

Getting to know you

Thegn Ladefoged

- Q. How did you get into archaeology, and specifically Easter Island archaeology? What triggered your interest?
- A. My focus during my BA at the University California Santa Barbara was on cultural anthropology. Once I realized that I would have to deal with real live people I decided that a change was in order. Archaeology was a way for me to think about people in the past rather than the present. Surfing originally led me to Pacific archaeology, and a job offer brought me to the University of Auckland. I met Chris Stevenson when he was a post-doctoral fellow at Auckland in the mid-1990s, and he invited me to work with him and Sonia Haoa on Rapa Nui in 1999.
- Q. Who or what do you consider as your most significant influence (scientific or otherwise) either as a person or a particular work (or series of works)?
- A. My wife Sarina Pearson and my father Peter Ladefoged, who have and had academic careers, and showed me how to achieve one.
- Q. What theory or project of yours turned out differently from what you had expected as, for example, a complete surprise?
- A. When I began my work with Michael Graves in Hawai'i on the leeward Kohala agricultural field system I don't think either of us realized the significance of soil nutrient dynamics that Oliver Chadwick and Peter Vitousek have now documented.
- Q. What would you have done if you had not pursued your current line(s) of research and interests?
- A. Surf.
- Q. What was your best Eureka moment?
- A. One day rather suddenly finding my mental and physical limitations on the North Shore of O'ahu.
- Q. What do you hope to accomplish (in archaeology) on Easter Island in the future?
- A. An empirical assessment of terrestrial resource dynamics on the island.
- Q. What is your favorite Easter Island site and why?
- A. The northwest coast of the island because there are no roads, few people, and the archaeological landscape is incredible.
- Q. What myth or misinformation about Easter Island would you like to dispel?
- A. That the extent of soil erosion that you see on the sides of the volcanic cones of Rapa Nui also occurred throughout the island.



Zelda Ladefoged, Thegn Ladefoged and Oliver Chadwick having directional issues.

- Q. What's the most important thing you'd like visitors (or scientists, for that matter) to know about Easter Island?
- A. Respect goes a long way.
- Q. What advice would you give to a person interested in Easter Island archaeology or anthropology (or those fields generally)?
- A. If you want to make a career out of it, learn how to write and publish focused articles, and/or find someone who can help you achieve that.
- Q. If you could, what would you change about the fields of archaeology and anthropology?
- A. The wearing of suits at conferences and anthropological social occasions.
- Q. What are you currently reading?
- A. Tracks.
- Q. Credentials?
- A. Professor of Archaeology
- Q. Date and place of birth?
- A. September 24, 1959, Redruth, England