Interim Report — Archaeology at Ferryland 2011
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This year marked the 20th season of consecutive fieldwork at Ferryland, but it was eventful for other reasons as well: 2011 was the most labour intensive, coldest and yet, one of the most informative field seasons to date. The first half of the 16 week season focused on a seventeenth-century mortared stone building partially exposed back in 2004 but which we had not revisited owing to a variety of logistical challenges, not the least of which was its elevated location at the southern end of Area F nestled under a steep hillside. In June, the field crew removed the tarps, sand bags and wooden platforms that had covered the site and proceeded to excavate a 2x5 metre trench inside the eastern half of the structure (Figure 1). Unfortunately, the first metre of overburden consisted largely of unconsolidated gravel and rocks rapidly deposited in the depression of the collapsed building sometime in the early decades of the nineteenth century. To make matters worse, below the gravel fill was a dense concentration of large boulders, almost all of which were too large to remove by hand and owing to the site’s location were inaccessible for mechanized removal. The only recourse was to break up the boulders individually using a maul or cleave them apart with a hammer and chisel. All the rocks and excavated soil were carried from the site approximately 150 metres (thankfully some of it downhill) to the sifters and backdirt pile.

Figure 1: Partially exposed back wall of mortared stone building, looking south.
While most of the crew were struggling with the challenges posed inside the building, excavation started outside the east wall of the structure in an effort to locate associated refuse deposits and expose portions of the builder’s trench. This proved to be much more productive with much less effort. The matrix within the builder’s trench – mostly shattered bits of stone, roof slate fragments and lime mortar – also contained a variety of seventeenth-century ceramic, glass and clay tobacco pipe fragments. The pipes, in particular, helped to date the building’s construction to the Calvert period (Figure 2a). A nearby refuse deposit also demonstrated that this stone building was utilized throughout most of the Kirke era (1638-1696). Beside datable clay tobacco pipes, some of which were produced in the third quarter of the seventeenth century, excavations revealed another lead DK token, this one an example of the smallest denomination ‘farthing’ pieces described by Berry (2006) and Jordan (2006). The large quantity of faunal remains is likewise worthy of note. This may be suggestive of the building’s function (discussed below); however, it must be recognized that the lime mortar greatly improved bone preservation, and thus recovery, compared to most other parts of the site.

Excavations to the east of the stone building also uncovered thousands of associated window glass fragments (Figure 2b) indicating that there were glazed windows on this side of the structure. Curiously, there were comparatively few lead window cames in the same deposits.

**Figure 2a-b:** (left) clay tobacco pipe bowl; (right) window glass fragments

Those that were recovered, like the other examples of window cames at Ferryland, were devoid of any dates or diagnostic marks as is often not the case on other sites in colonial North America. Outside the northeast wall of the building, a 0.91m (3 ft) wide cobblestone pavement was exposed and continued north for a short distance toward the large stone hall of Calvert’s ‘Mansion House’ (Figure 3). The pavement’s southern and eastern edges were clearly delineated but its northern terminus is uncertain due to the gradual erosion caused when the high stone walls...
of the adjoining buttery/cold room and nearby stone ‘hall’ collapsed sometime after 1696. The location and orientation of this cobble pavement suggests that there was a door at the northeast side of the mortared stone building and that those living/working there had access to the second floor of Calvert’s hall.

Despite the difficult conditions encountered inside the mortared stone building, the field crew were able to fully expose and record its interior walls and a fireplace and excavate down to subsoil in several units. As seen in Figure 4, the mortared walls are well preserved and the interior dimensions of the structure are 4.87m by 6.09m (16 by 20 feet). The fireplace at the back (south) of the building is 1.83m (6 ft) wide at the opening, 0.91m (3 ft) deep and situated just west of centre. The building appears to have had a

**Figure 3:** Cobblestone pavement leading toward the hall of the ‘Mansion House.’

wood floor based on a lack of evidence for other flooring material (cobblestone or flagstone) and the presence of post molds which could have supported floor joists.

There are two other features associated with this building: a cobblestone pavement immediately south of the structure and a large circular hole, 1.83m (6 ft) in diameter, inside the southwest corner of the building. The cobblestone pavement (Figure 5) appears to have functioned as a drainage feature, redirecting water runoff from the hillside away from the interior of the building. The circular feature, with vertical walls dug into the rocky subsoil, was excavated for about 1 metre before work was halted due to the potential danger of collapse of the nearby mortared walls. Given its shape and vertical orientation, it seems likely that this is another well. The presence of this feature holds promise for some very interesting archaeology. However, before excavations can proceed we must determine how to stabilize the nearby south and east walls of the building.

Based on the above description, the current interpretation is that this mortared building originally served as a kitchen within a larger group of interconnected structures later referred to in the 1650s as Calvert’s ‘Mansion House.’ The kitchen was the southern half of a two-unit service
Figure 4: Stone building, looking south.

Figure 5: Cobblestone ‘drain’ feature at the back of the building, looking west.
wing; the northern half, the buttery/cold room was fully excavated (with the exception of its cellar) back in 2006. Although future excavation and analysis is required before any conclusions can be drawn, the architectural and artifactual evidence suggests that food preparation and cooking were primary activities associated with the building’s initial function.

Toward the end of August, the remainder of the field crew (minus the summer students) came down from the hill and began excavations at the western end of Area F, on land formerly owned by the Costello family. At the end of last year’s field season, the crew exposed a small section of a stone feature and this was one area we planned on investigating further in 2011. As often turns out, this feature overlies the remnants of an earlier building which overlies an even earlier sixteenth-century migratory fishery and Beothuk occupation. The uppermost and thus most recent feature turned out to be a large stone fireplace, likely dating to the early decades of the eighteenth century (Figure 6). Measuring 2.32m (7 ft, 6 in) at the opening, the fireplace has a brick hearth and at the back (east) is a small alcove or room, with a well-worn flagstone floor.

![Figure 6: Stone fireplace with brick hearth, looking east.](image)

Immediately above these structural remains, Wayne Croft found our most interesting (and exciting) artifact of the summer: a Portuguese 1000 Reis gold coin dated 1708 (Figure 7). What
makes this coin so interesting is that it was purposefully bent into an S shape to make a love token, essentially an object of affection that a man would bestow to his sweetheart or wife. We may never know who gave the token or who received it; however due to its value, it was certainly presented by an individual of some means. One possible individual is the merchant James Benger who later married Mary Kirke, the former wife of David Kirke (Jr). Mary Kirke took possession of the Kirke family’s Pool Plantation after 1697 and both Mary and her second husband James Benger resided somewhere in the vicinity of the inner harbour or Pool, possibly in the same house revealed this summer. Our next step is to figure out how best to preserve and display the remains of this structure while also investigating the earlier occupations beneath. No doubt 2012 will prove to be a busy time.

Figure 7: obverse (left) and reverse (right) views of Portuguese 1000 Reis gold coin dated 1708.

The 2011 field season would not have been possible without the assistance of the Colony of Avalon Foundation, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, the Provincial Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, the Provincial Archaeology Office, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council and last but certainly not least, Loyal and Millie Benham of New Mexico, who, over the last number of years have generously funded two students to work in the field. Thank you as well to our field and lab crews, our conservators Donna Teasedale and Charlotte Newton, and curator Maria Lear.
Conservation Summary
(by Donna Teasdale)

During the 2011 field season the conservation laboratory crew processed approximately 25 000 records, accounting for close to 75 000 artifacts. The Colony employed four summer students, in addition to our four regular staff members to work in the conservation lab. The students were responsible for the daily processing of artifacts such as cleaning, documenting, cataloguing, and packaging artifacts for storage. Our four regular staff assisted with the training of the summer students as well as carrying out their own daily duties.

Charlotte Newton, archaeological conservator, was gracious enough to volunteer her time again this season where she spent eight weeks at the conservation bench. Charlotte recently retired from the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) and her experiences and work are invaluable to the Colony of Avalon. She will be returning for her 11th year next season to carry out more volunteer work in the conservation lab.

The conservation team stabilized approximately 800 artifacts. We conducted daily artifact assessments of various material types such as copper alloys, iron, lead, wood, bone and textile to determine conservation treatments and priorities. Background research into these materials such as manufacturing techniques, chemical makeup, deterioration properties and environmental influences was done to complete the conservation process.

A number of small finds primarily manufactured from copper alloys and lead were conserved on site. Artifacts included buckles and buttons, thimbles, measuring devices, and coins to name a few. Of the seven coins found this summer, one coin of interest was a gold Portuguese reis dating to 1708 bent into a love token. Another noteworthy find was a hawking whistle manufactured from copper which was excavated toward the end of the season. This whistle would have been used for hunting either ground game or birds and was a common hunting tool during the 17th century and earlier 18th century. Also, a large amount of iron artifacts such as door hardware, fishhooks, knife blades and unidentified artifacts were processed and stabilized.

This season we had the opportunity continue with our collections re-housing project that was started in the summer of 2010. Over the past couple of years collection management has become one of our main priorities. The collection is comprised of approximately 2 million artifacts, with the majority held in storage on site. In 2006 the collection was transferred from Memorial University’s Archaeology Unit to the Colony of Avalon. Since then, the collection has grown significantly. Our focus over the past two summers has been to re-sort and re-package the vast amount of ceramic, pipe, glass and metals from previous seasons. The conservation crew re-housed the tin-glazed earthenware, lead and copper artifacts, and some coarse earthenware from the collection. With the purchase of packaging materials, funded by Dr. Gaulton, we were able to re-house and organize artifacts to improve accessibility within the storage area. Although this
task is far from completion we did get a lot accomplished and plan to continue with this project during the field seasons to come.

Overall, we had a wonderful summer at the Ferryland conservation laboratory this year. We reached most of our goals with much of the seasons artifacts completely processed and packaged for storage. This can be credited to the hard work and dedication of all laboratory staff and especially to those that have been with the Ferryland project since the beginning. We all look forward to another exciting season next year.

Collections Management Summary
(by Maria Lear)

The Archaeological Collections storage area at MUN manages the digital catalogue of artifact records as received from the data entry that is completed on site in Ferryland. In addition it houses a small portion of the Ferryland collection as well as the original field tags. During the 2011 field season (June-October) a total of 24,644 records were entered into the database which accounted for over 72,024 individual artifacts. The majority of the materials collected are as follows:

Ceramic: 16,747 sherds catalogued in 8251 artifact records (refined, coarse & stoneware)
Clay pipes: 5835 fragments (bowls & stems)
Glass: 12,877 shards catalogued in 3516 artifact records (wine bottle fragments, drinking glasses & window glass)
Lithics: 397 finds catalogued (ex: flint, ballast, gunflint, debitage, whetstones, & chert)
Lead: 162 finds catalogued in 98 records (ex: lead shot, waste, musket balls & a bale seal)
Iron: 32,895 finds catalogued in 7469 artifact records (of which 32,292 were nails). The remaining finds were fishhooks, straps, blades, hooks, hardware & unidentified fragments
Copper: 62 finds catalogued in 53 records (buttons, sheeting, coins & pins)
Organics: 177 finds catalogued in 58 records (bone, wood, leather, charcoal, botanical material & shells)

Most of the collection is stored on site at the Colony of Avalon laboratory and within their dedicated collections storage area. Complete cataloguing of individual finds is also completed on site with digital database updates being submitted to MUN on a weekly basis. In 2006 the entire collection was transferred from Memorial University’s Archaeology Unit to the Colony of Avalon. Since then, the collection has grown significantly.
References Cited:
Berry, Paul S.

Jordan, Louis E.