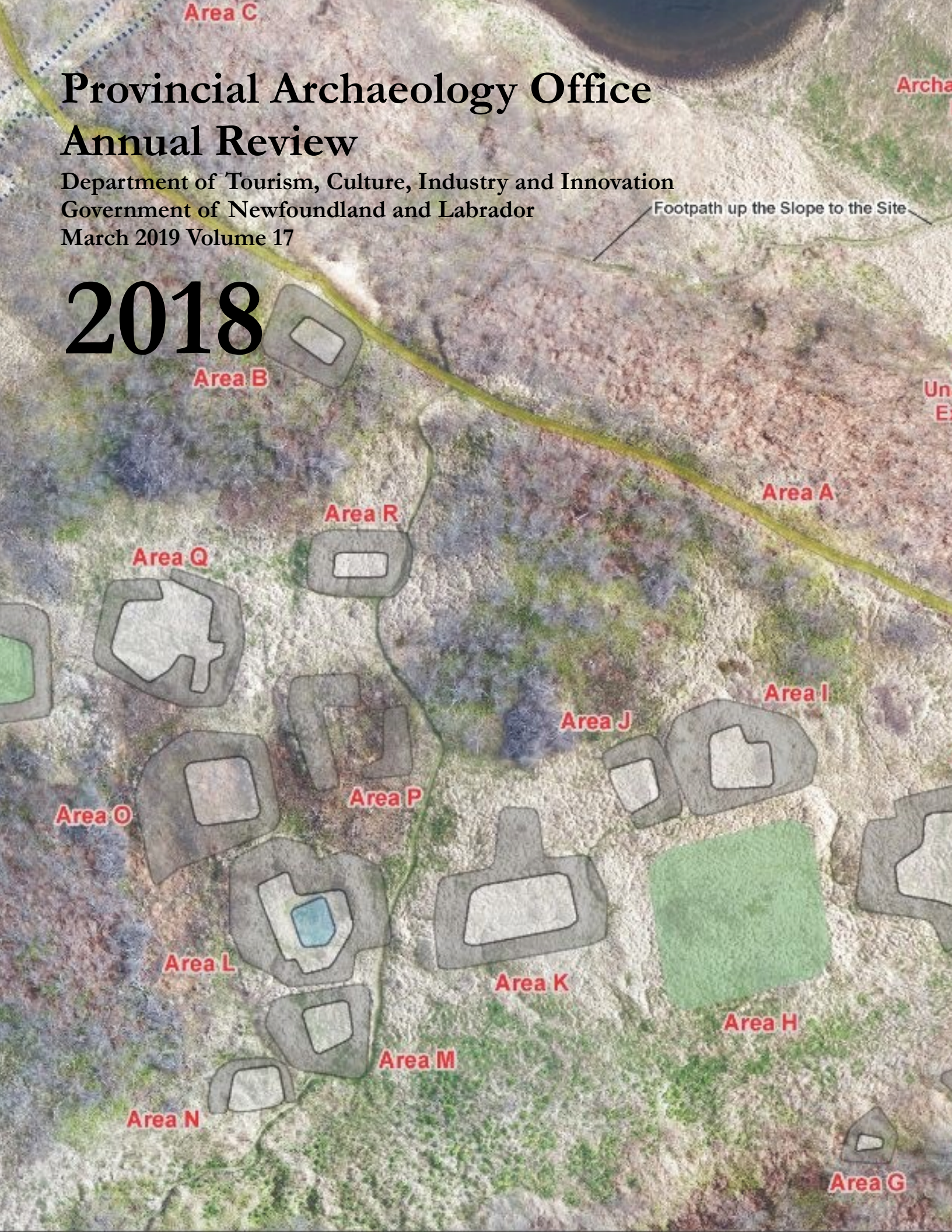


Provincial Archaeology Office Annual Review

Department of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation
Government of Newfoundland and Labrador
March 2019 Volume 17

2018



Archaeology at Ferryland 2018

Barry Gaulton & Donna Teasdale
Memorial University

Our 2018 fieldwork was largely informed by the discoveries of the previous summer, having revealed evidence for a masonry structure and associated slate roof tile collapse at Area D, and a rich domestic midden in nearby Area J. The former feature dates to the early years of the colony of Avalon in the 1620s; whereas the latter deposit was formed sometime between the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The goals for the 2018 field season were to better understand the nature and duration of occupation at Area D and to locate evidence for *in situ* structural remains associated with the domestic deposit at Area J. As discussed below, additional excavations in 2019-2020 are required before any firm conclusions can be drawn.

The investigation of Area D's early 17th-century stone structure (Feature 217) was divided into two teams, each with disparate tasks. The first group focused on expanding excavations to the north and west of the structure to further expose architectural remains and associated construction and occupation layers. A second group, directed by graduate student Alexa Spiwak, conducted a targeted excavation to the south of the structure to answer questions pertaining to the manufacture of slate roof tiles at Ferryland. This report will outline the work of the first team; for a discussion of the second team's findings see Spiwak (this volume).

Tantalizing traces of a cobblestone pavement and possible doorway uncovered at the west and north ends, respectively, of Feature 217 during the

Figure 1: Feature 217, looking west.
Note the cobblestone hearth (in the southwest) and doorway (in the northeast) of the structure.





Figure 2: Base of furnace immediately north of Feature 217 hearth.

previous field season (Gaulton and Lacy 2017) were further exposed in 2018 to reveal a .91m by 1.52m (3ft by 5ft) hearth floor set with cobblestones, and a 1.17m (3ft 10 in) wide doorway (Figure 1). The cobblestones on the hearth floor are large and set in an E-W orientation. At the north end of the hearth – and at the same level as the floor – is an oval-shaped furnace set into the west wall of the building. A large rectangular flagstone sits at the opening of the feature but its interior is floored with small cobblestones, many of which are spalled from repeated heat exposure (Figure 2). The interior walls of the furnace, built of clay-bonded masonry but also utilizing bricks as part of the above superstructure, show similar amounts of spalling and fire reddening. Although excavations must proceed further west to fully expose the base of the furnace, its interior dimensions are approximated at .69-.85m wide by 1.28-1.5m deep.

Positive identification of a door at the north-eastern end of Feature 217 prompted additional excavations to the north, encompassing both the north wall of the structure as well as nearby construction and/or occupation layers. This operation provided architectural details in the form of wall thickness (.76m or 2ft 6 in) but also evidence for further fenestration in the form of window glass fragments. Unsurprisingly, refuse deposits were particularly evident outside the doorway; however, the quantity and variety of artifacts in these deposits are quite modest compared to those associated with other early 17th-century structures, both domestic and non-domestic, at Ferryland.

Low numbers of clay tobacco pipe, case bottle glass and ceramic fragments – inside and outside Feature 217 – suggest a brief occupation despite the significant investment required to construct a building with stone walls and a slate tile roof. The handful



Figure 3: Clay pipe makers' marks found in the occupation layer outside Feature 217.

of early pipe bowls and associated marks, in particular, lend support to a 1620s occupation that may not have extended into later decades (Figure 3). The building's location, some 30 metres outside the original 4-acre fortified settlement, is also anomalous with respect to all other structures associated with Calvert's colony, and is perhaps an important clue to understanding its purpose/function.

Based on existing archaeological evidence and historical records, several possibilities can be presented. One idea is that this building pre-dates 'official' settlement in August 1621. It has been suggested that

the first governor of Ferryland, Captain Edward Wynne, and others overwintered in 1620 to reconnoiter the land in advance of planting a colony (Gaulton and Miller 2009:118). This sturdy stone building could have served such a purpose, saw continued use while the fortified colony was being constructed, but abandoned shortly thereafter. A second theory is that this structure was built to serve an industrial function(s). The large doorway (nearly 4ft wide), earthen floor, and oval furnace provides tangential evidence, as does the dearth of domestic material culture and its location outside the village proper in the event that an

accidental fire would prevent conflagration of other buildings. This theory gained traction in 2018 with the discovery of hundreds of small pieces of glassy, bubbly residue or waste product outside the door of the building (Figure 4). Correspondence with specialists in the UK cast doubt on the possibility that these pieces pertained specifically to an industry such as glassmaking. Instead, the glassy waste was interpreted as an unintended by-product formed when the sandy clay that bonded the stones inside the furnace reacted to repeated and prolonged heat exposure. These small glass-like bits, sometimes referred to as ‘kiln sweat’ (Sarah Paynter, pers comm 2018), would have been gathered up among the spent fuel from the floor of the furnace and discarded out the north door of Feature 217.



Figure 4: Glassy by product formed inside the furnace of Feature 217.

A masonry building with an active furnace located outside the colony not far from the water (13 m away) brings to mind an almost forgotten trial industry that is known from historical records to have been attempted at Ferryland in the earliest years of settlement: salt making. In 1621 Edward Wynne requested that the sending of a “salt pan” (for boiling down salt water to extract salt) be deferred one year (Wynne 1621). A lone saltmaker, John Hickson, arrived in July 1622 and the “salt work” was near completion (Wynne 1622a). By mid-August, limited production was underway, for Hickson had produced “a barrel of the best salt that ever my eyes beheld” (Wynne 1622b). Considering that excavations have revealed no trace of the 1622 saltworks inside the 4-acre village, and that this kind of activity was conducted on a small-scale trial basis by one individual, Feature 217 may yet be a viable candidate. With

only half the structure uncovered thus far, many more discoveries await; as does the possibility that Feature 217 could have served multiple functions over its short lifespan.

For two weeks in 2018, we shifted our efforts to investigate the late 17th- to early 18th-century domestic deposit at Area J, located on a gently sloping hillside some 30 metres south of Area D. Evidence for occupation on this part of the site lay in stark contrast to that of Feature 217. Here, a rich midden deposit contains thousands of ceramic, clay tobacco pipe, glass, and iron fragments, along with an assortment of items of personal adornment that strongly point to a domestic occupation; yet, no structural remains have been found save the occasional brick fragment or fire-cracked rock. The previous excavation from 2017 (2x5m N-S trench) was extended east by one metre, followed by a preliminary magnetic susceptibility/conductivity survey conducted by



Figure 5: Artifacts recovered from the late 17th- to early 18th-century deposit in Area J. From top left to bottom right: silver-plated finger ring; amber colored glass bead; copper thimble; copper chain links corroded onto an iron ‘nail’.

MUN graduate student Allan Wolfrum. Allan was generous enough to volunteer his time and instrument before heading to Labrador for summer field research in Sheshatshiu (see Wolfrum, this volume). Unfortunately, neither the expanded excavation nor the non-invasive survey were successful in locating in situ structural remains. One area of potential interest six metres west of the 2017 excavation trench was identified during the magnetic susceptibility/conductivity survey; however, subsurface testing proved negative.

The results of the 2018 excavation in Area J bears further discussion as work in the area continues to refine our understanding of those who lived here. As in 2017, the midden deposit consisted primarily of large pieces of ceramic, glass and clay tobacco pipe,

some of which can be dated to within several decades. Several links from a copper chain, a large amber-colored glass bead and a silver-plated finger ring with an undecipherable inscription etched on its interior surface continue to demonstrate the former residents' predilection for objects of adornment. A copper thimble further hints a domesticity in the form of sewing activities (Figure 5). The most notable artifact from Area J, a glass bottle seal bearing the name John Dennis, was unfortunately found in a questionable context under a large boulder at the intersection between the primary midden and an overlying plowzone layer (Figure 6). Research into John Dennis is still ongoing but the name is not recorded among known residents of Ferryland from the 17th or 18th century. In all likelihood Dennis was someone of note, possi-



Figure 6: John Dennis bottle seal found in Area J.

bly a prominent Newfoundland planter or even the captain of a fishing, merchant or naval vessel plying the waters around the Avalon Peninsula.

As for the ongoing search for a dwelling at Area J, traces of a nearby structure are suggested by a large door hinge recovered from the northernmost unit excavated in 2018. Whether this overturns our previous assertion that the associated structure would be found on a levelled terrace further south can only be answered through continued investigation.

Postscript

The copper chain links recovered from Area J (noted above) were adhered to what looked like a corroded iron nail fragment. However, following our standard practice of X-raying ferrous metal objects, the 'nail' and copper chain links turn out to be something

much more informative (Figure 7). This artifact has been identified as part of a *chatelaine* (sometimes referred to as an *equipage*), typically worn by women and hung from the waist. *Chatelaine*'s were constructed to support a variety of items which could include a watch, a pendant case containing sewing tools, scissors, a thimble, a ruler, a pencil and miniature pair of compasses, also keys, money or other objects that would have seen daily use. Items were suspended from metal chains, usually made from a copper-tin alloy, but also in silver, steel or gold (Evans, 1970:160). The *chatelaine* came into use during the 17th century in England and was considered highly fashionable; however, by c. 1830 they were worn mainly for utilitarian purposes (Newman 1981:65).



Figure 7: X-ray image of CgAf-02:765455 (Event 943) showing scissors with chain.

The x-rayed iron object is a pair of fragmented iron scissors. They are small, measuring approximately 12 cm in length if complete. Two finger loops or bows are partially intact, the rivet that connected the scissor blades at the pivot point is visible, and the void between the shanks can be clearly seen through radiography. The copper alloy chain is concreted to the scissor fragment in numerous areas along the scissor shaft and wrapped around what remains of the finger loops. Where the chain was fastened to the scissors remains unknown. Further conservation will hopefully bring more information to light.

References

- Evans, Joan. 1970. *A History of Jewellery, 110-1870*. Boston Book and Art Publisher, Boston.
- Gaulton, B. and Miller, A. 2009. Edward Wynne's *The British India or A Compendious Discourse tending to Advancement* (circa 1630/31). *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 24 (1): 111-137.
- Newman, Harold. 1981. *An Illustrated Dictionary of Jewelry*. Thames and Hudson, New York.
- Wynne, E. 1621. A Letter to Sir George Calvert dated 26 August 1621, in Cell, G. T., 1982. *Newfoundland Discovered: English Attempts at Colonization, 1610-1630*. The Hakluyt Society, London, pp. 253-257.
- Wynne, E. 1622a. A Letter to George Calvert dated 28 July 1622, in Whitbourne R., 1623. *A Discourse and Discovery of New-Found-Land*. Felix Kingston, London.
- Wynne, E. 1622b. A Letter to George Calvert dated 17 August 1622, in Whitbourne R., 1623. *A Discourse and Discovery of New-Found-Land*. Felix Kingston, London.

