

‘A well-stocked mind’

Inside Jack Diamond’s manuscript collection

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Auckland Libraries

written and Typed 1966

still applicable 1973

NOTE FROM J.T. DIAMOND.

1986 I have completed sorting and putting into bundles at least 100 of my notes. 1978 I am continuing work in some cases.

So you are sorting and indexing my notes. I wonder if it is with pleasure or resignation? Actually you are doing what I longed to do; not just to put these notes in orderly array, but to have the pleasure of rediscovering the many incidents in the history of the Western Districts which in the past twenty years, have faded from my memory. Some incidents which, at the time, seemed unimportant could now be the key to the solution of a project.

I agree with you that these notes are in complete disorder and now doubt you consider me an untidy person, but rather than dwell on my shortcomings, concentrate on the lessons to be learned from my experiences and mistakes. In 1933 I was to give an afternoon lecture at the Auckland Museum. The Chairman asked me how long I intended to speak. I told him I never exceeded an hour and a quarter. He thought for a while and then tactlessly replied that nobody could talk for that length of time on the history of the Waitakere Ranges!! My first big public lecture and to be told this. Using slides to illustrate my talk, I did speak for just over the hour and at the conclusion a reporter came up to me and said that contrary to his expectations of a dreary talk, he had thoroughly enjoyed it. Would I help him with a few details? I did so and then he asked me what degrees I had. NONE!! But surely I had some letters after my name? NOT! What a pity, anyway the reporter would do the best he could for me.

That year I was the only lecturer in the series not to be reported in spite of the fact that I had attracted the largest audience. Two years later I again gave an afternoon lecture, but this time two lecturers in the series were not reported. I was one of them, so at an early date I learnt that the right piece of paper meant a great deal. What has this got to do with my untidy notes? Nothing but I repeat these episodes to show how necessary is a degree in the academic and newspaper world.

When I first compiled an index for my notes, I too like the chairman had no conception of the amount of historical material that was to be gleaned on the Western Districts. My index had proved adequate

for other boroughs and districts but as time went on I found that the system lacked elasticity. For instance "Transport" under which was grouped notes on traction engines, bullock teams, coaches, railways etc. became unwieldy and had to be broken down into smaller groups so that an index was required for the index. To overcome this I finally perfected a system in which I divided the area into sections conforming as close as possible to its geography. For instance Auckland would cover all the watershed of the Manukau stream.

This Section - No. 3. - in my indexing system was broken down into its various parts starting with A for Buildings, Sites and Houses down to at the present time - 1956 - Z for General Views and Townships. This method was arrived at after consultations with Eric Evans of the Auckland Museum. I did not make a start at indexing my notes because

A. I wished to try the system on my photos which were also in a chaotic state.

B. I considered that it was far more important to collect stories and memories of the old people of the district while there was time. I felt sure that I would live to retire when I would have time to do what you are now doing.

I am fully aware of the difficulties of the task ahead of you. Whereas I personally knew the informant and would be able to assess the probability as to which version is correct you will have no such guide. I knew Les Williams had an exceptional knowledge of the Big Muddy Creek but was busy on the Titirangi area. I would back any Alex or Gus Bishop on Titirangi but not on Big Creek, Bill Burr on Huia but not on Bethells and so on but this is not always the case. For instance Alfred Hill was excellent on Huia and Kihotapu and many other areas, Dick Baker on almost all the area except Huia and Whangapoua, and so I can give no guide because I came to know them so well that I instinctively knew when they were sure or otherwise of the information imparted. You will just have to work it out for yourself.

Also I have left out what to me was implied information. E.g. Dr. Follen had a brickyard. I could have written Dr. Follen started a brickyard on the Whau Creek down towards the end of Roselawn Rd. etc etc but I know all that from personal exploration so in most of the early notes I eliminated all what was to me superfluous details. After all they are my notes and I did not anticipate anyone having to correlate them.



Written and Typed 1966
Still applicable 1973
Moro

NOTE FROM J.T. DIAMOND.

1986 I have completed sorting and putting into binders at least 1/2 of my notes. 1978 I am catching up

'So you are sorting and indexing my notes. I wonder if it is with pleasure or resignation? Actually, you are doing what I longed to do. Not just to put these notes in orderly array, but to have the pleasure of rediscovering the many incidents in the history of the Western Districts which in the past, twenty years, have faded from my memory'.

J.T. Diamond, 1966

My Research.

How it was Conducted and my Observations.

Note. I gave another lecture with the same title to the West Auckland Historical Society in February 1997. See Holder No. 6.13. p. 78.

A. Page 1. Resume of my research and the people who assisted me.

B. Page 8. Examples and observations of my treatment as an historian.

C. Page 12. What I should have done and what I would have liked to have done while researching the history of the Waitakere Ranges.

D. Page 14. A cynical review of my research written after unwarranted criticism of my work.

John T. Diamond
December 1979.

E. Page 17. Destruction of historic material.

Page 16. Update 1997 on future of my information.

My Research.

How it was Conducted and my

'I defend vigorously the state of my notes and make no apologies for them. I maintain it was better to have information recorded and stored unsorted than far less information neatly sorted and indexed. If you are worthy to peruse my notes you will, I am sure, appreciate my point of view'.

John T. Diamond
Jack Diamond 1979

E. Page 17. Destruction of historic material.

Page 16. Update 1997 on future of my information.

The Question.

During my 50 years of historical research I have been asked some difficult questions in March this year (1984) I was asked what I consider the most difficult. "Do I enjoy my research?"

To answer in the affirmative or the negative would not be truthfull. It would also be incorrect to say it was satisfying for, because of the amount of information and details I have collected over the years anything I write or record does not entirely satisfy me.

For example, in January I drafted out article "Briemaking in New Zealand 1860-1880" but found when I re-read it in late February that it did not suit me so I re-wrote it in a different way. This redrafted article I again altered in places and even when I was typing it I still made some changes, adding and deleting there.

My feelings and emotions regarding my writing are the same for my research. There are sources I should have researched, I should have visited and ideas I should have followed up but did not, so again I must say, I am not satisfied.

So if I do not enjoy my doing my research and do not dislike the work and I can honestly say I get satisfaction working it, what then is my object in continuing it. I can only answer this question with an old cliché: - A man has to do what a man has to do.

For some 50 years I have been researching the pre-history and history of the Western Districts of Auckland and in that time have amassed cartons of notes which

Professor Green, Richard Cassels, Janet Davidson and Pat French have told me I should put in order before I die otherwise I should burn them.

I would not like this to be done so I am trying to isolate the many scraps of information written on pieces of paper of all types and sizes. It is not really an enjoyable exercise as the time necessary to do this is indeterminable but it is not a boring one. Also I cannot say it is a satisfying one because I know that as soon as I complete one project there are still many more waiting to be finished.

However the thought of what is still waiting for me to process does not depress me because years of research has taught me not to feel any emotions one way or another when closing off or perhaps finishing a project.

So it comes back to these questions:-

1. Do I enjoy my research? No!
2. Do I dislike my research? No!
3. Would I give it up? No!
4. Am I satisfied with my research? No!

However I am satisfied I have a worthwhile recreation to keep my brain alive and I hope about now I have retired. To me my research is a recreation and a challenge. Ed. Hillary said he climbed mountains because they were there. I do my research because of the wealth of information in the Western Districts of Auckland waiting to be uncovered. Instead of knocking off the top of a mountain successfully climbed, I knock over another obstacle on the long long road leading to my final goal, the completion of all my research projects.

Still applying Aug. 1990
Still applying June 1998

J. T. Diamond
April 1984

The Question.
I have been asked some difficult questions about my research. There are sources I should have researched, people I should have visited and ideas I should have followed up but did not, so again I must say, I am not satisfied.

So if I do not enjoy doing my research, and do not dislike the work and I honestly cannot say I get satisfaction working on it, what then is my object in continuing it?

I can only answer with this cliché; A man has to do what a man has to do.

Jack Diamond, April 1984

12.
New Zealand Archaeological Association and at The Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science in Jan 1979. Incidentally at the previous Science Conference held in Auckland c1962 I was chosen to lead a bus tour of the archaeological sites on the Auckland Isthmus. There were only 2 buses at the biannual conference of the New Zealand Archaeological Association held in Auckland in May 1979. I was, with Bruce Haywood, awarded the prize for the best lectures of the session from members other than lecturers or University staff. Our lectures were on our recording of archaeological sites in the Waitakere City Council area and I spoke on the change to landforms and flora in the area.

What I should have done and What I Would have Liked to have Done while Researching the History of the Waitakere Ranges.

After some 40 years of research I still consider I have only just explored the tip of the historic iceberg and am in a good position to be the judge of my efforts. I have set out in other sections my reason for not having completed all that I wished and to anticipate your well meant criticism I will now set out what I should have done as well as what I would have liked to have done.

I make no excuse for my shortcomings as my research was in later years conducted for my own satisfaction and recreation. People buy jigsaw puzzles for their amusement, in my research I fit together historic jigsaw puzzles. There are a lot of historic jigsaw puzzles in the western districts waiting to be fitted together. Some I have almost completed, others I hope to start as I finish others.

There are some I have finished or almost finished. For example place names in the Waitakere Ranges, Kauri Bowing Dams, archaeological surveys, and Maori history and legends of the Ranges. I am working on at the moment (1979) brickworks and brickmakers in Auckland and have just finished compiling the reasons and meanings of place names I gave to streams and features in the Ranges. In an endeavour to use up some of my photographic papers before they deteriorated, I bought 1,250 feet of contact paper in 250 foot rolls 3 1/2 wide in 1969 as well as to sort into some sort of order, the boxes of negatives not yet sorted and in December I made a concerted effort to clear up some of this work. To assist I employed at my own cost Jennika Vandenberg at \$20 a day. She proved helpful

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Jack Diamond, December 1979

be deplored but until the inestimable value of a continuing photographic record is realised, this state of affairs will continue.

In the past Auckland was fortunate in having a number of professional photographers such as Richardson, Winkelman and Breckon but today, apart from a few dedicated photographers, the equivalent of these professionals are sadly missing.

Some local bodies are engaged in the work but the use of public money for this purpose is always open to criticism. Local historical societies are always on the lookout for "old" photos but I consider they should always include present day photos thus ensuring a continuity in the photographic history of the district.

Remember the present day photo is the "old" photo of the future.

John T. Diamond
1976.

About 1983 I was asked by Mr. Norman King of Huiia if I would consent to be Patron for the Huiia Museum. While I considered it an honour to have been asked, I refused as I felt there were others who as Patron would bestow some honour to the Museum so I suggested one of the Turner family or Professor Blainlock. Prof. Blainlock was later elected Patron.

The times of certainty are gone. They were in the years back.

Thoughts on my Research.

As I pick my way along the bed of a stream or perhaps rest on the scabbled of an ancient Maori headland pa, my thoughts often dwell, not on the beauty or tranquility of my environment but on my dedicated research into its history both prehistoric and historic.

I often ask myself, "Why do I continue this research?" and the answer is always the same. I have experienced the vindictiveness of older people without a hobby or occupation and am determined that I shall avoid their attitude to people and life in general.

I have ensured that I have a well stocked mind and am waiting to retire to enjoy the fruits of my research.

Whether my photos or material gathered during virtually a lifetime of unceasing research will assist others to appreciate the beauty and history of the Waitakere Ranges depends entirely on their viewpoint. It is not for me to argue this issue.

Of one thing I am certain. I have helped all types of people to comprehend the diversity of the history of the Ranges and to seek out on their trips through the area, the relics of the past, their enjoyment and appreciation of my research is an added compensation.

John T. Diamond
1986

Perhaps we wouldn't worry so much about what other people think of us if we knew how few of them do.

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J.T. Diamond, 1966





Jack (J.T.) Diamond searching through the remains of the demolished Glenburn Brick and Pottery Works, Avondale – c.1969