Area 14 of FjCa-14 in Sheshatshiu, portion of feature in southeast corner of initial 6x3 excavation grid. (Neilsen)
The 2012 excavations at Ferryland focused on two areas of the site where we left off in fall 2011: the stone kitchen, which served as part of a two-unit service wing for George Calvert’s Mansion House; and a late 17th- to early 18th-century timber-framed house with a stone fireplace and brick hearth.

Situated at the southern end of the site, on the uppermost terrace dug into the hillside during the 1620s, the kitchen excavations saw crewmembers working both inside and outside the stone building (Figure 1). The interior excavations concentrated first on excavating the remaining 1 metre units and then carefully scraping the subsoil in an effort to record any features. These efforts revealed evidence that the building was reoccupied/reused sometime during the mid-18th to early 19th century, and that there was a wooden feature set against the east side of the building as demonstrated by a series of small, shallow post molds – possibly the remains of a wooden bench/work area where food could be processed. At the north end of the kitchen interior, we exposed portions of the builder’s trench filled with small bits of lime mortar and chipped slate stone. This sealed deposit contained 17th-century artifacts only, demonstrating that the building was in fact from the early colonial era and confirming our earlier theory that the kitchen was the southern ‘room’ of a two-room service wing built to serve the occupants of the adjacent stone house (the Mansion House). Artifacts in the builder’s trench were few but included a small silver spur or shoe buckle (Figure 2).

Another reason for continuing excavations inside the kitchen was to explore a well found at the end of the 2011 field season. We were unsure if this feature was an early colonial well associated with the Calvert era or something much more recent and associated
with the later 18th- to 19th-century reoccupation. To ensure a safe working environment, we set up a wooden frame and pulley system and lowered sections of metal culvert down the well, connecting them together as excavations proceeded. The first 8 feet of well fill contained 18th- and 19th-century material culture including many copper buttons, some preserved textile, an 18th-century silver ½ real coin and the remains of a large dog that most likely fell into the abandoned well and perished (Figure 3). At 10 feet below the surrounding subsoil, things started to get both wet and exciting: we hit the water table but also began finding broken but largely restorable wine bottles, some still containing the original corks (Figure 4). These late 18th- to early 19th-century wine bottles were followed by several oak barrel staves, other wood fragments, some rope and a beautifully preserved brass spigot used to decant wine or beer (Figure 5). Shortly afterward, the well bottomed out on bedrock at 12 below subsoil. Based on the artifacts it appears that the wood-lined or barrel well was in operation (and likely dug) sometime in the late 18th or very early 19th century and is associated with the more recent occupation of this part of the site.

Excavations outside the stone kitchen involved two separate operations. The first was a 1 metre by 6 metre test trench on the hillside west of the kitchen. This area was tested to see what, if any, activities were taking place in this part of the site. It wasn’t long before we found evidence for a significant mid-18th- to early 19th-century deposit, as evidenced by large numbers of wine bottle glass, creamware, transfer-printed pearlware and Chinese export porcelain. Some of these artifacts, particularly the transfer-printed pearlware bowls and wine bottle glass, are identical to that found inside the kitchen and well during the later reoccupation phase. This brings to mind the possibility that these artifacts originated inside the reused kitchen building and were discarded in a midden to the west. Alternatively, there may be a domestic building west of the kitchen, the occupants of which were responsible for much of the refuse found in this part of the site.

East of the kitchen, excavations proceeded to uncover more of the early midden associated with the 17th-century kitchen occupation. Similar to last season’s finds, this refuse was found directly above the anthropomorphic terrace dug in the 1620s and consisted of window glass fragments, coarse earthenware and stoneware, case bottle and wine bottle glass, refuse bone and clay to-
Figure 3. In situ dog skull found in well fill.

Figure 4. Duncan Williams showing a wine bottle excavated in the well.
Figure 5. Spigot (with key) found near the bottom of the well.

Figure 6. Late 17th- to early 18th-century timber-framed house with stone fireplace and brick hearth, looking east.
bacco pipes. Just like the 2011 excavations, these objects were most abundant in the first 2-3 metres east of the kitchen wall and petered out further east. Much of this terrace remains unexcavated but limited testing to the north and much further east suggests that intact 17th- and later 18th-century deposits (and features) are preserved underneath several feet of slope wash from the hillside to the south.

In conjunction with the kitchen excavations, the other half of the field crew excavated a late 17th- to early 18th-century timber-framed building located near the present Pool road (Figure 6). Some of the crew exposed the southern sill of the building and the remains of the floor joists, while others worked further north, beyond and below the level of the house, and uncovered a mid-17th-century midden deposit (likely associated with members of the Kirke family) and earlier 16th-century occupations found on the original beach. As in previous field seasons, the 17th-century midden deposit in this part of the site continued to reveal a large quantity of interesting objects including large pieces of North Devon sgraffito plates, Portuguese tin-glazed earthenware and a relief-moulded clay tobacco pipe bowl (Figure 7). The earlier occupations from the 16th century are equally interesting and impressive. Large fragments of Breton coarse earthenware and underlying chert flakes, bifaces, projectile points and bone fragments certainly demonstrate that the lands around Ferryland’s inner harbour, or Pool, were heavily utilized by French migratory fishers and by Newfoundland’s native Beothuk (Figure 8a-b).

Excavations inside the late 17th- to early 18th-century timber-framed house helped determine the range of occupation for the building and the activities which took place.
under its roof. Some of the notable artifacts include clay tobacco pipes produced in Barnstable, Devon; large pieces of case bottle glass; half a ceramic button produced in the Staffordshire region of England; copper buckles and coins; two brass wick trimmers and hundreds of pieces of small lead shot.

In 2013, we hope to return to this area in an effort to fully expose the floor joists and sills of this house. Once the building is fully recorded, excavations can then proceed to the north in an effort to learn more about the earlier 16th- and 17th-century residents of Ferryland. This year’s excavation certainly highlights one thing: the ongoing archaeology at Ferryland, Newfoundland is providing an important window into the lives of not just the Calvert and Kirke families but those who were here before and after them.

Figure 8a-b. Sixteenth-century Breton earthenware fragment; large Beothuk biface.