



*Janet Davidson with NZAA President Matthew Campbell.
Photo: Ian Barber.*

Roger C. Green Lifetime Achievement Award

Michael Malthus Trotter

Michael is perhaps the only currently active Association member who can claim to have been a practising archaeologist before the Association was promulgated. Michael began his archaeological career in his teens as an enthusiastic amateur carrying out archaeological research in North Otago with

the encouragement and guidance of Otago Museum Director H.D. Skinner. Michael, then eighteen years old, first learnt of the establishment of the Association by reading an article in the *Otago Daily Times* newspaper on 28 August 1954, his interest particularly aroused by the report that two major excavations, one in his home patch Otago and the other in Auckland, were planned for early the following year. Although Michael was then probably blissfully unaware that he was soon to become an active participant in the development and application of many new scientific approaches to archaeology in New Zealand. There is little doubt that Michael's huge professional contribution to archaeology in New Zealand over the following 60 years had its genesis in his teenage willingness to observe, analyse and adopt the then emerging techniques of archaeological best practice.

Michael himself recalls four events during what might be described as his archaeological apprenticeship years between 1953 and 1958 that greatly influenced both his future career in archaeology and also the development of archaeology in New Zealand. In December 1954 he was invited by Les Lockerbie from the Otago Museum to be one of a team of seven to participate in one of the first New Zealand Archaeological Association promoted excavations (but organised by Otago Museum) in January 1955 at the moa hunter site at Hawkesburn in Central Otago where Les pioneered the use of the technique of 'three dimensional recording' in New Zealand. The next professional influence was Dr Bob Bell who in 1956 demonstrated to Les Lockerbie and Michael during excavations at the Papatowai site in the Catlins, South Otago the technique of 'clearing off' horizontal levels from which evidence of downward intrusion could then be seen. A standard method for delineating structures and observing stratigraphy had arrived in New Zealand archaeology.

In 1958 Michael and Dr Roger Duff, director of Canterbury Museum accompanied Wal Ambrose and Frank Davis to the Waitaki Gorge where they undertook the first salvage archaeology exercise involving Māori rock drawings. Michael recalls the technique of recording the drawings using a combination of photography and tracing onto transparent sheeting employed Ambrose and Davis set a standard of accuracy and detail previously unrealised in New Zealand. Michael in turn both applied this technique and taught others in its application for over 30 years, contributing greatly to a nationally significant archive of approximately 800 tracings and drawings held in Canterbury Museum. This archive which includes a large number of tracings of original drawings that have subsequently either disappeared or become shadows of the original art work, is soon to be digitised to facilitate ongoing research. The last chapter in Michael's induction to archaeology was his participation in the first official New Zealand Archaeological Association excavation at Moa Bone Point Cave, near Sumner, Christchurch in 1958. Michael recalls that this excavation

was his first and only opportunity to work with Jack Golson who demonstrated, and from whom Michael learnt, yet another new archaeological concept, excavation and recording by stratigraphic layers (see Trotter 2004:216-220). A description of Michael at the time as being ‘very young and quite shy’ by Baden Norris a fellow archaeologist and later friend and colleague at Canterbury Museum might bring a smile to Michael’s face.

Encouraged by Roger Duff, Michael joined the Association in the mid 1950s (the author is not sure of the exact year) and has remained a member continuously ever since. Michael has held office in the Association in many capacities, including Canterbury and Marlborough filekeeper for many years, Council member in 1970, Secretary between 1972 and 1977, Vice-President in 1978 and President from 1980 until 1982.

Excavations in North Otago were a feature of his early interest. A significant outcome of these was his paper on fishhook forms (Trotter 1965) which was a neat archaeological demonstration that culture change in the South Island was not all about replacement.

For most of his professional career Michael worked at Canterbury Museum where he was archaeologist from 1965 until 1983 and director from 1983 until 1995. Between 1965 and 1975 Michael was also field leader of the Canterbury Museum Archaeological Society, a group of enthusiastic amateurs who worked under the umbrella of Canterbury Museum. During his time as the museum’s archaeologist Michael worked extensively throughout the province, continuously undertaking site surveys and updating the NZAA site record files, leading numerous programmes to locate and record Māori rock drawings, researching and writing hundreds of detailed archaeological site reports, delivering countless public programmes on his archaeological work and of course regularly undertaking research and salvage excavations. From 1972 onwards one focus of Michael’s research was the archaeology of the Kaikoura region where his work, particularly at Takahanga pā, but also elsewhere throughout the Kaikoura rohe was supported by the local rūnanga whom he actively encouraged to participate in archaeology both as guiding cultural advisors and also as part of his ‘hands on’ excavation team. It must have given ‘Matua’ Michael considerable pleasure earlier this year to receive an invitation from Te Rūnanga o Kaikoura to attend a hui at Takahanga Marae where in the company of kaumātua he presented an illustrated archaeological retrospective of the pioneering archaeological work they did together. The heritage unit of Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu has recognised and embraced the significance of Michael’s work by commissioning a separate video of Michael’s presentation for the iwi archives. On behalf of the Association Michael please accept our congratulations, for your career must surely have come full circle and now you are the mentor and hopefully the younger Association ‘apprentices’ will be

professionally influenced to add cultural inclusiveness to their repertoire of archaeological practice.

Michael's archaeological work also extends beyond Canterbury and Otago into the Polynesian Islands, first with his participation in the Canterbury Museum expedition to the Southern Cook Islands and the first archaeological survey of the island of Atiu in 1969 and then the archaeological survey of Niue Island in 1971 (Trotter 1974; 1979).

Perhaps the most tangible testimony to Michael's commitment and contribution to archaeology in New Zealand is best documented by his published record. Even a quick literature search, although likely to be incomplete, reveals an impressive record. Starting from 1959 onwards Michael has contributed no fewer than 28 articles to New Zealand Archaeological Association publications and co-authored a further 17 papers, many of these with Beverly McCulloch. If newer practitioners want examples on how to write accounts of fieldwork, accessible to a general reader, they could do no better than look there. In *The Records of Canterbury Museum* Michael contributed eleven papers and co-authored another six, once again mostly with Beverly McCulloch. In addition Michael contributed many articles to other publications such as *The Journal of the Polynesian Society* (four), *Asian Perspectives* (three), *Notornis* (one), *British Archaeological Reports* (one), *New Zealand Journal of Geology and Geophysics* (one) and the Canterbury Museum monograph series (three). Michael also contributed to and co-authored several books. In 1971 Michael and Beverly McCulloch published the first edition of *Prehistoric Rock Art of New Zealand*, which to this day remains a 'standard' popular reference on the subject. In 1977 Michael contributed a chapter on recent research to the third edition of Roger Duff's *The Moa-Hunter Period of Maori Culture* (being invited to do so must be an achievement in its own right) and in 1989 Michael and Beverly McCulloch wrote and edited *Unearthing New Zealand* and curated an exhibition with the same title at Canterbury Museum. This book was public archaeology at its best and did much to inform the public of the scope and embrace of contemporary archaeology in New Zealand.

Although the census might describe Michael as retired this is far from accurate because Michael continues to be an extremely busy archaeologist and the quality of his site reports continues to set the benchmark for colleagues to aspire to. Hopefully there is also the promise of further publications to look forward to as well.

Michael your contribution to the New Zealand Archaeological Association and archaeology in New Zealand in general is enormous and the Association and the whole archaeological profession salutes, congratulates and

thanks you for all your achievements and years of meritorious service to the profession.

Roger Fyfe, Canterbury Museum

References

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Michael Trotter accepting his award from NZAA President Matthew Campbell. Photo: Ian Barber.