

EDITORIAL: FOUR NEW REPORTS ON FOUR OLD SITES

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This number of Ontario *Archaeology* continues the journal's venerable tradition of publishing detailed descriptions of archaeological investigations at various sites throughout the province. The four site reports also reflect the diversity of practitioners who are active in the field. The contributors include a university professor (Smith), a student (Ormerod), employees of archaeological consulting firms (Pihl and Thomas), and an OAS Director (Burse) who reports on material excavated by an avocational archaeologist (Garrad).

David Smith's contribution on the early Late Woodland Occupations at Cootes Paradise revisits an area explored by David Stothers and William Noble in the 1960s. The fact that the two sites described by Smith are situated on gradients in the bottoms of glacial ravines should convince others that a proper archaeological survey must explore all topographic features and not just those that fit *a priori* assumptions about where human groups are most likely to have left material remains. The author notes that "this type of location for a native archaeological site in southern Ontario seems to be unique to Cootes Paradise." It is possible that these sites would have been discovered by applying the type of site potential modelling that considers distance to water as a major variable (Bellhouse et al. 1996). On the other hand, previous surveys of the area led to the discovery of one of these sites, but failed to document the other. One wonders how many more sites of this nature have escaped the attention of the research community.

Trevor Ormerod's study of the chipped lithic technology at the early Late Woodland Lone Pine site is a behavioural approach to the analysis of 6,000 informal, expedient, flake-based tools. Ormerod concludes that tool function, availability of raw material and group mobility were guiding factors in choosing design and technological strategies. The main strength of this contribution is the manner in

which the author brings an extant corpus of theoretical and methodological literature on lithic analysis to an Ontario case. Its principle weakness is the mobility argument.

The dichotomy between 'mobile' and 'sedentary' groups is as exaggerated in the Ontario archaeological literature as is the distinction between so-called Algonquian foragers and Iroquoian horticulturalists. The fact is that, during the period shortly before and after first European contact, Iroquoian men frequently left their large palisaded communities, sometimes for months at a time, to hunt, fish, trade and raid in a manner little different from their Algonquian counterparts (I leave aside the additional fact that there were Algonquians who practiced horticulture). Clearly, the archaeological manifestation of any group must include not merely their home bases, but also their seasonal camps which can be hundreds of kilometres away. Depending on which one is excavated, a group could be characterized as either sedentary or mobile. Hence, the fact that the Lone Pine tool kit indicates an expedient rather than a curated lithic strategy may have nothing to do with the relative mobility or sedentism of the group.

It is instructive to compare Ormerod's association between technological strategy and mobility with the conclusions offered by the authors of the third contribution to this number. Robert Pihl and Stephen Cox Thomas interpret the Late Iroquoian Finch site as a seasonal base camp for fishing and hunting parties who came from a permanently occupied village. If this is correct, then the site reflects the 'mobile' aspect of a 'sedentary' group. Yet, the lithic assemblage has both curated and expedient technologies.

The Pihl and Thomas paper is in many ways the quintessential site report — heavy on empirical observations and modest in its approach to interpretation. This is not to say that it lacks deficiencies in presentation. While

explaining their preference for NISP rather than MNI quantification in faunal analysis, they casually assert that the former "is a real, empirical unit," while the latter is "built on inference." It is difficult to comprehend how the identification of a specimen as American Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) can be any more empirical than the simultaneous observation that this represents a minimum of one individual (MNI=1). Furthermore, it must surely be conceded that a count of four left mandibles (MNI=4) is not built on inference any more than is the identification of the species. In the case of dogs and wolves, counting mandibles may be even less inferential than identifying the species.

Even critics of MNI frequently dilute their case by resorting to statements that could only be based on MNI calculations. In his recent publication on the Calvert site, Peter Timmins gives a lengthy justification for privileging NI SP over MNI, but then goes on to say that had he not been aware that 40 of the avian bones are from a single wild turkey, it would have tripled the NISP count and left the erroneous impression that there are many more birds represented (Timmins 1997:90-93). Much of the confusion over MNIs in the recent archaeological literature can be traced back to a misreading of Grayson (1984) whose comments are frequently taken out of context. After all is said and done, there continue to be strong arguments for including both types of counts as a matter of record and I will expect this from future contributors to OA. Even Timmins provides an excellent table giving both NISP and MNI for deer elements found in various features (Timmins 1997:95). The judicious use and lamentable misuse of such lists during subsequent analysis by various archaeologists are of course entirely different matters.

The final contribution to this number is Jeff Bursey's description of stone artifacts from a protohistoric Petun village. Among other things, Bursey provides compelling evidence that the chert artifacts exhibiting evidence of bipolar battering are wedges rather than cores. What I found even more interesting, however, is that the McQueen-McConnell site was occupied after the first European trade goods had been introduced into southern Ontario but before contact with the newcomers had significantly altered Aboriginal life. In addition to thirteen stone beads, the site yield-

ed several beads made from European materials. Bursey seems surprised that stone axes continued to be used and speculates that this is because "iron axes could not be obtained in sufficient quantities." As I have shown elsewhere, however, the appropriation of European materials, behaviours and ideas involved intentional efforts by both natives and newcomers to make the necessary adjustments required to harmonize the material and ideational realms. In the case of beads, there was sufficient flexibility to allow an effective balance between the familiar and the novel (von Gernet 1996). It is a common mistake to attribute the absence of an apparently superior technology to a lack of availability rather than to the complex factors that characterize cultural transfer.

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