



Further Light on James Cook's Survey of Newfoundland

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In 1973 William H. Whiteley drew attention to the role James Cook played in implementing British policy in regard to the Newfoundland Fisheries.¹ Two hitherto unknown manuscript charts of Newfoundland by Cook, dated 1764, were found by Yolande Hodson in 1986 in the Royal Library, Windsor Castle. When examined with similar charts of Newfoundland by Cook, drawn in the same distinctive style, in the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office (Taunton) and in the British Library, and in particular with a manuscript chart of Newfoundland by Cook in the Admiralty Library (Taunton), these charts throw further light on the first two years of Cook's survey of Newfoundland. The first of the charts in the Royal Library is titled *A Chart of the Coasts Bays and Harbours in Newfoundland between Griguet and P Ferolle Survey'd by Order of Hugh Palliser Esq Commodore &c^e &c^e in the Year 1764 by James Cook²* and the second is titled *A Chart of the Island of Newfoundland with part of the Coast of Labradore Corrected from the latest Observations by James Cook³* on which the date '1764' has been added later in sepia ink.

The importance the French placed in the Newfoundland Fisheries was demonstrated in 1762 when, as a final gesture in the Seven Years War, a small French squadron under the command of Captain d'Arsac de Ternay crossed the Atlantic and succeeded in capturing St John's, Newfoundland, and destroying British fishing facilities on the east coast of the island. British reaction was swift and decisive. A squadron under the command of Commodore Lord Alexander Colville, flying his broad pennant in the *Northumberland*, escorted a contingent of troops under the command of Colonel William Amherst, and succeeded in recapturing St John's. Cook, who was master of the *Northumberland* at the time, took this opportunity to carry out a number of surveys,⁴ which much impressed Colville, causing him to write to the Secretary of the Admiralty on his return to England:

...I beg leave to inform their Lordships, that from my Experience of Mr Cook's Genius and Capacity, I think him well qualified for the Work he has performed, and for greater Undertakings of the same kind.⁵

¹ Whiteley, William H. 'James Cook and British Policy in the Newfoundland Fisheries, 1763-7', *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. LIV, No. 3, Sept 1973, pp. 245-72

² Royal Collection Windsor Castle, 710058.a

³ Ibid, 710058.b

⁴ Andrew David, 'James Cook's 1762 survey of St John's Harbour and adjacent parts of Newfoundland', *Terrae Incognitae*, Vol. 30 (1998), pp. 63-71

⁵ Colville to John Cleveland, 30th December 1762, Public Record Office (PRO), London, Adm 1/482, f. 293; reproduced in Beaglehole, J.C. *The Life of Captain Cook*, London, 1974, p. 59



A sketch of the Island of Newfoundland Done from the latest observations by James Cook, 1763. The Admiralty Library (Taunton), Atlas Vv2, Vol 1, item 21. Reproduced by the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office and The UK Hydrographic Office

Captain Thomas Graves, Governor of Newfoundland, who was also present at the recapture of St John's, was equally impressed by Cook's abilities. When it became clear that a hydrographic survey of Newfoundland would be needed to help him enforce the terms of the Treaty of Paris, signed in February 1763, particularly with regard to the important fisheries, Graves specifically asked for Cook to be appointed to carry this out. Under the terms of the treaty France recognised British claims to Newfoundland, but she was allowed to retain her fishing rights in Newfoundland on the so-called French Shore stretching from Cape Bonavista on the east coast of the island north-about to Point Riche on the west coast, which had

The second legend is placed off the north-eastern side of the island and reads:

Note: Port Bonavista, Keels, Salvages, Gooseberry Islands, Greens Pond & Ca[n]t Harbour where settled on or before the year 1660. Wadhams Islands, Tilton Harbour and Fogo Harbour where settled on or before the year 1729. Bay of Toulguet on or before the year 1735. All which places the English have continued to fish since first settled.

From these legends it is clear that the purpose of this chart was to delineate the stretch of coast where the French were permitted to fish following the Treaty of Paris and where the English regularly fished prior to the treaty being ratified. It seems probable that it was drawn up by Cook as a sort of aide-mémoire before setting out in the *Antelope* in the spring of 1763 to begin his survey rather than on his return to England later that year since none of his 1763 surveys appear to have been incorporated in this chart. The chart itself measures 600 x 705 mm, the sea is coloured with a uniform pale yellowish-green wash with a thin ribbon of green wash along the coast, with other washes as described above to delineate the various areas where the French and British fisheries were situated.

On his arrival in St John's Graves sent Cook in the *Tweed*, Captain Charles Douglas, to survey St Pierre and Miquelon before they were handed over to the French, in accordance with an Admiralty instruction,



A Chart of the Coasts, Bays and harbours in Newfoundland (north coast) by James Cook (Right hand side of map). The Royal Collection © HM Queen Elizabeth II, 710058.a. Photographer: EZM

which ordered Graves to send back 'exact and faithful charts of the coasts and drafts of the harbours, noting the depths of water, perpendicular rise of the tides, conveniences for fishing, and whatever else may occur worthy of our knowledge, in the same manner as you are directed in regard to Newfoundland.'⁸ On completion of his survey of these islands Cook returned to St John's where he joined the *Grenville*, a 68-ton schooner built in Massachusetts, which Graves had purchased for him, having obtained permission from the Admiralty to purchase a suitable vessel for his use.⁹ Cook then sailed for the northern tip of Newfoundland, where, in the next three months, he surveyed York Harbour, now called Chateau Bay, in Labrador, and Croque, Quirpon and Noddy Harbours at the northern end of Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula. In the sailing directions which he included on his survey of York Harbour Cook wrote

...Fishermen would certainly find their account in settling this place as Cod and Seals are here in great plenty, and Temple Bay and Pitts Harbour will afford Timber and Building such as Fir, Spruce, Juniper and Birch, Henley Harbour seems the most convenient place for curing of Fish, and Sea Islands for catching of Seals where there appears to have been a considerable Seal Fishery.¹⁰

Few details of Cook's work during this brief season are known. His journal, if he kept one, has not survived and since he was not in command of the *Grenville*, which was manned by seamen recruited in St John's, and therefore not a ship of the Royal Navy, no log has survived either. In consequence the historians R.A. Skelton and R.V. Tooley both overlooked Cook's surviving survey of Croque Harbour,¹¹ since it only appears as an inset plan on a manuscript chart of the eastern side of the Northern Peninsula by Captain Ruthven of the *Terpsichore*, also held in the Admiralty Library (Taunton).¹² This is confirmed by Graves in a letter to Philip Stephens, Secretary of the Admiralty, in which he reported that Cook had worked with 'indefatigable industry having survey'd four harbours'.¹³

Cook returned to England in the *Tweed* where he laid his surveys before their Lordships. While in London he was employed by Captain Hugh Palliser, who had been appointed Commander-in-Chief and Governor of Newfoundland in place of Graves, in a little historical research. The French were claiming that Point Riche, the western terminus of the French Shore or Treaty Coast, was the same as Cape Ray, the south-western tip of the island, both of which are clearly marked on Cook's 1763 chart of the island. After visiting a number of book and map sellers and examining various maps Cook gathered enough information to help to rebut French claims. But so little information was available in London about the west coast of Newfoundland that for further evidence Palliser was forced to resort to French fishermen and charts.¹⁴

When Cook returned to Newfoundland in 1774 he was appointed in command of the *Grenville*, during which he kept a journal which gives a few details of his surveying methods. Thus we know that he started his survey on 14th July in Sacred Bay at the northern tip of the island, where he 'went into the Bay sacre, measured a Base Line and fix'd some flaggs on the Different Islands, &c'.¹⁵ From here he continued his survey to the west, landing occasionally in the cutter to observe a series of triangles, depicted on one of his manuscript surveys.¹⁶ Although not mentioned in his journal, Cook must have been aware of the whereabouts of French fishermen in Noddy Harbour, presumably from his survey the previous year, since on 6th August, in the vicinity of the aptly named Unfortunate Cove on one of Cook's charts, a powder horn blew up severely injuring Cook's right hand and

...having no Surgeon on board Bore away for Noddy Harbour where a French fishing ship Lay,

⁸ PRO, Adm 2/90, Admiralty to Graves, 3rd May 1763, quoted by Whitely, p. 249

⁹ PRO, Adm 1/1836, Graves to Philip Stephens, 5th and 18th April 1763

¹⁰ HO, B188, quoted in Mary Blewitt, *Surveys of the Seas*, London, 1957, p. 72

¹¹ Skelton, R.A. *James Cook, Surveyor of Newfoundland*, San Francisco, 1965, p. 13 and R.A. Skelton and R.V. Skelton, *The Marine Surveys of James Cook in North America, 1758-1768*, Map Collectors' Series No 37, London, 1967, p. 6

¹² Cook's survey is an inset plan on 'A Sketch of the Coast of Newfoundland between Canada Head and Cape St Antoine with the Harbours of Carouge, St Julians & Cremailliere taken by the Honble Capt^r Ruthven of His Majestys Ship *Terpsichore* 1763' in HO, Admiralty Library (Taunton), Vv2, Vol. 1, item 22

¹³ Graves to Stephens (draft) *Antelope*, St John's, 20th October 1763, National Maritime Museum, London, GRV/106

¹⁴ Whitely, pp. 258-9 and Beaglehole, pp. 76-7

¹⁵ Adm 52/1263, f. 8v









¹⁶ HO, c54/3

at 8 sent the Boat in for the French surgeon at 10 the Boat returned with the Surgeon, at 11 anchord in Noddy Harbour in 6 fathom water.¹⁷


Cook remained in Noddy Harbour until 25th August when he resumed his survey to the west of Unfortunate Cove, noting the presence of existing stages and places where stages could be built for drying fish, which are depicted on the chart of the north coast of Newfoundland in the Royal Library.

The above chart measures 1958 x 673 mm and is drawn in ink, with water-colour and colour washes on paper carrying a watermark of a fleur-de-lis in shield crown above, over LVG4, with the counter-mark J VILLEDARY, the well known eighteenth century Dutch paper maker. The sea is depicted in light green and sepia washes, while the land is depicted in a combination of green, grey and mauve washes, with trees drawn in green. There is 'A Scale of [11] Miles 60 to a Degree and 360,000 Feet¹⁸ to a Degree' = 11 inches or 1:72,960. The chart is drawn on four sheets pasted together with four folds, one of which is laid down on a further sheet of paper extending about two inches on which is inscribed '21', suggesting that the chart has been extracted from an atlas at some time. It is oriented with true north offset by about 20° to enable the 1774 season's work to be depicted on the single joined up sheet. Two meridian lines towards the left and right hand sides of the chart are graduated for latitude.

To the left of the scale is the legend:

REFERENCES	
	Stages with Beach for drying Fish on.
	Stages with Flakes for drying Fish on.
	Places where Stages may be built
	Anchorage
	The center of the Instrument where the Latt ^d is determined by an Astronomical Observation.
	On the Meridian Line directs to the Place of Observation
	Rocks above Water.
	Rocks under Water.

Note// The Figures denote the depth of Water in Fathoms at low Water.

Astronomical observations for latitude were observed by Cook at six places as indicated by the symbol , namely on Cape Degrat, in Noddy Harbour, on Cape Norman, on Green Island, in the Bay of Genevieve



A Chart of the Island of Newfoundland with part of the Coast of Labradore, 1764 by James Cook. The Royal Collection ©, HM Queen Elizabeth II, 710058.b. Photographer: EZM

¹⁷ Adm 52/1263, quoted in Beaglehole, p. 80

¹⁸ The correct value of a nautical mile is 6,080 feet or 364,800 feet to a degree now shown on the latest Admiralty chart

and on Point Ferolle. The values of latitude obtained by these observations are given on arrows intersecting the two meridian lines, the arrows pointing towards the respective observation spots. To the left of the scale is a table headed 'Remarks upon the Tides in the Respective Places in this Chart' and at top left is 'A Table of the Names of the Places in this Chart as they are known to the English' with 'and French' added later in sepia ink.¹⁹

The chart of the whole of Newfoundland in the Royal Library incorporates both Cook's 1763 and 1764 surveys and so it is reasonably certain that it was drafted after he returned to England at the end of 1764. This chart measures 615 x 695 mm and is drawn in ink with water-colour and colour washes on paper carrying the watermark of a fleur-de-lis in shield crown above, over LVG4, with once again the countermark J VILLEDARY. The sea is depicted in a uniform green wash, while the land is depicted in a combination of green, grey and mauve washes. There is 'A Scale of Leagues twenty to a Degree' = 5 inches or 1:875,520. The chart is folded in two with the upper part laid down on a further sheet of paper extending about two inches, suggesting that this chart too has been extracted from an atlas at some time.

A number of names have been added later in sepia ink, namely Moll R.²⁰ and Gibraltar R. (off Placentia); Caderoy (north of Cape Raye); St Georges H (in Bay of St George); Our Ladies Bubbies²¹ (which is drawn in elevation on the chart to the east of Blanc Sablon on the coast of Labrador); Barrack Ledge, Fogo H and Tilting H (adjacent to Fogo Island) and Catt Harbour, Greens Pond, Harrow H. and Salvages (between Fogo Island and Bonavista).

Beneath the title is the legend:

REFERENCES:

Those parts that are colour'd with Red, are from accurate Surveys.

Those parts that are colour'd with Blue, are much frequented, supposed to be pretty correct, but never Survey'd.

Those parts that are colour'd with Yellow, are little known, and, supposed to be erroneous, being either copied from former Charts, or drawn from very incorrect Observa^o

From this legend it seems reasonably clear that the purpose of this chart was to show how little of the coasts of Newfoundland had been accurately surveyed. Cook and his successor Michael Lane were to rectify this omission in the course of the next few years.

Biography

Andrew David is a retired Lieutenant Commander, Royal Navy, who specialised in hydrographic surveying. He is the senior editor of the acclaimed *The Charts and Coastal Views of Captain Cook's Voyages*, published in three volumes between 1988 and 1997 by the Hakluyt Society of which he is a Vice-President.

¹⁹ There are two other versions of the chart of the north coast of Newfoundland, one in HO, c54/7, which measures 1945 x 670 mm and another in the British Library, Add MS 31,360, f. 11, which measures 1948 x 673 mm

²⁰ Placentia Bay was surveyed by Cook in 1762, but he failed to locate Moll Rock during this survey

²¹ This distinctive feature with its descriptive name was placed some distance farther north on Cook's engraved charts, but it is not