Additional Evidence for pre-1788 Visits by Pacific Islanders to Norfolk Island, South-West Pacific

JIM SPECHT
Australian Museum,
PO Box A285, Sydney South, NSW 2000, Australia

ABSTRACT. One of F.D. McCarthy’s earliest professional papers was a report of stone tools on Norfolk Island which he interpreted as evidence for pre-British visits by Pacific Islanders, probably from Polynesia. Since McCarthy’s paper (1934), additional artefactual, biological and historical evidences have supported his original conclusions. The present paper describes further finds and concludes that the evidence is firmly in favour of Pacific Islanders visiting and using the Kingston area of Norfolk Island about 700 years ago and, probably, again at a later date. These visits originated in the East Polynesian area, possibly the Society or Cook Islands and New Zealand, though a landing from Melanesia cannot be ruled out. Why there was no population on Norfolk at the time of its discovery by Cook in 1774 remains unanswered, but the answer probably lies in a range of factors. Further progress on understanding the island’s prehistory requires the location and excavation of in situ deposits.