

Archaeological Fieldwork on Norfolk Island

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ABSTRACT. Exploratory excavations in Cemetery, Emily and Slaughter Bays in search of a prehistoric settlement site are outlined, along with small scale researches elsewhere on Norfolk Island and on adjacent islands. The archaeological excavations at the settlement site discovered in Emily Bay are described in detail and the taphonomy of the site discussed.

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The Norfolk Island Prehistory Project (NIPP) programme was divided into four field seasons. These were in December 1995 (directed by Atholl Anderson and Geoff Hope), in April 1996 (directed by Atholl Anderson and Ian Smith), in November 1997 (directed by Atholl Anderson and Peter White) and in February 1999 (directed by Peter White). It is convenient to describe the fieldwork and the characteristics of the sites investigated in this framework.

Fieldwork in 1995

Cemetery Bay. The first focus of fieldwork on Norfolk Island was upon the fauna-rich localities previously recorded in Cemetery Bay. It was considered that further investigation of these might divulge clues to a greater cultural influence in the evidence than was then known, essentially the existence of rat bone and charcoal. Local resident Jack Anderson took us to a place located 78 m south of the southern end of the Cemetery Bay sand beach (“Jack’s site”). There are similar exposures, many disclosing faunal

material, to either side, but this one had the deepest stratigraphy. At the top of the low cliffs (about 5 m above high tide level) were two sedimentary units resting in holes and crevices of the underlying calcarenite basement. The upper consisted of about 0.5 m of coarse yellow-brown sand, containing scattered pebbles, calcarenite rubble, landsnails and bones, while the lower consisted of up to 0.5 m of compacted brown sand and clay, full of calcarenite rubble, and with very little bone. Most of the bone came from a band 0.1–0.5 m below the surface. A small excavation of the exposed face and of material slumped from it was carried out, and the faunal remains retained for analysis. There was nothing about them to suggest a cultural origin.

Trench CB95:01. The “Old Quarry” site (“Area 1” of Varman, 1990) at Cemetery Bay was chosen for investigation because it was the locality in which unit C4 (a band of charcoal enriched sand, and bird, fish and rat bones) had been most extensively investigated (Anderson and White, *Approaching the Prehistory*, this vol.). A large shell adze had been found in the northwest corner of the “Old Quarry”