

BELLEVUE BEACH



Bellevue Beach was first pointed out to me by my friend and folklorist Elke Dettmer from Pouch Cove. When she heard about my Vinland project she remembered that the owners of the Bellevue Beach camp site, Ivan and Maxine Anderson, were convinced that it was the *Hóp* from the Vinland sagas. And indeed, Bellevue Beach features a long and narrow land tongue with beaches running on each side which creates a barachois, a sort of lagoon at the upper end of Trinity Bay, just as the saga texts depict it.

I met Ivan Anderson at his barachois waterfront home, and before we took off to his beach house at the campsite where he keeps a collection of papers and notes related to his research about Bellevue Beach and Vinland, he pointed out a trimmed stone in his garden. It had been found on the adjacent land tongue by Danish author Niels Vinding in 1997, who identified it as a ballast stone to balance empty ships and believed that it would have fit inside a Norse overseas vessel, a *knarr*.

At the beach house Ivan told me that he first read about the Vikings in Newfoundland and a place he believes is Bellevue Beach in Farley Mowat's *West Viking* (1965). Mowat identifies *Tickle Cove* with the Vinland of the sagas, and Bellevue was called *Tickle Harbour* before it was renamed by a priest in 1915. The puzzle of the name became even more confusing: Ivan mentioned archaeo-mythologist Robert Burcher who also came searching for Vinland in Bellevue Beach, last in 2013. In the abstract of a talk Burcher gave at the public library in Collingwood, Ontario in October 2015 it is suggested that Leif Eriksson may have landed at a place called *Tickle Cove Pond*. Now, *Tickle Cove Pond* is a small community in Bonavista Bay over 100 km north of Bellevue Beach which lacks a land tongue and lagoon but features a large pond very close to the shore...

But let us turn to Ivan's own research-based theory. He is convinced that Bellevue Beach is Vinland, as it matches the depictions of *Hóp* in the sagas. Moreover, it offers perfect shelter, an abundance of salmon and flounder, and allows for growing crops and cutting wood. The ballast stone is only one of a number of finds Ivan presents as

evidence. Three years ago Niels Vinding showed Ivan a rune stone in the garden of a neighbour. Ivan was embarrassed that, despite his well-known interest in the Norse and their voyages, he hadn't been acquainted with the stone before. He supposed that it was due to the fact that the stone and the home of the lady both sit on land which she does not officially own, not an unusual scenario in Newfoundland, where not too long ago you could go into the woods, clear the patch of land of your choice and build your home. Ivan respected his neighbour's concerns and only showed me a copy of a photograph of the rune stone (see bottom right on the following page) without revealing its location.

He then presented a piece of paper that showed the Skálholt Map (1570) and a number of calculations he had made. I could not follow the details of his argumentation, but his conclusion was that, if one respected medieval mapping conventions, the latitude of Vinland suggested in the saga texts perfectly matches that of Bellevue Beach. And had all this not been enough to convince him that he lived in Vinland, he and his wife Maxine discovered what they believe to be the remains of a sod building on a foundation of ballast stones in the woods nearby. They have kept this a secret as they fear some unauthorized people might devastate the place. When we finished our conversation Ivan fell silent for a moment and looked deep into my eyes. "Now," he said, "I have to make a decision: can I trust you?" After a pause (I was not expected to answer his question) he gave the answer himself: "I can see it in your eyes that I can trust you. So, I will take you to the site." And off we went past the sign at the entrance to the *Vinland Hiking Trail*. It was a windy day and small sharp stones were badgering me inside my sandals unsuited for a cross-country walk. But the effort was worth it: Ivan beamed with pride and passion when we found the site and it was still untouched.

The photo of the site I am showing on the next page to illustrate the story gives only a small excerpt of the scene and has been digitally modified in order to prevent tracing the location by means of the image.

* *Vinland 1000 år*, 1998; *The Viking discovery of America*, 2005



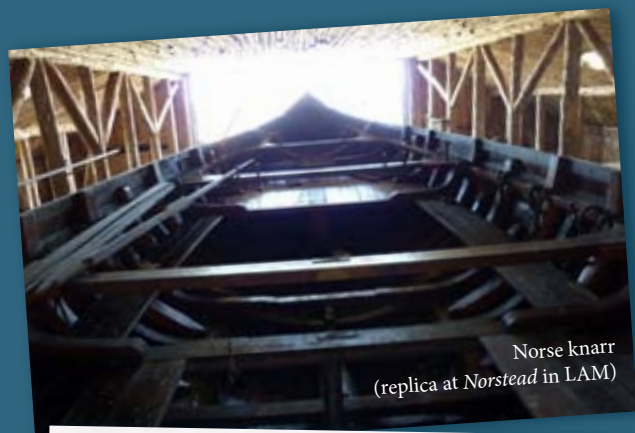
The goose grass in Bellevue Beach is similar to that in Greenland says Ivan Anderson.



Ballast stone in Ivan Anderson's garden



Trail starting at the Bellevue Beach campsite



Norse knarr (replica at Norstead in LAM)

Ivan Anderson's secret Norse site ↓



Skálholt Map and Ivan's calculations



First view of inscription - Bellevue 2011