

# NEWSLETTER

of the

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF B. C.

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Contributions should be addressed to Miss Gladys Groves, Apt. 504,  
2005 Pendrell Street, Vancouver 5, B. C.

Deadline for next issue: April 30.

- HIGHLIGHTS:
- \* National Museum research on the  
B.C. northern coast: a report.
  - \* Bella Coola survey: a report from  
the S.F.U. team.

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N. Russell  
Editor

REPORT ON THE 1968 FIELD SEASON  
ON THE NORTHERN COAST OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

By Dr. G. F. MacDonald, National Museum, Ottawa

From June 26 to September 1, 1968, archaeological field research was conducted, with a crew of twenty-six university students and one Museum technician, on five prehistoric sites on the northern coast of British Columbia.

The sites were located on an east to west transect between the first canyon of the Skeena River near Terrace to a small offshore island, Lucy Island, on Hecate Strait. All five sites have a minimum of 3,000 years of cultural deposit and were chosen to provide an example of the sequence from each of five important ecological areas.

At the Kitselas Canyon of the Skeena a stratified fishing site with 13 feet of cultural deposits produced more than 5,000 stone tools. One industry employing cryptocrystalline material included projectile points and bifacial knives, as well as a variety of cutting and scraping tools based on flakes. A cobble tool and spall industry complemented the fine grain industry throughout the sequence, and in the upper portions of the deposit a third industry of pecked, sawn and ground stone was well represented. Fragments of carved pumice clubs and pendants from the deposit will provide dates for an art style known previously from the area only in surface collections. Faunal remains were preserved only in the upper portion of the deposit and a single human burial was recovered. House structures were encountered but because of the depth of overburden and the large size of the structures, they could not be traced in their entirety.

On the coast, a small shell midden (GbTn-1) that served as a temporary camp at the mouth of a salmon stream and close to inland hunting territories was investigated during the month of July. Testing last season indicated that the deposit, although only half the depth (6 feet) of the harbour middens, contained a condensed sequence, abundant in artifacts--particularly fishing gear. Net-sinkers, fish spear points and grooved adzes were quite abundant in the sample of more than 300 artifacts recovered. The site also produced one human burial and a large quantity of faunal remains.

The second harbour midden was in the Dodge Cove area near to site GbTo-18 investigated last year. This site had undergone virtually no disturbance since its abandonment in late prehistoric times. The overall structure of this village was the least disturbed of any of the harbour sites investigated to date. Refuse dumps were distinguishable from house platform areas and allowed the sampling of the deposit to be very selective. On the house floors layers of shell and heavy organic deposits alternated in rhythmic progression through the deposit and could be traced with relative ease between excavation units. Two house benches were encountered, each with its own

dump area. In the dumps, stratigraphic horizons are extremely localized, cannot be connected with living floors and contain few concentrations of charcoal for dating. However, they do contain cemetery areas with high concentrations of primary interments. Most common are box burials set on the surface of the midden and piled with large rocks to keep out dogs. Elaborate grave goods including whalebone clubs, copper ornaments, amber and shell bead necklaces and bone carvings occur in at least half of the burials. Dogs are frequently found separately, or with human interments, in the dumps. More than forty complete burials and a dozen complete dog skeletons were recovered from this site, mostly from a late prehistoric context. No trade goods were recovered.

A wide band of waterlogged deposit runs through the midden and contains preserved wood and fibre artifacts in undetermined quantities. No facilities for drainage were available this field season so excavation on a large scale could not be attempted.

The final excavation was on Lucy Island which lies several miles off the mainland coast among a maze of tiny islands that serve as breeding grounds for sea mammals and birds. It was expected that the particular ecological niche in which this site existed would be reflected in the tool and faunal assemblages. The deposit in the area tested was more than 13 feet deep and did show marked differences from harbour middens although the yield of artifacts was relatively low.

Other projects of more limited aims were undertaken in the course of the summer with considerable success. Three large historic burial areas on the Charlottes were located for future excavation and small samples of exposed skeletal material were collected. In addition twelve historic Haida villages were mapped to provide data on settlement and community patterns that was not available in the ethnographic literature, but which has direct application to the interpretation of archaeological village sites on the north coast.

Next summer attention will be focused on site GbTo-31. Of particular interest are the recovery of adequate samples of skeletal material from different periods of occupation, recovery of highly perishable materials from the waterlogged deposits and recovery of details of structures on the house platforms.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE  
OCEAN FALLS - BELLA COOLA REGION,  
SUMMER 1968

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By Philip M. Hobler, Assistant Professor  
of Anthropology, Simon Fraser University

The 1968 field season saw two archaeological projects under way from Simon Fraser University. The Mayne Island project has already been described by Dr. Carlson. This is a short report on the University-sponsored archaeological survey that was conducted in the complex of rivers and salt water inlets in the general vicinity of Ocean Falls and Bella Coola. I was assisted in this work by S.F.U. graduate students Arnoud Stryd, Hudson Palmer and James Baker. The project was made possible by a grant from the University. The use of facilities in Ocean Falls, generously made available by the Crown Zellerbach Company, greatly simplified problems of logistics and supply. Without the help from Crown Zellerbach some of the more important sites would never have been found.

The central reason behind the investigations completed last summer was to lay the ground work for a future series of excavations that are expected to cast some light on the problem of who lived in the area prior to the first written record of the region made by Alexander MacKenzie in 1793. MacKenzie provided no information to resolve the problem that we now see in the enigmatic position of the Bella Coola Indians. The Bella Coola as speakers of Salish exist as an enclave surrounded on the north, west and south by groups speaking closely related dialects called Wakashan. The Bella Bella are one of these. Are the Bella Coola relatively late comers to the coast arriving perhaps only a century or so before MacKenzie? Or, are they very ancient occupants of the area who may once have covered a much larger portion of the coast? Archaeological evidence has solved similar problems elsewhere and may well provide the answer to this one.

Last summer's field work consisted of "survey", a basic archaeological exploration of the area with the intention of locating and evaluating the surface characteristics of prehistoric Indian camp sites, fishing sites, and village sites. The archaeologists made Ocean Falls their home base. They used a chartered 33 ft. boat for transportation, living on it for a week or more at a time while away from Ocean Falls. Twice the boat threatened to sink beneath them as a result of faulty bottom planking. Grizzly bears turned out to be another serious hazard to field work. On one occasion two of the students nearly walked into a large female grizzly who was unaware of their presence. They later solved the bear problem by wearing bells on their packs whenever working on land.



Sites discovered. A total of 35 sites was recorded by the archaeologists during the summer's field work. These include middens (refuse deposits at ancient habitation sites), extensive rock walled fish traps, several panels of rock art made by painting or by cutting of figures on bed rock or on cliff faces, a remarkably preserved example of an aboriginal cedar plank house of 19th century age, and traces of several long abandoned villages.

Two finds are particularly significant. The first is a rock art site showing very well preserved paintings. The artists had used three basic colours: red, black, and yellow with red predominating. Some of the paintings at this site are well within the classic Northwest Coast Indian art style. Others at the site, appearing older and more weathered, are less clearly in the classic style although nevertheless related to it. We hope to be able to do a detailed study of these next summer since such a study may provide some long awaited clues concerning the development of this well known art style.

Probably the most significant find of the season's work is a pre-historic refuse midden located beneath low tide. The truly unique characteristic of this underwater site is that the continuous immersion of the refuse deposits in wet mud seems to have retarded the action of the natural decay-causing organisms with the result that the kinds of materials that one never expects to find preserved in coastal sites have escaped decay. It was not possible to conduct any excavations at this site last summer because of the severe technical problems involved in underwater excavation. However, it was possible to gather some specimens at a very low tide by walking the upper surface of the midden in wading boots. Materials collected in this manner include cedar bark rope and twine, matting, cordage, rope-wrapped wooden splitting wedges, and a whole basketry hat. Such objects usually disintegrate rapidly but no evidence was found on the site to indicate that it had been occupied for at least a century and a half. Some of the types of stone tools found suggest that the deposits may be quite considerably older than this.

Prospects. The survey or exploration phase of the project was largely completed last summer. The archaeologists will now concentrate on the excavation and detailed study of some of the key sites mentioned above. A Simon Fraser University field party will be in the area next summer to begin this phase of the project. They hope to be able to dig one deep midden and, if the necessary technical assistance can be obtained, to isolate part of the important underwater deposits and to begin their excavation.

### IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

Reprinted from The Beaver (Summer 1967) by  
permission of the author, Richard J. D. Brunt,  
of Ladner, B. C.

There can be little doubt that the white man was responsible for their extinction, as he was for extinguishing the passenger pigeon and the hordes of bison from the plains. But this time he did it without ever pointing a gun or firing a shot; his presence and his goods were sufficient to bring about the disappearance from the North American scene of an entire species until today all that is left of the mysterious wool dog of the Coast Salish Indians is a few square yards of woolly material and a single painting.

If you look at a map of Northwest America you will find, almost on the 49th parallel of latitude, a great Strait debouching into the Pacific Ocean. This is the Strait of Juan de Fuca which leads into the incredibly beautiful waterways of Puget Sound, to the south, and to the Strait of Georgia which separates Vancouver Island from the mainland of British Columbia, to the north. In this relatively small area, only some three hundred miles long by 150 miles wide, lived a people who had not only come to terms with their environment but had made it produce an abundant living. From the sea came an endless supply of food as nourishing as it was varied. From the rain forest came the giant cedars from which they built their sea-going canoes and wove (from its fibrous inner bark and roots) everything from fishing nets to cooking pots—even clothing. But the ingenuity of these people knew no bounds and in their cedar-planked long houses the women of the tribes turned to loom weaving, using for their wool the fine hairs of the mountain goat mixed sometimes with fireweed fluff or soft feathers.

Then, out of nowhere it seemed, there came a supply of wool even finer, even thicker; a wool shorn from the backs and flanks of a strange breed of dog; a breed of completely unknown origin; a breed probably extinct this past one hundred years; a breed of which even the Indian name has been forgotten.

Why, among all the peoples of the Northwest Coast, was it only among the Coast Salish that the strange wool dogs were found? Captain James Cook, who stayed at Nootka Sound in the spring of 1778, commented that "hogs, dogs and goats have not as yet found their way to this place" while Juan Perez, who preceded him by four years, made much the same observation.

It is to Captain George Vancouver that we are indebted for the earliest eye-witness account of these dogs. While anchored near Restoration Point (about half way down Puget Sound) in May of 1792 he noted, "the dogs belonging to this tribe of Indians were numerous, and much resembled those of Pomerania, though in general somewhat larger. They were all shorn as

close to the skin as sheep are in England; and so compact were their fleeces, that large portions could be lifted up by a corner without causing any separation. They were composed of a mixture of a coarse kind of wool, with very fine long hair, capable of being spun into yarn. This gave me reason to believe that their woollen clothing might in part be composed of this material...."

Later, at Milbanke Sound, farther north, Vancouver remarked that not one person was seen clad in a woollen mantle such as had been so plentiful in "New Georgia" (the region of the Coast Salish), which again seems to indicate that the dogs were indigenous only to a very small area of the Northwest Coast.

While Captain Vancouver was exploring the coast (in June of 1792) two Spanish vessels, Sutil and Mexicana (Captains Galiano and Valdez), entered the Gulf of Georgia and anchored off the northern end of Gabriola Island near the present city of Nanaimo, where they found that "the indians also offered new blankets which we afterwards concluded were of dog's hair, partly because when the woven hair was compared with that of those animals there was no apparent difference, and partly from the great number of dogs they keep in those villages, most of them being shorn. These animals are of moderate size, resembling those of English breed, with very thick coats, and usually white; among other things they differ from those of Europe in their manner of barking, which is simply a miserable howl."

John Jewitt, armourer in a Boston trading ship, who was a captive at Nootka between 1803 and 1805 remarked that the natives had "a kind of grey cloth made of the hair of some animal which they procure from the tribes to the South". Dr. Robert Brown, who edited the 1896 edition of Jewitt's Narrative, added that "a tribe on the Fraser River used to keep flocks of these curs which they periodically clipped like sheep."

Simon Fraser, descending the great river which still bears his name, met (in 1808) the Coast Salish near Agassiz and wrote: "This nation... have rugs made from the wool of Aspai or wild goat and from dogs hair, which are as good as the wool rugs found in Canada. We observed that the dogs were lately shorn." And, "They make, with dogs hair, rugs with stripes of different colours, crossing at right angles and resembling at a distance, Highland plaid."

Seventeen years later Dr. John Scouler, the surgeon of the Hudson's Bay Company's vessel William and Anne remarked that "the natives of Tatooch (in Juan de Fuca Strait) show much ingenuity in manufacturing blankets from the hair of their dogs. On a little island a few miles from the coast they have a great number of white dogs which they feed regularly every day. From the wool of their dogs and the fibres of the Cypress they make a very strong blanket. They have also some method of making red and blue stripes in their blankets in imitation of European ones."

the naturalist attached to the British North American Boundary Commission, who said, "I have been informed by a friend who has been there that the Japanese have a small long-haired dog, usually white, and from description very analogous to the dog that was shorn by the Indians of the coast and of Vancouver Island".

The little dogs are gone now, unnamed and almost forgotten, and the Stalo people (as the Salish of the Fraser River call themselves) experiment with home-made looms attempting to recapture a lost art, a little something of the old days gone now, like the dogs, forever.

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#### ADDITIONS TO A SELECTED READING LIST ON B. C. ARCHAEOLOGY

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Compiled by Art Davies

MASKS OF THE NORTHWEST COAST by Marion Johnson Mochan. 1966. Publications in Primitive Art No. 2, Milwaukee Public Museum, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Softbound \$5.50, 102 pp. 91 plates with field notes.

During the winter and spring of 1915, Dr. Samuel A. Barrett, then Curator of Anthropology at the Milwaukee Public Museum and later its Director, conducted a collecting expedition to the Northwest Coast Indian territory on Vancouver Island and the adjacent mainland in British Columbia. He was able to bring together a comprehensive ethnographic collection of over 1,000 specimens principally representing the Kwakiutl Indians. The importance of the Barrett collection lies not only in its excellent specimens, but also in the fact that the notes on each specimen obtained in the field make this an unusually well-documented collection.

PREHISTORIC MAN IN THE NEW WORLD edited by Jesse D. Jennings and Edward Norbeck. Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York, N.Y. Hardbound \$10.00, 633 pp.

A survey of the principal findings of anthropologists in recent years, in a series of articles by several well-known archaeologists. An excellent résumé of the early history of the Western Hemisphere, which includes trans-Pacific contact problems, and linguistic analysis.

THE STRUGGLE FOR SURVIVAL (Indian Cultures and the Protestant Ethic in British Columbia) by Forrest LaViolette. 1961. Museum of the American Indian, Heye Foundation, New York, N.Y. Hardbound \$5.50, 201 pp.

This book deals with the cultural adjustment of the coastal B.C. Indians to the encroachment of the white man, and the development of Indian leadership. It concentrates on the law suppressing the potlatch, the land title question, and the emergence of leaders among the Indians.



By 1825 then, only fifty years after the first explorers plied these waters in their tiny ships, the Indians, though their blanket designs had been original, were already imitating products of European manufacture and the wool dogs were well on their way to obsolescence; indeed only twenty-one years later the naturalist Berthold Seemann (in H.M. surveying vessel Herald) wrote that "since the Hudson's Bay Company have established themselves in this neighborhood, English blankets have been so much in request that the dog's hair manufacture has been rather at a discount, eight or ten blankets being given for one sea-otter skin."

Fortunately for posterity Paul Kane, an artist who accompanied the Hudson's Bay Company brigade from Fort William on Lake Superior, arrived at Fort Victoria in 1847 and sketched one of these dogs which can be seen (looking decidedly sheep-like!) in his painting "Clal-lum Women Weaving a Blanket" which is now in the Royal Ontario Museum.

Kane says, "The men wear no clothing in summer, and nothing but a blanket in winter, made either of dog's hair alone, or dog's hair and goose-down mixed, frayed cedar-bark, or wildgoose skin... They have a peculiar breed of small dogs with long hair of a brownish black and a clear white. These dogs are bred for clothing purposes. The hair is cut off with a knife and mixed with goosedown and a little white earth, with a view of curing the feathers. This is then beaten together with sticks, and twisted into threads by rubbing it down the thigh with the palm of the hand... after which it undergoes a second twisting on a distaff to increase its firmness. The cedar bark is frayed and twisted into thread in a similar manner. These threads are then woven into blankets by a very simple loom of their own contrivance."

By the time of the Fraser River gold rush of 1858 the Indians had all but lost the art of weaving and the wool dog had become almost extinct. Mr. Jonathan Miller, the first postmaster of the city of Vancouver, B.C., stated that soon after his arrival in 1862 he was present at a potlatch in the vicinity, and that during the ceremonies he saw a native conjurer devour, or pretend to devour, alive, a small white long-haired dog of a species that he had never before seen amongst the natives.

From Juan Perez, mariner, to Jonathan Miller, postmaster, was only eighty-eight years but in that one life's-span the little white dogs of the Coast Salish apparently became extinct. Some were undoubtedly abandoned on their islets to starve and others probably found their way into the village cooking-pots as the advent of English trade-goods made the wool dog obsolete.

But still there remains the question, "where did they come from originally?" At least one writer, recalling the "miserable howling" of these dogs, has attempted to link them with the more-or-less voiceless dogs of Kamchatka, advancing the theory that junks from the Orient had been wrecked on this coast (as indeed happened in 1834 when a Japanese junk went aground in the Strait of Juan de Fuca). This theory was supported by Mr. J. K. Lord,

PREHISTORIC STONE SCULPTURE OF THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST by Paul S. Wingert. 1952. Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon. Softbound \$2.00, 46 pp.

An illustrated catalogue of an exhibit of stone sculpture from the Columbia River and southern B.C. regions, and a study of its styles.

NATIVE TRIBES OF CANADA by Douglas Leechman. 1956. W. J. Gage Limited, Toronto, Ontario. Hardbound \$5.75, 367 pp.

Describes the former ways of life of several different groups of Canadian Indians, and gives a representative legend from each area. Authentic, accurately drawn illustrations by E.A. Ingram of the National Museum of Canada. Mr. Ingram, in most cases, used the actual materials in the Museum as models. Clearly and simply written, it is one of the most suitable books on this subject for our younger readers.

ARCHAEOLOGY: AN INTRODUCTION by Clement W. Meighan. 1966. The Science Research Associates, Inc., 44 Prince Andrew Pl., Don Mills, Ontario. Softbound \$4.50, 207 pp.

In the two introductory chapters, Meighan discusses the archaeologist's analytical and field methods. In the eight chapters that follow he uses a common intellectual framework to examine specific sites, which range from ancient times to recent periods, from single cultures to complex civilizations, from both Old and New Worlds.

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#### A. S. OF B. C. DIARY

- Apr. 9 8:00 p.m. Dr. Hanna E. Kassis, Dept. of Religious Studies, UBC, in the Centennial Museum, on "The Phoenicians in the West".
- Apr. 16 8:00 p.m. Room 3144, Academic Quad., SFU: Tour of Archaeology Lab.
- May 14 8:00 p.m. Miss Adelaide Robertson, member of the Society, in the Centennial Museum, on "Easter Island and Machu Picchu, Peru".

#### OTHER EVENTS

- Mar. 16 8:00 p.m. Student Union Bldg., UBC: the William Holm Dance Group of Seattle will perform. Admission \$2.00 (Students \$1.00 if purchased in advance).

Centennial Museum Lectures of special interest to members:

- Mar. 17 8:00 p.m. Dr. Roy Carlson on excavations at Mayne Island.
- May 15 8:00 p.m. Mrs. Lynn Maranda on Gaming and Betting among Coastal Indians.

FOOTNOTES

- \* Vancouver Museum archaeologist Miss Gay Calvert is appealing for help during the daytime at Centennial Museum. Anyone interested in washing artifacts, labelling, and related work should put their name on list at next society meeting.
- \* Preliminary work on the St. Mungo Cannery rescue dig has begun. Volunteers will be called in rotation, as needed -- probably only about eight people at a time. The dig, sponsored by the city museum in co-operation with the society, aims at salvaging an important old site from robbers and encroaching boat launching facilities. Some twenty miles from downtown Vancouver; if called, don't forget to take lunch.
- \* Worth a visit is Museum Arts, 456 Seymour Street, Vancouver, with a fine stock of ancient and contemporary museum reproductions--authentic and copyrighted--of sculpture and jewelry. (And they are giving us reciprocal publicity in their own newsletter!)
- \* Society membership is now 95. New members:

Lewis Chechik  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Meek  
David R. Pacey  
Peter Robinson

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