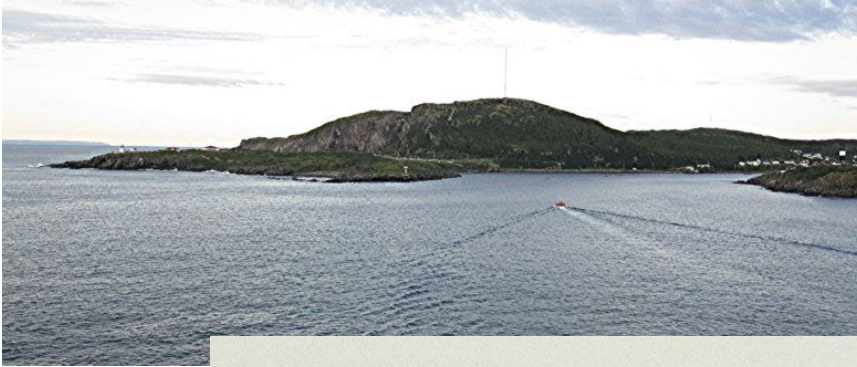


Day 32 August 25, St. Anthony Newfoundland – L'Anse aux Meadows – Vikings

The day started with bright sunshine and calm sea. The Maasdam entered the outer harbor for St. Anthony, Newfoundland and anchored at 7am. more than a mile from the passenger landing. The following pictures are of the scenes around St. Anthony that could be seen from the Maasdam.



A tender boat from the Maasdam is making its way into the inner harbor of St. Anthony.

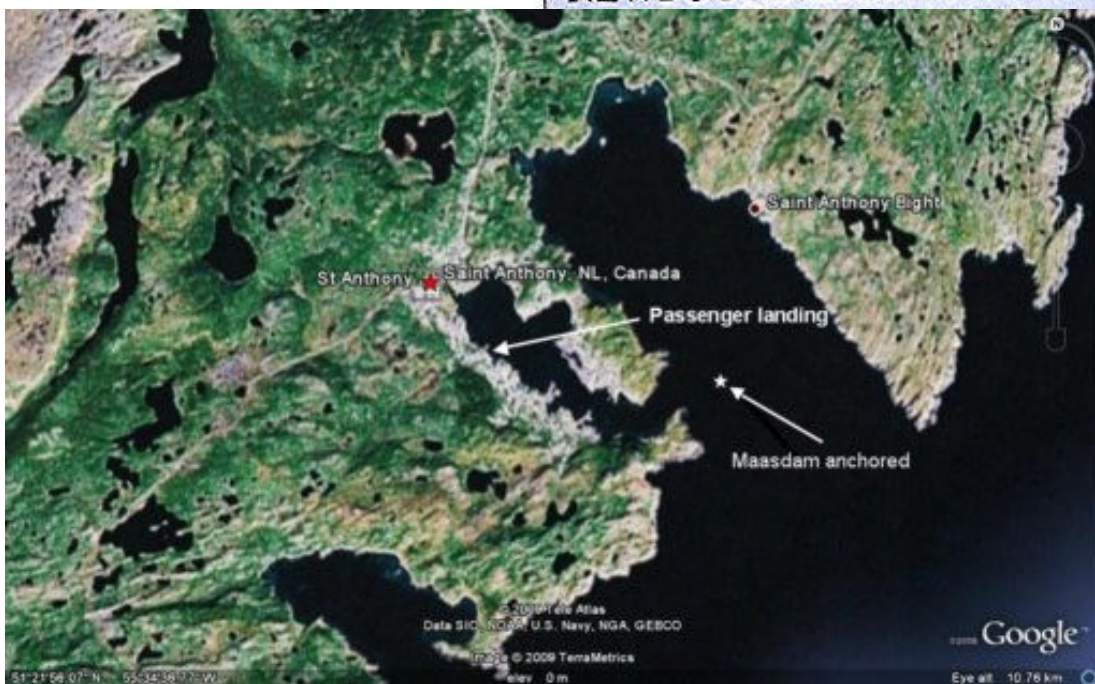
The town of St. Anthony is located in the well protected inner harbor, as shown below.



The location of St. Anthony in Newfoundland and the proximity of the L'Anse aux Meadows Viking heritage site at the northern tip of Newfoundland are shown on the map below.



We used a satellite image of the area from Google, as shown below, to indicate where the Maasdam was anchored in the outer harbor and where we were unloaded from the tenders in St. Anthony.



Our main goal today was to visit the Viking settlement called L'Anse aux Meadows. We had signed up for a Holland America tour that would take us and about 125 other Maasdam passengers out to see this famous site.

We gathered in the Rembrandt Lounge about 7:45 and we were in a tender boat headed for St. Anthony by 8am.

We boarded our bus and headed out to L'Anse aux Meadows with our guide, Kayla. During the course of the day Kayla told us she had just graduated from a small local high school in June along with a class of 60 other students. She was headed to college in St.



John's in the fall. This was her first tour as a tour guide. She was young but very poised and, although she professed nervousness, she appeared very self confident.

The site of the Viking settlement at L'Anse aux Meadows is about 20 miles north of St. Anthony and the trip took about 30 minutes over rolling hills and a narrow two lane road.

Kayla mentioned that moose were plentiful in the area and we might see one along the way. Sure enough, like clockwork a moose was soon sighted in the distance. The bus was stopped and we all shot pictures through the window. It turned out to be two moose standing in a clearing and they obliged us by standing still for our photo opportunity, as shown on the right. Apparently moose are a real traffic hazard and collisions between the large moose and cars on the highways are responsible for many injuries and deaths during the year.



Background on L'Anse aux Meadows: The L'Anse aux Meadows site is the only authenticated Viking settlement site in the North America. The property, which has been designated a National Historic Site, was discovered in 1960 by Norwegian explorer and writer Helge Instad. The local people had known of the curious mounds long before 1960 but assumed they were artifacts of the Indian tribes that used to inhabit Newfoundland. A local man had made Helge Instad aware of the mounds and, after being convinced of their potential importance, Instad and his wife Anne conducted archaeological excavations during the 1960s and 1970s.

The Instads had reason to believe that the L'Anse aux Meadows site might have been where an ancient Viking settlement was established. The story of the first North

American settlement by a European explorer appears in the Greenlander's Saga, which is a compilation of stories from centuries of Scandinavian oral history. Sometime around 1000AD, Lief Erikson sailed from Greenland with a crew of 30 perhaps to escape some legal problems or to gather large trees for boat building and repair. After many weeks at sea, he arrived at a sheltered harbor and described it as a "place in which a slender peninsula extended into the sea from a large island." Along the shore, a gentle rolling meadow was surrounded by thick forest. They described a small stream and drastic tidal fluctuation. This description fits the location of L'Anse aux Meadows where the ancient Viking artifacts were found.

Initially the Vikings had good relations with the native Indians in the vicinity. However, the Indians were relatively "low tech" compared with the Vikings who gave them the disparaging name of Skraelings. The Vikings would also kill the Indians who got in the way of expanding the settlement land area or any other activity. This practice annoyed the Indians who far outnumbered the Vikings. There were a series of conflicts with the Indians and after a few years it appears the Vikings packed up their stuff and went back to Greenland or Iceland. During their stay in Newfoundland the Vikings may have explored further south, perhaps into the St. Lawrence River but no archeological evidence of their landings has been found.

The tour bus dropped us off at the Canada Parks Visitor's Center which maintains the L'Anse aux Meadows site. There are busts of Helga Instad and his wife Anne beside the walkway leading up to the visitor's center.

Inside the visitor's center were many exhibits showing artifacts they have collected from the site. There were also models of ships that the Vikings used to explore and move livestock and other belongings to their new settlements in the Western World.



Here are some photos of the models showing the large open boats that the Vikings used. It was hard for us to imagine the suffering of the people in the boats as they crossed the cold North Atlantic in those open boats. However, the Vikings were hearty people skilled at building, repairing and navigating these boats that

allowed them to carry out amazing journeys across the ocean. The boats were large enough to carry livestock and timber but had a relatively shallow draft which allowed them to proceed up rivers and approach shallow shorelines to establish settlements.

A rather insignificant looking item in one of the showcases was a severely corroded bronze brooch used to hold the collar of a cloak or tunic together at the throat. It looked like a nail with the head flattened and perhaps some image stamped into the flat part. We didn't get a picture of the brooch but we later learned it was one of the most important finds because it had a unique design that was popular as a tunic brooch in Northern Europe for only a brief period. The presence of the brooch at this site provides some of the strongest evidence that it was occupied by Northern European people.



We left the Visitor's Center and proceeded along a boardwalk that had been laid out through a small forest between the Center and the Viking settlement site. In the photo below the archeological site is located along the shoreline in the distance, about 0.5 km (0.3 miles) away.



Along the way was this abstract bronze sculpture that was intriguing but had no explanation as to what it represented. At one spot low on the left of the sculpture was what may have been the bow of a Viking boat and the upper part looked like a sail so we surmised that it could have depicted the voyages conducted by the Vikings in their expansion across the stormy Atlantic waves. Here is a photo of this interesting artwork on the right.



We proceeded on to where a Canada Parks employee was standing and she told us about the first exhibit which was the archeological dig of a blacksmith shop that was located next to a small stream. As with all the ancient ruins, the remains after careful examination and documentation they were covered up with turf to preserve them. Consequently, the photo of the blacksmith shop, shown on the left, and other later photos don't reveal a lot of detail.



There were several blacksmith shops and a foundry located at the site. Working with iron was a key to success of the Viking technology of boat building and weapons. Iron was much stronger than other metals like copper or bronze and allowed them to push the limits of what they could do with their limited resources. Iron they brought with them from Europe was highly prized but with extremely limited travel across the North Atlantic they had to find a way to replace worn out iron pieces. They obtained new iron by extraction of what is called "bog iron". In the low lying marshy area around the Viking site bacterial and other chemical processes concentrated the naturally occurring iron into small nodules that formed layers in the soil of the marsh or bog. They would dig down into the bog to reveal the layer of nodules which they then collected. Through a process of heating and other treatment they converted the nodules to relatively pure iron

which could be used to make the all-important nails for ship building and repair as well as swords and other weapons.

The next archeological finds were a series of what were originally sod dwellings where their foundations were revealed by raised mounds of earth, as shown below.



In order to provide tourists with a better idea of how the Viking sod houses may have looked and how they were used, Canada Parks has constructed sod houses based on the

best available archeological data from other ancient Norse settlements. They have staffed the representative sod houses with enthusiastic people who pretend to be the ancient Vikings doing their daily tasks. As we proceeded along the path through the site we came upon the first restored sod house as shown below.

The outside roof of this house was still under construction but the lower walls of sod were in place. The photo below shows an up-close view of the stacked sod which is similar in appearance to that which we saw in Akureyri, Iceland.



The thick sod walls not only provided good insulation but also made extensive use of wood framing and siding unnecessary. A more complete sod house was next door as shown below.



We went inside the house which depicted what would be a large dwelling for a Viking chieftain. We found our Maasdam fellow passengers checking it out. It was good to get away from the sharp breeze blowing outside and the fire felt good. There were interesting artifacts from the Viking period were distributed around the room and a Canada Parks person was there to explain about the exhibit and answer questions.

The sod walls were covered on the inside with thin rough cut wood panels. The ceiling construction, as shown below, was constructed of tree branches cross laid to support the sod outer covering.



We moved on to a blacksmith shop demonstration, as shown below.

An iron nail for boat building was manufactured. It had a square cross section and looked like a crude version of a modern nail with a large flat head. The blacksmith said the iron was obtained from the “bog iron” extraction process but a modern source seems more likely. We don’t question that the Vikings extracted bog iron we just doubt that this exhibit would go to



what is probably a labor intensive effort requiring considerable skill. The “bog iron” process will require more research when we get home.

We finished looking at the exhibits in the archeological portion of the site and then we boarded a shuttle bus that took us on a 5 minute ride to another exhibit which was a more extensive simulation of a Viking settlement called “Norstead, A Viking Village & Port of Trade”.



We had to capture these whimsical decorations on the Gift Shop/Ticket Booth wall.

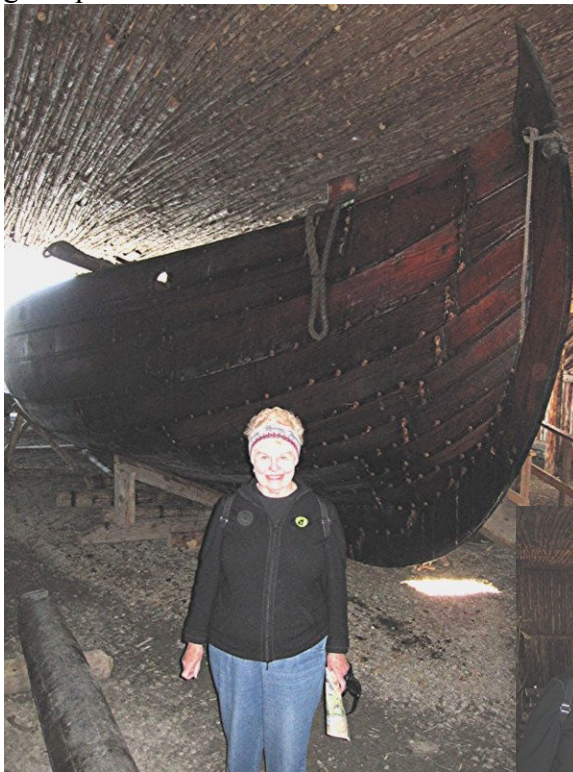




From the gift shop the first building we saw was the large boat house partially buried in the hill at the waterfront.

Inside the boat house was a large, 56 feet long, boat made recently in the Viking design. A larger Viking boat 75 feet long has been unearthed in Gokstad, Norway but this one looked huge to us. We struggled to get a

good picture of it in the mixture of dim and bright lights, as shown below.



On the left is the bow of the ship with the carefully shaped planks nailed together using iron nails. The planks were also attached with wooden dowels to ribs that gave the ship its cross sectional shape. The Viking boats, like this one, were large but they had to be very crowded on a long ocean voyage with sheep, cows, pigs and humans along with their food and belongings packed into the available space.



At the stern of the ship was this most colorful Viking we met on our tour. He enthusiastically told us about the hardships and triumphs of the seafaring Vikings.

Part of his act was to portray himself as a pagan who was persecuted by the Christians in the community. This probably was meant to convey some historical truth as in the 800 -1000 AD time period the Vikings went through a transition from paganism to the Christian faith. In fact, Eric the Red and his wife had a falling out as his wife converted to Christianity while he remained a pagan until lying on his deathbed.

Outside the boat exhibit was a display of a huge sail that could



have been used on the boat we just saw. The spreader bar for the sail is laying at the bottom of the sail in this picture on the left.

This little cart shown below suggests that Vikings were quite good at making wheels and for useful vehicles.



Nearby was a sod house Christian Church as it might appear in a Viking village.



This inside view of the church shows the uncomfortable looking, rough hewn pews. If



these were an accurate representation of the church pews we would have to have a new appreciation for the dedication it took to convert to Christianity in those days.

Next door to the Church was a building that contained an exhibit of weapons and armor. A Canada Parks employee gave demonstrations of how the Viking shield could be both a defensive and offensive weapon.

Shown below is another shield that was on display along with a sword.





While in this building Orlin couldn't contain his hidden Viking heritage any longer and took the seat of the village Chieftain. The lady on the right said her husband was due back at any time so a hasty retreat was in order.

The Vikings brought sheep with them from their homeland and continued to

make woolen cloth in their settlements. Here, on display, was a crude loom that like those that were used in every household to make wool cloth. This authentic looking Viking, shown below, was helping in some of the cloth making process.



After checking out all the exhibits we got back on the bus and returned to St. Anthony.

Back in St. Anthony we spent a little time walking around the area near the pier and got these pictures along the main street of this rural town.



The hospital located in St. Anthony, as shown below, was huge and must represent a significant amount of medical expertise and capability in this part of Newfoundland.



The tender boats were making frequent runs to the Maasdam from the passenger pier so we decided to take one while the line of passengers was small. We lined up and went through the key check with security. Then we saw this sign for St. Anthony and remembered there was one more thing we had to do before departing. Barbara whipped out her yellow library card and we got this picture for the record.



We then got ourselves onto the tender boat and we were soon back on board the Maasdam.

The ship pulled up anchor and got underway about 2:30pm headed for St. John's, Newfoundland. The weather remained excellent with calm sea and we looked forward to this short overnight journey to our next port.