

An Introduction to Historical Archaeology in New Zealand

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This brief paper was presented as the narrative to accompany a pictorial presentation on the development of historical-industrial archaeology in New Zealand. It was primarily for the benefit of Australian archaeologists unfamiliar with the range of historical sites and the development of the discipline in New Zealand. The images were intended both to help visitors to visualise New Zealand sites, and to trigger ideas and comment for discussion later in the conference.

The presentation was intended to complement Ian Smith's paper, also in this volume, which is a more analytical review of the course of historical archaeology since its inception in New Zealand. The author works for the New Zealand Department of Conservation at Waikato.

Ian Smith elsewhere in this volume considers that the earliest New Zealand publications in the discipline of historical archaeology are the circa 1920 descriptions of circa nineteenth-century Maori and European fortifications.¹ Some forty years elapsed before the first historical site excavations were conducted on some of these sites and other early European contact sites in the Bay of Islands and Fiordland. While there is no doubt that the sites in question were associated with historical events, both early explorer contacts and Maori Pakeha confrontations, the excavators of this era were primarily interested in documenting changes in Maori culture. Given their pre-European bias, it is not difficult to understand why they placed little emphasis on describing the associated historical material culture. Coutts is perhaps the exception.² During this period (late 1960s to early 1970s) he conducted some small excavations on nineteenth-century European sites in the Fiordland-Foveaux Strait area.

In the mid 1960s, the New Zealand Historic Places Trust initiated an archaeological mitigation programme in the Central North Island after much public concern was expressed over the likely impact of the Tongariro Power Development project on sites in the area. The programme ran almost continuously from mid-1966 until December 1971. Trevor Hoskings was employed to locate, record and investigate archaeological sites in advance of the excavation programme and deal with archaeological remains which were uncovered unexpectedly in the course of the construction work. Hoskings recorded 197 sites during the programme and excavated twelve of them. Most of the sites he investigated were post-European contact and throw some light on this period, although various delaying factors resulted in a belated published report on the work.³ Later the Ministry of Works (i.e. the New Zealand government agency responsible for the power development) took Hosking's work a step further by clearing and interpreting two of the sites: Opotaka, a post-European contact Maori settlement; and McDonnell's redoubt, a fortification established by Te Kooti, and occupied and modified by his adversary McDonnell a month later.

The next substantial foray into historical archaeology in New Zealand was that of Nigel Prickett who during the course of Ph.D. research in the late 1970s investigated British and colonial fortifications in Taranaki.⁴ Prickett's work is often regarded as the first substantial contribution in historical archaeology in New Zealand, because the

long winded delays in getting anything published from the Tongariro archaeological work meant that it never achieved the impact it should have, either professionally, or from the general public. Even before completing his Ph.D., Prickett produced a series of highly readable booklets about both his Maori and European excavation sites and their *raison d'être*.⁵

By the early 1980s historical archaeology in one form or another was really underway in New Zealand, and increasingly funded by government agencies for management, interpretation, mitigation objectives as opposed to university-sponsored research investigations, although a steady trickle of theses on aspects of historical archaeology continue to be produced.

In the past decade, surveys of goldfield sites have been commissioned in nearly all the recognised mining areas of New Zealand, the most substantial being those undertaken in the major mining areas, i.e. Central Otago (New Zealand Historic Places Trust), and the West Coast and Coromandel by the former New Zealand Forest Service.⁶ Nationwide, some fifty surveys of gold mining areas have been completed thus far.⁷

In the same period major surveys of historic sawmills (by non-archaeologists) were commissioned by the New Zealand Forest Service in Southland,⁸ and on the West Coast,⁹ while Bruce Hayward and Jack Diamond¹⁰ undertook considerable archaeological documentation of the driving dams associated with the kauri logging industry on the Coromandel Peninsula and in the Waitakere ranges north of Auckland.

Following the appointment of the writer as project archaeologist on the Clutha power project in 1977, a major programme on the archaeology and history of the Chinese goldminers in Central Otago was initiated (some thirty excavations, twenty three of them on Chinese sites),¹¹ as well as documentation of the gold mining relics which are the dominant site type in the area. An important objective of the ten-year Clutha project (originally five years) was to produce detailed studies of particular artefact categories which others could build on. To this end specific studies were undertaken on clay pipes, match boxes, glass containers, metal containers, dental equipment, portable ceramics, and uniquely Chinese artefacts such as cash (Chinese coins), opium smoking paraphernalia, gambling and writing equipment, as well as faunal remains, and alluvial tailing sites.¹²

Elsewhere during the 1980s excavation projects were conducted on the Brunner industrial site near Greymouth,

on Armed Constabulary (New Zealand War) sites in the Central North Island,¹³ on late nineteenth-century alpine tourist sites near Mount Cook,¹⁴ on various urban sites, as well as a number of one-off excavations on a wide range of sites including whaling stations, flour mills, early homesteads, a bushman's hut, an early fish hatchery, and the Waitangi Treaty House.¹⁵ In addition to the numerous excavations conducted on historical sites during the 1980s, the number of recorded historic sites in New Zealand increased sixfold from less than 1000 to the present tally of c.6,000.

The 1980s saw a boom in historic urban archaeology, especially in Auckland where Sue Bulmer built up a regional archaeology unit to cope with the growing amount of mitigation work arising from building construction particularly in the central business district.¹⁶ More recently, urban archaeological investigations have commenced in Wellington and Christchurch.

At least eight urban and rural hotel sites have been excavated in various parts of the country in the past decade but not all have been written up yet.¹⁷ Comparative analysis of the assemblages from these sites would be a most useful exercise.

Notable recent work on industrial sites include the excavations on the Pollen Pottery & Brick works in Auckland,¹⁸ the investigations of the Kawau Island copper smelting industry,¹⁹ and Joan Maingay's work on the tanning industry at Pompallier House in the Bay of Islands.²⁰ Myfanwy Eaves has recently completed an M.A. thesis on the heavy clay industry in the Auckland area. Beyond Auckland, Alexy Simmons has started a Ph.D. project with excavations at Te Wairoa, a mission station and later Anglo-Maori tourist village buried by the eruption of Mt Tarawera in 1886. Neville Ritchie has recently completed a survey of historic structures and sites on the Huntly coal field²¹ and undertaken a salvage excavation on the site of the Te Awamutu redoubt.²²

Recently completed work with an archaeological and engineering orientation include several projects initiated by Paul Mahoney (this volume). His projects consist of recording and assessment of the rapidly diminishing number of New Zealand railway stations,²³ and overseeing historic engineering documentation of some of the best of the surviving kauri timber dams,²⁴ and logging trestles in the country.²⁵ The latter are on the Port Craig timber tramway in Southland. Mahoney has also been involved in the Institute of Professional Engineers of New Zealand (IPENZ) 1990 project involving the installation of special plaques on the most significant (as rated by IPENZ) early and modern engineering projects in New Zealand.²⁶ The sites include the ruins of the Kawau copper mine winding house, the Mahurangi cement works, and the beam engine in the pump house at Western Springs (these sites were visited on the conference field trip).

Young recently completed a major historical research project as a prelude to a Department of Conservation sponsored project involving the field recording of sites associated with the Coromandel logging industry.²⁷ Projects in the pipeline include a study of the role of Maori miners on the New Zealand gold fields last century²⁸ and 1840s-1850s Maori horticulture and flour mills in the Waikato.²⁹

In addition to the work on the mainland, New Zealand archaeologists have been involved in major fieldwork on historic sites on some of the New Zealand administered sub-Antarctic islands, and in Antarctica. While work in the sub-Antarctic islands has been limited to recording sites in the Auckland Islands.³⁰ The small test excavations at Cape Evans were a forerunner to a major and ongoing archaeological and restoration project undertaken by the

author, Alexy Simmons,³¹ and more recently Roger Fyfe on behalf of the Antarctic Heritage Trust.³²

To conclude, mention is made of a few areas where there is scope for new or further historical archaeology studies. Rural industry, far and away New Zealand's major economic contribution, has hardly been touched thus far, although many significant sites associated with early agricultural and pastoral enterprise exist such as Hayes Agricultural Engineering Works in Central Otago and the Totara Park complex in North Otago (the source of the first frozen meat shipment from New Zealand). Food-processing and food-packaging sites are also under-studied, as are shipwrecks and other aspects of maritime archaeology. There is a continuing need for detailed comparative studies of artefacts and faunal remains, and further material culture studies, i.e. researching the introduction, development and usage of specific artefact types (from nails to major machinery). This work, the nuts and bolts and building blocks of archaeology, must proceed apace with the development of new theoretical and methodological perspectives.

NOTES

1. see Smith, this volume, for a fuller discussion and associated references.
2. for references see Smith 1990.
3. Newman 1988.
4. Prickett 1981.
5. e.g. Prickett 1977, 1978a, 1987b.
6. see Ritchie, 2nd paper, App.1 this volume.
7. see Ritchie, 2nd paper, App.1 this volume.
8. see Hangar n.d.
9. see Craig 1986: 1980.
10. Hayward and Diamond 1975, 1978, 1979, 1982.
11. Ritchie 1990.
12. see Smith this volume for references.
13. see Spring-Rice 1982, Mitchell 1983.
14. see Ritchie 1985, Bedford 1985.
15. see Smith for references.
16. for details refer Macready, this volume.
17. e.g. Bedford 1986, Chester 1989, Ritchie 1985, Brassey this volume.
18. Best and Clough 1988.
19. Clough 1990, and this volume.
20. Maingay presented a paper on her 1987 investigations at the ASHA conference in Auckland.
21. Ritchie 1991, in preparation.
22. Ritchie and Gumbley in preparation.
23. Mahoney 1990.
24. Pearson 1991.
25. Mahoney et al. 1990.
26. see Sinclair 1990.
27. Young n.d.
28. see Ritchie ms.
29. see Laurie 1985 ms.
30. Hurst 1982, Ritchie 1987.

31. Harrowfield 1978.
32. Ritchie & Simmons 1987, 1988. Ritchie 1989, 1990. Fyfe 1990.

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