



NEW ZEALAND  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

## ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEW ZEALAND



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# THE DATE OF THE FORMATION OF THE ASSOCIATION

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The Association has decided to celebrate its 50th anniversary with a special conference in early December 2004 in New Plymouth. In deciding on 2004 as the anniversary date there has been some research on the subject of when we did start.

Les Groube's paper about New Zealand archaeology in the 1950's, "Dig up those moa bones dig" in the Golson festschrift, says that the Association was founded in August 1954, citing Golson on its origins (Groube 1993: 8).

The referenced article (Golson 1955a), is an article by Jack entitled "New Zealand Archaeological Association" in the March 1955 edition of the Journal of the Polynesian Society. He says there "The organisation had a modest birth in Wellington last August when a group of invited people met and talked together at the Dominion Museum." 'Association' was already being capitalised as a title in the article. The article continues: "until it is properly constituted later this year..." so early formalisation was then expected. H.D. Skinner was the President of the group conducting the affairs until it was "properly constituted." Golson is listed as the secretary/treasurer. A subscription fee of 10/- is cited so a financial existence would seem to be real at that date, though the support of an anonymous donor helping to found the group is mentioned.

A further article by Golson of the same title occurs in the same year, in the September issue of the Journal of the Polynesian Society (Golson 1955b). It says the committee met in August 1955 and agreed a draft constitution to be submitted to the first AGM. "Arrangements are therefore being made for the first New Zealand Archaeological Conference to be held in Auckland from Tuesday May 8th to Thursday May 10th 1956, with the Annual General Meeting falling on the final afternoon."

The Newsletter's first issue was in March 1957. It invites people to the 2nd annual conference, to be held in Dunedin. Issue 2 (August 1957) reports on that

conference and says “the Annual General Meeting was held and the new constitution adopted” (p. 5).

In volume 2 no 3 (June 1959) there is a report on that year’s conference in Rotorua, reporting Roger Duff talking to the conference on “the explosive expansion of the Association since its foundation in 1955, and the three previous successful conferences at Auckland, Dunedin and Whanganui” (Scarlett 1959: 2).

From this then the history of the main events of the first years of the Association was:

- 1954 Foundation meeting in Wellington
- 1955 Foundation according to the Duff quotation
  - First subscriptions taken
  - Constitution drafted
- 1956 Auckland Conference
  - First AGM
- 1957 Dunedin Conference
  - New Constitution adopted
  - Newsletter started

What then is the foundation date? Other than Duff’s reported assertion of 1955 as a founding date, which has support only from the presumed first collection of subscriptions, the real alternatives seem to be:

- 1954 Wellington (Golson and Groube)—first meeting of people to form the Association
- 1956 Auckland—first conference and AGM
- 1957 Dunedin—constitution adopted

The Association Council as chosen to take 1954 as the date, and hence have 2004 as our golden anniversary year and treat the other alternatives as of mild organisational interest.

## References

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