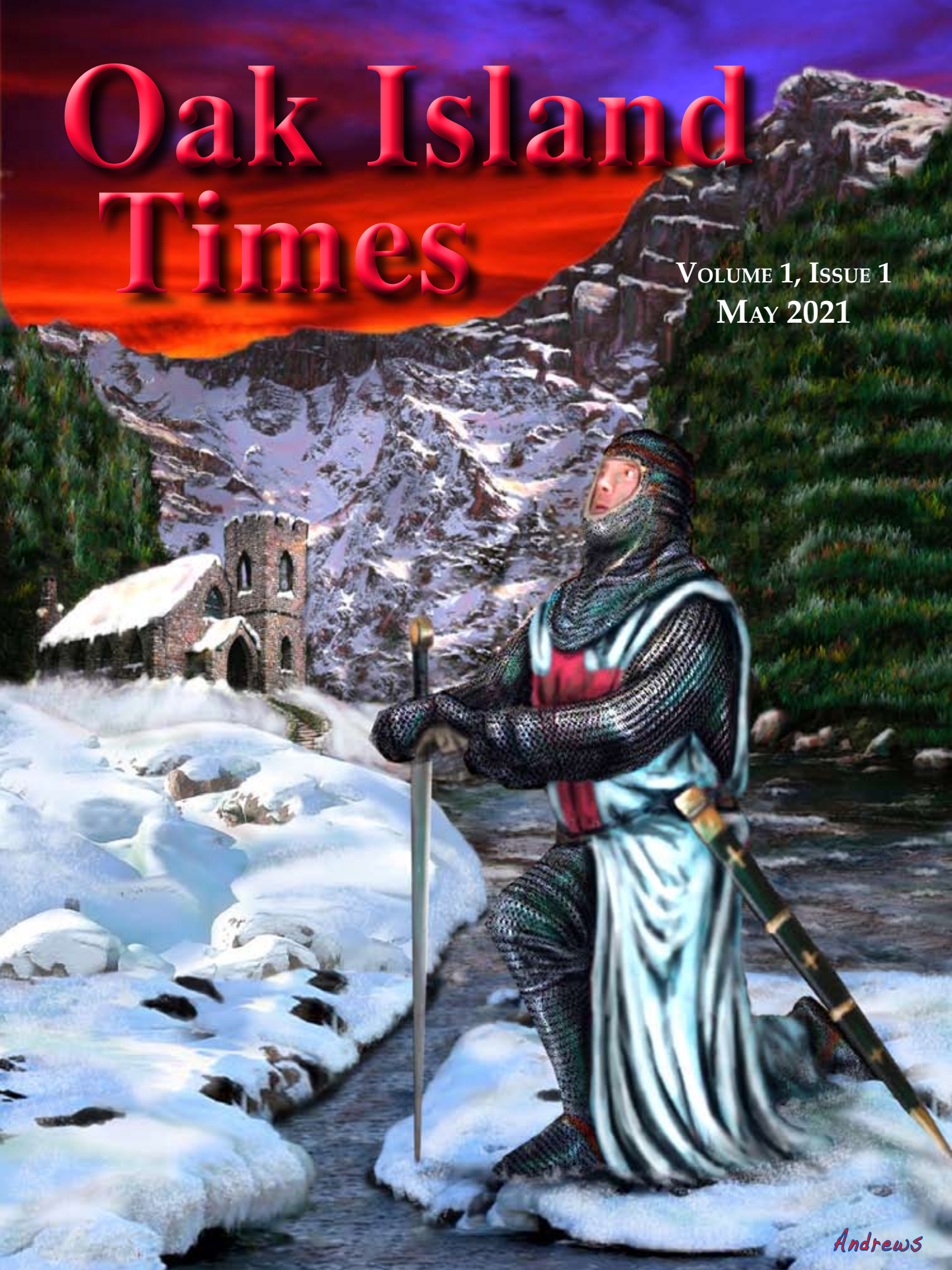


Oak Island Times

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Andrews

From The Publisher ...



Welcome to the first issue of *Oak Island Times*. Over the last several years I have been writing books about Oak Island. I've also appeared on *The Curse of Oak Island* TV show ten times, as of this writing.

I have to believe my theories and research are valuable to Oak Island fans and it seems that every time I just get finished with a new Oak Island book some important information comes my way.

With seven books written already I am reasonably sure I will go down as the most prolific Oak Island author. My bigger concern is that my research does not get lost. That was the reason the OI team suggested I write my first two books. The rest just naturally followed. Now I'm on a quest to preserve the bulk of my research, whether in more books or in this newsletter/magazine. **NOTE: This publication is in no way meant to represent or speak for the Oak Island team, Oak Island Tours, Prometheus Entertainment, or the History Channel.** However, I am happy and proud to say that I am featuring an interview with Craig Tester, one of the main Oak Island players, as my very first article in my very first issue.

Meanwhile, I don't pretend to have the Oak Island mystery, or for that matter, the New Ross foundation mystery, SOLVED but I have collected and continue to collect an abundance of information. I guess you could say it is my hobby and perhaps my gift, to ferret out details and blend them into a possible narrative of what might have taken place in this little neck of the woods in Nova Scotia. I use historical documents as much as possible, along with family traditions and interconnections, old books from as far back as the 1600s, logic, motives and a little science if available. Not everyone will agree with my assessments and there may be conflicting histories about any single aspect of this research, plus I just might make a mistake every once in awhile. If it is accepted well, I will continue it as long as I am able. *NOTE: The cover artwork for this issue was drawn by Larry Andrews, over a dozen years ago. I've waited for just the right opportunity to use it.*

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Craig Tester

– an interview –

For this very first issue of *Oak Island Times* I am happy to have an interview with one of the main partners in the search taking place on Oak Island, Nova Scotia – Mr. Craig Tester.

OIT: Craig, thank you so much for being here. I imagine with your home life, your energy business, and your involvement in Oak Island, your life gets a little hectic at times. With all the daily buzz typically going on, how did it feel last season to have to isolate for 14 days within the clutches of Oak Island?

Craig: I'm always eager to work when I get to Oak Island. So last year it was very frustrating to be so close to the island for two weeks but not be able to set foot on it. I did talk to the guys regularly but you always want your own eyes on the projects.

OIT: Covid has slowed the world down a lot, but before all that, what were/are your favorite hobbies when not working on one project or the other – or did you even have time for any?

Craig: Golf is my favorite hobby and Oak Island definitely has cut into that.

OIT: I recently read that you were a wrestler back in school. That explains a lot to me because I've watched my former wrestling friends and they generally seem to be quietly assessing the situation before jumping into the fray. With your engineering background, I frequently see you having the final say on projects. We so often hear, "Craig, what do you think?" Do you see yourself more as an engineering consultant to the team, or a guiding voice when the final decisions have to be made?

Craig: We refer to ourselves as the “Fellowship of the Dig” because it truly is a group effort. I see my role as digesting everyone’s ideas and giving Rick and Marty my honest opinion on what to do next.

OIT: Many people have pointed to the 1965 *Reader’s Digest* article as their first encounter with Oak Island, including Marty and Rick Lagina, Dan Blankenship, Fred Nolan, Robert Restall and others. When did you first hear about the mystery?

Craig: Marty and I had been partners for many years when he asked if I’d be interested in looking for the treasure. I think he was expecting me to say “that’s a crazy idea” but I was intrigued and I’m so glad I got on board.

OIT: This question may seem unfair, but do you have a favorite pet theory?

Craig: Not really. My wish is it would be related to the Knight’s Templar.

OIT: I have been there and have seen you folks working long days, late into the evening, during the dig season. Is it the thrill of the hunt that keeps you all going?

Craig: Yes, you never know what Oak Island will reveal.

OIT: Does a return on investment play any role, or does the search transcend those types of concerns?

Craig: It’s the thrill of the search both mentally and physically that keeps me involved. I love solving puzzles and I’m fortunate enough to be involved in one of the biggest.

OIT: The world has seen a lot of personal issues play out for the whole team. The show is almost a microcosm for the real lives of so many fans, and that, I suspect, is one of the major draws for fans to make them set aside Oak Island day, week after week, and then to feel just a little hollow when the season ends. Are you so busy elsewhere, once you’re off the island, that you have no time for the bittersweet, or are you already tasting what the next dig season will bring?

Craig: I am always thinking about Oak Island. We collect so much data that all winter I’m going over it to see what I missed, what new technology might help us, what is James McQuiston up to now!

OIT: I want to thank you for taking the time to answer a few questions from one of your biggest fans.

Craig: Thanks for your support and the support of our fans. You don’t know how much that means to us. Cheers.



Craig Tester was the first member of the Oak Island team that I met. This is a photo of that meeting, from 2017, in a nearby tourist shop.

Who were the Knights Templar?

Perhaps no other organization in history has had so many theories surrounding it as has the Knights Templar. Among the prevailing mysteries are whether they were the forerunner to the Freemasons and if they buried still-undiscovered treasure in Europe, Scotland and/or North America, particularly on Oak Island.

They are also behind one of the theories about the building of a castle at a site in New Ross, Nova Scotia, located less than 20 miles from Oak Island, with Gold River flowing between these two places.

In 2020, I made the discovery, since verified by three GPS experts, that the cross arm of Nolan's Cross (a configuration built of several monolithic stones forming a huge cross on Oak Island), when followed as if it were a gunsight or a surveyor's transit, points directly to the New Ross foundation.

Whether it was the Knights Templar involved, or not, whoever it was that built Nolan's Cross seems to have been involved at New Ross as well.

Another mystery is whether the Templars took part in the 1314 Battle of Bannockburn, under the forces of Angus Og MacDonald, Lord of the Isles, at which Robert the Bruce defeated the English King Edward and became King of Scotland.



Why this is important is that the battle took place almost exactly 100 days from the day Jacques de Molay, last Grand Master of the original Knights Templar, was burned at the stake.

Robert the Bruce's descendants created the Stewart line of kings for Scotland and eventually for all of Great Britain.

In 1621, one of these kings, King James (Stewart) VI of Scotland, James I of England and Ireland, granted Nova Scotia to Sir William Alexander. It was in this charter that the words Nova Scotia first appeared, 400 years ago, this year. King James also helped William Alexander form a new degree of knighthood known as the Knights Baronet of Nova Scotia.

In turn, Sir William Alexander was descended from Angus Og MacDonald's family and grew up on former Templar land, located just seven miles from the Bannockburn battlefield.

An associate of mine, Ron Henderson, of Perth, Scotland, was a member of the Order of Scottish Knights Templars and past Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. I am currently a Fellow with the same society.

Ron has departed this life but before he did he provided me with a video of another deceased associate of his, Robert Brydon, who was considered one of the foremost experts on Templars in Scotland.

Another close associate of mine from Aberdeen, Scotland, provided me with an extremely detailed report on Templar land holdings.

This second gentleman and I once conspired to form a group of historians in an effort to document everything we could find on the Scottish Battle of Red Harlaw and to store it digitally.

Harlaw is said to have been the bloodiest battle ever fought on Scottish soil and was, in essence, a civil war.

Nearly every Scottish family surname was somehow represented at this battle.

My Aberdeen friend also provided a proprietary report in which an associate of his catalogued all mentions of Templar land deeds and official activities in Scotland.

I am very indebted to all of these gentlemen for my knowledge of the Knights Templar. Along with their valuable information, I have sourced several books from my own extensive library, some of which are considered scholarly, along with web sites, magazine articles and books that were meant more for entertainment than for pure scholarly study.

The challenge is not so much in finding information as it is in the condensing of that information into an understandable tale that shows a connection of Templar presence in Scotland to other aspects of Scottish life.

Part of the Oak Island/Knights Templar legend is that, after escaping persecution in France, Templars came to Scotland and combined forces with fellow knight Robert the Bruce.

Bruce had been excommunicated from the Catholic Church and so Scotland would be a natural place for Templars to take refuge. From there, it is said, they made their way to North America and particularly to Oak Island.



Robert the Bruce

After extensive research, my version of the Templar's story is meant to simplify as much as I can of their history, while still adding in critical or informative episodes along the way. Since this history is so old, some of it is not universally accepted and there are alternative angles to the story.

I am, however, reporting it in a way that is agreed upon by many.

I will not be able to tell the entire story in this single issue or article, however it will be a beginning of this narrative to which I will add more details in future issues of *Oak Island Times*.

To begin with, the Knights Templar were principally a military order first founded by two French/Norman knights in 1118 and dedicated to protecting pilgrims traveling to the Holy Land.

These knights initially relied on handouts for food and clothing. King Baldwin II of Jerusalem housed them on part of the Temple Mount, thought to be the site of Solomon's Temple.

At least four religious traditions are known to have made use of the Temple Mount. These include Judaism, Rome's Pagan multi-deity religion, Christianity and Islam.

According to Jewish tradition and Bible scripture, the first temple on the Temple Mount site was built by King Solomon, son of King David, in 957 BC.

From that time until today the site has been the center of extreme variations in culture. Consequently, Knights Templar members were exposed to many types of languages, architecture, literature, legends, religious ideas and, some say, to artifacts that were found in the temple.

This resulted in the Order becoming quite worldly in their outlook on life, especially compared to the average Scotsman, who spent much of his life fishing, growing crops and fighting wars for his clan chieftain or laird.

Granted Papal protection in 1128, Hugh de Payen (also spelled Hugo de Pavens or Hugues de Payens) was named as one of the organization's two founders. The Order's full title was given as the "Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon."

They were also known as "The Knights of the Temple," and thus the abbreviated name – "Knights Templar."

Hugh de Payen quite likely already had ties to Great Britain long before the Templars were organized.

He came to the British Isles, or perhaps back to the British Isles, in 1128, recruiting men, raising financing and also collecting donations for the Order.

The great Scottish author and poet Sir Walter Scott mentions de Payen in his book *Ivanhoe*, where he says, in part – "The souls of our pure founders, the spirits of Hugh de Payen and Godfrey de St. Omer and of the Blessed Seven who first joined in dedicating their lives to the service of the Temple..."

For you see, there were originally nine Knights Templar, as mentioned by Scott and in many documents from as early as the 12th century.

It has, at times, been mistakenly thought that the Knights Templar only arrived in Scotland during the 14th century, after being banished from the Catholic Church.

In fact, they were there much earlier.

However, considering the fact that Robert the Bruce, who became the hero-king of Scotland, was already excommunicated along with his entire country and the fact that the 12th edict of the Knights Templar "Latin Rules" reads, "Where you know excommunicated knights to be gathered, there we command you to go" – a case could be made that some Templars went to Scotland simply to save Bruce's soul, while others may have gone there upon their own Papal dissolution.

Regardless, these 14th century Templars were predated by many others who were there earlier for a variety of reasons, not the least of which were land ownership and for the mining of gold!

Gold! That magical matter that has made men mad, made them risk life and limb in battle and adventure, that has caused women to swoon and cities to rise and fall. What higher standard than the gold standard – the golden age, the gold medal award and the golden rule?

Two places on earth not necessarily known for gold mining are Scotland and Nova Scotia and yet it could well be this mineral, actually found in abundance in both places, that created a primal connection between these lands.

In fact, Sir William Alexander, who mined extensively in Scotland, and actually served as Master of Mining for Scotland, was given the rights to the proceeds of all mining in Nova Scotia, owing only 10% of any silver or gold to King James.



In 2020, I discovered that this likeness of Sir William Alexander had been somewhat hidden away on a painting from 1634. Only one other image of him was available, until now. It was a drawing made from a portrait of him, or sometimes a photo of the portrait itself. The above image is unique and was made available through the Audley End House and Gardens, UK, which surprisingly also plays another important role in my Oak Island theory.

Monks from Melrose Abbey, in Scotland, also founded Newbattle Abbey in 1140.

The patron of both Melrose and Newbattle was King David I of Scotland.

Hugh de Payen, who served in the First Crusade with Henri St. Clair (Sinclair), 2nd Baron of Rosslyn, is sometimes connected to Catherine St Clair, as his wife. He met with King David of Scotland, in 1128. Not long afterwards, the Templars established a seat at Balantrodoch, which is still today part of the Parish of Temple, Midlothian, on the Esk River, in Scotland.

King David also granted to the Templars land in Ballater and the chapel at Tullich, both located near Aberdeen. In 1179, land in Turriff was gifted to the Order and, in 1187, William I, the Lion of Scotland, granted lands of Culter to the Templars.

A papal bull, from 1139, granted the Order permission to build its own chapels and churches, allowing them free movement across any borders and making them tax exempt. They answered to no one save the Pope himself.

A charter signed by Alexander II of Scotland, on March 20, 1236, confirmed to the Knights Templar all the rights and liberties which King David I, King Malcolm and Alexander's own father King William the Lion had granted to them earlier.

The estates of the Templars were so extensive in Scotland and Europe that earls, barons and even kings began taking out loans from the Order. In 1260, Henry III of England even pawned the crown jewels to the Templars for cash!

By 1296, the Templars also held lands in the burgh and the sheriffdom of Nairn, plus the burgh of Ardersier, of St. Germain's in East Lothian, of Inchinnan in Renfrewshire and Mount Hooly on the burgh-moor in Edinburgh.

A bound volume of land deeds found in the early 19th Century, by a trusted antiquarian, showed over 500 properties in Scotland listed as “Terrae Templariae,” or “Templar Land.”

Further research has found up to 640 potential Templar properties, with at least 620 of them documented well enough to be accepted as authentic.

Many Templar properties were actually tenement buildings in Edinburgh and other Scottish towns, as the Templars were very astute businessmen.

In 1189, one Alan FitzWalter, the 2nd Lord High “Steward” of Scotland, was a benefactor of the Templar Order. It was Bruce’s daughter who married into the FitzWalter line, creating the Steward or Stewart monarchy in Scotland, through their son Robert II.

William II of England, son of William the Conqueror, had propped up King David I.

When William II died he was succeeded by his brother, Henry, who married David’s sister Matilda – first uniting the royalty of Scotland and England, at least in this matrimonial way.

The monastic order of Cistercian monks, who founded Melrose Abbey, and the Knights Templar were closely associated, with some historians believing that they were indeed of the same order.

Bernard de Clairvaux, an important figure in the founding of Templarism and co-author of the “Latin Rules,” along with Hugh de Payen, followed the Cistercian way of life. He was a leading influence in the church’s endorsement of the Knights Templar and a powerful advocate of that monastic order.

The heart of Robert Bruce, a legendary beneficiary of Templar support, was buried at Melrose Abbey.

As mentioned, the monks of Melrose oversaw the building of Newbattle Abbey, whose own monks first discovered nearly pure gold in the nearby Lowther Hills. The Templars became intimately involved in its mining, along with their other financial enterprises.

Newbattle Abbey, also a beneficiary of King David I, sits in the Parish of Temple very near to the ancient seat of the Knights Templar of Scotland, at Balantrodoch.

While there are about 640 records of land ownership in Scotland by Templars, this connected series of clues stands out: Melrose Abbey and Newbattle Abbey; the Templar seat at nearby Balantrodoch; the associations between Hugh de Payen, Bernard de Clairvaux, Henri St. Clair (Sinclair) and King David I of Scotland, along with the intermarriage of the Stewart and Bruce families and possibly of the de Payen and St. Clair families; plus the burial of the heart of Robert the Bruce at Melrose; and finally the mining of nearly pure gold from the Lowther region.

These proven, related events all add up to one major and undeniable proof of substantial presence and power of the Knights Templar in Scotland long before their 14th century persecution.

There is a theory that Hugh de Payen was the son of Payen or Pagen, a knight of William the Conqueror. William’s invasion of the British Isles, in 1066, led to much of the first recording of land ownership, specific surnames being used and the organization of fighting men to join in the First Crusade, whose official start date was August 15, 1096. Just ten years earlier, William the Conqueror commissioned the *Domesday Book*, which documented land ownership and surnames throughout most of his new kingdom.

Within the *Domesday Book* one will find a man named Pagen who was one of William the Conqueror's chief barons, on whom he especially bestowed his favors.

In addition, one would find Robert, a younger son of William the Conqueror, under whom Hugh de Payen went to the Crusades, thus placing the sons (if sons they were) of both William and his chief baron in direct communication and association with each other.

The conclusion is at least very natural and certainly very probable, that Hugh de Payen (the son of Payen or Pagen) was really the son of the baron mentioned in the *Domesday Book*, with Edmund being the eldest and heir.

That Hugh de Payen was "poor" and yet the son of a rich father is readily explainable by the fact that the prevailing law of primogeniture gave the whole inheritance to the oldest son and left the younger son poor – a fact of such importance that it led, in the world of heraldry, to the adoption of a particular feature on the Paine, Payne or Payen Coat of Arms to express this.

The feature placed on the family shield was a Martlet, or footless bird, to indicate that the holder of the arms had no land to stand on and hence no use for feet.

One of the extracts from *Domesday* is the following, "Edmund, the son of Pagen, holds of the King, and Hugh holds of him." That this Hugh spoken of was Hugh de Payen cannot certainly be determined, but the fact that his surname is not given, but simply his Christian name, implies that his surname was the same as the person he "held of" as being "the son of Pagen."

The conclusion can hardly be resisted that the great Crusader, Hugh de Payen, was the son of the knight upon whom King William abundantly showered his favor.

Perhaps it was the favor of King William that opened the palace doors of King Baldwin, in Jerusalem and gave to the "poor" son, Hugh de Payen, a home and the prestige of his influence and his power – that door being the Temple Mount – along with the Order name of "Poor Knights of Christ and the Temple of Solomon."

The next phase of Templar activity in Scotland comes after they were condemned in France and eventually dissolved.

The Order, having amassed vast wealth in Scottish gold and from many other sources as well, became the world's first international bankers.

Organized according to the Cistercian rules, the Templars included knights and chaplains, both considered noble, but also sergeants and servants and eventually clerks and bookkeepers. In fact, it has been said that by the time of their dissolution in France there were more Templars serving in clerical roles than as military knights. It was their very success at banking that led to their eventual downfall.

King Philip of France was an extravagant ruler, spending far more than his subjects could provide, though he taxed his people heavily. As the story goes, Philip was being chased by angry Frenchmen one night and took shelter in a Knights Templar chapel. There he learned of the vast wealth and power of this Order.

On one hand, he desired and received massive loans from the Templars. On the other hand, he realized their power and that his indebtedness to them could result in the Templars taking over France and also controlling the Pope, who was firmly in the grip of Philip.

On Friday the 13th, of October, 1307, Jacques de Molay, the Grand Master and about sixty Templars were arrested.

The Knights were accused of heresy and monstrous crimes (profanation, idolatry and more). Tortured severely, most of the accused men confessed to everything.

Pope Clement V, shaken by these confessions, ordered other kings of the Catholic world to arrest Templars in their realms, in early 1308. Later, the Pope changed his mind and appointed ecclesiastical commissions to conduct their own investigations, during which time the Templars retracted their confessions.

But the weak Clement V did not have the capacity to resist for long the very King of France who had made him Pope. In May 1310, after their conviction as “relapsed heretics,” 54 Templars who had retracted their confessions were burned at the stake.

The Council of Vienne, in October 1311, refused to recognize the guilt of the Templars, but Philip pressured Clement V, who, in a papal bull dated April 3, 1312, officially declared the dissolution of the Order.

Some Knights Templars who kept to their confessions were freed. But on March 19, 1314, the Grand Master, Jacques de Molay, and the head of the province of Normandy, Geoffroi de Charnay, were led to a great scaffold in front of Notre Dame de Paris and were called upon to repeat the tale of their crimes before the assembled crowd. They courageously protested, denouncing the absurdity of the accusations against them while proclaiming the purity and holiness of their order.

A furious Philip had them burned at the stake that very evening, again as relapsed heretics. The innocence of the Knights Templar is today almost unanimously recognized. To be continued...

NEXT MONTH: In Steps Scotland!

The Curse Of Jacques de Molay

Molay is credited with being the last of the Grand Masters of the Knights Templar, leading the Order from April 20, 1292, until it was dissolved by the command of Pope Clement V, in 1312.

It has been claimed that Molay cursed King Philip IV of France and his descendants from his execution pyre. This story was told by a contemporary writer, Ferretto of Vicenza.

The leading Templar was brought before Pope Clement V, whom he denounced for his injustice. Some time later, as he was about to be executed, he appealed “from this your heinous judgement to the living and true God, who is in Heaven,” warning the Pope that, within a year and a day, he and Philip IV would be obliged to answer for their crimes in God’s presence.

King Philip and Pope Clement both died within a year of Molay’s execution; Clement succumbed to a long illness on April 20, 1314, and Philip died due to a stroke while hunting, in the same year.

Then followed the rapid succession of the last direct Capetian kings of France between 1314 and 1328, the three sons and a grandson of Philip IV.

Within fourteen years of the death of Molay, the 300-year-old House of Capet had collapsed.

American historian Henry Charles Lea wrote: “Even in distant Germany King Philip’s death was spoken of as a retribution for his destruction of the Templars and Clement was described as shedding tears of remorse on his deathbed for the ruin of the Templars and Beguines.”

How Does That Work?

-Carbon Dating-

Occasionally, I hope to be bringing you a brief explanation on how some of the science used on Oak Island actually works.

This month I look at carbon dating.

Every time I see the OI team bring up a piece of wood found *in situ* (in a position that could offer a clue to its age or purpose) I always think, “Wow, if they only had a carbon dating lab right on Oak Island so they could get almost immediate results.”

The basis of radiocarbon dating is simple: all living things absorb carbon from the atmosphere and food sources around them, including a certain amount of natural, radioactive carbon-14 (or ^{14}C).

When the plant or animal dies, they stop absorbing, but the radioactive carbon that they’ve accumulated continues to decay.

Measuring the amount left over gives an estimate as to how long something has been dead. This is why a range is given particularly for finished lumber as it can’t always be known when a tree fell. Did it fall naturally and was used 20 or 30 years down the road? The range given used to be 70 to 80 years, but I’ve noticed it has recently been more like 25 to 35 years.

This basic carbon dating calculation assumes that the amount of carbon-14 in the environment has been constant in time and space – which it hasn’t.

In recent decades, the burning of fossil fuel and tests of nuclear bombs have radically altered the amount of carbon-14 in the air and there are non-human activated changes going much further back.

Typically during planetary magnetic-field reversals, for example, more solar radiation enters the atmosphere, producing more carbon-14. The oceans also suck up carbon – a little more so in the Southern Hemisphere, where there is more ocean – and they circulate it for centuries, further complicating things.

As a result, conversion tables are needed that match up calendar dates with radiocarbon dates in different regions.

Since the 1960s, researchers have mainly done this re-calibration with trees, counting annual rings to get calendar dates and matching those with measured radiocarbon dates. The oldest single tree for which this has been done, a bristlecone pine from California, was about 5,000 years old.

By matching up the relative widths of rings from one tree to another, including from bogs and historic buildings, the tree record has now been pushed back to 13,910 years ago.

Since 1998, there have been several official re-calibrations, adding in new data from layers of lake and marine sediments, cave stalagmites and even coral. In 2018, some stalagmites in Hulu Cave, in China, provided a datable record stretching back 54,000 years.

In 2020, another major re-calibration was made. Though, the numbers often seem large for changes made, in the long span of earth’s history they are relatively small.

The main point is that ^{14}C calibration is dynamic and constantly being adjusted and yet it generally gets us in the right time period at least.

Measurement of the radiocarbon present in a sample was originally done by a beta counting device, which counted the amount of beta radiation emitted by decaying ^{14}C atoms in a sample.

More recently, the use of accelerator mass spectrometry has become the method of choice. It counts all the ^{14}C atoms in the sample and not just the few that happen to decay during the measurements. It can therefore be used with much smaller samples (as small as individual plant seeds) and gives results much more quickly.

The development of radiocarbon dating has had a profound impact on archaeology. In addition to permitting more accurate dating within archaeological sites than previous methods, it allows comparison of dates of events across great distances. Histories of archaeology often refer to its impact as the “radiocarbon revolution.”

Radiocarbon dating has allowed key transitions in prehistory to be dated, such as the end of the last ice age, and the beginning of the Neolithic and Bronze Age in different regions. Even with all of its advances and re-calibrations, carbon dating still has its share of challenges in the lab.

Samples for dating need to be converted into a form suitable for measuring the ^{14}C content. This can mean conversion to gaseous, liquid or solid form, depending on the measurement technique to be used.

Before this can be done, the sample is treated to remove any contamination and any unwanted constituents. This includes removing visible contaminants, such as roots that may have penetrated the sample since its burial. Alkali and acid washes can be used to remove humic acid and carbonate contamination, but care has to be taken to avoid removing the part of the sample that contains the carbon to be tested.

It is common to reduce a wood sample to just the cellulose component before testing, but since this can reduce the volume of the sample, testing of the whole piece of wood is often performed as well.

Unburned bone can also be tested. It is typical to date it using collagen, the protein fraction that remains after washing away the bone’s structural material. For burned bone, testability depends on the conditions under which the bone was burned.

Shells from marine and land organisms consist almost entirely of calcium carbonate which is very susceptible to dissolving and recrystallizing. The recrystallized material may contain carbon from the sample’s environment, which may be of geological origin. If testing recrystallized shell is necessary, it is sometimes possible to identify the original shell material from a sequence of tests.

Other once-living materials that have been successfully dated include ivory, paper, textiles, individual seeds and grains, straw from within mud bricks and charred food remains found in pottery.

Parchment, such as the piece found in the Money Pit, during the 1800s, is an item that can be tested. However, in a conversation with Rick Lagina, in 2018, he told me that they are hesitant to get that particular piece of parchment carbon dated because the sample is so small and a good share of it would likely be destroyed. It has at least been proven to be parchment.



Enlarged image
of the Money Pit
Parchment

Who's Who? MacDonald

One in every 57 people in Nova Scotia has the last name MacDonald, making it the number one name in the province.

After that, you can find Smith, Brown, LeBlanc and MacNeil as the other most common names; 46.18% of MacNeils in Canada can be found in Nova Scotia.

Oddly enough, the LeBlanc name may have something to do with this same family, which I will explain in a later column.

Since a lot of my personal theory about Oak Island relies heavily on who was related to who, I thought I'd offer a look at names important to Nova Scotia and Oak Island.

I am starting with the name MacDonald because the current premier Knight Baronet of Nova Scotia is named Ian MacDonald. His Gaelic patronymic (a surname derived from the name of a male ancestor) is MacUisdean, which also happens to be the original form of my own name, since he and I both appear to descend from the very same man, Uisdean MacDonald. Uisdean is said as "Ooshdn," although some say it originally sounded like Ocean and there was even a group called the Ocean MacDonalds for awhile.

Beyond Sir Ian, premier Knight Baronet, we also have the Scots founder of Nova Scotia, Sir William Alexander MacDonald.

Sir William is typically noted as having Alexander as his surname, however, if the old legends of the MacDonald clan are true, he was a MacDonald as well.

There are two different explanations presented for this connection, which are probably not worth going into. The bottom line is he believed this himself as proven in two ways. First, he sometimes signed his name William Alexander MacDonald and second, his own coat of arms carried the same motto as the one shown below on the shield of the MacDonalds of Sleat (slate), Isle of Skye, Scotland – *Per Mare Per Terras*, meaning by "By Sea and By Land."

Many Nova Scotian families eventually came over from the Isle of Skye and from the nearby mainland. Whether they knew it or not, they were carrying on a long-held MacDonald tradition of interest in Nova Scotia.

The tartan shown below is the "modern" MacDonalds of Sleat version.



MacDonald Tartan and Shield

So how did Sir Ian MacDonald become the premier Knight Baronet of Nova Scotia?

In 1625, King James VI of Scotland, now also King James I of England and Ireland, joined with Sir William Alexander to form the Knights Baronet of Nova Scotia as a way to fund an attempt to settle that country.

I say "country" because back then Alexander's grant included Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Anticosta Island and even a small part of Maine.

The Knights Baronet of Nova Scotia came about after Alexander was unsuccessful in getting settlers and investors interested in the land grant he was given in 1621.

A new type of knighthood was offered to any leading Scotsman (typically a clan chieftain) who was willing and able to pay the fee of 3,000 merks, which compared to about 150 British pounds, at the time.

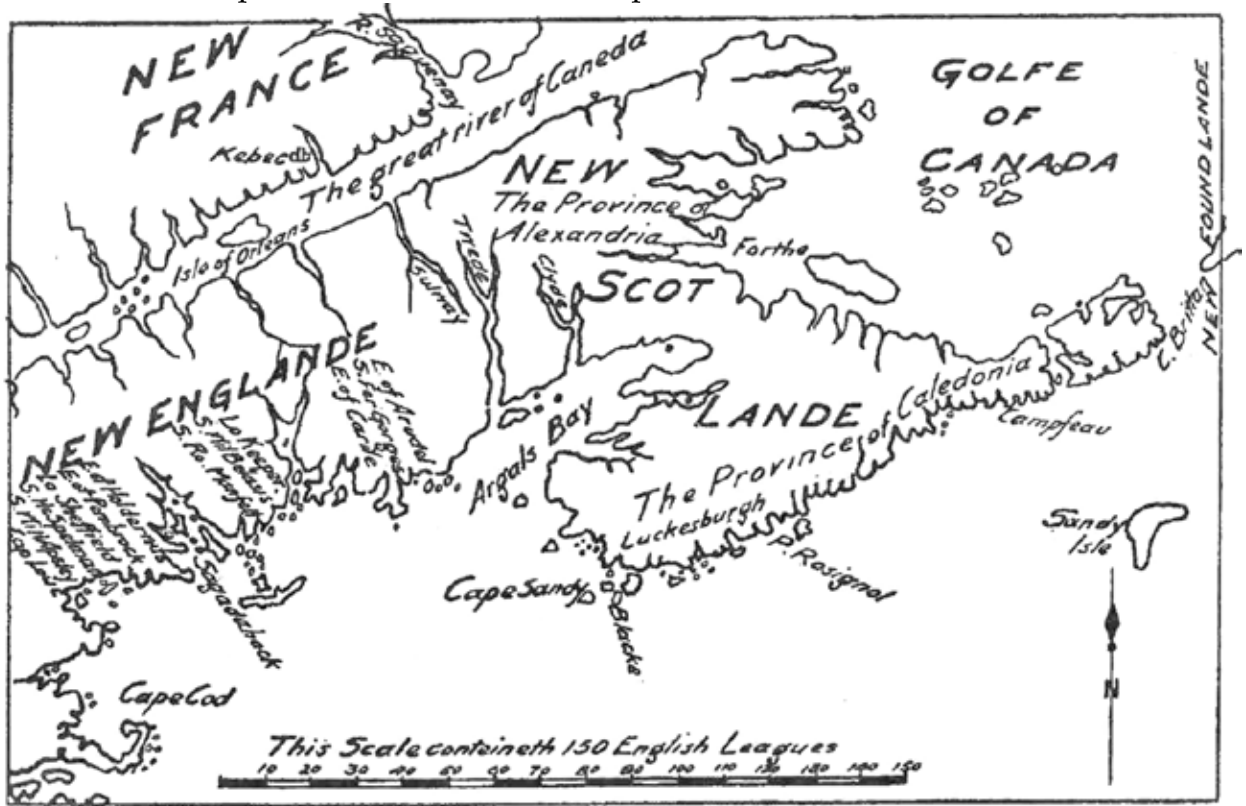
This would translate to over \$50,000 U.S. dollars, in today's money.

Two-thirds of the money went to the king. One-third went to Alexander to finance the ships, supplies, weapons, cattle and anything else that was to be sent along with the first settlers.

The MacDonalds had long held sway over the western Islands and Highlands of Scotland, usually under the banner of the Lord of the Isles.

They both fought against and married into the Stewart family. In fact, Uisdean MacDonald was the great-grandson of John MacDonald, Lord of the Isles and Margaret Stewart, great-granddaughter of the hero king Robert the Bruce, and was the daughter of Robert II of Scotland.

Peace had come to the MacDonald/Stewart families, yet this clan was still a force to be reckoned with and so a special place was made for Donald MacDonald.



William Alexander MacDonaldd's map from 1624

My distant relative Sir Ian MacDonald MacUisdean (the Gaelic root of the McQuiston name) is typically considered the current premier Knight Baronet of Nova Scotia. I found two contemporary records supporting this.

The original charter issued to Sir Ian's ancestor Sir Donald MacDonald, on July 14, 1625, said that he "should have precedence before Sir William Douglas of Glenbervy, Sir Alexander Strachan of Thorntown, and Sir David Livingstone of Dunipace, by which he became the next baronet to Sir Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun (whose line failed in 1908), and the second of that order in the Kingdom of Scotland."

Also, written in the name of the king in Latin, a partial translation of one of his decrees reads: "The King as the fountain of Honor and by Virtue of his Royal Prerogative, declares himself that he had promised another gentleman, Sir Donald McDonald of Sleat, the precedence of all the other Baronets who had been created before him."

For whatever reason, Robert Gordon was ultimately chosen as the premier Knight Baronet but, when his line died out in 1908, the line of Donald MacDonald moved into the premier position and is now represented by Sir Ian MacDonald.

The first two recorded non-operative Masons were also actually MacDonalds, since they were the sons of William Alexander MacDonald – William Jr. and Anthony.

The story of the Knights Baronet of Nova Scotia and how they are associated with Oak Island and with the beginnings of Freemasonry is best told in my book *Oak Island Knights* and expanded on in *Oak Island Endgame* and *Oak Island And The Mayflower*.

My research seems to show that four consecutive Knights Baronet of Nova Scotia owned Oak Island through most of the 1600s. Since Freemasons have been so closely linked to Oak Island the relevance of this research cannot be overstated. And that research, begun in 2016, has continued virtually every day since.

MacDonalds continued to play a role in the Oak Island search as well. It was David MacDonald who wrote the famous (and perhaps most influential ever) article for the January 1965 edition of *Reader's Digest*.

At least in part because of David MacDonald, Dan Blankenship, Fred Nolan, the Restall family, Rick and Marty Lagina, Craig Tester and so many others have dedicated their lives and fortunes to the cause of solving this age-old mystery.

Another man of this surname, one Angus MacDonald, served for nearly sixteen years as the Premier of Nova Scotia, and Rodney MacDonald served for over three years in this same position.

A man named Jefferson MacDonald was mentioned in a 1958 book, written by Reginald Vanderbilt Harris, entitled *The Oak Island Mystery* - considered to be the first book on Oak Island. The author states, "About 1865-1866, the stone (the so-called '90-foot stone' found in the fabled Oak Island Money Pit) was removed and taken to Halifax. Among those who worked to remove the stone was Jefferson W. MacDonald."

And so, it would be impossible to divorce the Oak Island story from the name MacDonald – the same for the history of Nova Scotia and Scotland, and for the history of the Freemasons.

Next month we'll take a look at the family of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, one of the more famous Oak Island searchers.

The First MacDonalds' Breakfast?

Served up the hard way!



Here is an very interesting tale from MacDonald legend, which explains how the Sinclair family lost the Orkney Islands, where Sir Henry Sinclair once ruled.

William Sinclair, 1st Earl of Caithness (1455–1476), 3rd Earl of Orkney (1455–1470) and Baron of Roslin, was a Scottish nobleman and the builder of the famed Rosslyn Chapel, in Midlothian, with ties to the Knights Templar.

He was the grandson of Henry Sinclair, 1st Earl of Orkney and son of Henry Sinclair, 2nd Earl of Orkney and was, for a time, protector of the young James Stewart, the later King James I of Scotland. In addition, he was Lord High Admiral and Lord Chancellor of Scotland.

The MacDonald Lord of the Isles and the Sinclair Earl of Orkney found themselves in Edinburgh, late one evening, celebrating with drink and a healthy bit of boasting.

Sinclair invited MacDonald to breakfast the next morning to which MacDonald replied he'd have breakfast ready first and Sinclair could join him, instead.

They "discussed" this to the degree that they made a wager on who could be up earliest and have breakfast ready first.

As the celebration ended, the Earl sent twelve men out into the countryside to make sure no one sold meat or provided firewood to MacDonald, so that Sinclair could win the wager. Lauchlan MacLean, a follower (and possibly a brother-in-law) of MacDonald, found some firewood, shot a Highland stag and prepared breakfast very early in the morning.

Word was sent to the Earl of Orkney that his "MacDonalds" breakfast was ready, which upset him greatly.

When next he saw MacDonald he said, "Do you think to equal or cope with me in power and authority?"

MacDonald countered that he had a young son at home (Uisdean MacDonald) who could in fact equal the Earl in power and would someday prove it. Several years passed until 1460, when MacDonald's final boast came to fruition.

William Sinclair was no one to play games with! He became the first Lord St. Clair of Scotland in 1449, the same year his nemesis, Uisdean or Hugh MacDonald, son of the Lord of the Isles, was given land on the Isle of Skye and made Chief of the MacDonalds of Sleat (slate).

In 1460, Hugh of Sleat and several other "gentlemen of the Isles" descended upon the Orkneys. They landed opposite of where the Earl had anticipated and were quickly able to claim a victory over his men.

Some historians have wrongly reported that the Earl was killed. He lived on, long after this event, though he lost his lands on Orkney in favor of lands on the nearby northeast coast of Scotland, in an area called Caithness (kateness).

King James III claimed Sinclair's rights to the Norwegian Earldom of Orkney for the Scottish Crown in 1470 – the once great realm of Sir Henry Sinclair. William was thereafter 1st Earl of Caithness, alone, until he resigned the Earldom in favour of his son William, in 1476.



So, the end has come to the 2020-21 season of *The Curse of Oak Island*. I have to say that I was more than surprised to see my face on the show the first time.

When I appeared the next week, and two weeks after that, and then my theory was discussed to such a great degree on the 5/4/21 *Drilling Down* episode, I was taken aback, as they say.

This was especially true when I heard Rick Lagina say, "When you ask the who, what, when, where, why and how, I think James, above all the others, really deals with that... I can tell you what, James is not giving up."

Marty also seemed quite impressed with the work I did in my *Oak Island And The Mayflower* book

There is normally only a small amount of back and forth correspondence between the OI team and myself, especially when it is near the close of the dig season and into the actual TV season.

Often it depends on whether I am working on a specific project with Doug Crowell, for instance in the case of the 1671 knighthood medallion, or the true nature of the area called Mirligaiche, or other things we've conspired on.

Of course, when it is time to make arrangements to go up there or, in the case of this past year, to set up a Zoom meeting (which I like to call my War Zoom meeting) then there are phone calls with Prometheus and often with Rick Lagina. But I'm never told if or when I will be on the show.

At times I will see myself in the preview for the next show, but not this year. So, again, all four of my appearances were a big surprise to me.

The War Zoom meeting ended up lasting three hours, but that was still topped by my 2019 war room meeting that lasted four hours!

I was exhausted by the end of my presentation and question and answer period, but I had nothing on the team who had already been out in the field for about eight hours that day. There was just so much to talk about.

Trying to pack what is in my books, or what is presented in the war room, into a single segment on *The Curse of Oak Island* is a tough challenge for them. They film 10 to 15 times what they can end up using, plus they are getting film feeds in, sometimes, from four to five cameras, especially for outside filming where drones are used.

I have a lot of sympathy for the note takers and footage editors in trying to make a molehill out of the mountain of data that is being provided.

I was very glad to see the earlier *Drilling Down* episode where credit was given to the large Prometheus crew that braves long days, biting insects, rough terrain and often very bad weather just to bring us this show. They and the whole Oak Island crew deserve all the thanks we can give them.

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In late 2020, I had an epiphany that the cross arm of Nolan's Cross might point to the mysterious foundation at New Ross, located about 17 miles away.

I did a makeshift drawing of this and sent it off to the OI team. A month or so went by with no word, which is not unusual when the dig season is ending and the TV season is beginning.

The following month I sent a much more refined drawing of my theory but still no word. I had also been corresponding with a man who has studied the cross in great detail and so I asked him to give me his opinion.

I'm not talking about just drawing a line from Nolan's Cross to New Ross. I'm talking about taking a sighting along the cross arm as if it were a surveyor's transit or a rifle sight.

This gentleman, Brian Pharoah, came up with the same results and a much nicer illustration of this phenomenon. I sent this off to the OI team with a request that we get Steve Guptil involved. Steve used a GPS point provided by the current owners of the site and his results matched mine and those of Mr. Pharoah.

The team has since had this verified by another GPS expert.

My discovery, made by no one else in over 226 years of searching on Oak Island, was included along with a couple of other discoveries, unique to my research – all in my latest book *Oak Island And New Ross*.

Carmen Legge was kind enough to answer a few questions for me (being one of the premier historians of New Ross) and once he saw a PDF proof of my book, he stated that it will “shock” a lot of people.



My new book, *Oak Island And New Ross*, has at least three major discoveries in it that no one else has ever realized.

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I have several other research projects going on but one of those is identifying the bag or bale seal found on the shores of Oak Island this past season.

What might be the case is that these types of trademarks were inspired by stonemasons who marked the stones they worked on with their “Mason’s Mark” for two very practical reasons – the first was to make sure they got paid for each stone they worked on, and the second, because the overseers wanted to know who it was that worked on a stone if it was defective.

There was no real mysticism in this, just practicality. The same was true for the Mason’s Word. This word was a secretive way of making sure that a non-accepted stonemason could not sneak on a job site.

First, if a lead stonemason was found employing someone who was not at least an apprentice stonemason, that employer could be fined heavily.

Second, there were many trade secrets the stonemasons were not anxious to share since there was so much money to be made in building cathedrals, castles, bridges and tenement houses.

Under King Richard II, of England, it was decreed in 1389-90 that: “the workers, weavers, and fullers shall put their seals to every cloth that they shall work.” This was likely related somehow to the collection of taxes, as Richard had taxed his subjects heavily to pay for war with France.

It was not needed to command stonemasons to add marks to their work as they had been doing this since anyone could remember. According to the Scottish stonemasons of the day, “The only rule for their formation is that they shall have at least one angle; that the circle must be avoided, and cannot be a true mason’s mark unless in combination with some line that shall form an angle with it.”

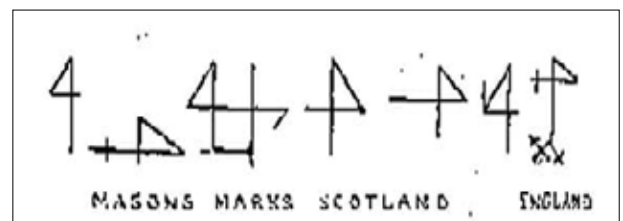
I think the circle was to be avoided simply because it took longer to cut into the stone, thus cutting into production.

It has been generally accepted that the signature or markings which masons have for centuries been in the habit of cutting on the stones wrought or hewn by them may all be included in two classes: the false or blind mark of an apprentice, displaying an equal number of points, and the true mark of the fellow-craft or passed mason consisting of an unequal number of points. This is likely where the expression “The true mark of a craftsman” comes from.

I found some exciting news that might link not only the bag seal, but also the scale weight, found on Oak Island to my chief suspect, Sir William Alexander.

The accompanying graphic shows what is known as the “Mark of Four” being used in Mason’s marks, and also in Merchant Adventurer marks.

The bag seal found on Oak Island has a logo or mark somewhat similar to that of the East India Company, but not an exact match.



When the East India Company was chartered by Elizabeth I, Queen of England, in 1600, it was already customary for each merchant or Company of Merchant Adventurers to have a distinguishing mark which included the “Mark of Four” to serve as their unique trademark.

The East India Company's mark was made up from a '+', a '4' and the initials EIC, which proves it is not a match for the OI seal.

In the early seventeenth century, similar groups of investors were formed to develop overseas trade and colonies in the New World: the Virginia Company which later split into the London Company, settling Jamestown and the Chesapeake Bay area, and the Plymouth Company, which settled New England. Sir William Alexander and Sir Francis Bacon were part of the later Merchant Adventurers company as shown in my *Oak Island And The Mayflower* book.

The Company of Adventurers in Canada sent forces that achieved the surrender of Quebec in 1629. This is the same year William Alexander Jr. reached Port Royal. His way was paved by the Kirke brothers.

In the book *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain, Vol I, 1567-1635*, by Charles Pomeroy Otis, Ph.D., written in 1880, it is stated: "Sir William Alexander applied himself to the formation of a company of London merchants who should be at the expense of fitting out an armament that should not only overcome and take possession of the French settlements and forts wherever they should be found, but plant colonies and erect suitable defenses to hold them in the future. The company was speedily organized, consisting of Sir William Alexander junior, Gervase Kirke, Robert Charlton, William Berkely, and perhaps other distinguished merchants of London." Here, the author places a footnote: "We do not find the mention of any others belonging to the Company of Merchant Adventurers to Canada."

We know who William Alexander Jr. was, including being the leader of the Port Royal Scots and the world's first Freemason.

We also know that Gervase Kirke was one of the several Kirke brothers who agreed to act as the military force to be used to chase the French out of Nova Scotia.

It was the Kirkes who captured Claude de la Tour, who was later granted Mirligaiche by William Alexander. But what about the other two men mentioned?

Sir William Berkeley was the longest-serving governor of Virginia and a playwright. After being educated at Oxford and after a brief study of the law, Berkeley gained access to the royal circle surrounding King Charles I. Soon after his graduation from Oxford (in 1629), he was given a seat in the privy chamber and served in the colonial office as a **commissioner of Canadian affairs**. This was the same year William Alexander Jr. reached Port Royal.

The other man, Robert Charlton, was a goldsmith on Mincing Lane, located very near William Alexander's home in London. Robert married a daughter of Sir Job Harby, also an eminent goldsmith.

Sir Job Harby along with his brother Sir Thomas Harby were "the most eminent goldsmiths of their time" according to *The Lives of the Speakers of the House of Commons*, by James Alexander Manning, 1851.

This puts these three men, all mentioned in conjunction with William Alexander Jr., also in direct association with Sir William Alexander the elder (and Nova Scotia), along with the Merchant Adventurers who used logos containing the Mark of Four, plus the London cloth business, and the London goldsmithing business.

What was found on Oak Island? A bag or bale seal for the cloth trade with the Merchant Adventurers' commonly used Mark of Four on it, and a scale weight seeming to be the kind used to measure gold!

SO, WHAT'S NEXT?

My June issue will feature a continuation of the Knights Templar story, but my lead story for that issue will be about Captain Kidd. He has been associated with Oak Island for a long time, even though there is no proof that he even knew about Oak Island. You'll hear about his life, about early news articles mentioning him as being tied to Oak Island, and you'll hear what other Oak Island searchers have had to say on the subject.

For my "How Does That Work?" segment, I'll talk about GPS and surveying. Might even get some outside help on that subject.

I'm working, as I'm sure many other people are, on identifying the trademark and original ownership of the bag or bale seal found on the shores of Oak Island. This could be a major clue. I have found that it is often said that quite a few of these seals date to the 16th and 17th century. Any time I hear a date from the 1600s related to Oak Island I obviously get excited as my target date for the beginning of this mystery is 1632. In fact, the title of my second book is *Oak Island 1632*.

I'm not sure what else will be in the next issue as I am working on a few new angles and I don't yet know how refined they'll be by the June issue. My research has stretched over seven years and individual discoveries have sometimes taken three or four months to nail down, with even more information coming along later. This is one of the reasons behind this newsletter – to keep folks up-to-date, as much as possible, on my research.

A few points I need to make before saying goodbye for this month. **This publication in no way represents the Oak Island Team, Oak Island Tours, Prometheus Entertainment or the History Channel.** However, some of the photos in this e-magazine are courtesy of the History Channel or Prometheus. They are also well aware of *Oak Island Times*.

I've worked with all of these folks for seven years, but they speak for themselves.

I am just presenting my ramblings for your enjoyment. This publication is free and will continue as long as it makes sense, and as long as I am able to keep it going. And there never seems to be a lack of things to talk about concerning Oak Island. If you wish to have the password to the digital vault where these issues will be stored, simply email me at oakislandtimes@gmail.com. I'll be keeping the number of pages and file size down to allow for easy transmission anywhere in the world. **See ya next month!**

Here is one of my favorite photos. At left is Charles Barkhouse, center is yours truly, and at right is Doug Crowell. We are seated at the war room table. These men have been so kind and helpful over the last seven years.

