

ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR - 1983

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## EXCAVATIONS AT BOYD'S COVE, NOTRE DAME BAY - 1983

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Boyd's Cove is a large (ca. 2100 m<sup>2</sup>) Beothuk and Recent Indian site located on a glacial moraine at the bottom of Dildo Run in eastern Notre Dame Bay (Figure 1). Area A, tested in 1982, was found to contain an extensive Recent Indian occupation which had been thoroughly disturbed by European gardening, probably in the late 19th century. Area B, comprising about 1760 m<sup>2</sup>, was also investigated in 1982, and it revealed 11 features which have been interpreted as Beothuk house pits (Figure 2). There may indeed be more than 11 house pits; features H-4 and H-8, for example, may represent multiple, overlapping houses. House 1 was partially excavated in 1982 as was a 10 m<sup>2</sup> area to the northeast. In this past field season, House 11 was almost completely excavated, and House 3 was excavated to the bottom of its living floor and to the surfaces of its earthen walls. A total of 47 m<sup>2</sup> outside of these houses was excavated to the sterile subsoil. Only one important feature, a concentration of fire-cracked rocks (Plate 5), which lacked both a significant amount of charcoal and burned subsoil, was found outside the immediate environs of the excavated houses.

House 1 had contained a bone and shell midden of some 8.25 m<sup>2</sup> which extended almost 2 m to the northeast of its entrance and to a point about 2 m inside, overlapping the house's central hearth. This midden yielded 1.743 kg of bone and 12.093 kg of shell. (A radiocarbon sample of this shell (Beta 6729) has been dated at 270±70 B.P.). Other samples of the shell and all of the bone were sent to the Zooarchaeological Identification Centre, National Museums of Canada, Ottawa, for identification. Although a final report has not yet been received, preliminary analysis points to an interesting subsistence pattern. Although Boyd's Cove is a coastal site, its location at the bottom of a protected run provides good access to terrestrial resources. Initial examination of this faunal assemblage bears this out. The impression is that "marine resources are not as important as land-based fauna," and, overall, the

Other European articles recovered from a Beothuk context are:

pipestems	9
beads (made from pipestems)	8
ceramics (Normandy stoneware)	16
glass fragments	21
trade beads (Kidd IIa12 & IIa56)	377

The relatively high frequency of nails to other metal objects contrasts strongly with the Wigwam Brook collection. There, nails formed only 32.5% of the metal objects. This would be consistent with the much later date of that site's occupation. By that time, the English migratory fishery had been largely abandoned for a sedentary one which would have greatly decreased the opportunities for stealing from seasonally-abandoned fishing stations. In addition, the Wigwam Brook Beothuks (according to the site's faunal analysis) were likely living there year round (Stewart 1973:18), probably because an expanding white occupation of the coastline denied them access to marine resources (Tuck 1976:74-75), and to coastal structures such as wharves, stages, and stores which formerly would have been a rich source of nails. European tools (perhaps stolen from white furriers) made up 9.8% of the metal objects at Wigwam Brook (LeBlanc 1973: 118-136). Other late 18th/early 19th century sites along the Exploits River have yielded large numbers of trap parts (Don Locke, personal communication), also suggesting theft from furriers as opposed to absent fishermen.

Evidence that the Beothuks were in contact with the French comes from the discovery in 1983 of 16 ceramic sherds identified by Gerard Gussett (Parks Canada), as Normandy stoneware (personal communication). These sherds, representing at least two vessels, were recovered from Houses 11 and 3. Normandy stoneware was manufactured in France throughout the colonial period and thus cannot serve as a reliable chronological marker. The presence of this stoneware, in fact, casts further doubt on the possibility of using the pitifully small sample of pipestems to date the Boyd's Cove Beothuk occupation. The stoneware suggests that the pipes might be of French manufacture which would rule out use

of the Harrington-Binford pipestem dating formula, for no bore diameter chronology exists for French pipes. (There is a possibility, it should be noted, that the Boyd's Cove Beothuks were in contact with aboriginal allies of the French. Marshall [1981:74] has suggested possible contacts with the Montagnais, and there are Micmac oral traditions hinting at a peaceful relationship with the Beothuks [Howley 1915:25].)

So far, the earlier hypothesized date of AD 1670-1720 for Boyd's Cove (Pastore 1983a) continues to be based largely upon circumstantial evidence, now buttressed by one radiocarbon date (Beta 6729) of 270 $\pm$ 70 B.P. on the previously mentioned shell midden, and slightly weakened by another date of 140 $\pm$ 70 B.P. (Beta 6728) from charcoal recovered from a hearth built on the wall of House 1 after it was abandoned. None of the European objects, including the trade beads, appear to have any chronological specificity. It is doubtful, however, whether the site's highly visible pithouses could have been occupied much past the 1720's, since that decade saw the beginnings of a white occupation of the coastline as close as 6 km away (C.O. 194/6, f. 11). The recovery of a metal object, now positively identified as part of a trap base, points toward an occupation sometime after the 1670's when English furriers had begun to exploit the Bonavista Bay hinterland (Head 1976:19).

Boyd's Cove may have been occupied during the period 1670-1720 because it combined nearness to food stocks with safe access to Europeans. Boyd's Cove lies within a maze of islands and shoal waters which would have been fine for canoes, but dangerous for any European vessel larger than a longboat. In the period A.D. 1670-1720, Boyd's Cove was located in a niche between a French fishery in the western portion of Notre Dame Bay and an English fishery in Bonavista Bay (Head 1976:15-16). During this period, the site may well have been a refuge from which its inhabitants made canoe voyages to European zones to trade or to steal.

Eventually, recognition of changing styles in Beothuk house construction may assist in the dating of this site. Already, investigation of the Boyd's Cove houses has indicated some differences with those of other sites. House 1 was partially excavated in 1982 because its walls and entrance were well-defined and a test pit in its entrance indicated