



NEW ZEALAND  
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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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## REVIEWS

**Phil Moore and Neville Ritchie. *Coromandel Gold: A Guide to the Historic Goldfields of Coromandel Peninsula*. Colour photography by Lloyd Homer. Dunmore Press. 1996. 197 pp. \$44.95**

I have had no difficulty understanding the excitement and romance of the lure of gold. However, beyond some enjoyable (unsuccessful) attempts at panning, the technology of larger scale extraction and its ruins and relics has failed to kindle more than a perfunctory interest for me. That was in the past. Why the turnaround? The answer lies in this guidebook to the old goldfields of Coromandel Peninsula. To start with the cover took my fancy, featuring a dramatic photo of a mine tunnel in a scenic setting and a cutout of a prospector peering expectantly into his gold pan, both set on a black background. The promise offered by the cover is fully kept by the content.

Rather than presenting a comprehensive assessment of the goldfields of the Coromandel the authors' primary intent has been to provide a practical guide to the exploration of former mining areas to enable visitors to experience first hand their enchantment and atmosphere. Of the more than 16 separate goldfields, 13 of the most accessible and relic rich have been described and illustrated. These include the more familiar like Thames, Waihi and Karangahake but with particular emphasis on the less well known.

The book begins with an overview of the history of discovery and exploitation of gold on Coromandel Peninsula. I have often wondered how Maori reacted to these prospecting activities. There are a few snippets of information on this topic in the first chapter. The following chapters in Part One cover the geological formation of the gold-bearing deposits, the techniques employed in mining, extracting, and processing gold in quantity, and general information on exploring the goldfields as they are today.

Part Two gets down to the business of focusing in detail on each goldfield; its individual history, geological characteristics, the mines and machinery, special features, access and location, and production figures. An explanation for the name of the Try Fluke mine, following the fortunes of the Luck-at-Last mine, understanding batteries and berdans, stampers and cyanide treatment, mullock and slimes, adits and winzes; I'm hooked!

The clarity of the text, enhanced by equally clear diagrams makes understanding of the various aspects of goldmining not only uncomplicated but a real pleasure. There are excellent maps and highlighted directions to the sites at the end of each goldfield chapter. A very useful glossary of technical terms can be found at the back. Bringing the ghosts of the goldfields to life is the wonderful selection of historic photographs (one of my favourites is of the Shotover Mine, Thames, in 1868 showing miners posing all over a very raw and rocky exposure but also including two women dressed in flowing crinolines). Lloyd Homer's photographic skills provide powerful and romantic images of what has survived to the present and inject an exciting feel to the books overall presentation.

Phil Moore and Neville Ritchie both have strong archaeological backgrounds and although they have written this guidebook for a general readership it will certainly enthuse students of industrial and mining archaeology as well. Hopefully, it will spread awareness of our mining heritage and spur efforts to conserve as many remains as possible.

Whenever you're heading for Coromandel be sure to take this book, for wherever you are on the Peninsula it will never be far from a goldmine. But you would be wise to keep it in a plastic bag. Being softcovered it won't stand much battering.

Kath Prickett, Auckland Museum

**Reilly, Paul and Sebastian Rahtz (editors) 1992 *Archaeology and the Information Age: A Global Perspective*. Routledge, London.**

*Archaeology and the Information Age: A Global Perspective* is the result of discussions held over five days in late 1990 at the Second World Archaeological Congress in Barquisimeto, Venezuela. The 22 chapters in the volume demonstrate the global effect that information technology is having on the methods, theories, and results of archaeological investigations. The reader is introduced to a range of computer applications that go beyond mere

quantitative analyses to include studies as diverse as the syntax and semantics of Classical Attic figurative art, to a four-dimensional representation of a British bronze age burial mound. The contributors to the volume do a fine job of discussing their methods and results, but significantly, they also consider the implications of using information technology for the dissemination of information and the "democratization" of archaeology.

The volume is essentially divided into four sections. In the first, the contributors survey the use of information technology from around the world. Two papers in the volume stress how Africans are disenfranchised from their history due to the inaccessibility of archaeological information. The cost and availability of computer systems, the isolation of scholars, and the technophobia of archaeologists and the general public alike, are all identified as contributing factors that restrict access to archaeological information. On a more positive note, the production of cheap publications as a result of desktop publishing is seen as somewhat alleviating the problem. With reference to Hungary and the United Kingdom respectively, Suhajda and Wilcock suggest that the data stored in computerized systems must be standardized for it to be of any benefit. Wilcock suggests the impetus for standardization will come from improved communications between increasing numbers of personal interactive computers and the availability of multimedia devices, an observation that in 1990 was quite astute.

The second section of the volume contains four papers on the visualization of archaeological data. Lock and Harris present an overview of the functionality of geographic information systems for automating methods used with manual maps and recognizing spatial patterning. Chapters 10, 11, and 12 are all concerned with the multi-dimensional visualization of architectural features. Fletcher and Spicer's detailed and insightful account on how to objectively measure the angle of ridge-and-furrows shows the versatility of graphical techniques for highlighting previously unnoticed archaeological features. In Chapters 11 and 12, the authors discuss the technical issues of surface and solid modelling for both historical buildings and monuments. While aspects of their discussion have been dated by the sheer speed with which computer technology has developed in the past seven years, they suggest the ways in which computer visualization can help to reconstruct buildings by analysing the strength of building materials and adding lighting and shading to our models. The ability to consider alternative architectural perspectives helps archaeologists recognize the ways in which the buildings shaped and modified the behaviours of past peoples.

The "analysis" section of the volume contains papers by Koetje on experimental approaches for statistically discriminating cultural layers within a site, and Sinclair and Troy on using correspondence analysis for determining temporal patterning in the status of individuals in a Lower Nubian cemetery. The remaining four papers in the section are detailed discussions of the application of formal models, artificial intelligence and expert systems. The papers demonstrate the usefulness of these techniques in illuminating the structure and contradictions found in archaeological interpretations. Biskowki details the use of expert systems in generating hypotheses, and Dallas shows that formalized grammars are procedural models that facilitate our understanding of figurative art. In Chapters 17 and 18, the authors detail the specifics of particular expert system software packages. The discussions are useful introductions for archaeologists entering into the complex world of artificial intelligence.

The final four chapters deal with the communication of archaeological techniques and information. Molyneaux argues that computer based simulations are an excellent means for students to learn about and explore archaeological excavations without the costs and logistics of fieldwork. Another contribution documents an exhibition of Tibetan artwork which integrated an interactive sketch book that allowed users to appreciate the spiritual and compositional aspects of the artwork in a user friendly technological environment. The volume concludes with discussions on the use of multi-media technology for conveying archaeological information in educational and publishing environments. Many of the issues raised by the authors concerning the dissemination of information via CD-ROMs will be relevant for readers creating hyper-linked pages on the world wide web today.

The volume is published by Routledge as part of the *One World Archaeology* series and contains numerous well produced figures and tables, and several beautiful colour plates. The influence of the World Archaeological Congress is clearly present throughout the volume. The emphasis of the papers extends from mere technical matters to include theoretical and political considerations. As a volume intended to introduce archaeologists to the wonders and complexities of information technology, it clearly succeeds.

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