

# Parks Canada Archaeology in Terra Nova National Park

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In July 2014, Parks Canada conducted archaeological field work in Terra Nova National Park with two objectives:

1. To conduct test excavations at Aboriginal sites being impacted by coastal erosion
2. To assess the potential impacts of proposed tent platform installations at several locations within the park

This work resulted in the documentation of additional information on three known archaeological sites and the identification of two new sites.

### ***Archaeological Monitoring & Testing Program***

Parks Canada has been conducting a regular program of monitoring at archaeological sites within Terra Nova National Park since 2007 in order to identify and document the impacts of coastal erosion (Curtis 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2013; Stopp 2013). The initial season of monitoring lead to salvage excavations at the Bank site in 2008 and 2009 (Curtis 2009a, 2009b, 2010b, 2010c). The Bank site is a multi-component site spanning Groswater Palaeoeskimo, Dorset Palaeoeskimo, Cow Head, Little Passage and early European occupations (Curtis 2009a, 2009b, 2010c; Schwarz 1993). Notably it includes a Little Passage linear hearth feature associated with Ramah chert projectile points and a dense Dorset Palaeoeskimo deposit associated with a semi-subterranean house structure.

In addition to the Bank site, several Aboriginal sites are actively being impacted by coastal erosion; however, our knowledge of these sites is limited to what has been observed along the eroding bank edges. The full extent, nature, and cultural affiliations of these sites remain uncertain. In 2014 we thus shifted our focus from brief monitoring visits at many sites to test excavations at selected sites. Two sites were tested in 2014: Swale Island and Chandler Reach 4.



Figure 1. Artifacts from Swale Island site (28A). Top biface found in 1979, bottom projectile point and endblade excavated in 2014.





**Figure 2.** Test excavation unit at Swale Island site (28A) where artifacts were recovered in 2014.

#### *Swale Island (28A/DdAk-8)*

Swale Island is located in Newman Sound. The Swale Island site was identified during the first archaeological survey of Terra Nova National Park, directed by Jim Tuck (1980), in 1979. Tuck's team collected a single large biface from the beach (Figure 1). This artifact was originally attributed to the Maritime Archaic period, but is now thought to represent a Cow Head complex presence at the site.

Monitoring visits in 2007 and 2010 lead to the recovery of two microblade cores along the extensive eroding bank edge. One core is of high quality grey chert and the other is crystal quartz. These two artifacts indicate a Palaeoeskimo presence at the site. On each occasion a few rhyolite flakes were also observed in the eroding bank. Although the quantity of material being exposed here is small, the recovery of two microblade cores is intriguing. In comparison, the excavated assemblage from the Bank site mentioned

above, includes hundreds of Dorset Palaeoeskimo tools and thousands of pieces of manufacturing debris, but only one microblade core.

These finds from the eroding bank edge at the Swale Island site indicate that some archaeological deposits may remain *in situ*. In 2014 we excavated three 1 m by 1m test units spread along the edge of the eroding bank over a distance of 75 m (Figure 2). These units were placed adjacent to the locations where the cores were found and at a location where rhyolite flakes had been observed in the eroding bank. Two of the units were sterile (though one was not completely excavated in the time available), but the central unit, placed where the rhyolite flakes were observed, produced about 50 small flakes of rhyolite and chert along with two diagnostic artifacts. One of these is a side-notched point of grey rhyolite likely attributable to the Beaches complex and the second is a Dorset Palaeoeskimo endblade of light grey chert (Figure 1).

*Chandler Reach 4 (412A/DdAk-19)*

Located on Overs Islands in Chandler Reach, this site was identified during our monitoring work in 2009, when we had the opportunity to survey beaches in this island group while visiting known sites. In 2009 we recovered a large bifacial core and a preform of rhyolite at the water's edge (Curtis 2010a, 2010b). In 2014 we placed a 1 m by 1 m excavation unit at the location of these finds and three 50 cm by 50 cm test units each five metres away, to the east, north and west (the water being immediately to the south). All of these tests were negative, no archaeological material was found.

*Summary*

Though our finds from these test excavations at Swale Island and Chandler Reach 4 are minimal, the information gained from the testing will be very useful in contributing to our decision-making regarding cultural resource management in Terra Nova National Park and may allow us to focus on other archaeological sites in the future.

***Tent Platform Impact Assessments***

In addition to the test excavations at eroding sites, we assessed several locations where tent platforms may be installed. This resulted in the documentation of additional archaeological features at Buckley Cove and the identification of two new sites in Lions Den.

*Buckley Cove (414A/DdAl-6)*

An historic period archaeological site (perhaps late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> century) was identified at Buckley Cove, on the north shore of Newman Sound during the impact assessment for a trail extension in 2009 (Curtis 2010a). This site consists of several possible cabin or structure locations as indicated by various low mounds and depressions and the occasional cast iron artifact. Further pedestrian survey in 2014 identified additional potential archaeological features as well as a suitable tent platform location. As the potential features consist of rather amorphous mounds and depressions in grass and shrub covered areas specific details of the site age and function are not readily evident.

*Lions Den North (430A) and South (429A)*

Lions Den is a body of water that opens on to Chandler Reach just south of Newman Sound and north of Clode Sound. No archaeological sites have

been recorded from this area, but historical accounts indicate that sawmilling operations along with a pit-prop and pulpwood business were located in Lions Den during the first half of the twentieth century (Major 1983:57-58). During our pedestrian survey for tent platform areas we observed indications of these sawmilling operations.

At Lions Den South we did not observe any potential cultural resources within the campsite areas, but we did find slabs of cut wood in the water just off shore. This indicates that sawmilling operations took place here. The area is surrounded with dense vegetation that could easily be obscuring traces of archaeological features related to the forestry work.

At Lions Den North three pieces of cast iron including at least one stove part were observed in a clearing. These indicate the presence of a cabin or shelter that was likely related to the forestry work.

***Conclusion***

Our work in Terra Nova National Park this season expanded our monitoring program to include test excavations at the Swale Island and Chandler Reach 4 sites. In addition to providing some additional insight into the nature of occupations at these sites the information gained will contribute to cultural resource management decision-making. Archaeological assessments for tent platform installations also contributed new information and resulted in the identification of two new sites related to the forestry industry in Lions Den.

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