

Award citations

Roger C. Green Lifetime Achievement Award

Janet Davidson

M.A. (Auckland) D.Sc. (Otago), F.R.S.N.Z, O.N.Z.M.

Janet was born in the wartime village of the Hutt, to a family steeped in classical and modern languages. Her brother John was to become Professor of Classics at Victoria University of Wellington. This family environment must be the source to which Janet's achievement in plain writing and in editing can be traced.

In 1958 she became a vacation assistant to Sue Davis at the Dominion Museum. As well as digging at Paremata and elsewhere in Wellington, Janet would have learned from Sue about life as a student in the field of archaeology recently established in Auckland by Jack Golson. In 1959-60 Janet was excavating at Sarah's Gully working under the direction of Laurie and Helen Birks. Janet was also active in the University of Auckland Archaeological Society, taking a leading role in its site recording activities. These were the years when the NZAA was founded and before too long Janet was secretary (1966-72) and president (1972-74) of the association.

In 1962 Janet graduated from the University of Auckland, the archaeology side of her degree supervised by Golson, and subsequently gained her MA (1964) with a thesis on what was then the neglected topic of shell middens. In 1961-62, in the course of that degree work, she and Roger Green co-directed excavations in the 'Opunohu valley, Mo'orea, Polynésie Française, Janet directing her team in fluent French and Roger his in Tahitian.

Not long after, in 1963, Janet worked again with Roger on Tongatapu and Vava'u, Tonga, and on 'Upolu, Samoa. In Tonga it was an exploration of early mounds and on 'Upolu, excavations of a wider range of settlement features. Roger Green has said that her work on the Falefa valley was her major contribution there. The Samoan work was written and jointly edited by Roger and Janet as *Archaeology in Western Samoa* published in two volumes (1969 and 1974). The 1960s also saw Janet at work in Micronesia, starting a long engagement and interest in the western Pacific and the Polynesian Outliers. In 1965, on Nukuoro, she pioneered the archaeology of coral atolls in the Pacific.

From 1966-1979 Janet held the post of the Earle Vaile Archaeologist at the Auckland Institute and Museum. In the course of the post's duties, which must have included writing up the Samoan work, she excavated the Motutapu Station Bay undefended sites (with Anne Leahy) and the Station Bay pā, a pioneering effort to understand pā and place them in a local settlement pattern. Janet had a high public profile in the Museum role; she was often called upon

for interviews and comment on archaeological matters and she was a very effective advocate for Auckland's archaeological values.

Janet also got involved in what we would now call Cultural Resource Management (CRM) working in 1971-72 on a survey of Te Paki for the Department of Lands and Survey. Under instructions from the Council of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, in 1968, she visited Kororipo pā in the Kerikeri Basin and salvaged that historic ground from a local proposal to make it a picnic area. Janet served on the New Zealand Historic Places Trust Council from 1968-78 and while taking a full interest in all of the Trust's activities she particularly advanced archaeology in the Trust. This was through helping develop its organisational capability, covering the commencement of the 1975 Act. She also got a site surveying programme funded which greatly expanded the number and quality of site records in the NZAA Recording Scheme and gave many in our community their first archaeological job.

In 1974-76 Janet was on leave as a Rhodes Visiting Fellow at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, where she worked on drafting *The Prehistory of New Zealand*, published in 1984.

This experience of English food reflects Janet's omnivorous taste in food. Foss Leach reports that she has even eaten the reef dweller keke, *Dactylosargus arctidens meandratus*, granite trout or marble fish, which no one else will eat because it tastes so bad.

On her return from Oxford, and now inextricably linked to Foss, she was involved in Roger Green's south-east Solomon Islands Culture History Project. In particular she and Foss, with experience on Nukuoro and Kapingamarangi, jumped at an opportunity offered by Roger to explore Taumako. This was done against the highly problematic and peculiar background that the outliers were distinguishable from neighbouring areas only by language, not by material culture or physical type. From Namu, 190 individual skeletons were sent for study at Otago. The Taumako monograph has been a 'retirement' project and was published in 2008.

From 1979 – 1987 Janet was an honorary lecturer at the University of Otago when *The Prehistory of New Zealand* was published (1984). It remains the only full book-length survey of New Zealand archaeology. In 1985 she became a Fellow of the Royal Society of New Zealand. In 1986, not long after publication of the *Prehistory of New Zealand*, the University of Otago granted her the rare degree of Doctor of Science. At this time too she became involved in the editing of the *New Zealand Journal of Archaeology*, serving as Assistant Editor from 1982-84 and Editor from 1985-2008 when the journal evolved into the *Journal of Pacific Archaeology* with Atholl Anderson at the helm.

In 1987 Janet took up the position of Senior Curator Ethnology at the National Museum, shortly to become Te Papa. In the latter institution she came to be involved particularly with the Pacific collections and a programme of

outreach to the many Pasifika communities of Wellington. With Foss Leach she was involved with the Archaeozoology laboratory and also with Foss set up the 'Bridge and Barrier' project. This built on Foss's longstanding interests in Palliser Bay and its connections about the Cook Strait. At this time too she delivered a number of papers on pā and Polynesian origins and the outliers. With Foss, Janet worked with Rangitāne ki Wairau and Ngati Hinewaka on experimental pits and experimental kumara gardens. As with so much in Janet's life, the gardens were remarkably productive.

Her professional and community work will have informed the award in 1997 of the New Zealand Royal Honour the ONZM. In 2007 Foss brought her to Te Papa on a subterfuge. When she entered a room brimming with friends and colleagues, she knew exactly what was up, burst into tears, and received the festschrift *Vastly Ingenious: the archaeology of Pacific material culture in honour of Janet M. Davidson*.

One final remark leads us back to what is arguably New Zealand's most famous archaeological site and wāhi tīpuna – Wairau Bar. Evidently Foss and Janet became close counsellors to Rangitāne ki Wairau on many archaeological topics, including the movement to repatriate the human remains long-stored at Canterbury Museum. It seems likely that the achieved results to date as part of that movement, to re-study the bones using DNA and forensic osteology, and to do further contextual excavation, must in part be due to wise counsel from Janet and Foss.

In some ways life has come full circle for Janet and Foss who now live in Martinborough, Foss in his tūrangawaewae and Janet over the hill from the wartime village of her early childhood. Some final words from Atholl Anderson:

‘...the success of such a career owes as much to the qualities of the person as to those of scholarship. Janet's collegial generosity, particularly to younger members of the profession, and her staunch support of them in the scholarly journals and conferences of New Zealand and Pacific archaeology is widely appreciated. She has not forgotten the perils of her own introduction to the deceptively simple life of the Pacific Islands.’

Kevin Jones