

The Ontario Archaeological Society



ARCH NOTES edited by Nancy Powell

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THE OCTOBER MEETING

DATE: WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 14, 1964
PLACE: Archaeology Laboratory
Sidney Smith Hall basement
St. George Street
(West side, just south of Harbord)
TIME: 8:00 p.m.
SPEAKER: MR. WALTER KENYON
TOPIC: "Burial Mound at Rainy River, Ontario"

The first meeting of our fall term will be held in our regular meeting place and our speaker is an old and valued friend of the Society, Mr. Walter Kenyon of the Royal Ontario Museum. Walter has been continuing his field work in the Rainy River district this past summer and he has discovered there an extremely interesting burial mound of the historic period. He reports that once again his finds appear to be "fraught with mysticism" and those of you who have heard Walter speak before will know that we are in for a fascinating and entertaining evening. We shall be looking forward to greeting old members and welcoming new ones at this important meeting of the Society.

I say that this meeting is important, not only because you will have an opportunity to hear an excellent speaker, but it is necessary at this time to chart the future course of the Society. For too long now we have held both meetings and digs with only a handful of members in attendance. Despite the fact that we have an impressive membership of 70 odd, the same few turn out for all our gatherings. The Society is, in effect, in a moribund state when it could and should be dynamic and active. We can play a vital role in the archaeological work of this province. There are innumerable sites that an organization such as ours could excavate under skilled leadership. In many cases it is urgent that material should be recovered and recorded before the bulldozer eliminates all evidence of archaeological remains.

Dr. Taylor, Chief of the Archaeology Division of the National Museum of Canada, has sent us a most informative and interesting letter concerning the work being carried out by the National Museum in Ontario. He reports that one of our members, Mr. William Noble of the University of Toronto, has been assisting Dr. J. V. Wright throughout the summer. They carried out various salvage excavations, including work at the Row site on the Lower Rideau River, and at the McIvor site near Spencerville. At the latter site, an undisturbed midden deposit was located and 4,689 specimens were recovered. The site represents the second western-most Onondaga site in eastern Ontario and its analysis will be most valuable for comparative purposes.

The already-excavated Heron Bay site near Marathon was re-worked in order to obtain materials suitable for radio-carbon analysis. Some wood charcoal, raw bone and carbonized bone were obtained, as well as further artifacts. It is essential to obtain radio-carbon dates from this site as it is the largest Laurel component discovered along the north shore of Lake Superior and by seriation studies appears to be one of the earliest Laurel sites.

Mr. Noble was also active at the Fort Erie excavation mentioned in our last bulletin. Upon completion of the work, the material was sent to the National Museum where Mr. Noble and several assistants cleaned, sorted and catalogued the tens of thousands of pieces recovered. Processing is still going on so it is difficult to estimate the exact number of burials, but it appears to be in excess of 500. The ossuary is believed to be Neutral and if so, those findings would represent the only large body of Neutral skeletal material which resides in an institution and which was excavated under relatively controlled circumstances.

Other OAS members have been actively engaged by the National Museum. Mr. K.C.A. Dawson has been excavating Blackduck focus components on Whitefish Lake near the Lakehead. This work represents an important contribution to the study of Late Woodland assemblages in Northern Ontario and it is especially interesting as the material differs in a number of important respects from that at Rainy River.

One of our newer members, but someone with a great deal of experience, is Major James F. Pendergast. He has been excavating the multi-component Brophy's Point site near Kingston. This work is extremely valuable in determining the archaeological sequence in the area and its relationship to the broad chronology of the Northeast in general.

Another friend of the Society, Mr. Clyde C. Kennedy, carried out a survey in the Ottawa Valley in both Ontario and Quebec in search of Palaeo-Indian sites. Several new

stations were discovered which will add to our knowledge of the Archaic and Woodland periods in the area.

The Museum has also sponsored projects in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia and the Northwest Territories as well as supporting research this year in Canadian physical anthropology and radio-carbon dating.

Dr. Taylor thought we would be interested to learn that Mr. George Macdonald, formerly of the University of Toronto, has joined the staff of the National Museum and spent the summer as second in command of a joint project on a Palaeo-Indian site in Nova Scotia. Dr. William N. Irving joined the staff in September to specialize in the archaeology of the western sub-arctic of Canada.

We are certainly grateful to Dr. Taylor for providing us with so much interesting archaeological news. I would like to encourage all of you to pass along any item you think might be of interest to the members.

But, meanwhile, our own record has certainly not been very impressive over the last year or so. The Cleary site dig of last fall and spring was not nearly as successful as it could have been had there been a full complement of members turn out instead of the faithful few. And, of course, the actual work of the excavation is only the beginning. Artifacts must be cleaned, sorted and catalogued and finally reports written before the job is done. Bill Donaldson has a basement full of the results of past OAS digs that he cannot possibly deal with by himself.

Now comes the question of this year's fall dig. Dr. Clarke, as we mentioned in last month's Notes, discovered a promising looking site in Scarborough. Moreover, the area is just south of the wrecked car lot in an unused section of land. The owners have given us permission to carry out a dig there. But is there any use in going ahead and organizing a dig if once again we only have a few turn out? Is there any sense in filling up Bill's basement with another load of artifacts while he struggles to cope with material from digs of two and three years ago?

Well, in any case, we would like to hear your views on what you think the Society could accomplish and how. I know that it is very probable that your executive is largely at fault. But it is up to you, the members, if you want to make this Society worthwhile. So come out in full force this October 14th and so prove that you are truly concerned with the future of The Ontario Archaeological Society.

The Editor
(somewhat harassed)