



AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

# NEWS

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## Caltex Volcanoes & Giants Heralds New Museum Experience

**The *Caltex Volcanoes & Giants* exhibition is all about New Zealand.**

From the time visitors enter through a cave in a simulated volcanic lava flow they will be engrossed in the big stories of New Zealand's natural history, its volcanic past and possible future, and highlights of its fascinating biological evolution.

Opening on May 7th and running for 21 months, the exhibition is the flagship of the Museum's redevelopment project and is the result of a team effort over the past two years by many members of the Museum staff, complemented by a group of outside contractors.

The exhibition will appeal to everyone but will have special appeal and interest to families, school and overseas visitors. In line with other commercial attractions, the exhibition will have an entry fee but this has been kept as low as possible, to make the experience an affordable one, especially for families. Admission costs will be \$7.00 for adults, \$4.00 for children and \$15.00 for a family pass which will admit two adults and up to three school-age children.

Museum staff have con-

tributed an immense amount of dedicated and consistent effort in order to make this exhibition a unique, exciting and innovative experience for the public. They have called on a wide variety of skills, experience and materials and it is particularly gratifying that all the exhibits and displays have been completely produced within New Zealand.

Collections staff have researched the exhibition, sourced display items, arranged for casts and models to be made, reviewed pictorial material and written labels and provided material for the exhibition's descriptive catalogue.

Conservation staff have reviewed all artefacts going into the exhibition and carried out any necessary renovation. The display team have used their creative and technical talents to create the space, locate and protect the objects within it and prepare the labels from the supplied text. The Museum's School Service has developed an excellent education package for visiting school groups and we are appreciative of the assistance given by Caltex Oil in the printing of these kits.

continued



This special edition of Museum News is devoted exclusively to stories about the Museum's first-floor development. The *Caltex Volcanoes & Giants* exhibition, the *Weird and Wonderful* permanent children's discovery centre and ethnology visible storage areas will provide the first taste of an exciting new museum experience for visitors.



continued

## VOLCANOES & GIANTS

The Administrative Project Manager has been responsible for the sourcing and provision of resources. Public relations work has included liaison and negotiations with sponsors, publicity, media contact and organisation of functions.

The groups and individuals involved have been co-ordinated by an able exhibition team led by Dr Nigel Prickett. All Museum staff have shown both a tolerance of the disruption which the mounting of an exhibition of this magnitude inevitably brings and a commendable commitment to give the Museum's visitors an unforgettable experience. ■

## World's Largest Jurassic Ammonite

15 years ago the world's largest ammonite from the Jurassic period (about 150 million years ago) was dug out of a road cutting near Kawhia with explosives and a bulldozer. It has since been on display in the corridor of the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences premises in Lower Hutt, for scientists and school groups to view.

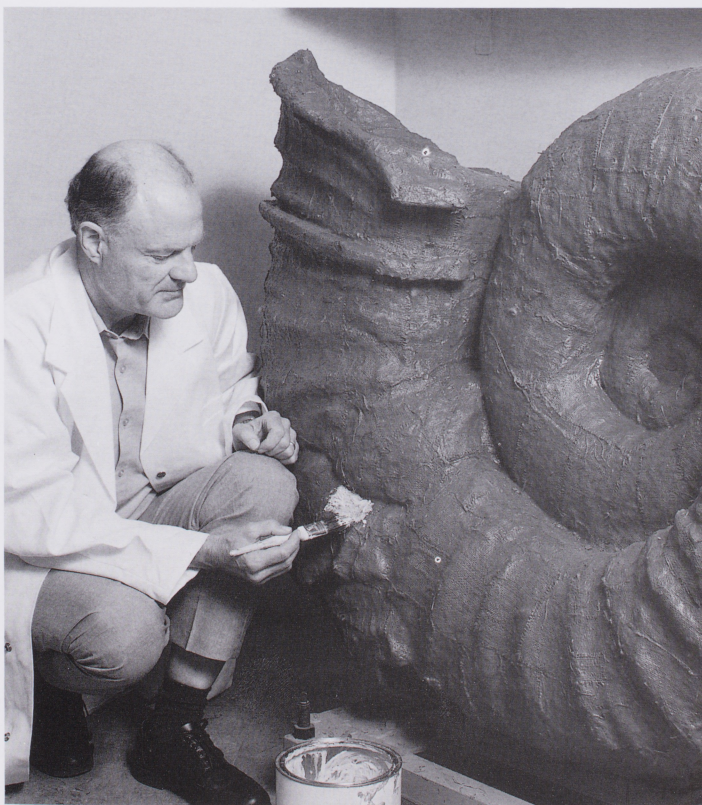
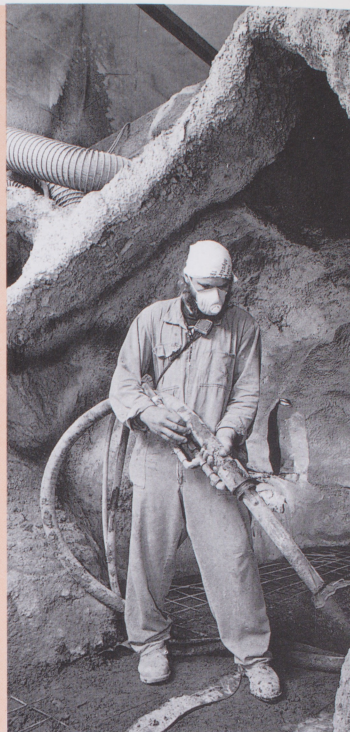
A cast of the giant ammonite will be displayed in the exhibition. From a latex mould made by Ian Keys, a palaeontologist with the Institute of Geological and Nuclear Sciences, a fibreglass cast of the ammonite has been taken and worked on to produce an exact replica of the original. Techniques used have been perfected by Keys to the extent that visiting experts have been fooled more than once into mistaking a replica for the real thing. ■

Ian Keys preparing a replica of a giant Ammonite fossil.

## Construction of the Volcanic Lava Cave

As visitors enter the exhibition they will experience something of the drama of walking inside a live volcano. Special effects will create the impression of flowing molten lava accompanied by loud volcanic rumblings.

Various techniques for forming the volcanic cave were investigated and visits were made to underground volcanic caves in Auckland to check out details such size, shape, surface texture and colour. To create the actual contours of the cave and maintain the feeling of rock, a ferro-cement technique was used involving a reinforced steel armature covered in mesh and sprayed with a specially designed concrete mix. The work of Auckland contractor Ron Grosse and his team in creating the volcano cannot be praised highly enough. ■



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An artists impression







## New Zealand's Journey through Time

A fossilised tooth of a formidable extinct shark twice the length of the modern great white shark will be featured as part of an exciting Gondwana computer interactive featured in the exhibition. The terrifying giant, *Carcharodon megalodon*, appeared in the Oligocene, about 35 million years ago, and became extinct just one million years ago. Its huge triangular teeth are found fossilised throughout the world, with many specimens from New Zealand.

The Gondwana computer interactive has been developed for the exhibition by Museum palaeontologist Bruce Hayward and Newmarket based Terabyte Interactives. It includes a computerised animation of continental drift from a New Zealand point of view ranging from 600 million years ago, when New Zealand was sandwiched between Australia and the west coast of North America and lay in the northern hemisphere, to 30 million years into the future when we expect New Zealand will have moved north to the latitude of present day Fiji. ■



## Recreating Giants of the Past

New Zealand's extinct giant animals have usually left behind little more than fragmentary bones. To give an impression of what these ancient creatures looked like, local sculptors and model-makers are building several full-sized models for inclusion in the exhibition.

In a work-shop in Grey Lynn, Kate Lang, a sculptor with a zoology degree and an eye for detail, is building four giants, much to the disbelief of neighbouring workers who have caught glimpses of enormous body-parts taking shape. Since completing the giant penguin featured in a previous *Museum News*, Kate has been working on a scaled-down, but very impressive, plesiosaur, a large herbivorous hypsilophodont dinosaur, and a larger-than-life giant weta.

Across the harbour in Northcote, a team of artists with Bill Harris Design is building the largest model in the exhibition - an animated theropod dinosaur with a height of 4 metres, a length of 8 metres and a similarity to *Tyrannosaurus*. This monster will move its head and open its jaws as it towers above the startled hypsilophodont.

The Bill Harris team is also producing a highlight of the exhibition - an animated diorama depicting a New Zealand eagle, the largest bird of prey ever known, attacking a giant moa stuck in a swamp. An animated pterosaur, a flying Mesozoic reptile with a wing-span of nearly 4 metres, completes the assemblage of animal giants from New Zealand's past.

The methods and technology involved in recreating these giants are worth noting. Most are sculpted in sections from large blocks of expanded polystyrene foam. Once the sections are connected the final surface details are perfected and the whole form is coated in fibreglass and painted. The heads are made separately and fine details like the eyes and teeth are cast individually from coloured resins. ■



## Auckland

Many visitors realise that Auckland's shows clear past. Both the Hospital has a wide experience and levelled exhibition with Domain Vol

## Rangitoto Auckland

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The fascinating Rangitoto is being prepared Department



## Auckland's Volcanoes

Many visitors to the Museum do not realise that it sits on the edge of one of Auckland's oldest volcanoes which still shows clear evidence of its explosive past. Both the Museum and Auckland Hospital have been built on the rim of a wide explosion crater now drained and levelled for playing fields. The exhibition will feature a model of the Domain Volcano. ■

## Rangitoto - Symbol of Auckland

Rangitoto, Auckland's youngest volcano, is home to plants which are not uncommon themselves but grow differently in this unusual environment. Epiphytes such as kahakaha, which elsewhere perch on tree branches, grow directly on the free-draining Rangitoto lava.

Lichens and mosses establish first on Rangitoto's bare lava. They tolerate the droughts, high temperatures and drying out and are able to function when moist again. Amongst other plants which share the ability to withstand drought are the 30 species of foreign succulents, descendants of those planted by former bach owners, which have now become naturalised. Over 50 years ago Lucy Cranwell, a former Museum botanist, pointed out the environmental concerns inherent in this naturalisation. Fortunately few of the succulents are aggressive weeds.

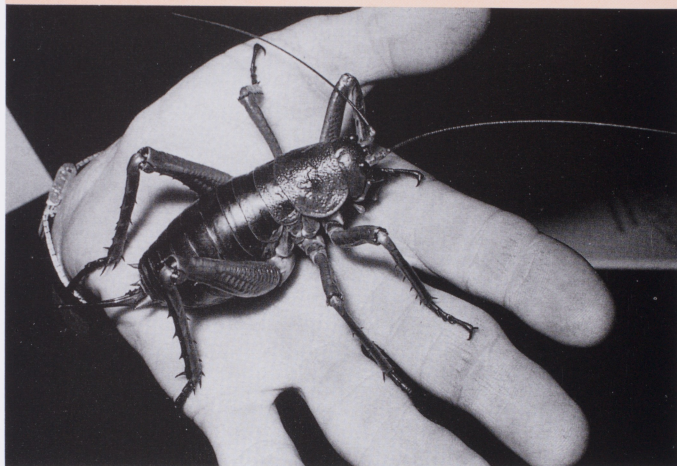
The main flowering tree to initially establish on Rangitoto was pohutukawa. It formed shaded "islands" where less hardy species could then establish. These vegetation islands have had 600 years to establish, expand and unite to form New Zealand's largest remaining pohutukawa forest.

The fascinating vegetation of Rangitoto is one of three displays being prepared by Museum's Botany Department. ■

## Giant Wetas Popular Creatures

"Have you got any giant wetas?" This is the question that visitors to the Entomology Department most often ask curator John Early. Awareness of these gentle giants is increasing as they get more publicity and at last we are realising that they are just as important as kakapo and tuatara. What's more, people want to see them but the Museum hasn't had any on display for about 25 years. The *Caltex Volcanoes & Giants Exhibition* provides the perfect opportunity to display them once more. This time the fascinating creatures will be displayed live in special cages and, because they are nocturnal, their days and nights will be reversed. They will dine on leaves, fruit, dead insects, cheese, cat food and peanut butter - but not all at once!

Most giant weta species are protected by law but the Department of Conservation has granted the Museum a permit to keep wetas bred in captivity. The two pairs of almost fully grown Poor Knights wetas, the second largest of the ten species that live in New Zealand, will be displayed in alternate weeks to reduce stress. ■



Kahakaha an epiphytic native lily, growing on Rangitoto Island.



## Permanent Weird & Wonderful Experience For Children

Following the huge success of the recent temporary children's discovery area, a new permanent Discovery Centre, called *Weird and Wonderful*, will open on Saturday, 7 May. Providing a range of stimulating hands-on activities for children, the Centre is the Museum's first permanent major development catering especially for children. It will include the latest in computer technology generously provided by IBM Computers and Microsoft New Zealand Ltd. The Discovery Centre has been developed by a Museum Exhibition Team led by Katrina Stamp.

*Weird and Wonderful* will offer a "learning is fun" atmosphere for adults and children of all ages. A special space is set aside for pre-school children and a resource centre features numerous hands-on specimens and high tech microscopes. Live natural history specimens include a beehive with a queen bee identified by a red spot and another area is packed with computer wizardry.

The Centre is located in the Cross Gallery on the first floor and there will be a nominal admission charge of \$1.00 per person. Operated by two full-time staff, it will be open from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm and will be the focus for additional holiday and weekend programmes. Special booking times will be available for Schools, Kindergartens, Senior Citizens and Community Groups.

We look forward to seeing you in our *Weird and Wonderful Discovery Centre* and promise an entertaining and unusual educational experience. ■

An artists impression of the Weird & Wonderful Children's Discovery Centre.



### IBM & Microsoft DinoMites Discovery Club

We are delighted to announce we are launching a special club for children. The IBM & Microsoft DinoMites Discovery Club will have its headquarters in the Weird and Wonderful Discovery Centre and, as the name suggests, is made possible through the generous sponsorship of these two organisations. The Museum gratefully acknowledges this significant sponsorship.

Club activities will include field trips, open evenings, computer training sessions, games, holiday programmes, involvement with museum staff, special interest programmes and more. A monthly newsletter will include contributions from children. We are keen to train young people to assist other children within the Centre and propose a *Weird and Wonderful Young Scientist Volunteer Programme*; a name for this will be sought from participants.

An application form for enrolment in the IBM & Microsoft DinoMites Discovery Club has been included in the News. Please encourage your children, grandchildren, neighbours and schools to join. The Club and newsletter will be bursting with news and information that you won't want to miss.



## "Ethnic Worlds" Visible Storage

In addition to the Maori collections, Auckland Museum holds an internationally recognised collection of ethnographic items from all areas of the world, with special strengths in Pacific and south-east Asian art and artefacts.

Students, scholars, ethnic groups and other museums constantly seek access to these collections for research projects, publications, inspiration for contemporary arts, and as loan items for exhibitions by other institutions.

For the last two years this valuable and sought-after collection has been held in inaccessible temporary storage while a staff team has worked on plans for a totally new concept of visible ethnology storage to be situated in the former geology gallery. This important public gallery embodies all the fine heritage qualities of the 1929 building. The new facility is being designed to preserve and enhance these features while providing the public with a new experience and an insight into the museum's ethnological work.

Storage systems will be ranged along both sides of the gallery and separate air conditioning will ensure that the artefacts are held in the right climatic conditions. Visitors travelling through the gallery will be able to view collection management activities and special displays. Multimedia computer interactives will provide additional in-

formation on the artefacts. A primary objective of this initiative will be to provide public visual access to a greatly increased proportion of this world-class collection.

Construction will be staged over the next two to three years. While planning continues staff are working on the collections; cleaning, mounting and repacking each artefact in preparation for the move. This major new attraction will enable the Museum to effectively manage, store and display a unique collection in a facility of world-class standard.

During the *Caltex Volcanoes & Giants* Exhibition a small display will be mounted to give visitors an indication of what they can expect from the ethnology storage installation in the fu-

ture. The display will include drawings of the development proposal and will highlight some outstanding artefacts and examples of storage methods. ■

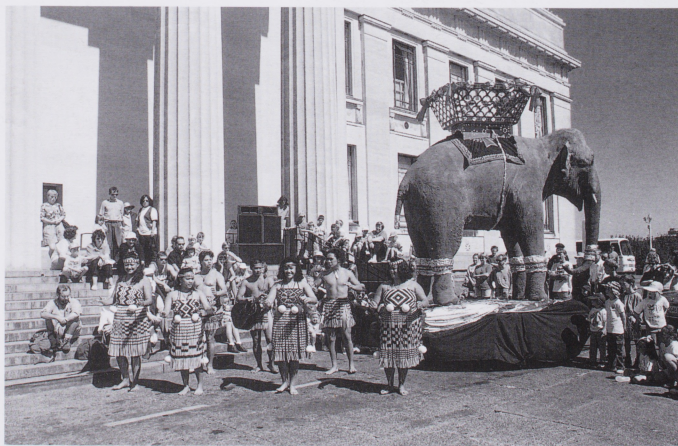


Carved Figure of a goddess from Ra'i vavae, Austral Islands, French Polynesia. Taken to England by Rev. John Williams in 1820's. Auckland Museum Ethnology Collection.

## AN ELEPHANT AUCKLANDERS WILL NEVER FORGET

The saying goes "an elephant never forgets". Well millions of Aucklanders will never forget Rajah. He was a symbol of our fondest childhood memories of visits to Auckland Museum. Dwarfed by his size, we stood in awe and gazed up at his massive frame and glassy-eyed stare and imagined what a magnificent sight he must have been once, in his natural environment. Years later, we took our children and grandchildren along to see him and they gazed upon him in the same silent wonder. Alas, the years have not been kind to Rajah. 58 years in the same place is a long time, even for an elephant and his deterioration is now beyond repair.

Rajah was removed from the Museum and farewelled at a special function in the Auckland Domain on March 27, with all the affection and ceremony such an icon deserves. He will be placed in indefinite storage off-site and will probably be used as a mascot for the proposed friends/supporters of the Museum society. ■



Ponamu Ventures performing at the function to farewell Rajah.

Auckland War Memorial Museum was erected in the Auckland Domain in 1929 and extended in 1960 as the Memorial to those from Auckland Province who died in the two World Wars. It is administered by the Auckland Institute and Museum, whose origins go back to the first Auckland Museum of 1852. Auckland Museum News is issued free to members of the Institute and Museum, a group of friends and supporters of the Museum.

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