

# LOG OF MV POLAR STAR

## ROUND THE RUGGED ROCK

28 September to 09 October 2006

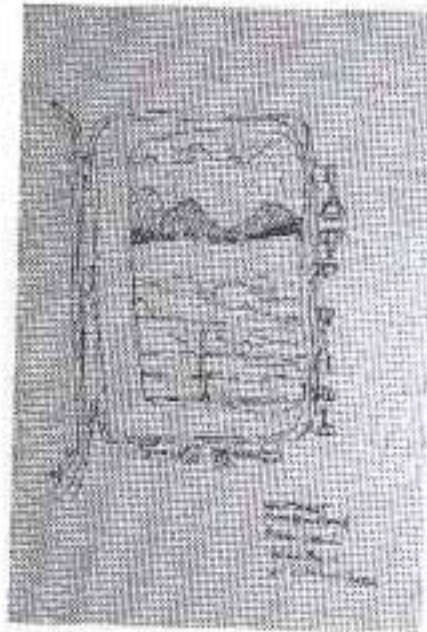


Compiled by Jim Payne  
Assisted by John Harrison  
Maps by Leon Normore  
Wildlife List by Tony Power  
Photos by John Harrison Sketches by Fred Beck

MV Polar Star

*ROUND THE RUGGED ROCK*  
28 SEPTEMBER-09 OCTOBER 2006

Captain	Adam Boczek
Chief Engineer	Boguslaw Radomski
Chief Officer	Jedrzej Marsz
First Engineer	Wojciech Zieba
Second Officer	Janusz Korwel
Hotel Manager	Rita Hivcovics
Head Chef	Paul McDougall
Office Assistant	Natasha Hanson
Doctor	David MacNeil
Expedition Leader	Mark Whittington
Staff	John Harrison
	Heiner Josenhans
	Richard Neville
	Doug Nixon
	Leon Normore
	Jim Payne
	Tony Power



Thursday, 28 September 2006

Halifax, Nova Scotia

1800 hrs

Position: 44° 25' 9" N 63° 27' 3" W

Barometric Pressure: 1014 mb

Air temperature: 12° C

Wind: Force 2 Variable

The bright weather promised by early morning sunshine did not materialize as we boarded the MV Polar Star at Pier 23 in Halifax, Nova Scotia. After we had been shown to our cabins and unpacked our luggage, we gathered on the stern decks and the observation lounge to view Halifax harbour as we headed out in a light mist. The pilot boat provided the first photo opportunities for some of us as it maneuvered alongside to allow the pilot to deftly jump back into his craft after he had guided us to open sea. Another much larger cruise ship came up behind and overtook us, no doubt jealous of the much more intimate nature of an expedition cruise such as ours.

Ship's complement then gathered in the observation lounge for a welcome aboard from Captain Adam and Expedition Leader Mark, with some housekeeping notes from Hotel Manager Rita and safety instructions from Chief Officer Jed. Expedition staff then introduced themselves with a few words of welcome and a summary of what they would be doing on board. Having been forewarned that it was coming, we then went smoothly through a mandatory lifeboat drill when the alarm sounded, before sitting down to a delicious first meal aboard of what is to be our home for the next twelve days. After dinner we gathered once again on Deck Five for a zodiac safety briefing and an overview of our upcoming adventure from Mark, who took questions ranging from how we wear our rubber boots to how many times must we flush the toilets. Doug spoke briefly on our upcoming first excursion into Louisbourg in the morning and then it was time for some to get fitted for wet gear.

After a long travel day for many of us, it was time to get settled on the ship and rest in anticipation of the thrill of discovery that awaits us over the coming days. We'll get used to being rocked to sleep by the gentle rhythm of the ocean, and now we'll let our fine ship do the business of travelling, so we can concentrate on the pleasure.

Friday, 29 September 2006

Louisbourg, Nova Scotia

0800 hrs

Position: 45° 37' N 60° 05' W

Barometric Pressure: 1019 mb

Air temperature: 15°

Wind: Force 4 E

We awoke to a thin grey cloud cover this morning and relatively calm seas, but the temperature was a positively balmy 15 degrees. Our arrival at Louisbourg was slightly delayed since the ship had slowed down overnight so passengers could have a more comfortable ride on their first night aboard. We were all looking forward to our first zodiac ride of the voyage, however, and shortly after breakfast the time came for us to suit up in wet gear, rubber boots and lifejackets.



The historic fortress of Louisbourg was originally settled in 1713 by settlers who had been expelled from the French capital of Newfoundland in Placentia. The British and French fought over this whole area for many years, and it changed hands several times before the Treaty of Paris settled the final boundaries in 1763. Unlike many other historic colonial sites, there was no modern town built at Louisbourg, enabling the Canadian government to proclaim it a National Historic Site in 1928, and begin reconstruction of the fortress in the early 1960's. The fortress looked quite dramatic and foreboding in the grey morning light, but the image was quickly dispelled by the



friendly welcome of the Parks Canada guides and the costumed interpreters who showed us round the site.

The sea had come up a bit by the time we were ready to head back to the ship, and a little salt spray let us know that we had finally arrived on the Atlantic Ocean.

We passed the afternoon in the comfort of the Observation Lounge, where John gave us a presentation on the global history of whaling, with particular emphasis on some of the cultural aspects of western society's obsession with whales and frequent references to Moby Dick. He showed pictures of the wide array of formidable weaponry used to tackle these behemoths, and explained how the products gleaned from the whaling industry contributed to many of the increased creature comforts available to people of that era. We lost a few souls with the onset of wind and high seas before Jim gave us an overview of Newfoundland music and folklore complete with songs, folk tales and a few

dance steps. This brought us up to Happy Hour and our first daily recap.

Mark began the recap with an updated weather report and advice to make sure our belongings were secure in the cabins, as "a bit of a blow" was expected overnight. He also gave us the plans for St. Pierre tomorrow, including the details on dealing with Customs on both our arrival in France and our return to Canada later the same day. Jim talked briefly about the historical connections between Louisbourg, St. Pierre and the southern coast of Newfoundland before Heiner showed us some fabulous pictures of the ocean floor around Louisbourg Harbour, with the fascinating tidbit that it was once a freshwater bog. We then deserted the Observation Lounge to secure our cabins and make ready for dinner. We had a lazy night of it after that, dreaming perhaps of French wine and cuisine as we rolled onward with the ship over the waves to St. Pierre.

Saturday, 30 September 2006  
St. Pierre, France  
0600 hrs  
Position: 46° 47' 1" N 56° 15' 51" W  
Barometric Pressure: 1015 mb  
Air temperature: 13°  
Wind: Force 7 E



A rough night's crossing from Louisbourg to St. Pierre kept Dr. David on the hop and several passengers confined to their bunks until we entered St. Pierre Harbour in early morning drizzle, fog and wind. After breakfast French Customs made quick work of clearing us for entry on shore, and we disembarked the ship for bus tours of St. Pierre. Our friendly, informative driver/comedian Hubert gave us the rundown on the St. Pierreais and their dependence on France for their survival as the last French outpost in North America.

With a population of 6000 people, 60% of whom work for the government, the archipelago consists of three main islands: Miquelon, which has a fishing village of roughly 600 souls, Longlade in the middle, uninhabited except for grazing horses and a few summer residences owned by people who

live mainly in the town on the main island of St. Pierre, which is essentially a volcanic rock consisting mainly of rhyolite buffeted by stormy Atlantic winds. After emerging from the wars that raged throughout the area between the French and English, St. Pierre is now a bustling town that has survived mainly through the fishery, although as Hubert explained, fish haven't been so plentiful lately, like fishing industries on the rest of North America's east coast, and indeed throughout the world. The population is serviced by satellite television from France, a brand new airport that sees few flights, one church with three priests and five nuns, and 35 gendarmes who come from France for a three year hitch before returning to Europe.

The glory days of St. Pierre were really during the prohibition era in America, from 1920-1933, when French liquor supplied the speakeasys and gin joints of the US, and made fortunes for some now prominent Canadian and American families in the process, including the famous gangster, Al Capone, who spent some time in St. Pierre in those days. Some of the houses on the island are built from the remains of whiskey crates, including Chateau Cutty Sark, which Hubert pointed out in our jaunt around the island. In its heyday, St. Pierre was exporting 300,000 cases of liquor per month to Canada and America. Hubert also took us by several of the town's prominent buildings and landmarks like the French Treasury, local supermarkets and the cemetery, complete with a description of local internet practices. All in all, it was a great view of the island on a day when it wasn't really fit to see it in any other way.

After the tours, some passengers took advantage of a stroll around the town to sample some French culinary delights in local restaurants, and do some shopping in the few places that were open while we were there. We were all back on the ship by 1400 hours, to make our way back to Canada. Heiner gave us a fascinating glimpse of the glacial activity that shaped the landscapes along the south coast of Newfoundland where we'll

be in the next couple of days. When the blinds went up at the end of his talk, we were off Fortune Head, on Newfoundland's Burin Peninsula.

Re-entry into Canada turned into a rather more complicated affair when Canadian officials demanded that all of us go ashore by zodiac to visit their premises. And here's where the folks on this expedition really showed their mettle! We were over the side into the zodiacs like old pros, onshore, customs-approved and back on the ship before Bartender Bart could say Happy Hour. Fortunately the seas were calm, a little sunlight was peeking through the clouds, and the unexpectedness of it all created a frisson of excitement that made the mis-Fortune of the call ashore a bit of an adventure. Merriment was made of it at recap, when John miraculously produced a poem to commemorate the event, and we shared our indignation at the gall of Canadian Customs. With a large contingent of Canadians on board, people were heard muttering threats of writing letters to Members of Parliament, or complaining to Customs and Excise, but after coming from St. Pierre and stories of rum-running and smuggling, it was a not totally unexpected or inappropriate ending to our crossing into Newfoundland. We went off to dinner in high spirits and some went to the movies in the Polar Star Cinema for the BBC production of *The Blue Planet*.

**Sunday, 01 October 2006**

**Grey River/Francois, Newfoundland**

0700 hrs

Position: 47°29' 4" N 56° 57' 5" W

Barometric Pressure: 1027 mb

Air temperature: 8°C

Wind: Force 2 Variable

A beautiful morning dawned on us today as we steamed towards the picturesque little hamlet of Grey River. Despite the clear sky outside on the open sea, a tongue-like sliver of fog and mist filled the fjord as we slithered into the narrow entrance. Dramatic cliffs rose on both sides until suddenly we were in front of the triangular-shaped village of approximately 100 filling the only habitable land.



As we brought folks ashore in zodiacs, the fog began to lift and by the time we had wandered through the town and sampled the tasty delicacies made by the local welcoming committee, it had warmed up considerably. Some of us hiked to the lookout at the top of the hill for fabulous views, and after returning to the community hall to listen to some music and dance a couple of jigs, it was a perfect time for a late morning zodiac cruise deeper into the fjord where three estuaries empty into the bay. Waterfalls abounded over the cliffs, and the changing colours of the heavily forested hills framed stark and stunning views at every turn. Too soon, we had to return to the ship for lunch and our steam to Francois, but we left echoing Mark's words of thanks to the people of Grey River for their tremendous hospitality, and the warm welcome extended to us.

We steamed along Newfoundland's historic south coast, and by 1430 hours we were making the turn at the lighthouse that marks the otherwise hard to find entrance to Francois (*pronounced Fran-sway*), a community of about 240 residents nestled underneath an imposing rock face. A sign of welcome in several languages on our starboard side boded well for the extra helping of hospitality we were about to receive, with Mayor Kim Courtney on the dock to greet us accompanied by most of the local tourism committee.

After getting everyone ashore, we wandered through the boardwalks of the town, hiked to the lookout atop the cemetery trail, and the hardier souls walked up past the waterfall for striking panoramas of the island's interior. After taking advantage of the lemonade stand provided by a trio of enterprising girls at the edge of the dock, a veritable smorgasbord awaited us when we got back to the ship, where several Francois residents were our guests for a barbeque on the stern deck. With Jim providing ambient music on the accordion, great food and drink, it was quite a sophisticated scene.

Then it was back in the zodiacs for a "time" at the community hall. Desserts were on the table, the bar was open, and local musician Darin Dumford provided the music with everything from traditional Newfoundland songs to country and popular music hits. Most of the town was there along with the great majority of passengers and all hands danced up a storm until it was time for last zodiac call back to the ship. Some of the locals accompanied us back to the dock to say goodbye, and we steamed out of Francois harbour humbled by the isolated rugged beauty of the place, and full of wonder at the sense of community and good-natured welcome we had received. Combined with our Grey River experience this morning, it was a day to remember.

Monday, 02 October 2006

Grand Codroy River Delta, Newfoundland

0800 hrs

Position: 47°32' 6" N 59° 16' 7" W

Barometric Pressure: 1015 mb

Air temperature: 4

Wind: Force 5-6 E

With news of impending bad weather as a result of the approach of Hurricane Isaac, we awoke with an anxious eye on wind and sea conditions today, but things were relatively calm. A bit of swell at the gangway when we sent expedition staff ashore in two zodiacs to scout the landing site didn't seem to be enough to keep us on the ship, but by the time we returned for passengers, the swell had turned to heavy seas accompanied by a gale. Driving rain in the face of zodiac drivers was like being sand blasted.

Mark made the grim announcement that we would not be going ashore in the foreseeable future. Leon and Jim returned to the beach to pick up our shore party of Doug and Tony and to relay the news to the local welcoming committee who had turned up in over twenty cars to transport us. A bagpiper in full rain gear was on the beach doing his level best to be heard over the howling wind, an epic struggle even for bagpipers, and many of the waiting vehicles had balloons attached, so everyone was well primed for our arrival.

Passengers were gazing at the returning zodiac crew through the windows of the Observation Lounge, by turns anxious, amused, and no doubt wondering why these crazy people were looking like they were having such a good time in driving rain, gale force winds and high seas. Once all hands were back on the ship, the daily program was hastily redrawn just in time for Birdman Tony to give us a presentation on the multitude of sea birds that inhabit the coast of Newfoundland. It was an informative

and entertaining talk as Tony showed several pictures of his spectacular workplace, which just happens to be the most accessible sea bird sanctuary in North America at Cape St. Mary's. He also touched on the problem of oiled birds, which happens when ocean going cargo vessels from the ports of mainland North America empty their bilges off the south coast of Newfoundland before heading out to open sea. It is estimated that 100,000 seabirds are killed every year due to this illegal and senseless activity.

After Tony's talk it was just about time for lunch and our truly amazing chef Paul, with his equally terrific galley crew, whipped up a delicious pizza buffet for over one hundred people, who as far as the galley knew, were supposed to be lunching on shore. It was a truly laudable effort by the folks below decks.



The weather hadn't really improved after lunch so the decision was made to abandon our excursion up the Grand Codroy River altogether. While all of us were naturally disappointed not to visit this beautiful region of the province, our main thought was for the local people and the effort that had been put into

preparing for our arrival. But this was just another reminder of the nature of expedition cruising. Consequently, Leon's planned after dinner lecture was moved up to early afternoon as we resigned ourselves to a full day at sea. In anticipation of our planned excursion to Bonne Bay tomorrow, he explained why the entire province is a geologist's paradise, and illustrated the distinct geological regions of Newfoundland and Labrador before moving on to talk specifically about the unusual features of Gros Morne National Park and the reasons why it has been declared a UNESCO World heritage Site.

Later on, Doug rounded up the first groups who had expressed interest in engine room tours and Jim presented more music and folklore, especially as it related to the area that we are currently sailing past. This presentation included riddles, recitations and songs about the logging and oil industries of Newfoundland, and concluded with dance instruction for a group of passengers in the footwork and figures of some traditional Newfoundland dancing. Mark gave us a recap before dinner, including a weather update, things we need to know for tomorrow's program, and Jim added a couple of notes on the notorious Wreckhouse winds that roar up the Codroy Valley, along with some comments on the cultural diversity of the early settlers in Newfoundland's south west corner.

After dinner, we stuck with the day's theme. Since we were unable to experience the real thing this morning, Heiner took us on a virtual reality tour of a fibre optic cable link that runs from Nova Scotia across the Cabot Strait and up the Grand Codroy River. By this time the sky had cleared somewhat, the stars were shining, and as we passed by the Port au Port Peninsula, the reflection of a gleaming moon off the surface of the ocean gave promise of a fair weather day for tomorrow.

Tuesday, 03 October 2006

Gros Morne National Park, Bonne Bay, Newfoundland

0800 hrs

Position: 49°29' 8" N 57° 54' 9" W

Barometric Pressure: 1001mb

Air temperature: 13°

Wind: Force 3 E

After a reasonably calm night of steaming north, we entered beautiful Bonne Bay just after daylight with several passengers on the bow decks to get their first view. We moored about halfway into the western arm of the bay just before breakfast, and later put the first zodiacs over the side. No sooner had they hit the water than dorsal fins popped up beside them, and a pod of a dozen or more white breasted dolphins made their way down the arm chasing mackerel.

After we arrived on shore, some of us were whisked off to the Tablelands for a guided tour to get up close and personal with the geological features that Leon had told us about the previous evening. Explanations and illustrations were forthcoming about plate tectonics, continental and oceanic crusts, and a variety of rocks and flora, including Newfoundland's provincial flower, the pitcher plant, which traps and digests



insect life to survive.

Although all of Gros Morne National Park is important, the Tablelands are the most important geological feature in the Park, and the main reason for it being declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. An extensive flat-topped range of hills where the earth's mantle has pushed up through its crust, it is composed of ultramafic rock, a rock type that forms the earth's upper

mantle and brought to the surface when the Iapetus Ocean was closed about 470 million years ago during the Ordovician era. We saw a multitude of rock types including Pillow Lavas, Gabbro, Pseudotachylite (Mantle), serpentinite, interbedded limestone and dolomite.

Meanwhile, others checked out the Discovery Centre, a Parks Canada information and interpretation building that offers striking views overlooking Bonne Bay. Some took a trail that meandered behind the town where a couple of moose were seen observing us as we passed, and others took the beach walk back to the zodiacs.

After lunch we embarked on a zodiac cruise towards the opposite side of the bay where bald eagles were soaring high above the cliffs when they weren't trying to avoid harassment from pesky crows. We poked around some idyllic little coves with secluded beaches below grassy meadows that would have been perfect for an extended camping trip, minus the mist that had started to envelop us, of course. We came face to face with more of the famous Gros Morne rock, with slivers of quartz running snake-like through it as well as some that looked as though it had exploded under the pressure of all the rock on top. We also slowed down in shallow waters to check out the shimmering kelp beds on the multi-hued ocean floor before heading back to the ship to dry off and get ready for Happy Hour and recap.

Mark started recap with some pictures taken by the folks at Codroy as they were vainly waiting for us to land on the previous day. They had also sent along a poem composed by one of their number, Nelson, who didn't give us his last name. Our own award-winning author, John Harrison, read Nelson's poem and countered with a reply from David Archibald, the Polar Star's Director of Operations in Halifax. Jim chimed in with a song about an event that happened in the area in 1919 to illustrate the role of local songwriters in recording regional history before Mark gave us the goods on our upcoming Port aux Choix excursion. After dinner, Doug completed that particular bit of orientation with a presentation of the pre-history of Newfoundland and Labrador, and talked about the Maritime Archaic Indians and Dorset Eskimos who were the earliest known inhabitants of these areas and the ancient ancestors of present day aboriginal groups.

Wednesday, 04 October 2006

Port aux Choix, Newfoundland

0800 hrs

Position: 50° 43' 9" N 57° 19' 9" W

Barometric Pressure: 1001 mb

Air temperature: 11°

Wind: Force 2 SW

After steaming through the night along the west coast of Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula, we were rounding Point Riche when dawn broke. The harbour pilot came on board at 0845 hrs and guided us through an extremely narrow channel, so that those of us observing from the bridge felt like we could practically reach out and touch the rocks on our port side. We soon reached the dock in the prosperous fishing village of Port aux Choix however, and were whisked off in buses to the Parks Canada Visitor's Centre and Philip's Garden, an archaeological site that has been host to settlement by a variety of peoples since about 3500 BC.

The earliest of these peoples were the Maritime Archaic Indians, direct descendants of the first people to live on the North American continent. They reached Labrador about 9000 years ago and Newfoundland by about 5500 years ago. As Doug explained in his presentation last night, they disappeared from the region about 3200 years ago and there is an unexplained gap between then and the arrival of the Groswater Paleoeskimos and subsequently the Dorset Paleoeskimos. All of these early settlers were drawn to the place by the abundance of resources available on the shores of the Strait of Belle Isle. Sea mammals, birds, caribou and other small game in this strategic and sheltered location provided everything they needed in the way of food, clothing and shelter.

The excursion to Philip's Garden also provided us with an opportunity to get out and stretch our legs for a bit, and while some of us walked between the two sites, caribou were spotted browsing along the way. At the visitors centre, the guides took us round the displays and then walked us through the limestone



barrens, which, upon a closer look with helpful interpretation from our guides, feature

an astonishing array of vegetation, including a rare plant known as Fernauds Braya, which flowers only for one week each year. We also saw fossils embedded in the rock running along the shores of a stream, and our two caribou were keeping a watchful eye on us as we intruded on their territory.

By lunch time the sun was splitting the rocks, and with an afternoon at our disposal, we wandered aimlessly around Port aux Choix. Between a little shopping, chats with local people and visits to a private local museum and studio, it was a relaxing and carefree day ashore before we arrived back on the ship at 1700 hours for Happy Hour and recap.

John gave us a brief account of early Viking trade with native people of eastern North America, a prelude to an upcoming presentation. Jim explained that this whole coast had been originally charted by Captain James Cook of Endeavour fame, and that some of his charts are considered to be so accurate that they are in use to this day. After a song about Sailing Along the French Shore, which is precisely where we are, Mark talked about tomorrow's excursion to Red Bay and Battle Harbour in Labrador. Known as the Big Land, it is new territory for this expedition and we spent the night in anticipation. Movie-goers watched *People of the Sea* in the Observation Lounge, while others strolled the moonlit decks as our excellent Polar Star adventure continued on a gorgeous night at sea.



Thursday, 05 October 2006

Red Bay/Battle Harbour, Labrador

0800 hrs

Position: 51°44' 3" N 56° 26' 0" W

Barometric Pressure: 1007 mb

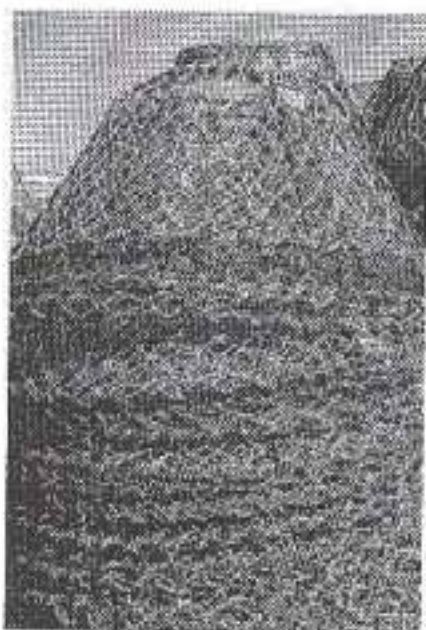
Air temperature: 8°C

Wind: Force 2 Variable

Red Bay was one of the largest whaling operations in the world during the early 16th century, when Basque fishermen, who had probably been fishing in the area long before the English and French discovered the place, made it one of their main overseas destinations. In 1981, the Basque whaling ship *San Juan* was discovered at the bottom of Red Bay Harbour, amazingly intact due to the cold salt water. Another ship was found in the harbour just last year, as marine archaeology continues. We visited the Orientation Centre on our landing dock, and then it was up to the site Interpretation Centre, for a look at the chalupa, one of the small boats used by these hardy early fishermen. After a look at a whale skeleton in the community hall, we wandered back to the waterfront, where several people found a colourful selection of knitted goods and other local souvenir items in the gift shop next door.

After lunch back on the ship, John Harrison gave us an overview of the rise and fall of the Vikings, starting with their expansion into the British Isles and continental Europe, up to and including their move westward to Iceland, Greenland and finally Vinland,

the present day Newfoundland. Richard continued with a musical exploration of Labrador, and played several songs by some of Labrador's best-loved artists as well as some of his own. By 1700 hours we were ready to head into Battle Harbour.



Battle Harbour became prominent as the centre of the Labrador fishery beginning in the early 1770's, when West Country merchant John Slade set up his mercantile premises there. Up until 1974 when the salt fish trade was overtaken by the age of refrigeration and global economics, it was a bustling port, with a blacksmith, a cooperage, general store, salt storage facilities, basic public health services, and the various and sundry amenities required to supply a population that at its peak during the height of the fishing season could reach up to 20,000 people.

It was also the place where Peary held his press conference to counter Frederick Cook's claim that he had reached the North Pole, insisting that he (Peary) was the first one to reach it instead. Battle Harbour was chosen because Peary happened to be at Akoutuk, the family fishing station of his navigator, Captain Bob Bartlett of Brigus, when he

heard Cook's news. Battle Harbour was the closest place where Peary could arrange for reporters from American newspapers to be present and have the means to relay news back to their editors through the Battle Harbour Marconi station.

In a palette of autumn pastels, we made our way back through the soft evening light and choppy seas to the ship for dinner, after which we had a late recap. Leon told us about Labradorite, a local mineral now being exported to Italy among other places, and Jim sang a song about the fisheries situation that reflected some the history of Battle Harbour. Richard topped it off with a couple more songs about Labrador, and it was time to call it a night, as we prepared to leave the Big Land, or as Jacques Cartier called it when he first sighted it in 1534, the land God gave to Cain.

Friday, 06 October 2006

St. Anthony/L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland

0800 hrs

Position: 51° 21' 9" N 55° 35' 0" W

Barometric Pressure: 1018 mb

Air temperature: 5°C

Wind: Force 3-4 NW

Daylight broke this morning as we were rounding the tiny communities of Great Breat and St. Carol's prior to entering St. Anthony harbour. Originally named by Jacques Cartier as St. Anthony's Haven, it is a sheltered harbour on the eastern side of the tip of Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula. It's really a combination of what used to be five separate harbours that have now grown so much that they have become one community. St. Anthony is the main town and service centre for this part of northern Newfoundland with a population of approximately 2500 hundred people.

The only authenticated Viking settlement found in North America is L'Anse aux Meadows, about a 40 minute bus ride from our landing site. We headed out in two

buses of a distinctly different class shortly after breakfast with one group heading directly for the Parks Canada Interpretation Site and guided tour, while the other went first to Norstead, a living history Viking village recreated by the province. At the Parks Canada site we saw a short film of Helge and Anne Stine Ingestad, the people who determinedly searched for traces of a Viking settlement in North America based on references in the old sagas to a far away place called Vinland. After searching for several years, they finally found their way to Newfoundland where they fortuitously met George Decker of L'Anse aux Meadows, who, when they asked about the possibility of ruins in the area, promptly led them to the area that has now been declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Proving the old adage that you never know what you'll get if you don't ask, Mr. Decker told them that no one from outside the area ever showed any interest in the site until the Ingestads followed the route of natural ocean currents that would, as Mr. Ingestad believed, inevitably take them to North America. After a guided walk through the archaeological site, we hung about in the long house listening to costumed guides explain the lifestyle of the Vikings while they were in Newfoundland, including information about food supplies, weaponry, and relations with local native people which they called Skraelings.



At Norstead, the main attraction was the Snorri, a replica of a Viking trading ship known as a knarr, which had been sailed across the Atlantic and subsequently installed in its current location. There were also interpreters demonstrating how they made their own clothing, a fine array of tools, and an explanation as to how the Vikings became converted to Christianity. Viking men, especially if they died with a weapon in their hands, believed that they would go to Viking Heaven, Valhalla. Their women, however, had no such promise awaiting them when they died. The Viking women were the first to convert to Christianity because it promised them a life after death, and the story goes that they then refused conjugal relations with their men unless they also converted. The Vikings became Christians in short order.

After arriving back in St. Anthony, we were deposited at the Interpretation Centre for the International Grenfell Mission. Sir Wilfred Grenfell was a young British doctor who came to northern Newfoundland and carried on a lifelong mission of bringing medical service to the northern coasts of Newfoundland and Labrador. He worked tirelessly to better the lot of local people along these coasts, and encouraged local people to employ their craft skills to make goods that could be sold abroad for cash to supply the local cottage hospitals with medical supplies. Perhaps the most famous of these are the Grenfell hooked mats, which today still command exorbitant prices in the art markets of major North American cities.

After seeing the video presentation about Dr. Grenfell and his work, many of us went up the hill to visit his house. Lovingly restored with a fine collection of artefacts from around the area relating to his work, it is an elegant and comfortable building set among the hills overlooking the community. Many of his personal items remain in the

building; his typewriter, gramophone, sealskin boots, as well as letters, photographs and other documents.

We were all back on board by 1600 hours, to practice our party pieces for tonight's post-auction variety show, and to count our silver in preparation for bidding on some of the variety of goods up for sale. All proceeds will go to the Francois family who lost their home in Hurricane Florence a few weeks ago. At recap, Mark outlined plans for tomorrow, while Jim reminded people that although Grenfell was revered in the area, he wasn't universally liked. He was a teetotaler and started a branch of the Temperance League here, with the result that local moonshiners were sometimes reported to the magistrate. These events are recounted in a local song from Goose Cove called The Moonshine Can. Jim also did a song about the abandonment of local communities, as many of the local villages, like rural communities everywhere say goodbye to many of their young people.

After dinner it was auction time. With some real gems up for sale, Mark, ably assisted by passenger Gary, talked us into parting with our hard earned money for a very good cause. The whole event was highly entertaining, and raised a significant \$2300.00, a testament to the generosity of our passengers. After the auction, they also proved to be a talented lot, with an open mike session in the Observation Lounge bookended by Richard and Jim, but the real highlights were the unexpected contributions of passengers who sang, told stories and read their own poetry.

Saturday, 07 October 2006

Fogo Island, Newfoundland

0800 hrs

Position: 49°47' 6" N 54° 17' 3" W

Barometric Pressure: 1023 mb

Air temperature: 8°C

Wind: Force 5 SW

We had an interesting zodiac drive from our anchorage to the landing stage at Fogo. The town sits on a neck of land with



the sea either side. We skimmed under the small road bridge and into the fishing harbour where local dignitaries greeted us and handed out packs which included a map from the Flat Earth Society which claimed that Brimstone Head was one of the four corners of the earth along with Papua New Guinea, the Greek Island of Hydra, and the Bermuda Triangle: strange bedfellows. There were three museums to get to grips with, including the former fish merchant's home, enticingly named Bleak House, from the days when it stood alone on that shore. The interior was much cosier than the name. Fogo was referred to by the Portuguese as early as the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It soon became a fishing base for both French and English seasonal fleets, and especially Basques. It now has a greatly reduced industry based on snow crabs, fished for in round pots shaped like lampshades, and lobsters, caught in what looked like adapted wooden crates. There is also shrimping, and many of us were able to see squid jigging, which is not Richard's new dance number, but a rapid way of catching these cephalopods on artificial lures lowered by simple hand-wound spools over the side of traditional dories.

In the morning, we took a look round the town, its handsome churches, and the classic Newfoundland one-roomed schoolhouse, used until 1965, and now preserved with the desks, books and slates from its period past. There was some chance to shop, especially if you like coming back from holiday and giving people unknown items of ship's chandlery, and leaving it up to them to work out what they are for.

Most opted to go back to ship for lunch, though a few stayed in town to try the seafood restaurants. Afterwards, we returned ready to attack the hills. Three walks were led by staff up to different viewpoints around the town. Some saw the site where a very early Marconi transmission was made, a few made the desperately dangerous journey to Brimstone Head. The warning sign tracks the death toll: 0. If you think that not enough people have a sense of humour about their beliefs, this was probably the hike for you. All are reported to have returned. (But why were the staff hiding unused life-jackets in the bow-box of the last zodiac? Were there a few empty spaces at dinner?)



**Sunday, 08 October 2006**

**Bonavista, Newfoundland**

1200 hrs

Position: 48°40' N 53° 07' W

Barometric Pressure: 1012 mb

Air temperature: 10°C

Wind: Force 3 SW

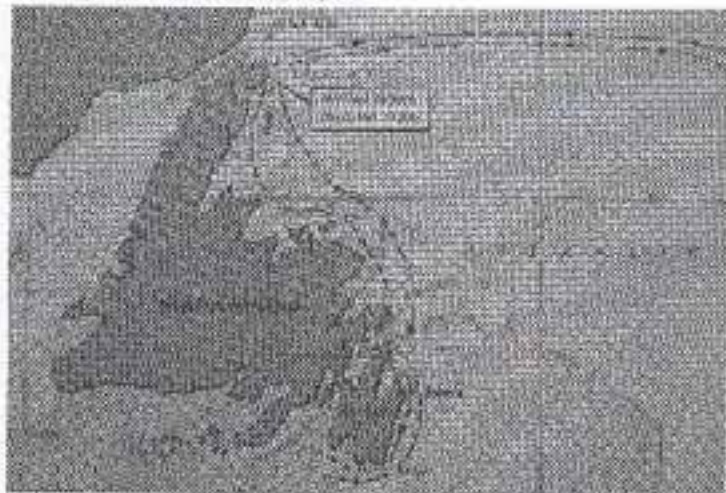
Our final full day was grey and the sea's swell was being raised by strong winds all the time we prepared for our landing. The ship was able to anchor quite close to the small harbour, but the sidegate was an interesting experiment in timing to get aboard safe and dry. But we all passed the test. Events ashore ran in a different order for different groups, but we all ended up seeing the same sights. Right alongside the jetty was the claret and blue storehouse which shelters the replica of John Cabot's ship the Matthew for the winter. This was John Cabot's ship for his voyage of 1497 which deserves to be better known. It was one of a number of professionally executed expeditions, including that of Frenchman Jacques Cartier into the St Lawrence, which, if their claims had been seized on by their monarchs, would have resulted in a very different history for North America. Instead they were distracted by wars of religion, ironically funded on the Spanish side by the loot from Mexico and Peru.

#### **John Cabot**

John Cabot was the first visitor to N America after the Norse. We have no portrait of him, no written description, no letter, no scrap of handwriting, or signature. No shipmate left an account. All our information is third hand. What happened on his first voyage is largely surmised, and he vanished on his second voyage, in 1498.

He was born by 1453, possibly in 1451, like Columbus. He was certainly Italian, probably Genoese; in that dialect, Caboto means a coastal trader. He couldn't interest Seville or Lisbon in a shorter, high-latitude route to the Indies, so he went to London which was at the priciest, western limit of the Spice Route trade. The omens weren't good; Henry VII had turned down Columbus. Cabot was at the English Court in late 1495 and got Royal letters patent to have authority over new lands discovered, subject to the Crown taking 20% the

Royal Fifth. The king would provide a ship, but no cash. Cabot settled in Bristol, Britain's second port, with 10,000 people.



On his first voyage, he took just one small ship, the *Mathew*, 50 tons. They left around 20 May 1497, and went there and back in 11 weeks, a record which stood for a century. It took 35 days to sight land, on 24 June 1497. 300 years later a voyage of 40 days was still considered good. He arrived in north Newfoundland, close to L'Anse aux Meadows,

496 years after Erik the Red. They landed, and took possession for England. He saw no people but observed snares and fish-nets. He admitted he dared not explore beyond cross-bow range from his ship, and never landed again.



There was also a tour of the Ryan Premises, giving a history of the sealing and cod industries, a commerce of international importance in its heyday. The interpretation was superb, something Canadian museums do very well. Bonavista Lighthouse was another destination, where those with a limited interest in the engineering of rotating light bulbs could simply admire the view, reflecting on all the lives saved by such a simple idea. Enactors in period costume showed us what life in the lighthouse was like: not bad apart from having to spend fifteen minutes, every two hours of the night, winding up the weights that powered the revolution of the six lights, two red, one white, repeated. There was also a quick photo stop at the dramatic natural rock formation in the cliffs, known as the

Dungeons.

In the afternoon we settled accounts and watched the photo presentation, put together by Leon, of our trip. So much has happened in such a short time, it was strange to review it. Captain's Farewell Dinner and the final briefing rounded off the day. Late in the evening we docked at St John's and bunkered fuel.

**Monday 9 October 2006**

**St John's, Nova Scotia**

Midday position 47°33'N 52°42'W

Trains and boats and planes, and one or two taxis awaited us to take us onward to our destinations, weighed down with luggage and a few extra inches, but our step lightened by memories, and our friends forewarned of huge photo-fests to come.

Bar Voyage!

## Talking Canadian Immigration Homesick Blues

Well we'd saved up all our pay, just to have a holiday  
and decided we would go to Newfoundland.  
It was just the kind of island in which Canada abounds  
there's a dry bit in the middle and some wet stuff all round.

We just knew our destination was a *Polar Star* sensation  
once we passed with trepidation through Canadian immigration.  
They wore badges on their hats, they wore badges on their sleeves  
they wore badges on the tiny bits of fabric in between.

They perceived our showerproof pants and declared we'd been to France  
though we'd really only been across the bay,  
while we damned this crazy rumour, our faces long and gloomier  
we remembered that a uniform just has no sense of humour.

So into boots went slacks and we took our zodiacs  
and we went from France to Canada again  
over ocean almost infinite we passed in just two minutes and  
I know because my shortwave caught Big Ben.

So if you want to go to Europe but you're feeling short of cash  
just nip off to St Pierre and you'll find all France is there  
where officials have all day to waste your time  
There is constant immigration from across the Gallic nation

from all those whose consternation is work's worry and frustration.  
Here in this Newfoundland they've found that life is grand  
and there sleepy lotus-eaters live a life of relaxation  
at a sleepy little desk labelled Canadian Immigration.

Copyright ©John Harrison 18:30 -18:50 *Polar Star*  
30 September 2006

## STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

### John Harrison

John was born in Liverpool, England and graduated in Geography from Cambridge University but preferred Liverpool for his Masters in Civic Design as the football team was much better to watch. He gave up the day job as a public policy planner in 1998 to write fiction and travel books. His first travel book, *Where the Earth Ends* was a Sunday Times Book of the Week, and he has twice won the Alexander Cordell Travel Writing Competition. He has made twenty-five cruises to Polar regions, and travelled extensively in Latin America, walking over seven hundred miles at high altitude through the Andes of Ecuador and Peru for his next book: *A Walk to the Sun*, due out next year.

Home is currently in Cardiff, Wales. Email [cloudbroad@ntlworld.com](mailto:cloudbroad@ntlworld.com) then wait until he gets into port to pick it up.

### Heiner Josenhans

Heiner Josenhans worked as a marine geologist with the Geological Survey of Canada (Atlantic) at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography in Dartmouth, N.S. from 1968 to 2005. Upon retirement from the Geological Survey of Canada he continues to apply his 37 years of surveying experience as a private consultant.

Mr. Josenhans has been project leader of surficial geological mapping programs throughout Canada including: Scotian Shelf, Gulf of St. Lawrence, Labrador Shelf, Hudson Bay and the Queen Charlotte Sound and Queen Charlotte Island Archipelago. These studies have produced published maps and atlases and scientific papers in leading international journals.

The mapping programs have provided insight into seabed morphology, seabed evolution, and seabed stability and marine archaeology. The research results have also been published in popular literature such as National Geographic Magazine and Canadian Geographic and on numerous radio programs such as the CBC Quirks and Quarks science program. Heiner Josenhans resides on the East Coast of Canada from June to December and in British Columbia for the remainder of the year.

### Richard Neville

Richard Neville is from Black Tickle, Labrador and started fishing with his father at the age of 13. They fished together until the collant to college in Goose Bay and obtained a certificate in Environmental Studies, which led him to work as a wildlife technician for the Newfoundland and Labrador Wildlife Division. He also applied his environmental education to the Eastern Habitat Joint Venture and was instrumental in helping to initiate the first stewardship zone in Labrador, in the Goose Bay area.

He has played the guitar since the age of ten, and spent his teenage years playing in local bands around Labrador. When he eventually moved to Goose Bay, he continued working as a musician and his services have long been in great demand as a studio musician backing up other performers on their recording projects. For the past several years, he has been lead guitarist for Harry Martin, one of Labrador's leading singer/songwriters, playing on his recordings and touring across the country. He has also appeared frequently on radio and television.

He is currently residing in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where he is in the process of writing songs for his first solo recording and working as an accompanist for several other musicians.

### Douglas Nixon

Douglas Nixon has worked as an archaeologist for over twenty years in British Columbia, Ontario and Newfoundland and Labrador. He was educated at the University of Western Ontario and Memorial University of Newfoundland, and as a consulting archaeologist, he has been employed on federal, provincial, and private research projects. He has extensive experience in Newfoundland working on both aboriginal and European sites, while in Labrador he has focused on aboriginal sites, some dating as far back as 5000 years BP.

His travels have taken him through Europe, Australia, Canada and the US. When not working as expedition staff or on archaeological sites, he puts his carpentry skills to use as a set builder for movies and theatre productions. He also serves as Chair of the Colony of Avalon Foundation in Ferryland. Conveniently, he is married to a shore bound archaeological conservator who tends to the artifacts he generates.

### Leon Normore

Born in St. Anthony, Newfoundland, spent most summers on the Pinware River (Southern Labrador) working as a salmon fishing guide. Completed B.Sc. (Honors) in Geology at Memorial University of Newfoundland in 2001, worked on offshore drilling rigs in the Gulf of Mexico, Scotian Shelf and the Grand Banks offshore Newfoundland before returning to MUN to work on a Master's program in Petroleum Geology.

### Jim Payne

From Notre Dame Bay on Newfoundland's northeast coast, Jim is one of the province's best-known performing artists. A singer of traditional songs, a writer, actor, storyteller and dancer, he operates his own record label featuring traditional and contemporary music that reflects the Newfoundland experience. He is a member of several performing troupes, including the acclaimed traditional music band A Crowd of Bold Sharemen and is a frequent performer with Rising Tide Theatre. He has performed extensively on radio and television in Canada and abroad, and has toured on six continents. He also teaches a cross disciplinary course in Music and Folklore at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

Jim is also a veteran of expeditions to the Arctic and Antarctic as well as being a member of the Polar Star expedition staff for several of their Newfoundland circumnavigations. Besides being an experienced zodiac driver, he brings his knowledge of maritime music and folklore, a keen interest in natural history and ocean ecology, and a deep-rooted affinity with the circumstances and lifestyles of coastal peoples. He also brings a passion for sea travel and poking around in out of the way places in zodiacs.

Jim has represented Newfoundland and Labrador as well as Canada in several international expositions and cultural events around the world. He is a past recipient of the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Council's Outstanding Cultural Achievement Award, and was the 2005 recipient of a Cultural Tourism Award, presented jointly by

Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, the Government of Newfoundland's Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, and the federal Department of Canadian Heritage.

### Tony Power

Tony Power is from the Cape Shore community of Branch, St. Mary's Bay, Newfoundland. He grew up surrounded by the sea and the myriad of creatures living in it and consequently developed a love of nature at a young age. He has worked for many years with the Canadian Wildlife Service and Newfoundland and Labrador's Parks and Natural Areas and is currently manager of four of the island's seabird ecological reserves.

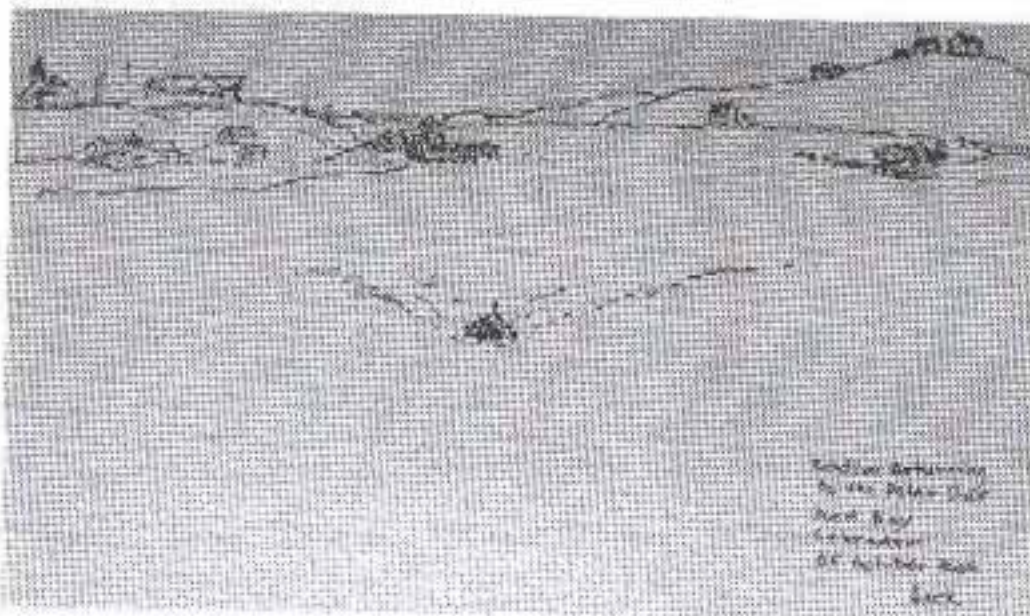
He spends most of his working time at Cape St. Mary's, not far from his home, where he can sometimes be found hanging over the sheer cliffs counting and banding birds. For his efforts in conservation and education, he has been awarded the Leslie Tuck Award by the Newfoundland and Labrador Natural History Society and the George Chafe Award from Newfoundland and Labrador Parks and Natural Areas.

### Mark Whittington

Mark was born and brought up in the Lake District, NW England. He completed his degree and PhD in Marine Biology at the University of Liverpool in 1993, during which he spent over 4 years on the Isle of Man. He then set off on a series of global adventures that saw him living and working in the United Arab Emirates, Tanzania, Mozambique, South Africa and Madagascar. Despite surviving on a desert island for 3 years, managing land mine clearance programmes and enduring an airlift out of a flooded Mozambique, he lived to tell the tale.

In 2003, Mark returned to the comparative comfort of the UK and joined a marine environmental consultancy based in London. During the summer months he is generally found under the water on commercial diving projects and during the winters he escapes the grim British weather to work aboard expedition cruise ships.

He can be contacted (when not "boat bound") by email: [mrkwhittngtn@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mrkwhittngtn@yahoo.co.uk)



## Species List

### **Bird List**

Northern Gannet  
Greater Shearwater  
Sooty Shearwater  
Manx Shearwater  
Leach's Storm Petrel  
Double-crested Cormorant  
Greater Cormorant  
Red Phalarope  
Iceland Gull  
Bonaparte's Gull  
Herring Gull  
Gr. Black-backed Gull  
Black-legged Kittiwake  
Arctic Tern  
Common Tern  
Common Murre  
Thick Billed Murre  
Atlantic Puffin  
Dovekie

Black Scoter  
Surf Scoter  
Harlequin Duck  
Am. Black Duck  
Red-breasted Merganser  
Mallard  
Osprey  
Kestrel  
Snowy Owl  
Kingfisher  
Bald Eagle  
Merlin  
Semi-palmated Plover  
Greater Yellowlegs

Blue Jay  
Gray Jay  
American Crow  
Common Raven  
American Robin  
European Starling

Tree Sparrow  
Fox Sparrow  
White-throated Sparrow  
Black capped Chickadee  
Cedar Waxwing

### **Mammal List**

Humpback Whale  
Minke Whale  
Seal (probably Hooded)  
White sided Dolphin  
White-beaked Dolphin  
Moose  
Caribou  
Meadow Vole  
Short Tailed Weasel