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ROGER SHEPHERD DUFF : AN APPRECIATION AND TRIBUTE

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Canterbury Museum

It is not easy to write about Roger, whom I knew for over 40 years, and whom I loved as a brother.

Roger Duff was born on 11 July 1912 in Invercargill, and educated at Christchurch Boys High School (he was Dux Scholar in 1930) and Canterbury University College, where he was senior scholar, and took an Honours M.A. in Education in 1935. He spent some time in the Public Service in Samoa, and was then appointed Ethnologist at Canterbury Museum in 1938. It was at this time that I first met him, at a League of Nations Union meeting. From that first meeting a warm friendship developed.

After Jim Eyles, as a schoolboy, discovered the Moahunter Maori camp at Wairau Bar, Marlborough, Roger worked there with him, and that work led to the publication of Roger's best known book, The Moahunter Period of Maori Culture of which the 3rd edition appeared in 1977.

It is not my intention here to write of Roger Duff's many scientific achievements, although I hope later to compile a bibliography of his writings, as a Memorial to him.

I wish to write of him as a man. Throughout the years of association with him - helping him at the Museum during my spare time as a student, excavating Moa and other birds with him at Pyramid Valley, helping him on archaeological "digs", I grew to love him as a brother. He was one of the finest characters that I have known, and one of my dearest friends. Roger was a very generous man - I think sometimes over-lavish with his praise of others, certainly I did not deserve all he said of me - and rather too tolerant of fools, at times.

He became Director of Canterbury Museum in 1948, and on my appointment to the staff on 2 February 1950 I became even more closely associated with him. He was an excellent employer, leaving me to run my own Department in my own way, except when he wished any special job done. I like to think I have not betrayed his trust.

Roger was a Scot, and had a Scot's stubbornness. No man can be right all the time, but it took a lot to convince Roger he was wrong. It is as characteristic of his nobility of nature that on the few occasions when he was shown to have made an error, he made a very handsome retraction.

His sudden death on 30th October 1978 lost us a great Museum Director, a great ethnologist, and the Maori and Polynesian people a great friend. We may not see his like for a long time.



DUFF TRIBUTE. Roger Duff (with beret) at the Waitara swamp excavation, 1960. (At right is the late Rigby Allen).



TE MIRO Plate 1. Aerial view of Te Miro site.