
PORT AU CHOIX ARCHAEOLOGY PROJECT

SUMMARY OF 2004 FIELDWORK

Phillip's Garden, Barbace Cove & Conche

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The Port au Choix Archaeology Project ran three research programs this summer at Phillip's Garden and Barbace Cove in the Port au Choix National Historic Park, and in the Conche area on the northeast coast of the Northern Peninsula.

The program at Phillip's Garden concentrated on determining the size and construction of some of the larger houses at this Dorset Palaeoskimo site (ca. 2000-1200 BP). Renouf has identified at least 68 dwellings at this site, a place from which the Dorset hunted harp seals in March and April each year. Some of the large dwellings were excavated by Dr. Elmer Harp in the early 1960s but details of the architecture such as post-holes and exterior dimensions were not recorded. Renouf and her team did limited re-excavation of two of the dwellings excavated by Harp and found that one (House 2) was very large, with an exterior footprint of 78.4 m². It had two and possibly a third evenly spaced post-holes down the centre which would have supported a gabled roof. One of the post-holes was 81 cm deep and the two others were 55 cm deep, indicating a substantial and well-constructed dwelling. Excavation of one of the post-holes revealed a series of deposits that suggest at least two construction phases related to this dwelling. The older phase consisted of the large deep post-holes and a younger phase consisted of filling in these to make smaller, shallower and narrower holes for much smaller posts. The discoveries from this season confirm that Dorset architecture at this site was more complex and permanent than previously thought. It also confirms that the dwellings here could have accommodated more than one or two families, as earlier suggested by Harp.

Renouf and her team returned to the French Basque site of Barbace Cove on the Port au Choix peninsula to search for evidence of a roofing structure over the oven excavated during the field season in 2003. This well-protected cove was a French summer fishing station used from at least the eighteenth century up until the turn of the twentieth century. In 2003 the team excavated the remains of one bread oven (Event 12). This feature would have been part of a fishing room that usually consisted of a stage, a beach for processing cod, a bread oven, and possibly a cook-house and sleeping quarters. Last year Renouf and her team identified the platform on which the oven would have rested, as well as some of the materials used in its construction. The platform at 29 m² and the footprint of the oven at 9.5 m² suggest a large communal oven providing bread for the 50-100 French fishermen who would have fished out of Barbace Cove and processed cod on its beaches. Excavations this season extended to the east of the platform wall to include all of sub-operation 7A945B. While no evidence of supports for a roof was found the team did locate the remains of another bread oven that had been partially dismantled, presumably for the construction of the adjacent, excavated oven feature. The well placed platform stones of this older oven were removed and only the rubble interior of the platform remained. No oven materials were found in association with this feature. The area also revealed a deposit of fish bone that indicates that at least some cod processing was done on shore behind the beaches and well away from the water. Ceramics and glass recovered confirm a late

eighteenth, early nineteenth century date for this structure. The oven (Event 12) was covered in sand bags for protection.

The main objective of the 2004 summer field season was to identify new archaeological sites on the East Coast of the Northern Peninsula. Bradley Drouin and his crew surveyed the region between Canada Bay and Hare Bay and focused their efforts on four main areas: Englee, Conche, St. Julien's and Croque.

Five new sites were identified in Englee: White Point (EeBa-10), the Compton site (EeBa-11), the Duck Trail site (EeBa-12), Fillier-2 site (EeBa-13) and Fillier Ridge site (EeBa-14). Based on preliminary artifact analysis the five sites in Englee have been identified as Palaeoskimo with the White Point site being Dorset based on the presence of a tip flute spall.

Conche produced a wider array of new sites with four historic and ten prehistoric sites, ranging from Maritime Archaic to Dorset. The four historic sites of Rancid Seal (EfAx-20), the Bottom site (EfAx-21), Sleepy Cove (EfAx-22) and Martinique Bay-1 (EfAx-23) were all located in Martinique Bay at the bottom of Conche harbour. The sites mainly consisted of scattered nails and iron artifacts. Sleepy Cove however produced one pipe stem, earthenware and a few other ceramic fragments. The dating of the sites based on artifactual material has not yet been completed. Interestingly the Bottom site also contained a prehistoric component. Two lithic cores and two flake concentrations were found on the lower terrace (~2-4 masl).

The remaining prehistoric sites were located along the western shore of Conche harbour from the southern tip of the Conche Peninsula, known as Fox Head, to Chest Head in the town of Conche. The sites located directly along the coast at Fox Head were (moving south to north): Fox Head-3 (EfAx-18), Fox Head-1 (EfAx-16), Fox Head-2 (EfAx-17), the Dock site (EfAx-24), Fox Head-4 (EfAx-19), Salmon Net (EfAx-25), Green Cove-2 (EfAx-28), Green Cove (EfAx-12), First Cove (EfAx-26), and the Carroll site (EfAx-27). Based on artifact assemblages Fox Head-3, Fox Head-1, the Dock site, Fox Head-4, and Green Cove-2 are Dorset sites. This is based primarily on the presence of tip flute spalls and diagnostic endblades. Salmon Net and Green Cove are two Groswater sites, the first of their kind to be found on the East Coast of the Northern Peninsula. This is based primarily on the presence of endblades which have been ground, very finely flaked and notched. First Cove is possibly a Maritime Archaic site based on ground slate flakes, similar to ones already found at EfAx-1 (Foley Garden site) and flakes of Ramah chert. Fox Head-2 only contained one flake but is spatially located close to the Dock site. In addition, Steve Carroll donated a large fragmented soapstone pot that he found during the building of an extension on his house. No testing was done due to the extensive disturbance caused by the construction. Further testing of EfAx-1 and EfAx-2 (Chest Head) revealed the limits of these sites. As expected Chest Head is very disturbed by modern and historic root cellars, gardens, and house foundations. However, the site is much larger than previously thought. EfAx-1 on the other hand, is smaller than what was expected. A number of ground slate flakes were found along with a beautiful finely flaked Ramah chert projectile point.

Preliminary testing in Croque and St. Julien's was also completed this summer. No new sites were identified; however further testing is needed in St. Julien's and Croque. █



Older (right) and younger (left) bread oven platforms, Barbace Cove, Port au Choix. (Renouf, Drouin & Wells)

Sites at Fox Head, Conche. (Renouf, Drouin & Wells)

