

Norfolk Find Revives Old Mystery

AN unfinished Polynesian stone adze recently found on Norfolk Island has renewed speculation on whether that island was inhabited by Polynesians, or merely visited by them, in pre-European times.

The adze, which has been identified by the Auckland Museum ethnologist, was found in shallow water at the west end of Emily Bay, near the convict-built Salt House. It is four inches long and about 1½ inches wide. It varies in thickness, but is not more than one inch through at the deepest part. It is shaped to fit the hand, and bears evidence of flaking, grinding and polishing.

The finder was Ann Hoare, a 13-year-old schoolgirl, whose mother, Mrs. Merval Hoare, is an authority on Norfolk Island history.

“Earlier finds of Polynesian artifacts,” Mrs. Hoare tells us, “were made on Norfolk Island by a Mr. McPhail, who found an adze on the sand dunes at Emily Bay in 1929, and by Mr. H. Rabone, who, in 1934, reported his discovery of a number of unfinished adzes and several hundred flakes in the Emily Bay area.

“Today a few Norfolk citizens possess shaped stones which might be artifacts, but they have not been submitted for identification.

“Norfolk was uninhabited when Lieutenant Philip Gidley King arrived in 1788 to establish the first penal settlement.

“King recorded later that he had found certain articles that pointed to the existence of previous inhabitants. These included “a large cluster of plantain trees” found growing on the south side of the island and some

stone implements dug up during cultivation in the interior.

“Though previous occupation of the island by Polynesians may be difficult to establish, the occasional discovery of artifacts points to the possibility of accidental Polynesian callers at Norfolk.”

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