

Historical Archaeology and the Demand for Alcohol in 17th Century Newfoundland

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Volume 19, Number 1, Autumn 1989

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/acad19_1art04

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Publisher(s)

The Department of History of the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (print)

1712-7432 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Pope, P. (1989). Historical Archaeology and the Demand for Alcohol in 17th Century Newfoundland. *Acadiensis*, 19(1), 72-90.

PETER POPE

Historical Archaeology and the Demand for Alcohol in 17th Century Newfoundland*

LATE IN THE SUMMER OF 1648, Sir David Kirke, co-proprietor of the permanent fishing colony at Ferryland, and self-styled "Governor" of Newfoundland, sold a consignment of goods to Nicholas Shapleigh, master of the *David*, who had recently established himself as a merchant at Kittery, Maine.¹ This shipment is interesting as an example of early Newfoundland/New England trade and because of its composition. Of a shipment valued at £613-15-6, £252 or about 40 per cent, consisted of Madeira and Canary wines. How and why had Kirke, who was a fish merchant, become involved in the wine trade? To whom would Shapleigh sell the 18 butts or approximately 8000 litres of wine that would have been involved? Fishermen at the nearby Isle of Shoals? To whom had Kirke been planning to sell the wine, assuming he had not foreseen a bulk sale to New England? The fisherfolk of Ferryland? Wines were, in 17th-century England, a middle-class luxury,² but along the 17th-century North Atlantic littoral, at least according to some contemporary accounts, fishing men and women consumed wines, distilled spirits and other alcoholic beverages in quantities then considered unusual, given their modest social standing.

This paper presents some quantitative archaeological data, relating to the consumption of alcohol, from the site of the 17th-century fishing station at Ferryland, Newfoundland. The ceramic assemblage from one locus suggests that the fishermen who used it were avid consumers of alcohol. This evidence is comprehensible within the context of the documented history of the site in particular and the early modern cod fishery in general. It does not overthrow

*My thanks are due Dr. Ralph Pastore, Dr. James A. Tuck and Dr. Daniel Vickers, all of Memorial University of Newfoundland, for research guidance; participants in the History Seminar at M.U.N. and the Atlantic Canada Studies Conference at Edinburgh for thought-provoking comments; Gérard Gusset of Parks Canada, Dr. Henry C. Miller of Historic St. Mary's City, and Ivor Noël Hume of Colonial Williamsburg for introducing me to their archaeological collections; and the Institute for Social and Economic Research at M.U.N., the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for financial support of my research.

1 David Kirke and Nicholas Shapleigh, Bill of lading, 8 September 1648, in James P. Baxter, ed., *The Baxter Manuscripts, Documentary History of the State of Maine*, vol. 6 (Portland, 1900), pp. 2-4. On Shapleigh see vol. 4, pp. 9, 10.

2 Peter Clark, *The English Alehouse: a social history 1200-1830* (London, 1983), pp. 8, 96, 125; A.D. Francis, *The Wine Trade* (London, 1972), p. 26.

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generally received ideas about the behaviour of fishermen but it does call into question a recent attempt to reinterpret fishermen as unremarkable in their consumption habits and it poses some questions about the social and economic functions of alcohol at the resource periphery.

The Avalon Peninsula, which lies closer to Europe than any other part of North America, has been continuously exploited by Europeans since the early 16th century. An English presence grew swiftly in the 1570s and 80s and Ferryland, one of the better harbours in this region, became an important summer station for West of England fishermen.³ In 1621 Ferryland became one of the earliest permanent European settlements in Newfoundland, and indeed Northern North America, when George Calvert, later Lord Baltimore, bought what was then an active but not permanently occupied fishing station. The proprietor had various structures erected, including a 44 by 15 foot "Mansion House" to which he brought his own large household late in the summer of 1628. The family found "the sadd face of winter" too much for them, however, and Calvert decided "to committ this place to fishermen...able to encounter stormes and hard weather" and to remove himself to the Chesapeake.⁴ Although Ferryland has often been interpreted as a Roman Catholic religious refuge for the Calverts, it was set up as a fishing business and was always intended to operate as one.⁵ While the Calverts subsequently concentrated their activities on Maryland, they continued to operate Ferryland as a fishing station until 1638.⁶ With the predatory instincts of

3 Keith Matthews, "A History of the West of England Newfoundland Fishery", D.Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 1968; Gillian Cell, *English Enterprise in Newfoundland, 1577-1660* (Toronto, 1969). On Ferryland in the 16th century see "The voyage of M. Charles Leigh" and "The voyage of the Grace of Bristol", in Richard Hakluyt, ed., *The Principal navigations, voyages, traffiques and discoveries of the English nation* [1598-1600] (New York, 1965), vol. 8, pp. 165-82.

4 George Calvert to Charles I, 19 July 1629, Great Britain, Public Record Office, Colonial Office, CO 1/5 (27), f.75, published in Gillian Cell, ed., *Newfoundland Discovered, English Attempts at Colonization, 1610-1630* (London, 1982), pp. 295-6. Henceforth references to documents in the P.R.O. will give simply the relevant *fonds* on the first citation, e.g. "Colonial Office", and, in subsequent references, simply the series designation, e.g. "CO 1/5". Note that early P.R.O. papers are inconsistently numerated. Cell follows W. Noel Sainsbury *et al.*, *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series* (London, 1860-1963), in assigning numbers to documents. These are indicated here in brackets, e.g. CO 1/5 (27). Where a folio number exists an effort has been made to supply it, e.g. CO 1/5, f.75. In cases where two or more folio numbers exist, stamped folio numbers are taken to be authoritative.

5 Raymond J. Lahey, "The Role of Religion in Lord Baltimore's Colonial Enterprise", *Maryland Historical Magazine*, 72, 4 (1977), pp. 492-511 and "Avalon: Lord Baltimore's Colony in Newfoundland", in G.M. Story, ed., *Early European Settlement and Exploitation in Atlantic Canada* (St. John's, 1982); for Ferryland as religious refuge see Cell, *English Enterprise*, p. 92.

6 William Poole, Deposition, 24 August 1652 and John Slaughter, Deposition, 30 August 1652, Maryland Historical Society, Ms 174/202, published in L.D. Scisco, ed., "Testimony Taken in Newfoundland in 1652", *Canadian Historical Review*, 9 (1928), pp. 247, 250.

the successful businessman and the backing of three aristocratic associates, in 1637 David Kirke secured a patent for the exploitation of the Newfoundland fishery which essentially revoked the earlier grant to George Calvert.⁷ Kirke's ruthless management made the resident fishery profitable, with more effect on socio-economic developments in Newfoundland than those of the better remembered Calvert.⁸ After Sir David died under arrest as a Royalist during the Cromwellian Interregnum, the family operation, inherited by the formidable Lady Sara Kirke, continued to dominate the fishery at Ferryland well into the 1670s.⁹

From its initial exploitation by Europeans, Newfoundland was part of an international economy and this continued to be true even for those parts of the Island from which the English gradually excluded other nations, since the West Country dry fishery at Newfoundland depended on European markets.¹⁰ The Newfoundland trade was essentially triangular — southern products like wine and oil were shipped to England in exchange for salt fish exported directly to Iberian or Mediterranean ports. By 1600 the practice had developed of sending specialized cargo vessels, the "sack ships", to collect the processed fish. Meanwhile provisions were transported to Newfoundland by the fishing ships themselves early each season. Thus the material culture of the Newfoundland settlements was shipped, by and large, from the outports in the West of England whose major business in this period was the Newfoundland fishery.¹¹ The provisioning of Newfoundland changed after the Interregnum, perhaps because of a depression in the West Country fish trade between 1660 and 1690.¹² New sources of supply became important. It became increasingly common for fishing ships to call at Waterford on their way out to Newfoundland and by the 1670s Ireland was a key supplier of butter and salt meat. The resident fishing boat owners or planters came more and more to rely on New England for naval stores, for the traditional

7 "A Grant of Newfoundland to the Marquess. Hamilton... and Sir David Kirke...", 13 November 1637, CO 195/1, ff. 11-27.

8 See Ralph G. Lounsbury, *The British Fishery at Newfoundland, 1634-1763* (New Haven, 1934), p. 89. On Kirke's remarkable career see J.S. Moir on David Kirke and his brothers Lewis and Thomas in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. I (Toronto, 1966), pp. 404 ff. and Henry Kirke, *The First English Conquest of Canada* (London, 1871, rev. ed. 1908).

9 John Berry, "A list of ye Planters Names with an Account of their Concerns...", 12 September 1675, CO 1/35 (16ii), ff. 126-32.

10 Harold Innis, *The Cod Fisheries: The History of an International Economy* (rev. ed., Toronto, 1954), pp. 30-51.

11 Matthews, "Fishery", pp. 6-12, 74.

12 W.B. Stephens, "The West Country Ports and the Struggle for the Newfoundland Fisheries in the 17th Century", *Reports and Transactions of the Devonshire Association*, 88 (1956), pp. 90-101.

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provisions — bread, peas, flour and salt meat — as well as for the new comes-tibles — sugar, molasses and rum.¹³

Rum was a new product but maritime demand for distilled alcohol was already taken for granted by the beginning of the 17th century.¹⁴ The anonymous author of *Britaines Busses* (1615), a proposal for an improved fishery, included a supply of “Aqui vita” in his budget, in addition to a daily one gallon beer ration.¹⁵ What is in question is essentially the former, not the latter. Fermented malt-based drinks were part of the daily diet of our ancestors — but labourers and their families could often only afford “small beer”, the weak product of a second fermentation of the worts that had already produced a stronger brew.¹⁶ A daily one gallon ration would, likely, have consisted of beer of this sort. With improved trading connections and technical improvement in distilling a wider range of alcoholic drinks became available to a wider range of potential consumers in the early modern period.¹⁷ Home or locally produced ale of low alcohol content remained simply a healthier substitute for water. Seventeenth-century accounts suggest that the alternatives beer/wine/spirits represented a range of social prestige as well as of alcoholic content.¹⁸ The choice at issue here is simpler: the decision to consume C_2H_5OH rather than H_2O . Along the English Shore of Newfoundland in the mid-17th century this would have been a choice between water or weaker ales on the one hand and, on the other, stronger ales or beers, Canary, Madeira or Fayal wines, French or Dutch brandy and, after 1660, American rum. The relatively new alcohols, spirits and the sweet wines of the Atlantic islands, shipped more reliably than traditional wines or beer.¹⁹ The traditional English unhopped ale could not be stored well, let alone shipped, hence early modern Newfoundland generally imported malt, not ale.²⁰ Without

13 C. Grant Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland* (Toronto, 1976), pp. 100-37; J.D. Rogers, *Newfoundland*, vol. 5, part 4 of H.J. Herbertson and D.J. Howarth, eds., *Historical Geography of the British Colonies* (Oxford, 1911), p. 81; Captain James Story, “An Account of...Shippes Planters &c...”, 1 September 1681, CO 1/47 (52i), ff. 113-21v.

14 John Josselyn later remembered “Rhum” in New England in 1638; see *An Account of Two Voyages to New-England* (London, 1675), p.26.

15 Anon., *Britaines Busses or a Computation as well of the charge of a Busse of Herring-Fishing Ship* (London, 1615). The distilled alcohol is still treated as a medicine, listed under “Physick and Surgery helps”.

16 Clark, *English Alehouse*, p. 103.

17 C. Anne Wilson, “Burnt Wine and Cordial Waters: The Early Days of Distilling”, *Folklife*, 13 (1975), pp. 54-65 and *Food and Drink in Britain* (Harmondsworth, 1984), p. 332ff.

18 Clark, *English Alehouse*, pp. 8, 125.

19 T. Bentley Duncan, *Atlantic Islands: Madeira, the Azores and the Cape Verdes in Seventeenth-Century Commerce and Navigation* (Chicago, 1972), pp. 38-9; Clark, *English Alehouse*, p. 95.

20 Clark, *English Alehouse*, p.24; Exemption from Customs, 14 September 1629, Port Books

denying that the beers or ales regularly brewed in Newfoundland might sometimes have been brewed for strength, it seems likely that the imported malt would have been stretched, normally, to produce as much small beer or ale as possible, given the contemporary distrust of water as a regular drink.²¹ It could be argued, then, that 17th-century demand for alcohol, in Newfoundland, can be roughly equated with demand for wines and spirits.

The demand for alcohol was reputed to be strong in the 17th-century fishing stations of Maine and Massachusetts, which of all early European settlements in the New World most closely resemble the communities of early modern Newfoundland.²² Contemporary documents presume a strong demand for alcohol among fishermen at Newfoundland.²³ Unfortunately this kind of evidence can be called into question. Many Englishmen of middling means were beginning to feel, by the middle of the 17th century, that drinking by labourers was excessive. Contemporary criticism of the alehouse can be seen as an early salvo in the effort to exert the kind of class-based cultural hegemony that resulted, in the 18th century, in the "closed parish".²⁴ The first and most vociferous criticisms of the Newfoundland "tippling house" coincided with a wave of similar doubts about workers' drinking establishments in England.²⁵ Furthermore this spate of criticisms was voiced by substantial

E190/822/9, in Cell, *Newfoundland Discovered*, p. 291; Sir John Berry, Letter to Secretary Sir Joseph Williamson, 24 July 1675, CO 1/34 (118), ff. 240-1.

- 21 For examples see Richard Short, *Of Drinking Water* (London, 1656) or Anon., *Via Recta ad Vitam Longam* (London, 1622).
- 22 Charles Clark, *The Eastern Frontier, The Settlement of Northern New England, 1610-1763* (Hanover, N.H., 1983), pp. 22-3; Christine Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture, The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts, 1690-1750* (New York, 1984), pp. 35, 218, 228-9.
- 23 E.g. anon., "Reasons for the settlement of Newfoundland", c.1668, CO 1/22 (69), ff. 115-6; Minutes of the Committee of Trade and Plantations, 2 February, 8 April and 5 May 1675, summarized in *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series... 1675-1676*, pp. 179, 204, 226-7. Compare Duncan, *Atlantic Islands*, pp. 154-5.
- 24 Keith Wrightson, "Alehouses, order and reformation in rural England, 1590-1660", in E. Yeo and S. Yeo, eds., *Popular Culture and Class Conflict 1590-1914* (Sussex, N.J., 1981), pp. 1-27; Peter Clark, "The Alehouse and the Alternative Society", in Donald Pennington and Keith Thomas, eds., *Puritans and Revolutionaries, Essays Presented to Christopher Hill* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 47-72 and *English Alehouse*, pp. 40, 166-87. For New England parallels see Richard P. Gildrie, "Taverns and Popular Culture in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1678-1686", *Essex Institute Historical Collections*, 124, 3 (1988), pp. 158-85.
- 25 Exeter Justices of the Peace, Petition to Privy Council, 10 January 1640, CO 1/10 (28), f. 46; Robert Gabbes [Mayor of Plymouth] *et al.*, Petition to Archbishop Laud and the Privy Council, 22 January 1640, State Papers SP 16/442, f.77; Barth. Nicholl [Mayor of Plymouth] *et al.*, "The humble petition of the merchantess...of Plymouth", 24 March 1646, House of Lords mss, published in Leo F. Stock, ed., *Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliament Respecting North America*, vol. 1, 1542-1668 (Washington, 1924), p. 177; Robert Gybbes [Mayor of Plymouth] *et al.*, "Pettitions of Plimouth agt. Sr. Da. Kirke", c. 1650, published in *Winthrop*

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merchants of the same social background as those who concerned themselves with the maintenance, or establishment, of social order in England itself. It is difficult, therefore, to accept many of the contemporary accounts of drinking by Newfoundland fishermen at face value, since these accounts may well express a class bias.

This does not mean that it is safe to conclude, as E.A. Churchill recently has, that fishermen were therefore "a most ordinary lot of men" with respect to the consumption of alcohol.²⁶ He argues that the image of early New England fishermen as drinkers and brawlers is overdrawn and that there is a poor fit between the traditional portrayal and the history of Richmond Island, an important and very well-documented 17th-century Maine fishing station.²⁷ However, Churchill supports what he calls "the reality of leisure time activities" at Richmond Island only with secondary accounts and conjecture.²⁸ At best his case is not proved, at worst he has ignored the evidence of his own star witness, John Winter, who not only observed that "Great store of sacke & stronge waters comes in all the shippes that com hither" but whose accounts are full of the sale of wines and spirits.²⁹ The consumption of the alcohol he and others sold to the fishermen of Richmond Island may, possibly, have been controlled by this "grave and discreet" manager so that it never interfered with the social and economic life of the community, but this was certainly not the case at Newfoundland or in Massachusetts.³⁰

In the end there is no doubt that fishermen consumed quantities of alcohol. In general *per capita* alcohol consumption probably rose in early modern times; the

Papers, vol. 3, *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections*, 5th ser., vol. 1 (Boston, 1871), pp. 499-501. Compare David Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion, Popular Politics and Culture in England, 1603-1660* (Oxford, 1987), pp. 239, 242.

26 And several other habits which he regards as vices. See E.A. Churchill, "A Most Ordinary Lot of Men: The Fishermen at Richmond Island, Maine, in the Early Seventeenth Century", *New England Quarterly*, 57 (1984), pp. 184-204.

27 For the traditional view, see Clark, *Eastern Frontier*, pp. 13-35.

28 Churchill, "Richmond Island", pp. 194-5.

29 For example, the £2-15-4 worth of alcohol sold to Nicholas Mathew in 1639, 23 per cent of a total account of £11-15-2½, or the £4-11-11½ worth sold to Richard Cummings, 41 per cent of a total account of £11-7-6. See James P. Baxter, ed., *Trewlawney Papers, Documentary History of the State of Maine*, vol. 3 (Portland, Maine, 1884), pp. 174, 184, 187, and cf. p. 110. The quote is from John Winter to Robert Trewlawney, 18 July 1639, p. 174.

30 Compare Churchill, "Richmond Island", pp. 194-5 with Thomas Cruse, Deposition, 1667, West Devon Record Office, Plymouth, W360/74, extract in Richard N. Worth, *Calendar of the Plymouth Municipal Records* (Plymouth, U.K., 1893), pp. 204-5; Thomas Manning, Deposition in Salem Quarterly Court, 9 November 1681; John Bartlet, Deposition in Ipswich Quarterly Court, 20 January 1671; Selectmen of Marblehead, Petition to Salem Quarterly Court, 25 June 1678, published in *Records and Files of the Quarterly Courts of Essex County Massachusetts* (Salem, 1911-19), vol. 3, p. 193; vol. 5, p. 6; vol. 7, pp. 70-1. I am indebted to Daniel Vickers for drawing the latter to my attention.

mass consumption of distilled alcohol is certainly a phenomenon of this period.³¹ Production of spirits for non-medicinal purposes in early 17th-century England was largely devoted to maritime victualling.³² What remains in question is to what degree one should accept contemporary middle-class and even puritan assertions that fishermen drank more than others as the consumption of wine and spirits became more widespread. One would expect rates of consumption to have varied among occupational groups and social classes during the period in which demand expanded and it should be possible to quantify this variation archaeologically. It was an attempt to do this that resulted in the observations discussed in this paper.

Ferryland was subject to some early "archaeology". Bishop Howley reported excavations c. 1880 and surveys were carried out at least twice this century before crews from Memorial University of Newfoundland's Archaeology Unit began exploratory excavations under the direction of Dr. James Tuck in 1984.³³ Since then two areas have been tested. A trench at the "Pool" or inner harbour revealed the extensive stone foundations of two large 17th-century waterfront structures, overlying the vestiges of late 16th-century seasonal occupations.³⁴ Material from this excavation has not yet been analysed. Excavation nearby uncovered a mid-17th-century Forge Room and thousands of 17th-century artifacts, including some interesting ceramics. The discussion that follows was prompted by an analysis of the ceramic vessels from the Forge Room itself and the subsequent fill.³⁵

This mid-17th-century "Room" was about four meters (13 feet) wide and at least 6.5 meters (18 feet) long and had been excavated into the subsoil underlying an embankment at one end of the site. Inside lay a deposit of slag, scale, cinders, iron concretions and coal. The bowl styles of clay tobacco pipes recovered from this forge refuse suggest deposition c. 1640 to 1660.³⁶ At the centre of the refuse

31 Wilson, "Burnt Wine", pp. 54-65; Clark, *English Alehouse*, pp. 106, 209, 239.

32 Clark, *English Alehouse*, p. 95.

33 Michael F. Howley, *Ecclesiastical History of Newfoundland* (Boston, 1888), p. 124; J.R. Harper, "In quest of Lord Baltimore's house at Ferryland", *Canadian Geographic Journal*, 61 (1960), pp. 106-13; James A. Tuck, "Looking for the Colony of Avalon", *Archaeology in Newfoundland and Labrador*, 4 (1985), pp. 378-97; James A. Tuck and Douglas Robbins, "A Glimpse at the Colony of Avalon", *ibid.*, 5 (1986), pp. 237-49.

34 See James A. Tuck, "Excavations at Ferryland, Newfoundland — 1986", *ibid.*, 7 (1989), pp. 296-307.

35 For archaeological data see Peter Pope, "Ceramics from Seventeenth Century Ferryland, Newfoundland (CgAf-2, Locus B)", M.A. thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1986. Excavations in 1986 added to the assemblage but they do not much affect my interpretation. I hope to publish a fuller report on the ceramic analysis in a separate paper.

36 Peter Pope, "Stylistic Interpretation of Clay Tobacco Pipes from Ferryland, Newfoundland (CgAf-2)", paper presented to the Society for Historical Archaeology, Baltimore, January 1989.

but to one side of the Room stood a rectangular rock forge. These features lay in a stratum deposited during occupation of the Room before it was abandoned about 1660 and underlay a later structure which burned, possibly in the Dutch raid of 1673. During the later 17th century refuse from a gentry household, probably the Kirkes', found its way into the depression left by the collapse of the earlier building. Although this blanket of fill was deposited between about 1660 and 1700, it incorporated some material that had probably been originally discarded earlier in the century. It is tempting to see the original Room as the Avalon Colony's "Kitchin", which Calvert's foreman Edward Winne described as having involved labourious digging and having been 18 feet by 12, with eight foot stone walls and a large chimney.³⁷ This was the second largest building constructed by the original colonists, after the Mansion House. Such buildings, which came to be called "cookrooms", were used by boat crews to prepare food and to eat in. These buildings were conventionally about the same size as Winne's kitchen.³⁸ One of the goals of the ceramic analysis was, therefore, to assess the possibility that what had ended up as a forge was also a cookroom.

The ceramics from the Forge Room are what one would expect in a small maritime community commercially dominated by West of England ports, in particular Dartmouth, Plymouth, Barnstaple and Bideford. They come from two distinct contexts. Those from several overlying strata were discarded sometime after 1660, but probably few were used there. Those from the three underlying strata associated with the Forge Room were often mixed with forge refuse and were probably used as well as discarded there between 1640 and 1660. About 65 per cent of the vessels from the pre-1660 strata are of West Country origin.³⁹ Most were the widely-marketed North Devon wares: gravel-tempered pipkins and flesh pots, the smooth-fabric baluster-shaped tall pots and sgraffito-decorated drinking vessels. The remaining ceramics are tin-glazed earthenware ("delft" or "faience"), or Spanish Merida, a red earthenware widely used in early modern maritime communities.⁴⁰ The material from the post-1660 secondary deposit has a more cosmopolitan composition. West Country wares make up somewhat less than half the assemblage. Pipkins and tall pots are common, again, but so are decorated dishes, coarse stoneware mugs, jugs and bottles, and

37 Edward Winne to George Calvert, 18 July 1622, in Cell, *Newfoundland Discovered*, pp. 195-6.

38 Charles I in Council, Charter, 10 February 1634, CO 1/8 (1); Charles II in Council, Charter, 27 January 1676, CO 1/65, ff. 128-35, both published in Keith Matthews, *Collection and Commentary on the Constitutional Laws of Seventeenth Century Newfoundland* (St. John's, 1975), pp. 65-75 and pp. 167-80; John Downing, "A Brief Narrative Concerning Newfoundland", 1676, CO 1/38 (70), f.174. All years are given here new style, that is documents dated by contemporaries between 1 January and 25 March as "1675" are recorded here as "1676".

39 Total vessels from pre-1660 strata, n = 64.

finer wares including a sgraffito-decorated North Italian slipware dish, several Iberian tin-glazed vessels, an Italian Montelupo tin-glazed jug and even a Chinese porcelain saucer. In these strata non-West Country and tin-glazed wares occur in frequencies typical of assemblages from West Country gentry households in this period.⁴¹

To interpret the ceramic assemblage unearthed at the Ferryland Forge Room it was necessary to attend not merely to the various wares represented (North Devon, Spanish Merida, etc.) but to account for the presence of particular vessel forms (bottles, pots, pipkins, etc.). The analysis was based statistically on the minimum number of distinguishable vessels excavated from 17th-century contexts so that a Flesh Pot handle, for example, might count as a Flesh Pot.⁴² This exhaustive compilation was offered as a way of narrowing the interpretive gap between the use of ceramics in the past and sherd counts or illustrations of particularly complete vessels. Archaeological data are often cast in one of these forms, despite their limited interpretive implications. In fact, whatever its attractiveness as a museum piece, a vessel which has survived intact has no more significance regarding past behaviour than one represented by a few sherds.⁴³

The analysis compared the array of vessel forms from each of the 17th-century contexts at the Forge with the arrays of forms at six other early modern sites in the British colonies: two isolated dwellings and what is thought to be the governor's residence, at Martin's Hundred in Virginia, each dating to the first half of the 17th century; Smith's Ordinary and the Lewgar residence at St. Mary's City in Maryland, dating from the second half of the century; and the wreck of H.M.S. *Saphire* in 1696 at Bay Bulls, Newfoundland.⁴⁴ The analysis

40 On these wares see Alison Grant, *North Devon Pottery: The Seventeenth Century* (Exeter, 1983); Frank Britton, *London Delftware* (London, 1987); John Hurst, David Neal and H.J.E. van Beuningen, *Pottery produced and traded in north-west Europe 1350-1650, Rotterdam Papers*, 6 (1986).

41 Rates of occurrence, 51 and 18 per cent, respectively. Total vessels in 1660-1700 strata, n=83. On comparisons see John Allan, *Medieval and Post-Medieval Finds from Exeter, 1971-1980* (Exeter, 1984), pp. 101ff. and Pope "Ceramics", pp. 193ff.

42 This excludes a few intrusive sherds of 18th- and 19th- century stonewares and refined white earthenwares.

43 This point is made eloquently in M.C. Beaudry, J. Long, H. M. Miller, F.D. Neiman, and G. W. Stone, "A Vessel Form Typology for Early Chesapeake Ceramics: The Potomac Typological System", *Historical Archaeology*, 17, 1 (1983), pp. 18-43.

44 For these sites see Ivor Noël Hume, *Martin's Hundred* (New York, 1982) and "Excavations at Carter's Grove Plantation, Virginia 1976-1979", *National Geographic Society Research Reports*, vol. 17 (Washington, 1984); Henry C. Miller, *Discovering Maryland's First City: A Summary Report On The 1981-1984 Archaeological Excavations in St. Mary's City, Maryland* (St. Mary's City MD, 1986); Virginia Myles, "Artifacts of the Saphire", *Canadian Collector*, 20, 2 (1985), pp. 34-6.

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employed the Potomac Typological System (POTS), an attempt by some American historical archaeologists to come to terms with functional variability in 17th- and 18th-century ceramics. This seemed a promising analytic approach because of the shared cultural heritage of the colonists of Newfoundland and the Chesapeake. Vessel forms occurring at Ferryland (Figures 1 and 2) are represented in the POTS typology, which has the distinct advantage that its analytic boundaries are deliberately based on semantic distinctions made by original users of such artifacts.⁴⁵ The documentary record suggests several distinct patterns of vessel use in 17th-century Newfoundland: culinary and non-culinary, at sea and on shore, for crewmen and for planters. Documented culinary and non-culinary vessel use by crews fit the array of vessel forms found in the pre-1660 contexts quite well. Documented middle class culinary functions predict many of the forms found in the post-1660 contexts and documented crew functions, culinary and non-culinary, account for most of the rest.⁴⁶ Such documentation was another basis, then, for the functional interpretation of particular vessel forms. Comparative analysis of the rates of occurrence of particular functional groups of vessels permitted, in turn, the testing of several related hypotheses about the socio-economic functioning of the locus itself, some of which are examined here.

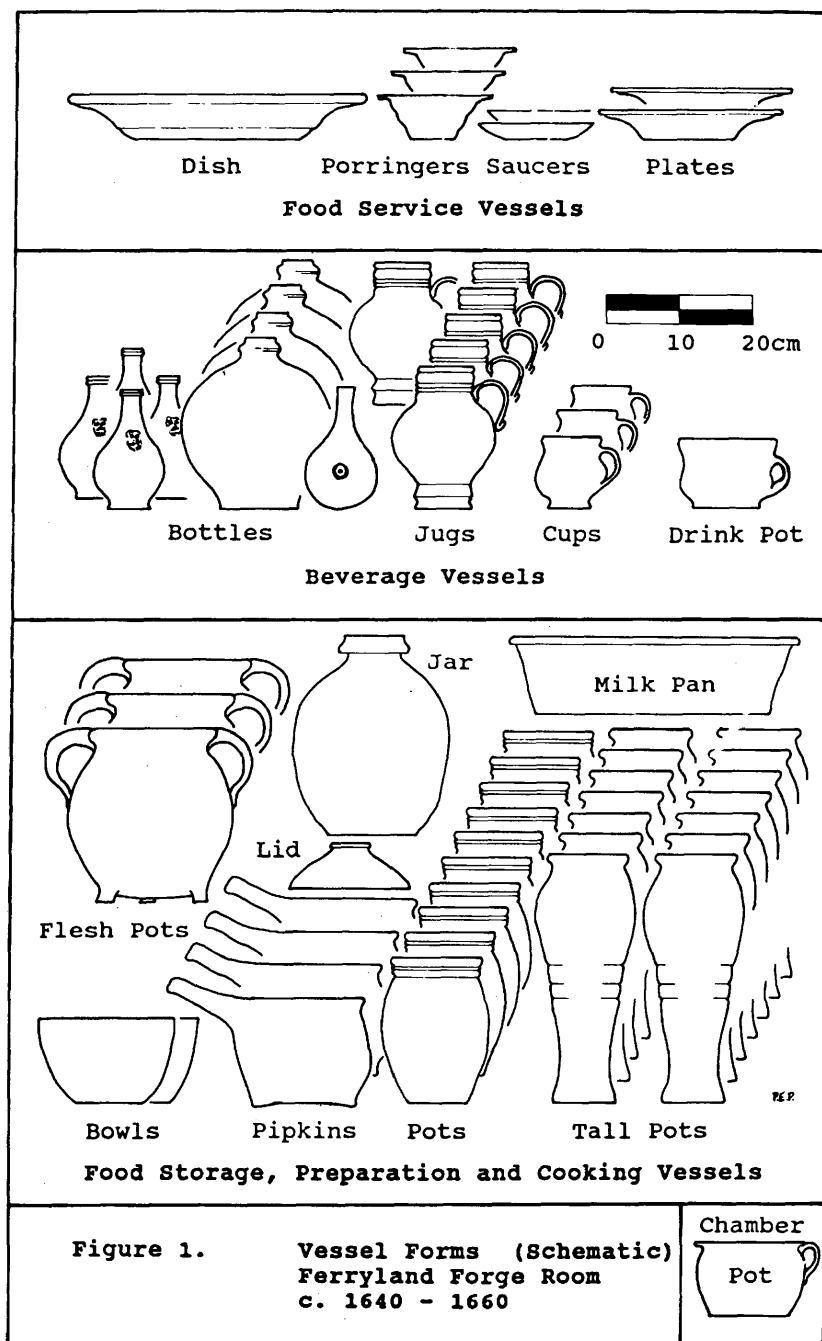
If the Forge Room was used as a cookroom, then vessels from the relevant pre-1660 strata should include a high proportion of storage, food preparation and cooking vessels. In fact, well over half of the vessels from the pre-1660s contexts were functionally related to food storage, preparation or cooking.⁴⁷ The only comparable proportions among the comparison sites occur at the very early Virginia homelots at Martin's Hundred where, in each case, such vessels represent about one third of the assemblages. At sites in Exeter, Devon of 1600 to 1660, kitchen and storage vessels comprise just over 40 per cent of all vessels, a figure very close to the rate for the secondary post-1660 deposit overlying the Forge Room. If 30 to 40 per cent represents average contemporary rates of occurrence in functionally mixed assemblages, a rate in the order of 50 to 60 per cent strongly suggests that the storage and preparation of food was an important activity at the Forge Room.⁴⁸ This combination of functions may not have

45 Beaudry *et al.*, "Vessel Form Typology". The categories "Lids" and "Tall Pots" were added.

46 Anon., "An Inventorie of what provision is Left at the English Coloni in Cupies Cove in the Newfound Lande", 26 July 1611; Richard Whitbourne, *A Discourse and Discovery of New-found-land* (London 1622); John Poyntz, "[Advice] given to Sir Henry Salusbury", 1626 — all in Cell, *Newfoundland Discovered*, pp. 65-7, 173-4, 246-9. See Pope, "Ceramics", pp. 212-22.

47 The rest are mostly beverage-related. Serving vessels for crewmen were normally wooden.

48 See Pope, "Ceramics", Tables 16-24, based on W. Pittman, "Vessel Count for Martin's Hundred Sites", ms on file, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, n.d.; artifact catalogue on file at St Mary's



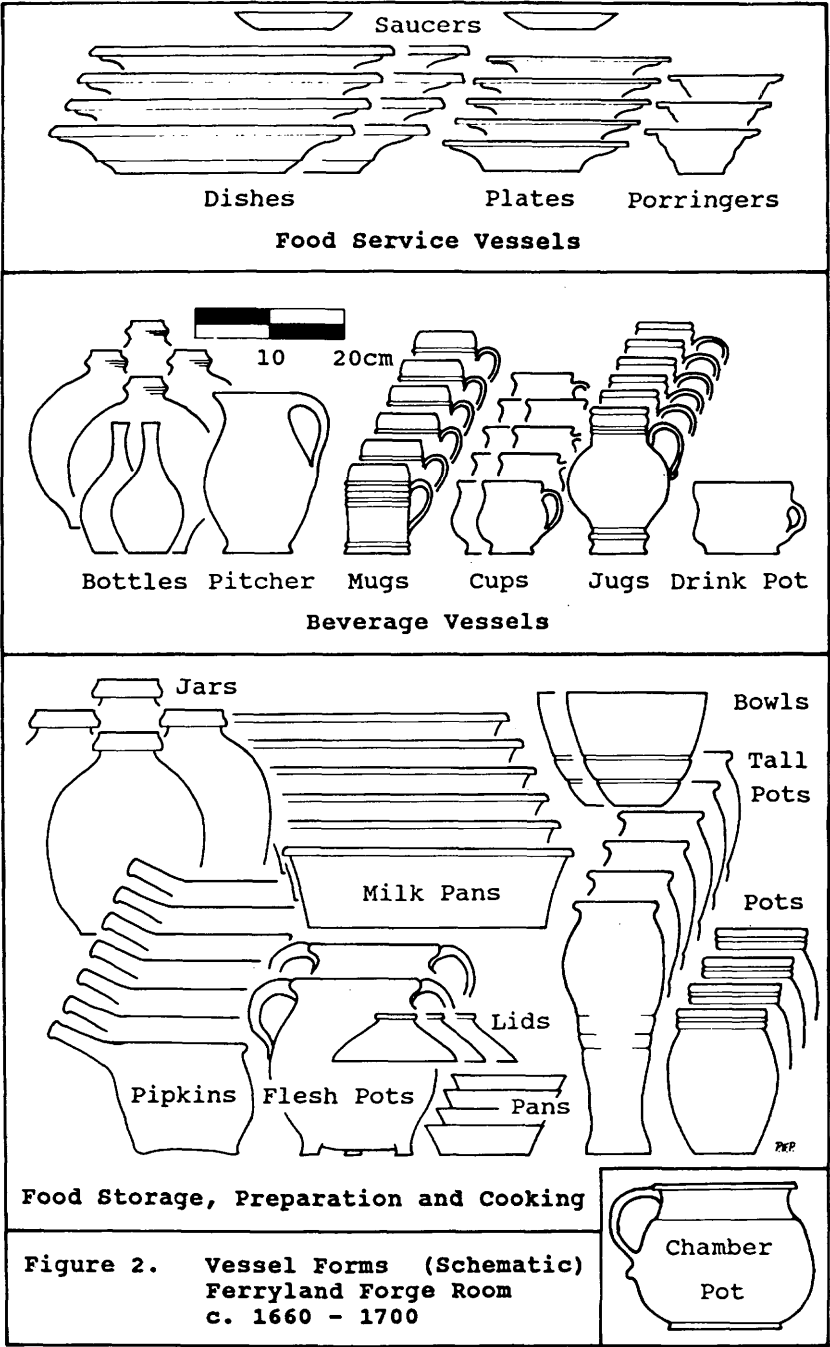


Figure 2. Vessel Forms (Schematic)
Ferryland Forge Room
c. 1660 - 1700

seemed as odd to the fishermen who shared a mess of pottage around the fire as it might today, since if forge work was necessary on board ship, the galley fire served the same combined functions.

The ceramic assemblage also provides evidence about the amount of drinking done at Ferryland. There is no obvious way to distinguish between vessels used for alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages. Thus all beverage service forms must be counted. Tea, coffee and other soft drinks are not in question; they enter the picture in the home market only in the later 17th century and were not consumed by working people in significant quantities before 1700.⁴⁹ Since alcohol cannot be, for physiological reasons, simply a substitute for water but inevitably constitutes an addition to total beverage consumption, high rates of occurrence of beverage vessel forms can be taken to suggest high rates of alcohol consumption, in the absence of any contemporary documented fashion for other beverages that are not simply water substitutes. One could argue (tongue in cheek, if necessary) that any positive relationship between the rate of breakage and the level of alcohol consumption would further validate the proposed index.

Beverage vessels are very strongly represented in both 17th-century contexts at the Forge Room, making up between 30 and 35 per cent of the assemblages. This high proportion is matched among the comparison sites only at Smith's Ordinary or tavern in St. Mary's, where beverage vessels make up a very slightly larger portion of the assemblage. At Chesapeake residential sites proportions range around 10 per cent. At the mixed urban sites of Exeter such vessels account for 20 per cent of all ceramics. The representation of drinking vessels was also high on board the H.M.S. *Saphire*, where 25 per cent of all vessels fall into this category. The ceramic evidence from both Ferryland and the *Saphire* supports the premise that mariners were avid consumers of alcohol. Considering the proportion of drinking vessels at the Forge Room with the evidence from Smith's Ordinary, one might conclude that the Room abandoned c. 1660 was a tavern and that the overlying strata consisted of secondary deposits from a similar, later and more up-market amenity. We need not choose between a functional interpretation of the Ferryland Room as a forge or as a sort of cafeteria or as a kind of tavern; it was, evidently, all these things and probably more. A successful tippling house required a warm fire and it is probably no coincidence that blacksmiths are among the occupational groups Peter Clark finds most often involved in tippling.⁵⁰

City, MD, n.d.; Gérard Gusset, "Interim Report on the Ceramics Found in Bay Bulls in 1977", ms on file, Parks Canada, Ottawa, 1978; Allan, *Finds from Exeter*, microfiche 43.

49 John Burnett, *A History of the Cost of Living* (Harmondsworth, 1969), p.82; Fernand Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life* (New York, 1981), pp. 251-60; Clark, *English Alehouse*, p. 214.

50 Clark, *English Alehouse*, pp. 66, 75.

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The archaeological evidence from one site cannot prove that fishermen were abnormally inclined to consume alcohol, any more than one document could establish such a point. Taken together, however, the documentary and the archaeological evidence suggest, consistently, that fisherfolk did exhibit a preference for alcohol, among the goods on which they might have spent their incomes. The archaeological evidence has the virtue of being first hand: the beverage vessels at Ferryland must be explained because they were there, not because a West Country fish merchant claimed they were there. The archival evidence has the virtue of putting the consumption of alcohol in context. The artifacts validate the assumption in the documents that alcohol was an important commodity on Newfoundland's original English Shore; the documents provide us with some indication of why this was so.

Several superficially plausible explanations are inadequate. The merchants of Exeter and Plymouth simply blamed their competitor David Kirke, the major planter merchant, accusing him of setting up taverns "whereby the fishermen waste their estates and grow disorderly".⁵¹ Kirke, they told the Council of State, besides being a corrupt and blasphemous drunk himself, injured the Commonwealth's interests at Newfoundland in several ways:

...butt especially by his continuall support of rude, prophane, and athisticall planters, whome hee not only licenceth to keepe tavernes att sevrall yearly rents in most of the choyssest fishinge portes & harbors, butt furnisheth them with wynes, att his owne rates & prises, to the debauching of seamen, who are thereby taken off from theyre labors in the principallest tymes of fishinge, as by the examinations of sevrall masters of shippes heereunto annexed appeares.⁵²

There is little doubt that Kirke was heavily engaged in a trade in alcohol. This trade and the licensing of taverns were two of the six sources of his profits that the Council of State instructed the Commonwealth's commissioners in Newfoundland in 1651 to audit.⁵³ Indeed, the archaeological evidence from the Kirke brothers' occupation, from 1629 to 1632, of Champlain's Habitation in Quebec, suggests that they may have already been active in the alcohol and tobacco trades before Sir David set up shop in Ferryland and switched his primary

51 Exeter Justices of the Peace, Petition.

52 Robert Gybbes *et al.*, "Pettitions of Plimoth".

53 Council of State, "Warrant for a Commission to examine witnesses", 8 April 1651, State Papers, SP 25/29, ff. 11-18. Cf. Kirke and Shapleigh, Bill of lading. Thomas Cruse testified that Kirke charged him a £15 annual license fee for his tippling house in Bay Bulls in the 1640s. See Cruse, Deposition.

export effort from fur to fish.⁵⁴ The explanation, however, is unsatisfactory. We must still ask why the trade in wine and brandy attracted a merchant as astute as Kirke, as well as the smaller planters whom he is said to have licensed and supplied.

When we observe relatively high ratios of beverage-related ceramics in an archaeological assemblage from Ferryland of the 1640s and 50s or note that at least 160,000 litres of wines and spirits were imported into St. John's in 1677, we are not observing consumption itself but proxies for it.⁵⁵ Even if we take these statistics as a guide to consumption patterns, we are still at some distance from cultural choice, since consumption itself is the intersection of two conceptually distinguishable potentials: supply and demand. From the supply point of view the importance of alcohol as an import in early modern Newfoundland is not surprising. Wine was a major product of the market to which Newfoundland exported its staple, salt fish. Indeed, the sack ships which carried that staple to market took their very name from that other staple, wine, which they carried back from southern Europe, normally to England.⁵⁶ Wine was already part of the business of many of the merchants involved in the shipment of fish.⁵⁷ But the availability of wine to these merchants does not explain their choice of this, among many available goods, as a preferred item of supply.

In the situation of chronic specie scarcity, typical of the early modern world, merchants were under great pressure to develop returns for the goods whose export they organized: they could not hope to pay for fish in coin, for coin was too scarce.⁵⁸ The reasonably high unit value and durability of alcohol in shipment made it a useful commodity in this respect. One naval observer noted that, although Newfoundland planters were at risk during fisheries crises because crew wages were high and provisions were expensive, "the liquour they Sell at a very Deare Rate does something help".⁵⁹ Furthermore, the demand for alcohol

54 Françoise Niellon and Marcel Moussette, *Le Site de l'Habitation de Champlain à Québec: étude de la collection archéologique (1976-1980)* (Québec, 1985), p. 49.

55 The figures are given in Head, *Eighteenth Century Newfoundland*, Table 6.1, p. 101, from "Severall sorts of wyne & Provisions imported this yeare only in St. John's Harbr.", which he cites as CO 1/41 (14).

56 "Sack" probably derives from "vino de sacca" or "wine set aside for export" rather than "secco" or "dry". See Francis, *Wine Trade*, pp. 50-1.

57 London merchants of 1630 to 1650, involved in both the trade in salt fish and the wine trade, include John de la Barre, William Berkeley and Sir David Kirke's brothers James and John. See P.R.O., High Court of Admiralty, Interrogatories, HCA 23/12 (7), (232), HCA 23/13 (35), HCA 23/14 (148), HCA 23/16 (134) and Libels, HCA 24/96 (3), (334), HCA 24/106 (67).

58 See W.T. Baxter, *The House of Hancock, Business in Boston, 1724-1775* (New York, 1965), pp. 16, 295; Jacob Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade* (Cambridge MA, 1980), p. 121 and *passim*.

59 Captain Francis Wheeler, "Observations...as to the Western Charter", 27 October 1684, CO 1/54 (56), ff. 239-45.

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was elastic: if bulk imports reduced the cost of alcohol to the consumer, demand was such that consumption would expand. This property of demand elasticity was unusual in the early modern period and would have been a considerable benefit to the import merchant who was also the employer of labour in producing an export staple.⁶⁰ In the early modern world a reduction in costs or an increase in wage rates did not automatically result in an increase in consumption. Labour, in short, had a tendency to choose increased leisure over consumption.⁶¹ Any good with an elastic demand would tend to short-circuit this tendency and would therefore benefit the importer who was also an employer.⁶² The Hudson's Bay Company seems to have used brandy in a similar way in its fur trade with the Indians.⁶³

The question of obtaining fish for export was, for the merchant, a question of labour control. Contemporaries associated alcohol with debt and consumer credit with bound labour in what eventually came to be known as the truck system. The term "truck" meant simply barter to John Guy and his early 17th-century contemporaries, but in the 18th century it took on the narrower sense of a system of payment in kind in lieu of wages. In Newfoundland the term came to denote the system of advancing provisions on credit against the expected catch of the ensuing season. How and when the truck system, in this sense, began to function in the Newfoundland cod fishery are important and unanswered questions.⁶⁴ In 1684 Captain Wheeler observed that planters were in heavy debt to larger merchants "yett they must goe on, or Else the Marchants wont Sell them provisions to live in the Winter".⁶⁵ The planters erected a similar structure of obligations with their servants who, the imperial government was told, "run into debt, and are forced to hire themselves for payment thereof; one month's profuse living and a pair of shoes leaves them in bondage for a whole year".⁶⁶ If it

60 See D.C. Coleman, "Labour in the English Economy of the Seventeenth Century", *Economic History Review*, 2nd series, 8 (1956), pp. 280-95.

61 Eric L. Jones, "The Fashion Manipulators: Consumer Tastes and British Industries, 1660-1800" in Louis P. Cain and Paul Uselding, eds., *Business Enterprise and Economic Change* (Kent State, 1973), pp. 198-226.

62 Compare Daniel Vickers, "The First Whalemen of Nantucket", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 40 (1983), pp. 560-83.

63 See Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. Freeman, *'Give Us Good Measure': an economic analysis of relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763* (Toronto, 1978), pp. 128 ff.

64 A history of the truck system is assumed by Gerald Sider in *Culture and class in anthropology and history: a Newfoundland illustration* (Cambridge, 1986), in which some social and economic implications of the system are worked out, theoretically.

65 Wheeler, "Observations".

66 Captain George Larkin, "Report to the Council of Trade and Plantations", 20 August 1701, CO 194/2, f. 44. Compare Captain James Story, "Report on Enquiries", 1 September 1681, CO 1/47 (52i), ff. 112-21.

is unclear when the truck system emerged in Newfoundland, one of the characteristics of its early phase was evident — as a commercial mechanism it was lubricated with alcohol: “Considerable quantities of rum and molasses are brought hither from New England, with which the fishers grow debauched and run into debt, so that they are obliged to hire themselves to the Planters for payment thereof”.⁶⁷

Demand for a good, whether alcohol or tobacco, earthenware vessels or bedlinen, represents some combination of taste and disposable income. However much the inhabitants of 17th century Ferryland might have enjoyed alcohol, they would not have had it unless they could also afford it. The disposable incomes of Newfoundland fishing crews were high relative to the wages semi-skilled workers could expect at home. “A labouring man will get in a summer near 20 *l.*, and their daily food comes out of the sea, while such a person would not get 3 *l.* in England”, observed Captain John Berry in 1675.⁶⁸ In other words, crewmen might make in the order of £10 to £20 in a good six month season, as opposed to something under £10 *per annum* at home. This in itself undercuts any assumption that 17th-century Newfoundland was an underdeveloped “plantation economy” in the sense that the West Indies or the Chesapeake could be seen to have been.⁶⁹ Since small production units participated efficiently in the cod fishery and since wages seem to have been relatively high, Newfoundland’s failure to develop, at least in the early modern period, may have had as much to do with the willingness of fisher folk to disperse disposable income on imports as it did with the possibilities for capital intensification in the production of salt cod or with the tendency of merchants to export profits.⁷⁰ This apparently feckless attitude is like the one Marcus Rediker observes among deep sea sailors: “acquisition but not accumula-

67 Captain S. Fairbourn, “Report to the Lords Commissioners for Trade and Plantations”, 11 September 1700, in Saintsbury *et al.*, eds., *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial*, vol. 18, pp. 521-3. Molasses was the major ingredient of spruce beer, which is not necessarily a small beer. Note that one naval observer dismissed reports that servants were forced to hire themselves for the satisfaction of debts resulting from “debauchment”: see Charles Talbot, “Answers to Enquiries”, 15 September 1679, CO 1/43 (121), ff. 214-7.

68 Sir John Berry, “Report to Secretary Williamson”, 24 July 1675, CO 1/34 (118), ff. 133-4. Compare Talbot’s view that fishing servant’s wages at Newfoundland were excessive, “Answers”. On wages in the English labour market see Joan Thirsk, *Economic Projects and Policy* (Cambridge, U.K., 1978), p. 173. According to Churchill, male wages at Richmond Island in the 1640s were, with one exception, between £9 and £15 10s annually; see “Richmond Island”, p. 185.

69 For the plantation model see Robert E. Baldwin, “Patterns of Development in Newly Settled Regions”, *Manchester School of Economics and Social Studies*, 29 (1956), pp. 161-79.

70 Compare Stephen Antler, “The Capitalist Underdevelopment of Nineteenth-Century Newfoundland”, in Robert Brym and R. James Sacouman, eds., *Underdevelopment and Social Movements in Atlantic Canada* (Toronto, 1979), pp. 180-202.

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tion; the present, often at the expense of the future; gratification and consumption over deferral and savings".⁷¹ Observing that fishermen are, after all, mariners only pushes the difficult questions further back. Why was this culture of consumption adopted? How did this pattern of behaviour arise? Why was it exhibited first with commodities like alcohol (and tobacco and sugar)?⁷² Historians and anthropologists should know, if anyone does, that "human nature" is not a constant; taste is, like other facets of personality, a social product. Consumption must make some cultural sense to the consumer whose taste is expressed in demand and whose demand is expressed in consumption. We must link culture and economics if we are to answer questions about the fishermen's taste for alcohol.

Daniel Vickers has suggested that high rates of alcohol consumption on the resource periphery resulted from social and political marginality.⁷³ Newfoundland's 17th-century fishing populace was politically marginal and there is little evidence of any social life except that of the cookroom or tippling house. However, it is unclear that fisherfolk were more marginal politically than much of the English population.⁷⁴ Furthermore, it was normal for early modern English workers to look for sociability outside the home. Domestic social life among workers seems to have been largely restricted to work in this period. "Homes were to work, sleep, and, increasingly, to pray in, but not great centres for relaxation and recreation", as Carole Shammas has put it.⁷⁵ The 17th-century worker normally found his or her social life either in a religious congregation or at the alehouse. Again we are left with the question of why fishermen chose the latter, or the local equivalent. This was a cultural choice with significant economic implications.

What did fishermen use alcohol for? At one level they used it as their young, mobile, predominantly male, erratically-employed counterparts did in the home country: as an occasion for socializing.⁷⁶ At another level, goods like alcohol and tobacco may have had a special role at the resource periphery. They seem to have functioned as "little hearths";⁷⁷ both were thought to satisfy a physiological need

71 Marcus Rediker, *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue Sea* (Cambridge, U.K., 1987), p. 149.

72 On the rise of the demand for sugar see Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power* (New York, 1986).

73 Daniel Vickers, "Work and Life on the Fishing Periphery of Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1675", in David Hall and David Allen, eds., *Seventeenth Century New England* (Boston, 1985), pp. 83-117.

74 Cf. Keith Wrightson, *English Society, 1580-1680* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1982), pp. 149-82.

75 Carole Shammas, "The Domestic Environment in Early Modern England and America", *Journal of Social History*, 14 (1980), pp. 3-23; cf. Clark, *English Alehouse*, pp. 123-32.

76 See Clark, *English Alehouse*, pp. 49, 114, 139, 148.

77 This is Ralph Pastore's felicitous phrase.

for warmth in a cool climate. Aqua vitae was "to be permitted unto cold and phlegmatic bodies, especially in colde and moyst seasons".⁷⁸ The "Intolerable Cold...would make it hard liveing with out Strong drink", one 17th-century visitor to Newfoundland thought.⁷⁹ In the task-oriented world of the early modern cod fishery, drinking binges may have served to mark periods of leisure — leisure which was, as the archaeology of the Ferryland Forge Room indicates, enjoyed in the same physical surroundings as the work itself. Desirable, portable, divisible goods, like alcohol and tobacco, are eminently suitable as small luxuries appropriate for frequent reciprocal exchange among peers. For the worker, no less than for the merchant, alcohol was a "valuable" appropriate for exchange and short term storage of capital: it had high unit value and was relatively durable, although not quite durable enough for long term accumulation. Binges would have dispersed such short term "savings" in a neighbourly way.⁸⁰

Valuables like alcohol and tobacco had two aspects: to the labouring consumer they represented a culturally useful good, to the supplying merchant an economically efficient return for fish. In some sense they were the cultural face of the credit system. The pivotal role ascribed here to alcohol in the local social economy would go some way to explaining why levels of consumption were high in the early modern fishing periphery and may explain why attempts were made so often to exert legal control over its distribution. In the end, the trade in what might seem a minor luxury may have been as important as the commercial practice of credit as a form of labour control, as a factor in the export of profits, and perhaps, therefore, as a constraint on development.

78 Anon., *Via Recta ad Vitam Longam*, p. 36.

79 Wheeler, "Observations".

80 On the social function of drinking binges see Clark, *English Alehouse*, p. 114; on valuables see Colin Renfrew, "Varna and the emergence of wealth in prehistoric Europe", in Arjun Appadurai, ed., *The Social Life of Things* (New York, 1986), pp. 141-68.