

New natural history galleries in Auckland



K. PFEIFFER, AUCKLAND WAR MEMORIAL MUSEUM

A new kind of museum 'experience' featuring ecological displays with specimens in their natural environment is emerging at the Auckland War Memorial Museum. Four new galleries are already open with a fifth, about Maori and their knowledge of natural history, still in preparation.

The new displays are presented in galleries devoted to New Zealand's origins, life on land, ocean life and human impacts.

In the first, giant dinosaurs stand above fossil birds, animals and plants; in the land gallery ecosystems, based on Auckland region and beyond, display animals and plants in their natural settings; the oceans include beaches and underwater reef systems; the human impacts feature the onslaught of introduced animals and plants, with a conservation perspective.

Among the environments is the kauri forest, represented by a cast

from a kauri tree which stands four-storeys high in an old stairwell, with a 24-hour cycle of forest life presented every eight minutes. A South Island mountain scree slope and life in a beech forest are also parts of the land gallery. A wetland is modelled on the Forest and Bird Society's Matuku Reserve at Te Henga, West Auckland (see *Branching Out* this issue).

In the oceans gallery, a mangrove forest and an open beach are reproduced as the setting for

Casts of dinosaurs which inhabited prehistoric New Zealand loom above one of the new natural history galleries at Auckland War Memorial Museum. This 'origins' gallery is one of five, which also includes land, oceans, and human impacts. A gallery displaying Maori perspectives on the natural world is still under construction.

common shells, appropriate birds and beach life. Also among the marine collections are reproductions of shore platforms and cliff faces showing the environment of the inner harbour, complemented with live specimens in rock pools including one covered by glass over which visitors walk. A reproduction of an underwater cliff at the Poor Knights Islands is the background setting for ocean-dwelling species of fish and plants.

A librarian runs a resource centre within the galleries, so people can make enquiries about things they have found, utilising library books, computers and type specimens.

The new natural history galleries are part of the total refurbishment of Auckland War Memorial Museum which is due for completion by the year 2000. Galleries are designed to be 'collections rich', each featuring a broad range of specimens. When reconstruction is complete it is expected the museum will present a greater area of galleries than Te Papa. — *Gordon Ell.*



GORDON ELL, BUSH FILMS

Heritage building in Taranaki national park

An historic lodge on Mount Taranaki has been restored at a cost of \$216,000. Known as The Camphouse, the building is the oldest accommodation building in any national park in New

The historic Camphouse at North Egmont in Egmont National Park has been restored at a cost of \$216,000. The building was prefabricated in Australia in 1855 as a military barracks for the Taranaki Wars and was re-erected on the mountain for tourists in 1891-92. Accommodation is available for 32 visitors.

Zealand but its days go back even further. The building originally housed colonial soldiers serving in the Taranaki Wars, at Marsland Hill, New Plymouth. It has a Category 1 listing with the Historic Places Trust for a number of reasons.

Prefabricated in Australia it is a very early example (1855) of a building made from hand-wrought corrugated iron. After its use as a military barracks the building was used in 1874 to house immigrants.

It became the Camphouse when shifted to North Egmont in the summer of 1891-92, in the

pioneering days of tourism on the mountain. The initiative was led by the Taranaki Scenery Preservation Society which lobbied the Government for £67 to relocate the building. The Society later played a major role in the creation of the park.

The Camphouse is close to North Egmont Visitor Centre on the slopes of Taranaki and can accommodate 32 people in bunks. It now has an electric kitchen, flush toilets and hot showers, with locker and drying rooms to come. It offers budget accommodation to backpackers and tour groups.