

***ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY AND  
EXCAVATIONS AT L'ANSE AUX MEADOWS  
NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE OF CANADA***

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**M**emorial University and Parks Canada conducted the second field season of a multi-year archaeological excavation and survey program directed at the Aboriginal occupations of L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site of Canada, on Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula (Kristensen and Curtis 2008). Four weeks of fieldwork in September and October

were dedicated to three main components: the excavation of an Aboriginal hearth adjacent to the Norse site, retrieval of sediment samples and cores for insect and mite analysis, and shovel testing along the coast west of Épaves Bay to identify previously unrecorded Aboriginal sites.

A Recent Indian hearth was identified through test pit excavations and a shovel testing strategy based on local topography and previous excavation areas (Wallace 1989, Wallace 2006). The hearth is 35 m southwest of a Norse smithy (area 4A76P in Figure 1) and consists of fire cracked rock, charcoal, and a cobble concentration (Figures 2 and 3). Calibrated radio-

carbon dates suggest the hearth was used between 960 and 910 BP. Artifacts from two cultural components were associated with the hearth: a European nail (Figure 4) 1 m southeast of the hearth, and a cluster of prehistoric stone flakes (Figure 5) 1 m west of the hearth.

Aboriginal activity areas, a shovel test on the upper terrace of L'Anse aux Meadows yielded one piece of red jasper (Figure 6) and five chert flakes. The jasper is similar to Norse specimens from L'Anse aux Meadows that have been geochemically sourced to Greenland and Iceland (Smith 2000). Two 1 m by 1 m excavation units (area 4A301A in Figure 1) were opened to ex-

During the initial round of testing to identify units

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Figure 1: Excavation plan adapted from Parks Canada map with 2008 excavation areas indicated in red and enlarged (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)

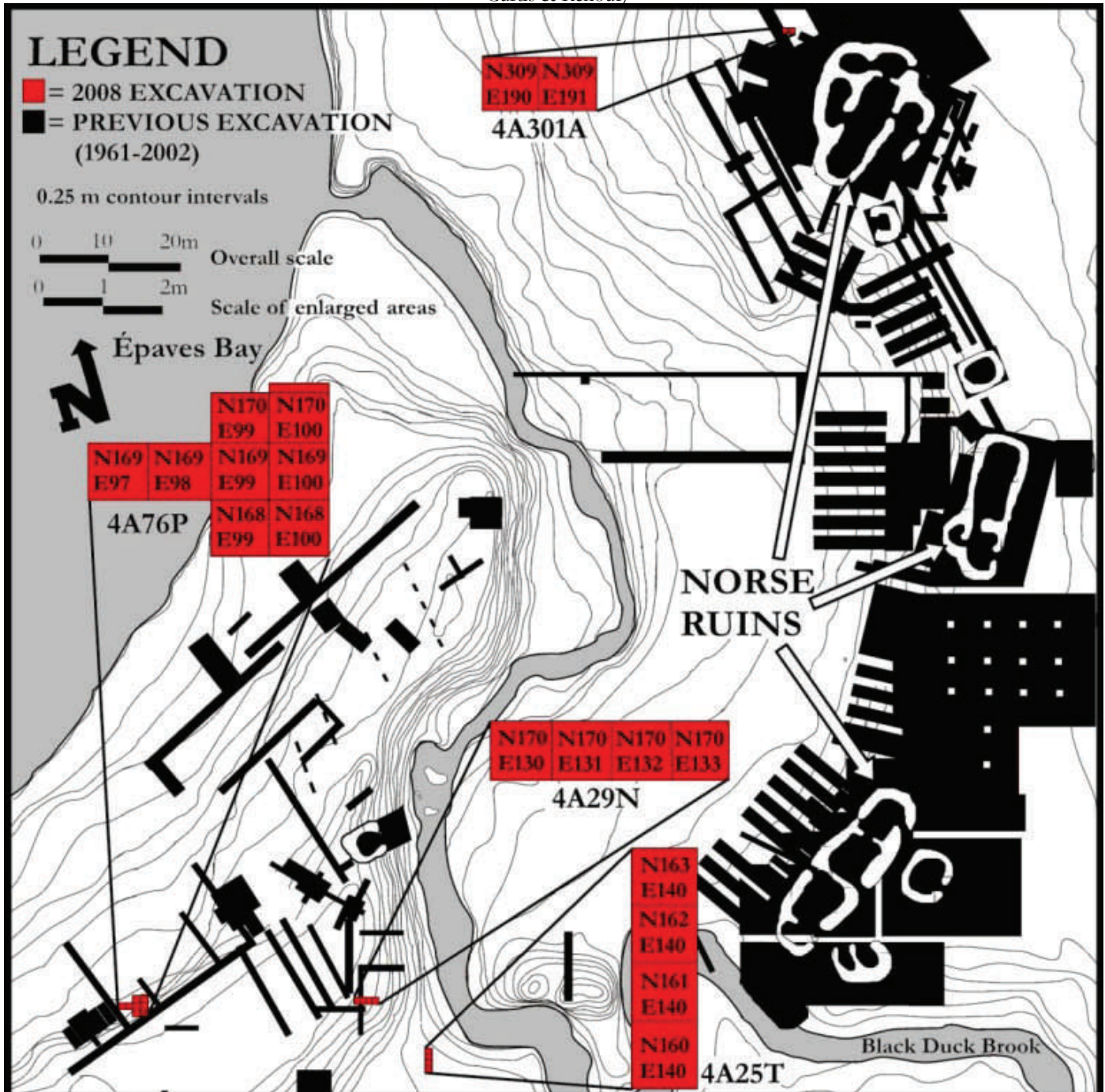




Figure 2: Hearth feature on lower terrace in excavation area 4A76P (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)

explore this area's potential for future excavations. A total of three chert flakes were recovered and the context appears undisturbed suggesting that this area could yield additional information on Aboriginal occupations at L'Anse aux Meadows.

Twelve 1 L sediment samples were collected from the Recent Indian activity area. The samples will be analysed for bird parasites (insects and mites) using a kerosene flotation method. In the absence of poorly preserved bird bones, more durable bird parasites would indicate prehistoric bird exploitation. The presence of these faunal remains will help address questions pertaining to the role of L'Anse aux Meadows in prehistoric Aboriginal cultures. This archaeoentomological study will test the hypothesis that Recent Indian complexes utilized the area as a task-specific bird hunting and egg collecting locale.

Three sediment cores were collected from Little Sacred Island, 2 km north of the L'Anse aux Meadows Norse site. These sediment cores will also be analysed for seabird parasites. A small pond on Little Sacred Island (Figure 7) was chosen for coring due to the appropriate sediment for organic preservation and a ring of feathers that lined the shore. One of the two sediment cores extracted from this pond is shown in Figure 8. A well preserved stratigraphic column of seabird parasites would serve as a proxy indicator of seabird population dynamics through time. This record of seabird demography over the past thousand years will then be compared to human patterns of occupation and abandonment at nearby L'Anse aux Meadows. Preliminary analysis of sediment samples from the archaeological site have yielded oribatid soil mites. Though these are not indicative of the resources ex-

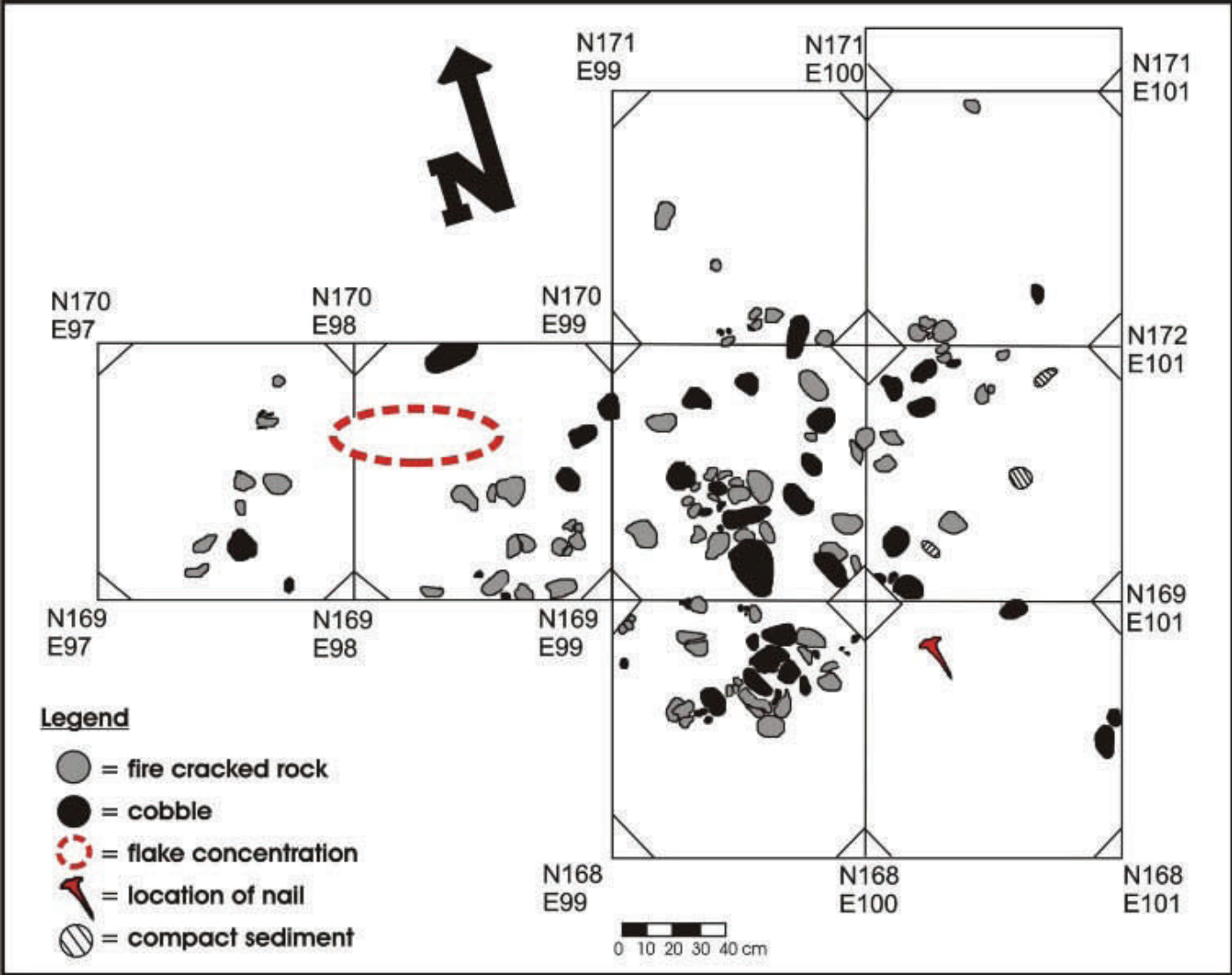


Figure 3: Hearth feature in excavation area 4A76P (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)



Figure 4: Iron nail found in excavation area 4A76P (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)



Figure 5: Chert flakes found in excavation area 4A76P (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)



Figure 6: Red jasper found in shovel test on upper terrace of L'Anse aux Meadows (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)

exploited at L'Anse aux Meadows, they indicate good preservation potential.

The 2008 survey focused on Upper Quarter-

deck Cove, the second cove to the west of Épaves Bay and the Norse site. The survey consisted of shovel test-pitting along random transects and in areas of high archaeological potential (on or near geographic features such as raised terraces and freshwater brooks). Although no Aboriginal cultural material was found, indirect evidence of past human activity was observed. The landscape here today is very open, with low ground cover and occasional patches of tuckamore. Many of the test pits, however, encountered tree stumps and roots suggesting that this area was more extensively forested in the past. Today's landscape may thus be partly a result of wood-cutting activities over the last two hundred years, following the establishment of the nearby communities.

Exploration further to the west documented a small historic site in New Harbour Cove. The site consists of at least one stone house foundation measuring approximately 6 m by 4 m and a scatter of ceramic sherds along the beach (Figure 9). A sample of

Figure 7: Small pond on Little Sacred Island from which two sediment cores were extracted (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)





Figure 9:  
Overgrown house  
foundation at New  
Harbour Cove  
(Kristensen, Curtis  
& Renouf)



Figure 8: Crew member Mike Donnelly holding sediment core prior to incremental dissection (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)



5 cm

Figure 10: Ceramics from New Harbour Cove (Kristensen, Curtis & Renouf)

the ceramics was collected to provide information regarding the age of the site (Figure 10). This sample is consistent with an occupation between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century as it includes a variety of refined white earthenware fragments along with a coarser, buff-coloured earthenware.

#### *Future Research*

Parks Canada survey work west of Épaves Bay will continue in an effort to expand the Aboriginal site inventory of L'Anse aux Meadows National Historic Site and surrounding area. Future excavations at the site and current research by M.A. student Todd Kristensen will explore the nature of Recent Indian occupations at L'Anse aux Meadows and on the Northern Peninsula.

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