

## THE CODROY VALLEY



When I arrived in the Codroy Valley I drove to the river mouth to get a view of Point Rosee which sticks out north of it. Near the tip of Point Rosee, space-archaeologist Sarah Parcak and her team had spotted peculiar formations on satellite images a couple of years ago. The first diggings in the summer 2015 produced interesting but ambiguous finds which they believe hint at a Norse presence. The news was made public in a BBC/PBS documentary on April 1<sup>st</sup> (maybe not the most sensible date choice), 2016 and was followed by a wide media coverage. When I looked up the French word *rosée* and found it means “dew”, a passage in one of the Vinland sagas came to my mind according to which the Norse, when setting foot on the new land which they would eventually name Vinland, found dew on the grass, and when they put it to their lips it was the sweetest thing they had ever tasted...

I had first come across the Codroy Valley before Point Rosée hit the news, when Ken Reynolds from the Provincial Archaeology Office told me about a local resident who had long claimed that the region was settled by the Norse and thus was part, if not the center, of Vinland. I first contacted Wayne MacIsaac in the spring, and he agreed to meet me for an interview when I would come over in the summer. From Ken Reynolds as well as from Birgitta Wallace I knew that Sarah Parcak and her team would be on site again at the time I was planning to go. What a happy coincidence!

Point Rosée was clearly visible from the large sandbar at the mouth of the Grand Codroy River. I crossed the single-lane bridge towards the base of the point. I didn't have a plan whether or not I should try and hike out to the excavation site. When I saw a grocery store I stepped inside as I had learned that stores are always good places for obtaining any kind of information. I asked the lady behind the counter if she had heard anything about the digging out at the point, and she said yes and looked at me, expectantly. So, I told her about my project, and after some other customers had left the store, she told me that the archaeologists parked their vehicles right behind the store every morning to hike out to the site. She then offered for her and her husband to drive me out half way with their truck and give me directions from there. I jumped on the opportunity, I felt so lucky that I had met just the right

person! I changed my sandals for hiking boots, zipped the long leg extensions to my pants (important for eventual *bush whacking*), and off we went into the wilderness. When Hockey and Gerardine dropped me in Capelin Cove and I saw their truck disappear, I suddenly felt pretty lonesome. Although I could see the tip of the point I still had some kilometers of bushy or boggy terrain to traverse. An ATV track was helpful at first. But when it branched repeatedly I got lost, although I had tried to follow Hockey's directions. I ended up in a wide bog and briefly thought about reversing. But then I went on as I could still guess the right direction by sight. The bog got worse and as my legs got tired I almost fell into a very black little puddle – my unprotected camera in my hand! Nothing happened but wet feet and pants and so I went on. Already then I felt that this hike was part of the story. Eventually I found another ATV track which led me right to the grassy and slightly depressed plain with the excavation site. I could see the team from afar, and they could see me as I was slowly approaching. I first spoke to a young guy a little apart as I didn't want to disturb anybody's work, but he said they were only just preparing the digging and that it was actually good timing to talk to Sarah. So this is what I did, and after a short chat she gave me directions for the way back, avoiding the bog.

The next day Wayne MacIsaac took me to the place where he thinks he had identified remains of an ancient defensive wall and a mound that is essentially square and thus man-made. The site was located along the Little Codroy River, about 10 km from Point Rosée. Wayne discovered the site as a teenager, after he had read the Vinland sagas and was struck by the similarities of the depictions of *Hóp* and his immediate surroundings. He had kept the location mainly secret to avoid it being dug up unprofessionally. His attempts to get experts from Memorial University and the Provincial Archaeology Office interested in his theory failed. About two years ago, the owner of the land started to develop it for an RV park, and parts of the potential defensive wall have now already been destroyed. Wayne is excited about the excavations at Point Rosée. He says that when he first heard about it he bounced around the house like a ping-pong ball and couldn't sleep for three nights. He has been in touch with the archaeologists and hopes that *his* site will now get their attention too.



Location of the dig site



Bog on Point Rosee



View of the dig site from the tip of Point Rosee

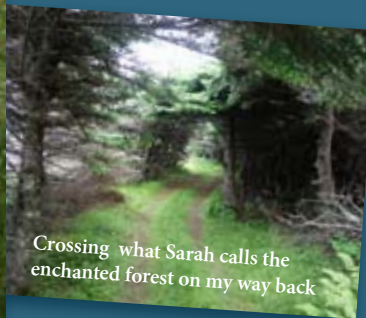


Sarah Pascale



New RV park overlooking Little Codroy River

Wayne Mc Isaac



Crossing what Sarah calls the enchanted forest on my way back



Partial view of the square mound