

The Bright Archaeological Light that was Angela Middleton¹

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It seems remarkable when considering Angela Middleton's contributions to archaeology, that she came relatively late to the discipline. She was 44 in 1997 when she graduated from the University of Auckland with a BA in Anthropology. She had been busily engaged in a whole series of other careers before that: photography, book publishing and retailing, silk-screen printing, and a coordinator of the Ponsonby Community Centre in Auckland and then social worker in the same city. The details of these earlier aspects of her life, which suggest an adventurous, inquisitive, and determined personality in themselves, can be found in other publications (Smith 2019a, b). Here we concentrate on her archaeological career which was truly impressive when considering its trajectory over only two decades up to her death in March 2019. She first became interested in archaeology from the 1990s completing her BA through part-time study. In 1998 she began her MA thesis, *Reading Landscapes for Meaning at Tataraimaka, Taranaki*, completing it with a First Class result in 1999. It was through this study that she established one of the primary themes of her research, locating physical remnants in New Zealand's landscapes of the dynamic interplay and overlay of Māori and Pākehā (European) cultures. Her PhD, completed in 2005², focused on missionisation with the site of Te Puna in southeast Bay of Islands as the field location. In 2003 she shifted to Dunedin and was a part-time Teaching Fellow (2003–2006) and Lecturer (2006–2011) in archaeology at the University of Otago. She worked briefly for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust, before establishing an archaeological consultancy company, Arch Hill Heritage in 2005. She managed to balance well both a commercial and research career. Anyone who has tried this knows it is no mean feat.

In 2012 and 2013 she collaborated with fellow archaeologist and partner in life Professor Ian Smith³, and with the Department of Conservation and local Iwi (tribes)

in archaeological and historical research on the first permanent settlement instigated by Europeans in Aotearoa (New Zealand), the Hohi mission station established in 1814. The site had been on Angela's priority research-list for some years as she had become very familiar with it during her PhD research. It was part of the same history-rich landscape, located just over a kilometre from the Te Puna mission, which had been established 18 years later. The research at this site, almost 200 years after its initial European settlement, provided a detailed picture of mission life and interactions with Māori. It gained widespread publicity and community support, and contributed significantly to interpretation at the greatly expanded Marsden Cross Walk and Rangihoua Heritage Park.

Angela ultimately went on to author 26 books, chapters and or articles. Her contributions, however, to archaeology were much more than simply publications. Her determined focus on missionisation in Aotearoa/New Zealand has instilled in a whole generation of archaeologists the importance of this phase in the country's history and the immense contributions that archaeology can make to this period, which up until very recently has been largely ignored by the discipline. Much of Angela's work highlighted the lives of women in the historical contexts that she studied. This included not only missionary women, but also those from the Māori world. In 2018 she published a paper in the *New Zealand Journal of History* concerning Hariata Hongi, the daughter of a prominent Ariki (Paramount Chief), who played a significant but poorly known role in important events in northern New Zealand throughout the nineteenth century.

Angela sought and established genuine collaborations with Māori, many of whom joined for various periods on a range of the excavations she directed and, in some cases, jointly authored research. In this she highlighted the value of archaeology in understanding and helping preserve the past amongst Iwi of the north who had previously often had mixed experiences with the discipline. Her influence also spread far beyond the shores of her homeland. She was widely acknowledged globally as one of the leading archaeological scholars in the field of missionisation. Angela attended and presented at most annual conferences of the New Zealand Archaeological Association (NZAA) over the last 20 years and was a regular attendee of the Australasian Historical Archaeological Society (ASHA) meetings.

1 Some detail included here has been gleaned from obituaries authored by Ian Smith (2019a, b) and a biography written by Wendy Harrex published in the Otago daily Times on the 16th November 2019.

2 It won the Australasian Society for Historical Archaeology's Maureen Byrne Award for best MA or PhD thesis.

3 Ian Smith who had been battling illness himself for some period sadly died in January 2020.

Despite recent major surgery, she was in fine form at her last meeting of the former, the combined NZAA/Australian Archaeological Association gathering in Auckland in November 2018. All the authors contributing here had varying contacts with Angela over her archaeological career and we recount some of the more memorable moments.

Harry Allen was the de-facto supervisor of most students who got involved in archaeology of the historic period at Auckland University. He recounts his long association with Angela.

I vaguely knew Angela well before becoming the supervisor of her Masters in 1998. She moved in similar hippy circles in Ponsonby with her stint managing the Ponsonby Community Centre and also as a social worker in mental health

at Auckland, where other mental health workers I knew also knew her. When she graduated with her BA in 1997, I was lined up as she started to look around for a supervisor for her intended work on Taranaki. She was a descendant of colonial settlers there and wanted to do her historic archaeological research there on the Tataraimaka Block, an early New Plymouth land sale. We survived the MA that was completed in 1999 and Angela was on a roll, but I was soon to realise that she could also be a feisty customer. Following the Masters I encouraged her to gain more archaeological field experience as her work to that point had been more historical than archaeological. It was my turn to do a fieldschool at Auckland, ANTHRO 317 Field Methods in Archaeology, so I got Angela appointed as the fieldschool tutor and in January/February 1999 we and a team worked at Butler's Point, where we targeted the remains of an 1840s



Figure 1. Field crew at Hohi Mission site 2013. Top row: Angela Middleton, Tristan Russell. Second row: Tristan Wadsworth, Kiri Sharpe. Third row from top: Megan Lawrence, Kim Bone, Rosie Geary Nichol, Naomi Woods. Front row: Raewyn Ormsby-Rihari, Justin Maxwell, Ian Smith, Jessie Garland, Hugh Rihari (Photo: Tristan Russell).

trading store. All went well on site but later Angela put in a formal complaint to the University that I was trying to force her to go beyond her contracted hours when I asked her to help with the student projects in Semester 1.

Again, we survived the experience and again I was appointed as supervisor (along with Peter Shepherd) when Angela was successful in getting a PhD scholarship and she came up with the topic of the historical archaeology of early Maori and Pakeha interaction. As a field site she initially targeted the early nineteenth century pa site of Otuihu in the Bay of Islands which had been a melting pot of early interaction. She spent considerable time presenting at hui in the area to gain Maori permission to work on the site. This proceeded very well, and everything seemed to be going fine. Together we planned another fieldschool for Otuihu, but at the last minute, key members of Ngati Manu closely connected to the site expressed reservations. Permissions were on hold. We had 21 students all signed up and no-where to go, but thankfully through Simon Best an alternative site was found, that of Purakau an early Catholic mission site on north Hokianga and the fieldschool went ahead in February 2001 with Angela again a fieldschool tutor and with Simon as joint leader. I did not push too much this time on input post-fieldwork.

At the same time Angela continued to search for another field site for her PhD research. Serendipitously, through her Ngati Hine/Ngati Manu contacts she had made during hui associated with her proposed Otuihu research she was recommended for a private consultancy to do an archaeology survey on a large piece of farmland in the southeast Bay of Islands on which the site of the Te Puna Mission station was located. She was immediately alerted to this extraordinarily well-preserved landscape and it became the core of her PhD proposal. She officially began in 2002 and completed her thesis in 2005. She was rewarded with a contract to publish her thesis for Springer Press...and they paid an advance! Many years later she told me that she had been contracted to write a Waitangi Tribunal report for Te Aho Claims Alliance – Ngati Manu, Ngati Hine and other Inland Bay of Islands hapu, adding that 'Yes, Ngati Manu came back to me wanting me to work for them! And sorry that I hadn't done the PhD there!'

It was during her negotiations with Ngati Manu to get permissions to do fieldwork at Otuihu that Stuart Bedford first met Angela in 2000.

I was on a familiarity trip of the Northland region in late 2000 having just taken up the post of Regional Archaeologist for the New Zealand Historic Places Trust (now Heritage New Zealand), and being aware of the Otuihu site and its extraordinary potential, was keen to join Angela in her negotiations. Unfortunately, and despite my best efforts at waiata (song in support) this was her last meeting which did not end in successful approval. Soon afterwards though through her engagement with the as-

essment of a large rural block located in Rangihoua Bay in the southeast Bay of Islands we were to meet again. We visited the site together to assess its archaeological values and to discuss various development proposals of the new owners. They had bought it off a family who had retained ownership for 5 generations and were descendants of the missionaries who settled there and established the Te Puna mission station in 1832. It was a truly remarkable place with an almost entirely intact archaeological landscape, dating from well before first European arrival through to the earliest European contacts prior to initial missionary efforts in 1814. Unfortunately, as is so often the case such landscapes are only recognised once their development has been proposed. Inevitably tensions arose between developers and heritage concerns but Angela persevered and managed to negotiate a fine balance in this often-strained setting. Her focus became the Te Puna mission station and in 2002 she directed what was to be, remarkably, the first serious archaeological investigation of such a site in New Zealand. It returned fabulous data and Angela crafted a wonderful history in combination with historical sources. She remained very connected with this wider landscape and was a key advocate of it being listed as an Historic Area, a status that helped promote its protection beyond the archaeological provisions of heritage legislation. I re-connected with mission archaeology in Vanuatu from 2013 where I have co-directed a series of fieldschools that incorporated Presbyterian mission stations on the islands of Aneityum and Aniwa. Angela's hardbound book, *Te Puna – A New Zealand Mission Station*, has been a key piece of the fieldwork equipment used as an essential teaching and researchers guide.

Martin Jones recalls collaborating with Angela on the preparation of the Rangihoua Historic Area listing – the largest carried out in northern New Zealand at that time.

The listing of Rangihoua in the mid-2000s was a major undertaking that could not have started, let alone completed without Angela's fundamental input. As well as her enthusiasm for the project, Angela's research abilities, in-depth knowledge of the place, and engagement with Iwi perspectives were absolutely critical to its success. Although I had worked in listing for a couple of years previously, this was my first involvement in assessing a large and complex landscape with deep and enduring connections to Aotearoa New Zealand's bicultural beginnings as well as pre-European Māori history. For this undertaking, I could not have wished for anyone more sharply rigorous or warmly supportive as a colleague than Angela. The breadth of her work made a deep impression, influencing approaches to subsequent listing projects.

Angela's many strengths included an ability to weave together strands of evidence from different sources and disciplines. Like Dame Anne Salmond and Judith Binney, she had a capacity to interpret and present the past to a



Figure 2. Angela Middleton in the study at home, North Dunedin, November 2014 (photo: Linda Robertson, Otago Daily Times)

wider public in a clear and engaging manner, both through the written word and by using elegant visual imagery. After working on the Rangihoua report we would occasionally meet up when she was in Auckland or were both at conferences, when she would talk about her various book deals. One of the many legacies that she has left us with is the insightful and beautifully presented *Pēwhairangi*, which covers the wider context of engagement between Māori and missionaries in the Bay of Islands.

Jessie Garland was a student at Otago University where she did her BA and MA. All through this time she had close associations with Angela and Ian and ultimately would co-author papers and volumes with them.

Many of the anecdotes I have about Angela are probably not appropriate for publication and I am certain she would not appreciate my expanding on them in too much detail. There were several occasions during the Hohi excavations when she shocked all the students with hilarious and unexpected stories during drinking games, coming out of left field and leaving everyone in stitches of laughter. She was a very funny person, dry and forthright and sharp. Always very supportive, but never shy of constructive criticism. She and Ian both encouraged me to do a PhD, although

Angela tried to get me to do it on mission stations for a little while before other opportunities associated with the Christchurch earthquake became my choice. She gave me my first archaeology job, analysing the artefacts from a site she had excavated in Dunedin while I was doing my MA and she taught me a lot about material culture analysis, especially glass, just through visiting the lab while I was there and answering questions when I had them.

A lot of my memories of Angela are hard to put into words. They are just ordinary moments—having tea with her and Ian in Dunedin, a mutual appreciation of Evansdale cheese, talking about historical archaeology at conferences or in the lab or at their house. St Bathans, the nineteenth century gold mining town in Central Otago, is a place I'll always associate with her (and Ian)—she had a house there, and in part because of that, there was a quite a bit of student archaeology out there. I did my MA on an assemblage they excavated from the old cottage hospital there and Otago Anthropological Society spent at least one fun weekend out there recording the water races above the Blue Lake with the two of them. We were all very lucky to have had the opportunity to spend time with and learn from Angela and I suspect I will be feeling her influence on my work for a very long time to come.

James Flexner first came across Angela's work while a graduate student at UC Berkeley, and eventually got to know her through ASHA and other professional organisations.

Unlike the others here, I first got to know Angela through her writing rather than personally. The work she did at Te Puna and her subsequent publications in various articles and a book in Springer's Global Studies in Historical Archaeology series are really a model for anyone pursuing PhD research and then getting a local story recognised on the global stage. Likewise, the rapid jointly authored publication of monographs from the Hohi field seasons remains an incredible feat. The 2012 monograph on the first field season was published in the same year as the excavations, a turnaround rarely if ever accomplished in academic writing! Ironically, I had been a student at University of Otago during a semester abroad in 2003, and even had a few lectures from Ian, but most of that semester was spent snowboarding and travelling around the South Island so it wasn't my most studious moment.

When I finally did get to meet Angela as well as Ian at the 2011 ASHA meeting, I found them remarkably supportive and welcoming. I had flown from Virginia to Dunedin for the meeting and was incredibly jet lagged. They invited me over for a cup of tea, a biscuit, and a quick nap as a pick-me-up before the conference dinner. After that we were in regular contact and became close colleagues, catching up regularly over emails or at annual conferences. Angela and Ian's work at Te Puna and then Hohi were inspirational in my own research into Vanuatu missions, and I feel very lucky to have gotten to know both of them over the last decade.

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