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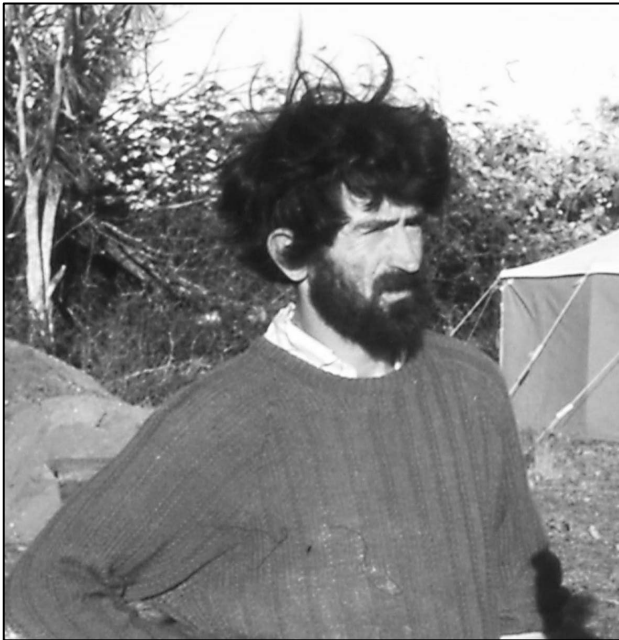
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Obituary

Leslie (Les) Montague Groube (1938-2018)

Les was born in Hawkes Bay and attended Napier Boys High School excelling at art and debating. He moved to Auckland in 1956 where he attended Elam School of Fine Arts as well as starting a BA, coincidentally taking Anthropology 1 the same year as Jim McKinlay. Jim remembers him sitting at the back taking notes with a dip nib pen. On his art he remarked in later years he was good at it – as good as his now famous contemporaries – and would have succeeded if he had elected to stay with it. Perhaps the strict formalism of the then curriculum then dissuaded him. Rather anthropology and archaeology took him. In Auckland he was taught by Jack Golson and had his first involvement in fieldwork there.



Les as co-director (with Peter Bellwood) of the excavation at Otakanini pa in 1968 (Garry Law).

Les was involved in the documentation and pilot testing of the early site recording scheme which emerged in a 1958 handbook by Golson and Green.

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Jim McKinlay remembers the pilot testing field trip to South Kaipara Head, including Les and Wal Ambrose where the procedures were trialled. Site recording continued as a particular interest and he was an active practitioner, as well as an engaged filekeeper of NZAA's Auckland file. He completed his MA with a thesis that explored the early historical records of Maori looking at the evidence for settlement patterns and building function. It demonstrated that the received 'Elsdon Best' view on these was from a later period, not that apparent in the late 18th century. It began a period of intense interest in the archaeological potential of pa.

Les held lectureships successively in the Anthropology Departments of the Universities of Otago and Auckland from 1963 to 1968. He was influential there with students, particularly in small classes and with those he induced into fieldwork – field schools were not a requirement or a credit then, but Les' digs, including displays of Cossack dancing, were memorable, as was a brief foray into acting, at Dunedin's Globe Theatre. He excavated at two of Otago's rare pa and at the Paeroa Pa in the Bay of Islands mapped by the French, that map being an even rarer thing – the French not being so continuously afflicted by romanticism as the British. Unfortunately the frequent site reconstruction – now known to be typical – had eliminated any direct relationship between the archaeology and the map. In Auckland Waioneke, Otakanini and Orakei pa received his attention and he had ambitions to tackle even Maungakiekie – One Tree Hill. New Zealand did not constrain him and he undertook fieldwork in Tonga, resulting in a masterly reappraisal of the Tongan archaeological sequence. In this period his contribution in written and conference papers was substantial. Les was a big picture thinker and dealt with the important issues of the day seeking new insights.

Motor vehicles were an indulgence Les partook to the limit of his means. One time in Auckland it was an elderly red Mark VII Jaguar. Rosemary resisted being characterised by the car. Service station attendant: 'It's a shame to have the dog on the leather seats' – Rosemary, 'Oh we only keep this car for the dog.' In the Auckland department where some of the staff still sported gowns while lecturing Les stood out as completely unconcerned with appearance. You took him exactly as you found him and certainly some found the unkempt appearance too much. A clipping from the Otago University student paper *Critic* of 1966 shows a more indulgent view by others. It reads: 'We didn't tell you about the Les Groube Hair Style Contest for Anthropologists did we? There was only one contestant, the award being duly presented.' Les could be charming and generous, his rationality could extend to determination about matters on which he held a strong opinion. He could be

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dismissive on points that he considered had already been resolved, uninteresting or had already been aired sufficiently. Evolution as a fact rather than a theory was one example. He lectured very much as he wrote, so the logic of arguments was often very apparent in his verbal reasoning, as if it was already in published form. Indeed when reading his words, those who experienced his lectures can almost hear him speaking.

Les' contribution to New Zealand archaeology is remembered in the NZAA Groube Fieldwork Award - awarded biennially. At its inauguration John Coster wrote an appreciation of Les which established the link to the award (Coster 1997). He was a council member secretary and a vice president for NZAA in the late 1960s.

Les left New Zealand in 1969 and his career over the next 20 years took him to Canberra, Dorset, Port Moresby and Cambridge in research, public archaeology and lecturing positions. His commitment to fieldwork continued unabated in those roles. His publications occasionally returned to New Zealand (as did he) but also broadened into an interest in past disease and their effect on human evolution. His occasional application of mathematics to problems of prehistory showed a sometimes baffling erudition.

Les died in Brittany, France, where he had lived for more than quarter of a century. He was pre-deceased by his wife Rosemary and is survived by their daughter Kristin. A full bibliography will appear in Foss Leach and Helen Leach's appreciation – to appear elsewhere.

Garry Law, John Coster – with thanks to Jim McKinlay and to Foss Leach and Helen Leach who kindly shared their draft obituary.

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Foss Leach and Garry Law