

Lamanai--The 1997 Season

LAMANAI FIELD REPORTS 1997

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Lisa cleaning a polychrome dish.



From the end of May through June of 1997, archaeologically related work was concentrated in two areas: the site of Lamanai in northern Belize, and Middle Caye, one of four cayes on Glover's Reef Atoll in southern Belize. No excavations were carried out in 1997, but we began organizing the pottery in the Lamanai on-site museum for display purposes, and we carried out preliminary survey and mapping of Middle Caye.

At Lamanai, all of the artifacts recovered from the excavations carried out by David Pendergast from 1974 to 1986 (see History of Excavations at Lamanai) were previously stored in a temporary field lab. They are now displayed and stored in a masonry building that is serving as the on-site museum. Most of the artifacts on display are pottery vessels; there are many other kinds of artifacts in the museum besides the ceramics, but most of these cannot be displayed owing to lack of sufficient shelf space and are temporarily stored in wooden drawers, on storage shelves, and in the bodega (warehouse).

The non-Belizean field crew working at Lamanai in 1997 comprised: Elizabeth Graham, Associate Professor in the Department of Anthropology at York University, and Research Associate in Anthropology at the Royal Ontario Museum, Toronto, Canada; David Pendergast, now Vice President for Collections and Research at the Royal Ontario Museum; Heidi Ritscher, Master's degree student in archaeology from the University of Toronto; Lisa Hilborn, Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Archaeology in London, England; and Norbert Stanchly, also a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Archaeology. Input in Belize was provided by Lamanai caretakers, Nasario Ku and Guadalupe Cunil, both of whom contributed valuable information on tourist traffic patterns, and

Some of the pottery as originally stored in David's field lab. All the pottery seen here dates to the Postclassic period.



Norbert sorting and cleaning some of the non-ceramic artifacts and temporarily strengthening a termite-eaten drawer.



Heidi storing the non-ceramic artifacts on shelves until 1998.

on the questions tourists ask about the archaeological material.

Nasario, who also serves as a museum guide, suggested to us that visitors would benefit most if we organized the pottery chronologically. He was also instrumental in organizing material so that the pieces of greatest interest to local schoolchildren are placed where children can view the items most easily, and where the pieces they like best can be easily spotted. The pottery is now organized on the shelves according to the period it represents, and is placed according to children's viewing specifications.

By July of 1998 we hope to have a galvanized metal shelf unit built in which to store the artifacts. Until glass cases are built, Nasario will continue to display only selected non-ceramic artifacts on a daily basis. Although we were unable to display them, the bulk of the non-ceramic artifacts were cleaned and sorted and the wooden drawers in which they were kept were strengthened for temporary use.

Heidi, Nasario and Lisa working on the "small finds" (special artifacts) just outside the museum building.

