

OUR NEWFOUNDLAND TRIP

by Alice Trusty

THE GROUP OF SEVEN from the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society had a wonderful time visiting various sites in Newfoundland and was made up of Ted and Allene Douglas from Eatonia, Wilda O'Brien from North Battleford, Bill and Eleanor Long from Regina and Jack and Alice Trusty from Moose Jaw.

July 16, 2007: Jack and Alice landed in St. John's in the evening to find that the airport was being evacuated because of an explosive threat. Unable to get their luggage upon their arrival they had to make a return trip to the airport. Two and one half hours after their landing and \$65 poorer (taxi fares to and from airport) they settled into their B&B (Wit's Inn) for a much needed sleep.

July 17: In the morning while waiting for the others to fly in, Jack and Alice visited the Rooms which is the provincial museum, art gallery and archives all under one roof. The Rooms pays tribute to the traditional lifestyle of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In the afternoon Jack and Alice took a taxi back to the airport. This time they picked up Ted and Allene and the group's rental van. From the airport they traveled about 30 miles South of St. John's to Holyrood to check into their accommodations at the Beachview Motel and then to the Beachview Restaurant for lunch (great food and a wonderful view of Conception Bay).

In the evening Ted and Allene, having taken a late flight out of Saskatoon, had been up over 24 hours so decided to settle into their room while Jack and Alice headed back into St. John's to pick up the Long's and Wilda. This time they took the TransCanada rather than the scenic Conception Bay route. It is now raining, a little foggy and traffic was backed up for road construction. Did they make it to the airport on time? Yes, just as the passengers were coming into the luggage pick up area. THE GROUP OF SEVEN is now complete and ready so see Newfoundland. The ladies' of the group first impression: lupines, they grew wild, just everywhere on the Avalon Peninsula.

July 18: The group visited The Colony of Avalon Archaeological Site at Ferryland, southeast of Holyrood. Project Archaeologists Dr. Barry Gauton and Dr. Bill Tuck gave us a tour of the site of Lord Baltimore's early colony settled in 1621. We got to see walls from the original buildings, cobblestone streets, a well that would have been used by the colony and the world's first flushable toilet. An excavation was in progress while we visited. One young chap had been excavating each year at this site since he was a young boy.

We decided to break up the tour and go for lunch before we visited the interpretive centre and the lab. Well! A lighthouse picnic! Sounds like a great plan! It was, and everyone else who lived near must have thought, beautiful sunny day! Picnic! We drove part way up along a steep gravel road, then walked a very scenic walk the rest of the way to the lighthouse. We gave our order, received our picnic blankets and our flag and chose a spot outside, spread our blankets and planted our flag (so that they would know where to bring our lunch). Well, after about 3 hours

(maybe an exaggeration), we got our picnic lunch. Quite delicious but the excitement of eating a picnic lunch had waned.

In the wait time we did get to see a most breath taking view of the water, some did get to climb to the top in the lighthouse which wasn't opened to the public (must have been our charm or making them feel guilty about our wait), and for entertainment we watched a young lad climbing up and down the hill delivering picnic lunches to picnickers scattered hither and yon. Bill with the aid of his binoculars helped this lad locate a particular flag. We can only dream of being in this young fellow's shape. Oh, did I mention naps? A few in the group took naps on their blankets while waiting for lunch.

After lunch we were taken into the lab and saw some of the artefacts from this year's excavation. We just had time to browse the interpretative centre and even less time to shop in the gift shop but we did manage to buy a little.

July 19: We went into St. John's, booked into our B&B (Witt's Inn) on Gower St. situated downtown amongst attached, colourful houses. We went on the double decker bus tour which took us to Government House, St. John the Baptist Basilica, Quiddi Viddi Lake and Village along Waterfront Street and Duckworth Street. We also went up Signal Hill to the Cabot Tower, a stone tower built in 1897 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of John Cabot's landing at St. John's. It was too windy to access the tower's roof.

After the bus tour Terri Hunt, a geo-cacher from the area (Jack and Alice had made contact with her prior to the trip) took us up to Cape Spear, the most Easterly Point in North America. It was raining at this time (I say at this time because it can rain one minute, stop the next or in one location and not in the next few feet). As we reached the Cape the fog was moving in. It just got thicker and thicker as we stood looking out to sea. With the foghorn sounding just above us we saw some WWII bunkers and the stocks from the battery guns. Jack found the geo-cache and placed his McKeith Lake Geocoin in the cache. Unfortunately the lighthouse, which is the oldest surviving lighthouse in Newfoundland, had just closed for the day.

Back down into St. John's to take Terri for supper (not raining, sun shining). This is where some in the group got to like the taste of Quiddi Viddi beer. After our supper Terri took us back up Signal Hill to see the "Harbour Lights" and the lights of St. John's at night.

July 20: While four of the group went to the Rooms, Jack, Alice and Bill went geo-caching in Bannerman Park. Bill found the tree where the cache was hidden. The afternoon found us at the Johnson Geo Centre which has an educational interpretive centre and exposed bedrock wall along one side of the cavernous room.

Must mention before the men got into the centre they went geo-caching along Signal Hill. Jack disappeared over the rocks. Time went by. The other two came up with a plan. Ted went looking for Jack, but he took a path around rocks, not GPS reading over rocks, and if they didn't return then Bill would report them missing. As it turned out Ted and Jack met but Ted's path was much easier.

Now, who would believe, we made a quick stop at a shop on Duckworth Street and who would have thought you would meet Norma Hain from Swift Current walking along Duckworth Street. Well we did! It started raining again and it was time to head back to Holyrood and our supper at our favorite restaurant.

July 21: We left Holyrood and the Avalon Peninsula in the fog and rain. By the time we had reached Clarendville the sun was shining. Here we stopped at Tim Horton's for a coffee and met with some ladies who had also been on the double decker bus tour. They were heading to Trinity on the Bonavista Peninsula to see the Rising Tide Theatre in "The New Founde Lande Pageant" (after lunch naturally). This Pageant takes the audience on a journey through the lanes and sites of Trinity accompanied by characters who tell of Trinity's past in story and song. The day turned out warm, sunny and as the director of the Theatre said, "this is as good as it gets in Newfoundland".

At about 5:00 pm, and after taking a wrong road, we finally made our way to Eastport where we had booked into two B&Bs, "Almost Home" and "The Doctor's Inn" for the next two nights.

July 22: We met with Laurie McLean at the Burnside Archaeology Centre. He took us through this small center that houses artifacts from the Maritime Archaic, Paleo-Eskimo and Beothuk cultures which were unearthed from the islands of Bloody Reach. To date over 40 sites have been discovered. These sites are only accessible by boat. Terry, a volunteer at the site took us (by boat) first close to a burial site, the remains of which are housed in the Rooms in St. John's. From there we continued to the beaches which are located at the top of Bloody Reach. It has both historical and archaeological importance because it is the largest Beothuk settlement found in the province. It once was home to 18 Beothuk mamateeks; excavations have unearthed eight of these 'pit houses'. At this site we walked along the beach and could see flakes in the eroding bank where the tides cut into this bank. They have but up a barrier trying to slow this erosion. They were going to excavate again in August.

From there we made our way by boat to Bloody Bay Cove, or as we renamed it "Bill's Bloody Bay Cove". It was here that Bill slipped getting out of the boat and hit his head. Could have been serious, but fortunately Bill is thick-skulled and other than blood running down his face, onto his tilly hat and onto the wharf he didn't have any major effects (not even a headache). We patched him up, then left him, Eleanor and Allene behind in the boat with a whistle with instructions to whistle if they should need us. The rest of us with our guide Terry, climbed, not counting but at least two hundred steps up to the Quarry, which is largest aboriginal rock quarry in Newfoundland. This large rock hill is of rhyolite. Arrowheads and other stone tools dating back 5,000 years have been found at this site. This site was probably one of the most impressive sites that I saw; it is still a site in the works, so we saw it while it is hands on, walk up to it, touch it, admire it. Only draw back was mosquitoes or "nippers" as they say in Newfoundland. The boat ride was great, the water calm, it rained some but for the most part it was a great day. We saw a whale. So you might say we had "a whale of a day".

Upon our return we went to a little village, Salvage, to the Killick café for supper (a killick is a home made anchor). I recommend the Cod au Gratin.

After taking Wilda, Allene and Eleanor back to our B&B, Jack, Ted, Bill and Alice went back to Burnside to the Big Shoot lookout trail to geo-cache, but the nippers were hungry so once the cache was found even Jack did not take time to write his usual epistle.

July 23: A long day of driving. Our objective, Deerlake. We stopped in Gander at the North Atlantic Aviation Museum where Ted saw a forest service plane, which he had seen when operational and the Link trainer which I call the black box. He said it made his day. We made Deerlake for supper, and booked into "Lakeview B&B " for an early night.

July 24: We left Deerlake and the TransCanada which I must say was an excellent highway, double lane only around St. John's area. The rest is two-way with many passing lanes so that you never had to follow slower traffic for any length of time.

We now made our way north along the Viking trail. This highway, although not nearly as good as the Trans Canada, was really quite good. The scenery first was trees and rocks, then open wind-swept barren stretches very close to the waters of the St. Lawrence. One can only imagine what the winter winds must be like. We saw many fishing villages with colourful fishing stages along the waterfront where the fishermen kept their fishing gear.

We stopped at the Arches Provincial Park for a rest break and found the most interesting rock formation. It is a natural rock archway created by tidal action. We spent a while exploring the rock archways. Jack picked up a stone he believed to be Labrador chert, later to find it was iceberg chert, and Eleanor made her way to the water's edge.

As we traveled and got closer to Port au Choix the waters of the St. Lawrence were becoming more and more turbulent. Where the waves hit the rock along the shore the water sprayed high into the air. NOT A DAY for FLATLANDERS to be on the water.

We reached Port au Choix around noon, booked into Jeannie's Sunrise B&B, and then went for lunch before visiting the Port au Choix National Historic site. Port au Choix has been the site of human occupation for the past 4,200 years. Since 1968 archaeologists have unearthed over 100 skeletons and more than 10,000 artifacts from the Maritime Archaic Indians, the Groswater Eskimo culture and the Dorset Eskimos. We first watched an audiovisual presentation in the theatre, followed by a guided tour within the exhibit area by a young lady who we thought was an archaeologist or at very least a student of archaeology. She was a summer student, not in any related field, but knew the material that was on display. After the tour, a young Inuit lady from Labrador demonstrated the traditional art of drumming and singing using deep throat intonations. Jack and Ted stood in depressions where at one time earlier inhabitants would have had their dwellings.

We went to the lighthouse. We stood and watched the waters of the St. Lawrence give a display of how powerful waves can be. At times I believe the sprays from the waves hitting the rocks were 30 feet high.

July 25: We left for Bird Cove. We most often tried to be on the road at 9:00 each day. Jack was our official designate to pack our luggage into the van. He had it to a science. He knew

where each bag had to be placed. He and Ted were also our drivers. Allene, Wilda and I took the far back seats and Allene and I were the official back seat drivers, depending which husband was driving; as well, we were instructors of use of the temperature controls. For some reason Jack and Ted never seemed to know which control regulated the back airflow (Jack said neither he nor Ted could figure out how to shut off the hot air coming from the back, funny, ha ha). Wilda was Wilda and as long as you didn't have her and Jack seated near each other they didn't cook up too much in the line of trouble (at least they didn't get into the blue cheese like they did in Scotland). Bill the map man, along with his wife Eleanor, who was in charge of snacks, occupied the middle two seats in the center of the van. Now that you know the dynamics of the group we can continue our travels.

As mentioned we left for Bird Cove where we were to join the excavation group under the supervision of Latonia Hartery from the University of Calgary and Dr. Steven Cox from Eastern USA. We got to Bird Cove around lunchtime, so those joining the dig, Jack, Ted, Bill and Wilda picked up lunch makings from the little town grocery and headed out led by one of the local volunteers to the dig site. As I didn't go I had to take the other's word that it was a good long walk over rough terrain to get to the site. This is a Dorset-Paleoeskimo site dating back about 4,500 years. Allene, Eleanor and I walked them as far as the bridge over the water. Then we returned and went through the small interpretative center before heading back to the Plum Point Motel, which is about 18 km from Bird Cove. In Plum Point we stayed in two, two-bedroom self-contained cabins. That evening four very weary members from "The Group of Seven" returned to the cabins, in time to wash up and go up to the hotel restaurant to celebrate Bill and Eleanor's 54th wedding anniversary.

Tired they were, but not too tired for some, namely Jack, Alice and Ted to accept Latonia, Daniel (Latonia's boyfriend) and Steven's invitation to a beach party. There were about nine of us at the party. A roaring fire, wiener and marshmallow roast along with wine made up the venue. Daniel entertained with guitar and song. The fire was warm and the seats "rock hard". Jack says no soft rock that night.

July 26: Jack seemed to be the only one out of "The Group of Seven" with the stamina to make the long hike out to the dig. The rest of us decided on a more relaxing day. Jack's name is now in the Bird Cove records as the finder of a possible projectile point or ovoid blade and a broken micro blade out of a clear glass-like chert, which comes from northern Labrador.

While Jack was with Steven and Latonia at the dig site the rest of us walked out to the old Bird Cove cemetery where many of the first European settlers of the area are buried. It was a nice long walk through the trees, over a dirt trail and at times on a wooden plank boardwalk over swampy land. It was in one of these swampy areas that we saw pitcher plants growing in the wild. The pitcher plant is Newfoundland's floral emblem, so I consider that experience a gift. At the cemetery Ted took the opportunity to do some divining with his brazing rods. He was trying to locate areas where the ground had been disturbed and might be unmarked graves.

The afternoon was a time for doing laundry, napping and a little drive up the road to St. Barbe where the ferry leaves for Labrador.

After supper, Latonia and Steven had rented a boat. A young teen and his grandfather operated the boat because the youth's father was fishing in Labrador as many of the fishermen were while we were in Newfoundland (if they were not fishing off the shores of Labrador they were off working in Alberta). We went across from Bird Cove to Old Ferrole Island which had been seasonally inhabited by the French. There were long flagstone pathways leading from the water inland where the fishermen would have dried their fish. They seemed to be in the condition they would have been left so many, many years ago. We went to an area where Latonia is hoping to excavate. We saw so many wild flowers, we saw the sun set on the Strait of Belle Isle and we had a boat ride.

Latonia and Steve and everyone involved with the dig went out of their way to be very hospitable. It should be mentioned that the peninsula where the dig was located, as well as the area around Plum Point and Old Ferrole Island, had been surveyed by Captain James Cooke between 1763 and 1764. We had had another very GOOD DAY.

July 27: It was raining, and Latonia and Daniel advised us to watch for moose as we headed North to L'Anse aux Meadows. Allene saw three moose; I saw one. Yes, we were in the same vehicle but I have a hard time not driving from the back seat so the moose we both saw was very near the road. Just eating, with very little intent of moving. We arrived at L'Anse Aux Meadows around lunchtime. We booked into the "Viking Village B&B" then had lunch before visiting the Historic site.

L'Anse aux Meadows is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a National Historic site excavated by Helge Ingstad and his wife Anne Stine Ingstad, in the 1960's and further excavated by Parks Canada from 1973 to 1976. This is a 1,000 year-old Viking site.

When we got to the site it was COLD, RAINING, and WINDY. All, except Jack (who didn't take a jacket) wore as many layers of clothing as possible with rain jackets over top, and still we felt the bite of that cold wind. We made it to the center just as the outdoor tour was to begin. So we were guided around to the foundation depressions where the original Viking structures would have housed these seasonal inhabitants as they sought timber from "Vinland". We saw the reconstructed sod and timber buildings that the Vikings would have lived in while they harvested the timber. We were thankful for the warmth of the fire with in these reconstructed primitive buildings. Those Vikings would have had to have been TOUGH.

After visiting with the costumed interpreters Gunnar, Harold and Thora in the reconstructed building, we made our way back to the interpretative center where we perused the exhibits. And we bought a little from the gift shop.

We took supper at the Norseman Restaurant where we were entertained by the locals in a dinner theatre.

We also watched as Wilda was screeched in, Newfoundland style. She dressed like a Newfie, she spoke like a Newfie (well kind of spoke like one), she even got to drink screech like a Newfie. But best of all she kissed the codfish. She has her certificate to prove that she has been there and done that.

July 28: The sun was shining, the wind was less ferocious and the temperature warmer. Unfortunately, we missed the nicer weather by a day. We packed our bags and headed south. We made stops in Plum Point for lunch, in Parsons Pond where we found a little store and bought souvenirs at a very reasonable price, at a small rest area along the highway where we found a feast of wild strawberries, and at a rest area in Gros Morne National Park where we almost fell over from the heat when we exited the van. We made it back to Deerlake in time to visit the insectarium and butterfly pavilion. We saw many species of butterflies including the owl butterfly. You had to watch not to step on one and shorten their already very short life span. Upstairs there were live scorpions and tarantulas (behind enclosed thick glass). We stayed at Lake View B&B again. The weather was extremely warm and a thunderstorm was threatening. We went from needing the heater one night to fans whirling to help cool us the next night.

July 29: Our destination, Twillingate on the Kittiwake Coast. To get there you must take the road to the Isles. This road joins four small islands, Twillingate, Change, Chapel and New World by causeways. At the top end of these islands is the community of Twillingate of about 5,000 residents. Here we were able to see icebergs off the lighthouse point, an experience none of us has had before. I only wish we had had an extra day to explore the community and take a boat tour out to see the icebergs much closer (next time). We had to separate our group again for accommodations. The Long's stayed at the Crewe's Heritage B&B while the rest of us stayed across the street in a summer cottage called the "Wind Song". We thought someone had to be living in the cottage. It had a very up to date kitchen, fully stocked with food for our breakfast. On the main floor there was a full bath, laundry, living room and dining room with a deck just through patio doors. On the deck was a huge stainless steel BBQ. Upstairs were three large Victorian-style bedrooms and another bath. It was too bad we didn't have longer to enjoy all the luxury.

We went to the Harbour Inn for our supper hoping for a Jiggs dinner, which is a traditional Newfoundland meal of salt beef, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, potatoes, turnips, onions and pease pudding (yellow split peas) all served on one dish with figgy duff for dessert (a type of spiced bread pudding in a sweet sauce). We had stayed a long time at Boyd's Cove so by the time we got to Twillingate, found our accommodations and then found the Harbour Inn (and waited to be seated, many others wanted a Jiggs dinner), they were sold out. So we had to make alternative choices.

We had stopped at Boyd's Cove on our way to Twillingate. At Boyd's Cove we viewed a video about the site in their very up-to-date Beothuk interpretation center. Very little is known about these people because they avoided Europeans. Boyd's Cove however offers more evidence about their way of life than any other site on the island. In the center we viewed artifacts recovered from the archaeological dig. There were nails that have been refashioned into arrowheads and other tools. These were not from trade but rather from the Beothuks scavenging through the debris left behind by the seasonal European fishermen. The Beothuk are an extinct people; the last died in 1829. After a self-guided tour of the center you can take the 1.5 km trail to the excavation site of several Beothuk houses that date between 1650 and 1720. Along this trail they have signs marking many of the wild plants and flowers native to Newfoundland.

I must mention by the time we finished in the interpretation center it was thundering and lightning. So, the Three Wise Men (or women) decided to stay put in the warm, dry building, while the four foolish, ventured out to the excavation site. They returned an hour or so later looking much like they had gone swimming, but THEY HAD SEEN THE SITE.

Ted showed the young lady at the center how to use his divining rods. She was a natural, so Ted left the rods with her. I'm sure he wonders if she was able to put them to use.

July 30: Another long day of driving. We headed back to the Avalon Peninsula, back to Holyrood where the cross on the top of the hill was our guiding light (is there an analogy here). We settled back into our Beachview Motel accommodations and then made our way to the Beachview Restaurant for our supper.

July 31: Our last full day as a group. The weather forecast was for the tropical storm to be hitting the coast of the Avalon Peninsula sometime within the next 24 hours. We watched the Weather Channel as if it were the only channel offered. By noon the day was still calm, sunny and it didn't look as if the storm was going to strike within the next few hours so we decided to venture out. Ted and Allene were tired. Ted had driven the entire way the day before so decided he was in need of a rest and Allene thought she too would rest. We traveled around Conception Bay to the quaint little village of Brigus. Here we went to Hawthorne Cottage National Historic Site. This cottage was built in 1830 and was once home to Captain Robert Bartlett, the Newfoundland-born Arctic explorer, who was with Robert Perry on three of his expeditions to the North Pole. While there we made our way to the harbour to see the sculpture in the shape of a ship's sails honouring Bartlett. Not far from the sculpture was the Brigus tunnel which needed exploring. Another beautiful day.

August 1: The rain and wind did come toward morning. The worst of the storm hit a little to the south, closer to Cape Race. But we did have to get to the St. John's airport. We were advised to travel along the Conception Bay road. Once we had to make our way around a significantly large amount of water on the road. Other than that we had no trouble getting into the city. By the time Wilda's, Bill's and Eleanor's flight was leaving the sun was shining and the day was great. Ted and Allene were leaving on a late afternoon flight so we stayed together postponing the moment of goodbyes. Our holiday was over. There is such a feeling of emptiness when you are no longer that tight group.

Jack and I stayed behind another week to make a pilgrimage to Labrador where my father had served during the war, while he waited his overseas posting. On our return to Holyrood before we flew home the dinner table at our favourite restaurant just wasn't the same without the rest of "THE GROUP OF SEVEN".