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ROGER MAKES A VISIT

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Roger made many arduous and energetic expeditions into the field and perhaps none more so than to the Solomon Islands forty years ago. Transport was rudimentary and communications erratic. There were no telephones outside the towns and few radio transmitters elsewhere. It might take weeks to get a reply to a letter, making it more problematic to deal with colleagues than usual. There was always the risk of malaria or injury and Doug Yen tells the story of Roger on one occasion walking around the coast of Santa Cruz with a severely damaged knee. It is a small miracle that more Pacific archaeologists have not gone down in small planes, swamped canoes or fallen victim to snakebite.

But no trip was more carefully planned and executed with enthusiasm and determination than Roger's visit to Kohika in February 2007 when, due to illness, it was very difficult for him to travel at all. He and his wife Valerie set out from Auckland in the station wagon, stopped overnight in Tauranga to break their journey, negotiated the rough farm road and arrived at the site equipped with a lightweight portable alloy chair, sun umbrella and other protection from the elements.

A large excavation and field school were in progress and Roger carefully inspected every open square and stopped to talk to nearly every student and staff member about what they were finding and its significance for the site. The discussion ranged across the implications for New Zealand and Pacific prehistory, and sometimes more general issues of method and theory. He was in his element.

Under excavation at the time was a multi-level open court/marae beside an elite household but separated from the houses by a line of standing carved posts. Just across the bay was where a carved house – whare whakairo – once stood, and the yard outside where a canoe was built and great blocks of obsidian that had been unloaded at the adjacent canoe jetty were undergoing initial

reduction. All of these various structures were known to be contemporary because they were interrupted by the same flood.

Actually, Roger was more pleased than surprised by what he saw. He was shown over the site; he listened and he lectured. He already knew what to expect and had the proto-East Polynesian and Maori names for the structures he could see – from his long studies of historical linguistics and comparative ethnology and his collaborations with scholars such as Andrew Pawley and Pat Kirch. Triangulation he called it and was impatient with those of his colleagues who refused to see the light. He was keen for his predictions to materialise in the archaeological record and commented that they were perhaps more clearly revealed at Kohika than normally seen in New Zealand. By the end of the day, apart from the details, he had the site largely interpreted in his mind and had made many interesting observations and suggestions.



As it happens Roger had been involved in the original discussion about what to do about Kohika when it was first discovered in 1974 and had visited the site for a few days to join a dig in the summer of 1976. Then, after we returned to Auckland with a railway wagon of waterlogged material, Karel Peters, the department's illustrator and technician, designed space for a conservation laboratory in the new Human Sciences Building, and Roger subsequently promoted

the specialist training of conservators. Dilys Johns has been the director of this important facility for many years.

In the intervening 30 years he continued to encourage the analysis of the finds from Kohika which took place in fits and starts, in between other things, and he was always interested in the issues and opportunities of wetland archaeology. As many of us know Roger's urging, however genial, had a lot of weight behind it.

Roger's fairly recent visit to Kohika was just two days long but was typical of his intellectual life. His love of anthropology, his breadth of knowledge, his energy, his organizing zeal, his wide contacts with scholars and his generosity towards them were amazing.