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# Towards a climate event stratigraphy for New Zealand over the past 30,000 years

by D.J.A. Barrell, B.V. Alloway, J. Shulmeister and R.M. Newnham (editors)

## **Contributing authors:**

B.V. Alloway, P.C. Almond, P.C. Augustinus, D.J.A. Barrell, N. Bertler, C. Briggs,
L. Carter, C.H. Hendy, N.J. Litchfield, D.J. Lowe, B. Manighetti, M.S. McGlone,
R.M. Newnham, A.S. Palmer, H. Rother, P. Shane, J. Shulmeister, R.P. Suggate,
P.J. Tonkin, M.J. Vandergoes, P.W. Williams

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D.J.A. Barrell, Institute of Geological & Nuclear Sciences Ltd, Dunedin, New Zealand B.V. Alloway, Institute of Geological & Nuclear Sciences Ltd, Lower Hutt, New Zealand J. Shulmeister, Department of Geological Sciences, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, New Zealand.

R.M. Newnham, School of Geography, University of Plymouth, Plymouth PL4 8AA, United Kingdom.

For further information and contact details of all authors, go to the New Zealand paleoclimate research website at www.paleoclimate.org.nz

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## POSTER

Towards a climate event stratigraphy for New Zealand over the past 30,000 years (back pocket)

## ABSTRACT

A poster summarizing a representative selection of evidence for environmental conditions and climate change in New Zealand during the last 30,000 years has been prepared as a "firststep" contribution to the INTIMATE (INTegration of Ice-core, Marine And TerrEstrial records) initiative of the INQUA (International Union for Quaternary Research) Paleoclimate Commission. This international initiative aims to establish a more detailed knowledge of the nature, timing and regional to global extent of climatic and environmental changes associated with the Last Termination (the end of the Last Glaciation).

The poster depicts key New Zealand onshore and offshore records for the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) and the Last Glacial-Interglacial Transition (LGIT), from a variety of latitudes and elevations. Inset maps show New Zealand's oceanographic setting, principal currents and water masses, extent of glaciers, and distribution of vegetation zones at approximately 22,000 calendar years ago and at modern times (incorporating the inferred vegetation distribution at *c*. 1250 AD, before deforestation associated with human settlement). A calendar-age timescale is based on a combination of volcanic ash (tephra) and radiometric dates. Paleoclimate records from ice cores from Antarctica and Greenland are presented for comparison with New Zealand records.

High-resolution records are presented for sediment-filled volcanic craters in Auckland (total carbon, carbon isotopes and pollen), wetlands in northeast North Island, central North Island and western South Island (pollen), marine sediments off eastern North Island (oxygen isotopes), and stalagmites in caves in northwest South Island (carbon and oxygen isotopes). In addition, the poster includes a range of lower resolution or fragmentary records of climate events, based on glacial landforms and deposits (central Southern Alps, South Island), river terraces and deposits, loess deposits (eastern North and South Islands), and aeolian quartz silt in non-quartzose, loess-like, andesitic tephric deposits of western North Island.

The poster reflects work-in-progress and aims to assist comparison of the New Zealand paleoclimate records with those from the wider Australasian region and elsewhere. The immediate goal is the establishment of an Australasian-INTIMATE climate event stratigraphy by the New Zealand and Australian paleoclimate communities, for presentation at the 2007 INQUA Cairns Symposium.

## **KEYWORDS**

Quaternary, Holocene, Last Glacial Maximum, interglacial, paleoclimate, glaciers, vegetation, oceanography, ocean currents, dating, tephra, carbon content, carbon isotopes, oxygen isotopes, marine core, foraminifera, pollen, speleothems, glacial sequences, river fluvial sequences, loess, aeolian quartz, Auckland, Kaipo, Taranaki, Otamangakau, Gisborne, Hawkes Bay, Wairarapa, Nelson, Buller, Westland, Okarito, Southern Alps, Canterbury.

## **INTRODUCTION**

## OVERVIEW (by B.V. Alloway, D.J.A. Barrell, R.M. Newnham & J. Shulmeister)

INTIMATE (INTegration of Ice-core, Marine And TerrEstrial records), a core programme of the INQUA (International Union for Quaternary Research) Paleoclimate Commission, aims to establish a detailed knowledge of the nature, timing and regional to global extent of climatic and environmental changes associated with the Last Termination (the end of the Last Glaciation). Initiated in 1997 and facilitated through a series of international workshops, the project strives for improved precision in establishing the ages of, and effecting high resolution correlations between, events of the Last Termination.

There have been two major factors behind the drive for high resolution correlations and improved precision. First was the publication of the GRIP and GISP2 ice-core records from Greenland (Alley *et al.* 1993; Johnsen *et al.* 2001), which showed that environmental changes during the Last Termination were more abrupt and more complex than had previously been realized. This highlighted a need for methods that enable the sequence of events during the Last Termination to be reconstructed at a resolution of decades. The second was a growing realization of the severity of problems affecting radiocarbon dates, the most widely used method for dating Last Termination events. INTIMATE members have proposed a number of mechanisms for advancing the state of knowledge. These include an event stratigraphy approach for correlation (Bjorck *et al.* 1998; Walker *et al.* 1999; Lowe *et al.* 2001); improved protocols for both radiocarbon dating (e.g. Wohlfarth 1996; Lowe and Walker 2000) and tephrochronology (Turney *et al.* 2004); correlation based on stratigraphical methods thought to reflect synchronous regional or global changes, e.g., marine oxygen isotope (MIS) stratigraphy (Hoek and Bohncke 2001); and more effective use of sites with annually laminated sediment sequences (e.g. Litt *et al.* 2001).

Members of the NZ paleoclimate community attended the inaugural NZ-INTIMATE workshop at Lower Hutt in August 2004. The focus of the meeting was to:

- identify key New Zealand onshore and offshore records for the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM) and the Last Glacial-Interglacial Transition (LGIT).
- promote ways to improve procedures for establishing precise ages of, and effecting high resolution correlations between, onshore and offshore New Zealand records.

The outcome of this meeting was a unanimous agreement to prepare a poster summarizing New Zealand climate records spanning the last 30,000 years, emphasizing continuous records (e.g. cores) from a variety of latitudes and elevations, supplemented with fragmentary records (e.g. glacial, fluvial, and loessial deposits). The poster reflects work-in-progress that will be updated as new data become available. The poster is intended to assist comparison of the New Zealand paleoclimate record with records from the wider Australasian region and elsewhere. The goal is the establishment of an Australasian-INTIMATE climate event

stratigraphy by the New Zealand and Australian paleoclimate communities, for presentation at the 2007 INQUA Cairns Symposium. The poster is presented in the back pocket of this publication and the following text describes the various components of the poster and presents a full reference list.

## LAND AND OCEAN MAPS (compiled by D.J.A. Barrell, C. Briggs, L. Carter, D.J. Lowe

## & R.M. Newnham)

A series of maps show the oceanographic setting, principal currents and water masses, extent of glaciers and distribution of vegetation zones of New Zealand at approximately 22,000 calendar years ago, and in modern times. The 'modern' vegetation zones represent the inferred natural vegetation cover at approximately 1250 AD, immediately prior to human settlement (Hogg *et al.* 2003).

## TIMESCALE (compiled by B.V. Alloway & D.J. Lowe)

A calendar-year timescale is shown on the poster. Air-fall tephra from volcanic eruptions in central North Island provide valuable time-line markers within the stratigraphic record. Tephra are widely preserved within and offshore of the North Island, but only one tephra (Kawakawa) is currently identified in the South Island. Much of the age control for the paleoclimate records, and tephra, comes from radiocarbon dating. All records have been aligned to the calendar timescale following conversion of radiocarbon dates to calibrated ages (calendar years before 1950), using INTCAL98 (Stuiver et al. 1998) via either the CALIB (Stuiver et al., http://radiocarbon.pa.qub.ac.uk/calib/) or OxCal (Bronk Ramsey 2001) For radiocarbon ages older than the range of INTCAL98 calibration programmes. calibration, the estimates of calendar age are based on the GRIP regression curve (Bard et al. 2004). Other numerical dating methods used to constrain the paleoclimate records, such as Optically Stimulated Luminescence (OSL), Uranium/Thorium (U/Th) and surface-exposure cosmogenic isotopes (e.g. <sup>10</sup>Be) have ages that are expressed in calendar years prior to the year of sample collection. Thus there may be an up-to c. 55 years mis-match between calibrated radiocarbon ages and those obtained by other methods.

## **DESCRIPTION OF RECORDS**

In the selected paleoclimate records, the focus is on published data. Locations are shown on the maps on the poster and information sources are listed in the references. The selected records are a representative sample of the highest resolution, most precisely dated, or otherwise significant, New Zealand paleoclimate data for the last 30,000 years. This is not an exhaustive array of available paleoclimate evidence for this time period in New Zealand.

## HIGH RESOLUTION RECORDS

Auckland maars (compiled by P.C. Augustinus, J. Shulmeister, R.M. Newnham, P. Shane & B.V. Alloway)

Marine and lake sediments filling the Pukaki, Onepoto and Pupuke volcanic explosion craters are interbedded with numerous macroscopic tephra. Pukaki maar has yielded pollen evidence for paleovegetation between 9.5 and 27.5 calendar years BP. Latest isotopic and organic content data are presented from analyses-in-progress on sediments from Onepoto and Pupuke maars; the data are expected to yield high resolution paleoprecipitation and paleotemperature records.

### Kaipo wetland (compiled by D.J. Lowe & R.M. Newnham)

This small wetland at 980 m altitude north of Lake Waikaremoana, eastern North Island, is potentially sensitive to climatic change because it lies a short distance below the modern treeline. It contains a sequence of peat and mud deposits spanning 18,000 years, with interbedded macroscopic tephra. A proxy paleoclimate record is provided by pollen.

### Otamangakau wetland (compiled by M.S. McGlone)

This wetland at 600 m altitude on the northeast margin of Tongariro Volcano, central North Island, contains a c. 80,000 year long sequence of peat and mud deposits interbedded with macroscopic tephra. A proxy paleoclimate record is provided by pollen. Only the late-glacial record is shown here.

## Marine core - MD97-2121 (compiled by B. Manighetti & L. Carter)

This 35 m giant piston core retrieved from 2314 m water depth, 117 km east of Cape Turnagain, off eastern North Island, provides a high resolution multi-proxy paleoenvironmental record back to Marine Isotope Stage (MIS) 6.

## Speleothems (compiled by P.W. Williams)

Eight stalagmites from limestone caves in the Nelson and Buller regions, northwestern South Island, have provided high-resolution oxygen and carbon isotope data. The resulting composite record of  $d^{18}O$  and  $d^{13}C$  from 23,400 calendar years BP to the present is constrained by 43 U/Th dates (using the TIMS method) with 2s errors averaging  $\pm 1.1\%$ . Six climatic phases are recognized.

### Okarito wetland (compiled by M.J. Vandergoes, C.H. Hendy & R.M. Newnham)

This wetland at 70 m altitude lies in a basin enclosed within old moraines at Okarito, western South Island. A 10 m long core contains a sequence of peat and silt deposits extending back to MIS 6. Pollen provides a proxy paleoclimate record.

### Antarctic & Greenland ice cores (compiled by N. Bertler)

Isotopic variations from the EPICA Dome C site in Antarctica and the GISP2 site in Greenland are presented to allow comparison of polar paleoclimate records with the NZ paleoclimate record.

## FRAGMENTARY RECORDS

**Glacial sequences** (compiled by D.J.A. Barrell, R.P. Suggate, P.C. Almond & H. Rother) Moraines and outwash surfaces of extensive LGM glaciers and small, localized, modern glaciers provide physical evidence of glacial events. LGM glaciation was widespread in the New Zealand mountains but many of these areas have been ice-free since the LGIT. A potential 0 to 30,000 year record exists only in the higher parts of the Southern Alps, central South Island, where glaciation persists to the present day.

Landforms and glaciogenic deposits from the best radiocarbon and surface-exposure dated, central South Island, glacial sequences provide a fragmentary record of glacial events in the western and eastern sides of the Southern Alps.

**Fluvial aggradation or degradation and loess accumulation** (compiled by N.J. Litchfield, A.S. Palmer, P.C. Almond, P.J. Tonkin & D.J.A. Barrell)

River aggradation and loess deposition were widespread during the LGM. The LGIT marked a general onset of river incision and an extreme localization of loess deposition. Stratigraphic and age information are presented for the best-dated fluvial and loess sequences in New Zealand. Fluvial records are from eastern North Island (Gisborne-Hawkes Bay) and northeastern South Island (North Canterbury). Loess records are from southeastern North Island (Hawkes Bay-Wairarapa), western South Island (South Westland) and eastern South Island (Canterbury).

## Aeolian quartz (compiled by B.V. Alloway)

Aeolian quartz silt is disseminated through non-quartzose, loess-like, andesitic tephric deposits at Onaero in North Taranaki, western North Island. Quartz accumulation rates and total quartz content are interpreted to be proxies for paleowind intensity.

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## Institute of Geological & Nuclear Sciences Limited

#### Gracefield Research Centre

69 Gracefield Road PO Box 30 368 Lower Hutt New Zealand Phone +64-4-570 1444 Fax +64-4-570 4600

#### Dunedin Research Centre

764 Cumberland Street Private Bag 1930 Dunedin New Zealand Phone +64-3-477 4050 Fax +64-3-477 5232

#### Rafter Research Centre

30 Gracefield Road PO Box 31 312 Lower Hutt New Zealand Phone +64-4-570 4637 Fax +64-4-570 4657

#### Wairakei Research Centre

State Highway 1, Wairakei Private Bag 2000 Taupo New Zealand Phone +64-7-374 8211 Fax +64-7-374 8199

For more information visit the GNS website http://www.gns.cri.nz