



ROD WALLACE

AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO ARCHAEOLOGY

The winner of the Outstanding Contribution to Archaeology Award this year originally hails from a farm in South Canterbury, and it would be fair to say that his practical rural bent never left him. He completed his MA thesis in 1979 – Landsnails and palaeobotanical reconstructions: a study of Chatham Islands archaeological assemblages, at the University of Otago. He then moved north to undertake his PhD studies on the conservation of waterlogged wood in New Zealand at Waikato University, which he completed in 1985.

Following submission of his PhD he moved further north started at University or Auckland Anthropology Department as a laboratory technician in 1984, and was a fixture of the department for the following 37 years, until his retirement at the beginning of 2021. We are of course talking about Dr Rod Wallace.

His speciality, as most here are aware, is the identification of wood species in the archaeological record, particularly in the form of charcoal – he is undoubtedly considered the leader in the field of anthracology here in New Zealand. Over the course of his career, Rod has authored or co-authored dozens of academic papers, book chapters and conference presentations; he has been described as a genuine scholar, of an indigenous New Zealand type, who despite a long career in Auckland, has never entirely lost his South Island flavour. As all good scholars do, he likes to think deeply, debate, and test hypotheses, but perhaps more unusually, he has been a great collaborator, as exemplified by his work with Dilys Johns at the University of Auckland's National Wet Organic Archaeological Materials Conservation Laboratory, where he has identified literally thousands of wooden taonga as part of their conservation schedules, and with the Ahuahua research project in the field and in the lab over the last 10 years, to name but two.

Rod's practical outlook has been invaluable for his involvement in University of Auckland Field Schools over the past 3 decades. A skilled excavator, and perhaps more importantly, interpreter, of the archaeological record in the field and back in the lab, Rod's easy-going and approachable nature has benefited hundreds of archaeology students and teachers, including more than a few in this room tonight.

Outside of pure excavation he's also taught a variety of more practical field archaeological skills too – the right type of manuka to cut down to make tripods for sieve stations, how to light a Thermette with and without diesel accelerant, how to magically disappear behind a sand dune, his location only being given away by a gentle waft of cigarette smoke.

But it is Rod's contribution to the world of cultural resource management archaeology, and radiocarbon dating in this country, that is perhaps his greatest legacy to New Zealand archaeology. His identifications of wood and charcoal samples from excavations around the country have allowed accurate palaeobotanical analyses and radiocarbon determinations for countless CRM projects; a quick search of the Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga Digital Library reveals him as a contributor to at least 477 final reports – and those are just the final reports now digitised. His timely, accurate, and dare I say it, inexpensive, analyses have meant that our understanding of the archaeological record in this country has been greatly enhanced.

Rod has continued his drift north, currently living on Auckland's North Shore, and having bought property and built in Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands - we wish Rod well in his (semi) retirement (as I'm aware he's still undertaking charcoal identifications from the comfort of his own home) and on behalf of all New Zealand archaeologists, thank him for his outstanding contribution to New Zealand archaeology.