Deb and Tom Hangin’ out at Leif’s Place

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Above: Deb and Tom Mohr visit L’Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland (see story p.5)
A Rockin’ Good Summer (Part 1)

by Tom Mohr

The word ‘Rock’ seems most appropriate to this year’s late-summer’s activities...not all of the same variety, though. And I am not even including the Steve Hackett tickets that I picked up...but I digress.

Ontario’s North Hastings region boasts deposits of almost 90% of the world’s mineral varieties within its borders, so it seems fitting that the town of Bancroft, placed in the north of the county, has become well known as a mecca for Rockhounds, or amateur geologists.

In recognition of its status as “the Mineral Capital of Canada”, the town celebrates with an annual event called the Rockhound Gemboree – now a four day celebration, and in its 52nd year. This year’s event featured a newcomer, the Ontario Archaeological Society. Originally set up by Peterborough Chapter Director Morgan Tamplin, the Gemboree organizers responded enthusiastically to the idea of our participation and offered us a couple of tables. Morgan was ultimately unable to attend, so the OAS was represented instead by me, as Peterborough Chapter President. Two protective pop-up shelters had been generously provided by Home Hardware, Lindsay for the weekend. OAS Director of Chapter Services Chris Dalton took over the other one, along with fellow flintknappers Dan Long and Darcy Fallon.

Our spiel was that we were there to inform the Rockhounds as to what else might await discovery in the field, and what to do if they encountered any archaeological resources in the course of their activities. We also asked them to report to us the whereabouts of steatite and other pipestone sources.

We débuted the new display materials that had been created for us in partnership with the Museum program at Fleming college. In testimony to the wonderful job done by the Fleming students, I had to fend off more than one offer to buy the cases, complete with artifacts. A pair of cabinets featured
orphaned Laurentian Archaic lithic assemblages, which contrasted nicely with the neighbouring table, upon which Dan proffered some of his masterful artisanal creations for sale.

The knapper’s close proximity often generated observations such as ‘So these are real, and those aren’t?’, to which Dan would patiently reply ‘Of course mine are real...you can see them, can’t you?’ We finally straightened that out by explaining that mine were used, and his were new, which seemed to satisfy everyone.

I also brought along the last of our ‘paleochocolates’ left over from the 2014 symposium and they were quite a hit, especially with the kids. Ultimately, it seemed wiser to give them away while they were still pretty (no patination?), than to use them up in a chocolate fondue.

So, while the knappers were busy turning nodes of chert into sharp pointy objects...and a lot of debitage, the OAS table generated a lot of interest in the science and practice of archaeology. Our displays of both the old and new complemented each other perfectly, and our presence generated much favourable comment from visitors and organizers alike. We have been invited back for a return engagement next year.

Above: Dan Long, Darcy Fallon and Chris Dalton caught ‘knapping' in Bancroft
We Publish Our First Book!

by Dirk Verhulst

The Peterborough Chapter of the Ontario Archaeological Society is pleased to announce the publication of a new book about archaeology in the Peterborough area.

*Peterborough Archaeology* is an outcome of the Ontario Archaeological Symposium hosted by the local chapter in October of last year. Contributing authors include chapter members, as well as archaeologists who have given presentations at the group’s monthly public meetings. Proceeds from sales of the book will go towards public education about Peterborough’s rich and fascinating archaeological heritage.

The book is edited by Dirk Verhulst, secretary of the Peterborough Chapter. Lay out and design were done by Grant Karcich, a local chapter member, as well as the Director of Publications for the Ontario Archaeological Society.

“It seemed like a natural follow-up to all the local interest and enthusiasm generated by the provincial symposium as well as the many community events that resulted from Mayor Bennett’s declaration of Archaeology Week last year,” said Dirk. “I especially appreciate the contributions of chapter members and previous guest speakers who volunteered to write articles for the book. Each of them has a fascinating story to tell,” he added.

Some of the essays in this book are personal reflections on people, places and issues related to local archaeology. Brian Ross and Sheryl Smith set the context within the unique ‘ecotone’ of which Peterborough is a part. Doug Williams, Anne Taylor, and Julie Kapyrka remind readers about the importance of practising archaeology in consultation with the local First Nations and present convincing arguments for how such partnerships can offer fascinating insights into local traditions and history.

*Above: Bill Fox speaks at the book launch held jointly with the Trent Valley Archives*
Other contributions focus on significant archaeological discoveries made at important local sites, including: Pat Dibb (The Brock Street Burial); Susan Jamieson (The Moodie Farmstead, West Burleigh Falls); William Fox and Tom Mohr (The Honey Farm); Dirk Verhulst (The Serpent Mounds, The Peterborough Petroglyphs); Lisa Sonnenburg (Rice Lake); Peter Carruthers (Quackenbush); and Gordon Dibb (Trent-Foster).

Several articles provide personal and individual insights into an amazing variety of archaeological topics and issues: Susan Neale (museum archaeology); Rudy Fecteau (archaeobotany); Jeremy Ward (the archaeology of canoes); Leora Berman (spirituality in The Land Between); Tom Mohr (community outreach); Janice Teichroeb (public archaeology); William Fox (stories in stone); Morgan Tamplin (community participation); and Doug Williams and Julie Kapyrka (native languages and oral traditions).

The book was officially launched at the Trent Valley Archives Open House on Sept. 5 and at our chapter’s September meeting, held at Gzowski College, Trent University. The event featured a panel presentation on The Brock Street Site in downtown Peterborough by four of the contributors to our book, as well as chapter members. They included: Pat Dibb, co-owner with her husband Gord, of YNAS, the company that conducted excavations at the site; Anne Taylor, Curve Lake Archivist, who participated in the reburial ceremony; Sheryl Smith, former Aboriginal Affairs Adviser for the Trent Severn System, and consultant to the project; and Susan Neale, Director of the Peterborough Museum and Archives, where some of the artifacts recovered from the site are stored.

The publication of this book was made possible through a City of Peterborough Community Development Grant. The cost of the book is $15.

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**A Rockin Good Summer** (part 2)

by Tom Mohr

This summer’s second Rock theme was more allegorical in nature - a return visit by Deb and I to Canada’s island province of Newfoundland, aka ‘The Rock’. On the itinerary were two well-known archaeological sites, and we wandered accidentally onto a third.

L’Anse aux Meadows has been renowned as the only known Norse site in North America, outside of Greenland. While that assertion is being challenged by new discoveries on Baffin Island by Patricia Sutherland, the fact remains that Parks Canada has celebrated the location with an outstanding installation at the very northern tip of Newfoundland. We had been there before, some six years ago, but we were still enthralled by the sense of adventure associated with the story of humankind’s
completion of the circle’: meeting up again after having diverged in the trek out of Africa some 100,000 years ago. The landscape is rugged and beautiful - the ocean replete with icebergs and whales.

Costumed interpreters and a reproduction of a Norse sod house help to provide insight into the lives of these adventurous souls who had crossed the North Atlantic in their longboats and set up a base camp in a new world. It’s also rather humbling to stand in a shallow depression in the barrens, and know that it was once home to the legendary Leif Erikson.

These lands were also home to the people of the Dorset Tradition (500 BCE–1500 CE) and the Maritime Archaic people who lived there some 5-6000 years ago. A short hike away from the Norse site, there are tent rings and firepits to be found, reflecting the long history of occupation upon these wild shores.

We had also planned a trip to the community of Fleur de Lys (pronounced, as one local informed us “Flower de Lies”), for its proximity to a celebrated Dorset soapstone quarry site. A sidebar…at home, in the region known as the Eastern Woodlands, we work with a chronology that ranges in a linear fashion from Paleo, to Archaic, to Woodland. In Newfoundland, Maritime Archaic predates the Paleo-Eskimo, or Dorset tradition. Oh, it’s all good once you knows better, but I was a mite ‘farbed up’, as Newfoundlanders say, until I got a handle on that. And they seem to refer to projectile points as “endblades”. Oh them, and their clever dialect!

Located near the tip of the Baie Verte peninsula, the quarry and interpretive centre are registered as a National Historic Site. The exhibits are well presented, but the star attraction is the nearby bluff whose face bears an almost 1960s-era ‘op-art’ look. These ‘extraction scars’ are left behind from the removal of soapstone blanks that would be hollowed out for use as cooking vessels and oil lamps. Archaeological evidence shows us that the site was used from the Maritime Archaic, into the Middle Dorset. It is certainly one of the most dramatic remnants of past peoples upon the land, and well worth the visit. Mind you, almost anywhere in Newfoundland is well worth the visit.

Lastly was an accidental find. We have a habit of driving ‘to the end of the road’ in our visits there, seeking our hidden vistas and always lured by lighthouses on remote points. A run out to Cape Ray, near Port aux Basques, rewarded us with a small museum relating to a nearby archaeological site; this one marking what is the most southerly range of the Dorset People yet discovered in the province. Research indicates that they would have been attracted to the site in early spring to hunt harp seals. Most of the artifacts discovered there are on display in St. John’s The Rooms, but some can still be seen on site, along with a host of local handicrafts and preserves available for purchase.

Newfoundland has a rich cultural heritage, both before and since European contact. Ferryland, on the Avalon Peninsula, and Red Bay, a ferry’s ride away in Labrador, are standout historical attractions. While the rocky ocean shorelines and the warm welcome of the Newfoundlanders themselves are most often cited as reasons to visit ‘The Rock’, a little extra exploration will reveal some attractions for those of an archaeological mind as well.
Above: Tom Mohr contemplates eternity from Newfoundland’s Cape Ray shoreline

**Coming Events**

7:00 P.M. Tues. Oct. 27 In the Fine Annex of the Peterborough Museum and Archives

The Peterborough Chapter invites chapter members and friends to visit the museum’s new storage facilities. Susan Neale, the museum’s director, will be our presenter and guide. For security reasons participants will need to pre-register for this special event. To reserve a space contact Dirk Verhulst at dverhulst@cogeco.ca.

7:00 P.M. Tues. Nov. 24 In Room 112 Gzowski College, Trent University

Trent archaeology professor, James Conolly, will give a presentation on his recent work in Alaska. His topic is ‘Community archaeology and landscape archaeology in the thermokarst—recent work at the early Yupik site in Alaska.’