

THE ZIBBY GARNETT TRAVELLING FELLOWSHIP

Report by Keira Lauren Ahmed Miller



Textile Conservation Intern

At Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa

18 July – 2 September 2016

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INTRODUCTION

I am Keira Lauren Ahmed Miller. I am a 32-year-old British student, and I am studying for a post-graduate degree at the Centre for Textile Conservation (CTC) at the University of Glasgow. I will graduate in 2017 with an MPhil in Textile Conservation. This is a two-year course with a work placement module that takes place between the first and second years of study, for which I opted to undertake a placement at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa in Wellington, New Zealand. I was informed of the work of the Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship by Professor Frances Lennard, course leader for my MPhil programme.

Prior to taking up my place at the University of Glasgow, I gained a BA in Theatre Design: Costume Interpretation from Wimbledon School of Art. I graduated in 2007 with First Class Honours and was immediately offered a position at the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), as a specialist in the display and packing of contemporary and historic textiles. After 8 years in this role, I was granted a 22-month career break in order to advance my studies of conservation.

In undertaking a work placement in New Zealand, I wished to broaden my knowledge of conservation techniques used to treat world culture objects, and to work in an institution with markedly different institutional practices than those I had experienced at the V&A. During my first year of study, I developed a strong interest in the way museums interact with their communities. Consequently, I was very keen to experience working life in a museum with a strong focus on community and co-working.

My long-term wish is to continue to be employed in an institutional setting. I am fascinated by the dynamics of how conservators fit into cultural institutions and the roles they fulfil as investigators, educators, interpreters and practical problems solvers. It is my greatest wish that, as my career develops, I will find myself in a conservation role which combines practical conservation with institutional decision making, and hopefully the education of the next generation of textile conservators.

The total cost of my internship, including trips to other museums was £1,916. The Zibby Garnett Travelling Fellowship funded £800 of this. The remainder was funded by a grant from The Beatrix and James McNeil Whistler Scholarship, and from my own savings.

PLACEMENT OVERVIEW

Introduction to the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa



Figure 1 - The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.

I spent my seven-week placement at the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa), New Zealand's national museum [Figure 1]. The Museum is located in New Zealand's capital city, Wellington, which is situated at the south-western tip of New Zealand's North Island [Figures 2 and 3]. Te Papa itself is located on Wellington's waterfront and looks out over the Cook Strait, the body of water separating the North and South Islands.

New Zealand has a population of approximately 4,723,610 people, of whom an estimated 402,300 live in Wellington and the surrounding suburbs. This makes Wellington the second most populated city after Auckland. In keeping with the rest of New Zealand, Wellington has a diverse population comprised largely of people of Māori, Pacific Islander, Asian, Australian and European descent, with Europeans making up the largest ethnic group, and Māori making up the largest minority group. The official languages of New Zealand are English and Māori, which reflects the two dominant influences on New Zealand, or Kiwi, culture and national identity. The three Māori tribal groups local to the Wellington area are Ngāti Toa Rangatira, Ngāti Raukawa, and Te Āti Awa.

Te Papa is a relatively new museum. It opened to the public in 1998 and has since striven to establish itself as a bicultural organisation with a focus on building success around its relationship with, and its ability to represent, its community. The collections at Te Papa span five key areas: arts, *Taonga Māori* (Māori cultural treasures), Pacific culture, New Zealand history (focused on New Zealand heritage), and natural environments.



Figure 2 - New Zealand (circled) is located in the South-West of the Pacific Ocean.



Figure 3 – Wellington is found at the South-West tip of New Zealand’s North Island, while Te Papa can be found on Wellington’s waterfront.

Globally, Te Papa is recognised as a museum with community relationships at the very heart of its institutional values, and this stems from its principle aims being thoroughly intertwined with those of the Treaty of Waitangi [See Appendix 1]. The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Act, passed by New Zealand Government in 1992, was drawn up as a means of ensuring that Te Papa - which replaced both the National Museum and the National Art Gallery - would be appropriate for the country's culturally diverse society, that it would reach a broad audience, and that the collections would be accessible to the nation. Access to taonga is one of the foremost principles of the organisation, with Te Papa aligning itself as a *kaitiaki* (guardian) rather than a keeper of taonga.

Objectives for Learning

In order to focus and maximise my opportunities for learning, I set myself the following objectives. These proved vital for steering my daily activities and communicating to my colleagues what I hoped to get out of my placement.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| Professional: | Explore the day to day implications of working in a bicultural organisation. |
| Academic: | Examine how Te Papa's commitment to engage with its communities affects conservation decisions. |
| Personal: | Broaden my knowledge of non-western textile techniques and compare conservation practices for these objects. |

As my placement was also a graded assignment as part of my MPhil qualification, these objectives gave me a structure for reflection on my return to study.

A Home from Home

During my time in New Zealand I was very lucky to be offered accommodation in the family home of my placement supervisor, textile conservator Rachael Collinge, and I found this to be a great way of integrating into daily life in New Zealand. Staying with a 'Kiwi' family introduced me to all the little things that make up a culture – like preferred brands of chocolate (and where to buy it), accent and language differences, native flora and fauna, and traditional meals and delicacies.

Since Rachael has two young children, I also gained a really fascinating insight into what it means to grow up as a New Zealander, and how the biculturalism Te Papa subscribes

to is acted out in the lives of the people who call New Zealand their home – no matter what their background.

LESSONS IN BICULTURALISM

Biculturalism is heavily embedded in all daily museological practices at Te Papa, and aims to recognise the validity of both Māori and settler cultures and values. The following section of this report aims to highlight some of these bicultural practices, along with the means by which I was introduced to them, and how they helped me integrate within the Te Papa *whānau* (family).

Tikanga and Iwi Relations

Tikanga loosely translates to protocol or guidelines for spiritual and physical wellbeing, and is applied to all aspects of Māori daily life. At the beginning of my placement, a Māori member of staff introduced me to different concepts of tikanga observed within the museum, alongside giving me a more conventional guide to the health and safety practices I should observe. Key concepts that were outlined for me included *mana taonga* (authority of taonga) and *whakapapa* (genealogy), both of which highlight taonga as being thought of as living entities or ancestors with their own *mauri* (life force), deserving of the utmost respect at all times. Customs practiced within the museum include the reciting of *karakia* (prayers) before and during work on an object, and the cleansing of *tapu* (something spiritually bad/sacred) after visiting stores, and not bringing food or drink near objects as it might neutralise their mauri. As a conservator, I found this fascinating, as many aspects of tikanga overlap with what might also be considered best conservation practice.

Te Papa aims to involve community and *iwi* (Māori tribal groups) in many of its exhibitions and displays, including the tri-annual redevelopment of a dedicated space for iwi led exhibitions. Also, in keeping with the Māori concept of mana taonga, many of the objects in the collection, particularly the cloaks, continue to be used in ceremonies and blessings both inside and outside the museum. Witnessing this practice and discussing it with museum staff was an important part of my experience at Te Papa, as it severely challenged some of the very Eurocentric conservation concepts I am used to, particularly the idea that objects cease to be used for their once intended purpose the moment they are accessioned by a museum. I left Te Papa with a sense that while conservators may often be the best placed professionals to advise on the physical wellbeing of an object, they

may not always consider the wider implications of the spiritual and social meanings an object may have for a particular community, or how these are best served.

Te Reo Māori



Figure 4 - A basic guide to Māori pronunciation was vital for me to feel I could partake in Te Papa's bicultural practice.

I attended four te reo classes during my seven-week placement, and by the time I left the museum, I was regularly using Māori words in conversation, in emails and in conservation documentation. This proved to be a big contrast to when I started the placement, when I regularly felt I needed a glossary of terms just to understand normal everyday conversations.

Attending te reo classes prompted my realisation that biculturalism at Te Papa is a constant two-way exchange, one in which I could both learn and share knowledge.

Te reo classes helped me to confront my apprehension for admitting I may need guidance in negotiating some of the customs of the institution, but they also helped me form a strategy with which to position myself in the bicultural world of the museum, as they highlighted to me the Māori tendency to ask where a person is from, ahead of asking what they do. My approach therefore, was to openly talk about myself, who I was, where I came from, how I came to be at Te Papa, what I was working on, how I was working on

it and why I was working on it. Through this dialogue, I found myself able to integrate, and earn both the trust and the support I needed to fulfil my role in conservation.

Store Tours, Studio Visits and Earthquakes Proofing

Another invaluable element of my work placement was being encouraged to spend time with other staff members around the museum, be they other conservators, collection managers, curators, or National Service Te Paeranigi, the team who facilitate outreach projects for Te Papa's wider communities and for regional museums. Spending time outside of the conservation lab was particularly helpful for allowing me to see how conservation fits in to the wider museum and very often the wider community as well.



Figure 5 – Māori cloaks being used during a repatriation ceremony.

I was lucky to be taken on several guided tours of the stores, which really made me think about how the long term preservation of objects cannot simply be the role of conservation staff, since other museum professionals also come into regular contact with collections. Disseminating knowledge must therefore be a key part of a conservator's job, along with sharing information about how objects can be best cared for. This is particularly true for the conservators at Te Papa, since the collection is often used during ceremonies.

Store tours were also an especially good way of seeing how Te Papa's collection managers skilfully earthquake proof their collections in storage. Since Wellington is so regularly struck by earthquakes, Te Papa is actually built on large base isolators which cause the building to roll rather than shake in the event of an earthquake. I was also shown many tricks for protecting objects on display from earthquakes, including the use of quake wax, specialist

mounts, and double sided tape to stop mannequins from falling over. Having gained all this knowledge, I was very disappointed to discover that I had slept right through the only earthquake that was strong enough to be felt during my time in Wellington. Still, it was reassuring to see that nothing on display or in storage had come to any harm!

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

The conservation department and the majority of Te Papa's object stores are located in a building on Tory Street, 850 metres away from the main waterfront site. I spent my placement working between the two sites. The conservation department consists of twelve permanent members of staff across seven different disciplines: framing, frames and gilded surfaces, paintings, paper, objects, preventive conservation and textiles. Te Papa employs three part-time textiles conservators, Anne Peranteau, Rachael Collinge and Rangī Te Kanawa. At the time of my placement Rangī was taking study leave to complete a PhD, but still found time to visit the studio to offer advice on conservation of Māori taonga, and to teach me some aspects of traditional Māori weaving. Rachael Collinge took on the role as my placement supervisor.

Pockets



Figure 6 - GH007784 – A pair of 18th century ladies pocket.

This pair of ladies pockets [Figure 6], dated c.1760, are now on display in the decorative arts exhibition *European Splendour 1500-1800*, part of Arts Nga Toi Season 6. Prior to display however, they required a small amount of stabilisation, particularly where the metal threads of the silk brocade had become loose.

From the 17th century through to the 19th century, most European women and girls, no matter their social standing, would have owned at least one pair of detachable pockets like the ones I worked on, although many would have been less ornate.

Threaded or stitched onto a ribbon or cord, pockets like this would have been worn beneath a woman's outer garments, with the ribbon tied around the waist of the wearer and the pockets hanging safely between her under and her outer garments. This intimate positioning led to pockets being widely commented on by diarists, satirists and novelists alike. In order to allow access to pockets, the side seams of dresses and petticoats made during this period would have an opening though which the hands could be inserted.



Figure 7 – Above left: loose threads before conservation.
Above right: the same area after conservation.



Figure 8 - Using dye recipes and small samples to select the perfect shade.

Since some of the metal threads in the brocade appliqué had come loose and were in danger of becoming detached entirely, I elected to use a stitching technique known as couching to secure the metal threads in place. This involved applying short horizontal stitches over each of the individual loose threads. Before and after images from this treatment are in Figure 7 above. The threads used for the couching stitches are a very fine silk, which was dyed to the correct shade of pink prior to the stitching being carried out [Figure 8]. During my time at Te Papa, I wrote a news item about this treatment, which was selected to appear on the museum blog.

Jaqueline Fraser – ‘The Making of Basquiat 2013’



Figure 9 – ‘The Making of Basquiat 2013’ © Jacqueline Fraser / Te Papa.

Jaqueline Fraser is a New Zealand artist of Ngāi Tahu descent, whose work is well represented in the art collections of Te Papa. Two of her works, which make up ‘The Making of Basquiat 2013’, were acquired for display in the fine art section of Arts Nga Toi Season 6. Unusually, this art work was acquired partially in kit form. The artist had focussed on preparing the inner collage panels [Figure 9], while the outer fabric

panels were to be constructed by museum staff, from black sequin covered fabric supplied by the artist.

The construction of these panels took place during my placement and I was asked to complete one out of the six panels. Initially, this task to be seemed more related to construction than preservation. Fascinated by how conservation had come to be carrying out this work rather than the artist, I asked to see some of Jaqueline Fraser’s other artworks in the collection. Collection Manager for works on paper, Andrea Hearfield, agreed to show me some of the works in storage, and it was very evident that some of the construction materials, particularly the adhesives, were beginning to fail and cause unsightly damage [Figure 10]. By stitching rather than adhering the panels for ‘Basquiat’, we were effectively preventing this type of degradation from occurring.



Figure 10 – ‘Here’s the Lone Cowboy approaching Belfast (with pinking shears) [[slyly]]’

2001

© Jacqueline Fraser / Te Papa.

I found this a really interesting project as it made me consider how much it is possible to retain an artist’s true intent while also ensuring that their art work is stable enough for storage and display, both now and in the future.

An Introduction to Tapa Cloth

Tapa cloth, or tapa, is the name given to bark cloth traditionally made by the peoples of the Pacific Islands. It is a material of which I had no prior experience, and I was keen to familiarise myself not only with how it is made and used, but also how it is conserved.

Tapa is a material most commonly manufactured by beating the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree (*Broussonetia papyifera*), although other tree species are sometimes used, to create a papery-like fabric traditionally used throughout the Pacific Islands as clothing and to adorn homes.

During my placement, it was suggested that I should carry out a week of ‘tapa familiarisation’, whereby I would focus on two newly acquired objects in the Pacific collection, with the aim of fully documenting them, carrying out surface cleaning and arranging for discussion with the Pacific Curators about how the items might be conserved and displayed.



Figure 11 – FE012965 and FE012966. Surface cleaning two tapa loincloths from the Solomon Islands.

The two objects I worked on were both loincloths from the Solomon Islands [Figure 11], and as I was carrying out documentation and surface cleaning, I found myself wondering if any of the extensive creasing and damage could be considered evidential of how the loincloths were originally worn. Sadly, the provenance of the objects only stated that the loincloths had been worn by a very large man. Since most of the tapa cloths in the collection at Te Papa are incredibly large and require lots of space and time when

undergoing conservation, my supervisor Rachael Collinge had the forethought to provide me with some small fragments of tapa on which to carry out tests for treatments I would not have time to complete on collection objects, including humidification and adhesive repairs. This was an invaluable experience as it helped me understand how quickly tapa can respond to humidification, and that it is often impossible to successfully treat creasing on both side of the tapa simultaneously. The same is very much true for applying adhesive patches, which I was given time to trial using a number of different conservation adhesives. As a result, I discovered a real appreciation for how well organised conservators have to be when treating very large tapa cloths, the largest of which can be as big as 20 metres wide, and 5 metres tall!

As the Centre for Textile Conservation is currently taking part in a large international research project on Polynesian bark cloth, this was a hugely valuable experience for me. On my return, I was invited to assist the bark cloth project conservator during the autumn and spring semesters. This has seen me carrying out conservation tasks on bark cloth objects from the Hunterian Museum Collection and the Economic Botany Collection at Kew Gardens, and I am proud that my new-found skills have been put to use so soon after returning from my placement.

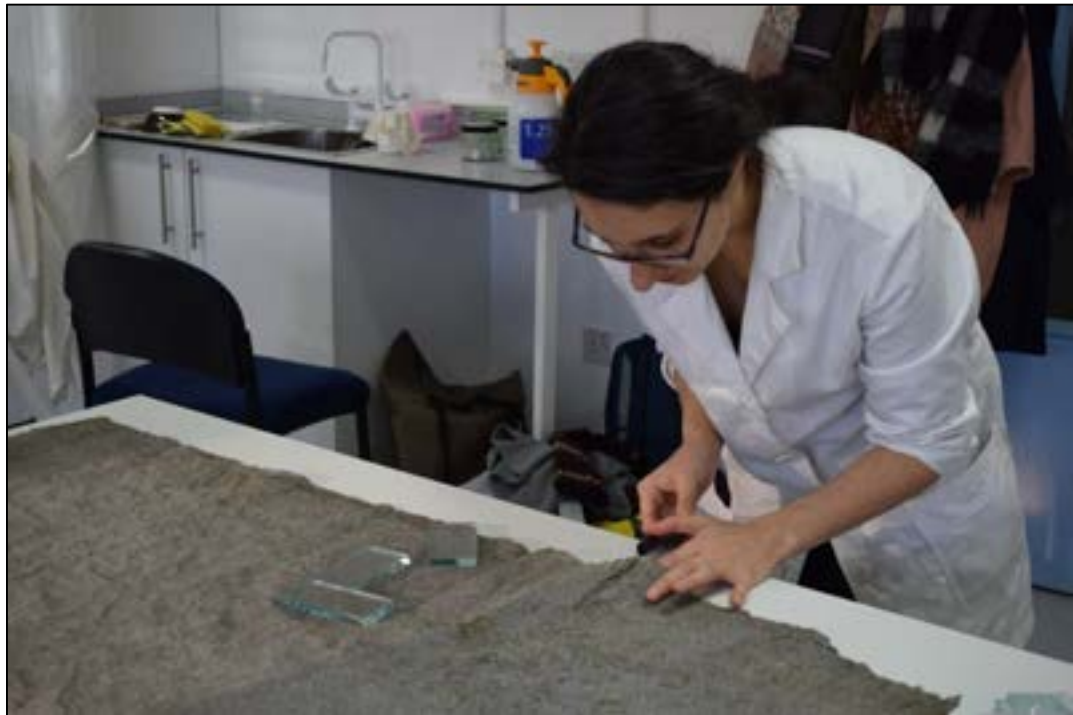


Figure 12 – Humidifying barkcloth for the Situating Pacific Barkcloth Production in Time and Place Project at The Centre for Textile Conservation at the University of Glasgow.

Tātua

Quotation 1 – A karakia to begin a project.

*Whakataka te hau ki te uru, Whakataka te hau ki te tonga
Kia mākinakina ki uta, Kia mātaratara ki tai
E hī ake ana te atakura, He tio, he huka, he hau hū
Thei mauri ora!*

Cease the winds from the west, Cease the winds from the south
Let the breeze blow over the land, Let the breeze blow over the ocean
Let the red-tipped dawn come with a sharpened air.

A touch of frost, a promise of a glorious day.

The most complex object I was asked to work on at Te Papa was a *tātua* (Māori belt), woven from strips of *pīngao* and *kiekie* (varieties of native New Zealand flora). Traditionally worn by men, with either a *maro* (frontal apron) or a *piupiu* (kilt), they were often used to carry short-handled weapons such as a *patu* (club). Dating to the 1850s, the *tātua* I worked on is considered a rare transitional garment because the leather straps and metal buckles are an early example of Māori adopting European technology, where traditional belts would have fastened with plaited strings of *muka* (flax fibres) [Figure 13].



Figure 13 – ME10572 - *tātua*, woven from strips of *pīngao* and *kiekie*, with leather straps, from which the tip had become detached (above).

The belt I worked on had become damaged due to the fragility of the dried out leather, which was exceptionally prone to cracking when being handled. This had resulted in one end section of the strap becoming completely detached. I was tasked with documenting the belt, outlining treatment and storage options and opening up a dialogue with Māori curators and collection managers about these options and their potential long-term consequences, as well as undertaking the treatment.

After much consultation with my colleagues, I proposed that I would undo the strap and carry out an adhesive treatment with painted Japanese paper to reattach the end of the

Quotation 2 – A personal karakia for daily recital.

*E kui ma, e koro ma, he uri ano e tu mai nei
Manaaki mai I ahau, e mahi mei I maga ahi,
Aianeī, a, ake mei, amene!*

Respected elders, I am a descendant like yourselves: look with compassion on the work that I do as an ongoing part of my employment, I ask for your support, amen!

missing section of the strap. I also suggested that a more suitable storage and handling mount should be made to prevent further damage from occurring. [Figure 14]. As adhesives were not something I had covered as part of my studies I was quite apprehensive to be carrying this treatment. This however, turned out to be very beneficial, as it meant that I carried out extensive testing of different types of paper and adhesives before I arrived at a suitable combination, and in doing so became far more familiar with the way the materials can be manipulated.

This project brought together all of my experiences at Te Papa, and touched on each of my learning objectives. Having attended te reo Māori classes, I was able to somewhat confidently use the correct terminology, which in turn allowed me to feel comfortable discussing the object with Māori members of staff, using correct vocabulary and context. Te reo Māori gave me a vital link to both the people and the object, as well as to the karakia recited prior to work commencing on the object [Quotation 1], and on a daily basis [Quotation 2], and the tikanga I should follow. I was introduced to materials and conservation practices I had not experienced before, which pushed the boundaries of my theoretical, ethical and practical knowledge. I also found myself in a position where I had to think very carefully about how the object would be handled in the future and by whom, as it is often handled by Māori community groups. I therefore designed and made a handling and storage mount for the object which would facilitate this community engagement without endangering the object.



Figure 14 – Some of the stages of working on the tātua. Left to right:undoing the strap; applying the adhesive patch; and the finished handling and storage mount.

EXCURSIONS

Lethenty, Bulls

Built in 1915, and furnished with European decorative arts dating from the 17th century onwards, Lethenty is a historic home in the small town of Bulls, 150km North of Wellington. I was fortunate to be invited to visit, alongside textile conservator Anne Peranteau, in order to undertake an informal survey of the property's many historic textiles, and to advise on their care. The majority of the textiles we viewed were hand-embroidered by the original lady of the household



Figure 15 – Hilary Haylock and I outside Lethenty.

Anne (Annie) Wilson, nee Adams, between 1903 and 1930. Annie was evidently heavily influenced by the work of William Morris and the embroideries of the Jacobean period, and worked many large hangings. During our visit, Anne and I were given a tour of the house by Annie's granddaughter Hilary Haylock [Figure 15], who, at 91, is beginning to find the responsibility of such a large historic home to be quite demanding. For me however, it was a real pleasure to be welcomed into the home by someone who knew its every nook and cranny intimately, and I was more than happy to trade my knowledge of textile conservation for the beautiful bunch of camellias Hilary handed over as we left!

Dunedin

Despite having already travelled 18,381 km from Glasgow to Wellington, I soon decided I wanted to travel a little bit further, and I took the opportunity of visiting one of the conservation studios in the city furthest away from Glasgow. Dunedin is the second largest city on the South Island of New Zealand, and is situated on the South-East coast. Taking its name from the Gaelic form of Edinburgh, Dunedin is exceptionally Scottish in character, the irony of which I didn't fail to notice, particularly as I found myself walking along streets with identical names to those I was familiar with in Glasgow and Edinburgh, and recognising architectural features that were much like those seen in major Scottish

cities. The overcrowding in urban areas of Scotland by the 19th century, the effects of the Highland Clearances, and the division of the Church of Scotland which created the Free Church of Scotland, led many Scots to migrate to New Zealand from the 1840s onwards. Some sought their fortunes on the Otago goldfields, others migrated with the intention of setting up largescale sheep stations. What seems to have united many of them however, was a determination to make a better life overseas, while retaining much of the culture of their home land.



Figure 16 - Toitū Otago Settlers Museum.



Figure 17 - Fiona McLachlan and Claire Orbell introduce me to some of the highlights of their collection.

One of my main reasons for visiting Dunedin was a long-standing invitation to visit the conservation labs at Toitū Otago Settlers Museum [Figure 16]. Founded in 1898 by the Otago Settlers Association, the museum, which is the oldest history museum in New Zealand, aims to tell the stories of migrations to the Otago region from the time of the Māori. I was shown around the conservation studios, stores and galleries by Conservator Fiona McLachlan and Registrar Claire Orbell [Figure 17], both of whom impressed me immensely with their costume and textiles storage devices – particularly their hanging forms for heavy skirts with separate bodices.

I was also fortunate to fit in a visit to Otago Museum and a guided tour of Olverston House, which was built by the Theomin family between 1904 and 1907, and bequeathed, with its large collection of decorative arts, to the city of Dunedin in 1966.

Time to Relax

New Zealand is an unbelievably beautiful country, and despite visiting in the middle of winter, I was able to make the most of my time off work by going on several day trips and weekend outings, around the city of Wellington and further afield.

Wildlife Spotting, Bubbling Mud and Wine Tasting

During my time on New Zealand's South Island I decided to fulfil a long held aspiration of seeing albatrosses in the wild. The only mainland Royal albatross breeding colony in the world is located at Taiaroa Head, at the tip of the Otago Peninsula. During a day trip, I was lucky enough to see three albatross chicks who were each testing their wings against the sea breeze and preparing to fledge. Unfortunately, my photography skills do not do this amazing experience justice, and in almost all of the pictures I took, the albatrosses look a lot like seagulls. Luckily, I also made several other wildlife spots during the day, including sea lions, seals, and yellow eyed penguins! [Figure 18]

Rare birdlife aside, New Zealand is also known for its geothermal activity, and I was lucky to spend a weekend exploring the geothermal phenomenon that is the city of Rotorua, in the Bay of Plenty, on New Zealand's North Island. Highlights of this trip included a visit to Wai-O-Tapu geothermal park, Rotorua Museum of Art and History, which is housed in the city's former bath house, and of course a relaxing trip to the luxurious hot pools at the Polynesian Spa. Another little luxury during my stay was a day trip to the Martinborough wine region to sample a few of the country's most well respected Pinot Noirs, as well as some excellent 'Kiwi' cuisine!

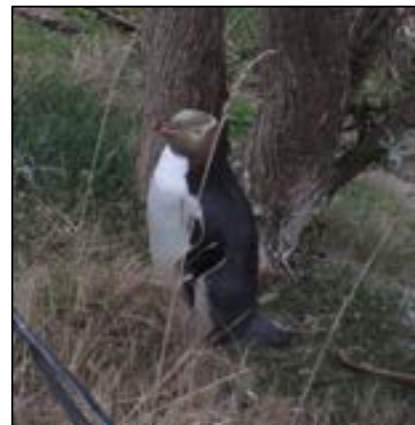


Figure 18 – Top and bottom: Fur seals and yellow-eyed penguins on the Otago Peninsula.

Middle: Hot crater pools at Wai-O-Tapu, near Rotorua.

Weaving

As it was winter, which in ‘Windy’ Wellington often brings icy howling winds and heavy rain, I also found a selection of indoor activities to keep me occupied in my spare time, including taking part in two weaving workshops. The first, which took place at Wellington High School, introduced me to simple basket weaving using strips of leaves from *harakeke* (New Zealand flax, *Phormium tenax*). [Figures 19]



Figure 19 - Splitting and weaving harakeke leaves to make a small basket.

In the second workshop, led by textile conservator and weaver Rangi Te Kanawa, I found myself learning how to ply muka fibres, which are traditionally extracted from harakeke leaves using a mussel shell. Plying is done by rolling moistened doubled fibres down the length of your (bare!!) leg. It is these strong but fine plied fibres which are used in the twining technique employed in the manufacture of Māori cloaks. Rangi very kindly got me started on practicing this method on a miniature cloak of my very own! [Figure 20]

Attending both of these workshops was a valuable means of gaining a far greater perspective of both the manufacturing processes, and the raw materials, of the historic Māori objects I encountered within the museum. Through experiencing the methods by which harakeke can be manipulated, I found I gained a much greater understand of the long-term inherent weaknesses of objects manufactured from plant fibres – many of which stem from the processes by which the object was made.



Figure 20 – Left to right: learning to ply muka; using a twining technique to make a miniature cloak; and getting some help from Chilli the cat.

Wellington in Winter

I was fortunate to know a small number of people in New Zealand prior to my trip, all of whom took great pains to introduce me to as many traditional aspects of New Zealand life as possible. For this most part, this seemed to revolve around food, indoor netball and the weekly pub quiz – with the latter seeing more wins than the former!. As with my experience of staying with a ‘Kiwi’ family, this gave me a chance to immerse myself in Wellington and New Zealand culture, from the best places to get a perfect flat white and a jam doughnut, to the ‘proper’ way of eating a mince and cheese pie (apparently the ketchup is important), and the great influence the All Blacks rugby team have on the mood of the nation.



Figure 20 – A view of Wellington from the Botanic Gardens.

CONCLUSION

One soon finds, upon delving into the history of *Aotearoa* (New Zealand), that human habitation of the ‘land of the long white cloud’, is relatively recent, for both Māori and Pākehā. Historically and genealogically, the people of New Zealand have strong links to the islands of the Pacific, to Europe, Asia and Australia, and yet, in the 800 years since the arrival of the first *waka* (Māori canoes - which carried the first settlers from the Pacific Islands), a culture has emerged which is undeniably linked to the land these settlers have come to call home.

I feel very grateful that I was asked to work on both the tapa objects and the tātua, as this gave me an opportunity to work with objects that encompassed textile traditions I was unfamiliar with, as well as conservation practices I was yet to encounter during my education. Rather than contrasting conservation techniques as my aims had stated, I instead found myself learning entirely new skills, such as methods for applying adhesives to leather and bark cloth, and ways of manipulating Japanese tissue paper to make visually subtle repairs.

Conversations with colleagues at Te Papa really brought home to me the notion that when an institution puts its community at the heart of practice, the conservator may sometimes feel as if presenting information is their primary function, be that the results of analysis, the current state of an object, possible treatment options, or the likelihood of future degradation. In such situations, the conservators at Te Papa claim no greater command or right to determine an outcome than any of the other stakeholders in the community. My own feeling, on reflection, is that conservators should aim to actively engage and integrate into a project community, both inside and outside the museum, with good communication being the key to this. In the long run, perhaps conservators who successfully situate themselves as part of a team, may come to view favourable conservation decisions and outcomes for objects in somewhat broader terms.

I thought I might find the practice of biculturalism to be divisive – and sometimes it is – but it is also an inbuilt part of the life of the nation. By travelling to New Zealand, I sought to have my Eurocentric notions of conservation ethics challenged, and I certainly found that to be the case. I returned to the UK far more aware of the sensitivities conservators have to negotiate when working with objects belonging to people of other world cultures.

Acknowledgements

The whole team at Te Papa deserve the upmost thanks for welcoming me into their workplace and their whānau. Anne, Rangi and Rachael in textile conservation sought to challenge my practical and theoretical approach to conservation, and the lessons they taught me will no doubt shape my conservation career for many years to come.

To the new friends I made in New Zealand, and to those I reconnected with during this trip, I offer thanks for sharing with me what it means to be a New Zealander.

The support of my supervisor Rachael Collinge and her family was far beyond what any conservation student could wish for. I feel truly blessed to have had such a warm welcome, and such invaluable guidance.

I thank my tutors Sarah Foskett, Frances Lennard and Anita Quye for furnishing me with theoretical and practical skills that kept me afloat in very unfamiliar waters, and I offer particular thanks to placement co-ordinator Karen Thompson for humouring my desire to go as far away as I possibly could.

Finally, I thank my funders, The Zibby Garnett Travel Fellowship and The Beatrix and James McNeil Whistler Scholarship. This valuable experience will forever remain a vital influence in my conservation practice, and would not have been possible without such generous support.

Glossary of Terms

Māori	English
<i>harakeke</i>	New Zealand flax, <i>Phormium tenax</i> .
<i>iwi</i>	Extended kinship group or tribe, often refers to a large group of people descended from a common ancestor and associated with a distinct territory.
<i>kaitiaki</i>	A guardian, caretaker or custodian.
<i>karakia</i>	Incantations, ritual chants or prayers.
<i>kiekie</i>	A woody climbing plant, <i>Freycinetia banksii</i> .
<i>mana</i>	Prestige, authority, power, influence, status.
<i>mana motuhake</i>	Self-determination, autonomy, independence.
<i>mana Whenua</i>	Power associated with possession and occupation of tribal land.
	The title of the Māori gallery at Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa.
<i>muka</i>	Fibres extracted from harakeke leaves.
<i>Pākehā</i>	New Zealander of European descent.
<i>pīngao</i>	Golden sand sedge, <i>Desmoschoenus spiralis</i> .
<i>tangata Tiriti</i>	people in New Zealand by right of the Treaty of Waitangi.
<i>tangata Whenua</i>	Indigenous people.
<i>taonga</i>	Treasure, goods or anything prized. <i>Taonga</i> can be anything considered to be of value including socially or culturally valuable objects, resources, phenomenon, ideas and techniques.
<i>tapu</i>	To be sacred, restricted or forbidden. May refer to a place, person or objects.
<i>tātua</i>	Belt.
<i>te reo Māori</i>	Māori language.
<i>tikanga</i>	Protocol, customs, correct procedure.
<i>whānau</i>	Family
<i>whakapapa</i>	Genealogy.
<i>whare</i>	House.
<i>Wharenui</i>	Meeting house.

Appendix 1

The Treaty of Waitangi

Drafted and signed in 1840, the Treaty of Waitangi is considered to be New Zealand's founding document. The agreement, signed by representatives of the British Crown and over 500 Māori Chiefs, is the document which led to British Sovereignty being declared over New Zealand. Three articles made up the treaty. However, the wording used in the English and Māori version had different meanings. The following, taken from *The Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, gives an overview of the differences in meanings:

“Article One

Māori: chiefs gave the queen ‘te Kawanatanga katoa’ – the governance or government over the land.

English: chiefs gave the queen ‘all the rights and powers of sovereignty’ over the land.

Article Two

Māori: confirmed and guaranteed the chiefs ‘te tino rangatiratanga’ – the exercise of chieftainship – over their lands, villages and ‘taonga katoa’ – all treasured things. Māori agreed to give the Crown a right to deal with them over land transactions.

English: confirmed and guaranteed to the chiefs ‘exclusive and undisturbed possession of their lands and estates, forests, fisheries, and other properties’. The Crown sought an *exclusive* right to deal with Māori over land transactions.

Article Three

Māori: The Crown gave an assurance that Māori would have the queen's protection and all rights – ‘tikanga’ – accorded British subjects. This was close to an accurate translation of the English text.”

In many ways, the treaty was essentially dishonoured in the decades following its inception, leading to numerous grievances among Māori. It was not until 1975 that a tribunal was formed to deal with claims against the Crown in breach of the treaty, and led to legislation acknowledging that the treaty has legal standing.

Today the treaty aims to uphold its original intention of reconciling Māori and the Crown, with the purpose of promoting the vision of New Zealand's being a nation of two peoples under the treaty.

As a government organisation, established by The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa Act, 1992, Te Papa puts the Treaty of Waitangi at the very heart of its bicultural mission.