



AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

NEWS

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Farewell to Museum Director

STUART PARK, the Museum's Director since 1979 and formerly Anthropologist at Otago Museum, left Auckland Museum just before Christmas. Stuart leaves to take up a position with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa as a member of a new conceptual leadership team, responsible for exhibitions and collection development. After 14 years in a largely administrative role, he is looking forward to being more directly involved in creative museum work.

At an official farewell function hosted by the Museum Council at the Museum on 17 December, Council President Dr Harold Coop acknowledged Stuart's wide-ranging contributions to the Museum over 14 years. Stuart's leadership led to many developments in displays, including the Maori Galleries; in special exhibitions such as the *Firth Dinosaurs*; in education and extension activities; in the improvement of collection storage and working conditions and in building maintenance.

In his reply to the President, Council, Trust Board, distinguished guests, former and present Museum staff, Stuart said: "In August 1979, I stood in the Auckland Museum with quite a number of you, on an evening like this. I spoke then of the warm welcome that I and my family had received since our recent arrival. Tonight, as I depart from Auckland Museum, I have to note that what was a warm welcome then,

Stuart is farewelled by the Museum's resident cultural performing group, Pounamu Ventures

grew into 14 years of warm support and friendship from many people in Auckland.

"There have also been friends of another sort. I think of Kave through there, who took me with her to New York; of Pukeroa, whose smiling face greeted me from every bus stop in New York and of the motley Rajah out in the foyer. This magnificent collection has a wide range of immensely wonderful objects and I have been privileged to know and learn about many of them in special ways. ▶



Assistant Director Anthony Wright (now Acting Director) presents Stuart with a gift and card from the Museum staff

continued

"I wish the Museum every success for its exciting future which I will follow with great interest. I assure you that in my new position I will continue to be a staunch supporter and friend of Auckland Museum."

Stuart takes with him to his new position the very best wishes and sincere thanks of all who have worked with him. We are sorry we are losing him as Director, but we anticipate gaining through him a closer relationship with the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa. We want to retain him as a close friend of Auckland Museum. ■

DEVELOPMENTS

CALTEX VOLCANOES & GIANTS CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY

The *Caltex Volcanoes & Giants Exhibition*, opening on May 7th and running until February 1996, is expected to attract over a million visitors. It will truly be an experience not to be missed.

Installation work is now in full swing in the first floor gallery. Before the installation programme was started, detailed drawings were prepared to indicate how the proposed construction would suitably interface with the heritage aspects of the building. Installation of the necessary heritage fabric protection screens has been carried out to ensure that important features of the original building are properly covered.

Construction has started on the volcano interior through which visitors will enter the exhibition. Parts of this are being cast from an actual underground lava cave located in a residential back garden in a volcanic area of Auckland.



Construction underway on the first floor developments.

In April, a special feature of Museum News will be devoted exclusively to the major development on the first floor. It will include a full update on the *Caltex Volcanoes & Giants Exhibition*, the *Children's Discovery Centre* and other initiatives such as *Ethnology Visible Storage*.

A number of contracts have been entered into in New Zealand for off-site production of life-size models of a plesiosaur, a hypsolophidont, an animated tyrannosaurus and pterosaur, as well as for the animated moa and eagle group.

This special feature depicts an extinct harpagornis eagle with a wing-span of two and a half metres, attacking a helpless moa trapped in a swamp. Real turkey feathers with skin attached will be used to cover the eagle's wings and some choice birds from a local poultry farm have been specially chosen for this important role.

An intensive advertising campaign will ensure that the exhibition is well promoted. Advertising on television will commence in April and major exhibition sponsor, Caltex Oil (N.Z) Ltd, will also run a television promotion giving away free children's tickets to the exhibition. ■

FEATURES

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QUESTIONNAIRE TO MEMBERS

Included in this newsletter is a questionnaire seeking information from Members which will help the Museum to cater for your special needs in the future. We very much appreciate you taking the time to complete this and returning it to us in the Freepost envelope provided. If your completed questionnaire is received before February 18, you could win one of fifty double passes to the *Caltex Volcanoes & Giants Exhibition*.

FEATURES

LITTLE BARRIER ERUPTION DATE PUZZLES SCIENTISTS

For many decades, there has been considerable speculation as to the time of eruption of the Little Barrier volcano. The limited amount of erosion suggests that it was probably earlier than 5 million years but later than 500,000 years. If this is correct, then Little Barrier would be the only andesite volcano in the Northland/Auckland area later than the Waitakere and Whangarei Heads andesite volcanoes, which have youngest ages of 15 million years.

Little Barrier Island is the eroded remnant of an andesitic stratovolcano that sits as a sentinel at the entrance to the Hauraki Gulf. Stratovolcanoes typically have a steep central cone surrounded by a gently dipping ring plain composed of laharic breccias that have slid off the cone in mud flows (lahars). The steep central cone of Little Barrier is deeply eroded but its remains still stand as the highest point in Northland or Auckland. All remnants of the ring plain have been eroded away on the more exposed northern and eastern sides but large plateau areas still remain in the south and west.

As part of an intensive study of Northland and Auckland's volcanoes, Auckland Museum curator Bruce Hayward visited Little Barrier Island several years ago to collect rock samples for dating. Four samples were sent to Dr Tetsu Itaya at the Kiruzen Institute for research in Japan, for dating by the potassium-argon radioactive isotope dating method. Dr Itaya's measurements give an age for all four samples within the range of 1.4 to 1.5 million years old.

Geologists are now faced with the problem of explaining how and why andesite magma erupted in this region so recently. ■

Little Barrier Island



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Dr Brian Gill on the summit of Nukulaelae Islet, in the Wallis lagoon

LIZARDS BECKON MUSEUM CURATOR

To carry out their important research, museum curators sometimes have the opportunity to travel and explore exotic places that very few of us would ever set foot upon. Dr Brian Gill, Curator of Land Vertebrates, tells of a recent research expedition he went on, to identify lizards in Wallis and Futuna. He also had an opportunity to study specimens collected by another expedition to the Pitcairn Islands.

Auckland Museum has a collection of about 1600 reptiles, mainly preserved whole in alcohol. The Pacific Island specimens are especially important as so few are held in the museums of the world. Among other things, they are a benchmark against which future deterioration in biodiversity in the Pacific can be measured.

Expedition to Wallis & Futuna

Last September, Brian travelled to the French Pacific territory of Wallis and Futuna to spend two weeks collecting reptiles. This expedition was largely funded from the Museum's C.H. Worth Memorial Fund.

The beautiful and remote islands of Wallis and Futuna lie between Fiji and Western Samoa. Wallis, with 9,000 inhabitants, has a large airport and is reached from New Caledonia by Boeing 737. Futuna, some 200 km from Wallis, has 5,000 people and is an hour away from Wallis by small plane. The local people are Polynesian and there are several hundred French expatriates and their families, mainly on three-year work contracts.

The lizards of these islands had never been documented, so Brian's task was to travel about and make a reference collection. Since his return, Brian has confirmed the identities of the specimens collected and is currently writing a report.

When asked about the highlights of the trip, Brian commented: "Well, certainly the culinary highlight was a lunch of coconut crab prepared by a Futunian woman called Malia. The scientific highlight was finding Murphy's Skink on Futuna - a medium-sized species hitherto known only from Western Samoa and a few northern Tongan islands."

"I saw the first Murphy's Skink on a wall as I walked through the sleepy village of Fiua. With excitement, I dropped my haversack at the side of the road and crept towards the wall in an attempt to catch the lizard. This action took only about half a minute and, not expecting to be noticed by anyone, I was surprised to find an elderly woman at my side holding forth excitedly in Futunian. I explained in

French who I was and what I was doing but in vain, as many local people over 45 do not speak French.

The woman began calling for someone and presently a shy young woman emerged and I was able to explain myself in French to her. This information was shouted back and forth, for by now half the village was on the street wondering who the strange palagi was. Interest then died away and I was given freedom to search all the nearby walls and gardens. After 45 minutes I had caught three Murphy's Skinks - enough for my purposes." ■

IDENTIFYING PITCAIRN LIZARDS

Brian Gill has also been studying lizards from remote Henderson Island, one of four far-flung islands in the Pitcairn group. The colony is administered from Auckland, the British High Commissioner to New Zealand being the Governor of Pitcairn.

Brian was asked to find illustrations of each of the six species to be the subject of a Pitcairn Island stamp issue. He later checked proofs of the ensuing paintings which were done in London by the Crown Agents who produced the stamps for release in December. The chance to advise on a stamp issue was an unexpected practical application of his research on lizards.



Two of the six Pitcairn stamps

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FEATURES

FIFTY-NINE MILLION WORDS.....

Through the generosity of the Members' Library Purposes Fund, the Museum Library has recently acquired the twenty-volume set of the second edition of the *Oxford English Dictionary*. With nearly 22,000 pages, definitions for over half a million words, and containing more than 2.4 million illustrative quotations, the edition is the culmination of a project first conceived in 1984 at the Oxford University Press. Through the combined efforts of a team of lexicographers and computer specialists, a system was designed to convert the original printed version to a machine-readable form, which also had the capacity to integrate texts of the original *Dictionary* and the four-volumed *Supplement*.

New Zealand's special link to the *Dictionary* is through Robert Burchfield, born in New Zealand and appointed editor in 1957. He was instrumental in the drive to update the *Dictionary* in a supplement in four parts, from 1972 to 1986 and to move it into the electronic age.

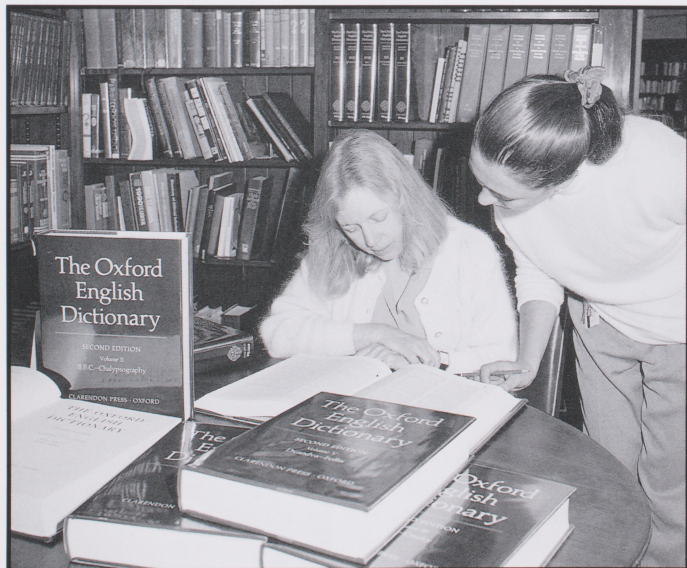
Superlatives abound in reviews of this second edition although it still has a strong British English bias. It has introduced the International Phonetic Alphabet, improved text legibility, used acid free paper, added some 5,000 new words and combined original *Dictionary* and *Supplement* in one alphabetical sequence.

Running through all the reviews and analyses there is an element of affection. After all, the *Oxford English Dictionary* has as its subject matter the whole vocabulary of the English language from 1150 AD to the present. Chaucer, Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson, Darwin, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, all have "contributed" to the *Dictionary*.

As one reviewer has commented: "Don't buy it just to let the world know how bright and cultivated you are, if you buy it, buy it to use it".

Members, readers and staff - please do just that! ■

Library staff Janice Chong and Victoria Bell admire the *Dictionary* purchased with donations from the Museum's Members



Captain William Hobson, R.N.,
1793-1842. First Governor of N.Z.
1840-42. [From a painting by
Collins about 1835]

LT. HOBSON URGES NGATI AWA TO MAKE PEACE

In the course of re-assessing and re-describing Maori manuscripts Jenifer Curnow, the Museum's Maori materials specialist, has identified an important and valuable document.

It is a letter written in Maori by an unidentified hand and signed by Lt Governor Hobson. It is dated 1840 and written at Rahera, Tokerau to the chiefs of Ngati Awa. The letter regrets the evil deeds among the tribes, saying that the Queen would not like it. It questions the good of fighting and urges the Ngati Awa to make peace as the government has heard that the chiefs of Ngati Whakaue and Waikato have made peace, which has pleased the government.

This document will join other significant original documents deposited by the Museum with the Old Colonists Museum and returned in 1965. Its recent "discovery" has led to a search for other related accessioned items, all of considerable value and significance. ■

STAFF NEWS

The Museum's Director, **STUART PARK** has resigned after 14 years to take up a new position of conceptual leader at Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa. Assistant Director and Executive Director Redevelopment **ANTHONY WRIGHT**, assumes the role of Acting Director until a new Director is appointed.

Curator of Applied Arts for the last six years, **JUSTINE OLSEN**, has resigned after six months maternity leave, to spend more time with her son.

MARY BEST retired after holding secretarial positions with the Ethnology and Archaeology Departments for 14 years.

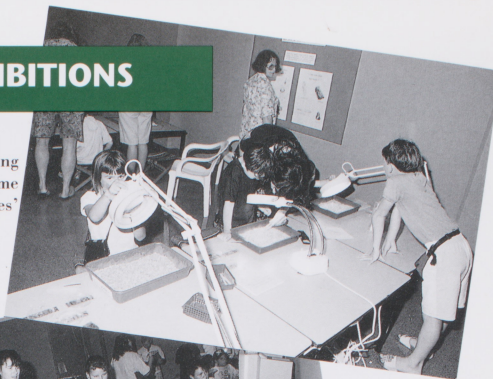
Public Relations Manager **KATHY KNOTT** has resigned to take up a position with Hill and Knowlton, International Public Relations Consultants in February.

CAROL BIDOIS, formerly Executive Secretary for the Regional Conservator with the Department of Conservation, has been appointed to the position of Executive Secretary to the Director.

ANNETTE MCKONE has been appointed as Objects Conservator. She has previously worked for the Museum as a volunteer and contract worker.

EXHIBITIONS

Children sorting midden to become 'dirt detectives'



Considerable interest in the IBM-Microsoft computer discovery area



Florence Hassall talks to a visitor about stick insects



RECORD VISITORS ENJOY WEIRD & WONDERFUL EXPERIENCE

Record-breaking numbers of children and families attended the Museum's Children's Discovery Centre running throughout January. With the intriguing theme of *Weird & Wonderful*, a range of natural history displays featured attractions from the dinosaur age through to the latest in technology. Amongst the activities offered, children could project larger-than-life images of insects onto a video screen or learn through hands-on exploration of exciting children's discovery boxes developed by Museum staff. Others learned the latest in computer technology from IBM and enjoyed a range of educational software programmes provided by Microsoft.

The Weird & Wonderful Discovery Centre was a forerunner to the Museum's permanent Children's Discovery Centre that will open this May. The Centre will feature a variety of high-tech equipment and other special features to enable children and families to explore, discover and enjoy natural science. Located on the first floor insect cross gallery, the Discovery Centre will be of world standard and will provide the families of Auckland province with a first-class natural history resource. ■

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.

Auckland Institute and Museum, Private Bag 92018, Auckland, Phone 0-9-309 0443.