



NEVILLE RITCHIE

ROGER C GREEN LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Neville is probably most famously associated with The Clutha Valley Development (CVD) Project, set up in the late 1970s and run by the Ministry of Works. It was a watershed project in New Zealand archaeology, one of the largest archaeological projects in the country's history and the first where a full-time archaeologist, a New Zealand Historic Places Trust employee, would be appointed to assess, record and research those areas that were to be impacted by the construction of a whole series of dams. Few could have predicted that Neville Ritchie would prove to be an inspired appointment to the position of Project archaeologist, a position he held for ten years from 1977 to 1986, when the position was effectively disestablished.

Neville began the project with relatively limited experience in archaeology in general; he had participated in various Otago University expeditions, completed a Master's in the sourcing of Pounamu and then had two years at the Southland Museum. Not surprisingly, for the period, he had almost no experience in historical archaeology. Yet over ten years, Neville managed to completely transform the discipline of archaeology from his base in Cromwell, not least through the mentoring of around 150 students who participated in excavations and surveys that continued for much of his tenure. Many went on to have careers in archaeology inspired by Neville and the nascent employment opportunities he facilitated. He embraced local communities and numerous local enthusiasts encouraging all to become involved with the various archaeological projects.

The targeting for investigation of the Chinese sites, notably Cromwell's Chinatown, early on in the project proved to be a major attraction to the wider public and strengthened general support for the archaeological research. Neville was also a very shrewd operator when it came to the CVD administration. He wasn't being directly managed by them, but he was integral to their positive public relations, which he used to great advantage. A

classic case of this was when he argued that as Cromwell's Chinatown was being destroyed by the project, the CVD should fund excavations of the Arrowtown Chinese settlement as compensation. This was just one of many seminal and influential projects that were undertaken with CVD financial support both inside and outside the area impacted by the hydro dams. Neville was the perfect person for the job. It is, in fact, hard to envisage anyone else who would have filled the position with the same vision and flair and who contributed hugely to the development of New Zealand archaeology on so many levels.

After the CVD Project, Neville moved north to take up the role of technical advisor/archaeologist with the Department of Conservation in the Waikato, where he remained until his retirement in 2018. In this position, he continued with his goldfields and historical archaeology research together with taking a leading role in the conservation of archaeological sites on DOC land and opening these up for improved public access. This work included restoration and stabilisation work at the Alexandra Redoubt in Pirongia, the creation of the walking track network in the Karangahake Gorge and the stabilisation of the kilns and other features at the nationally significant Victoria Battery (that the NZAA conference field trip visited in 2006).

Neville continued publishing the results of his fieldwork and research for both archaeological and general audiences, including 'Coromandel Gold,' a detailed guide to the goldfields of the Coromandel Peninsula co-authored with Phil Moore. Numerous articles in AINZ, JPA and ASHA (Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology) covered a wide range of subjects from all periods of New Zealand's human history (and even sub-fossil faunal deposits), as well as Antarctic and subantarctic islands archaeology.

Neville's work in the conservation of Antarctica history is significant. Simply, without his work in the restoration, preventative conservation and archaeological excavations at Scott and Shackleton's Expedition Huts in the Ross Dependency, this history would not be present today. Neville undertook this mahi from 1986 through to 2007, devoting months of his time to the Antarctic Heritage Trust. He undertook the first substantial archaeological excavations of these huts and their surrounds, recording in detail every

artefact and structure revealed and applying the latest building conservation techniques in association with built heritage conservators. Neville introduced groundbreaking techniques for excavation in the ice, publishing the paper *Polar Excavation Techniques and Technology* in 1989, where the pros and cons of the various techniques are tested. In this paper, he concludes that for polar excavation: "...without a doubt the Dynadrill is the most efficient, being in effect a 'reciprocating trowel' which breaks down the matrix (in this case ice)..". Neville then notes in typical Neville style, "...the only thing I am aware of that would be better is two Dynadrills...". Today, Neville's legacy in Antarctica continues with the ongoing conservation of Scott and Shackleton's Expedition Huts by the Antarctic Heritage Trust. His advice is still valuably sought.

Neville was also called upon to comment on the 'Kaimanawa Wall' in the mid-1990s, a favourite subject of fringe new-age conspiracy theorists that even now crops up from time to time, and for a brief period in 1996 was heavily covered in the media. It is still possible to find a film of a younger Neville giving his opinion on this 'wall' on YouTube.

Throughout this period, Neville's expertise in the archaeology of the overseas Chinese continued to be sought after, and this culminated in 2023 with the publication of his PhD thesis by Sydney University Press in association with the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology. This seminal work still provides the best overview of nineteenth-century overseas Chinese archaeology in Australasia.

Throughout his career, Neville has provided outstanding leadership in all aspects of the practice of archaeology in New Zealand, from developing research projects, conducting fieldwork and excavations, site conservation, and public outreach to the publication of results. In particular the sub-discipline of historical archaeology would be considerably poorer if it was not for his involvement in this field from the 1970s up until the present day.