

The Ruins at New Ross: The Genesis (and Resolution) of an Archaeological Mystery

Winner, Social Sciences

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New Ross is a small village located in the interior of central Nova Scotia, approximately 30 km inland from the Atlantic coast. The modern settlement of New Ross is situated along the shore of the Gold River, north of Lake Lawson, although the name has also been broadly applied to a larger area, encompassing this village and a number of nearby settlements. New Ross would seem an unlikely location for a castle. Or a Viking settlement. Or a royal Stuart refuge. Or Templar knights. And yet, a series of remarkable claims have been made about a particular village property and the features and artifacts uncovered there, all said to prove previously undiscovered periods of occupation.

Primarily, this paper is an exploration of the process by which speculative claims are constructed, from the inception of an idea about a site followed by attempts to locate artifacts and evidence which support a favoured belief, all in radical opposition to standard archaeological and scientific practice. While extravagant assertion and speculation are more often associated with better known sites, such as the pyramids at Giza or fabled Atlantis, the ruins at New Ross will act as a locally-based case study in understanding the pseudo-archaeological process. Working from the claims originally put forward by the main proponents of the area's alternative history, through later developments and tangents, this paper will contrast alternative theories with evidence offered by more traditional, scholarly sources, with an eye to clarifying the validity of the speculation. As well, it will also illustrate the challenges inherent in the ongoing engagement between archaeologists and advocates of a radically speculative viewpoint, of what has, perhaps charitably, been called "alternative" archaeology (Holtorf 2005:544).

The Origin of the Claims

The first claims regarding the antiquity of occupation at the New Ross property originate with Joan and Ron Harris, the landowners from the early 1970s until 1990. In 1972, the HARRISES first rented and then purchased the property. Joan Harris claims to have perceived ruins on the site even before they took possession of the property (Hope 1997:6). In the process of landscaping the yard, the HARRISES uncovered a number of features and artifacts that they attributed to multiple periods of previously undocumented occupation in the area, some predating Columbus's arrival in North America. Of the two owners, Joan Harris would become the chief crusader for the site's alternative history and the driving force behind the speculation, writing letters to a range of officials and public figures (Library of Hope website 2009: "The Continuing New Ross Saga", page 3) in hopes of garnering interest in the site. She

eventually self-published a book, *A Castle in Nova Scotia*, using the pen name, Joan Hope, in which she detailed her research and speculations.

Harris's claims regarding the site's various occupants are both wide-ranging and generally based on her own highly subjective imaginings, rather than tangible historical documentation, artifacts or features. In addition to the claims for various periods of human occupation, she makes mention of leprechauns and UFO sightings near the area (Hope 1997:51 & 65). It should also be noted that while she frequently mentions local lore and area folklore, a survey of area folklore yields no mention of the site, its supposed structures, or alternative history (e.g. Creighton 1976, Lacey 1979).

Although convoluted and challenging to coherently summarize, Joan Harris's alternative history boils down to two essential periods of habitation on the site. During the first period, she asserts the area was used by Viking settlers who built a large stone castle on the site in the 13th century. Harris believed this castle site to be the location of Norumbega, a legendary city, rich in gold and furs on an inland river (Hope 1997:103-104). The second period of purported occupation comes in the 17th century, when Harris suggests that a smaller but quite grand mansion was constructed within the perimeter of the ruined castle, for Scottish Stuart royalty in exile. She suggests the mansion was constructed in 1623 and abandoned between 1630 and 1632. Further, she states the mansion was constructed on behalf of King James I, by Inigo Jones, noting that the famed architect was absent from London between the years of 1621 to 1630 (Hope 1997:30-31). She believed the mansion was probably destroyed in 1654 by Robert Sedgwick, acting on the orders of Cromwell (Hope 1997:90), although she offers no written record of this order or of Sedgwick's presence in the area. Harris further notes there is evidence that the buildings were blown up with gunpowder and contends that one of the artifacts found during her excavations could be a part of the bomb used to carry out the task (Hope 1997:25-26). Harris's only documentation of this artifact is a rough sketch. No photographs were taken of the fragment, nor was it preserved for later viewing. This lack of historical documentation and physical evidence will be an ongoing theme throughout Harris's speculation about the New Ross site.

In support of these two main periods of occupation which predate the established historical founding of the village, Harris cites the Charters of New Scotland of 1621 and 1625, saying that they make mention of "castles and fortalices" and "towns and manors" in the area. These structures would predate the establishment of LaHave in 1632 and the first settlement of note in the region in traditional historical reckoning (Hope 1997:2). On examination, the Nova Scotia Charter of 1621 does not specifically mention " fortalices," "towns," or "manors," and the only reference to castles in the document clearly pertain to structures in other geographic areas (Internet Archive 2012: "Nova Scotia: The Royal Charter of 1621").

Harris further claims that aspects of the Mi'kmaq language can be connected to Norse, particularly in various Nova Scotia place-names and in the name "Micmac" (Harris's spelling) itself (Hope 1997:140-141). There do not appear to be any credible linguistic sources which make similar links.

Harris also draws on the problematic *Zeno Narrative* to support her claims. This account and accompanying map chronicle the travels of an unidentified prince from Europe, under the guidance of Antonio Zeno, to points westward. While widely discredited by historians (e.g. Smith 2002), some speculative authors, mostly popularly Frederick J. Pohl, have asserted the factual nature of the *Zeno Narrative*. Additionally, Pohl contends that one of the islands encountered is Nova Scotia (Pohl 1950:27). Joan Harris notes that when the sea-faring prince chronicled in the narrative arrives in Estotiland (which she identifies as Nova Scotia), he encounters a king with a large library of books in Latin. This meeting, Harris believes, takes place in the castle at New Ross (Hope 1997:95).

As a piece of additional proof, Harris contends that the New Ross property occupies the "highest point west of Halifax" (Hope 1997:7). This elevation, presumably, made the site a desirable strategic location for both the Viking castle and the Scottish mansion. However, a cursory perusal of a topographic map of New Ross and surrounding area shows that this is clearly not the case (see Figure 2). The land around this area of New Ross, while offering "a beautiful view of Lake Lawson and the surrounding countryside" (Leopold 1971:14), is decidedly not the highest point in western Nova Scotia and not even the highest hill in the vicinity. This area is only in the range of 400-450 feet in elevation, whereas even nearby hills top 650-700 feet, with Burnt Blanket Hill to the southeast reaching 750 feet (NSTDB Series Topographic Chester 21A/9).

Features and Artifacts

Through the course of her excavation work on the New Ross property, Harris uncovered a number of features she believed supported her theory of multiple periods of occupation on the site. Primary among these are stone walls, of two distinct styles, that she indicates correspond with the two main structures on the site, the castle and the later mansion. Harris claims to have located older walls that were at least four feet thick, describing them as "massively built" (see Figure 3). These were found at a greater depth and in different alignments than another series of narrower walls built with smaller stones (see Figure 4, Hope 1997:42). Michael Bradley, in *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic*, describes these structures as moving from rubblework walls near the surface into larger fitted stones below (Bradley 1988:50). Based on her findings, Harris describes the Viking castle as having seven towers with a great gate located at a right angle to the present day road (Hwy 12) (Hope 1997:91). Harris believed that two of the towers and the gate were in ruins by the time of 17th century occupation. Images taken by Harris (and later, by Michael Bradley) appear to show alignments of stone rubble, but not the massive, fitted stones that would be expected in walls supporting a large structure.

Elsewhere, Harris describes finding sand between the larger stones she believed were connected to the castle structure. This she attributes to the original mortar breaking down into its constituent ingredients due to cold weather and soil acidity (Hope 1997:17). The sand she describes as being non-local, with a gold colour, in contrast to the locally occurring red and white sand (Hope 1997:103). She also indicates the presence of a group of four stones clustered around what resembles a post-hole and reports that local lore says the later mansion was a "base frame" house constructed without the use of mortar (Hope

1997:16). Despite this humble sounding framework, Harris believed that the mansion boasted a golden dome and 12 marble pillars that were eventually looted to be used in the State House in Boston (Hope 1997:30). This is directly contradicted by the recorded history of the construction and later gilding of the State House dome (City of Boston website 2012: "Massachusetts State House").

At a depth of nine inches below the ground surface, Harris says she discovered a floor surface composed of cobblestones in a mosaic pattern (Hope 1997:46). Again, she failed to document this feature in her photographs or drawings of the site. In addition to the walls from the main structures of both periods, Harris notes the presence of other rubble stone foundations of smaller buildings, including one "small wooden building resting on cross-trees and circular or octagonal in shape" (Hope 1997:61) that she believed were constructed in conjunction with the 17th century mansion.

The old well is the other feature that is often referenced in Harris's writing. This she describes as being eight feet in diameter, with a depth of at least 50 feet (elsewhere, she records the depth as being 60 feet). The interior is reported to be constructed of interlocking cut stone with no cement and with a flaring bottom. According to Harris, the well is said to be known locally as a holy well to both the area's European settlers and the local Mi'kmaq people (Hope 1997:9, 41, Library of Hope website 2009:"Burning-Off and a Viking Sword-tip" illustration four).

The features were attended by a series of artifacts that Harris felt supported her claims. The most sensational was an iron implement she labels as the tip of an ancient iron sword. She describes the piece as being five inches in length with a blood channel. She further notes the style of sword is not 17th century (or later) but rather bears similarity to earlier Viking swords (Hope 1997:45). Her other notable find was a number of spruce knots split at the pointed end. These knots she claims were identified, by an unnamed visiting archaeologist, as primitive goldsmithing clamps. She also reports that they were carbon dated, resulting in a date range of "600-1000 c.14 years older than the 1950s" (Hope 1997: 34). Bradley (1988) describes them as wooden cones, split at the narrow end with evidence of cord wrapped around the opposite end (53). This evidence, Harris felt, supported her belief in a Norse connection to the site (Hope 1997:34). Harris does not include the details of the carbon dating in either her book or website.

The majority of other reported artifacts from the site are inscribed or artificially shaped stones. The first, a roughly human-shaped stone, Harris classified as a Celtic "herm," or man-shaped stone (Fig. 6). Based on this determination, she believed the carved stone dated to 800 AD (Hope 1997:80). Other examples of carved stones discovered by the Harrises include a stone with an inscribed "N" or "Z," a stone with a semi-circle or crescent carving, a stone with a cross and a stone with an image of a small shield set within a larger one (the shield escutcheon device) (Hope 1997:71-72). While she does provide sketches of the markings on the various stones, as well as some photographs, it is almost impossible to discern the same imagery in them as Harris contends.

Michael Bradley and *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic*

Joan Harris's beliefs might have remained a purely local phenomenon, in spite of her efforts to attract interest and support from a range of provincial and national governmental agencies. However, in 1981, she contacted author Michael Bradley, who had previously published *The Black Discovery of America*, which delved into pre-Columbian exploration. At the behest of Joan and Ron Harris (whom he calls Jeanne and John MacKay in the book, in order to preserve the couple's anonymity), Bradley visited the site in 1982 and was offered Joan's hypothetical timeline for the site (Bradley 1988:45-53). However, instead of adopting her theories for the site, Bradley developed his own conclusions in his book, *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic*, adding further commentary in 1998's *Grail Knights of North America*.

Bradley also makes claims regarding the antiquity of the New Ross site, spectacularly asserting that the area "might well turn out to be the *first European settlement in the New World*" (my emphasis, Bradley 1988:75). Making use of the discredited *Zeno Map of the North* and associated *Narrative*, together with other contested maps, Baigent, Leigh and Lincoln's *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*, and the work of Frederick Pohl, Bradley connects the New Ross site with the purported travels of Prince Henry Sinclair. Sinclair, a 14th century Scottish earl, has become a favourite of proponents of alternative European settlement since he was first linked to the mysterious sea-faring prince named in the *Zeno Narrative*. Theorizing that Sinclair left Europe with the remnants of the Knights Templar, carrying the Holy Grail, Bradley (1988) places his arrival in Nova Scotia in 1398 (139), where he eventually made his way across the province to found the New Ross site as a refuge for the Templars and their treasure.

Unlike Joan Harris's publications, Bradley's works were both readable and widely accessible, being distributed by a mid-sized Canadian publisher, Hounslow Press (although *Holy Grail Across the Atlantic* is out of print at this time, *Grail Knights of North America* is still available). These books served to displace Harris's claims and refocus the artifacts and features of the site to support Bradley's own conclusion that Henry Sinclair was responsible for the creation of the buildings at New Ross. Joan Harris herself bitterly disputed Michael Bradley's theory and his depictions of herself and her husband (Library of Hope website 2009: "The Continuing New Ross Saga", page three).

Bradley (1988) states that the walls Joan Harris located on the New Ross site appeared on the earliest colonial maps of the area and that they, therefore, must predate the arrival of British settlers in the 1800s (48). He cites Ganong's *Crucial Maps* for evidence of maps that depict mysterious illustrations, indicating a "refuge" in the vicinity of present day Chester (Bradley 1988:61). He concludes that the New Ross walls must have been in place prior to the known period of settlement since the walls do not follow the boundary lines set out in colonial surveys of the area and which are still in use in modern day property lines (Bradley 1988:203-204). Bradley (1988) also references the Caspar Vopell Map of 1545 which shows a Templar knight on an area of coastline Bradley suggests is Nova Scotia (212). Further, he cites the Gastaldi Map of 1548 with its "p: Refuge [Port Refuge]" notation (214) and an unnamed 1556 map which identifies a region as "Terra de Nvrumbega [Land of Norumbega]" (217), all in support of the area's periods of previously undocumented occupation (see Figure 7). He further theorizes that the New

Ross site had special significance as a symbolic midpoint on the watershed between the Gold River, which leads to the Atlantic coast, and the Gaspereau River, leading to the Bay of Fundy. At the mouth of each of these rivers lies an Oak Island with its namesake trees, which he believed acted as symbolic signposts for other Templars seeking the location of the New Ross settlement (Bradley 1988:62 &67).

Another Sinclair supporter, William E. Mann, contends that the modern awareness of Henry Sinclair/Templar Knight connections to the site are supported by the recent establishment of a Masonic Lodge, the Norwood Lodge, across the street from the purported castle site. Mann states that Michael Bradley confirmed the lodge had not existed in 1988 (Mann 1999:43-44). Caroline Leopold's work refutes this claim. Written in 1971, her book, *The History of New Ross in the County of Lunenburg Nova Scotia*, mentions the existing Norwood Masonic Lodge building (Leopold 1971:14), showing that the Lodge and its building were not newly established as Mann contends.

In regards to features at the New Ross site, Michael Bradley (1988) notes the presence of thick but low rubblework walls with buttresses, which he states, follow an "architectural style characteristic of late 14th century Norse and North Scottish constructions"(45). He draws comparisons to the black house style buildings found in the Outer Hebrides and Orkney islands but states that the New Ross structures were larger in size (Bradley 1988: 45-46). He further contends that the ruins reflect similarities in style and construction to the Newport Tower in Rhode Island (Bradley 1988:53). Bradley notes that pre-existing boulders have been included in the walls' construction, which he feels further supports a stylistic date of 13th to 14th century. He states that these boulders effectively "rule out" the likelihood that the structure could be a 19th century farm building. Bradley describes the features as comprising a large, five-sided walled enclosure with smaller internal structures (Bradley 1988:58) and agrees with Harris that there are possibly the remains of multiple towers. He reports that the walls would have reached a height of six feet or less, with the towers being four to six feet taller than the walls. These are unusually low walls for a structure defined as a castle. Bradley believes that the castle could have been constructed by approximately 20 men in a three to four month timeframe (Bradley 1988:203-204).

In *Grail Knights of North America*, Bradley quotes Terrence Punch, president of the Nova Scotia Historical Society during the period of 1980-1990, as stating that he "tended to think that the configurations at New Ross were genuine ruins of a large 'castle-like' structure" and that another ruin had been located 40 km/25 miles north east of the New Ross site (possibly referencing the undated stone walls and foundations found in Bayers Lake Park, near Halifax; Bradley 1998:107). However, Terrence M. Punch states that Bradley did not directly interview him about New Ross. Further, he notes that he has never personally visited the New Ross site and would not have called the ruins a "castle-like structure." In reflecting on the site and statements attributed to him, Punch states, "The most I'd be willing to say is that 'the site at The Cross/New Ross/Sherbrooke has yet to be explained to my satisfaction.'" (T.M. Punch, email to author, September 19, 2012).

Bradley repeats Joan Harris's suggestion that the site was later occupied by Scottish royalty during the time of Cromwell, including the claim that the later building was adorned with 12 pillars and a gold-coloured dome, as well as a mosaic of the Lion of Scotland crest. Bradley writes that the Nauss family of Lunenburg claim they were brought to the area in 1623 to construct a mansion and that an anonymous Nauss descendant produced sketches of the building, based on family lore (Bradley 1988:294). He goes on repeat Joan Harris's belief, suggesting that the structure was "purposely and efficiently" destroyed at some unspecified later date (Bradley 1988:204) possibly by Sedgwick's forces in 1654 (Bradley 1988:297).

Bradley (1988) generally offers the same artifacts produced by Joan Harris in support of his own version of the site's history. He does note that the reputed Viking sword tip could possibly have an agricultural explanation and dates the wooden cones to 1400-1680 A.D. but concurs that they are similar to gold working tools. He also notes that a "fibula pin" had been located (based on the photograph, this piece is likely the same artifact referred to as a set of tweezers by Joan Harris; Bradley 1988:52-53). Additionally, in Bradley's accounts, the human-shaped herm stone now also carries evidence of an inscription in Ogham, a style of writing used in Ireland and Scotland between the 4th and 7th centuries (Bradley 1988:56).

While Joan Harris's work expresses her obvious frustrations and an element of paranoia about the lack of interest from the various officials she had contacted (Library of Hope website 2009), Michael Bradley paints a picture of widespread governmental secrecy and intentional cover-ups. Bradley states that the Harrises had contacted the Nova Scotia Museum to investigate the site but that they expressed no interest, stating that the site was either "French or Indian" (Bradley 1988:48). He describes his own meetings with an anonymous Special Assistant to the Nova Scotia Minister of Culture, Recreation and Fitness who expresses interest in his findings (Bradley 1988:68). According to the assistant, the Ministry was reluctant to investigate claims due to potential animosity from the New Ross villagers, concerned over land appropriation and restrictions if a historically significant site was discovered in the village (Bradley 1988:74-75). Bradley (1988) contends that the Special Assistant commissioned aerial photographs of the site, to be conducted by an out-of-province company to hide the Ministry's interest in the matter (77). A deeper conspiracy of silence is suggested with Bradley asserting that the Minister of Culture, Recreation and Fitness was aware of the ruins and that unnamed forces within the government agreed that "some things should never be officially admitted" (Bradley 1988:77). Bradley claims he was further advised not to publish his research by a retired Canadian military colonel who stated that the story of the New Ross site was known at "high levels in Europe and North America" (Bradley 1988:77). As a final note, he contends that in 1982, the Nova Scotia Museum had on display a diorama depicting Henry Sinclair landing in Nova Scotia and that the display has since been removed (Bradley 1988:373). The current Manager of Collections has stated that he doubts the existence of any such diorama at the museum (D. Christianson, email to author, October 25, 2011).

Recorded History of the Area

In considering these various claims regarding past occupation of the area around New Ross, it might be advantageous to take a step back and review the established history of the village. Caroline (Broome) Leopold's *The History of New Ross* (which draws heavily on information in DesBrisay's 1895 *History of the County of Lunenburg*) dates the settlement of New Ross to 1816 when the Governor of Nova Scotia dispatched Captain William Ross and 172 disbanded soldiers from the Nova Scotia Fencibles to the area, with the intent of clearing forest and promoting settlement of the interior portions of the province (Leopold 1971:7). The settlement was originally named Sherbrooke in honour of Lt. Governor Sir John Coape Sherbrooke. Confusion arose as there was already another area of the province with the same name, so the settlement was renamed New Ross in 1863 for Lord Mulgrave, whose second title came from the Irish town of New Ross and for Captain William Ross (Leopold 1971:7, NSARM website 2011: "Place-names and Places of Nova Scotia").

Neither the 1761 Charles Morris map, *A Chart of the Peninsula of Nova Scotia*, nor an anonymous 1756 map, *A Map of the Surveyed Parts of Nova Scotia*, indicate settlement or remains of past settlement in the New Ross area, although the 1756 map does depict the ruins of a French fort at LaHave Harbour (Morris 1761 and Anon. 1756). It could be argued that both these maps focus on coastal portions of the province and do not appear to have extensive coverage of inland areas generally. Prior to settlement, the area was surveyed on a number of occasions in preparation for a road to be constructed between Annapolis and Halifax. Elias Wheelock conducted the first survey, just prior to 1775 (Leopold 1971:5). The planned road line was blazed in 1786, with lots for settlement laid out between Annapolis and the Windsor/Chester crossroad during the period of 1786-1791 (Leopold 1971:5). The road line was again surveyed in 1815 by John Harris and the road was opened between Annapolis and the new settlement of New Ross between 1816 and 1820 (Leopold 1971:6). The Harris survey map of 1815 shows no settlements in the area that will eventually become New Ross but does note "good land, in general, as far as Gold River" (Harris 1815). It seems reasonable to imagine that both Wheelock and Harris would have made note of substantial ruins in their survey area, should they have encountered them. A map from 1860, titled *Plan of Proposed line of Road between Sherbrooke and the Windsor road* by John Lawson, shows the assignment of lots along the Kentville to Chester road and the presence of a church at the crossing point of two roads near the head of Lake Lawson (Lawson 1860), but again there is no mention of large ruins in the vicinity.

Historian Brian Cuthbertson offers a reasonable alternate explanation for the foundations and presence of iron tools. Cuthbertson, in "Voyages to North America Before John Cabot: Separating Fact from Fiction," asserts that the Harris property was once the site of a blacksmith shop, which handily explains both the stone ruins and the iron implements found there (1944: 136). In the spring of 1817, a letter from Charles Morris, Surveyor General of Nova Scotia, requested that Lieutenant Ross find a suitable location for Daniel McKay, blacksmith (Cuthbertson 1994: 143). The 1860 survey map by John Lawson shows a property allotted to a Daniel McKay, one property up from the cross roads, in approximately the same location as the present day property (Lawson 1860). The presence of blacksmithing at the site could also offer an explanation for the charcoal/ash pit found by both the Harris and Keddy/Dickie excavations (Hope 1997:80 and Finnan 1999:15).

Cuthbertson's interpretation is supported by the 1985 site visit by experienced Parks Canada archaeologists, Charles Lindsay and Birgitta Wallace, Joan Harris's letter writing campaigns having finally yielded an official investigation of the New Ross site. During the course of their 2.5 hour visit, they viewed a selection of the artifacts and were given the landowner's interpretations of the area's history (B. Wallace, personal interview, October 30, 2011; Parks Canada memo 1985). Writing in an internal Parks Canada memo in July of 1985, Lindsay notes that nothing viewed was earlier than the 19th century. Specifically, he attributes the walls and foundations to linear piles of stone from field clearing and to the rough stone foundations of much later outbuildings. Further, he felt that the owners had excavated most of the property and therefore no additional excavation was warranted (Parks Canada 1985).

Of the artifacts, Lindsay records much of the presented findings as being 20th century rubbish. The reputed Viking sword tip he identifies as a scythe end and the goldsmithing tools as simply knots from trees. Further, he determined that all the stones and associated markings presented were naturally occurring, with "no evidence of human modification," particularly on the stone labeled as a Celtic herm (Parks Canada 1985). He also felt that Joan Harris was very quick to see artifacts where none existed, mentioning that a number of supposed arrowheads were only pieces of rough stone (personal interview, November 17, 2011). Speaking of the site to a local journalist, Lindsay definitively stated "We do not find any of the claims the Harris' (*sic*) have made about the site to have any credibility at all" and "we have persuaded our minister that we should not be making extensive communications with them [Joan and Ron Harris] because there is nothing new in the claims they make. We regard the matter as closed" (Coffill 1987:13).

Recent Developments at the New Ross Property

Joan and Ron Harris left the New Ross property in 1990. Following their departure the house and land were purchased by Alva and Rose Pye, who continued to promote the HARRISES' claims about the site to various local and provincial papers (Library of Hope website 2009: "The Continuing New Ross Saga" Page One). Although Joan Harris died in 2007, a website called *The Library of Hope* is still maintained with an electronic version of her book, *A Castle in Nova Scotia*, as well as occasional updates on the New Ross site, newspaper articles, and speculative works on alternative histories from other authors (Library of Hope website 2009). In the course of writing this paper, I attempted to contact the web master for the site to inquire about the location of the artifacts and any images from the excavations that might be in her possession, but no reply was forthcoming.

Since its heyday in the late 80s, interest in the site has notably abated. In 1993, Dr. Bruce Keddy, Gerald Keddy and Lloyd Dickie conducted a private excavation on the land (Finnan 1997:158 and Finnan 1999:14). They claim to have located sand with an unexpectedly high percentage of gold dust that they attributed to gold refining in the area. As well, they found charcoal beneath the stone the HARRISES were calling a "herm," a feature Harris described as an ash pit (Hope 1997:80). The charcoal was reported as having a radiocarbon date of 1500 B.C. (Finnan 1999: 15) but no scientific report on the dating was included or referenced. In 1998 the property was sold to Glenn Penoyer, who is identified by author

Mark Finnan as an archaeologist from Ontario. Later, in the summer of 1998, Penoyer and local Prince Henry Sinclair enthusiast, Dale Williamson, conducted further excavations of the site but report that nothing of note was found (Finnan 1999:141). It is worth mentioning that the Glenn Penoyer excavations were conducted without the provincially-required archaeological permits, and therefore, failed to generate the site reports required by the permitting process (D. Christianson, email to author, October 25, 2011).

The Pitfalls of Engaging Alternative Archaeologies

An important facet of the development of the New Ross claims centers on the interaction between the Parks Canada archaeologists, particularly Charles Lindsay, and land owner, Joan Harris. Both Birgitta Wallace and Charles Lindsay recall their time visiting the site with amazement. Speaking unofficially years later, Lindsay says of the encounter: "I have always regarded the visit to New Ross as the most bizarre incident in my career as an archaeologist and public servant" (email to author, November 11, 2011). Lindsay and Wallace were dispatched to view the property when Joan Harris's letter writing campaign succeeded in pressuring the national Minister of the Environment (whose portfolio included Parks Canada at the time) to investigate her claims (C. Lindsay, personal interview, November 17, 2011). In his 1985 Parks Canada memo, Lindsay makes reference to issues of paranoia and claims of suppressed evidence by Joan Harris. He describes her as "aggressive" and anticipating an argument from the archaeologists (personal interview, November 17, 2011). Birgitta Wallace recalls that Harris threw them out after lecturing them about her theories (personal interview, October 31, 2011). Later, Charles Lindsay would run afoul of Joan Harris for his comments to a South Shore newspaper, mentioned earlier. In an August 10, 1987 article for *The Lighthouse*, Lindsay plainly indicated that he felt the Harris' claims about the New Ross site lacked credibility and that there was no point to further investigation. Elsewhere in the article, he called their claims "wild and wonderful" (Coffill 1987:13). Joan Harris initiated a legal suit in response to the article. Speaking through her lawyers, she called the remarks "offensive and derogatory" and demanded a retraction and apology. Lindsay recalls directing Department of Justice representatives to tell Harris that he was "sorry if she was offended" and that this was the last communication he heard on the matter (personal interview, November 17, 2011). The case was eventually thrown out of court (B. Wallace, personal interview, October 30, 2011). Joan Harris's actions illustrate the level of strong emotion that can accompany speculative theories. This matter serves as an example of the diplomatic tightrope traditional archaeologists, in particular public servants, must walk when handling claims being made by proponents of alternative archaeological perspectives.

In conclusion, an examination of the claims asserted by Joan Harris and Michael Bradley, when contrasted with the reasonable counter-evidence and research put forward by archaeologists and historians, can only result in a conclusion that there is no physical or reasonable textual evidence to support any of the assertions that New Ross is a site of early European settlement (be it by Vikings, Templars, Stuart royalty or one of the host of other possibilities floated). The claims seem to stem from a potent mix of delusion and wishful thinking, in Harris's case, and a blinding attachment to a pet theory and fondness for conspiracy in Bradley's. While public interest in historical sites and their associated archaeology is broadly welcomed, it is crucial that all claims about prospective sites be considered with an impartial eye. All available evidence must be weighed, not just items cherry-picked to support a

personal agenda. Further, the interaction between Joan Harris and the archaeologists from Parks Canada, particularly Charles Lindsay, illustrates issues that can potentially arise when professionals in the field encounter and negotiate with proponents of alternative archaeologies. Unlike the New Ross claims, which have diminished over the years, these are issues that will continue to arise, as supporters of a more speculative vision of archaeology champion new sites.

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