

CARACOL

From "Field Notes" in PARI Newsletter 14:3-4 (December, 1991)

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The seventh field season of the Caracol Project lasted from the end of January until the very beginning of June 1991. Work at the site involved over 100 individuals during these five months. Much new archaeological information was gained on the extent of Caracol as well as on its early and late occupations. The stabilization program saw the completion of the mid-range of Caana and the rear of the Temple of the Wooden Lintel.

Survey and mapping of the area between the Pajaro-Ramonal and Conchita causeways was completed with the recording of all the terraces between these two causeways and the discovery of a via/causeway linking the two roadways approximately 1.5 km out from the site epicenter. Reconnaissance to the north of the epicenter located two new monuments, both Giant Ahua altars. One of these is within Caracol proper in a housemound group, called Chaquistero, approximately 5km northwest of Caana; the other monument is located in a new site called Caballo, approximately 11 km northwest of Caana. The end of the northwest causeway was also encountered in an area near the Guatemalan border; this terminus consists of a large reservoir, two large plaza areas (one with 15m high structures) and an acropolis group. Survey to the south of the epicenter found two new causeways branching from the original south causeway: one ran 2.5 km to an elite housemound group; the other ran 5.6 km to end in several successive plaza areas, some with plain stelae. An extensive acropolis group at the end of this longer causeway had been looted; information was gathered on six open tombs. No terminus has yet been discovered for the originally known south causeway; work was impeded

by successive encounters with large herds of wild pig by the survey crew.

In the epicenter, work continued on the Temple of the Wooden Lintel (Str. A6) and Caana; new excavations focused on Strs. B4 and B5 and on an epicentral group called Barrio (Strs. B21-B26). The rooms in Str. A6 were fully excavated with the recovery of much trash and a flexed burial dating to the end of the Classic period. The late Preclassic building was trenched resulting in the recovery of 3 axial caches (including the one reported on in the May 1991 *Belize Today*). Excavations in Barrio uncovered 60% of the group, exposing well-preserved stone architecture from formerly vaulted buildings and finding substantial Terminal Classic (post. A.D. 800) refuse associated with the various rooms of these structures. Similarly, *in situ* Terminal Classic trash was recovered on the floors of Str. B4. An axial trench into Str. B5 revealed that this building had been constructed during the Terminal Classic; its core consisted of extensive dry-core fill that made deep penetration impossible. The remains of a building were recovered on the summit of Str. B5, as were two deposits in the underlying dry-core fill. An axial probe into the stairway encountered the remains of several earlier stairways as well as a crypt burial containing 3 vessels and an empty stela pit.

The majority of the season's labor force concentrated on the stabilization and further excavation of Caana. New excavations were undertaken around the sides and frontal stair of Str. B20 and uncovered a pair of stucco masks. Clearing was also begun in the areas on either side of Str. B19 and uncovered the rooms ringing each of these plazas. Extensive refuse and the bones of a 6 year old child were found in the rooms of the eastern plaza. In the western plaza, an intact mat design in stucco was found on the substructure platform for Str. B18. Excavations were also undertaken on the south side of Caana. On the south side of B18, the remains of an almost intact vault were uncovered and stabilized. Perhaps the most important find was that of an intact roof facade consisting of modeled and painted polychrome stucco beneath Str. B16. Associated with the 3 seated human figures and 3 earth-monster masks was a stucco text of 42 hieroglyphs, 38 of which were

largely intact. This text records 3 war events related to Caracol's Naranjo wars, the accession on 9.11.5.14.0 of the Caracol king who is named on the La Rejolla monuments, the death of Kan II 29 days after this event, and an event in the 12 katun of the 9th cycle. What this final event was will hopefully be discovered during the 1992 field season.

*The 1991 field season had four P.A.R.I. staff working at Caracol in various capacities: Director Merle Greene Robertson along with Ed Kurjack and Rafael Cobos, spent several weeks completing a total of 20 rubbings including stelae, altars and ballcourt markers, while Maureen Carpenter worked as Lab Supervisor for the project.

[1990](#) - [1991](#) - [1993](#) - [1994](#) - [1995](#) - [1997](#)