

# The Mystery of Oak Island – Part 1: The Treasure Hunt

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*An account of the treasure-hunt that has taken place since 1795 on Oak Island, Nova Scotia—an island containing one of the great mysteries of history.*

Author: Peter Dawkins

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## The Enigma of Oak Island, Nova Scotia

Oak Island, Nova Scotia, is famous for containing one of the great enigmas of history. It is located approximately on the 45°N latitude and lies in Malone Bay on the south-eastern coast of Nova Scotia, 35 miles south-west of Halifax. The 140-acre island is one of more than 350 isles scattered around Mahone Bay and is the largest of those in the Bay’s inner reaches. Although at times it has had other names, the island is commonly known as Oak Island, supposedly because of the red oaks that used to grow on it, this being somewhat of a rare occurrence on islands and coastland in that part of North America.

Since 1795 Oak Island has been the subject of enormous effort and expenditure by successive treasure-hunting individuals, groups and companies. Much has been and is still being said and written about the island and its mysterious “Money Pit”, published in books, videos and websites, which provide a history of its exploration, an account of discoveries made, and plenty of speculations concerning what may be hidden there. There is even a History Channel television series (by Prometheus Entertainment) about Oak Island, entitled “The Curse of Oak Island”, that has been running since January 2014.

To start this treatise—in which I hope to bring further insights to the story, especially concerning the role that Francis Bacon and the Rosicrucians had in this affair—I will present a synopsis of the history of discovery and exploration to date, as reported and generally believed, although some people question the truth or accuracy of some of the older reports and allegations. This treasure hunt history forms Part 1 of the treatise. Part 2 concerns the

history of and rationale for the Baconian-Rosicrucian involvement in this Oak Island mystery. Part 3 is devoted to the secret.

## History of the Oak Island Treasure Hunt

The treasure hunt began in 1795, when a 16-year-old boy, Daniel McInnes, paddled over to the deserted island and found, in the interior of the island, evidence of tree-felling that had once taken place there, together with a clearing containing a shallow saucer-shaped depression in the ground, about 12 feet in diameter, over which, 16 feet above, hung the sawn-off limb of a huge old red oak tree that stood at the side of the depression. This limb was left forked at the end and was reported as having a plug inserted in the fork, thereby making a triangle, and bearing (or showing the signs of having borne) an old ship's tackle block on a rotting rope—or this is what Daniel imagined. Whatever the case, the teenager was immediately fired with visions of buried treasure, for the area was much frequented by pirates, with Captain Kidd being the main protagonist imagined.

The next day Daniel returned with two friends, John (Jack) Smith and Anthony Vaughan, and began digging. At two feet down they struck a smooth layer of flagstones, neatly fitted together, which they later determined had been brought all the way from Gold River, about two miles away. Having removed the flagstones, they could see that they had found the opening of a shaft whose mouth was more than seven feet wide in diameter and whose sides consisted of hard clay in which pick marks were still visible. Digging further, at 10 feet down they hit a platform of oak logs or planks tightly attached to the sides of the pit, but which they were able to remove. Beneath this the earth had settled, leaving a gap of about two feet. Digging down further they encountered another platform at 20 feet depth; and yet another at 30 feet. After excavating a further five feet, they stopped their treasure hunt.

Following this, John Smith, the oldest of the three, set about purchasing the Oak Island lot that contained the Money Pit. Smith and McGuinness, joined by Simeon Lynds (a wealthy Nova Scotian), settled on the island and, in 1803, together with Anthony Vaughan, Colonel Robert Archibald, Captain David Archibald and Sheriff Thomas Harris, they formed the Onslow Company and began to dig again. As they dug down they continued to discover an oak log platform at approximately every 10 feet, each platform supporting soil that had been placed upon it to fill the Money Pit. At a depth of 40 feet, there was charcoal covering the platform. At 50 feet depth they found a layer of thick putty spread over the platform. At 60 feet depth they encountered a bed of eelgrass and coconut fibre (which were not native to Nova Scotia) overlaying the platform. At 70 feet depth there was a layer of hand-cut planks. At 90 feet depth they came across a large square-cut flagstone inscribed with a two-line cipher message, which they removed, but were unable to decipher its message. Then, having dug down through nine platforms, at 93 feet they drove an iron rod into the soil and struck a solid mass at 98 feet depth that made a thumping sound when their rod struck it. Exhausted, but excited, they decided to retire for the night.

The next morning the treasure-hunters hurried back to dig up what they were sure must be a treasure chest, only to find the Money Pit filled with 60 feet of water (i.e. up to 30 feet below ground level). After weeks of fruitless bailing, the following year they hired miners to dig a new shaft at the side of the Money Pit. At a depth of 110 feet they began burrowing toward the Money Pit; but, with only two feet to go, a great mass of water burst through, filling the

new shaft up to the same level as in the Money Pit. The men narrowly escaped with their lives.

In the autumn of 1804, the group returned together with a Mr Carl Mosher and his mechanical pump. They managed to drain the Money Pit approximately down to the 90-foot level, but then the pump failed and water steadily refilled the pit. The team retreated and returned the following year, 1805, having decided on a new approach. They started excavating a new shaft close to and parallel with the Money Pit, but this also flooded. At this point the Onslow Company was forced to accept defeat.

It wasn't until 1849 that another attempt was made to find what might be in the Money Pit. A new company, the Truro Company, was formed, consisting of John Smith, Anthony Vaughan, John Gammell, Adams Tupper, Robert Creelmand, Esq., Jotham McCully, James Pitbaldo and Dr David Barnes Lynds, Simeon Lynds' brother. (Daniel McGuinness had by now died.) Having tried and failed to successfully drain the pit, they set up a platform above the water at the 35-foot level and, using a horse-driven pod auger (which could pick up a sample of anything it passed through), they plunged the auger down through the water and into the floor of the pit. At 98 feet depth (where the crowbar had hit the solid mass in 1804) the auger pierced a spruce platform about 5-6 inches deep (the 10th platform). It then dropped through a 12-inch empty space before it cut through four inches of oak, 22 inches of loose metal pieces, eight inches of oak, another 22 inches of metal, four more inches of oak, six more inches of spruce (the 11th platform), and a seven-foot depth of blue clay. Included with the samples that the auger brought up were three small links of gold chain. When the auger was sent down again, it reached 114 feet depth. It didn't bring up any gold this time, but it did show evidence of a further coconut fibre-covered oak platform (the 12th platform, presumably supporting the blue clay).<sup>1</sup> All of this suggested to the treasure-hunters that below the 98-foot level spruce platform there was some kind of vault, six feet high, containing two oak chests one atop the other, filled with treasure and supported on a watertight or semi-watertight construction.

The following year (1850) the Company excavated an adjoining 110-foot deep shaft 10 feet away from the Money Pit, and then from the bottom started burrowing horizontally towards the Money Pit; but the water from the Money Pit burst through and flooded the new shaft. It was then noticed that not only was the water in the Money Pit and shaft salty but also that it rose and fell with the tide. The realisation then dawned that the Money Pit was booby-trapped by means of some sort of underground conduit leading from a nearby beach. The beach they chose to explore, in the hope that they might find and block up the flood-tunnel, was Smith's Cove on the east shore of the island. To their astonishment, what they discovered when they stripped the beach of its sand was a thick mat consisting of tons of coconut fibre and eelgrass laid over a stone floor that stretched between the high and low tide marks (a distance of 150 feet). In this stone floor they found five stone-walled box drains converging in from the sea and slanting downwards towards a sump, with the whole orientated towards the Money Pit. The construction was such as to cause the beach to act as a gigantic sponge soaking up and the same time filtering the tidewater into the sump. The sump dropped 70 feet straight down to an underground tunnel that then, it was speculated, sloped upwards to the Money Pit, entering the latter at some deep point beneath where the supposed oak chests were placed. It was estimated that the length of this flood-tunnel was more than 460 feet and

its entry point into the Money Pit was somewhere below the 12th platform (at approx. 113-foot depth?).

It now seemed clear to them that the whole design was that of a genius and that the construction was done by experts in mining. The oak chests (if that is what they were) must have been resting on a secure spruce platform that had been made watertight (i.e. with the clay beneath), thus creating a water-free vault beneath the 10th and 11th platforms. By digging down and removing the first nine platforms and the soil that they supported, the treasure-hunters had unwittingly lessened the pressure of earth and air that had previously prevented the seawater from rising up in the Money Pit. The whole construction was such that it ensured that a goodly body of sea-water would always fill the Money Pit at any time of day and night, whether high tide or low tide, if the trap was sprung.

Efforts were now made to hold back the sea in Smith's Cove by building a cofferdam, but a storm and the sea promptly wrecked it. Interestingly, however, the remains of an older dam were found when building the new one, which was considered to be the one built by those who created the original 'booby-trap' drainage system. The consortium then dug a third shaft between Smith's Cove and the Money Pit in order to try to find and plug the flood-tunnel, but in this they also failed. Thus beaten, the Truro Company finally quit.

In 1861 the Oak Island Association was formed, consisting of 63 men and 33 horses. First they cleared out the Money Pit down to 88 feet. Then they dug two shafts parallel to and each side of the Money Pit, one on the east side to a depth of 118 feet and the other on the west side to a depth of 120 feet, the former to see if they could intercept the flood-tunnel from the sea and the latter so that they could tunnel under the Money Pit. However, not only were they unable to find the flood-tunnel but also their new tunnel caused the bottom of the Money Pit to collapse into the tunnel and then drop even further into some kind of void. Besides allowing whatever was speculated to be in the Money Pit to fall even lower than ever, it also caused the water to flood into their new shaft, nearly drowning two men. This was followed by further injuries and a death in 1861 caused by a boiler exploding whilst trying to drain the Money Pit. The Oak Island Association carried on for another four years, mainly trying to locate and obstruct the flood-tunnel from Smith Cove, then finally in 1866 the Association quit their treasure hunt.

In the years following, several other companies tried their luck, digging more shafts, building a new dam and attempting to fill in the drain on the beach, all of which failed of their purpose and with a storm again destroying the dam.

In 1893 two Nova Scotia men, Frederick Blair and S. C. Fraser, established the Oak Island Treasure Company. First of all they investigated what had become known as the "Cave-in Pit" that had been discovered in 1878 about 350 feet east of the Money Pit. It was speculated that this had been a shaft dug out by the constructors of the Money Pit, either as a ventilation shaft for the digging of the flood-tunnel or for access to other tunnels beneath the ground. But this started to flood at a depth of 55 feet and so was abandoned.

Over the next few years the Treasure Company dug more shafts and pumped more water, all to no avail. However, in 1897, by digging a new shaft 200 feet deep next to the Money Pit so as to help clear and drain the latter, in which they were successful, the Treasure Company was the first to locate the flood-tunnel inlet, approx. 111 feet down the side of the Money

Pit, which they attempted to block with rocks. They constructed a platform at the 98-foot level and then used a drill rig to explore the depths below. At 126 feet they drilled through five inches of oak wood and what seemed to be loose pieces of metal. Between 130 and 151 feet the drill encountered blue clay. At 153' 8" feet the bit chewed into seven inches of cement followed by five inches of solid oak.<sup>2</sup> The bit then dropped about an inch and a half and then penetrated through an unknown substance followed by a layer of soft metal, then 32 inches of what felt like metal pieces, then another layer of soft metal, and then more oak and cement. At 170 feet it rattled against impenetrable iron. When the drill was raised, the bit brought up with it flecks of gold and a tiny scrap of sheepskin parchment bearing the letters "vi" or "ui" written with a quill pen and india ink. The searchers interpreted this as being a large oak chest encased in concrete (or held in a concrete vault) and containing gold and parchments.

Sometime during this year, 1897, whilst the drilling was taking place, a Captain Welling visited the island and discovered a group of stones on the south shore, 300 feet due south of the Money Pit, which were carefully laid out to define a 60° sector of a 10-foot radius circle, with a line of stones laid out within it such that it acted as a compass needle pointing due north to the Money Pit. Another line of stones split the sector into an equilateral triangle and a segment. Captain Welling pointed this out to Fred Blair, who in 1895 had come upon a large stone with a hole drilled in its upper surface about 50 feet due north of the Money Pit. The group of stones discovered by Captain Welling became known as the "Welling Triangle".

Despite all the work done, water continued to enter the Money Pit; so the Treasure Company continued to dig further shafts in the hope of getting to what they believed was the underground vault and the chests of treasure within it. These all failed due to flooding; so eventually, in 1899, using dynamite near the shore at Smith's Cove, the Company attempted to block off the sea from entering the flood-tunnel. They then poured red dye into the water in the Money Pit, to see if they had been successful. Not a trace of the dye seeped back to Smith's Cove, but on the opposite side of the island, 300 feet from the Money Pit, in South Shore Cove red stains appeared in three places. This meant that there was at least one more flood-tunnel that had to be dealt with. The search continued, but after spending more than \$100,000 the Treasure Company folded in 1900.

Various syndicates and prominent financiers, including a young lawyer named Franklin D. Roosevelt, followed on, all trying their hand at finding the treasure and all failing. In 1931, William Chappell, a wealthy contractor of Sydney, Nova Scotia, who had been part of the Oak Island Treasure Company, made an attempt, but the Depression caused him to quit. However, before he quit in 1932, he managed to sink a 163-foot shaft to the southwest of what he believed was the site of the 1897 shaft, close to the original Money Pit. At 127 feet a number of artefacts were found, including an axe, an anchor fluke, a pick and the remnants of an oil lamp containing seal oil. The pick has been identified as a Cornish miner's poll-pick.

Chappell was followed in 1936 by Gilbert Hedden, a New Jersey millionaire, who purchased the southeast end of the island and began a new investigation in conjunction with Fred Blair, the actual owner of the Money Pit site. They hired the Pennsylvania mining firm, Sprague and Henwood, Inc., and ran submarine power lines from the mainland to drive high speed pumps to clear both Chappell's shaft and the 170-foot deep Money Pit. After a lot of effort and no

success at finding the supposed treasure, he finally concluded that all the digging and flooding had probably shifted the treasure as much as 100 feet in any direction.

However, Hedden did find some interesting things, such as a fragment of a stone bearing inscriptions similar to those found on the inscribed stone discovered at the 90-foot level of the Money Pit. He also came across several old timbers joined together by wooden pins in Smith's Cove, which were speculated as possibly being from the original constructors of the Oak Island complex. His team also found, at a depth of 93 feet, clay putty not previously found on the island, and at a depth of 114 feet they came across an intersecting tunnel measuring 3'10" wide by 6'4" high that was lined with hemlock timbers, which they speculated as possibly being one of the original flood tunnels. Hedden also came across a second large drilled stone, similar to the one found by Fred Blair in 1895, which was located not far from Smith's Cove, and rediscovered the "Welling Triangle" on the south shore.

In 1938 Erwin Hamilton took over the treasure hunt. He cleared out the previous shafts and made some exploratory drilling. In 1939, during the drilling, some rocks and gravel were found at a depth of 190 feet that Hamilton thought were non-indigenous to the land. The supposition was that they had been placed there by someone. In another drilling at the base of an earlier shaft that had been cleared out to a depth of 176 feet, a layer of limestone was encountered and drilled through. The drilling brought up some oak splinters, which appeared to suggest that there was oak wood beneath the limestone and that this was perhaps part of a timbering support for an underground tunnel.

When Blair died in 1951, Oak Island and its treasure rights were acquired by William Chappell's son, Mel, who had worked with his father's expedition in 1931. After expending \$25,000 on just one excavation, which quickly became a small lake, he then leased portions of his rights to a series of other fortune hunters, one of them being Robert Restall, of Hamilton, Ontario.

Robert, together with his wife Mildred, two sons and a daughter, moved to Oak Island in 1959 in hopes of finding treasure, but this ended in tragedy. On 17th August 1965, Robert was overcome by toxic fumes (possibly carbon monoxide fumes from a generator) and fell into the 27-foot deep watery shaft that he and his team were excavating at Smith's Cove in an attempt to seal off what was thought to be a flood-tunnel leading from the cove. His son Bobbie, together with Kal Graseser, Restall's partner, and workers Cyril Hiltz and Andy DeMont, all rushed to help but were likewise overcome. Edward White, who was visiting the site, had himself lowered on a rope into the shaft and was able to bring out DeMont, but the other four men died.

Fred Nolan, a surveyor, had come to Oak Island in 1961. Thanks to a mistake made in the purchase of the island made in 1935 that was discovered by Nolan, in 1960 he had managed to buy some previously overlooked lots covering one-quarter of the island. This later led to a lot of bad feeling and court cases between him and the neighbouring owners who thought they owned the land. During a detailed survey of his land in the 1980s, Fred Nolan found six large unusually shaped boulders (five of them conical and the sixth looking like a face) laid out in the form of a huge Latin Cross, 720 feet wide by 876 feet long, which has become known as Nolan's Cross. Nolan rolled away the stone marking the right hand/arm of the Cross and found gold coins beneath, dated 1598 and with the Pillars of Hercules engraved on their faces.

In 1965, the geologist Robert Dunfield took on the lease of certain portions of the island. First of all, using two bulldozers, he set out to block the inflow of water at Smith's Cove—an endeavour which seems to have succeeded. Then he had a 600-foot causeway constructed from the western end of the island to Crandall's Point on the mainland in order to import a 70-ton digging crane with a clam bucket. With this he dug a trench on the south side of the island in the hope of intercepting and blocking the second flood-tunnel, but this was not found. Then the Money Pit area was dug out to a depth of 134 feet and width of 100 feet. From the bottom of the pit some drilling was carried out, which at 140 feet penetrated a two-foot layer of limestone and what appeared to be a wooden platform, and beneath that a 40-foot deep void. At the bottom of the void was bedrock. This information more or less matched that of the drilling done back in 1955 and suggested the presence of a large, natural underground cavern, something that is common in limestone strata.

Dunfield's lease terminated in August 1966 and was taken over by Daniel Blankenship, who had come to Oak Island in 1965. During that year (1965) and the subsequent year Daniel discovered an old shaft near the water's edge of the South Shore—a shaft that was hidden from view, buried under 12 feet of soil. He called it the "Hidden Shaft". It was located about 30 feet due south of the stone triangle that was first discovered by Captain Welling in 1897 and then rediscovered by Gilbert Hedden in 1937 (but which has since, in the 1960s, disappeared during excavations). During the excavation Daniel and his team encountered twigs and pieces of roots at 25-30 feet depth, and several layers of blue puddled clay alternating with layers of coarse sandy red material between 65ft to 77ft depth. The clay formed a water seal. The team pierced through this and beneath it found a mixture of black stinking water and muck that they brought up to the surface in many bucket-loads.

In January 1967, Dan Blankenship formed a partnership with David Tobias and purchased most of the island. The two men then formed a syndicate with Robert Dunfield and Fred Nolan, to try to heal the rift between them and for unfettered exploration of Oak Island. Throughout 1967, the men bored over 60 holes into the surface near the Money Pit. From their drillings they ascertained that bedrock began at a depth of 160 to 170 feet and that, at certain locations, there was wood a few inches thick at 40 feet beneath that bedrock. They retrieved a piece of brass from a site they termed Drill Hole 21, and pieces of porcelain, wood, clay and charcoal from other test holes.

In April 1969, Dan Blankenship and David Tobias formed Triton Alliance, Ltd., whose shareholders included some of the previous landholders, such as Mel Chappell. Over the next two years they recovered various metal samples at depths of up to 160 feet in a test pit or pits north-east of the Money Pit. In addition some of the workers at Smith's Cove found a U-shaped formation of logs marked with Roman numerals, which were thought to be the remnants of an ancient dam or harbour. A pair of wrought-iron scissors, a wooden sled, a portion of an iron ruler and other iron artefacts, including nails and spikes, were also discovered, which, when sent to the Steel Company of Canada for testing, were determined to predate 1790.

In 1971, Triton workers excavated a previously existing flooded shaft known as Borehole 10-X, widening it to fit a 27-inch diameter steel casing and deepening it to 165 feet. During the process, the crew recovered fragments of broken concrete as well as pieces of metal chain and wire. They then lowered cameras down the watery shaft, which recorded what appeared

to be a cavity in the surrounding bedrock at the bottom of the shaft, in which were some interesting shadowy items. Ten diving excursions were then carried out, many of them made by Dan Blankenship. What they thought they saw in the murky waters were some chests, tools and human remains, and also some wooden cribbing that hinted at possible tunnels leading off the cavity. However, more recent investigations suggest alternative interpretations.

Further excavations carried out across Oak Island in the following years still found no treasure. Then, in 1983, the work was halted because of lack of funds and the collapse of the partnership. The latter was due to legal conflict between Triton Alliance and Fred Nolan, with Triton Alliance contesting Nolan's ownership of seven lots on the island and claiming right of access to the causeway they had built, which Nolan had blocked. These legal battles continued from 1983 to 1987, when they were finally resolved with Nolan's ownership claim being substantiated but with him being required to remove the Oak Island Museum that he had built to obstruct the entrance to the causeway and to pay Triton Alliance damages for loss of income from tourism and other expenses that were incurred as a result.

In 2005 David Tobias sold a small part of his holdings on Oak Island to Center Road Developments, in conjunction with Allan Kostrzewa and Brian Urbach, and in 2006 he sold the rest of his holdings to brothers Rick and Marty Lagina. In 2007 this Michigan group formed a partnership with Dan Blankenship, who owned the rest of Triton Alliance's holdings in the island. The partnership is called Oak Island Tours and its partners are Dan Blankenship, Rick and Marty Lagina, Craig Tester and Alan J. Kostrzewa. It owns 78% of the island, the remaining 22% of the island being owned by private parties (e.g. Fred Nolan).

In 2007 the Oak Island historian Dan Hennigar was contacted by a gentleman in Florida who revealed that he had come to know a McGinnis whilst serving as an Air Force Colonel and later as a CIA operative during the Vietnam War. This McGinnis revealed that he was from a family that hailed from Nova Scotia and had direct connections with Oak Island. That is to say, he was a descendant of Daniel McInnes. He further revealed that the McGinnis, Vaughan and Smith families, who had started the treasure hunt, had seemingly found the treasure back in 1795 and never breathed a word to anyone. The gold cross on a gold chain being worn by the 20th/21st century McGinnis, who was telling the story, was part of that treasure and had been handed down in secrecy from father to eldest son through the generations. When this later McGinnis died, the Colonel contacted his sister, to whom McGinnis had passed on the gold cross and who knew the family secret. She told the Colonel that she had had it examined by appraisers, who told her the cross was over 500 years old. She further revealed that the legend passed on in the family was that three boxes of treasure were lifted out of the ground back in 1795 or thereabouts and that each of the three friends, Daniel McInnes, John Smith and Anthony Vaughan, each took a box, swearing themselves to secrecy.

In 2010 the Canadian government passed the Oak Island Treasure Act, which aimed to discourage exploitation of Nova Scotia's cultural resources for commercial gain. This has inhibited any treasure hunting, but tourism, however, is in high demand.

In 2014 The History Channel began the television series, *The Curse of Oak Island*, which documents the ongoing efforts of Rick and Marty Lagina, in conjunction with the father and son team Dan and David Blankenship, in their attempt to discover any unknown treasure or historical artefacts that might be buried on the island, and to unravel the mystery of its design, construction, purpose and author. For this they are also reaching out to other researchers



who might have relevant ideas, information or knowledge concerning this mystery. In this respect, the Baconian link is starting to assume importance, helped in particular by the cryptographic and on-site discoveries of the Norwegian researcher, Petter Amundsen.

In the finale of Season 3 of the series, three McGinnis sisters—Joan, Jean and Joyce—one of whom was the sister who had inherited the gold cross from her brother, were interviewed on the show and confirmed the story reported by the Oak Island historian Dan Hennigar in 2007. She showed the gold cross on the programme.

In December 2015 Rick and Marty were able to welcome Fred Nolan into the team. Regrettably, Fred Nolan died on June 4, 2016.

In Season 4 of the History Channel series, the finale of which was on 21 February 2017, the new discoveries made by the treasure hunters to some extent confirmed some of the reports given by the earlier treasure hunters, plus some extra discoveries. Various things brought up by the bucket drill from the Money Pit included a metal corner bracket, estimated to be from the corner of a ship's 'treasure' chest dating from the period 1550-1800; a button, originally gilt plated, belonging to a British military uniform of c.1775-1815; and various pieces of sheet metal, which may possibly turn out to be the shattered remains of the boiler that exploded in 1861 whilst trying to drain the Money Pit. Elsewhere a 1700 King George coin was discovered, whilst beneath the swamp some remains of a Spanish galleon (small sections of wood and a deck plank nail or spike) were found, including a Spanish coin dated 1652. In Smith's Cove, the prior existence of French drains forming a soak-away water catchment was proven by the unearthing of three graded layers of round stones, which was the common way of filling such soak-away drains.

### The Most Significant Discoveries so far

- The Oak Tree with its lopped off branch;
- The Money Pit, with its platform construction at 10 foot levels;
- The Hidden Shaft;
- Nolan's Cross;
- The Welling Triangle;
- Two large stones with holes bored in their upper surfaces, associated geometrically with the Welling Triangle;
- The Smiths Bay soak-away construction;
- The flood tunnels;
- The layers of coconut fibre and eelgrass;
- The flagstone inscribed with a cipher message found 90 feet down the Money Pit;
- The 1849 auger discovery, at 100-105 feet depth in the Money Pit, of what appeared to be two oak chests, one on top of the other, filled with treasure;
- The 1897 auger discovery in the Money Pit, at between 150 feet and 170 feet depth, of what was thought to be a 20-foot high sealed vault containing a concrete-enclosed oak chest of gold and manuscripts—the auger having brought up the tell-tale material

that included flecks of gold and a tiny scrap of sheepskin parchment bearing the letters “vi” or “ui” written with a quill pen and india ink;

- The pink granite stone incised with the letter ‘G’ found at the mouth of Smiths Cove;
- A pile of flasks which had contained quicksilver (liquid mercury), and core drilling that showed there was quicksilver in the Money Pit ‘vault’;<sup>3</sup>
- The gold coins discovered by Fred Nolan beneath one of the stones of Nolan’s Cross, dated 1598 and with the Pillars of Hercules engraved on their faces.
- The gold cross found by Daniel McInnes;
- The three chests of gold found by Daniel McInnes, John Smith and Anthony Vaughan (if true).
- The Cornish miner’s poll-pick and seal oil lamp.

## The Cipher Stone

The Cipher Stone, found in 1803 by the Onslow Company 90 feet down the Money Pit, was described as a rectangular 24” x 15” porphyry stone of a reddish-purple colour, weighing approximately 175 lb and inscribed with cipher figures that constituted a message of some kind. At first the message couldn’t be read, but in the 1860s James Leitch, a professor of languages at Dalhousie University, resolved that it was a simple substitution cipher wherein the cipher symbols correlated to specific letters of the alphabet, with the decrypted message reading: "Forty Feet Below, Two Million Pounds Are Buried." This translation has been subsequently questioned, as Mr. Leitch was involved in the treasure hunting company which at the time was trying to sell stocks.

To begin with, the stone was used as a hearthstone in John Smith’s home on Oak Island. Eventually it was moved to Halifax where it served as a batting stone in Creighton’s book bindery. When this building was torn down, the stone went missing. It was later heard of in 1928 when it served as a doorstop on the premises of a construction company in Halifax. Its last known location was round the Centennial Pool area.

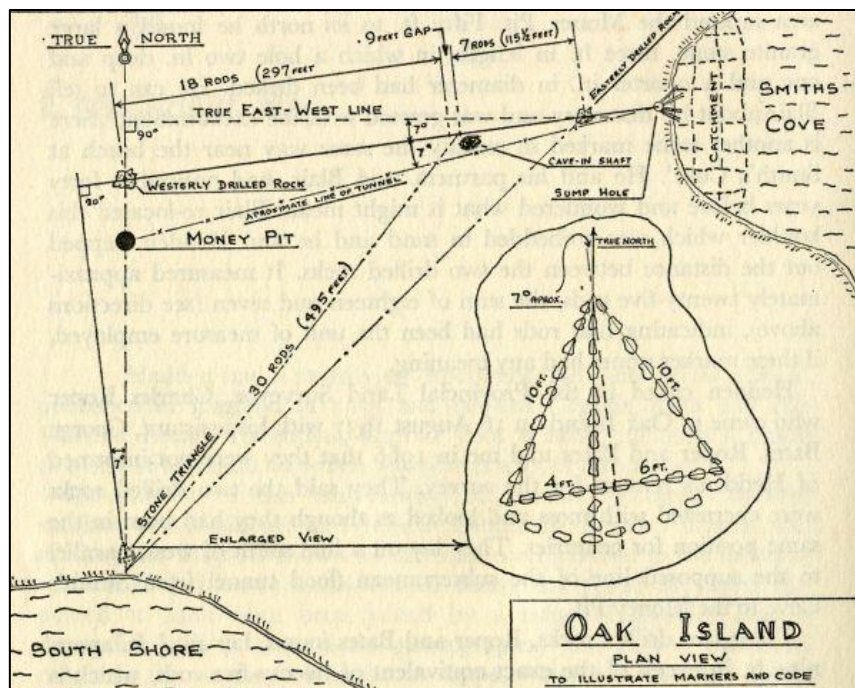
However, a copy of the cipher message was found in a long-deceased schoolteacher’s trunk, and at some point a replica was made that is purported to be like the original in colour, shape and cipher text (although in fact it is slate-coloured). Photographic and sketch copies of the cipher have been made, with various attempts at decipherment. One such attempt at decoding was done in the 1970s by Professor Ross Wilhelm of the University of Michigan. The result of his decryption will feature in Part 3 of this treatise.

## The Welling Triangle

### Oak Island’s Stone Arrow/Compass

The triangle of stones discovered by Captain Welling in 1897 and later rediscovered by Mr. Hedden in 1937 consisted of a group of large round beach stones carefully laid out to define a 60° sector of a 10-foot radius circle, with a semi-medial line of stones laid out within it such that the line acted as a compass needle pointing due north (true north, not magnetic north). A further line of stones split the sector into a 10-foot sided equilateral triangle and a segment.

The north-pointing ‘compass needle’ did not quite bisect the equilateral triangle but was offset from the bisecting line by 7°, such that the actual triangle/sector was pointing 7° west of north (i.e. 353° compass bearing).



Drg. from *The Mystery of Oak Island* by R.V. Harris, The Ryerson Press, Toronto.

This ‘needle’ divided the base line of the triangle into four feet and six feet (i.e. the ratio 2:3) and pointed due north to the Money Pit located approximately 300 feet north of the triangle (according to the Roper Survey). It also pointed north beyond the Money Pit to the westerly drilled rock, located about 50 feet north of the Money Pit. The alignment from this westerly drilled rock to the easterly drilled rock (lying over four hundred feet away) is not due east but offset by 7° north of east (i.e. 83° compass bearing), which means that it is possible to create two right-angled triangles sharing a base-line stretching between the Welling Triangle and easterly drilled stone. One of these right-angled triangles is virtually isosceles, with one side orientated south-north from the Welling Triangle through the westerly stone and the other equal side orientated east-west from the easterly drilled stone. The other right-angled triangle is the one that is 7° offset from the main compass directions, with one side extending from the easterly drilled stone through the westerly drilled stone, and the other side extending 7° west of north from the Welling Triangle, following the direction of the ‘compass needle’.

The 7° west of north orientation of the equilateral Welling Triangle from its north-pointing ‘compass needle’ (or 6°34’ as surveyed by Aarlek Walton in 1963) has been suggested as perhaps indicating knowledge of the 23.4° axial tilt of the Earth, since the 60° angle of the Welling Triangle is divided by the ‘needle’ into 23° and 37°.<sup>4</sup> However, the Baconian alchemist Betty McKaig provides what appears to be a far better explanation based on her successful decoding of the Philaetes alchemical texts (see Part 3 of this treatise).

Regrettably the Welling Triangle slipped down on to the shore during excavations in the latter half of the 1960s and is now lost.

## Dating

The Oak Island tree that had a cut-off limb used as a hoisting support was a red oak and must have been a sufficiently mature tree when used by the builders of the Money Pit. Although it is not unknown for a red oak to live 350 years, Nova Scotia red oaks commonly live for 300 years. Since at the age of 70 years a red oak would have an 18-inch diameter trunk and branches strong enough to support hoisting equipment, it means that the project could possibly date back to 1565, but it is more likely to be somewhat later than that.

On June 3, 1969, Geochron Laboratories, Inc. reported to Doctor Michael J Needham of Toronto, who had supplied the lab with a few wood samples retrieved from deep drilling on Oak Island, for which they had determined “an age of 375+/-85 C-14 years B.P., which would correspond approximately to a Christian calendar of AD 1575.” Since B.P. stands for “Before Present”, where “Present” is defined as AD 1950 when using radiocarbon dating, it means that the estimated date of the felling of the timber used for the platforms deep down in the Money Pit was sometime between 1490-1660 or, more exactly, between 1504-1646.

This dating (a) of the use of the oak tree, and (b) of the making of the oak platforms, gives a likely date of somewhere between 1565 and 1646 for the construction of the Money Pit.

The eelgrass and coconut fibre has also been tested and dated, but the dating of such material is not so helpful. The coconut fibre retrieved from the Money Pit in 1804 and 1866 was confirmed as such by the Smithsonian Institution in 1916; and that which was retrieved from Smiths Cove in 1850 was likewise confirmed as such by the Smithsonian in 1930 and 1970. Beta Analytics and Woods Hole Oceanographic also confirmed the coconut fibres in 1990 and 1996 respectively. Beta Analytics carbon-dated the coconut fibre obtained from a core sample at 180-foot depth in the Money Pit to between 1200 AD and 1400 AD, but that’s when the coconut was living and doesn’t tell us when it was deposited on Oak Island. Coconut fibre was commonly used to pack fragile merchandise when being shipped, and such packing was normally reused many times over. Beta Analytics dated the eelgrass and pieces of branches to a period between 1440 AD and 1650 AD.

## Summary

The records are neither exact nor complete, and much speculation as well as disagreement is or has been involved. Moreover, an enormous amount of material damage to the island and what it contains has been done in the pursuit of treasure. The following, however, is an attempt at a rough summary based on the reports given, with the proviso that some of it may be more the result of speculation or misreporting than of fact.

Sometime between 1565 and 1646 the construction of the Money Pit and other underground works were carried out on Oak Island for some unknown reason, but presumed to be for the concealment of something extremely valuable and with the intent that this treasure should be recoverable or discovered at the right time and in the right way by persons with sufficient knowledge. The various setting out and construction measurements that appear to have been used relate to the British system of measurement, whilst the presence of a Cornish miner’s poll-pick suggests that Cornish miners were involved in the excavations and construction.

The Money Pit, which is of unknown depth and ends in a cavern deep underground, appears to have originally contained an oak log platform every 10 feet down, with the spaces between

filled with soil, until the 10th platform at 98 feet depth. On the 9th platform (at 90 feet depth) was a rectangular stone with a cipher message carved on it. Beneath the 10th platform was a 6-foot high 'treasure chamber' containing two oak chests, one on top of the other, filled with gold and other treasure of some kind. Beneath the 11th platform (which supported the chests) was a 7-foot layer of puddled clay supported on a 12th platform. Beneath this 12th platform was a 'flood chamber' filled with seawater channelled into it seemingly via two flood tunnels, one from Smiths Cove that entered the Money Pit at about 110 feet depth and the other from South Shore that entered the Money Pit at about 125 feet depth, thereby forming a water trap that would be activated if the first nine platforms were unwittingly removed (as indeed happened).

Where the bottom of this flood chamber is, is impossible to say, as the 1861 tunnelling caused the treasure chamber structure to collapse into the flood chamber and drop below the 120 feet depth of the tunnel into what then was described as empty space. This treasure chamber structure and its contents may be what the 1897 drilling came across at 126 feet depth. Then either part of the same or a further treasure chamber was found by the drilling between approximately 155-170 feet, which contained (and still contains?) a metal box or such like filled with gold and parchment, covered in some unknown substance and supported on a further platform of cement and oak. At 170 feet depth there appears to be an iron barrier blocking or sealing the Money Pit. Beneath this barrier the Money Pit penetrates 5 feet or so through the island's limestone bedrock, ending in a large chamber or cavern, possibly natural. A plug of blue clay fills the Money Pit between the iron barrier and the underground chamber/cavern.

In addition, during the 18th century the British military were on the island and a Spanish galleon either visited or was brought by them, then was either repaired or broken up. Whether it was a treasure ship or not, and whether treasure from this ship was then hidden on Oak Island, is a moot point.

## Various Speculations

When Daniel Blankenship discovered and excavated part of the Hidden Shaft that lies on the south shore, he speculated (rightly or wrongly) that the Hidden Shaft was 100 feet deep, with a tunnel leading off it at the bottom that runs 250 feet due north to the Money Pit. Cut through the island's bedrock, which is covered with a 10-14 inches thick layer of impervious blue clay, the tunnel enters the chamber beneath the Money Pit at a depth of 175 feet below ground level, which chamber contains the real treasure. Daniel felt, however, that all the diggings done by the many treasure hunters had pierced the tunnel and chamber(s), resulting in the black stinking water and muck that Daniel brought up from the depths of the Hidden Shaft.

Others have speculated that there is or might be an underground tunnel (or tunnels) leading off the Money Pit to treasure chambers cut out of the rock and lying safely above sea level. Some think that the Welling Triangle gives indications as to where such a chamber might be. It is also speculated (by Keith Ranville, a First Nations man) that the real treasure might actually be on a nearby island (Birch Island).<sup>5</sup>

The Norwegian researcher, Petter Anderson, through the decipherment of a cipher embedded in the Shakespeare Folio, which indicates the involvement of Francis Bacon and

the Rosicrucians and Freemasons, is discovering that Nolan's Cross not only represents Cygnus, the Swan, also known as the Northern Cross in the sky, but also is laid out more secretly as a cabalistic Tree of Life. The ciphers are enabling him to find with unerring accuracy the hidden stones on the island that complete the Tree of Life pattern. He speculates that the (or a) treasure trove will be found beneath the "Mercy Seat" (i.e. the 4th Sefhira of the Tree of Life, known as Mercy).<sup>6</sup>

## Alternative Theory

A completely different alternative theory put forward by Joy A. Steele (*The Oak Island Mystery Solved*) is that the Money Pit was in fact the disturbed remains of a tar-producing ground kiln constructed by the South Sea Company to produce naval stores for the use of the British Admiralty. Such tar, obtained from pine trees, was then extremely valuable.<sup>7</sup> The block and tackle hanging from the tree limb over the Money Pit had most likely been used to winch pine billets into the pit.

In this theory, the five covered channels found on the shore of Smith's Cove, assumed to have been box drains for feeding seawater into an underground tunnel leading to the Money Pit, were trench drains to let pine tar run out from a second kiln located on what subsequently became known as the Cave-in Pit.

A small wooden box-sled that was found at Smith's Cove three feet beneath the u-shaped wooden structure is undoubtedly a bucket funnel used in tar-making that conveyed the tar either into barrels or a catch basin (tar hold). The wooden structure would have been part of the reinforcement placed around the base of a kiln, to shore up the kiln and prevent it slipping down the embankment (on the side of which such kilns were built).

Production of the tar was begun on the island (and in other areas of Nova Scotia) by the South Sea Company in 1720, but very soon ran into trouble when, later that same year, the South Sea Bubble catastrophe occurred. The South Sea Company managed to limp on and production on Oak Island may have continued until 1722, when there was a stock bailout of SSC which annihilated two millions of the company's capital stock, bringing a definitive end to the Oak Island venture.

Between 1720 and 1795, when the Money Pit was first discovered, three powerful earthquakes affected the island that could have produced soil liquefaction. Added to this, the underlying bedrock of limestone and gypsum contains many underground cavities, two of which appear to underlie the Money Pit and Cave-in Pit, thereby (speculates Joy Steele) causing the remains of the original tar kilns to collapse into what were in effect sink-holes, helped somewhat by the treasure hunting excavations. In addition, sea levels affecting the island have risen considerably over the last few hundred years.

Joy Steele speculates that the cipher stone was left as a satirical pun on the ill-fated SSC enterprise—the death of a golden opportunity and the loss of a huge two million pounds investment that was buried, as it were, in the ground—and that Nolan's Cross was in fact the 'portate' (diagonal) cross symbol of the evangelising Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Lands (SPG), the missionary arm of the Church of England, acting in concert with the South Sea Company.

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## Endnotes

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- <sup>1</sup> John Gammel saw James Pitbaldo remove something caught on the bit, examine it closely and slip it into his pocket. When Gammel demanded to see what he had found, it bowed refused, saying he would show it to the shareholders the following day. Pit bound disappeared during the night and was not heard of again until several months later, when he and a companion turned up in Cape Breton Island. They made efforts to question the Onslow Company's title to Oak Island, even threatening to take over the site, but Pitbaldo was killed in a mine accident during the winter, taking with them the secret of his discovery.
- <sup>2</sup> The excavated material was sent to A. Boake Roberts & Co, analytical chemists in London, who confirmed that it was artificial and had the same chemical properties as hardened cement.
- <sup>3</sup> According to correspondence between Gilbert Hedden and Burrell Ruth (and later confirmed to D'Arcy O'Connor by Hedden and Ruth's widows, as well as by Amos Nauss, Hedden's on-site foreman), thousands of shards of broken pottery flasks were found in a shallow dump in Joudrey's Cove on the north side of the island in the summer of 1937. Some of the broken flasks contained traces of a liquid silver residue which Hedden had analysed in Halifax. This residue was found to be mercury. This was discovered at the time when Hedden had his crew scouring the island for any markers that might tie into the famous Mar Del map. (See D'Arcy O'Connor, *The Big Dig: The \$10 Million Search for Oak Island's Legendary Treasure*, published 1988; Joe Atherton's Oak Island Treasure forum; <http://www.oakislandcompendium.ca/blockhouse-blog/>.)
- <sup>4</sup> Oak Island Treasure Diagram: <http://cosmicorderoftarot.com/treasure-diagram>.  
See also David Wood (author of *Genesis: The First Book of Revelations*) on the Oak Island Treasure Forum: <http://forum.oakislandtreasure.co.uk/viewtopic.php?f=12&p=69673>.
- <sup>5</sup> <https://keithranville.wordpress.com/2014/12/19/is-oak-islands-treasure-really-on-birch-island/>  
<http://www.unexplained-mysteries.com/forum/topic/81447-is-oak-islands-treasure-on-birch-island/>
- <sup>6</sup> Petter Amundsen, *Shakespeare – The Hidden Truth*:  
<http://shakespearethehiddentruth.com/>  
Petter Amundsen, *Oak Island & the Treasure Map of Shakespeare* (CreateSpace: 2013).
- <sup>7</sup> One of the major objections to this theory is that the platforms are recorded as having been made of oak, not pine.