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NEWSLETTER OF THE PETERBOROUGH CHAPTER OF THE ONTARIO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

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President's Message



President Tom Mohr getting ready to put shovel to ground with help from Harry Johnson and Morgan Tamplin

Well, 2012 has gotten off to a busy start! The primary outreach activities of the POAS are our Speakers Series and our newsletter. We've been graced with an interesting lineup of speakers, with more to come. A good mix allows us to bridge academic and public interest. The newsletter, edited by Chapter Secretary Dirk Verhulst gets better with every issue and is a great account of who we are and what we're up to. So outreach is an important part of our mandate, especially since the practice of archaeology places legislative and ethical limits upon participation.

Our biggest challenge is to educate the public as to what to do if they happen to link with the buried, hidden past, and Pop Culture does not always inspire best practices. Indiana Jones may have steered a generation into Anthro 101 but hopefully they quickly learned how to dissect his films with a critical eye (Don't lean on the transit!)

Reality TV has presented a more pernicious approach with programs such as *American Digger* and National Geographic's *Diggers(!)*, outraging the archaeological community with their weekly dose of disrespect, ignorance and greed. Even Steve Santini's home-grown *Deals from the Darkside* muddies the water with his Internet purchase of an "8000 year old Mohawk War Axe (sic)" Ok, he eventually repatriates the item (chipped stone axe) upon discovering that it was looted from a burial site – but ought he to be trading these antiquities in the first place?

Yet, on the other end of the spectrum we see how homeowners may encounter a nightmare reno project as a simple addition inadvertently unearths a First Nations burial or other significant site. They are then left on the hook for the not-insubstantial CRM fees. Some folks may simply turn a blind eye rather than tap their retirement savings (as was apparently suggested) to "do the right thing". While using public funds to compensate such individuals is a wholly separate debate, is there anything that can be done?

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Your Executive recently submitted a letter to the Provincial OAS, which suggests that the problem might be addressed in a more proactive manner. Major land use change triggers a process in municipal planning, which assesses archaeological potential and initiates testing if warranted. Smaller projects, those most likely to affect the average homeowner, generally don't engage the system, even though they often require building permits and zoning variances. We have recommended that the planning process acknowledge the importance of considering archaeological potential at this level as well.

While such a concept may be considered unduly onerous by some, it adds a degree of assurance to the homeowner that they are less likely to find themselves in the middle of an even more costly adventure. Public awareness is also a good option, perhaps using a brochure handed out with building permits. It could alert homeowners to the possibilities inherent with excavating in an area with such a long history of settlement such as ours. The OAS would certainly be available to advise on any artifacts unearthed, but might there be a role for licensed OAS members to conduct simple shovel tests if needed, perhaps in exchange for a modest donation to the Chapter? That's a discussion to have with the CRM industry, but might be worth consideration.

Advocacy and awareness are important aspects of Chapter business, but we try not to neglect the fun factor. Last year we conducted an entertaining field trip to Curve Lake and the Petroglyphs. This year we are considering Serpent Mound and Lang Pioneer Village as destinations for a day trip. Stay tuned, details to follow...

Finally, I'd like to remind everybody that we receive no financial support from the provincial OAS so we are dependent upon memberships for operating funds. Please consider joining, or if you are already a member, don't forget to renew – it helps to keep our Speakers Series free and open to all! We also have our new POAS coffee mugs available for sale at a modest \$10. Designed with a bit of a Rock & Roll flair, it is the perfect artifact of our arcane pastime. For those about to excavate, we salute you!

Special Feature

A note from the author,

The following is intended as the first in a series of instalments, outlining events both great and small which have influenced the directions of a "checkered" career in archaeology, among other pursuits. The latter will not be the subject of this autobiography, as it is an attempt to present a story of general interest to the archaeological community. Much will be glossed over and names will be withheld on occasion to protect the innocent (and guilty – including the author!). A serious theme which will be woven into what I hope to be an entertaining narrative, is a history of the Provincial government program in

archaeology. Discussions with current employees have convinced me that, despite the heritage mandate of the present Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport program, there is very little awareness of their own heritage. You may understand why this is, as the story unfolds. Numerous places, people and events have moulded that program and perhaps someday, the whole story will be told; however, I have decided to tell only the story as I experienced it.

What may create more general interest is that my narrative spans a dynamic

period in the history of Ontario archaeology – at its beginning, there were fewer professional archaeologists in Ontario than the fingers on one hand. In fact, there were no more than a dozen archaeologists employed throughout the entire country! This may be hard to imagine for those immersed in a world of consulting archaeology, employing literally hundreds of archaeologists across the Province today. Particularly for those directly involved in Cultural Resource Management (CRM), the loss of archaeological sites to development activities during the post-War economic boom must remain a sobering thought. How many significant sites were lost to provincial and municipal infrastructure projects and private sector housing construction in the quarter century prior to 1970? Sadly, thousands were destroyed, in all likelihood.

The Early Years: the adventures of Billy Fox

How it all began I'm not entirely sure, only that it happened in the late 1950's. It may have been following a long trip along what are now secondary highways (there was no Hwy. 401!) from Hamilton to Windsor to visit my grandparents, with the promise of receiving a tomahawk that my father had found as a child. After seeing illustrations of such items in "historical" volumes such as the Classic Comics version of *Last of the Mohicans*, you can imagine the disappointment of being directed to the back garden to recover a smooth igneous rock (Archaic Period

axe) which my grandmother had formerly used as a meat tenderizer! Nevertheless, I made the most of my gift by hafting it and attempting to impact local vegetation – without much success. It may have been the discovery of an interesting stone flake in a Red Hill Creek valley field, while we were helping ourselves to Mr. Spera's raspberries (a Flint Ridge retouched chert flake on what turned out to be a Middle Woodland campsite). It could have been the Onondaga chert triangular drill and ceramic pipe stem picked up on a bicycle path on my way to play baseball (King's Forest Park site). It was certainly stimulated following graduation from Grade 8 in 1961, when Mr. Kadonaga my math teacher generously offered to drive me to Midland to visit Wilfrid Jury's "Huron village" reconstruction (what parent would permit a virtual stranger to take their child on a day trip nowadays?!). And so it began...

My first communication with a real archaeologist involved a letter written on February 12 of 1961, concerning the "tomahawk". The response 10 days later was somewhat disappointing, as the Royal Ontario Museum Assistant Curator of Ethnology, Walter Kenyon informed "Master Bill Fox" that it was "either an axe or adze-blade" which could not be associated with any particular tribe. Shortly thereafter, the discovery of chert flakes and ceramics on the surface of an old berry field (I referred to it as the Red Hill site - which artifacts my father referred to as "road gravel and sewer tile" in a joking manner.....I think – he **was** an Engineer!), was followed by additional discoveries during the Fall of 1961 in

east-end Hamilton, including the Pergentile site on King Street.

Below Figure 1 Hamilton Science Fair, 1962



Artifacts from both sites were forwarded to Walter for identification, and in a December 1st letter, he pronounced the sites “Glen Meyer”, while also mentioning his four year excavation program which had just concluded on the Miller site. Based on this knowledge and various readings, a wood and bark model of the Pergentile village was constructed for the Hamilton and District Science Fair the following April, resulting in the best overall junior exhibit award. (see figure 1 above)

Next followed an invitation from a noted Ancaster artefact collector, Jack Morton, to visit his farm and view his extensive collection. This was the result of a regular *Hamilton Spectator* local news column, which introduced paper carriers to the readership and reported young Bill Fox’s interest in archaeology. By chance, I arrived to visit Mr. Morton at the same time that he was meeting a famous Ontario avocational archaeologist, who had recently published a volume on the *Archaeology of the Neutral Indians*. So

it was that I met Mr. Frank Ridley. That event launched me into a long-term interest in the Neutral confederacy, and visits to village sites such as Daniels, Hosken and Walker, and the Daniels ossuary. Speaking of which, I will never forget the impact of the latter visit. Armed with my army surplus pack and folding shovel, I visited the Butters farm and obtained permission to walk to their “back forty” in search of the site which had been discovered by Frank Butters in 1933. Ploughing of a loamy soil rise had exposed a scatter of bone fragments, which I assumed to be the cemetery site. A brief excavation through the plough zone confirmed this fact, as I looked down into the burial pit. I say “looked down”, as the heavy soil had not settled into the criss-crossed mass of long bones which extended down to an unknown depth. Under an overcast sky and alone, I experienced an unsettling feeling, carefully refilled my excavation, and decided to depart the site immediately.

I began to discover and excavate middens on the King’s Forest Park site and pit features at the Pergentile site. The west end of the latter was being mined for sand at the time, so I spoke with the machine operators and showed them what a pit looked like in profile. Thereafter, they kindly moved to another face whenever they came across a feature, providing time for me to map, profile and excavate the contents before they continued on eastward. It was thanks to them that the unique gourd effigy vessel was recovered (presently on display at the ROM); although, I did participate in bicycle chases after dump trucks from

time to time as they headed to construction sites in east Hamilton. The Pergentile site was also on my

Below Figure 2 Pergentile Site (north of King St.)



path to Glendale High School, permitting regular monitoring. Later, in 1965, I was able to recruit fellow students to form the “Glendale Archaeological Group” and salvage excavate a portion of a longhouse at the east end of the site, before it was entirely destroyed by apartment construction in 1966.

A visit to the 1964 Iroquois Conference at the University of Waterloo with the restored gourd-shaped vessel provided my first opportunity to meet Dr. J. Norman Emerson of the University of Toronto. He responded to a letter concerning the Hamilton sites in April, 1965 with a copy of *Cahiague 1961*, and an offer to have me work on the Warminster site that summer (which never materialized). I then renewed communications with Frank Ridley through an exchange of letters in 1965-66, in which he suggested connections with sites in the middle Mississippi valley based on the gourd effigy vessel. Frank also mentioned similar corded ceramics he had

recovered from the contemporary Boys site in Pickering, and described his ongoing excavations on the “Jesuit mission Huron site of Ossossane.”

It was during those high school days that my CRM commitment was first tested by municipal bureaucracy. One Fall day in 1962, “Bill Fox. Come to the office” blared from classroom speakers – for no apparent reason, for once! Arriving at the Vice-Principal’s office I was introduced to some men in suits, who ushered me to a large black limo parked outside the school main entrance. It whisked me off to the Rosedale ballpark, where I was interrogated by City of Hamilton Department of Works staff about the validity of my claims concerning the impending destruction of a significant archaeological site by a far more significant storm sewer project. I was informed that the site consisted of fill, to which I responded that the area of the ballpark to the east was built on fill, but that the western portion was intact. I led them to a number of pit features containing artifacts exposed by their bulldozer topsoil stripping, which “won the day”. The City allowed the Royal Ontario Museum to arrange for an Ontario Archaeological Society excavation during the following Spring (report published in 1965 by William Donaldson in *Ontario Archaeology* No. 8).

In the early sixties, I surface collected on sites in the Hamilton/Ancaster region and even bicycled as far as the village of York on the Grand River to collect from an Archaic site at the mouth of McKenzie Creek - discovered when boredom set in during a fishing trip with my father.

Other bicycle destinations included Princess Point in west Hamilton, the Hosken (Fletcher) site near Binbrook, and various farm fields currently under subdivisions in Stoney Creek. Based on two five foot squares excavated on the Historic Neutral Hosken village, I submitted an illustrated report to the *Ontario Archaeology* editor in the Spring of 1965. Dr. Churcher responded in a May 29 letter, promising to “edit it to form a note for the next issue of Ontario Archaeology (ie No.9).” While this never came to pass, he did accept my “Hillside Midden Report, Red Hill Site, in Hamilton” manuscript during the summer of 1966, resulting in the publication of my first article the following year. It was during the latter excavations that I met a notorious Hamilton artifact collector, who had happened upon the Red Hill/King’s Forest Park site and began digging on it. I had discovered his activities and begun to salvage the remains of his latest work in the Fall of 1965. A face to face meeting resulted from a note left in a glass bottle deposited in one of my excavation squares, wherein he accused me of being greedy for

removing so much material! This was not the first example of such clandestine activities I had witnessed, having seen the coal shovel trenches of an infamous Hamilton region Neutral cemetery looter on the Walker site, near Brantford.

This brings to a close my high school years, during which time I met some of the most influential Ontario archaeologists (both avocational and professional) and had witnessed the impact of urban development and looting on archaeological sites. Granted, I had not met Tom Lee or Wilf Jury or Ken Kidd, but there would be future opportunities for that. Finally, I cannot conclude this “chapter” without crediting my father for supporting my boyhood passion through transportation to and from sites both in the Hamilton vicinity and as far away as Inverhuron Provincial Park, Huronia and the Sheguiandah site on Manitoulin Island. It must have amused him to find me asleep one Spring afternoon in a concession road ditch, French trade axe clutched to my chest!

Epilogue

Further details concerning the adventures of a young archaeologist can be found in:

Robert, D. L.

1996 King’s Forest Park (AhGw-1) and Pergentile (AhGw-2): Early Ontario Iroquoian Settlement at the Head of Lake Ontario. M.A. thesis submitted to Trent University (Appendix A).

Wilson, J.

1998 The Aboriginal Presence: The Red Hill Creek Valley, 9000 B.C. – 1615 A.D. in *From Mountain to Lake: The Red Hill Creek Valley*. Edited by W.G. Peace: 76, 110, 117. W.L. Griffin Printing Limited, Hamilton.

My boyhood collection, field notes and photos are presently curated by the ROM, courtesy of Dr. Mima Kapches.

The Quest for Gandy

Gandatsetiagon (Gandy) was a 17th century Seneca First Nations village located somewhere in the area of Pickering. According to historical records it was the place where a French missionary, Francois Fenelon, was first welcomed by the Seneca people and where he spent a winter.

Gandy's exact location remains an archaeological mystery.

On Feb. 28, 2012 two of the members of the Peterborough Chapter of the OAS presented their answer to the question: *Where is Gandy?*

Tom Mohr, the newly elected president of the local chapter, who has written a paper on the early interaction between the French and the Senecas, guided the audience on a slide tour of the north shore of Lake Ontario.

He began with Frenchman's Bay. Tom provided us with evidence from the archaeological record that, despite early claims, this was not the place of Gandatsetiagon.

It is, however, the present location of a public school that bears its name- and the home of the Gandy Gators.

From there Tom took us to a number of other possible sites along the Lake Ontario shoreline- lots of evidence of settlements, but probably not Gandy, he concluded.

That brought us to the Rouge River valley, the location of Canada's newest and first national urban park.

At this point, Sheryl Smith, the recently retired Aboriginal Affairs Advisor for Parks Canada and also a member of the Peterborough Chapter, joined Tom at the front of the room.

Sheryl gave a brief review of how a First Nations site in the park came to be recognized as nationally significant.

"Archaeological reports, as early as the 1840's, understood its importance," she said.

She went on to explain how, in 1991, she became closely involved with the preparation and ultimate acceptance of a proposal to the Historic Sites and Monument Board that recommended the site be designated as a national park.

An archaeologist was hired to conduct a survey and preliminary excavations began. The findings were so persuasive that the federal government agreed to commit \$10 million dollars to the protection of the area and its development as a national park. But is it Gandatsetiagon? Both Tom and Sheryl believe it is.

The archaeological findings certainly provide evidence of a large First Nations settlement. They include hair combs, effigy pipes, and beads that were typical of other Seneca sites. There were also musket balls and a charred coin marked with a date- 1655.

A recent pamphlet about the Rouge Park states that there are 31 Archaic sites (7000-1000 BCE) and 8 Initial Woodland sites (1000 BCE-700 CE) within the boundaries of the park.

And... there is Bead Hill, an archaeological site with the remains of a 17th century Seneca Village.

Tom, Sheryl....and several archaeologists in the audience, agreed: this was the most likely location of Gandy.

OAS President Visits Peterborough

Dr. Neal Ferris, the Lawson Chair of Canadian Archaeology at the University of Western Ontario and current President of the Ontario Archaeological Society, recently visited Peterborough.

At the March meeting of the Peterborough chapter of the OAS he gave a presentation on “A Late Woodland Archaeological Borderland.”

His presentation began with a comparison of the Western Basin Tradition with that of the Ontario Iroquoian. Traditionally archaeologists have distinguished the two traditions in terms of distinct variations in village plans, housing, storage pits and ceramics.

Recent excavations in Western Ontario, Dr. Ferris pointed out, have recently led archaeologists to re-examine previously held beliefs about the separation between the two traditions.

He referred to recent excavations at Cherry Lane, the Sherman site, the Robson Road site, and Roffelson site, among others, as examples.

The Roffelson site in Chatham was of particular interest. Mr. Roffelson, the gentleman who owned the land, had won a substantial amount of money in a lottery. He generously decided to use some of his winnings to pay for the excavation of the site and a detailed analysis of the findings.

Of particular note was the discovery of a massive enclosure dated to about 1100 A.D. Findings included a large human burial crypt containing the remains of 9 individuals. Osteological analysis revealed a shared genetic deformity in the ears of the deceased. Although they had been buried at different times, they were clearly members of the same family.

Dr. Ferris summarized the recent conclusions drawn by archaeologists in Western Ontario as follows:

- Maize was as much a part of the diet in Western Ontario as it was in Central and Eastern Ontario.
- Settlement patterns were found to be more diverse than previously thought.
- Diversified subsistence was clear.
- Community patterns were diverse across the region.
- Awareness of the world beyond the Western borderland was evident.

After his presentation, Dr. Ferris joined members of the Peterborough Executive for their monthly meeting. He welcomed the Peterborough Chapter into the OAS family and urged us to stay in touch with other chapters



“Archaeology isn’t a job, it’s a life style choice.”

With the above words, Dr. Amy Barron finished her fascinating account of the *“Adventures of a Female Archaeologist in the Middle East,”* at the April meeting of the Peterborough Chapter of the OAS.

Dr. Barron provided members of the audience with a unique perspective on her work at Tell Tuneimir in Syria, near the border with Iraq.



(above) Dr. Amy Barron presents her version of the working life of an archaeologist

Findings from this site, she explained, date back as far as 2000B.P.

She described the area as consisting of “ancient ruins surrounded by a parking lot.”



(above) Dr. Barron graciously accepts the new official Peterborough Chapter mug

Although she reported finding many things, (she described them as “wheelbarrows full of bones, stones, and metal”), it was her personal experiences and insights into the local culture that were particularly revealing.

Some examples:

- Who, among the local men, got the much-sought-after jobs working on the archaeological site was “all about political connections.”
- Specific jobs were ranked according to status- from shovel men to wheelbarrow men to water boys.

- The consistent answer to her question about how many children the workers had was “10- all boys.” (The many young girls who subsequently visited the site told a different story.)
- Female archaeologists could never be seen in shorts or t-shirts. They swam in their jeans. The older men always addressed them using words with male endings.
- The local women were particularly fascinated by the clothing of the westerners,
- especially their undergarments which apparently provoked much mirth.
- Local dangers included snakes, spiders and scorpions, but the greatest danger was the sand storms, which she described as “coming out of nowhere, and the next thing you know, you’re covered in sand.”
- Although polygamy was a common practice, a man couldn’t “take on a second wife unless the first wife approved.” It is also expected that the husband must build a house for each of his wives.

Dr. Barron finished her presentation by putting her experiences in the context of recent political turmoil in Syria. She described the implications of the transition of power following the death of Hafaz al Hassad to his son Bashar for the work of archaeologists. She also referred to the looting of the Iraqi Museum that resulted in the loss of so many priceless artifacts.

Her affection for the people she lived and worked with for so long was obvious.

“These are my guys,” she concluded, “I wonder what’s happening to them.”



Above: Dr. Barron with chapter members Grant Karcich and Gordon Dibb

Coming Events

May 22, 7:00 p.m. Rm. 126 Otonabee College, Trent U. “Archaeology and Education” with Michael Stringer, first president of the Peterborough Chapter and recent graduate of the Trent University Teacher Education Program

June 26, 7:00 p.m. St. Paul’s Presbyterian Church, Water St. “The Peopling of the Americas: New Evidence, Old Controversies” with William Fox from Trent University, recipient of the J. Norman Emerson Medal for his contributions to Ontario Archaeology and chapter vice-president.

