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Hand in Oak Island 'possible'

By IVAN SHORTLIFFE
Staff Reporter

BRIDGEWATER — A Halifax pathologist has confirmed that it would be possible for human flesh to be preserved "over a very long period of time," buried in the moist clay below the surface of world-famous Oak Island.

The statement was made following the spotting of what was believed to be a human hand by a submarine television camera lowered 212 feet below the surface of the mystery-shrouded Mahone Bay Island.

Dr. Ian Maxwell said that under certain moist conditions, a process could take place which in time would change the fat into a wax, thereby preserving a human body.

In the meantime, Dan Blankenship, project manager for a group of Canadian and American business financiers known as Triton Alliance Ltd., who has been spending Christmas and New Year's with members of his family in Miami, is expected to return to Nova Scotia's South Shore late next week.

In a telephone conversation from Florida yesterday, Mrs. Blankenship said that her husband was ill with the flu, but that work on the Island will be resumed and carried on through the winter.

Before leaving for his holidays, Mr. Blankenship said that the search for the treasure would go on now that the television probe had proved to him that "Oak Island is no longer a myth."

Three chests, a pick, and hewn logs were spotted on the television monitor, he said.

This, plus other discoveries, has made the Miami contracting firm owner more determined than ever to carry on with the search.

It is not the money that he and his partners are striving for, he said. Their goal is to uncover the mystery which has attracted world-wide attention since 1795, when three hunters discovered a ship's block hanging from a tree limb above a depression in the earth surface.

Since then, dozens of expeditions have explored the 128-acre island, located 45

miles west of Halifax in Mahone Bay. Fortunes have been spent trying to unlock the reason for all the ancient, flooding tunnels and other workings which have tantalized adventure-seekers into believing that these could be for no less purpose than to protect a vast treasure hidden somewhere on the island.

Many wealthy and famous persons have invested in digging for pirates' treasure on Oak Island. One of these was the late Franklin D. Roosevelt, president of the United States.

Dr. Maxwell warns that there is no time to lose, if it was a hand which showed on the monitor at the 212-foot level. He is anxious, he said, to examine the hand and to determine its age, offering to do anything he can to assist Mr. Blankenship in its recovery.

There is a danger, the head pathologist of the Halifax Infirmary explains, that deterioration could take place now that it has been suspended in water.

It is believed that the hand was torn free of a human body by the drill used in sinking the 26-foot shaft.

The great problem is the silt in the water in the large cavern where the objects were seen on the monitor. Soon after the camera disturbs the area, dense silt makes viewing impossible.

Mr. Blankenship would like to go down and explore the cavern himself, but this cannot be done until the next phase, expected to cost \$40,000 has been carried out.

While one pump has been used drawing more than 1,000 gallons per minute has already been installed, Mr. Blankenship believes that another powerful pump could do the trick, making it possible to keep the underground cavern in the bedrock free to explore.

The current operations were moved last summer from the Money Pit area where most of the previous diggings had taken place. Mr. Blankenship did not give reasons for the shift.

Triton is investing \$500,000 for the Oak Island exploration, Mr. Blankenship said.

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DEC. 1/1971

Triton

Explanation of hand said 'utter nonsense'

By IVAN SHORTLIFFE
Staff Reporter

OAK ISLAND — An explanation given on a recent radio program for the appearance of a hand projected by a submarine television camera lowered 212 feet below the surface of this Mahone Bay island of mystery, has been branded "utter nonsense" by Dan Blankenship, project manager for Triton Alliance which is working on the island.

Jack Adams, who had previously been employed by other explorers in their attempts to unravel the mystery of the famous money pit, said that several years ago a plastic hand had been dropped into one of the shafts and that this undoubtedly was what had been spotted by the camera.

"I don't know why Mr. Adams would make such a

statement," Mr. Blankenship said.

The contention that the hand, together with a mechanical attachment, had been used in an effort to determine if it would be carried by an underground shaft to the sea, "just could not be possible."

The only method for determining this sort of thing is by the use of dyes and these must be kept down under constant pressure in an effort to force them through suspected shafts, the Florida construction company owner explained.

The shaft in question is far removed from any previous drillings.

The first report of the "human hand, fingernails and all" being picked up on the TV monitor was carried in this newspaper Nov. 23, 1971.

At that time, the camera also spotted what appeared to be two or three chests

and a pick axe. In his determination to reach what the camera picked up, Mr. Blankenship donned a diving outfit and was lowered into the cavern about 230 feet deep. He was unable to move far enough away from the shaft to examine the area.

In the meantime, a new drilling project is expected to begin in about two weeks.

A theory advocated by British author Rupert Furneaux on the same radio broadcast that British engineers had carried out the vast underground workings on Oak Island at the time of the American Revolution, was also dismissed by Mr. Blankenship as not being consistent with the fact that no records of such an undertaking have been found.

It is inconceivable that the British engineers connected with British military forces in North America at that time, would not be required to record what was being done. Apparently, no such records exist.

He is convinced that no organized group, such as an army, constructed the maze of tunnels and perhaps many money pits, otherwise there is no doubt that someone, somewhere would have told or written about it he said.

The only positively permanent way for keeping the secret would be for the workers who did the job to have died without revealing the secret.

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HALIFAX
CHRONICLE-HERALD

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OAK ISLAND

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Nov. 23, 1971

TV camera picks up 3 chests

TRITON

(Hand & other objects were seen in the first week of Aug. 1971, but kept a secret until Nov. 1971.)

BORE HOLE
10-X

By IVAN SHORTLIFFE

WESTERN SHORE — What appears to be the first concrete evidence that a treasure of pirates' gold or the long-lost wealth of an ancient civilization lies beneath the surface of Oak Island, has been spotted by a submarine television camera lowered 212 feet down a shaft into a chamber below the bedrock.

A series of pictures show faint outlines of what project manager Dan Blankenship says he is certain are three chests, one having a handle on the end and a curved top. Beside another of the chests or boxes, he says, is some sort of tool, not unlike a pick-axe.

Another view clearly shows three logs lying on the floor of the chamber, more than 40 feet deeper than any previous treasure seekers had ever explored, Mr. Blankenship said.

A more gruesome revelation by the camera probing the same cell was the appearance on the monitor of a human hand, partly clenched, suspended in the water, Mr. Blankenship said.

Startled by what he saw, Mr. Blankenship said he summoned all his workers, one by one, into the shack housing the TV monitor. Each man confirmed that the hand, still covered with flesh, had what looked like a slash mark across the back, while below the mark the mangled flesh suggested it had been torn or chopped from the wrist, he said.

The workmen were told to try to manoeuvre the camera into a position showing the palm, but in this operation the object was moved slightly out of range, he said.

Mr. Blankenship said he sought the advice of experts, who told him that under certain conditions it would be possible for human flesh to be preserved, especially if it had been embedded in clay, such as is found at great depths on Oak Island. It might not have caused the hand to break loose into the water.

More convinced than ever that his findings are important, the Miami construction company owner says it is not the money he and his partners are striving for. Their goal, he said, is to uncover the mystery which has baffled the world since 1795 when three hunters discovered a ship's block hanging from a tree limb, above a faint depression in the island's surface.

No amount of talk will ever convince Mr. Blankenship that the treasure, if there is one, is that of Captain Kidd.

For one thing, he says, Kidd was a buccancer for only five years; and secondly, he definitely did not have enough men to build the underground maze of man-made tunnels known to exist on the Lunenburg County island.

"If I thought for one minute that it was Kidd's treasure we are looking for, I'd pack up this afternoon and leave," he said with a smile.

Exploration of the 128-acre island, some 45 miles west of Halifax in Mahone Bay, is being financed by a group of Canadian and American financiers and businessmen, who in 1969 formed a company known as Triton Alliance Ltd., investing \$500,000 to uncover the truth, once and for all.

Montreal businessman David Tobias is president of Triton, while Mr. Blankenship conducts the on-the-spot operations.

"Other searchers in the past have concentrated too much in the area of the money pit," said Mr. Blankenship. He said the entire island must be studied before actually attempting to retrieve whatever lies buried there. Once the age-old secret of the flooding system is revealed, the problem will be a relatively easy one, he said.

There is no denying the fact that this flooding system exists. Evidence of it has been uncovered all around the

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island. Tunnels running from beaches many feet inside the island are constructed in a way that they flood, preventing diggers from reaching their goal.

The Triton exploration earlier uncovered an extensive wharf complex at Smith's Cove. Two others have been uncovered on the opposite side of the island.

At Smith's Cove, a row of ancient logs were exposed, 160 feet long, notched exactly every four feet, each marked with a Roman numeral, Mr. Blankenship said.

Laboratory tests on wood samples taken from the workings indicate they are at least 250 years old, he said.

Among many interesting bits and pieces of material brought up by the Triton drills in the money pit area, were thin pieces of metal, he said.

This turned out to be low carbon, cold hammered steel, one side apparently cemented to wood, the other exposed to water, Mr. Blankenship said.

This steel is thought by experts to have been used as a protective covering for boxes or chests, in an attempt to make them water-tight, he said.

The lab report indicates the steel was produced before the middle 1700's, he said.

The complete lack of oxygen in the underground chambers kept the steel pliable until it had been exposed to the air for a short time, when it hardened, Mr. Blankenship said.

Television cameras were brought to the site for the first time this summer, following the discovery of cavities or chambers below the bedrock at a depth of 212 feet.

Asked how tunnels could have been made in bedrock more than 200 years ago, Mr. Blankenship said that the rock on Oak Island is anhydrite, easily cut with an axe or pick.

Other finds include two pairs of shoes, one about size 11. Mr. Blankenship said, while a smaller pair had metal eyelets, such as were worn in Spain during the period when Oak Island is believed, by at least some people, to have been a maze of activity.

As the work continues, it appears that the island was used as a communal bank by pirates, Mr. Blankenship said. One pirate alone, Mr. Blankenship said, had as many as 80 ships under his control. This could explain the vast wharf structures which have been uncovered this year.

Scientists at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington have told Triton that a triangular-shaped, sculptured stone found on the island, is identical to those found at entrances to pirates' communal banks in the Indies, Mr. Blankenship said.

Heart Shaped Stone

There are others who believe searchers someday will find on Oak Island a vast Inca treasure which, according to Spanish documents, had been loaded on ships swept north in a hurricane.

Whatever secrets the island has lodged beneath its surface, the hard-working American is determined to solve them. During the severe weather last winter, he missed only five days work.

"Do you think I would do this just for money?" he asks. "I thrive on a challenge and what has been found here is enough to substantiate that Oak Island isn't a myth any more."

Kerry Ellard of Montreal, who has been handling public relations for the group, said in a telephone interview that only large industries or corporations, interested in developing the island, later making it into a world-wide tourist attraction, stand any chance at all of investing in the operation.

Operations have all but halted on the money pit site, while the Triton organization studies the most appropriate and safest way to continue.

Mr. Blankenship wants to be lowered into the chambers to feel the objects brought to light on the TV screen. This would help confirm what he believes to be an exciting find.

Whatever form the next phase takes, it will have to be carefully calculated. Six men have already died in desperate attempts to end the 176-year-old mystery.

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Tuesday, December 7, 1971

"If it is good for the Maritimes, The Chronicle-Herald is for it"

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FIRST DIVER to go down a 26-inch shaft into a mysterious chamber below the bedrock, 235 feet from the surface of Oak Island, Phil Irwin, left, is shown with the harness used to lower him. Discussing the feat with him

are Larry DeLong, seated, President of Atlantic Divers Ltd., Brooklyn, Queens County, Ted Foster and Alan Harrington, all skillful divers. (Shortliffe)

Dives 235 feet beneath Oak Island, cavern 'could extend to Money Pit'

By IVAN SHORTLIFFE
Staff Reporter

BROOKLYN — Phil Irwin, a diver with Atlantic Divers Ltd., has revealed in an interview that he was lowered three times into a vast chamber, or cavern, about 235 feet below the surface of Oak Island.

He described the experience

as not unlike being suspended from an aircraft as he emerged from a shaft below the bedrock, but said that he could not see any walls, only a ghostly ceiling having eight or 10, 40-foot or more V-shaped gouges extending upward.

The cavern was so big, he said, that it could extend to the area on the island known as the Money Pit.

Reflection from his light on the ceiling in certain spots resembled a fluorescent light, he told this newspaper. He said he could not see bottom, but later stood on it and felt about for any objects which

bedrock to about 225 feet, is claimed by the divers to be a great accomplishment in itself.

Manoeuvring the oxygen tube and communication wires down to such a depth was labeled "tricky business."

The first dive was made Aug. 7 when Mr. Irwin was in the shaft for one hour and 40 minutes. Two more trips were made Aug. 14. The third was Aug. 26.

The divers had been sworn to secrecy until the story broke in this newspaper Nov. 23.

There was no sign at all of any form of marine life, the

ocean where it was thought the entrance to a flooding tunnel was located.

The divers said that they had been amazed when Mr. Blankenship stopped the rushing water.

The drilling had passed through a two and one-half foot flooding tunnel at the 212-foot level, beach rocks having been used in its construction.

Replying to a question, Mr. Irwin said there was no way these rocks could have been placed in the bedrock other than by man.

The divers said they had no theories as to what the Oak Island mystery is all about.

might be near.

The feat was carried out by seven divers, consisting of Mr. Irwin, Larry DeLong, president of the diving company; vice-president Ted Foster; secretary, Alan Harrington; Bentley DeLong; Garnet Winchester; and David Forbes.

Careful precautions and hours of work preceded the actual decent in the shaft. Mr. DeLong said, adding that they were more concerned with protecting the diver than discovering treasure.

Putting a man down the shaft, protected down to 180 feet by a 26-inch metal pipe, then through a hole through

Queens County diver and lobsterfisherman said.

Mr. Foster emphasized that nothing had been discovered during the diving operations which could in any way dispute statements made by Dan Blankenship, project manager for Triton Alliance Ltd., which is running the treasure hunt.

In the course of the first dive, Mr. Irwin radioed to Mr. DeLong that at about 180 feet water was rushing in so fast that it was sweeping the diving mask off his face.

The divers all said that Mr. Blankenship told them that he could stop the rushing water by bulldozing soil into

A submarine television camera lowered into the shaft had shown what Mr. Blankenship says are three chests and a pick axe. The camera also spotted a human hand at the 212-foot level, he said.