

**NEW ZEALAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION 2004**

**KEYNOTE ADDRESS**

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Fifty years is a long time by any standards. In today's archaeology it's a millennium.

Today, we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the New Zealand Archaeological Association.

I salute you all on this very special occasion. You've achieved miracles with minimal resources, huge doses of enthusiasm, and remarkably little government support until now. The Minister's announcement of support for the Association's site data base work is wonderful news and a fine recognition of your important role in archaeology in New Zealand.

Your Association was the vision of a handful of amateur and professional archaeologists, some of them part-timers, others ethnographers with an interest in archaeology.

Today, five decades later, New Zealand archaeology has come of age, but in a very different environment than that of a half century ago.

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My connection with New Zealand archaeology dates back to the very dawn of my career.

Like some of the senior figures in New Zealand and Pacific archaeology, I was trained at Cambridge University in the late 1950s, at the time about the only place in the world where one could obtain an undergraduate degree in prehistoric archaeology from a global perspective.

Our mentor was the formidable, and it must be admitted, forbidding, Professor Grahame Clark, an Olympian figure to us humble students.

It was only many years later, when I was asked by his Executors to write his biography, that I discovered that Grahame Clark was, in fact, a very kind and gentle man.

He had two passions in archaeology—one was the ecological perspective, epitomized by his classic research on the Mesolithic site at Star Carr in northeastern England.

The other was the notion that prehistoric archaeology was a global phenomenon. He wrote the very first World Prehistory and made sure that his students traveled to far corners of the world to excavate, survey, research, and teach. New Zealand was an early beneficiary of his vision. Without his encouragement to work abroad, I would not be standing here today.

I've visited New Zealand five times. On the first occasion, Wilfred Shawcross took me archaeologizing. And I'm very proud that a photograph of his exemplary shell

midden excavation at Galathea Bay has adorned my university textbook, *In the Beginning*, since its first edition in 1972. We are now in the eleventh edition, with no end in sight. And I will insist that Galathea Bay stays in the book to the bitter end!

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I've been a professional archaeologist for over forty years, and feel very lucky to have experienced a career during a remarkable formative period.

Quite apart from the Lords of Sipán in Peru, Egypt's Bahariya mummies, and the terracotta regiment of Chinese Emperor Zhihuangdi, there have been staggering methodological and theoretical advances.

My contemporaries and I have lived through the radiocarbon revolution, survived Lewis Binford and the so-called "New Archaeology." We've seen archaeology expand from a mere village of scholars into a large, international community.

When we started our careers, everyone knew everyone else, their strengths, their weaknesses, the gossip. . . . Academic archaeology dominated the study of the past. Heritage, cultural resource management, even rescue archaeology, were far in the future. Private sector archaeology was unthinkable.

Something's happened over the past fifty years. Archaeology has changed beyond recognition from a subject pursued by both amateurs and professionals to a highly specialized science.

Academic archaeology has striven to join the sciences, with all the pressures of large research grants, hi-tech research methods, and all the insidious excesses of the "publish or perish" culture.

Despite this move, the masters and mistresses of academia often regard us as poor relatives.

I'm amazed at just how few academic administrators really understand what archaeologists do—let alone the general public.

In truth, our place for the foreseeable future is elsewhere—in the world of heritage. Why? Because the archaeological record--all sites, all periods--is evaporating before our eyes.

The situation in New Zealand is just as serious as that elsewhere—quite apart from anything else, your population has doubled from a mere 2 million in 1960.

On a small land mass with finite space, archaeology and modern industrial civilization are uncomfortable bedfellows.

Whether we like it or not, archaeology is usually the loser.

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All of us in this room believe passionately that archaeology is of momentous importance. It's an integral part of our collective lives. We live and breathe it.

But do other people—governments, the general public, indigenous peoples, and all the other parties with a stake in the remote past, share our sense that it's important?

Frankly, most people do not. They're too busy making a living and shepherding such spare time as they have in an ever-busier world. Only a limited segment of the world has an interest in the past beyond that forced on them in school or at university.

Archaeology, in contemporary phraseology, is a niche market of a few thousand people in countries like Britain, Canada, and the United States. The number must be in the hundreds in New Zealand and Australia.

What have we done wrong? What are the solutions? How can we turn archaeology into something that's central to our identity as human beings?

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It's always easy to identify what one has done wrong—and we all know what's amiss with today's archaeology:

- Overspecialization and too much jargon—a concern with minute and often frankly unimportant topics and issues,
- Research that bears little relevance to anything in the real world. The public expect us to make spectacular discoveries. Yes, we do sometimes, but only rarely in these days when every early civilization is known. Public perception doesn't coincide with reality.
- The professionalization of the subject has become extremely complex—amateur archaeologists and volunteers are now only rarely part of the mainstream.

Above all, a convoluted value system within archaeology itself that values basic research, discovery, and publication above all else.

Yes, it's "publish-or-perish", and all the prestige and folderol that goes with research grants and that old bromide "peer-reviewed publication."

Any other form of archaeological activity ranks lower on the archaeological hierarchy—teaching, public archaeology, cultural resource management, heritage and tourism.

As far as I can discern, the same hierarchy applies, consciously, or unconsciously, in New Zealand archaeology.

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Let me emphasize at once that basic research is the lifeblood of archaeology in New Zealand and elsewhere, but the time has come when we have to ration it in the interests of other priorities.

In New Zealand, as in the United States and elsewhere, there has been a massive shift toward cultural resource management, and increasingly to CRM carried out by private contracting firms.

CRM is big business in North America, where a few large companies dominate much archaeological fieldwork. They operate as much in the world of business as they do in the universe of archaeology, with considerations of profit margins and legal compliance high on their agendas.

One can, or cannot, agree with this trend as one wishes, but the fact is that it's a reality that will shape the future of archaeology in New Zealand and everywhere.

Archaeology is now an integral part of a much larger effort to preserve the cultural heritage of all New Zealanders, whatever their origins.

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In many parts of the world, indigenous peoples are raising increasingly influential voices in archaeology.

In the United States, for example, the Native American reburial and repatriation act has exercised an enormous influence on the ways in which archaeologists and museums go about their business—and caused major controversies.

The most famous of these is, of course, Kennewick Man, which is still in the court system.

In recent years, several Southwestern tribes have formed their own archaeological units to carry out cultural resource management work in their homelands. The Hopi, Navajo, and Zuni all have such units, which employ both native American and other archaeologists.

The research carried out by these units encompasses both tribal policies and both federal and state regulations, with attitudes and perspectives on archaeological sites and sacred locations firmly governed by the tribes.

This is now it should be, for the tribal elders are the trustees of local history, of which archaeology forms a part. I believe this is the wave of the future, something that is already producing much better working relationships between archaeologists and indigenous peoples.

There will always be those indigenous people who say that archaeology is insulting or useless to tribal history, just as there are still some archaeologists who believe that science is everything, that oral traditions and native histories are irrelevant.

These attitudes are profoundly short sighted in a world where the archaeological record for future generations is vanishing rapidly. Our successors may have very different ideas about the past.

One of the greatest challenges for future generations of archaeologists is to foster close and productive relationships with indigenous peoples—a task in which the World Archaeology Conference is already assuming an important role, and something that New Zealand's take more seriously than many of their colleagues elsewhere in the world.

Let me stress, Ladies and Gentlemen, that whether you agree with me or not, that it is NOT business as usual in the comfortable archaeological world. We're entering a new era of profound uncertainty and difficulty.

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Archaeologists all over the world are facing the same emerging, and increasingly urgent, problem—

How do we prepare future generations of archaeologists for an entirely different archaeological world—one where the inventory of sites, the data base, is shrinking ever faster, a world where there are many more, legitimate stakeholders in the past, whatever its date and importance.

And how do we do it in a cultural and heritage environment where such locations as utilitarian World War I barracks, abandoned World War II pillboxes, and even the site of the Woodstock rock-and-roll festival of the 1960s seem to be higher priorities than archaeological sites?

The answer surely lies in two domains—

Firstly, convincing society as a whole that archaeology is an important part of the twenty-first century world.

Secondly, in making fundamental changes in the ways we teach archaeology, especially in colleges and universities.

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Extremely difficult, even impossible, tasks, you say? Difficult yes, impossible no—and the word “impossible” must not be part of our vocabulary. . . .

In recent years, archaeologists in many parts of the world have spent a great deal of time trying to communicate the importance of archaeology to a basically disinterested public.

In one sense, we've succeeded in making people aware of the fascination of the remote past, of the excitement of uncovering the behavior of our ancestors.

At the same time, we've done much to change the image of archaeologists in the public eye. We're generally no longer seen as Indiana Jones-like adventurers complete with whips and revolvers.

Instead, we have become specialized detectives of the past, able to conjure up astounding information from seemingly trivial finds.

Fine---and this is important.

But what we have singularly failed to do is to convince the world as a whole of the important relevance of archaeology to *contemporary* society, to a world afflicted with AIDS, terrorism, and vast differences in wealth.

With our overspecialization and penchant for obscure research, and our praiseworthy concern for site recording, we are in danger of becoming marginalized, being considered a luxury.

Ladies and Gentlemen—we are not.

Archaeology has so much to offer the world, and we need to tell it so—in voices loud and clear.

Consider the facts:

We are the only science that looks at human history over long periods of time, that gives us a collective identity as humans—As anthropologist Stephen J. Gould once proclaimed: “We are all products of the same African twig.”

Our very identity as human beings comes to us from archaeology.

No other science can better inform us about the origins of our intricate cultural diversity in the past—in an increasingly homogeneous world.

How are we similar, how are we different? How can we better respect other cultures, other societies?

Consider the intricacies of Ice Age art, ancient Egyptian civilization, the shaman-based religion of the Maya civilization...

What priceless insights they give us into human diversity, and totally different world views---cultural tolerance and respect is one of the most pressing issues of the contemporary world.

I believe archaeology contributes profoundly to our understanding of ourselves.

This alone is a reason why archaeology forms an essential part of the fabric of human history.

Archaeology, through tourism, is a major player in the global economy. Cambodia, Egypt, Mexico, Peru, and the United Kingdom—to mention only a few countries—derive much of their income from people who visit archaeological sites, take in cultural heritage.

Archaeologists are major players in the heritage business—and a business it is.

Archaeology has an enormous contribution to make to our understanding and implementation of self-sustaining strategies for agriculture, landscape, and all kinds of environmental management.

This is research that has hardly begun, research into cultural landscapes such as those of native Americans in the North American Southwest, in highland Bolivia with its raised fields, in the Maya lowlands of Mexico and Guatemala, where the Maya themselves have produced the first cultural geography, their own indigenous map of their homeland.

For the first time, archaeologists are active partners in studies of sustainable landscapes, of subsistence agriculture that has preserved traditional practices in the face of expensive, and often unsustainable industrial farming.

We offer one of the keys to the sustainable planet of the future.

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Archaeology is not about lost civilizations, golden treasure, and royal burials.

It's about us, *Homo sapiens sapiens*—intelligent, rational people who plan ahead, make decisions in good faith, who are born, grow to adulthood, fall in love, get married, have children, and die, who quarrel, fight, negotiate, and find solutions.

It's about an archaeology that is actively engaged in today's society—as a protector of heritage, as a contributor to tomorrow's world, and, last but not least, as a way of understanding ourselves, not only as New Zealanders, but as members of humanity.

This is the challenge for the archaeology of the future—something radically different from the archaeological world of today, where let's face it, we often still persist in digging up the finite archaeological record like our 19<sup>th</sup> century predecessors, while paying lip service to conservation and heritage.

Sometimes, I'm not surprised that many governments don't take us seriously.

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All of this seems like a radical change in archaeology as we know it today. And it is, something almost beyond comprehension. But it's not impossible.

We can no longer afford to go about our business as we have always done. The coming generations of archaeologists will face a very different world. The challenge of this generation is to train them for it.

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After a lifetime of teaching archaeology, I must confess to having no easy answers or solutions. All I offer are some general observations:

First, the most important courses of all that we teach are those for students meeting archaeology for the first time.

For these courses, there is no substitute for enthusiasm, for passion about the past.

It is these people, most of whom have never met archaeology before, who will be the leaders of the future.

We need to talk about the great discoveries, about basic methods and theoretical approaches, and, above all, about the role of archaeology in today's world, and about the importance of preserving our collective heritage, as well as the ethics of archaeology.

These courses need to be visually stunning, to captivate a generation raised on visual communication and on the Web.

There is nothing much new here, but we have to do it exceptionally well.

All too often, the convoluted value system of archaeology assigns the beginners to the most junior teacher.

Wrong! Beginning students should be taught by the best, as a rewarding passion and not as a tiresome chore.

If you can't be passionate about archaeology, don't teach beginners—indeed, don't teach at all. You'll do more harm than good.

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But what about the tiny minority of undergraduates, who want to become archaeologists? What about their advanced undergraduate and graduate training? It is here that we need to make the most profound changes—to reflect a real world where academic archaeologists are the minority.

At the advanced undergraduate level, the student should acquire a sound knowledge of the basics of human prehistory, and a sound familiarity with New Zealand archaeology.

He or she must gain first hand experience in the field and laboratory, and some practical background in heritage and historic preservation.

These activities have a sound rationale—to help them see potential career tracks, the opportunities that may, or may not, open up ahead.

The most despicable thing we can do is to give students any illusions as to how short jobs are in the real archaeological world.

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At the graduate level, there's a powerful reality.

Unless they choose to work in the southwestern Pacific, southeast Asia, or elsewhere abroad, in which case they have to become academics in a shrinking job market, almost all professional students will work in CRM, or some form of heritage management, often within government.

What skills do they need?

The last thing they need in many cases is a PhD. This is an academic research degree, not a qualification to carry out CRM or heritage work. MA degrees provide an admirable qualification for many people in this field.

I wager that the number of archaeological PhDs will fall radically in coming years.

What these MAs will definitely need is a sound grounding in archaeological fieldwork and analysis, in basic research methodology. This does not necessarily mean a detailed command of archaeological theory.

They will need a sound background in the issues of archaeological conservation, historical preservation, and heritage policy, including sustainable tourism.

They will require a fundamental multidisciplinary perspective, a training in the legal background to heritage and historic preservation.

Perhaps most important of all, they'll need first hand experience working with the diverse stakeholders in the past, especially *tangatāwhenua*.

Above, all they'll need training in the practicalities of CRM and heritage, so that they emerge from their training as highly prepared professionals—not academics but professionals, sought by government and the private sector both for their basic skills and experience, and also for their potential leadership abilities.

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CRM requires careful training. It's demanding work.

Projects small and large can pose intricate dilemmas for the archaeologist. A large housing development threatens the existence of a major settlement site or sacred burial mound. Should the archaeologists push for total excavation of the site before it's destroyed, or should they urge massive, and expensive alternatives that redirect the housing development and ensure that the site survives for future generations?

Each situation is different, the stakeholders involved have different agendas. There are agonizing decisions to be made.

Is the site important enough to justify complete preservation in perpetuity--and remember it's *perpetuity* that's involved?

Or is it a second level site in historical importance that could be destroyed, *provided that it's completely archived and written up for both professional archaeologists and lay people?*

Increasingly, archaeologists are confronting decisions like this on a routine, case-by-case basis, where the ideal, of preserving everything intact, is probably unattainable.

Regrettably, in most cases, the site will probably be excavated, then destroyed, perhaps just sampled. In truth, in many cases there has to be a middle ground, of benefit both to the past and to the other parties involved, especially with sites where there is likely to be a negligible visitor count.

I do not envy anyone these decisions, which require extraordinary communication skills, and a passionate belief in the importance of archaeology and the past. If we don't train people in the right skills, we won't be players at the table.

And, while in this vein, I remind you that we all have an ethical responsibility to write up the archaeological record we disturb—otherwise it's vanished as thoroughly as if a bulldozer removed it. No time to do so, you say. Sorry, that argument is ethically indefensible—unless you want to be considered a mere treasure hunter, which many people think we are. Students need to be trained in this ethic from the beginning.

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All of which raises a very important question- - -

Who should be giving such people their training? Universities, heritage agencies, or CRM professionals acting as mentors.

Surely the answer is everyone—in different ways.

Academics claim they teach archaeology as a discipline. They indeed do—but are the curricula attuned to the needs and realities of archaeology outside the academy? If other countries are any guide, such curricula are not. Some massive retooling is needed in the academic sector.

CRM professionals have a serious responsibilities as mentors of new graduates—not merely to provide themselves with cheap labor, but to foster the next generation of leaders and professionals. We're not talking potential competition here—we're looking ahead to the future.

Heritage agencies are already overburdened, but they certainly have an important role in mentorships and training.

This whole issue of training is something that can only be solved by intense, highly flexible relationships between *all* the parties involved in New Zealand archaeology—without the complications of petty rivalries.

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At this point, I'm in danger of being drummed from my archaeological clubs, condemned as a traitor to the Cause, as an Enemy of Research with a capital E.

I'm no traitor, but someone who has spent a lifetime dealing with academically trained students who cannot find jobs, who are taught that CRM and heritage are second-rate archaeological activities.

As so often happens, academic training lags far behind the faster-paced outside world, to the point that we are overproducing PhDs and academics and short-changing a contemporary archaeology that is now a profession, not a slightly eccentric academic pursuit.

The training now needed for archaeological students flies right in the face of academic values, curricula, and experience, but, somehow, we have to convince colleges and universities that “public or perish” is not everything.

Of course we have to train all students in research design and the ability to ask questions—otherwise we'll turn out CRM professionals who dig meaningless holes and write reports that tell us nothing. The responsibility lies with *both* the academic and CRM communities.

I think we're looking at multidisciplinary courses and specialties that integrate archaeology with all kinds of other disciplines.

Fifty years from now, archaeology will be part of a far wider heritage universe, one of many disciplines involved.

I think we're looking at government agencies and legislation that make archaeological sites and conservation a central part of heritage management in ways that seem unimaginable today.

Above all, I hope we are looking at world where archaeology is not considered a slightly eccentric luxury, a marginal pursuit unworthy of official support.

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Will these things happen?

Looking back at fifty years of New Zealand archaeology, one sees a deep passion, a determination to record sites, to be a voice that is heard, as much the achievement of amateur archaeologists as professionals—for which I salute you.

I'm optimistic that New Zealand archaeology and this Association will make the fundamental adjustments in the way archaeologists go about their business that are needed.

We owe the finite records of the past, and our collective ancestors nothing less.

To do anything else is to express a disrespect for our predecessors and for the diversity of human societies that is unacceptable.

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I stand before you in the early twilight of my career—I hope a long twilight—an outsider offering grateful suggestions.

I do so in the reassuring knowledge that I can offer these thoughts in the certainty that the task of turning archaeology on its head is that of my successors.

I only hope that you don't conclude that I'm out of touch.

It's a responsibility that requires extraordinary leadership and many new ideas—on curriculum, on ways of delivering instruction, on the role of archaeology in New Zealand.

How will archaeology contribute to society later in this century and in the more distant future? This, I think, is the question of questions for us all.

And I'm confident that you, and this Association, will rise to the greatest challenge that archaeology has ever faced.

Of course there'll always be the seductive lure of discovery, of teasing information from seemingly trivial finds, of writing history from archaeology.

But we must now meld these exciting tasks with more pragmatic goals, which are, quite simply, aimed at the very survival of archaeology itself.

My generation helped make archaeology a truly global pursuit, far more than merely a science of rubbish. We developed new theoretical and scientific approaches, made archaeology commonplace on TV and in popular literature.

Our successors, beginning with yourselves, have an even greater task—ensuring the survival of archaeology itself.

I know that you're up to the task.

ENDS