



## **“BETTER TO GO NOW”: OWEN WILKES 1940–2005**

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Owen Wilkes, renowned military researcher, peace movement activist and archaeologist, died on 12th May 2005. Owen took his own life in a forest near Kawhia, almost certainly triggered by recently learning that he needed major heart surgery in the near future prior to a scheduled hip replacement. In a farewell note he stated “I do not believe in artificially prolonging life. I am already five years past my expiry date. It is better to go now than suffer years of uniformity, muddle headedness and absent mindedness. It is time to put theory into practice.” In his mid-life Owen suffered bouts of depression. Some close acquaintances believe this may have been the catalyst (Listener May 2005). Others, including myself, believe it was a totally rational decision on his part for the reasons stated above. Regardless, the life of a remarkable New Zealander, who crammed more into one decade than most people do in a lifetime, has ended while he still had so much to offer. This essay provides some insights into Owen’s extraordinary life and achievements, particularly those related to archaeology. 200 people attended Owen’s funeral in Hamilton including about 20 archaeologists. Subsequently, memorial services have been held in Wellington, Christchurch and Auckland as well as heartfelt obituaries in several regional newspapers and the Listener.

### **The South Island years**

Owen was born in Christchurch in 1940, the son of a grocer and later Kilmore Street guest house proprietor. He attended Christchurch West High School (now Hagley High) from 1954–58. He once described his school years as “unmitigated misery” but even then Owen displayed a capacity for hard work, a strong intellectual interest in field sciences, and a love for the outdoors, particularly opportunities to tramp in the back country. During the school holidays he worked in a goldmine in the Lake Brunner area (they never found any gold) but it began a long time “interest in the Coast.” His means of travel from



*Figure 1. Owen Wilkes in the early 1960s. Photo Virginia Clegg.*

Christchurch to the Coast was usually by pushbike, so he “had transport at the other end.”

Between 1959 and 1966 Owen studied science subjects at the University of Canterbury, doing a B.Sc, majoring in Geology. He went to University because in his words he was “too scared to face the world outside the education mill.” He was an off-and-on student for several years. He passed five units of the requisite nine, including Geology which he took to Stage III, but after getting disillusioned with academia he did not complete his degree, which he believed was never a hindrance.

He spent the summer holidays at the end of his first year cutting tracks in the Abel Tasman National Park and writing a park guidebook, commuting by bike between Nelson and his sleeping bag on the beach. (M. Horton pers. comm.)

Partway through his second year (1960) Owen left university and biked up to Nelson, and spent several months on what was to become a lifelong interest; archaeology. When he returned from Nelson he began working on digs in Canterbury, in the days when Roger Duff was the Director of the Museum and the museum’s archaeological society was very active.

During this period Owen forged an unlikely but enduring friendship with Tony Fomison, who went on to become one of New Zealand’s most famous

artists. They shared many adventures on Maori rock art digs, including getting stuck together in a North Canterbury cave without any food (M. Horton pers. comm.). In the catalogue that accompanied Fomison's posthumous exhibition which toured the country after his 1990 death, there is a sketch of Owen and Tony together on a dig. In Fomison's obituary (*Watchdog* 63, April 1990) Murray Horton cited Fomison as saying "I led an expedition to Lewis Pass to look at what I thought was a Maori war canoe. Owen identified it as a colonial period pig trough. Wilkes and Fomison were the most unlikely pair imaginable, starting with their contrasting physiques, but the friendship was genuine and long-lasting. Murray Horton recalls an extraordinary visual image; Owen, on a bike, towing Tony, on his bike, into a nor'wester back into Christchurch after an especially disastrous North Canterbury expedition. The friendship with Owen led the painter into politics. "I started to decide my sympathies were Left when I saw the poverty in London and Paris. I worked for Owen (in the late 60s, at Governors Bay) and when he wasn't picking tomatoes, he'd be up to his elbows looking for Omega stations. I was impressed" (Fomison, cited by Horton).

During 1962–63, after missing out on a job on the sub-Antarctica South Georgia Islands, Owen was employed as a field entomologist ("bug collector", in his words) for the Bishop Museum in Honolulu, and spent the summer working in Antarctica as a field assistant for the US Navy and NZ Antarctic Program. He also worked on two US University projects: a John Hopkins University penguin banding project; and assisting with a Rutgers University pedological study in the Dry Valleys. He was more than satisfied with the pay, \$500 a month and duty free alcohol. On 25 November 1962 Owen survived a spectacular plane crash in a remote deep field situation when a R4D Dakota aircraft he was in crashed on take-off. Six JATO (jet assisted takeoff) bottles were fired but the aircraft stalled, a wing tip dug into the snow and the plane cartwheeled. Remarkably no one was injured, including the dogs.

April 1963 saw Owen begin an 18 month term with the Canterbury Museum as a field archaeologist, working mainly on Maori sites in Canterbury, Marlborough and Westland. During this period he spent a total of six months directing excavations at the Heaphy River mouth, as well as at Wairau Bar, Moa Bone Point Cave and Kaikoura. Virginia Clegg (pers. comm.) recalled that "the Heaphy River dig was fraught by short food supply. Flap jacks day after day - typical Owen, but we ran out of flour! He walked all night to Karamea and back next day so we could complete the excavations. I thought, hell we will get scurvy, so harvested watercress and shame we cut down a Nikau for millionaires salad! Not so good without vinaigrette! Then I thought, no protein, so collected some huhu grubs! I was castigated for carrying in 2 small bottles of Beetroot wine that we brewed at home! I should have carried proper food." When he was not



*Figure 2. Owen working at Pari Whakatau, Claverley (south of Kaikoura) June 1962. Photo David Harrowfield*



*Figure 3. Owen excavating at Heaphy River May 1963. Photo Virginia Clegg.*

doing fieldwork Owen did stints as the NZAA Site Record Filekeeper for Canterbury, Nelson-Marlborough and Westland districts and found time to do a civil engineering course in surveying at the University of Canterbury. As a consequence he became very competent at mapping sites by theodolite, plane table and auto-reduction alidade. For two insightful personnel reminiscences by people who worked with Owen during this period, Don Millar and Herb Harris, refer to Appendices I and II.

In 1964 he married Joan Hazlehurst and they both went on a Canterbury Museum archaeological expedition to the Cook Islands. He was supposed to have been there for six months, but was fired after a personal disagreement with expedition leader Roger Duff. The incident also ended Owen's association with the Canterbury Museum. He resigned from the museum on 3rd October 1964.

According to Michael Trotter, "Owen wrote up the 1964 work at Wairau Bar for publication but Roger Duff would not let it go ahead. Owen fell out with Roger for the same reason that everybody who worked for him at any sort of academic level fell out with him—especially those working in his own field. As Director, Roger demanded control over everything about his employees' lives, both in and out of the Museum. This ranged from refusing to allow publication of anything that conflicted with his beliefs and findings, to interfering in their private lives. This must have been particularly unacceptable for strong individualists like Owen Wilkes and Tony Fomison—both of whom left the Museum in similar circumstances. Tony's falling out was because of Roger's refusal to allow him to publish his work on Maori rock drawings. (Roger eventually 'lost' Tony's only copy—a hand written manuscript!—which had been submitted to Roger for comment by the NZHPT). Owen's departure in late 1964 followed disagreement over his Wairau Bar findings. Roger would not allow publication of this material because it differed from his own conclusions" (Michael Trotter pers. comm.).

Owen's field note books are full of interesting observations and asides, among them this poem coined by Owen at Wairau Bar:

*The Bar with No Beer*

*Well it's lonesome away from the Heaphy and all  
By the campfire at night where the wild kiwis call  
But there is nothing so lonesome to be at New Year  
On the Wairau Bar without any beer  
Old Manny MacDonald the local chief accused the Director of being a thief  
But as the Doctor turned around  
Old Manny's fist flattened him to the ground*

Wairau Field Book, Canterbury Museum, 1035–1109: 1

Nigel Prickett recalls Owen telling him that sometime after his fall-out with Duff, Owen was in the Canterbury Museum to check out something in the site record file. He encountered Duff in a corridor. Duff's famous eyebrows shot up and he was clearly very angry. Owen was told that as far as he was concerned the site record file was off limits. The spat was subject of some discussion by the NZAA Council (Nigel Prickett pers. comm.).

In 1965 Owen worked as a dustman in Christchurch, a job he enjoyed immensely. He claimed it was this job that led to him being politicised. He pulled a newspaper out of a rubbish bin, then another, and another... When Holyoake sent New Zealand troops to Vietnam later in 1965, Owen decided to get involved in the anti-war movement. It was the beginning of nearly three decades of dedication to the peace movement which were to make 'Owen Wilkes' a household name.

He did further work for the Bishop Museum between 1965-67 working as a field entomologist on Stewart Island, Raoul Island and in Papua New Guinea, plus another stint in Antarctica attached to the US Geological survey collecting insects and recording microclimate data. His stint on the Kermadec's was short-lived. As soon as they landed a volcanic eruption forced a strategic retreat. The team spent a week cruising round the islands watching the eruption. They put up nets in the rigging to catch trans-oceanic bugs, which in Owen's words "made the boat look like a transvestite" (CANTA 23/6/72).

### **Political activism**

While in Papua New Guinea Owen embarked on a letter writing campaign exposing military activities in the Antarctica and the use of the Bishop Museum as a front for a \$500,000 US Army germ warfare project (CANTA 23/6/72). This led to his being fired by the Bishop Museum and ending any possibility of re-employment by the Americans in Antarctica. Having in effect been fired twice he decided not to work for a boss again. He bought a house and an acre of land at Governors Bay for himself, his wife and baby daughter Koa. While growing tomatoes and cut flowers there, he worked in a Christchurch bakery (for 15 years), worked as a proof-reader for the Christchurch Press, planted pine trees, did contract fencing, spent three winters as custodian of the Temple Basin ski field (keeping generators, tows, plumbing, etc., operational) and did track work for Arthur's Pass, Abel Tasman and Westland National Parks, and wrote the tracks & routes section of the first Abel Tasman Park handbook.

Owen worked as a scuba diver in 1968 for the Fisheries Research Division of the Marine Dept., counting trout and salmon in Canterbury high country lakes. In 1970 he was a member of a Canterbury University expedition to the sub-Antarctic Snares Island. He helped build the hut that is there now.

About 1970 Nigel Prickett, Steve Bagley and Owen undertook archaeological survey work at Lake Manapouri as part of the Save Manapouri campaign. Nigel recalls an incident when they were a bit short of food, and Owen cooked up the potato peels that Steve and Nigel had just discarded, while expressing surprise that they had peeled the spuds since the skin was the best part for food value (Nigel Prickett pers. comm.). I have been unable to ascertain whether a report was made of the Manapouri survey work.

In 1971 his marriage folded, after seven years, and he moved to the Fox River commune on the West Coast. After the house burnt down, the residents lived in improvised dwellings, Owen's being an old fowl house. Owen's job at the commune was to look after the garden, something he always enjoyed. The commune had its own coalmine and a cart pulled by two huge Clydesdales. During this period Owen described himself as a "West Coast subsistence farmer" (CANTA 23/6/72).

1972 saw Owen working as an editor for Alister Taylor Publishing where he worked on the *Whole Earth Catalogue* among other projects. By this time he had become something of a bulwark against political duplicity and military encroachment in New Zealand.

Between 1976 and 1982 he was a guest researcher at the Oslo International Peace Research Institute in Norway, working on a project involving research about and exposing semi-covert military and intelligence gathering facilities in Norway. This was followed by a four year stint in Sweden at the Stockholm Peace Research Institute, where he compiled a catalogue of foreign military presence worldwide and wrote the draft of a 400 page history of military development and the use of radio navigation aids. For his trouble he got arrested "for having secret information", and after conducting his own defence (for which he learned Swedish) he was eventually deported and banished from Sweden for 25 years. He told me he really enjoyed Scandinavian society and if had he not been deported he may have settled permanently in Norway.

Sometime in the '70s Owen built a solar-powered 'eco-house' near Punakaiki on the West Coast. It was pulled down by the Buller County Council while Owen was in Norway because the house did not have a building permit.

Back in New Zealand in 1982–83 Owen moved to Karamea and became involved in dairy farming and a 300 hive beekeeping partnership with his brother.

Between 1984 and 1994 Owen established himself in Wellington where he worked as a researcher for Peace Movement Aotearoa and later *Peacelink*, the national magazine of the New Zealand peace movement. In 1989 he worked as a journalist being the sole compiler of the weekly *NZ Telecommunications News*.

In 1990 Owen was awarded the NZ Commemoration Medal for services to disarmament. He was nominated by Fran Wilde, Minister of Disarmament and Arms Control. The same year saw him in Auckland working for the Centre for Peace Studies at Auckland University where he compiled a history of New Zealand's involvement in chemical warfare, followed by a history of US missile testing in the Pacific for Nautilus Research in Melbourne. It was published in 1991. About this time Owen with his partner May and their friend Alan Leadley made a 16 day coast to coast trek across the North Island from Hawkes Bay via Ruapehu to Cape Egmont.

In 1992 Owen helped May with her historical research in the northwest King Country (published by the Waikato Conservancy in 1993). His involvement in this work appears to have rekindled his past interest in New Zealand archaeology.

### **The Hamilton years**

After some 25 years of peace and environmental activism (from which he had formally withdrawn), Owen walked into my office in 1995 and said words to the effect: "all the main objectives of the peace movement have been achieved, he was bowing out, and would like to get back into one of his old loves" archaeology, and particularly archaeological survey." He asked if there was any area that needed survey and he would be in to it. I told him that one of the last real gaps in the archaeological survey coverage of the New Zealand coastline was the difficult coastal area between Kawhia south to Awakino. Within a few weeks Owen, accompanied by his partner May Bass and friend Alan Leadley began a 10 day trek (personally funded) down the coast recording some 200 sites. Finding more sites than they could handle Owen repeated the exercise a few months later from south to north. This was followed by another 10 weeks fieldwork in the same area with a \$4000 grant from NZHPT when he recorded another 275 sites in this relatively remote area (Wilkes 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1995b)

Following the retirement of Neil Laurie in 1995, Owen was appointed the NZAA Waikato filekeeper and immediately began a major upgrade of the records which he continued until his death.

In April 1996 a half time assistant archaeologist position was established by the Department of Conservation's Waikato Conservancy in Hamilton. I urged Owen to apply for it despite some reticence on his part. But he did apply, and got the job on the strength of his archaeological experience and skills developed during his Canterbury years and a 40 year track record of diverse fieldwork and research including the production of well over 200 papers & articles (most of them related to anti-militarism research).





*Figure 4. Owen (accompanied by Perry Fletcher) in October 1998 photographing the markings on the top of Mt Tauhara near Taupo, which Ross Wiseman contends are Phoenician inscriptions. Owen concluded they were nothing more than natural markings caused by roots or branches. Photo Perry Fletcher*

During his Department of Conservation years (1995–2002) Owen fulfilled the job with distinction, although always tempered with a healthy cynicism for the Department’s bureaucracy, post Cave Creek risk aversion and political correctness. Among his major achievements for the Department were the production of a definitive history of Cuvier Island (Wilkes 1996, 1998a), and comprehensive research notes on the history of Pureora Forest. These span from earliest Maori settlement, through European exploration and activities through to the modern conservation period. But with characteristic contrariness Owen decided that synthesising his detailed Pureora research into a book “was a job for someone else.” This was typical of his approach. If it was something he was interested in or thought the outcome would be useful he threw himself into it with almost an obsessive fervour and focus, and produced brilliant work, but on the other hand if he was asked to do something he thought was low priority or a waste of time it was like trying to get blood out of stone.

A thorough and meticulous researcher, Owen had a low tolerance for people who published “error-ridden rubbish.” A good example of this is his



*Figure 5. Owen & partner Mae Bass during a break on the Northern King Country Survey 1995.*

1996 review of F. Phillips' *Nga Tohu a Tainui: Landmarks of Tainui, Volume II* in which he highlighted many of the numerous errors in both volumes which seriously detract from this otherwise well conceived and executed project. He believed many of the problems could have been avoided if the author had made use of the NZAA site recording scheme which Owen championed. "A lot of wrong information has been put into the public arena, and it will be hard to get it out again" (Wilkes 1996: 152). In fact the errors in the books have been regularly replicated since they first appeared in print. Just about every book in my office has annotations written by Owen in the margins highlighting what he considered were "inaccuracies or crap."

Owen's other achievements with the Department included an inventory of the 750 odd archaeological sites on lands administered by the Waikato Conservancy, and the compilation of a comprehensive listing of about 250 Maori and European sites associated with the Waikato War (1863–64). On the practical side of the ledger he assisted with the restoration of the radar buildings and tramway on Cuvier Island (Wilkes 1997a, 1998b) and the Christmas Creek and Dancing Camp kauri dams. More recently he made major contributions to the



*Figure 6. Owen writing field notes in an isolated hut during the Northern King Country Survey 1995.*

Kakepuku Mountain and Te Toto Gorge (on the coast south of Raglan) historic walk projects. While working for the Department of Conservation he got the opportunity to work on the second season of Ian Smith's Dusky Sound project, the only part of the South Island he had not previously been to. This led to two stints of volunteer hut wardening in Fiordland National Park on the Lake Hauroko-Lake Manapouri track system, which he greatly enjoyed.

But the work that will possibly have most impact nationally was one of his last DoC jobs, a major study, in conjunction with the Forest Research Institute (FRI) of the efficiency or otherwise of different timber preservatives used by DoC on historic timber structures nationwide. This project will be continued over the

next few years but already Owen's research findings and recommendations are having a major effect on the way the Department and other heritage professionals will do historic timber preservation work in future (Wilkes 2005).

Following his retirement in 2002 Owen continued a personal survey project recording sites around the eastern side of Aotea harbour which he had started before he joined DoC, and shortly before his death became involved in the Kawhia Harbour Protection Society, more or less as their honorary archaeologist and historian. This work was greatly facilitated by his familiarity with the Waikato Maori Land Court Records. He also got back into yachting, doing two delivery voyages of yachts down the east coast from Auckland to Nelson with yachting friend Phil Skipworth. In 2003 he bought a tidy Hartley trailer-sailer which he enjoyed sailing round Kawhia harbour. Unfortunately it was totally wrecked when its mooring line broke during a storm. At the time (late 2003) he said that was the end of his yachting, but he bought another Hartley when the opportunity came up about a year ago. The latter, however, required a lot of work which had not been completed when he died. In 2005 he produced his last archaeological report, being the lead author on the Waikorea Beach shipwreck investigation (Wilkes, Ritchie, Clifford & Soames 2005).

### **Owen's contribution to the NZAA file**

From the day Owen took over the Waikato file from Neil Laurie in 1995 he focussed on expanding it and upgrading the records. Figures provided by Tony Walton reflect this. The Waikato tally for 1994 was 2473 and for 1995 was 2789. The '94-95 increase was largely due to records from Owen's King Country coastline survey (Wilkes 1994a). By March 2005 the Waikato file stood at 3755, so 996 site records were added during Owen's tenure, a 35% increase. While various consultants contributed some of the records, most were Owen's work, particularly in two surges, after he first became filekeeper (1995-96), and after he quit DoC (2003-04). But in addition Owen did substantial upgrades of hundreds of the existing records, visiting many sites for the first time (in the Waikato file many of the sites had been recorded by Steve Edson solely from aerial photographs. They had never been visited on the ground). In terms of bulk he increased the Waikato file from two 3 drawer filing cabinets to four 4 drawer cabinets. Over the past two years Owen had been working through the map sheets that comprised the Waikato file, visiting the sites and upgrading the records. He was currently working on the S15 Te Awamutu sheet. Owen also contributed dozens of records and upgrades to the Hauraki file, as well as smaller numbers to the Taranaki, Bay of Plenty, Tongariro and Auckland files. After he retired in 2002, Owen spent every Tuesday attending to filekeeping matters and often came in on other days to in his words "finish stuff."

Tony Walton's recent AINZ article on sites on DoC land (Walton 2005) prompted me to dig out a large and complex inventory Owen did for me in May 1997. He then determined there were 643 recorded sites on lands administered by the Waikato Conservancy (which did not include stewardship land). In a footnote he added there are at least another 300 unrecorded mine drives, probably 200 unrecorded shafts, 135 known but unrecorded kauri dam sites, and many more unrecorded logging industry sites. He also estimated that only about 20% of the historic sites on DoC land in the Maniopoto area were recorded, and many of the recorded sites in the Conservancy contained multiple features.

The 643 recorded sites were summarized for each land block in Vol 2 of the Conservancy's Management Strategy usually in the form of short comments like "In the Kotuku Reserve there are 3 recorded pa, 6 pits, and 2 middens", or "12 sites associated with the old Ohui gold-workings exist in this reserve." Sometimes the site record numbers were quoted.

### **An Exceptional Character**

Owen was a rare and extremely independent individual. He had a unique world view and held to uncompromising principles which, it is now clear, extended even to deciding where and when to quit his life, because he foresaw that his mobility and mental capacity might be less than what he considered satisfactory. With his strong convictions Owen tended to see things very much in black and white, seldom in shades of grey. There was a right way to do things (usually Owen's way) and he would stubbornly argue in support of his stance. And he wasn't always right, his premature death being a case in point; he had a lot more to offer even if he didn't think so.

Owen used to describe himself as a "principled opportunist", i.e., he would get involved in things (paid or unpaid) that involved travel, fieldwork or research possibilities, so long as he thought the projects were good for the planet, hence his many years in the peace movement and on many research projects.

A classic 'jack of all trades' he could turn his hand to just about anything, and if he didn't know something he would research it until he was thoroughly acquainted with the subject matter. Typically he would retreat to the public library (he seldom bought books) and would immerse himself in the literature until he considered "he was knowledgeable or an expert on the subject." He was a great researcher, honed through years of research for the peace movement, and had an incredible memory for detail. So much knowledge has gone with his passing.

Owen did not suffer what he perceived to be "fools, charlatans or rip-off merchants" lightly. With his high personal standards he sometimes showed little tolerance of the failings of others especially with regard to mistakes in published works, woolly thinking or the use of methodology or techniques he thought



*Figure 7. Owen cooking puha during his epic North King Country survey 1995.*

could be improved upon. He would routinely annotate history books, highlighting what he perceived were errors of fact or interpretation, and if he was incensed enough would contact wayward authors (especially academics) or site recorders and sometimes quite forthrightly point out the error of their ways. Owen also had a well known curmudgeonly streak. He could live on the smell of an oily rag and expected others to do the same. He could also be downright perverse at times, deliberately doing things the hard or uncomfortable way. An example that springs to mind is when we installed a gas-heated hot shower in the house on Cuvier Island, Owen suddenly decided that going for a dip in the cold sea every night after work was “more refreshing.” His refreshing dips lasted about

four days before he started using the shower. He blamed me “for introducing him to and hooking him on power tools at the expense of craftsmanship.” Owen also had an interesting angle on time. As far as he was concerned there were seven working days in a week and he thought people should have the right to decide which two they took off. In recent years Owen divided his time between living with his partner May Bass in Hamilton and spending time together at his simple bach (in his words “three Army huts joined together”) at Kawhia where he was largely self sufficient from his wonderful garden there.

Although he made many great contributions to the Department of Conservation’s endeavours he often expressed reservations about working with a government department and having to do some tasks that he just did not want to do or thought were low priority. It eventually led to his decision to retire in 2002, but he came back and did much of his former DoC work, the stuff he enjoyed, for free. With his natural raconteur skills and subject knowledge Owen was a great field trip leader and was always in demand to guide field trips. He prided himself, as a consequence of his thorough background research, on being “able to answer any question someone might fire at him” during a field trip.

I greatly enjoyed the times we worked together on historic projects and his intellectual inputs into them. I’ll miss our debates (and they really were debates) on many issues. He used to get really worked up about pervasive social diseases such as political correctness and the virtual outlawing of common sense with regard to risk management these days (both of which Owen felt this country had lost the plot on). As the recent TV and newspaper stories have highlighted, Owen will be remembered as a tireless worker for global peace, but he will be remembered locally for the output and friendships he made from his rediscovered passion for archaeology (particularly Waikato Maori archaeology and history)

Owen has left an indelible mark on and made a difference to New Zealand’s social history. He is regarded in Peace movement circles as the intellect behind New Zealand’s anti-nuclear stance. Although less well known in the eyes of the public Owen also made significant contributions to New Zealand archaeology on both main islands, albeit with a 20 year gap in between while his focus was on the Peace movement and its objectives. Farewell friend, so much has been lost with your passing.

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### *Owen Wilkes' Records in the Canterbury Museum*

During his time as filekeeper and employment by the Canterbury Museum in the 1960s, Owen compiled many valuable but generally unpublished records. The most valuable resource is 12 fieldbooks consisting of four notebooks (numbered 153–474; No's 1 & 2 are missing) and eight numbered exercise books (numbered 475–1342) The fieldbooks are written in day-book style and record interviews with locals, observations about sites, site descriptions, section drawings, personnel, etc. (Roger Fyfe pers. comm. 2005). They encompass fieldwork on sites in Canterbury, the Marlborough Sounds, the West Coast and Wairau Bar. Judging from the sequence of page numbers there appears to be a significant gap between the Wairau Bar and West Coast books (pages 1109–1266).

There are several folders which contain miscellaneous but original interesting material prepared by Owen, especially about Wairau Bar. Some of the notes are quotes and information copied by Owen from other sources, but the overwhelming volume is original notes, observations, drawings, graphs etc. In addition there are envelopes of photographic negatives and excavation plans (Wairau Bar, Dashing Rocks, Waiekino and other sites), maps of Pahaoa and Palliser, and annotated copies (on tracing paper) of J.C. Drake's hand-drawn plans (1863) of Maori pa and settlements at Taramakau and Hokitika (Roger Fyfe pers. comm. 2005).

## Appendix I

### “It was a pleasure and privilege to excavate with Owen Wilkes”

*Don Millar*

It was my pleasure and privilege to excavate with Owen Wilkes on several occasions. I first met Owen when I was teaching in Golden Bay, where he had undertaken a site survey of the region. I was impressed with his determination to visit and record as many sites as possible, some requiring considerable “muscle energy” to reach.

When Owen returned to excavate at the Anapai site in Tasman Bay I was able to join the small team. Owen was single minded in his approach to archaeology. He was there to find out as much as possible about the site and recorded and readily discussed every aspect of the excavation. Site evidence “inferences” were at times extensively debated but did not interfere with the practical nature of “getting on with the job.”

Several days excavating at the mouth of the Heaphy River were again indicative of Owen’s passion for archaeology. He was always first up in the morning and on the job as soon as possible. Although some of us preferred a more varied diet, Owen was noted for his liking for “pog”, rolled oats boiled in a large billy and often eaten cold on following days. Army biscuits provided Owen with some variation to his basic diet.

In May 1963 Owen led a small team to briefly explore the Charleston Caves (near the Nile River) on the Coast. A crew of two from the National Film Unit joined us for a time. Owen and Ron Scarlett were ecstatic at the extent of the tunnels and chambers and the considerable deposition of moa bones in particular. We were not particularly well equipped as far as lighting was concerned and sleeping in the caves was not particularly comfortable but there is no doubt that Owen’s enthusiasm was infectious and kept us well focused.

There were times when Owen was perhaps “excessively adventurous.” While we were tramping in to the Heaphy River site, he chose to take a shorter route across the stony beach while his more cautious mates remained on the higher bush track. A high wave roared in and Owen was swept off his feet and tumbled in a sodden state several metres up the beach. Similarly crawling and squeezing through narrow cracks and gaps in the Charleston caves was not a problem for Owen as his determination to find out as much as possible was paramount.

Owen’s methodical and insistent completion of all intended squares was obvious during my second season as a member of the team at Wairau Bar. His explanation to the team gave a clear indication of what he was hoping would be revealed, although this was not to be interpreted as a biased expectation. The

excavation of a spectacular cache of five argillite adzes did not relegate other finds and interpretive observations to a position of less importance. Owen was thorough, pleasantly demanding of his team and always ready to discuss the range of archaeological possibilities and interpretations.

Although Owen had more public recognition because of his individuality and involvement in the peace movement, his significant contribution to New Zealand archaeology was backed by dedication, enthusiasm, a willingness to go anywhere and an ability to communicate directly and effectively. A person whom one will never forget.

## **Appendix II**

### **Owen Wilkes—(most of) a personal account**

#### *Herb Harris*

Towards the end of 1960 at the beginning of the school holidays my mother picked up a couple of hitchhikers on the Takaka Hill and brought them home for lunch. The older of the two was Owen Wilkes, about 18 or 19 at the time, who with his younger brother Allen was heading back to Totaranui for another stint of work at the headquarters of the then Abel Tasman National Park.

Later that summer while hiking in the park with a friend Bob Roy, we joined up with Owen and his brother; Maurice Sinclair, a student friend of Owen's; and a local Takaka lad, Harry Holmwood. We spent a part of our holidays exploring in the park while Owen and Maurice worked on track maintenance to supplement their university costs.

Later in August the same year I met up with Owen and Maurice when they were working for the Nelson Lakes National Park. Here Annette Jones, a student associate of Owen and Maurice's, a cousin of Annette, and Owen's brother Allen joined us. While Owen and Maurice established the Upper Travers hut the rest of us explored the surrounding country. It was on this trip that the idea of walking the relatively unheard off Heaphy track was first mooted. This later became a definite planned excursion for the end of the university year. So it transpired that towards the end of 1961 Owen, Annette, Ron Scarlett, ornithologist of the Canterbury Museum, and myself gathered in Westport and made our way to Karamea, and on to the Kohaihai. No bridges over the rivers in those days and although the formed path navigated the worst of the headlands the going wasn't too bad as this work had been done to bridle-path standards by the county councils at both ends of the track. The Heaphy track was of course, and still is as far as I know designated a public road. The land around the mouth of the Heaphy was being grazed at the time as crown lease

land and there were old yards and a shepherd's hut in which we stayed. The Heaphy track had in former times also served as a stock route between Golden Bay and the West Coast.

It was early in our stay here that I picked up an unusual rock on the lagoon beach. I still remember the excitement in Ron Scarlett's voice as he watched me approach the hut. His sharp eyes had from a distance spotted the unmistakable form of a Maori hogback adze. The find resulted in a change of plan as Owen and Ron had come to explore tombs and caves for bird remains. Instead a dig was begun on the land directly above the spot where the adze had been found. On subsequent University trips the remains of a village were uncovered and data and finds from these digs are now to my knowledge in the keeping of the Canterbury Museum.

By this time I suppose I had got to know Owen quite well. Being young, and realising the interest my find, a piece of grey argillite of D'Urville origin, had sparked, it had become a possession which I was unwilling to relinquish. Ron Scarlett determined that our trip was a museum expedition and therefore the adze should be handed over to that institution. A tug-of-war ensued in which Owen kept his silence. It was the breaking of that silence and the ensuing judgment of the situation that Owen made which clearly showed (at least to me) a clear mentality and a fairness which I later perceived to be expressed in his thoughts, opinions and actions where social values were at stake. I use this story only to illustrate Owen's basic sense of social justice. Ron had been out of order as Annette, Owen and I had instigated the trip, though subsequently on reflection I now think that Ron was right in a way and that the adze should have been given over to the museum as part of the Heaphy collection. For the moment it has been misplaced but should it come to light in the future that is where it will go.

I don't think I idolised Owen (he was a few years older than myself) but rather as our relationship unfolded I like to consider myself a critical friend. Owen personified some of the 'difficult' characteristics that I have noticed in other strong go-it-alone types. These people often seem at times to be torn between the drive for physically or mentally taxing endeavours, apparently unaware or unaccepting of their associate's and companion's shortcomings and weaknesses, and on the other hand the strong desire for the warmth of their companionship. If you did not keep the pace you were left behind, not out of derision or any judgment but simply because you were no longer there at the front so to speak, no longer in mind.

There is no doubt that Owen was a hard taskmaster but equally it could be claimed that paradoxically he was very much in touch with his humanitarianism and compassion. He delivered from the point of encouragement and inspiration,

and if that did not work then he lost interest, or rather went on and one was left to one's own devices. Owen was driven in each and every situation, whether at work or play, research or party, expedition or sitting by the fire, there was no such thing as idle. He exuded a strong nervous energy, if he were cooking he would also be reading or mending or something useful, always purposeful.

There was something about Owen's energetic nature seeming to hold as it were, an exclusive element which one could partake of or not. This was Owen's territory and your input was welcome as long as the tennis ball, so to speak, was aloft, but if you missed your shot or the ball disappeared out of sight, the engagement ended and the sense of wasting time reinstated itself like a tangible force.