

Archaeology at Ferryland, Newfoundland

James A. Tuck

Volume 9, numéro 2, fall 1993

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/nflds9_2art08

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Faculty of Arts, Memorial University

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-1430 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer cet article

Tuck, J. A. (1993). Archaeology at Ferryland, Newfoundland. *Newfoundland Studies*, 9(2), 294–310.

Archaeology at Ferryland, Newfoundland

JAMES A. TUCK

THE COMMUNITY OF FERRYLAND is located on the eastern Avalon Peninsula about 80km south of St. John's, Newfoundland. It has been known to Europeans since the early sixteenth century. The name Fariham appears on Verrazano's 1529 map and is probably a corruption of the Portuguese *farelhão*, a steep rock, reef or point (Searly 1971:27-29). Various other corruptions in the following years eventually resulted in the English "Ferryland." European fishermen from many nations visited the place throughout the sixteenth century, but Ferryland is best known as the site of George Calvert's (later the first Lord Baltimore) first attempt at a settlement in the New World.

Considerable documentation exists from the early years of the Colony of Avalon, as Calvert called his settlement, including descriptions of the buildings constructed in 1621 and 1622, names and trades of the settlers, the results of attempts at agriculture and husbandry and more general descriptions of the country and its potential benefits. During the remainder of the seventeenth century descriptions of the Colony of Avalon are virtually non-existent and consist only of passing references to some of the structures, including fortifications, that were built and rebuilt by settlers throughout the century.

Other aspects of the history of Ferryland are better known. George Calvert's visit to his colony in the summer of 1627 and his return to plant there with most of his family in 1628 are described in several letters. Calvert's disappointment during what must have been an unexpectedly hard winter of 1628-29 is recorded in a letter to Charles I in which Calvert indicates his intent to quit Ferryland and establish himself in Virginia. George Calvert died in 1632, but his son Cecil, second Lord Baltimore, caused the Maryland colony on the Chesapeake to be founded in 1634.

The Calvert family continued to be proprietors of Avalon, however, and maintained a governor at colony until 1638. The Island of Newfoundland was granted by Charles I to Sir David Kirke on January 1, 1637. Kirke dispossessed

Calvert's governor the following year and established Ferryland as the principal settlement of Newfoundland. There soon began a series of lawsuits between the Calvert and Kirke families over the ownership of Ferryland that was to last until the third quarter of the seventeenth century. Kirke himself died in the Clink "at the suit of Lord Baltimore" in 1654, but his wife Sara, Lady Kirke, and three of her sons continued to reside at Ferryland, in the area where the Colony of Avalon was first established, throughout most of the remainder of the century.

The disputes with the Calvert family were not the only difficulties that the Kirke family endured during their stay at Ferryland. Far more traumatic were a raid by the Dutch in 1673, during which much of the settlement was destroyed, and the even more disastrous attack by d'Iberville and French and Native forces in 1696. This latter episode resulted in the settlement being depopulated for the only time since its founding and, judging from the fact that fishing admirals reappear in 1697, also resulted in the focus of settlement at Ferryland shifting from the location of the original colony to other parts of the harbour.

The historical record of Ferryland is, of course, far more complete than this brief sketch. Peter Pope (1993) has compiled more than 200 pages of primary documents pertaining to Ferryland between 1597 and 1726. Nevertheless, there remain many questions about the Colony of Avalon, the succeeding Kirke era and possible visitors to the area prior to the earliest specific references. At least some of these questions might be answered by archaeology.

The location of the Colony of Avalon has never been lost to history. Daniel Powell's 1622 letter to Calvert describes the location of the colony as "at the foot of an easy-ascending hill, on the south-east, and defended with a hill, standing on the further side of the haven on the north-west. The beach on the north and south sides lock it and the seas on both sides are so near and indifferent to it that one may shoot a bird-bolt into either sea" (Pope 1993:15). Only the area around "The Pool" or inner harbour fits this description. The easy-ascending hill is clearly the westernmost part of the Ferryland Downs, which comprised the "1000 acres of good ground for hay, feeding of cattle and plenty of wood" which Powell goes on to say is "almost an island safe to keep anything from ravenous beasts" (ibid.). Despite the unequivocal nature of this description, some confusion about the precise location of the colony was generated by visible eighteenth-century ruins at other locations in Ferryland. The overwhelming local opinion placed the settlement on the shores of The Pool, however, and surface collections of artifacts from the beaches of Ferryland indicated that if the Colony of Avalon were not located around The Pool some unknown but even larger seventeenth-century settlement must certainly have stood there. Nowhere else are there found the numbers of seventeenth-century ceramics, tobacco pipes and other objects to approach those that littered the shores of The Pool and every nearby builders' trench and garden.

Prior to the beginning of major excavations in 1992, a number of small excavations had been conducted around The Pool. In the late 1950s J.R. Harper (1960), of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada, recovered seven-

teenth-century material from a test excavation on the south shore of The Pool. Robert Barakat, of Memorial University, conducted some brief excavations nearby, apparently to the east of Harper's test hole.

In the mid-1980s Memorial University began a second series of excavations intended to assess the potential of the site, the degree of disturbance by more recent construction and, if possible, to locate some trace of at least one of the several structures mentioned in the documents from the first years of the colony. Over a three-year period excavations were conducted in four areas, called Areas, or Sites, A, B, C and D (Tuck 1985, 1989; Tuck and Robbins 1986). Traces of seventeenth-century occupation were found in all locations, although differing greatly in numbers of artifacts and structural remains. Without going into detail (see below for more complete descriptions of these and subsequent excavations) it became clear after the 1986 season that the site of the Colony of Avalon was indeed around The Pool, that the site was much better preserved than we had dared to hope and that the site was far deeper, richer and more complex than we had expected. It was also clear at this point that a major effort, in terms of both time and funding, would be required to do justice to an archaeological site of this magnitude. In late fall 1986, therefore, we somewhat reluctantly filled our excavations to await the time when conditions were right to uncover seventeenth-century Ferryland.

That opportunity came when the Governments of Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador signed the Canada-Newfoundland Tourism and Historic Resources Cooperation Agreement in the spring of 1991. One of the provisions of the Agreement was funds for a multi-year investigation of the Ferryland site and funding was sufficient to provide the personnel to carry out the excavation, conservation and other aspects of the work.

Therefore excavations were undertaken for six weeks during the summer of 1992 and for 18 weeks during each of the summers of 1993 and 1994. The results of these excavations are described below in what should be considered a very preliminary report. Analysis and conservation of the estimated half-million individual specimens are still being carried out and less than ten percent of the site has been excavated to date. Nevertheless some significant discoveries have been made which shed new light on what may very well have been one of the most substantial colonies in British North America during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Five sites have now been partly explored (none completely), four of which have revealed significant seventeenth-century remains. Each is described briefly below following some comments on the overall excavation strategy and techniques.

EXCAVATIONS AT FERRYLAND

From the outset it was our plan to superimpose a master one-metre grid over the entire site to allow for horizontal recording. This has been done and each find

is now plotted to the nearest centimetre in the fashion of most archaeological investigations.

Recording the complex stratigraphy, however, presented a different problem and required a system of stratigraphic notation that could be used over large areas and across excavation areas that were not contiguous. The traditional system of calling the uppermost layer Stratum 1, the next Stratum 2, and so on, proved not to be feasible since, for example, the uppermost layer in one might be deeply buried beneath more recent layers in another part of the site.

At Ferryland, therefore, each new layer is given a consecutive number. These layers or lenses are referred to as "events", since each is the product of something that happened during the process of the formation of the site. An event, therefore, might refer to a lens of ash deposited during the period a house was in use, a layer of rock and rubble deposited when a building was destroyed, a layer of refuse in a privy, or a thick layer of fill deposited to create level land upon which structures could be built.

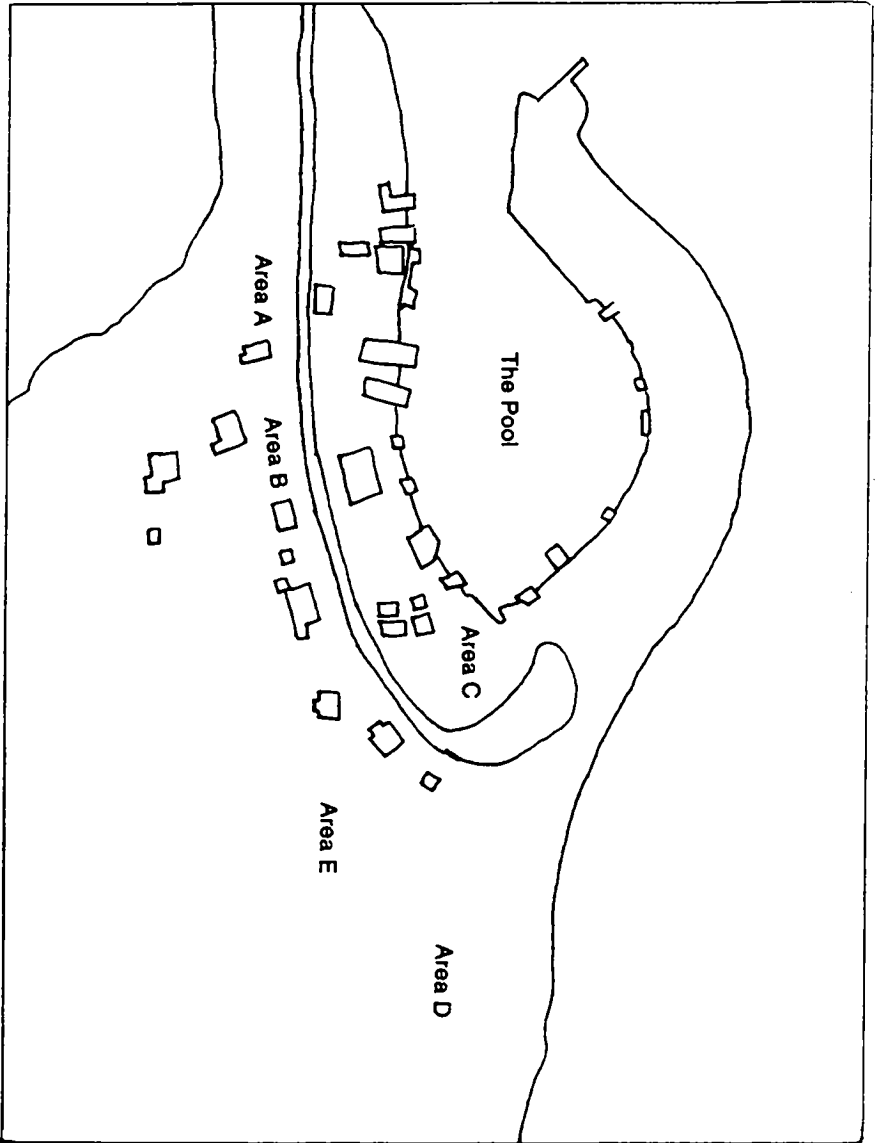
It is inevitable that some events, although they have different numbers, will prove, when discontinuous excavations are finally connected, to represent the same layer, deposited under the same conditions. It will then be a simple matter to combine two events; it would be much more difficult to separate the objects within a single stratum if they prove to represent different episodes in site formation. Finally, the use of the term "event" seems to encourage the excavators to think about the process that could have been responsible for the deposit in which they are digging.

The excavation is supported by a laboratory crew housed in a now-unused fish plant located on the site. Cleaning, cataloguing, conservation and some restoration are carried on at the site by a crew which numbers approximately the same as the excavation crew.

SITE A

This area was the scene of a small test excavation undertaken during the fall of 1984. It is located on the western margin of the site, where the cobble bar that leads to the mainland begins to widen at the western end of The Pool. We hoped to find there traces of fortifications which must have been situated to defend the settlement from attacks from the mainland. What we found was a deposit of gravel, apparently derived from a beach, that contained a mixture of ceramics, tobacco pipes and iron objects, mostly nails. Many of these could be attributed to the seventeenth century, but no structural remains were encountered. Looking back with the experience gained from subsequent excavations in other areas of the site, it now seems likely that our excavations simply did not go deep enough to reach the strata where early features are likely to be preserved. Site A is an area that should be reopened, something we plan to do in the coming years.

Fig. 1 Locations of Sites (Areas) A-E, Ferryland, Newfoundland.



SITE B

This excavation unit is located a few metres east of Site A and is very likely that area where J.R. Harper carried out his test excavation in 1959. We first dug there in 1984 and discovered what proved to be a deep deposit of refuse, fill, and collapsed structures that we now know dates between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries. The excavation covers an area of about six by twelve metres and reached a depth, in places, of more than 150cm.

The lowermost occupation layers were reached late in the fall of 1994 and provided a surprise in the form of small hearths of fire-shattered rock surrounded by sherds of European ceramics and stone tools and flakes discarded or lost by the Beothuk Indians. Only two square metres have been explored to sterile beach but a single stemmed Beothuk arrowpoint, four triangular stone bifaces, a large preform or chopper and hundreds of flakes all indicate the presence of Native people well before the establishment of the Colony of Avalon. In the same events as the stone tools are sherds of coarse earthenware ceramics, all with a high mica content, that remain to be identified. Some attributes — for example the micaceous fabric and the “sagging,” or gently rounded, bases — suggest that they are sherds of Southwest Micaceous ware, perhaps from the St. Germans region a few miles west of Plymouth. However, John Allan (personal communication) of the Royal Albert Museum at Exeter, suggests that the thin vessel walls suggest that they may be “Merida-ware” of Spanish or Portuguese origin. Regardless of their origin, the thick food residue on the interiors and burning on the exterior surfaces, suggest that they served as cooking pots. Dates for both the English and Iberian ceramics are from the late medieval period through the fifteenth century and later.

The early date of this deposit is confirmed by the fact that no tobacco pipes are associated with these events and, indeed, none was found in several overlying layers, indicating that the deposits date prior to about 1580 when European manufactured tobacco pipes first appear in the archaeological record. The absence of pipes, as well as the early English ceramics, both suggest a date earlier, rather than later, in the sixteenth century.

Only additional excavation will determine the meaning of this surprisingly early evidence of occupation at Ferryland and, indeed, the objects pose more questions than they answer. Why, for example, were the Beothuks on the eastern Avalon Peninsula, a place where their presence is heretofore unrecorded both historically and archaeologically? Were they here to exploit the resources of the area or were they attracted by the presence of Europeans? Is this evidence of an early sixteenth-century English shore-based fishery, perhaps centred in Plymouth, that thus far has escaped detection by archaeologists? Or were there Iberian fishermen engaging in a little-known shore-based fishery in the early sixteenth century? Were there actual contacts between Europeans and Natives? If so, what

300 *Tuck*

form might they have taken? The questions themselves are fascinating and I believe that the answers are buried at Site B where they await discovery.

Just above these very earliest layers excavations revealed two rough beach cobble pavements, covering and extending beyond most of the excavated area. The stones are not set on edge as in the other cobble floors found at Ferryland but are roughly laid in a fashion seemingly not suitable for either floors or pathways. I suspect that they may be portions of stone flakes upon which fish were spread to dry, perhaps constructed during bumper years when the available cobble beach was not sufficiently large to dry the catch. The surfaces of these features also produced ceramics of English origin, in this case clearly North Devon products similar to those found throughout more recent layers at Ferryland, but again no tobacco pipes, suggesting that they were the work of West Country shore-based fishermen operating at Ferryland sometime before the advent of the smoking pipe, at least as long ago as the third quarter of the sixteenth century.

Above these features is a layer of subsoil, essentially devoid of artifacts. It was dug by the colonists from the hillside to the south and deposited on top of the sloping stone pavements to provide level land for construction. The excavation into the hillside from which the fill was removed was clearly visible after the debris of the past several hundred years had been removed and proved to contain the remains of a stone forge and other features and objects associated with blacksmithing.

The forge and its associated features and objects will be the subject of a forthcoming M.A. thesis at Memorial University but it can briefly be described as follows. The forge itself measures about four by six feet with one end set into the west wall of the forge room. Two post moulds to the south, about three feet from the forge, indicate the position of the bellows. Two large post moulds at one corner of the forge, surrounded on two sides by thick scatters of scale and bits of iron, indicate the location of the anvil, which was apparently relocated some time during the period when the forge was in use. Another large post mould adjacent to one wall probably held a swage or nailer. A concentration of coal and charcoal located in the southeast corner of the smithy suggests the location of the fuel pile. In short, the layout of the forge is as obvious as could be hoped for and we expect to recover considerable information about seventeenth-century blacksmithing when the analysis of the tools, slag and other objects associated with the forge is completed.

The dating of the forge is suggested by the ceramics, tobacco pipes and other objects recovered from the floor. Ceramics are almost entirely North Devon pots consistent with a seventeenth century date. Tobacco pipe bowls are of the small varieties used in the first half of that century and the large sample contains none of the larger varieties from the latter half of the century. Bottle glass derives entirely from square "case" bottles. No sherds from the thick, dark green "onion" or "shaft-and-globe" bottles that begin to appear in North America during the 1640s were found associated with the forge. A small brass jetton, or counter, from an abacus-like counting device was manufactured by Hans Krauwinkel of Nuremberg between 1580 and 1610. In all, the assemblage indicates that the forge was

built and used during the first half of the seventeenth century. On July 28, 1622 Captain Wynne, the colony's first governor, wrote George Calvert that "The forge hath been finished these five weeks..." (Pope 1993:12) and there seems little doubt that this is the forge where two smiths — Thomas Wilson and John Prater — worked during the early years of the colony.

The location of the 1622 forge is not only interesting in itself, but has implications for understanding the town plan of the Colony of Avalon. In 1622 Captain Wynne wrote to Calvert describing the efforts of the first settlers. These included the construction of the Mansion House, tenements, a brewhouse, the forge and other structures. He closed this letter with the statement that "...so that within the same, *another* row of building may be so pitched, that the whole may be made a pretty street" [italics added] (Pope 1993:13). This implies pretty clearly that the first range of buildings formed a row parallel to the harbour. The discovery of the forge, one of the original structures, indicates that the row of buildings was located south of the present road, which may very well parallel closely Captain Wynne's pretty street. Moreover, since the forge is located near the west end of the settlement (there is one house-lot of land between the forge and the isthmus leading to the mainland), it seems very likely that the principal residence would have been located at some distance from the forge, or at the east end of the first row of buildings. The long-sought-after Mansion House, therefore, may lie beneath the easternmost house and garden in the present settlement. Only additional excavation will reveal the location of the residence where the Calvert family spent the winter of 1628/29 and where Sir David Kirke and his family dwelt for some years following 1638.

Excavation of the earliest layers at Site B was halted by weather in late October 1994 but will be resumed as soon as conditions permit in the spring of 1995.

SITE C

Archaeology in this area, located to the north and east of Site B and much closer to the present shoreline of The Pool, was begun in 1986 when several exploratory trenches were excavated to depths of more than a metre and where the remains of substantial stone structures were first encountered. It was these excavations that convinced us of the richness and complexity of the Ferryland site and caused postponement of further excavations until proper levels of funding were available. Excavations resumed in 1992 and continued through 1994 when the present road, a parking lot and several standing structures prevented enlargement of the excavations.

The stratigraphy in this area is extremely complex, far too much so to provide a detailed description in this article. Moreover, the limitations on the area excavated did not allow any of the walls to be followed for their full length so only a rough outline of the history of construction at Site C can be offered.

The deepest significant cultural layer, encountered at several places in this area, consists of a thin deposit of well-preserved organic remains including wood chips, bone and rich black soil. This event seems to rest just above the original beach or harbour floor. It contains North Devon ceramics and a few tobacco pipes with small bowls and large bore diameters, both indications of an early date. Present evidence suggests that this event may last have been exposed only a few years after the founding of the Colony of Avalon; the refuse was probably deposited by the earliest colonists and by seasonal fishermen from the West Country.

Immediately above this event, and throughout almost all of Site C, is a thick deposit of essentially sterile subsoil and rock that served as a fill upon which a series of substantial stone buildings was constructed. At the extreme northern edge of the excavated area is a massive stone wall, still standing more than 1.2m in places. This wall has only a single finished face, on the north side. The south edge of the wall is built into the fill which it was clearly designed to retain. Portions of what appear to be the same wall are visible along the southern margin of The Pool for some 50 metres and underwater investigations in 1991 and 1992 may have located additional preserved segments.

This wall was very clearly a seawall that formed a quayside along the south edge of The Pool and marked the northern limit of the settlement's waterfront. The construction of this wall and the process of filling behind it fits very well with Captain Wynne's comment that his "...endeavour affords a double benefit, the one of ridding and preparing the way for further work, the other of winning so much void or waste ground, to so necessary a purpose as to enlarge this little room..." (Pope 1993:13). It also fits with the present condition of the hillside on the southern border of the settlement which displays evidence of cutting and terracing, a process undertaken to obtain the fill found behind the seawall. If the amount of earth deposited in other parts of the waterfront is equivalent to that at Site C, this cutting and filling must have constituted one of the most ambitious construction projects in seventeenth-century Newfoundland.

As the filling took place, footings for walls were constructed and the fill piled around them and levelled; no trace of builders' trenches can be found around the wall footings. The walls themselves are of local slate or slate-like stone, probably quarried at a number of seaside locations within a few miles of the settlement. Most of the walls are uniformly 30" thick and the standing portions are, in places, more than a metre high. Wall segments were recorded individually since the present extent of the excavations does not allow any reliable reconstructions of the structures which they comprised. What the walls indicate clearly is that the structures at Site C seem to have been rebuilt and re-organized at least once, and perhaps several times, between the founding of the colony and the later seventeenth century.

Indications of this rebuilding are clearly visible in the excavated area at Site C. They include, for example: a) a large stone floor one-half of which is composed of large, thick, rough flagstones with natural edges which are carefully laid and

have slate fragments and cobblestones carefully placed in the interstices. The other half consists of thinner and more friable square slate flags, now badly weathered and cracked, which might once have been tightly fitted. The two sections of floor meet at a straight border suggesting two building phases; b) a portion of a long east/west wall has been dismantled and a north/south wall built in an unbonded fashion against it; c) a slate-lined and covered drain leads from a cobble floor through this wall (both part of the same construction), through a parallel wall which appears to have been partly dismantled and rebuilt to accommodate the drain; d) the privy wall was also partly dismantled and rebuilt in an inferior fashion to permit the installation of the drain.

A very tentative reconstruction of the history of Site C would place the seawall as the earliest stone construction, followed soon after by the deposition of the thick fill layer and the building of a long stone structure with a flagstone floor parallel to the harbourside. At the west end of this structure was a stone privy which drained through the seawall, about which more will be said below. The area along the southeast portion of this structure may have contained a less substantial wooden structure, which, by virtue of a very rough cobble/beach gravel floor covered with twigs and fir needles, may have served to bed animals. It also seems certain that none of these structures is the Mansion House for, thus far at least, no trace of fireplaces has been found and the ceramics and other artifacts are not domestic in nature nor do they reflect the high-status material which we might expect to find in the principal residence at the Colony of Avalon.

The date of this earliest complex remains to be demonstrated precisely but a few threads of evidence, some circumstantial, suggest that it may have been early in the history of the Colony of Avalon. Except for Captain Wynne's remark about filling waste or void ground, no documents survive that mention this complex, or for that matter any construction after 1622. In that year, however, with a stone-layer and quarryman already at Ferryland, Wynne asked for six masons, two or three good quarrymen, a slater or two, four carpenters, a lime-burner and limestones and mentioned that he had a slate quarry "in fitting." There is no doubt that Wynne planned extensive construction following the initial well-described efforts, and I suspect that the seawall, privy and other buildings at Site C are the result of these labours and therefore date from the mid-1620s. Some artifactual evidence lends a certain amount of credibility to this hypothesis. Tobacco pipes sealed within the lowest layers of the privy, although few in number, have the small bowls and large bore diameters that would be characteristic of the early years of the Colony of Avalon. Bottle glass from the same feature derives entirely from square "case" bottles with no trace of the thick, dark green onion or shaft-and-globe bottles which begin to appear on other sites in British North America in the 1640s. Finally, a small wax seal, clearly from a signet ring, bears the impression of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, pierced with an arrow and complete with three drops of blood below what appears to be a weeping eye. The symbolism is clearly Roman Catholic and the most likely time for such an object to have been at Ferryland is during the

Calvert period when Catholics were resident at the place, or during the 1620s or early 1630s.

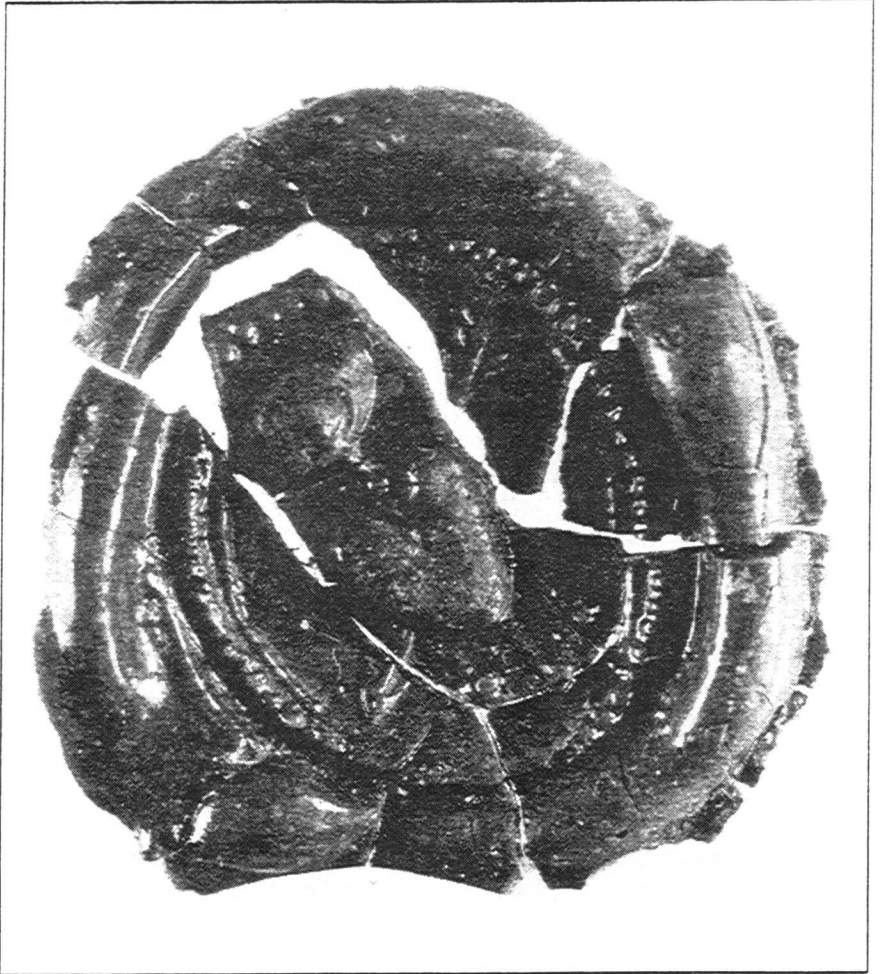


Fig. 2 Partly reassembled fragments of a wax impression from a signet ring. Found in the base of a privy at Site C, the bleeding Immaculate Heart of Mary is clearly Roman Catholic iconography and probably dates from the Calvert era at the Colony of Avalon. Actual diameter about 10mm.

The second building phase involved the partial demolition of the long east/west wall and the construction of a substantial stable or byre south of the eastern portion of it. The floor of the byre was raised some 20" and capped with a relatively well-laid cobblestone floor. Several small post moulds may represent tethering posts and a channel near the centre(?) of the floor was probably designed to allow waste to flow into the drain mentioned above which was constructed at the same

time. The drain opening neatly pierces the west wall of this structure and continues westward where an adjacent wall, part of the original construction, was partly dismantled to permit the flow of waste through the drain and eventually into the privy, now converted to a cesspit or cesspit/privy.

The date of this second construction phase is not clear, but it must have taken place sometime before 1673 when the Dutch raid in September of that year destroyed much of the settlement including the cesspit/privy. Perhaps the most likely time for this reorganization to have taken place is sometime after the 1620s when the Calverts abandoned the place, and when at least parts of the settlement fell into disrepair. Sir David Kirke and his wife and sons, who occupied Ferryland beginning in 1638, may very well have been responsible for the rebuilding and reorganization in evidence at Site C.

If the last few paragraphs seem confusing, they accurately reflect the state of our understanding of the history of Site C. Until excavations can proceed to the west, south and east we will not know the actual shapes and sizes of the structures built by the earliest colonists nor those built during the reorganization and rebuilding of the 1630s or 1640s. The functions of most of the structures remain unclear. At present it is only possible to say that the structures at this location are as substantial as anything yet found in seventeenth-century British North America and that they illustrate the value of archaeology in understanding aspects of history not preserved in the documentary record.

Before leaving Site C a few additional words should be said about the cesspit/privy excavated during the past three seasons. This unusual feature is already yielding an unexpected wealth of information about life in seventeenth-century Newfoundland. In addition to the ceramics, tobacco pipes, glass and the wax seal mentioned above, an almost incalculable number of other objects was recovered during 1993 and 1994. Artifacts include bits of textile, refuse from what appears to have been a nearby cooperage, wooden spoons, shoe parts, a walking stick and the better part of a wooden wheelbarrow. Thousands of seeds, including grains, peas, small fruits and plum pits represent both native and imported vegetable resources. Grasses, leaves, twigs, mosses, fungi and other vegetal materials are also well represented. Bones of fish, birds and mammals, as well as the shells of mussels and lobsters will also provide an indication of the colonists' diet. Perhaps most numerous, however, are the eggs from human intestinal parasites which, according to parasitologist Patrick Horne, are present at the astonishing rate of about 30,000 eggs per gram of waste. Separation of the various classes of objects from the burial matrix will continue for many months and the identification and analysis of the resulting material may not be completed for years. The information gained from this unique feature, however, will be more than worth the wait.

SITE D

This area is located near what may be the eastern margin of the settlement and has produced the first real evidence of a domestic complex, consisting of a dwelling and an associated stone-lined well. Excavations began there some years ago when a conspicuous fireplace foundation, probably built in the early nineteenth century was exposed as part of a Memorial University field school excavation. In 1993 we returned to this area and dug below the levels of the previous excavation; seventeenth-century artifacts were encountered in some numbers in these deeper layers. The objects first encountered were in a mixed context, probably disturbed by a combination of gardening and slope wash beginning in the eighteenth century. Below this disturbed zone was found a layer of wood charcoal, frequently preserving the forms of the beams and planks of what must have been a substantial frame structure. In 1994 the lower courses of a stone fireplace, cobble hearth and a semi-circular spread of gravel, cobble and stone in front of the fireplace were revealed.

The fireplace measures about 17.5 feet wide and probably reflects the width of the house. The length of the structure is not indicated by any actual structural remains, but an area cleared of rocks in front of the fireplace opening is the same width as the fireplace and about 31 feet long. If this cleared area represents the floor of the structure, the overall dimensions must have been about 39 by 17.5 feet including the chimney in a gable end. This is a substantial seventeenth-century house and it probably stood more than a single story in height, but whether two stories or a story and one-half we will probably never know.

The date of the construction of this structure cannot be stated certainly, but pipestems and bowls suggest a date no earlier than the second half of the seventeenth century. The date of destruction can be suggested with more certainty. That the house burned is beyond question, and we know of two major episodes of burning at Ferryland — the Dutch raid of 1673 and d'Iberville's attack of 1696. That the burning of the house at Site D took place at the time of the latter attack is indicated by two William III (1694-1702) coins associated with the burned layer; they were not in existence at the time of the earlier, Dutch, raid.

Who might have lived in this structure is again a matter of uncertainty. One of two surviving seventeenth-century maps of Ferryland, that drawn by James Yonge in 1663, shows a house with a chimney in the gable end not far from the location of the house at Site D. The house is identified on Yonge's map as "Lady Kirke." It would be satisfying to be able to identify Site D with residence of the Kirkes, but there might be some good reasons to doubt a one-to-one correspondence between Yonge's map and the archaeological evidence. In the first place Yonge's map shows only two houses and two flakes at Ferryland; many other substantial structures that were in existence in 1663 are not depicted. Even if Lady Kirke's house is shown in more or less its correct position, the artifacts found associated

with the structure do not conform to what would be expected from the house of a member of the Newfoundland gentry in the late seventeenth century. Although the house was a substantial one, relatively expensive ceramics (e.g. tin-glazed and 'sgraffito wares) are almost entirely lacking, a situation in decided contrast to ceramic samples from elsewhere in British North America. Glassware and other similar objects are also not well represented among the artifacts found at Site D. The few upscale objects that were recovered — a silver cuff- or waistcoat link, button holes with silver embroidery and two silver coins — do not necessarily indicate that the house was occupied by the gentry. At least one of the coins, a piece of Elizabethan silver dated 1579, is in such good condition that it must have been lost long before the house at Site D was constructed; the other objects may very well have been dropped by one of d'Iberville's men or by one of the Kirkes themselves during a visit to the house.

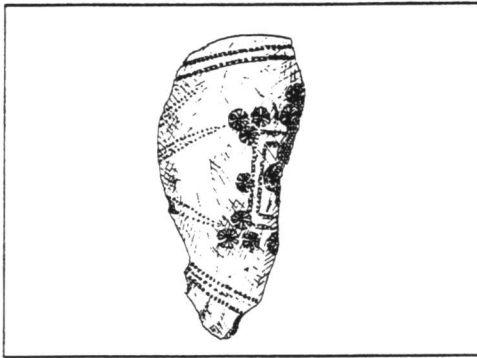


Fig. 3 Drawing of a "Chesapeake pipe" from Site D at Ferryland, shown actual size. Opinion is divided as to whether these distinctive tobacco pipes were made by Native North Americans or Afro-American slaves. What is certain is that they were made in the Chesapeake region of the eastern seaboard and may provide our first tangible "Ferryland - Maryland" connection. Drawing by Daniel Stewart.

During 1994 a stone-lined well, which I believe was associated with the house at Site D, was excavated. It presently extends nearly 25' below ground surface and is extremely well built. The lowermost construction consists of four hewn timbers, lapped at the corners, which form a square footing. Atop these is a single course of bricks set as headers (i.e. with the long axes perpendicular to the timbers) resting on the timbers. Above this the stonework is octagonal for about two feet, above which it gradually becomes round with an inside diameter of about 30".

Local legend has it that a child drowned in the well at some time in the past and that the well was filled at that time. The archaeology of the well seems to have confirmed this event for the fill consisted almost entirely of rocks and boulders clearly deposited as a single event. Glass bottle fragments associated with this fill suggest that the well was filled sometime in the late eighteenth or very early

nineteenth century. Unfortunately no datable artifacts were found in the bottom sediments of the well unless a bucket made from a cut down cask labelled “??. LONG SALT BEEF” can somehow be identified as to place and time of origin. Even this, however, probably dates toward the end of the well’s usefulness and we suspect that the well may have been cleaned repeatedly.

Adjacent to the well a collection of small rocks and associated ceramics, pipes and other objects discovered at the close of the 1994 season suggests that the well may be contemporaneous with the house at Site D. Sherds of ceramic vessels are typical of the late seventeenth century and a small bowl of North Italian marbled slipware probably dates from the early part of that century. These remains, and more than 11,000 charred peas, fragments of a burned net and other objects, all suggest the presence of a nearby structure, the function of which will not be known until excavations resume in 1995.

The entire Site D assemblage suggests a substantial dwelling complex which, were it not for the mundane nature of most of the artifacts, might be attributed to a late seventeenth-century family of some means. Perhaps further excavation will reveal the solution to this somewhat paradoxical assemblage of structures and artifacts.

SITE E

This site is marked by a conspicuous mound of earth at the crest of the hill south of the site. The mound is clearly artificial in origin and a closer inspection of the area reveals a large, shallow semi-circular borrow pit to the south (uphill) from which the earth comprising the mound was excavated. The site provides a vantage point over The Pool and the settlement and some distance to the east toward the passage through which ships must enter Ferryland.

Excavations at Site E in 1993 provided a glimpse at the fortifications of the late seventeenth century and, possibly, an indication of the location of the colony’s original defenses. Captain Wynne reported in 1622 that he had enclosed about four acres within a palisade composed of a frame of posts and rails with trees seven feet tall and sharpened at the top fastened to the frame with spikes and nails (Pope 1993:12). At the outset it seemed that it would be a simple matter to remove the plough zone, expose the post moulds of the original palisade, and follow it to determine the limits of the 1621 colony. As it turned out, the situation is far more complex and it will take a major effort to locate and understand the seventeenth-century fortifications of Ferryland.

The large earthen mound provides evidence of several building phases. The most recent structure consists of a pair of poorly-preserved fireplaces, presumably in the gable ends of a building measuring about 12 by 30 feet. Artifacts recovered from this structure include drinking vessels, bottles and tobacco pipes dating from the early through mid-eighteenth century. The assemblage seems skewed toward

objects of this type which may suggest the presence of a tavern, or a dwelling used as a tavern, during this period.

Beneath this eighteenth-century layer were the remains of at least two far more substantial earth and stone structures. The most recent of these may be the fortifications built in 1694 by Captain William Holman who undertook to repair the colony's fortifications at his own expense when the French threat became increasingly apparent. The mound which remains from this construction measures about 15m east/west and 8m north/south. It is comprised of earth dug from the borrow pit to the south with large rocks forming a retaining wall on the south (uphill) side. A line of post moulds runs roughly east/west near the southern edge of the mound. The post moulds are covered by up to a metre of fill washed from the mound when the fortifications fell into disrepair. A pair of post moulds and a large iron hinge found immediately adjacent to them suggest the presence of a gate in this area.

The stratigraphic position of this earthwork and a few associated artifacts suggest a late seventeenth-century date consistent with the interpretation of this as "Holman's Fort." A William III half-penny suggests a late seventeenth-century date and a few small glass beads of the type sewn on clothing and footwear may be evidence of d'Iberville's "Canadians", or Natives from the mainland, who accompanied the French forces during the attack of 1696.

In a single one-metre wide trench, and at a depth of more than two metres, the remains of a structure built from (or edged with) sods was exposed. A wall between ten and a dozen sods high seems to have formed the south edge of an earthen platform. The north edge has not been exposed, but some substantial retaining wall must have been built to resist the erosion of the platform. This structure is built upon a sterile humus zone, suggesting that it may very well be a part of the colony's original fortifications.

No military artifacts were recovered from our limited excavations but the location of this feature suggests that it is a part of the seventeenth-century fortifications of Ferryland, in all likelihood a gun platform. The surface of the mound offers a commanding view of the entrance to the outer harbour of Ferryland, between Bois Island and Ferryland Head. If this feature is a gun platform it is situated in the best location from the point of view of a balance between field of fire and proximity to the community. A location further out The Downs may have provided a military advantage, but this could have been offset by the distance over which supplies had to be transported and which residents would have had to travel to man and maintain the battery.

SUMMARY

Although our excavations have explored less than ten percent of the four acres which Captain Wynne indicated comprised the original Colony of Avalon, some

significant, if tentative, results have been obtained. Both Native and early European occupations, perhaps as early as the first part of the sixteenth century have been revealed. We have at least a rough idea of the location of the historically-recorded first range of buildings — the forge, tenements, brew house and Mansion House — built by the first settlers. The forge room itself and the tools and other objects recovered therein promise to reveal a great deal about seventeenth-century iron-working, perhaps the most basic trade of the period. The waterfront complex consisting of a seawall and a series of massive stone buildings suggests that construction continued throughout the 1620s and resulted in a town — or at least a waterfront — that appears at this point to have been much more similar to a British port than to contemporaneous settlements in British North America. The dwelling at Site D provides information about the day-to-day life of the late seventeenth-century inhabitants of Ferryland and the privy at Site C promises to shed new light on diet, health and disease during much of the same century. Although barely explored, Site E indicates that good evidence of the fortifications remains to be excavated.

Perhaps most impressive of all are the indications that most, if not all, of the Colony of Avalon and its successors throughout the seventeenth century lie beneath the ground around The Pool in a remarkable state of preservation. If time and funds are available in future years we can expect to have an unprecedented glimpse of life in seventeenth-century Newfoundland.

References

- Harper, J.R. (1960), "In quest of Lord Baltimore's house at Ferryland." *Canadian Geographical Journal* LXX(3):106-114.
- Pope, P.E. (1993), "Documents Relating to Ferryland 1597-1726." Report on file at the Archaeology Unit, Memorial University, St. John's.
- Seary, E.R. (1971), *Place Names of the Avalon Peninsula of the Island of Newfoundland*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Tuck, J.A. (1985), "Looking for the Colony of Avalon." *Archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador - 1984*, edited by J.S. Thomson and C. Thomson, pp. 378-397. St. John's: Historic Resources Division, Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth.
- . (1989), "Excavations at Ferryland, Newfoundland - 1986." *Archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador - 1986*, edited by J.S. Thomson and C. Thomson, pp. 296-307. St. John's: Historic Resources Division, Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth.
- and D.T. Robbins (1986), "A glimpse of the Colony of Avalon." *Archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador - 1985*, edited by J.S. Thomson and C. Thomson, pp. 237-249. St. John's: Historic Resources Division, Department of Culture, Recreation and Youth.