

## Interim Report: Ferryland (CgAf-02)

Permit # 16.13

Barry C. Gaulton, Catherine Hawkins and Robyn Lacy

Our 25<sup>th</sup> consecutive field season was filled with exciting discoveries and new information on the lives of Ferryland's former residents.

The first area explored this summer was a terrace behind the Calvert-era stable and brewhouse. Previous investigations in 2015 revealed a large amount of building material including hundreds of roof slate fragments, brick, limestone, as well as window glass and turned lead. Datable artifacts placed the activities on this terrace within the first half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Excavations in 2016 uncovered the same types of materials as in the previous field season but in smaller quantities. Given the proximity of the brewhouse and stable, and the date range of the artifacts, we tentatively interpreted this location as a work area associated with the intensive construction at Avalon back in the 1620s.

However, this changed three weeks into the field season with the discovery of a lead bale seal stamped with the initials IT and a date of 1638 (Figure 1). Since the seal was not made until at least 1638 and therefore was not deposited at Ferryland until after that time, this provides a *terminus post quem* for the associated deposit. Our revised interpretation is that this terrace also (or perhaps exclusively) served as an activity area associated with the dismantling/repurposing of many buildings at Ferryland during David Kirke's reorganization of the colony. Coincidentally, the date on the lead bale seal is the same year that the Kirke family arrived at Ferryland, displaced the Calvert's residing governor and took up residence in the Mansion House.



**Figure 1:** Lead bale seal with IT initials dated 1638.

Fifteen metres west of the terrace excavations, the field crew continued exploring deposits at the bottom of the builder's trench directly behind the hall of Lord Baltimore's Mansion House. In previous field seasons we had been uncovering new information on how this house was built as well as details on the daily lives of those who built it. Fish, mammal, and bird bones tell us about the types and quantities of food that was consumed by the tradesmen working on the Mansion House, while the remnants of ceramic cooking pots demonstrate how it was prepared. Much to our surprise we found some interesting clothing-related artifacts in the builder's trench in 2016 including a tiny silver sequin and a woven button made of silver-wrapped thread (Figure 2). Neither embellishment would be expected on the clothing of a tradesman but would not be out of place for the individual who likely oversaw the entire construction: Governor Edward Wynne. If not Wynne then perhaps these items once adorned the clothing of one of the other gentlemen or ladies that resided at Avalon back in the mid-1620s when the Mansion House was being built.



**Figure 2:** (left) Silver sequin; (right) button made of woven silver-wrapped thread.

Amongst the fragments of roof slate, brick and limestone in the builder's trench we also found substantial quantities of window glass, window came, turned lead and many thin cut lead strips (perhaps "glazier's sprue" first coined by Noël Hume and Noël Hume 2001:507). It was previously assumed that the windows set into the early buildings at Avalon were manufactured in England, carefully packaged and shipped over for ease of construction. The pieces of thick, unfinished window came and thin cut lead strips contradict this assumption — at least in the case of the Mansion House — because window came was cast in molds and then separated and trimmed prior to being fed through a milling vise to produce thin H-shaped turned lead (Riordan, 2017 personal communication). The turned lead was then set with pieces of cut glass for the manufacture of windows. In the seventeenth century, all of these related tasks were the responsibility of a tradesman known as a glazier. Given the evidence above it appears that one was present at Avalon during the construction of the Mansion House.

Next we turned our attention to a late 18<sup>th</sup>- to early 19<sup>th</sup>-century house built atop the filled and levelled remains of the much earlier ca. 1620s defensive ditch at the eastern perimeter of the settlement. Traces of this house were first discovered over a decade ago and will soon form an important component of MUN graduate student Duncan Williams' MA research. In advance of Duncan's fieldwork next summer, the crew spent some time exposing the massive 12ft wide by 3ft deep fireplace and excavating a 1x4 metre trench in the house's associated midden (Figure 3). The quantity and diversity of objects discarded by the occupants of this former dwelling is nothing short of fantastic.



**Figure 3:** Massive stone fireplace, late 18th to early 19th century.

Thousands of artifacts were uncovered including dozens of fish hooks and hundreds of codfish bones, several iron padlocks, dozens of buttons (bone, ceramic, glass and copper), sewing-related implements such as a darning needle, straight pins and thimbles, and a ceramic doll fragment (Figure 4). Wine and liquor bottle fragments were also well represented as were clay tobacco pipes. Ceramic fragments include every ware type that archaeologists could hope to find on late 18<sup>th</sup>- and 19<sup>th</sup>-century sites in North America including Westerwald and Rhenish Brown stoneware, Staffordshire slipware, English stoneware and porcelain, an assortment of hand-painted and transfer-printed creamware and pearlware, as well as various whiteware. Of particular note are several transfer-printed plates that were broken but subsequently repaired by drilling a series of mend holes on each side of the break from both the front and back (Figure 5). This technique of drilling holes from the front and back of a ceramic vessel — thus producing a

small mend hole that is hourglass shaped in cross section — has been recorded on other 19<sup>th</sup>-century sites on the Avalon Peninsula as well as in Labrador.



**Figure 4:** (left) Two padlocks; (right) a selection of buttons.



**Figure 5:** Close up of hourglass-shaped mend hole on transfer-printed plate fragment.

At least one of the occupants of this house was also literate as demonstrated by a writing slate, slate pencil and a large brass seal fob. The bottom of the fob bears an image of Atlas holding the Universe on his shoulders and can be found on similar seals from the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 6). Based on the artifacts in the fireplace and associated midden, this house was occupied into the late 1800s.

During the 2016 field season we also conducted some test pitting at the far eastern end of the site (Ferryland Area D) in advance of proposed construction for a new road to access the inner harbour. The results showed little in the way of in situ cultural resources that would be impacted if a new road was built. Only two test pits produced a 17<sup>th</sup>-century occupation layer and both

were located south of the potential road corridor. Each of these 50x50cm pits were expanded into 1 metre units and produced enough artifacts and structural remains to justify further excavation.



**Figure 6:** Large brass seal fob with stamp of Atlas holding the Universe.

The first area revealed a stone hearth measuring 6ft by 7ft (Figure 7). Hundreds of nails were found in a burn layer directly above and north of the feature suggesting a wooden superstructure that was destroyed by fire. Compared to other 17<sup>th</sup>-century fireplaces found at Ferryland this one is a much simpler construction and contained few domestic artifacts beyond scattered pieces of coarse earthenware, clay tobaccos pipe and bottle glass dating from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. An iron claw hammer was the only tool worthy of note. However, it is worth mentioning that the western end of this hearth is only 2 metres east of the stone-lined well found in Area D in 1994. At the time of the 1994 well excavation, a burn layer was also recorded and in it were parts of a burnt fish net and thousands of carbonized peas (Figure 8). Our preliminary interpretation of this new hearth feature is that of a living quarters for migratory fishing servants, possibly hired by the planter who lived in the nearby house in Area D. These buildings were razed during the French attack on Ferryland in 1696 (See Crompton 2001).



**Figure 7:** Late 17th-century stone hearth, Area D .



**Figure 8:** Carbonized peas found in 1994.

The second interesting occupation layer revealed through this year's test pitting is located between the stone-lined well and our reproduction kitchen garden. Below the uppermost layer of mixed plough zone was a dense deposit of angular stone rubble containing artifacts from the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century including what appears to be two shattered but complete case bottles. Underneath is another layer containing large angular wall rocks and many complete roof slates, the appearance of which suggests a building collapse (Figure 9). Based on current archaeological evidence, only structures built during the Calvert era were roofed in slate, whereas the Kirkes and later residents preferred wood to cover their buildings. If this is in fact the remains of a building with a slate roof then it is the only such structure found outside the original 4 acre settlement. Determining the exact age and function of this potential building will require further excavation.



**Figure 9:** 2x2 metre test unit showing wall rubble and roof slate collapse, Area D.

An important component of the 2016 fieldwork at Ferryland involved the search for the 17th-century burial ground. This was part of MUN graduate student Robyn Lacy's MA research. Prior to fieldwork, Robyn examined the spatial relationships between burial grounds and their associated settlements in both Newfoundland and the eastern U.S. The survey encompassed 43 early colonial settlements and the subsequent statistical analysis provided information on the potential positioning of burial grounds in settlements with similar characteristics. This

information was then applied to Ferryland in a systematic attempt to locate the burial ground associated with the 17<sup>th</sup>-century settlement. Guided by results of the statistical frequency model, a 6-week excavation was planned to investigate previously-unexplored areas directly south and east of the original 4 acre plantation as these locations were statistically the most likely areas for the burial ground *if* it was situated outside of the fortifications. Before excavations began, Robyn, Maria Lear (Archaeological Curator, MUN) and several volunteers conducted a ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey of four high-potential areas (Figure 10). Several anomalous features were noted and exploratory test trenches were later dug in a north-south orientation to increase the likelihood of crosscutting a grave shaft, which generally run east to west in the Christian tradition.



**Figure 10:** GPR survey at Area D, spring 2016.

During the first week of excavation a number of 17<sup>th</sup>-century artifacts were uncovered in the first trench including two intact pipe bowls just above a large posthole and post mold still visible in the glacial subsoil. In the second trench, two features which appeared to be candidates for grave shafts were identified in a clay deposit. Unfortunately, upon digging further we encountered an antifreeze bottle at approximately 95cm below surface, indicating that these features were a modern disturbance. These two trenches were dug between the kitchen garden and defensive ditch, overturning the popular idea that the burial ground was located in that area.

During the second and third weeks, excavation took place on the hill to the south of the settlement (Ferryland Area E). A preliminary test trench was first dug at the terrace edge directly west of the bastion earthwork. When, at 90 cm dbb, no graves or subsoil were encountered, the area started to become interesting for other reasons. Along the trench walls on the north end, nearest to the hill slope, multiple lenses of black organic material were visible in the profile beginning at 42cm dbb and continuing down to subsoil at 95cm dbb. These were identified as the remains of stacked sods that once formed an earthen rampart (Figure 11). Immediately south was the remains of an infilled ditch, which together comprised the southern defenses at Avalon. The discovery of these features meant that the entire crest of the landform should be devoid of graves and so no further testing was initiated.



**Figure 11:** Multiple organic lenses at the bottom half of the profile shows the remains of the earthen rampart.

On the fourth week, several 50cm wide trenches were opened up to the southeast of the kitchen garden. A 10cm thick layer of shattered slate fragments was exposed, possibly indicating a potential slate-working area. This deposit is likely associated with the building collapse and roof slates noted above, just four metres away.

Completing those trenches at the beginning of week five, we moved up the hill, south and southeast of the stone-lined well, to excavate a series of test pits in order to check the depth of subsoil before a backhoe arrived. During these tests, an intact 17<sup>th</sup>-century midden deposit was discovered on the Downs, yielding clay tobacco pipes, flint, bottle glass, and various coarse stoneware and earthenware fragments including several pieces of decorative North Italian marbled slipware (Figure 12). This area will be further explored in 2017. At the end of week five, the backhoe arrived and 8 trenches were dug in this area of the Downs and then trowelled down to subsoil in week six. Although none of these trenches revealed human graves, it came with the added bonus of locating a large 18th-century cellar that was previously unknown.



**Figure 12:** North Italian marbled slipware fragments (left and bottom) and tin-glazed earthenware (right).

While the 2016 excavation did not identify the early 17<sup>th</sup>-century burial ground, Lacy and a team of volunteers will be returning to Ferryland for four weeks in the summer of 2017 in order to excavate a high potential area inside the original 4 acre plantation, south of the brewhouse but close to where two gravestone fragments were found in previous field seasons. Due to time constraints this area was not included in the 2016 season but moved to 2017 in order to allot adequate time to record overlying natural and cultural deposits dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> century onward. According to data compiled for the statistical frequency model, it is equally likely that the early burial ground at Ferryland is located within the fortifications and near the center of the settlement.

The upcoming 2017 field season at Ferryland may prove to be our busiest and most exciting to date!

## References

Crompton, Amanda J.

2001 A seventeenth-century planter's house at Ferryland, Newfoundland (CgAf-2, Area D).  
MA thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Noël Hume, Ivor and Audrey Noël Hume

2001 The Archaeology of Martin's Hundred. The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation,  
Williamsburg, VA.

Riordan, Tim

2017 Personal Communication (email April 23, 2017).