

Read all about it! The discovery of a "Māori adze factory" at Tiwai Point

4 May 1968

'Adze Factory' At Tiwai Point

A problem which has puzzled Maori historians for many years was solved yesterday when Mr A. J. Mackenzie, curator of the Southland Museum, went with Mr R. Beck to Tiwai Point in Bluff harbour, site of the proposed Comalco aluminium smelter.

The point, is now known as the "adze factory" at which adzes were made. The origin of these adzes, used by the Maori hunters, had long puzzled Maori historians. Mr Mackenzie said the area had long been known as an ancient Maori site, but it was not until recently that, because of the possibility of the aluminium smelter being built there, it was decided to

examine the site while this was still possible. About 250 adzes were found on the point yesterday.

Some 50 adze "blanks" (the roughly formed adze), 100 broken "blanks", many stone flakes, from which "blanks" were made and five hammer stones—used to chip and rough out the "blanks"—were found.

Corresponded

The type of metamorphic rock used at the "adze factory" was found by Mr Beck to correspond with adzes found all over the province.

Pieces of decayed moa bone and several middens containing evidence of cooked fish and seal were found. In a place where a swath had been bulldozed across the peninsula by contractors, a human jaw-bone and part of a limb were unearthed.

Mr Mackenzie said the place was definitely a moa hunter's site, and had been used in comparatively recent times.

"The trip was very profitable, and has tied up a lot of loose ends," Mr Mackenzie said.

25/27 May 1968

Tiwai 'Rescue' Ends Today

The week-long archaeological "rescue operation" by the site proposed for an aluminium smelter on Tiwai Point finishes today with the archaeological group impressed and hoping to do follow-up work.

A range of items is being taken from the area by Mr Stuart Park, Otago Museum assistant anthropologist, who has been in charge of the work up to 12 University of

Maori Finds at Tiwai



Michael Forrest, a member of the party which helped to take Maori objects from the archaeological site at Tiwai Point on Friday, holds a flake awl, one of 60 objects discovered that day. The "rescue operation" of the site, have even offered to divert the road so as not to disturb what has lain untouched for centuries.

11 May 1968

G The Southland Times, Saturday, May 11, 1968.

'Rescue Attempt' Planned At Tiwai Adze Site

An urgent attempt is being made to mount an archaeological rescue operation on the Tiwai Point adze-making site—among the biggest discoveries of the type in the South Island.

The "rescue" bid is being sought by Dr Charles Higham, of the University of Otago, who yesterday went to Tiwai, where a further substantial number of Maori stone tools were recovered. With him on the site, which is liable to be plotted out at the outset of any work for an aluminium smelter, were the Southland Museum director, Mr Arthur Mackenzie, and the assistant director, Mr Cuswell Beck.

The men yesterday added about 100 artifacts to the 350 or so collected a week ago—again mainly adzes at various stages of creation and hammerstones, tools that were used in fashioning the adzes.

Delicate Work

The bulk of available surface material exposed by wind and sea had now been collected, and extremely delicate work must now be undertaken to see what lay under the sand and gravel, said Mr Mackenzie, who said Dr Higham, he said, hoped

to return with a team from the university. Mr Mackenzie appealed to the public not to fossick in the locality, which showed great promise of revealing more of Maori pre-history if left to organized scientific study.

The artifacts found indicate that the site was worked by nomadic peoples possibly more than 1000 years ago until large-scale adze-making stopped about 200 years ago.

Finished on Site

Adzes were both roughed-out and finished on the site, which appears to cover about 200 square yards, based on an argillite reef almost in a direct line with those at Greenhills, Oraki and Te

It is from the spot that much of the rock necessary for Awarua Bay causeways, which appears to be part of the planned land access to the smelter site, would probably be taken.

And the planned road along the Tiwai to the smelter site would also cross the "adze factory" remains.

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16 May 1968

Rescue Bid At Tiwai Next Week

A small beach likely to vanish at the start of any aluminium smelter construction work on Tiwai Point will be the scene next week of an urgent archaeological "rescue operation."

At the instigation of the Southland Museum director, Mr Arthur Mackenzie, the operation has been arranged by Dr Charles Higham, of the University of Otago, and will be led by Mr Stuart Park, ethnologist of the Otago Museum.

It is hoped to have 10 to 15 students working for a week on the site, which was found this month to have been a Maori adze "factory" that possibly dates from earliest times.

Storm Bonus

When Mr Mackenzie first saw the locality five years ago there was no indication there of its archaeological value. He now suspects that the hundreds of artifacts recovered this month were the result of the violent winds and sea action during the April storms.

The coming expedition was a further example of the good work done by the Otago and Southland institutions, Mr Mackenzie said, would be based at Harbour Board was assisting with accommodation.

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21 May 1968

Excavation to Start For Adzes

Preparation for excavation at Tiwai Point, the site of a Maori adze "factory," was almost completed, and a start would be made today or tomorrow on an investigation which it was hoped would reveal the procedure in adze-making. Museum ethnologist, Mr Stuart Park, said in Bluff last night.

A group of Otago University students are working at the site this week, following up the discovery of many adzes and artifacts on the site.

Mr Park said it was not known how the Maori made an adze, apart from the general principles. He hoped to find clues which would reveal the angle of each cut and the method.

Lot of Work

A lot of work would be necessary before any breakthrough was reached, and this might take months of study at the museum's laboratory.

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23 May 1968

SMEALTER WORK COULD RUIN ADZE SITE

An important New Zealand archaeological site could be lost if aluminium smelter work on Tiwai Point before next summer.

Excavations by a group of Otago University students under Otago Museum ethnologist, Mr Stuart Park, have been carried out at the point this week.

So far, they have found that the site is not only extensive, and contains clues to adze-making, from local green and fine black argillite, but there was a great deal of other activity making tools from other materials.

The site also contains moa bones, post-holes indicating dwellings and ovens," he said. These all add up to the existence of moa hunters in this area.

Site covers 10 to 15 acres and is undisturbed either by fossicking or ploughing—which is quite rare in New Zealand," Mr Park said.

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28 May 1968

Bluff Excavations

ALTHOUGH THE FINDS AT Tiwai Point have not been of the kind that make an immediate impact on the public, the extensive deposit of early material is nevertheless of considerable potential value in broadening our knowledge of Maori life in the southern part of New Zealand. If, as has been suggested, the site could turn out to be a significant one, the information it would provide would be of great interest.

At the moment, further scientific investigation has to be delayed. Mr Park, the Otago Museum's assistant anthropologist, had been helped by several University students who have had to return for the start of term. Although