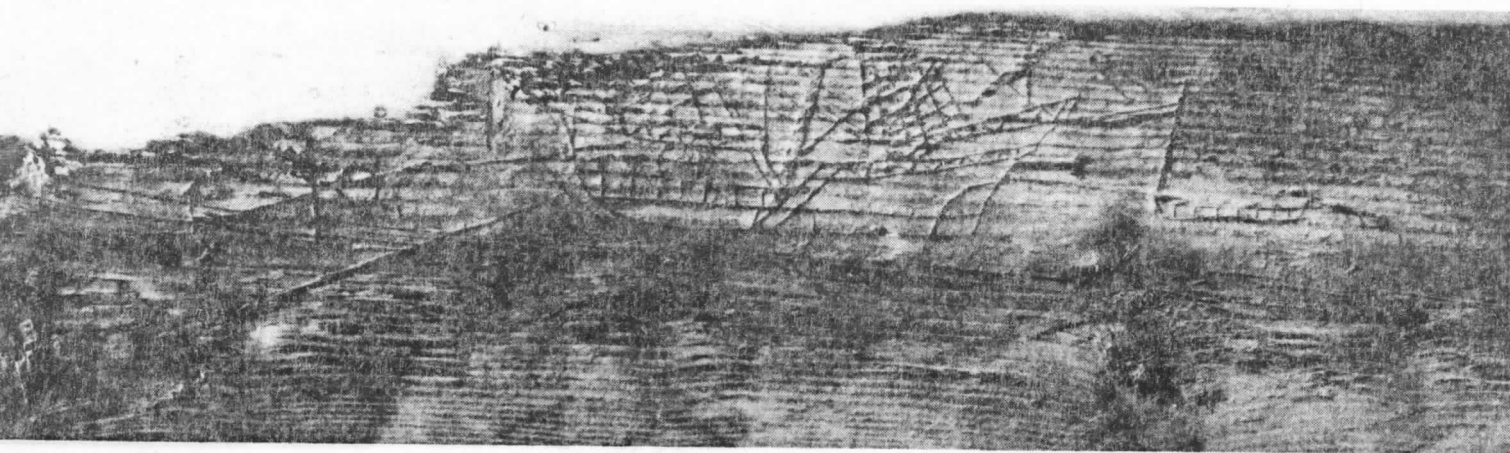


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EXCAVATIONS AT BOYD'S COVE—1984

A PRELIMINARY REPORT

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INTRODUCTION

Boyd's cove (DiAp-3) was discovered in 1981 (Pastore 1982a) in the course of a survey of eastern Notre Dame Bay designed to locate and assess Beothuk sites (Figure 1). Extensive testing in 1982 revealed 11 depressions in Area B, each of which are ringed by low earthen walls (Figure 2). These features have been interpreted as the remains of Beothuk pit houses. Most of the interior of House 1 was excavated in 1982 as well as 17 m² outside of the structure. Considerable testing of Area A revealed evidence of Recent Indian occupations possibly persisting through the past two millennia. Unfortunately, this area had been thoroughly disturbed by European gardening and to date no cultural material has been recovered in context (Pastore 1983). In 1983, the interior of House 11 was completely excavated, although 13 m² on the surfaces of the walls were taken down only to the level of the wall fill. In that same season, the interior of House 3 was excavated to the living floor and to the surface of the walls. A total of 47 m² to the east of these structures was also excavated. This exterior excavation revealed only one feature, which was interpreted as hearth debris. It consisted of a concentration of fire-cracked rocks lacking significant amounts of charcoal and evidence of in situ burning. The paucity of historic material in the vicinity of this feature suggests that this portion of Area B was little used by the historic Beothuk (Pastore 1984). In 1984, the remainder of the interior of House 1 was excavated and the walls were trenched at four points. The unexcavated portions of the House 11 walls were also dug to sterile subsoil as was the interior of House 3 and all but 12 m² of the House 3 walls. (These units were covered in plastic and re-sodded).

CULTURAL CHRONOLOGY

A portion of the walls of Houses 3 and 11 proved to be resting on a largely-undisturbed Beaches complex occupation. This complex, defined solely on the basis of its lithics, is characterized by triangular bifaces, thumbnail scrapers, and projectile points with side and corner notches (Tuck 1982: 211). A Beaches complex point (Figure 3a) was found in association with a hearth, charcoal from which was been dated at 960 +/- 50 BP (Beta 10235). This represents the first dated Beaches complex occupation on the island. Beaches projectile points had long been thought to be prehistoric Beothuk, although recently researchers have suggested that the Little Passage complex would more likely qualify as prehistoric Beothuk (Tuck 1982: 211). The Little Passage complex is defined by its triangular bifaces, thumbnail scrapers, and tiny, corner-notched and stemmed projectile points, frequently made from fine-grained, grey-green cherts. The evidence from Boyd's Cove now clearly demonstrates that the Little Passage complex is prehistoric Beothuk. The 1983 field season produced 14 stone projectile points and 4 triangular bifaces either with or above historic material. These artifacts show distinct stylistic resemblances to Little Passage triangular bifaces and projectile points. In addition, a recent attribute analysis of Little Passage/Beothuk projectile points from 18 sites on the island indicates that there is a clear progression from Little Passage to Beothuk, over time, in which projectile points "decrease in size, their notches become shallower and broader, and move from corner to base, and exhibit less surface retouch" (Schwarz n.d.: 66). At Inspector Island (DiAq-1), a site also discovered in the course of the 1981 survey, a Little Passage occupation has been dated at 610 +/- 60 BP (Beta 6730) to 690 +/- 40 BP (Beta 3938), placing this occupation between that of the Beaches complex and the historic Beothuk. It may be premature to conclude that this sequence of Beaches complex - Little Passage complex - Beothuk will remain unchanged, but the model developed at Boyd's Cove and Inspector Island appears to be the best outline now extant of the last millennium of Recent Indian chronology.

STRUCTURES

Descriptions of Houses 1 and 11 appear in previous reports (Pastore 1983, 1984). The 1984 field season revealed more post moulds in both houses including surprisingly well preserved wood from a post in House 1. The near-complete excavation of House 3 has revealed a structure very similar to that of House 1. The crests of the House 3 walls form an irregular six-sided configuration measuring ca. 7 m at its maximum and averaging 20-30 cm high. The interior was excavated to an average depth of ca. 10-12 cm, and at its greatest, the interior measured ca. 5.2 m from the base of one wall to the opposite base. Four, or possibly five, oblong depressions ca. 2-3 cm deep and averaging 1.5 by 0.8 m were found around the outer margins of the interior at the bases of the walls. It was not clear if these were excavated into the house floor. A central hearth was indicated by a shallow (5 cm) pit, burned, red subsoil, and an overlying lens of bone mash. A large battered rock on the margin of the hearth was interpreted as an anvil. Two post moulds on the periphery of the hearth may be evidence of a cooking rack. Four post moulds in the walls showed a slight (10^0) angle inward, while the remaining post moulds in the walls were vertical. The evidence, including one well-preserved portion of a post, indicated posts of ca. 10-15 cm in diameter. The entrance was indicated by a 1.3 m break in the north wall and what has been interpreted as two drip lines on either side of the entrance. This entrance also contained a bone and shell midden and a small hearth, both obviously created after the house had been abandoned by its occupants. Other indications of post-abandonment activity were evidenced by a black, greasy deposit, thought to be mammal fat, on the eastern wall, and a small hearth in the eastern portion of the house interior, above the living floor.

ARTIFACTS

Since so much of the 1984 effort was concentrated upon excavating the walls and the Beaches complex occupation underlying Houses 3 and 11, relatively few artifacts ascribed to the historic Beothuks were recovered. Among the more interesting of these, however, were Normandy stoneware from House 1, previously recovered only from Houses 3 and 11, and a pipe stem decorated with

a stamped fleur-de-lis inside a double diamond--a motif "most popular in the mid-seventeenth century" (Noel-Hume 1974: 305). More trade beads (Kidd IIa12 & IIa56) were found in House 1, as well as a brass buckle from House 3. All houses yielded more nails, modified nails, and projectile points made from nails. In general, the artifacts recovered during the 1984 field season continue to suggest an occupation during the period ca. A.D. 1650-1720 by a people in sporadic peaceful contact with either Europeans (likely French fisherman), or native groups (likely Montagnais) associated with the French. Both French (Roy 1923: 366) and English (Howley 1915: 26) sources hint at friendly intercourse between the Beothuks and the Montagnais, which may explain the origin of the trade beads and the small number of fish hooks, knife blades, and the few copper kettle fragments. The high frequency of nails (70% of the metal objects recovered to date) indicate that the Boyd's Cove Beothuks acquired most of their metal by pilfering, most likely from seasonally-abandoned fishing premises. Preliminary faunal analysis suggested the possibility of a fur trade at Boyd's Cove, but this has not been borne out by the final study (Cumbaa 1984: 15). The trade axes, varieties of beads, and profusion of kettles, knives, and firearms characteristic of mainland sites where a significant fur trade has existed are either lacking or in very short supply at Boyd's Cove (see Appendix 1). If the Boyd's Cove inhabitants were involved in a fur trade, it must have been a relatively minor one.

With respect to artifacts made of indigenous material, the recovery in 1984 of a number of bone tools and ornaments has thrown new light on our knowledge of the bone technology of the Beothuks and their predecessors. Incised bone ornaments, formerly found only in graves, have been recovered from the interiors and walls of House 1 and 3. Where wall fills have contained shell, bone preservation has been remarkable. A perfect bone Little Passage projectile point, for example, was recovered from House 3 wall fill. In addition, the Beaches occupation under House 3 produced what appears to be a bone mattock, a lance tip, and a number of awls--the first bone artifacts associated with the Beaches complex.

APPENDIX 1

Catalogued European Objects from Beothuk Contexts

Sheet iron pieces	6
Rod iron pieces	10
Strip iron pieces	73
Unidentified iron pieces	181
Iron button fragment	1
Iron chisel? (formerly identified as an adze)	1
Trap base	1
Lead shot	1
Strip lead piece	1
Brass buckle	1
Probable hinge fragments	2
Brass or copper kettle fragments	2
Brass or copper fragments	2
Cast iron kettle fragments	11
Fish hooks	15
Knife blade fragments	20
Iron projectile points (made from nails)	13
Aboriginally modified nails	132
Nails	637
Beads (manufactured from pipe stems)	8
Pipe stem fragments	13
Ceramics (Normandy stoneware)	18
Glass fragments	21
Glass trade beads (Kidd IIa & IIa56)	481