



NEW ZEALAND  
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## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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## REVIEWS

**Amanda Bowens (ed.). Underwater Archaeology: The NAS Guide to Principles and Practice. Second edition. Nautical Archaeology Society. Blackwell Publishing, West Sussex. ISBN: 978-1-4051-7591-3. 226 pp, colour plates, line drawings, appendices, bibliography. Paper. RRP US\$44.95.**

*Andy Dodd*

This is the second edition of the NAS Guide, which was first published in 1992. As with its precursor it was written with the intention of providing a general guide to carrying out archaeology in the underwater environment. It covers the basics of underwater survey, site recording and investigation. Since the publication of the first edition there have been developments in methods, technology, dissemination media, and a stronger focus on cultural resource management and community involvement in underwater archaeology. Accordingly, the second edition has a revised layout, and several new chapters added.

Additions include new chapters on ‘getting involved in underwater and foreshore archaeology’ and ‘international and national laws relating to underwater archaeology’. Previous material on historic research, underwater photography, illustration, geophysical and remote sensing, conservation and first aid for material recovered from the marine environment, safety on underwater sites and site monitoring and protection has been expanded into individual chapters. Appendices from the first edition on airlift and dredge construction (which included a handy shopping list for materials) have been removed, although the diligent reader with a smattering of mechanical and plumbing know-how can still get the basic idea of construction from pp.144-47. The code of conduct appendix has been removed, and a new appendix on anchor recording supplements the appendix on classification and recording of guns.

Because many of the same principles of terrestrial archaeology apply to archaeological work in the underwater environment, much of the content of this book is concerned with aspects that might be expected in a standard introductory archaeological textbook (e.g. interpreting stratigraphy, dating methods and site formation processes). Emphasis is, of course, on the application of this method and theory to underwater sites, and there are expanded discussions on topics that are particularly pertinent to shipwreck archaeology,

such as the relationship between archaeology and commercial marine salvage, treasure-hunting, and souvenir collecting or fossicking.

The chapters covering project planning and site safety are written with a United Kingdom framework in mind, and the New Zealand reader needs to approach this subject with New Zealand labour and health and safety laws in mind. Fortunately the Department of Labour's website has a section on occupational; diving, and examples of its application to a scientific (or archaeological) setting maybe accessible through some publicly funded agencies (e.g. the Department of Conservation has a draft Standard Operating Procedure for diving). In most instances full commercial diving certification is unlikely to be a prerequisite and scientific accreditation is available and sufficient for archaeological purposes.

The *NAS Guide* is biased towards underwater archaeology in the United Kingdom and Europe, and this is most evident in the chapter on national and international legislation. Different countries have diverse approaches about how salvage law applies to underwater cultural heritage, and fairly substantial volumes have been dedicated to the subject. Accordingly, the *NAS Guide* gives only a fleeting overview, but does contain a useful unravelling of salvage law as it pertains to the recovery of modern loss of shipping (which was the original purpose for its inception) as opposed to its application to underwater cultural heritage. An interesting thread in this chapter follows the issues of abandonment and ownership, which has been a topic of discussion in New Zealand with regards to shipwrecks.

New Zealand's archaeological record includes over 1200 pre-1900 shipwrecks, not to mention thousands of unrecorded coastal and foreshore structures that extend into the underwater environment. Mineral extraction, energy generation, commercial salvage, dredge operations and marina developments, to name but a few, are all significant pressures on this resource. These pressures are likely to increase rather than diminish in the near future, and while it has been possible to delay a more careful archaeological consideration of this resource it will increasingly need to be accounted for.

With the 2001 UNESCO Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage passing into international law in October 2008, the *NAS Guide* is a timely (although some may argue a couple of months premature) revision of the previous edition. It is a thoroughly recommended book for students considering a career in underwater archaeology, and a useful reference guide for heritage professionals focusing on terrestrial archaeology who want to keep up to date with the range of methods available for archaeologists in the underwater environment.