discussion, and especially in view of the government's economic policies, it became obvious that regional file-keepers of site records will remain irreplaceable and increasingly essential kingpins of the whole system. There is absolutely no prospect of replacing them by official, paid positions and they continue to represent the N.Z.A.A. at the regional local level, which is probably the most important level at which the N.Z.A.A. operates.

Discussion therefore centred around what might be done to improve the lot of regional filekeepers, particularly the heroic volunteers who were not supported by a museum or equivalent organisation. It was agreed that where possible museums (or the local bodies that run them) should be encouraged to see site recording as among their responsibilities; Roger Green suggested that while asking museums to employ full-time archaeologists might be crying for the moon, it might nevertheless be feasible to obtain some funds for part-time work on site recording and filing. When possible or advantageous, the site record file should be attached in some way to the local museum, since it is to local museums that the majority of archaeological enquiries are usually first directed.

Probably the most positive suggestion of all came from Garry Law. He suggested that, in some areas, it would be sensible to strengthen activities at the local level by setting up regional groups to plan the

management of their local archaeology. Such groups might include the filekeepers, museum employees and any local archaeologist or professional who has worked in the area. These regional groups might be able to set up positive programmes for their area; they could establish priorities for sites in need of protection and actively try to obtain protection for important sites; they could attempt to increase and publicise knowledge of archaeology in the area; decide priorities in research, and co-ordinate effort to try to solve leading problems in the area; they could set up specific objectives such as areas that need to be surveyed, or sites that need rescuing or inspection; they could try to anticipate any large development projects in their area; they could try to integrate the resources of museums, schools (especially their laboratories), community colleges, universities (if any), etc. In effect, then, the whole idea is to concentrate and apply the energies and principles of the N.Z.A.A. at a local level.

Such regional committees might be most useful in the areas that are archaeologically least known, such as Hawkes Bay, Southland or Wanganui. However they might also be very useful in other, better-known regions. In Auckland such a group already exists informally, and elsewhere this role might be already adequately filled by local archaeological groups. Nevertheless it is hoped that such groups will be set up and involve the N.Z.A.A. at a much more local level than it has hitherto operated at.

One further bit of news about site recording is that a report on a trial computerisation of site record files will appear soon in an issue of the Newsletter.

EXCAVATION

A number of people expressed the view that excavation, both for research or rescue (insofar as they can or should be distinguished) should be the Trust's (and hence N.Z.A.A.'s) priority. The argument was that it may be necessary to excavate an increasing number of sites if more and more are threatened by destruction; in addition, excavation has traditionally been what archaeologists do best and the level at which (? most) progress has been made. However these arguments did not carry the meeting, where it was generally held that site recording was still the immediate priority.

Roger Green argued that archaeologists should not excavate sites purely because they were going to be destroyed, and perhaps because funds were available to run a dig. In the long run such activities would merely burden the archaeologists under a greater load of reports to be written up; this load should at least consist of important sites.

If more funds for excavation became available under the legislation, the Trust would have to face a choice between, on the one hand, a few well-chosen and financed projects, which lead to publication, that enhance our understanding of New Zealand prehistory and, on the other hand, a host of largely 'rescue' excavations of no particular immediate importance and hence ones that are less likely to be written up fully. Obviously in this situation the Trust must opt for projects that are informative, that represent the best choices in terms of the overall management of archaeological resources, and that will lead to the best kinds of reports. Certainly there is no value whatsoever in an excavation that produces no report at all.

As with site recording, therefore, the meeting felt that excavation without any clear purpose or sense of problem was a waste of everyone's effort. Conversely, it is clear that archaeologists must look at their archaeological heritage as a resource to be managed, and hence inevitably direct excavation efforts towards sites that are threatened rather than ones likely to survive. In particular, sites such as swamp pa and Archaic middens are very precious, few in number, and few have survived intact; the excavation of such sites must not be undertaken lightly.

The meeting considered that there is a shortage of people who are able to run excavations, and urged the universities to do more to provide students with this kind of training. In addition, there is always a need for more trained excavators. Roger Green outlined the history of excavations at Hamlin's Hill, Auckland, and suggested that this type of project was a good way of providing the necessary training not only in excavation, but also in the running of, and reporting on, a dig. Hamlin's Hill is a large open settlement that has been gradually destroyed by commercial earth removal. It was initially investigated by Janet Davidson of the Auckland Institute and Museum. Since then a long succession of Auckland students have worked on the site, and the cumulative result of all this effort has been the exposure of the plan of a large area of settlement and a series of published reports. The site has thus yielded useful answers to problems, as well as serving as a handy training ground over the years. Doug Sutton suggested that an alternative training ground might be 'reconstructed' sites where settlements were built experimentally, to provide a mock-site for excavation by students.

Another lesson of Hamlin's Hill is the value of a new form of organisation or hierarchy for running such digs. After the first investigation, either Miss Davidson, or a member of the university staff, accepted ultimate responsibility for the excavation, kept an eye on what happened and discussed with the excavators the problems

that came up. However, the supervisor was not directly involved in most of the actual excavation which was directed and carried out by students. This is in contrast to the traditional excavation where the director alone controls operations, participating in the whole dig and in the analysis and writing up of the report at the end. This delegation of responsibility seems to be a useful approach that permits more excavation to be done with access at all times to more experienced personnel.

The question of standards of excavation was raised both in the context of the Trust issuing permits to excavate, and in the context of feasibility of providing training and hence certification for excavators. However, it was generally held that the Trust could be relied on to maintain appropriate standards through its power to issue or not to issue permits to excavate. It was thought reasonable that the Trust would at least require preliminary reports by a certain date from people authorised to excavate. The question of certification was dropped on the grounds that it might clash with the useful powers of discretion that the Trust will hold over issuing permits. Nevertheless, Doug Sutton suggested that a concrete discussion of standards and minimum requirements for excavation would be a useful exercise.

Subsequently discussion concentrated on what was held to be the most important but most neglected area of archaeology in New Zealand: what happens to the material after the excavation. It is at this stage that most archaeology in New Zealand has failed.

One aspect of this is laboratory analysis. Here even the universities are fighting a hard battle to obtain the necessary facilities. It was pointed out that people without institutional affiliation were seldom in a position to carry out the types of analysis that are now considered basic to the completion of an archaeological project, although Aidan Challis pointed out that secondary schools often had the required equipment and facilities (which were often under-used, but usually jealously protected!). It is clear that this aspect of archaeology is the one that needs most effort by the universities at present, and is a serious limiting factor for amateur archaeologists.

The issue of conservation facilities for finds was raised briefly but not discussed at length. It remains a high priority. Auckland University has organised a training course in conservation methods for museum personnel for July this year.

Then there was a long discussion on the status of records such as notebooks, photographs, catalogues, unpublished manuscripts, etc. which are as important as the actual finds that come from an excavation (and indeed are essential if the finds are to be of any value). Roger Green pointed out that it is every archaeologist's obligation to make his results available to others; and this obligation extends not merely to published reports but to all other documents. There is a range of degrees of availability from reports published in journals to reports circulated privately, to microfilm reproductions, to material available at museums, public institutions or even private homes. The meeting discussed which levels were appropriate for different evidence, and how availability could best be achieved.

The meeting strongly affirmed the principle that records sufficient for a re-interpretation of an excavation should be available to the public and should not be considered private property. Clearly this need not extend to every photograph or note taken, provided an adequate record is in existence. It was also pointed out that archaeologists should make arrangements in their wills for the disposal of records such as notebooks and slides, since history is full of cases of previous documents lost or destroyed through the ignorance of succeeding generations.

The final aspect considered was the safe lodging of the finds; it was pointed out that some local museums are not suitable for keeping valuable material, yet the importance of local museums cannot be denied. The Trust was urged to investigate the position of finds under the new legislation, and arrange a standard procedure with the Department of Internal Affairs to avoid possible ambiguities and to ensure that finds are directed to suitable repositories.

There was also some discussion on the problems of museums in storing large amounts of material. It clearly is important that museums should keep a sample of such finds as bones, shells, soil samples, etc. from important sites, but this could lead to storage problems. Suggestions, some of them light-hearted, were made that it may become necessary to store finds in old mine shafts or even to re-bury them on the site! Stuart Park reported that the problem was recognised by Museums, but not resolved.

HISTORICAL ARCHAEOLOGY

The meeting recommended that the N.Z.A.A. actively involve itself in the field of historic archaeology, and should devote a major part of the 1977 conference to this topic. There was a very strong feeling that this should be done very carefully, ensuring that

(1) attention was focussed on the archaeological investigation of historic sites and events, rather than a more general interest in early history; (2) that the standards of excavation and analysis applied to prehistoric archaeology should be maintained equally in the field of historic archaeology; (3) that historic archaeology should concern itself with the general problems of archaeology, anthropology, and the history of man rather than the particularities of historical events in which it is so easy to be led by the abundance of information available for the historic period. The meeting urged that a group be set up by the N.Z.A.A. to plan ahead for the 1977 conference and attempt to provide at this conference examples of the kind of investigations it would like to see carried out. Great enthusiasm was expressed for the stimulus which it was hoped that historic archaeology might provide for prehistoric studies; examples suggested were studies of bird extinction in the historic period; studies of colonisation and adaptation by the first European settlers; studies of artefact typology and evolution in the historic period; investigation of the impact of new technology among the Maoris, and many other processes of obvious interest to the prehistoric archaeologist. Generally it is absurd for the New Zealand archaeologist to lose interest after 1769 (or 1820 or whatever); the continuities from prehistory to history demand attention.

The question of marine archaeology and shipwrecks was discussed and it was pointed out that the present legal position is confused with an awkward division of authority between the Historic Places Trust and the Receiver of Wrecks of the Ministry of Transport.

OTHER DISCUSSIONS

Among the many topics that emerged in discussion, the following are worthy of note.

1. Amateur members

The meeting continually regretted that there were relatively few amateurs present, and expressed its hope that the amateur membership of the N.Z.A.A. should be encouraged in every way, and hoped that amateurs would come to conferences and say what it was they wanted from the Association. On many occasions the meeting was conscious of debating issues of interest to professional archaeologists only.

2. Science in Archaeology

Bruce McFadgen continues to wave the banner for a more scientific archaeology and hopes that in universities other than Otago and Auckland

the disciplines of archaeology will be taught in science faculties, on the grounds that there are enough anthropological/Arts archaeologists already.

3. What the professionals are writing

A forthcoming issue of the Newsletter will list all the more popular accounts of New Zealand prehistory that have come out over the last few years.

4. The role of part-time ("avocational") archaeologists

Roger Green initiated discussion on whether more and more professional archaeology could be done by people who had a 9-5 job doing something else.

5. Archaeologists in Government Departments

There was a discussion whether it was a good idea for archaeologists to be employed by government departments. Although there was some disagreement, many people felt that this was not a good idea since such an archaeologist might easily become isolated from the archaeological community (a common experience of many people) and might be less able to act to protect sites than someone outside that department; hence it might be better to have two more Trust archaeologists than two archaeologists in different government departments. There is also a danger that government departments might employ archaeologists only as a token gesture and as a way of avoiding some of the legal restrictions on their activities.

CONCLUSION

The meeting was a very good experience for all those who attended, and this was undoubtedly helped by the beautiful surroundings, the 24-hour living-together (so that discussions could continue in pubs, showers, on the beach, etc.) and the opportunity for relatively unstructured discussion which meant that any ideas that came up had an opportunity to be aired and overhauled by discussion. While the large numbers attending annual conferences may rule out this kind of discussion there, such a situation is ideal for smaller meetings to discuss particular issues.

What came out most strongly over the weekend was that the N.Z.A.A. had fully re-emerged as an organisation in its own right, doing a job that no-one else can do. The N.Z.A.A. had seemed to be merging gradually, at its top levels anyway, into the Historic Places Trust. The new situation makes it clear that the N.Z.A.A. will have a vital

role to play for years to come.

Many thanks are due to Nigel and Kathy Prickett and the Nelson members who organised this very successful seminar.

POSTSCRIPT

In writing up this report I have been fairly arbitrary about mentioning names. I do not intend to give the impression that the only people who spoke were Roger Green, Doug Sutton, etc. This was not the case, and many others participated equally or more; their contributions have emerged in the report under the guise of "the meeting felt that...."