

Newfoundland Trip 2004

We left at 5:40am. I love driving early in the morning: too bad no one else does ☺, but Mom and Margaret wanted to get home quickly so it was a sacrifice they were willing to make. Alex and Scottie were just plain dragged into it. Liz was happy to stay home and snuggle in a warm empty bed.

Aside from early start times, there was nothing to report. I made Margaret take a picture out the front window of the van every 20 minutes during the two day trip home. Can you tell which picture is from which province?



Boring, but quick.

After depositing Margaret, Mom and the boys I went on a trip of my own. This wasn't boring (I saw beautiful Fisherman's Cove, great waterfalls at Sheet Harbour, neat things in Sherbrooke Village, hiked a trail in Battery Park in St Peter's) but it was lonely. I missed Liz.

In Sherbrooke Village the blacksmith showed us how to ride a penny-farthing bicycle. Neat to watch, but dangerous to ride. He explained that if you hit something such as a rock, because the centre of gravity was so far forward with almost no weight in the rear, you would go ass-over-kettle over the front handlebars. In the printing office I saw drawers of fonts such as Century and Bookman, both currently available on this very

computer. Cool. There were lots of things to see and people to talk with. The most amazing fact was that the village was NOT assembled from buildings taken from other places: this was really where the buildings were and they were used in the same way as they are today.



In Battery Park at St.Peter's, I hiked up to a lookout. Now this may not seem hardly noteworthy, but the trail had no signs at all, but I knew where it went because of a map I had printed from the Internet before I left home. Unfortunately the view was less than impressive ☹

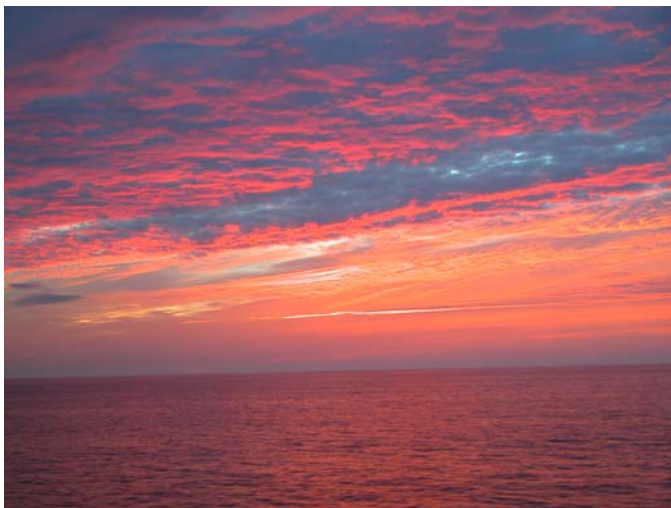
That evening I drove into Sydney in search of a Swiss Chalet and some wings. I found the restaurant and ordered a mess of hot wings. About 5 minutes later the waitress came back all apologetic and said that they had run out of wings. How can a chicken place run out of chicken wings I asked, but apparently they had, go figure... I had chicken soup instead. After I had finished she asked now the soup was. It was okay I said, but it wasn't a feed of wings I joked. (I also noted that my quarter dinner dinner had a wing on it...). Although I thought my kidding about the wings was good natured, the waitress was so distressed the soup was on the house!

The next day it was Louisburg. It was fun to recall the times when I was there in the early 60's and all there was, was an old museum building and nothing else. It's still there but also a good part of the old town. I love to go there and take tons of pictures and speak with the folks working there. I loved the girls in soldier's outfits: I told them it was a great improvement over the 1700's ☺



The musket demonstration consisted of only two soldiers: a guy showed how it was done in English, while a girl did the same in French. I of course watched the girl while listening to the guy! She had an audience of 6 and he had an audience of 56: crazy fools.

Before I left at noon, I bought a loaf of bread. It was middle class bread: the soldier's was 80% whole wheat, the upper class bread was all white, while what I got was 50% whole wheat. It was hot and steamy: I tore off several hunks and ate them on the bus that took us back to the parking lot: some good!



The ferry ride from North Sydney to Port aux Basques could be done in 5 or 6 hours they said when I got on at 4pm. Okay, 10pm was not so late I thought. The passage was nice and calm. I watched some movies and the mountains of Cape Breton and Newfoundland and dolphins. Yup: we saw several groups of dolphins play around the ship. The sunset was gorgeous as well.

Unfortunately Marine Atlantic has a management problem. They have 4 ships and 3 docks. When we arrived at Port aux Basques the freighter was in our spot. We waited an hour. So it was a 6 hour crossing, plus an hour wait plus a ½ hour time change, so I got off at 11:30, hopping mad. Fortunately the campsite at J.T.Cheeseman Provincial Park was open and manned and I was able to get a site without any hassles and they even had showers!

Up early the next morning. Hiked a trail in Corner Brook, got lost, but eventually made it to the James Cook monument and lookout, saw a cool totem pole at Marble mountain (carved with images of Newfoundland's history) and was in Deer Lake an hour before Liz was due to arrive.

Liz was the first off the plane! It was great to see her walk across the tarmac. I wasn't expecting her to be the very first, but I did manage to get a picture of her. The very first thing we did was to buy groceries and phone home. Of course there was an emergency but several calls later she managed to get the "Scottie's glasses" issues resolved: nothing money couldn't fix.

The first trail we did was the Lookout trail. I had intended a shorter Tablelands hike, but the girl at the entrance kiosk had convinced us to leave that till Saturday and do it with an interpreter, and she said the view was great from the lookout. It was a 3 mile round trip up the side of a mountain. I was scared Liz couldn't or wouldn't do it. But she lead the way and set the pace. She was slow but steady. The trail was relentless: every step was higher than the next: not a single level spot. We made the summit with much relief. It was a great view, thank heavens.



After that we got a campsite at Trout River and ate at the Seaside restaurant in the village. The restaurant was highly rated, written up in the New Yorker. It was very fancy with great food and service. On the walls were beautiful 3D wood carved type pictures of Newfoundland. We would have loved to have bought one, but the cheapest was over \$200!

The next day it was all the way around the bay and up to the Western Brook Pond Boat Tour. We stopped in at the visitor centre and they told us about the great geological site at Green Point. So we stopped there briefly, but were unable to find exactly what they were talking about.

We had a great boat tour. We saw a moose on the cliffs high up like a mountain goat, and the sheer cliffs of the fiord are very impressive. There were two boats and each was packed, but I had a good spot up on the bow for picture taking.



After the boat tour we hurried back to Green Point. The interpreter was still there giving his talk. We joined him and listened all about the fossils. It was low tide and it became clear why we couldn't find the spot earlier. The picture to the left shows the rock layers. In the middle is the division between the younger Ordovician period (to the left) and the older Cambrian period (on the right). It was primarily because of this that Gros Morne was declared a UNESCO world heritage site.

That evening we made a blunder in restaurant choice: Jackie's. The fish and chips were good, but we waited for about 1½ hours to get'em. It was amazingly slow: apparently they could only cook one meal at a time.

The next day Liz dropped me off at the Gros Morne hiking trail while she did the Tablelands hike with the interpreter. I attacked the mountain with get eagerness: I had been running all spring and summer, in preparation for this climb. The first 3 miles thru the woods was good: did that in an hour. Then it was the mad scramble up the gully over the rocks. It took another hour to reach the top.

During the gully climb a lone hiker from London Ontario passed me and so too did a couple from Austria. I didn't mind them passing me as the girl said that that often climbed the Alps. The guy from London was cool too as he had EXACTLY the same story as I with regard to the famous photo looking down into Western Brook Pond. Both of us wanted to do that hike, but both of us were barred by the park unless we were prepared to hike across country for about 4 days. We weren't. However we met two hikers at the top of the mountain who had just completed the 4 day hike. They told how awful a climb it was out of the Western Brook Pond. There were no trails and it took about 5 hours to make the climb. Damn, I so wanted that picture.

So I had to make due with these:



It was definitely the high point both physically and psychologically of the trip. It was simply wonderful up there with all the views back down the gully, down into Ten mile Pond and back into the park's interior. The hike out was a killer though. I had never done that before, previous ascents were always followed by a return scramble down the same gully, but now that wasn't allowed. The hike over the back edge was gentle and easy. BUT then there was another 3 mile hike along the side just to get back to the bridge and the end of the loop. Then from there it was another 3 miles to the car.

Liz picked me up later in the afternoon. We did laundry and had a great meal at Fisherman's Landing that evening.

The next day in the fog and rain we journeyed north to Port au Choix. I had been there nearly 20 years previous and found the spot but it said it was a local heritage centre. Eventually we got directions to the new centre and they said that they had moved from the heritage centre many years before. Anyway it was neat place with all sorts of artifacts they had found in the area. There were three main groups: Maritime Archaic Indians, Groswater and then Dorset Palaeoeskimos who had occupied the site over the past 10,000 years..



From there it was up to L'Anse aux Meadows, the very northern most tip of Newfoundland. There the Vikings had landed some 1000 years before. They showed us a movie on the Norwegian couple who spent most of their lives looking for this site from the descriptions of the ancient sagas of Lief Erickson. They found it of course. They found iron pins and nails clearly from Vikings as no Indians in North America at the time worked with iron. Unfortunately they only stayed one or two years, so their impact was not great on North American history.

Liz enjoyed talking to the guys in costume at the site. One guy in the main house explained how their fire created a fairly smoky environment that was not very nice. Nothing was done until the other year when they had a particularly big fire and the roof caught on fire! Now they have a gas fire that looks very real. Liz also had a long chat with the blacksmith who explained all about bog iron (where they got the raw iron ore), wrought iron (the process of folding the hot iron to get out the impurities) and how he was a silver smith in the winter.



Over at Nortstead, a Viking village (what the real place might have been like had they stayed longer), we saw lots more folks to talk to. They were weaving with various devices and knitting with a single needle. Liz even had a conversation with a couple of sheep who came “ba ba”ing when she called to them.



Finally in St Anthony itself we visited the museum and home of Dr. Grenville who was very important in terms of establishing hospitals and medical services in Labrador. (Unfortunately he was also a missionary so that was a bad mark on his record as far as we were concerned.)

We were anxious to return to Gros Morne as the weather was going to be nice the next day. So we dodged pot holes and moose in the fog till about 8:30pm and got a motel back down the coast. We saw 9 moose that day all in the upper peninsula. In the rain and fog it was both scary and fun to see them.

The next day it was beautiful sunshine: the clearest day so far. We drove down the coast marveling how beautiful it was now that we could see the mountains and ocean. (We had seen nothing but fog and road and moose on the previous day.)

We hiked out to see the Arches and then Southeast Brook falls. But the day was really a Tablelands day. Liz took me out on the Tablelands trail and gave me the same talk as the guide had given her two days prior. She explained about the mantle rocks and how they changed color from dark green to red and in the cracks they changed yet again into serpentine. Also she showed me the dead moss that instantly became green when she poured water on it. And then there were the rock circles and the 300 year old cedar, not

three feet tall. The Tablelands are so cool: Mars on Earth. And the wind... it was so windy on the Tablelands it almost knocked me over and it did rip off my Tilly hat which had been tied on with both a front and rear strap. It was a mad scramble to retrieve it ☺



Then it was onto the Trout River Pond Boat Tour. This tour was superior to the Western Brook pond tour in several ways: no walk to get there, only 15 people versus 55, and a cute girl who explained all about the Tablelands (even though she read from a script, it was a great script). We had a great time. Liz sat up in the front and talked with the captain, a nice old newfie. All his relatives lived in the Toronto area but he stayed for the salt air and water. On the way back she got sprayed with water as it broke over the bow.



After another supper at the great Seaside restaurant and a good night's sleep on the back of the van on the air mattress (that really helped: it was quite tolerable for Liz: being inside made it much warmer and nicer.), we headed for Nova Scotia.

After a quick side trip to the Rose Blanche lighthouse along the bleak south western coast we made it to the ferry terminal by 3pm. Now this was just like coming over: we waited until about 3:30 then loaded and off we went by 4pm. So as soon as we parked I ran into the main terminal to change my clothes from shorts to long pants. They would announce when to return to the vehicles in preparation for loading. I took my time and looked about a bit and then returned to the parking lot. It was empty!! Our van and all the other cars were on board the ship! I walked over to a traffic director and asked what to do. Well this was a new one for him; no one ever before had ignored the announcements! (There had been none that we heard: apparently they were made just before we parked and they began loading not 2 seconds after I was in the terminal building.) Anyway I knew there had to be a way onboard and he did admit there was a gangplank on the far side. I tried getting on with the big trucks, but that was a no go and eventually I did walk around and slipped up the gang way as if I was a "walk-on" passenger. If anyone had stopped me I figured I could prove I belonged on the ship as I had a key that fit a van onboard: though the tickets were in the van and not on me. I found the van, left my shorts and after a search found Liz. She had not got too excited as she was forced to drive on without me: she correctly figured it would make for a good story and that I'd think of it as an adventure!

The crossing was nice and calm and we were at our motel in North Sydney by a civilized 10:30pm. We were back in Sable the next afternoon.

Aside from the fact that John left Lynn and we were in the middle of a 25 year marriage break up, we had a reasonably pleasant time visiting Lockeport, Shelburne, Mahone Bay, Lunenburg and Blue Rocks.

The first night in Bridgewater, while Mom and Liz sat home with Lynn, having a good cry and a "pity party" as Mom called it, the boys and I did the natural thing in the face of disaster: we went to a movie: "Harold and Kumar go to White Castle". ☺

Liz flew home on Sunday and the boys and I made it back by Tuesday.

Aug 2004

