

INTERESTING ITEMS FROM THE COLLECTION



A collection of stones might not be everyone's idea of an interesting item but these little fragments are important parts of history and some of the few remaining artefacts of Norfolk Island's first settlement of Polynesians.

There are many outstanding questions about the settlement, including why it ended, however the 1997-1999 archaeological digs at Emily Bay did reveal artefacts created and used by those early settlers.

On Thursday 20 May, the museum was visited by Masters student Nicola Simpson and her supervisor Dr Amy Way, an expert in stone tools. We wanted to share some of the insights they provided during their visit.

The pictured stones above are a good example of material still in storage at the Norfolk Island Museum. Dr Way noted that NIM15789 included the very first initial chips taken off the stone (known as cortex stones). This was an exciting find as it indicated this group of 25 chips was most likely identified in the archaeological dig very close to where the original stone was found and worked on by Polynesians centuries ago. Polynesians were known to pick stones up, remove a few chips to ascertain the quality of stone, and then take a 'good' stone for adze making away for further working.



The material Dr Way viewed from the dig-site was at best B grade for Adze making and generally poor quality stone. The flaws noted in many of the chips clarified why there was so many proformas (partially shaped stone) discovered at Emily Bay: they were started and then discarded when the stone proved too rough. Other partially polished stone chips also showed that as well as adze manufacture, Polynesians also re-sharpened finished tools at the Emily Bay area (pictured below).



We thank Amy and Nicola for their insights and look forward to keeping the community up-to-date with further information on Nicola's analysis of the artefacts from the Polynesian dig-site.

If anyone is interested in viewing these artefacts from the Polynesian digs please feel free to ring 23788 or email us at info@museums.gov.nf to organize a time.

