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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

Obsidian artefacts from the far north

The Far North Regional Museum, Kaitaia, holds a well-shaped obsidian spearhead and an adze-like chopper. A private person in the same town has a similar chopper in the same glossy black obsidian and a knife with a worked handle.

The spear blade (A) is 100 mm long, 45 mm at its widest and approximately 5 mm thick. The retouching on the edges is regular and on one side of the blade only. Thus it is not the result of wear. The flaking is not recent as it has been sandblasted when the artefact lay on the surface.

The museum chopper (B) is 150 mm long, 75 mm wide and approximately 45 mm maximum depth. Some retouching on the cutting edge looks fairly recent and may indicate re-sharpening.

The objects were found at Scott Point on the northern end of the Ninety Mile Beach by a Kaitaia collector Mrs Dagmar Gleave who has deposited them with many other interesting pieces in the museum.

The pieces were accompanied by a pendant in similar obsidian. It was broken into three pieces and overall was 150 mm long. One piece had a suspension hole - surely an achievement with obsidian. The pendant vanished mysteriously. Visitors had often been allowed to look through her collection at her home and when she checked on one occasion Mrs Gleave found a full box of matches had been substituted for the box which had held the pendant.

The spear point would be suitable for killing large animals such as moa (it was moa country) seals or humans. There were early seal colonies at several places on this rocky coast.

The other two artefacts are also from the top end of Ninety Mile Beach. The chopper (C) is 130 mm long, 75 mm wide and 20 mm thick. Most of the use marks are on the longer sides and it is sand-blasted. The knife (D) is 150 mm long, the blade is 80 mm wide and 35 mm thick. It has a rounded handle and use marks on the blade. It could be a left-handed tool as the left hand fits an indentation above the blade. It is made of Kaeo obsidian.

These last two tools were collected by the late Mr Don Walters, a noted hunter and fisherman who brought them to the

writer when he found them over 25 years ago. They remained vivid memories and it was a pleasure to handle them again recently by permission of Mrs Neroli Walters of Kaitaia.

Derric Vincent
Ahipara

