

INDIAN HARBOUR, LABRADOR

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In 2010 Lisa Rankin again conducted excavations at an historic period Inuit site (FkBg-3) at Indian Harbour, on Huntingdon Island near Cartwright, Labrador. For 5 weeks in July and August 2 crews totaling up to 11 students under the direction of Rankin and Phoebe Murphy, an MA student at Memorial University, excavated two winter house structures and one tent ring, and carried out mapping of the site and environs. Crew members were from Bournemouth, Laval, Memorial, McMaster, Simon Fraser, and the University of Washington. Concurrently, 4 local high-school students processed artifacts in a lab in the Cartwright high school under the direction of Laura Termes, MA student at Bournemouth.

In 2010, Rankin's excavations focused

upon House 2, a sod-walled house that appeared to share part of an entrance passage with House 1 excavated in 2009 (Rankin 2010). Murphy's excavations, reported separately, investigated House 3, a larger sod-walled house thought to be later in time than either House 1 or House 2 (Figure 1).

House 2

The floor, benches and entrance passage of House 2 were completely excavated (Figure 2). The excavated house has a roughly square paved subterranean floor area measuring approximately 3.5m from front to back and side to side. In addition, there are two roughly square paved alcoves at the rear of the house, one extending from each side of the floor area. The alcove on the west side of the

Figure 1 Map of Indian Harbour Site (FkBg-3).

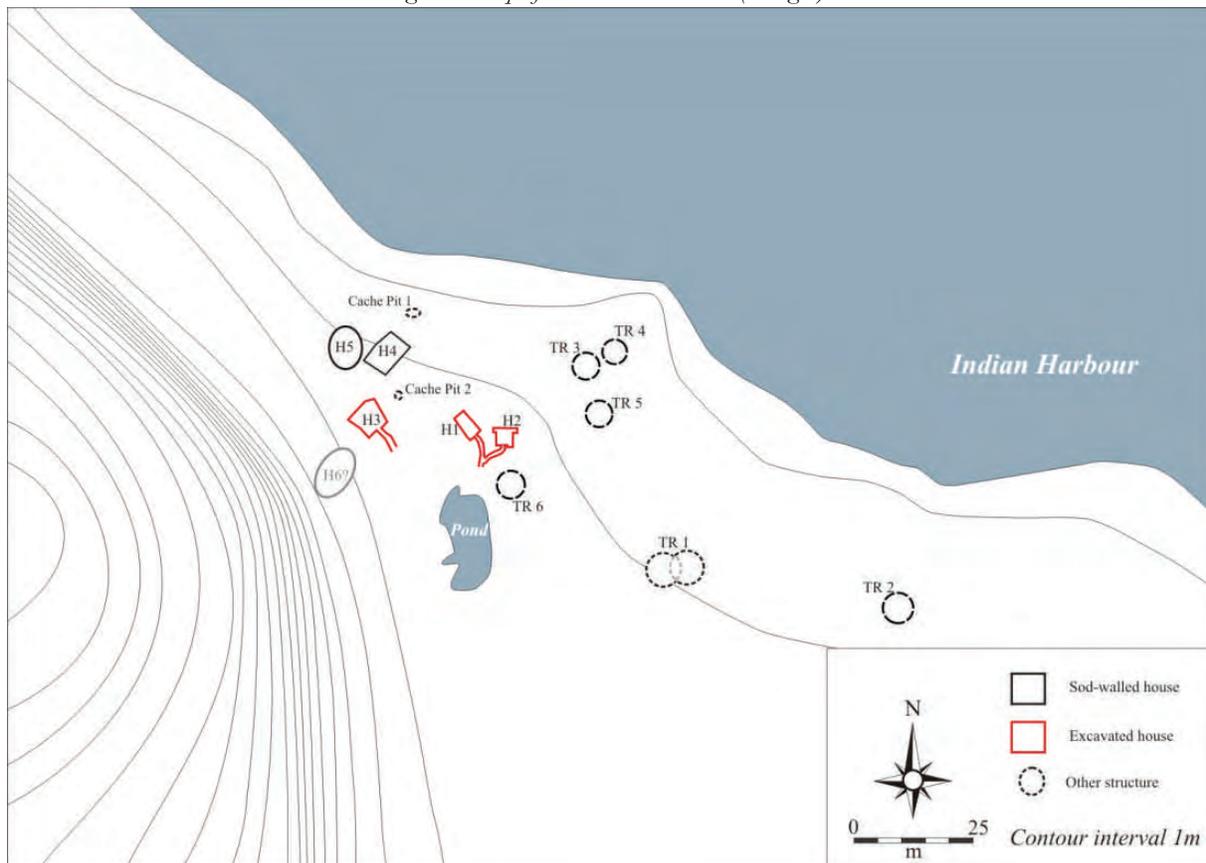




Figure 2 House 2 after excavation. The orange line marks the entrance passage, partly obscured by flanking stones.

house measures approximately 0.5m by 0.75m, and that on the east side approximately 1.25m by 0.75m. There are raised, partly paved earth benches on both sides and at the rear which are partially delineated on the inside with upright slabs of stone. There is also a probable lamp stand on the east side of the house near the front, formed of upright stone slabs. The sinuous entrance passage totals just over 5m in length. Beginning with a marked step down from the house floor, the passage leads southwards for approximately 0.75m. It then turns abruptly to the right, and heads roughly west-southwest for approximately 3m. Finally, the passage makes a gentle turn to the left, and heads southwesterly for approximately 1.25m.

During the excavation of House 1 in 2009, a paved area adjacent to the entrance passage, extending towards the then-unexcavated House 2, was a rather mysterious structure. With the excavation of House 2 in 2010, this feature now appears as a rather

poorly-defined, partly paved area extending from the east side of House 1 entrance passage to the rear part of the westerly bench of House 2 (Figure 3). While further analysis is still necessary in order to interpret this feature properly, at present it seems most likely that it is the remains of either an earlier Inuit structure, perhaps a tent ring, that was disturbed by the construction of Houses 1 and 2, or, most likely based on the field observations, as a paved annex to the House 1 entrance passage that was disturbed by the construction of House 2.

Eighty-three traditional Inuit artifacts recovered from this house include a miniature soapstone lamp (Figure 4), an iron ulu blade fragment, a few pieces of modified whalebone, and strips of baleen. Among the approximately 300 items of European origin recovered from House 2 are 134 iron nails or nail fragments, 13 roof tile fragments, 6 iron spikes, 4 fragments of woven cloth, 3 ceramic

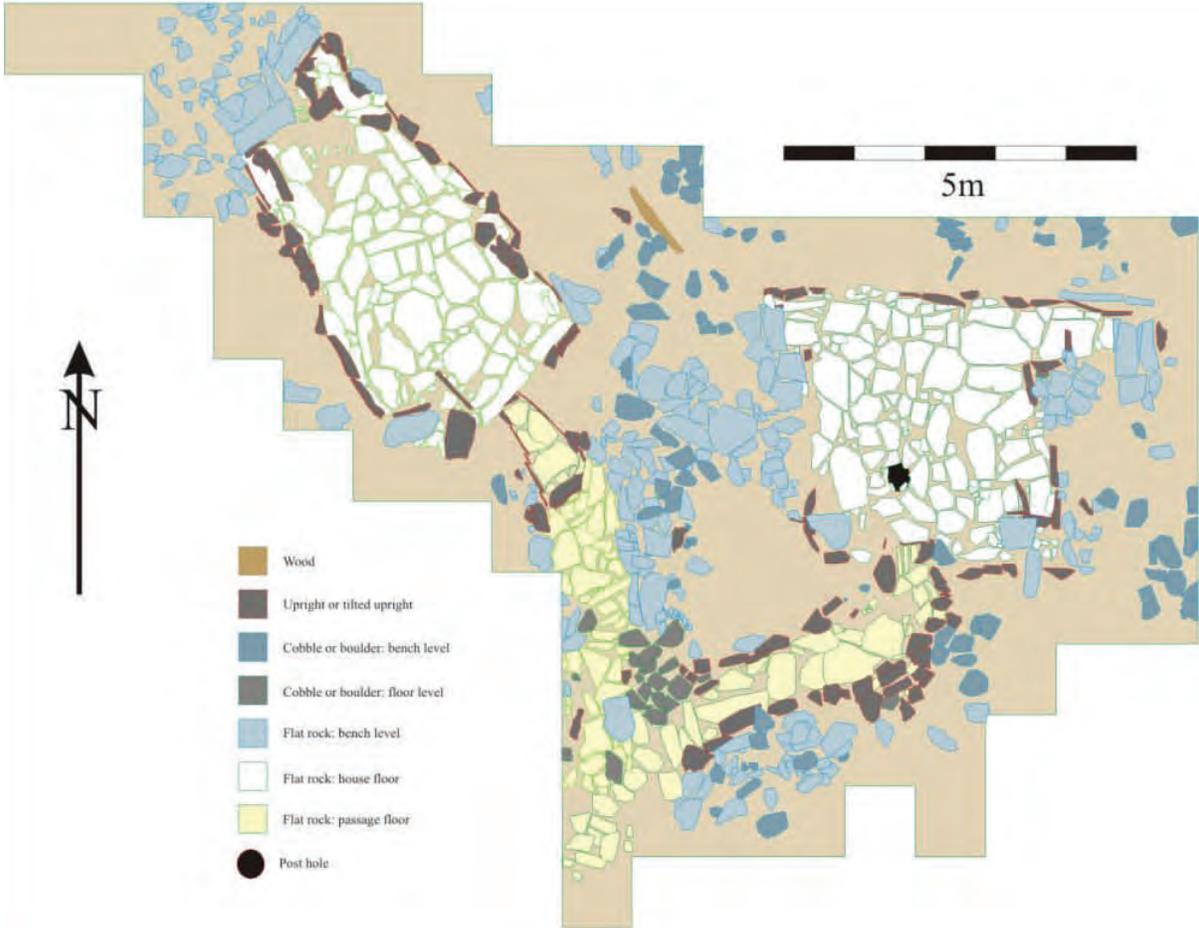


Figure 3 House 1 (on the left) and House 2, showing the partly paved feature between them.

Figure 4 Miniature soapstone lamp from House 2.



Figure 5 Blue glass bead from House 2.





Figure 6 Examples of European iron objects from House 2: a, iron rod bent into a loop; b, iron adze; c, iron fish spear prong.

sherds, 2 fish spear prongs (Figure 6c), 2 musket balls, 2 glass beads (Figure 5), the tip of an anchor tine, a kaolin pipe stem fragment, a file, an adze (Figure 6b), a knife and a spoon.

Tent Ring 2

Exposure of about half of Tent Ring 2 in test units revealed an unremarkable circular feature of cobbles and boulders approximately 5.6m in diameter. The only items recovered were two fragments of leather and several glass beads.

Comments

The initial impression that Houses 1 and 2 were contemporaneous structures sharing an entrance passage is not borne out by the 2010 excavations. Compared to the assemblage of House 1, that of House 2 contains a much less varied traditional Inuit component, and is more heavily dominated by European items. This suggests that House 2 is slightly later in time than House 1, which is

reinforced by the presence in House 2 of two glass beads, a trade item not recovered from House 1. A later date for House 2 is also consistent with the likelihood that its construction disturbed a paved feature associated with the entrance passage of House 1.

References

Rankin, Lisa K.
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