

OBITUARY

Vale Ian W.G. Smith (1954–2020)

Ian W.G. Smith was a pre-eminent historical archaeologist of Aotearoa New Zealand and the leading academic practitioner of his generation. His most recent book, *Pākehā Settlements in a Māori World: New Zealand Archaeology 1769–1860*, is a landmark synthesis of New Zealand's colonial archaeology providing a new understanding of Māori relationships with foreigners from contacts with Cook to the emergence of a multicultural, European-dominated society in the mid-19th century.

During his career, Ian worked prodigiously and expansively across New Zealand as both a consulting archaeologist and an academic researcher. He completed his PhD research in 1985 on pre-European Māori marine mammal exploitation in New Zealand. Ian worked as an assistant lecturer at the University of Auckland from 1982–1987. He then spent two years as an archaeologist with the Department of Conservation, where he was involved in working on some of the most significant historical sites in and around Auckland. Ian was subsequently appointed to an academic position at the University of Otago in 1989, where he stayed until his passing in January 2020.

Ian remained interested and active throughout his career in researching the evidence for human impacts on marine species distributions, including the application of archaeological and historical knowledge to solving contemporary ecological problems. The New Zealand fur seal (*Arctocephalus forsteri*) was a particular focus in this regard. Indeed, his highest citation counts are for publications relating to this aspect of his work. Ian was also involved with research on several significant Māori sites, including the Archaic settlements at Hawksburn, Papatowai, Shag River Mouth, and Pleasant River, which contain evidence of early Polynesian colonisation of the South Island. He collaborated on several projects in Remote Oceania, where his expertise in faunal analysis was particularly valued, including in the Marianas, Society Islands, Norfolk Island, and the Marquesas.

However, Ian's primary interest and research focus was historical archaeology. He excavated and analysed several historical sites for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (NZHPT; now Heritage New Zealand Pouhere Taonga) and the Department of Conservation (DOC). His research included sites on both the North and South Islands from urban areas of Auckland and Dunedin to some of the most remote European settlements in New Zealand. In the early 1990s, Ian was instrumental in rearticulating and redefining the relationship between the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) and the Site Recording Scheme in New Zealand (SRS), including the relationship between the SRS and national organisations such as NZHPT and DOC. At the time the SRS covered over 45,000 archaeological sites across New Zealand.

Major projects led by Ian during the 1990s included survey and excavations of the earliest, if ultimately abandoned, long-term European settlements in New Zealand at Facile Harbour and Luncheon Cove, in the remote Dusky Sound, Fiordland. In the early 2000s Ian led a Royal Society of New Zealand Marsden Grant-funded project exploring early shore whaling stations in the South Island. This project involved excavation of a series of sites including Oashore and Te Hoe, from which several short monographs were published.

Beginning in the early 2000s, Ian began a long and fruitful collaboration with the late Angela Middleton, who was both a fellow researcher and Ian's partner. Much of Ian's research during this time focused on the early mission contacts between Māori and Christian missionaries from 1814 until the 1840s, leading to a major archaeological investigation of the earliest mission site in the Bay of Islands at Hohi. This project coincided with preparations for the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the first missionary settlement in New Zealand. Ian and Angela also worked on the early-19th century site of Māori-European sealing on Whenua Hou (Codfish Island).

The research at Hohi involved large-scale excavations and detailed analysis of artefacts and spatial patterning among the remains of the early mission school buildings, houses, and other structures in the surrounding areas. Remarkably, the two field seasons in 2012 and 2013 were followed by almost immediate publication of technical monographs detailing the archaeological findings. Ian was later involved in developing the heritage interpretation for the area, including a signposted trail and online presentation for Rangihoua Heritage Park, where the Hohi Mission station was located. This project was nominated for several awards, including as a 'Webby' finalist for one of the top digital cultural heritage applications in the world.

Even with his productive and varied research career, Ian was perhaps even more influential as an educator, being responsible for the training of an entire generation of New Zealand historical archaeologists. Ian was responsible for orchestrating some of the only dedicated courses in historical archaeology topics in New Zealand. He led multiple field schools as well as laboratory-based courses, training hundreds of students in archaeological fieldwork methods, vertebrate faunal analysis, and historical artefact identification. He also supervised dozens of students at the Masters and Doctoral level.

Ian was a valued and supportive colleague, not only for his students and fellow academic staff in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Otago, but for his external collaborators as well. He was highly active in NZAA as well as ASHA. Ian and Angela were instrumental in organising the 2011 ASHA conference in Dunedin. Ian was a regular attendee of ASHA conferences including the 2017 meeting in Tasmania—held jointly with Interpretation Australia—where he received the award for best conference paper. Ian was a long-serving member of the editorial board for *Australasian Historical Archaeology*.

Colleagues in New Zealand archaeology and the ASHA membership more generally will greatly miss Ian's great depth and breadth of knowledge, his incisive wit, and his sense of camaraderie which were all equally apparent in the field, the classroom, and at the pub after the 'serious' work was finished.

*James L. Flexner
with assistance from Helen Leach*

Ian Smith's publications

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