2638 R. V. Harris Papers

Beamish

The Institute of Oceanography
University of British Columbia
Vancouver 8, B.C.
July 11, 1967.

Reginald V. Harris, Q.C.
Freemasons' Hall
Halifax, Canada

Dear Mr. Harris:

I have just come back from at sea and have received your letter of June 26th. Congratulations on nearing completion on the revised edition of the Oak Island Mystery and thank you very much indeed for offering to include our work and endeavors to solve this mystery.

On this last trip I believe that we successfuly completed over 10,000 man-hours of good quality scientific surveying with the very best geophysical instruments possible. Having been trained in geophysics at University of Toronto and M.I.T. , and having supervised this work I feel competant as a consultant for finding the solution of the Oak Island Mystery by scientific means. In fact I certainly would enjoy trying to complete this work in the future.

My combined expeditions of '65 and '66 recovered over 1,000 interesting relics, some no doubt dating back to the original pirate expeditions. I am enclosing a photograph of the large anchor found on the south-west shore at a depth of several feet. Also are enclosed two photographs of some of the boys using instruments and many more photos are available upon request both of the various scientific instruments used and of the fun and adventurous times that we all had. Photos of the coin do not indicate the fine structure that enabled us to identify it and from a distance it appears corroded and unconvincing. Could I please have these photos back when you are able to return them.

I am also enclosing an article that appeared in the Phillips Academy weekly paper last October, which tells some of the story of our '66 expedition. I am writing my agent, Mr. Richard Barber, c/o the Sterling Lord Agency, 75 E. 55th St., N.Y. 22, N.Y. to have him forward a copy of a professionally written story for publication and this story was not used to date so I don't see any reason why you could not use the information or any part of the text if suitable. Life magasine was ready to cover the story if we hit gold!

thought he was an instructor

Thank you once again for you letter and interest in our expeditions and I will certainly forward any further information necessary. Hoping to see you on my next trip to Halifax but I cannot say for sure when that will be. Thanks again.

Respectfully,

Beamish

2645 - R. V. Harris Papers
MG1 Vol 390

ANDOVER.

Phillips Academy,
Andover, Mass.,
01810,

Sept. 27, 1965.

Beamish

Dear Mr. Harris:

Thank you for yourletter which I received today.

I am enclosing some diagrams and photographs which you loaned to us and also a story of our expedition which we have just completed. We had a wonderfully successful time and everyone enjoyed themselves immensely.

I am sure that you will be interested in a Spanish coin that we found and which has dated at 1598/ It is a Spanish 11 Maravedi. We also found over 300 other metal objects of archeological interest, including axe heads, old irons, files, etc., and one axe head is extremely large, measuring 9" x 5" and very corroded. skin diving expedition turned up an anchor, many pieces of assorted china and several iron rings.

See Ponce Manuscript re Axe.

The accident, involving Mr.Restall and his son Bob was very tragic indeed. I was about midway on the western end working on our anonaly at the anamaly at the time and first to arrive of our group, it was some thirty minutes since the accident and only Andy was surviving in the pit. We managed to get him out and with artficial respiration, messaging etc., were able to save his life. My own idea of the occurance (nobody will know for sure) was that Mr. Restall fell in, his son Bob went down to save him, followed by the two others. Andy and then a sixth etc., and all were asphysiated, and the first four were drowned. This is an amazing thing to happen in so small a pit.

Some papers quoted me - most of which I said - especially of Restall being close to the treasure!

Dunfield has moved in with much activity now and he has made the most important recent discovery which you must know about, I am sure. However, he filled in most of Smith's Cove with bulldozers and muddied up all the north shore water. Then pumping the money pit he got crystal clear water. I am convinced that no water is entering from the north shore - it must be coming from the south!

As you know - I am very interested in this mystery and in the activities on Oak Island and as a personal favor, would you possibly mind droping a short note about any new developments if they occur. If Dunfield finds something I would love to come up. I think he has about a 20-30% chance!

Thank you so very much again for the maps and in advance, for any exciting news of progress on the Island. I hope you like our story, you were a great help to us all.

Thanks once again.

Very sincerely,

(Sgd.) Peter Beamish.

Beamish

1965

# THE GHOST THAT GUARDS

## $30,000,000.

by Richard Barber and Peter Beamish

An hour's drive south from Halifax, along a narrow winding road that follows the rugged irregular coastline of eastern Nova Scotia, brought us to the little community of Western Shore on Mahone Bay. Before us lay Oak Island. Before us the most mysterious and fascinating treasure story of our time.

Our expedition of nineteen geophysics students and two instructors had been keyed to a fever pitch of excitement since early morning when we had visited the Citadel Museum in Halifax and had seen the mysteriously lighted exhibits of pirates burying their chests in the ground of Oak Island. We had come for adventure and treasure, and we would find both.

Everywhere the atmosphere was filled with pirate legends of buried treasure. Road signs announced "The Captain Kidd Rod and Gun Club," "Pirate Tavern," "Gold River". Even the name Mahone Bay was derived from a Turkish word which defines a longboat used by pirates in the Mediterranean. It has been well established that the Jolly-Roger had often flown over these waters. Buried treasure has actually been discovered. But on haunted Oak Island a red jacketed ghost carrying a musket still protects the legendary hiding place of the $30,000,000. fortune of Captain William Kidd, a mysterious shaft called the "Money Pit".

Ghosts have been associated with Oak Island from the time of the first settlers in this part of Nova Scotia, but the legend of buried treasure began one summer day 170 years ago when a young boy from Chester, Daniel McGinnis, decided to paddle out to the uninhabited island for an afternoon of grouse and woodcock hunting. On a knoll on the eastern end of the island, McGinnis discovered a large circular depression in the ground. Above it, in the fork of an old Oak tree, was attached a ship's tackle-block. Their minds alive with pirate legends, McGinnis and two teenaged friends returned the next day to begin digging. At two feet, they struck a tier of flagstones, at ten feet a rotted oaken platform. The sides of the pit were hard, showing traces of pickaxe work, but the earth in the pit was loose. Work came to a halt at the fifteen foot level. The boys needed help, but they had difficulty in obtaining it due to the local inhabitants' superstitious fears of ghosts and skepticism of a treasure being buried so deeply.

Since 1795, fourteen major attempts have been made to discover the secret of the "Money Pit". The bottom has never been reached. Every time an expedition has come close to success, torrents of salt water

have poured into the shaft from a diabolicly planned system of man-made flood tunnels. The third expedition, in 1848, located the first artificial tunnel which connected the "Money Pit: with the ocean on the northern side of the island. Succeeding expeditions searched for others to the southern shore. The tenth expedition uncovered a possible walk-in tunnel to the deep cement-lined vaults. The eleventh discovered that surface markings, including a stone triangle near the beach and several drilled rocks, lay in positions predicted exactly by the markings on the original Captain Kidd treasure maps.

Despite the frustrations of digging thousands of feet of shafts and miles of tunnels, the ghost has mockingly dangled hope before the searchers. Excavation has located oaken platforms every ten feet down to 100 feet. A drill has located iron at a depth of 170 feet and cement below that. The water has now been blocked in the northern flood tunnel, but remains at tide level in the "Money Pit".

Over $1,500,000. has been poured into the "Money Pit". Only a small piece of parchment, with the letters "vi" written with a quill pen in india ink, and three small links of gold chain have been recovered. Ironically enough, more money may be spent trying to retrieve the treasure than may ever be found in the pit.

We arrived on August 10th to begin the fifteenth expedition on Oak Island. Every previous venture had planned to overcome the mystery by using the findings of previous searchers. Ours would be a new approach, a scientific survey using modern geophysical equipment. Once again teenagers would hunt for the treasure.

Peter Beamish first conceived of the idea of a geophysical investigation of Oak Island during the summer of 1964. While working near Halifax at the Bedford Institute of Oceanography, he became a close friend of another geophysicist and oceanographer, Donald Barrett. Don is the nephew of Mel Chappell, the owner of Oak Island. They were both delighted to discover each other's interest in tales of buried treasure and in the elusive mystery of Oak Island. For two weeks they camped on the island and tested various instruments for the detection of magnetic and gravitational anomalies. As a result of their experiments, they decided to make use of electro-magnetic equipment and to organize a full-scale survey of the island for the following year. Student help would be enlisted both to finance the equipment and to dig. Each boy would be given a percentage of any treasure found.

The students selected were representatives of the Phillips Academies in Andover and Exeter. An instructor from Exeter, Richard Barber, was invited to assist with organization and administration. Each boy would be given an education in geophysics, geology, skin diving, astronomy, and archaeology. Each boy would be given the adventure of his life in the quest for the buried fortunes of Captain Kidd.

All through the day on Saturday, August 7th, boys arrived at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, loaded with shovels, axes, sleeping bags, fishing rods, frying pans, footballs, treasure hunting hats, and quantities of gear for the trip. The equipment was loaded into a trailer which had been rented in exchange for 50 shares of stock in the expedition. Then at 8:30 that night, anxious and excited, the boys crowded into Beamish's apartment for their final briefing before the trip.

A large aerial photograph of Oak Island lay in the center of the floor and eager eyes and fingers roamed over the shapes of coves and beaches in anticipation of the exploration to come. The treasure hunt was now a reality. Beamish explained the operation of a modern coin detecting device, the oscillators of which caused a loud buzzing sound, as he located a heating pipe hidden beneath the flooring.

Beamish elaborated on the theoretical approach. He firmly believed in the school of thought led by Dr. R. V. Harris, the noted historian of Oak Island, who locates the treasure, not in the "Money Pit," but on the western end of the island. Our survey would be like a fleet of ships moving in for an attack on a submarine. First, our regional instruments would locate the general area of the treasure. Then precision equipment would be brought in to zero the exact position and depth. The highly developed nature of the instruments at our disposal gave us the added advantage of being able to measure the conductive effect of gold and silver as well as the magnetic effect of iron. We could detect the lock on a chest at ten feet.

The students retired for a night of sleepless excitement before our journey north.

Three nights later we finally welcomed sleep after loading and unloading thousands of pounds of food and equipment, and building a camping community which would be our home for the weeks to come. We were now ready for the primary assault which would start early in the morning.

Dawn broke and as the sun lifted above the quiet waters of Mahone Bay we warmed ourselves with a roaring fire and hot oatmeal. Some trees and bushes still had to be cleared away to complete the campsite, but interest now centered on the Beachcomber instrument and the search for coins near camp. In less than an hour, dozens of metal objects were appearing from the high tide lines of seaweed along the beach. Cans and bottle caps were assorted and classified as if each had its own archaeological tale of wonder. Wire, nails, and metal objects seemed to indicate that a sunken ship lay not far to seaward and that it was slowly being shattered and transported ashore by each ensuing wave. A burning ghost ship was seen to sink not far from this beach many years earlier. Possibly the storms of winter had buried the remnants beneath the beaches of Oak Island.

With the arrival of Don Barrett, who brought the large electromagnetic coils, the major geophsical survey began. The boys' interest

and excitement once again grew rapidly. These coils were the regional survey instrument for the geophysical assault. Both the transmitting and receiving coils are worn from shoulder straps and encircle the waist. They are similar in appearance to a hoola-hoop on suspenders. A wire cable connecting the coils sends the transmitted signal 180 feet along the ground to a receiving instrument panel worn by the principle operator. Readings are taken periodically of the conductive and magnetic properties of the earth as far as 60 feet from either coil.

It was decided to cut survey lines across the island at 100 foot intervals. The young treasure hunters attacked the forest with axes and machetes clearing out parallel lines from shore to shore. The scientific party followed closely behind. Education was in full swing as three physics students stepped forward to assist in the electro-magnetic survey.

Students under these circumstances are possessed with a supernatural power of strength and determination. Trees and bushes fell by the hundreds under their eager axes. Count was made one afternoon when Amos Galpin made 180 consecutive swings without stopping even so much as to watch the small pine trees topple to the ground. Line after line, the survey paths opened from shore to shore while the physics students pressed closely behind.

Another boy, Ben Barker, took an early and enthusiastic interest in the power of the modern electronics to search for buried treasure. It was not long before he was not only analyzing the electronic circuits, but suggesting improvements to perform. The influence of his tentmate, Greg Richards, was noticably helpful in the theoretical interpretations and calculations of the results. Each afternoon and evening, Greg would plot graphs of the electro-magnetic readings. These graphs became essential in locating the areas to be more closely investigated.

These two boys, both planning to enter Harvard in the Fall as sophomores, became so interested in the scientific methods that they later planned and were encouraged to make a special trip to Halifax to build an electro-magnetic instrument of their own. It was hoped that they would be able to contribute to the analysis of a highly conductive area in the ground, a so-called "conductive anomaly," a place where buried treasure could be suspected.

Meanwhile, some of the boys became fascinated with hundreds of wild plants and animals on the island and began hunting and fishing in preparation for amazing gourmet meals to come. They used a slingshot for pheasant, grouse and rabbits, and sharpened broom handles for various creatures that crawled along the ocean floor. Their efforts kept the scientists at peak capacity in an indirect but important way.

Students became fascinated with the reality of the practical side of the physics. Finally their classroom theories could be employed for something useful. They wanted to see physics prove that

six feet below the ground lay pirate chests of gold. Science would then be meaningful.

While the scientific survey continued at full speed, a second major program, that of skin and scuba diving, got underway. Michael Renton, a diver and student from Toronto who had joined the expedition in Halifax, was quickly engaged in the survey of the ocean floor for signs of sunken ships or submerged chests.

A local fisherwoman stopped at our campsite early one morning on her way home from her mackerel nets. She told us tales of a red coated ghost who carried a musket and who had interrupted many men who had tried to dig in the "Money Pit". "He always told them that they were digging in the wrong place," she said.

We asked her about the legend of the burning ghost ship. To this she replied, "Both my husband and brother have seen it." Then she told us something more exciting. Twenty years ago her husband had pulled up a sunken chest in his fishing net. It had broken through the mesh and had never been recovered, but its location was not far from the island. Other local people had told us of this same story so we decided to start two divers on a detailed survey of the surrounding waters. In only a few hours, Mike returned with an anchor, two wire hoops and various pieces of china of indeterminant ages.

On the third day of our scientific exploration, we discovered our first major anomaly. Its position was close to the oldest oak tree on the island and most certainly one that would have been quite sizable at the time of the pirates. This anomaly indicated a highly conductive area and we soon were able to establish its location within twenty feet. Could treasure be buried here by the oak? What could have caused the excitement of the regional instruments? One of the boys reminded us of a legend that located the treasure near an oak tree and buried at a depth of twenty feet.

Closing in on the exact position now required the use of our precision instruments. Before clearing operations got underway, we decided to make an exploratory survey with the magnetometer. This instrument can measure minute deflections in the earth's magnetic field, possibly caused by the presence of an iron lock or band on a treasure chest. We could measure the magnetic field along the old stone wall by the oak tree and at other positions between trees and bushes. These readings could indicate the best area to clear.

This first magnetometer survey led to the immediate discovery of a small area of unusually high readings beside the wall. Something magnetic was either in or under the stonewall. Excitement grew as the rocks flew in every direction. In a scientific search for buried treasure, however, one must continually measure and experiment to determine the exact line of approach. The second series of measurements indicated that the magnetic object had been moved. The readings were lower. Somehow our treasure had eluded us.

No one had removed iron or metal from the wall, so we speculated that the anomaly must have been caused by a rock. The culprit was quickly located. A small boulder from the center of the wall was composed of magnetite, a highly magnetic mineral and ore of iron. It had been carried down by the glacier thousands of years before, but only a hundred years ago had been placed by a farmer in the center of his wall. The Ghost of Oak Island must have been laughing. Now our readings would have to be corrected for the possibility of magnetic rocks.

After removing the rock from the area, we continued the magnetometer survey. At a spot only twenty feet from the oak tree, the magnetometer again registered an anomaly. Peter Beamish suddenly looked up from the instrument. "Gentlemen, I think we will start clearing right here first thing in the morning."

As we sat around the campfire after supper, he casually remarked, "You know, today is Friday, the 13th, and there's a full moon. Remember, this is the night that the fisherwoman told us to watch out for the burning ghost ship." We all laughed, but he continued thoughtfully, "It sounds incredible, but there are scientists who believe in ghosts. They theorize in the existence of 'time independent extrasensory perception'. Some things that you think or see form concepts which are transmitted as bundles of energy at very high frequencies. The energy stays suspended in time and space. If one of your minds is tuned to the same frequency as the person who originally saw the burning ship, you might see it tonight."

Doubting, but curious, we planned to stay up late that night. At 11:30, Ben Barker, the boy who had built one of our instruments, came running across the campsite.

"Look there -- the burning ship!"

Ben ran to get the telescope. As he focused, he became convinced that he could see it. We strained our eyes but saw nothing.

We went to sleep chuckling uneasily. Ben's conviction had shaken some of our skepticism.

The next morning, trees fell to the cracking sound of axes and machetes. The exact position of the treasure would soon be vulnerable to intensive attacks by the precision instruments. The terrain was changing rapidly from forest to field.

We moved in with precision electro-magnetic equipment. With luck we would have both position and depth by mid-morning. Several boys sat intently watching as the small red meter swung to half scale conductive over two positions separated by six feet. Those same boys ran, with hearts pounding, to get the others. Armed with shovels and pickaxes, they arrived back at the anomaly in minutes. The excavation for treasure on Oak Island had begun within twenty minutes of the discovery.

While our excitement grew in the days following our first electro-magnetic discovery, tragedy struck. Word flashed across the island on Tuesday afternoon, August 17th, that an accident had occurred on the ~~north~~ South shore. We knew that a Mr. Restall and his son, Bob, the principal treasure seekers of the ill-fated 13th expedition, were still searching for the ~~north~~ flood tunnel from the "Money Pit". Richard, his youngest son, had run to get our help. Boys from the clearing squad raced along the north shore. Others from the anomaly cut along the middle road, following a horse path through the swamp to the "Money Pit" and then down the hill to the beach.

We arrived almost simultaneously. Time was unbelievably precious. Five men, including Restall and his son, were suffocating from poisonous gas fumes at the bottom of a small exploratory pit twenty feet in depth. Our scuba gear was at camp, six minutes away. The immediate decision was made to lower a man by rope. Our only hope was that he could tie a second rope around a man whom we could see still gasping at the bottom of the pit before he, himself, became unconscious.

Edward White, a fireman who had just arrived on the scene, volunteered for the task and was lowered down on a strong rope by nine of the boys. A second rope was dropped to him to be tied around the victim. The remaining ten boys pulled the victim, Andy Dumonte, up out of the pit to safety. White was hauled up close behind and reached the surface, having held his breath from the start. The element of time had been against us. We were too late to save the Restalls and the other two men.

Dumonte, a teenager himself, had been the last to enter the pit and had tried desperately to save the four who had preceded him. He was in extremely dangerous condition, suffering from asphyxiation and shock. Artificial respiration was administered. He had begun to turn blue and the boys massaged him to increase his circulation. At last he began to breathe normally.

Don Barrett, the geophysicist, arrived on Tuesday evening with the news that Mel Chappel, his uncle and owner of the island, would arrive on Friday. This provided a perfect excuse to order steaks, which everyone had earned, and to set about with a belated camp cleanup. No one, however, wanted to slow the search for our treasure by the oak tree. Clearing, surveying, digging, resurveying, all continued at full speed as we located positions and excavated directly above the highest conductive readings on our Ronka electro-magnetic instrument.

When the digging had reached a depth of four feet, a decision was made to make a detailed magnetic survey in order to locate the exact position. Peter Beamish removed all metal objects from his pockets, removed his watch and ring, and cleared the shovels back from the area by 100 feet. A base station was set up beside the oak tree so that the instrument could be adjusted to a zero gamma reading. In three minutes, twelve readings were taken across the northern edge of the pit, after which he returned to base station to

check the earth's magnetic field and the instrument's drift. The reading was now plus twenty gammas. Something was unusually wrong.

An astronomy student was asked to place the sunshield on the Questar telescope and study the solar disc for sunspots. If an abundance of these were found, this would cause excessive activity in the earth's magnetic field and the survey would have to be postponed for hours or days until the sun settled back to its normal activity. He reported shortly that the earth's magnetic field was quite normal, the sun relatively calm. Something unusual had caused a magnetic drift of twenty gammas in three minutes. We were faced with a typical geophysical problem.

The answer was discovered shortly. Beamish thought he was wearing pants with a non-magnetic zipper, but the clasp at the top of the zipper was iron and it had changed its relative distance from the meter in successive readings. The solution was more awkward. He continued the survey in his plaid B.V.D.'s.

The main pit by the oak was becoming smaller now with increasing depth, and fewer boys could dig at once. Several of the boys were asked to take turns, using the coin detection instruments near the crumbled foundations of the old Graves' house on the north side of the island. Anthony Graves had farmed the island for thirty years during the last half of the 19th century. He had bought his supplies with Spanish coins. There was keen archaeological interest in this project.

An Andover student, Jon Pierpont, found the broken parts of an old stove. Piece by piece, it was pulled from the ground and reassembled at the campsite. It was not gold, but we could put it together and help the cooks. We felt that for once we had scored on our ghost friend.

But the ghost of Oak Island was not to be outdone. While we were attacking the treasure with all of our energies during the final week of our expedition, half of the boys and both instructors were suddenly stricken with water poisoning. The ghost must have rolled in laughter as he watched us struggling to carry on our work at half strength but full speed. First magnetic rocks and now poison water. What remaining tricks did he have for us in our last few days?

With precious time running out, we sank our pit deeper. A rainstorm hit and we had a foot of water to be bailed from our excavation. New depth determinations became extremely difficult. A mathematical analysis indicated we were getting errors dur to surface ground conduction, amplified by the moist earth below.

We had to make sure. On the last day we rented a bulldozer. Again the ghost intervened. Just as the dozer reached the area of the anomaly, its right tread jumped the track. Two hours later it was finally moving earth and shortly afterward it uncovered a conductive sulphide mineral deposit. A few boys stayed, others trudged slowly back to

camp carrying the picks and shovels, and three decided to make one last stab at the Graves' property.

We were sitting around the fire quietly waiting for supper when suddenly three boys burst into camp shouting: "We found a coin!" While prospecting on the northern beach by Graves old wharf, Amos Galpin had discovered the heavily encrusted coin. We crowded around ecstatically to get our first look at the treasure. A noted Boston coin specialist, J. J. Teaparty, later identified it for us as a 16th century Spanish Maravedis, proving that pirates who had raided Spanish galleons along the Carribbean trade routes must have visited Oak Island.

During the night, as we dreamed of our discovery, the red-coated ghost paid us a final farewell call. Our boat and outboard motor mysteriously broke loose from its anchor and drifted out to sea. From members of another treasure hunting expedition on the island, we were able to borrow a boat and leave for the mainland.

Peter looked back at the island and shrugged: "That ghost certainly had as much fun as we did. I guess he really did want to get rid of us." One of the boys was still staring at the island. "Maybe he liked the idea of teenagers looking for his treasure again," he suggested. "He might have meant that we were getting close and he didn't want us to leave. He might want us to return."

Our imaginations flashed ahead. Why not return? After all, we were now sure that the ghost was guarding the pirate's $30,000,000. It looked as if he might be on our side.

-30-