

## SOP'S ARM



Kent Budden of Sop's Arm was a teacher in St. Anthony from where it is only about 35 km to the Norse site in L'Anse aux Meadows. Looking at the geography and topography of his home in White Bay, 200 km south from St. Anthony as the crow flies, and based on artefacts he had found there, he developed the theory that Sop's Arm was the *Straumfjord* of the Vinland sagas, and that *Hóp* was nearby Salt Water Pond. He made his theory and his collection of artefacts accessible to the interested public in the *Viking Museum* which he installed in his private home in Sop's Arm. Kent was extremely passionate about his theory and rather frustrated that he never received much credit from third parties. Even Norwegian explorer Helge Ingstad had visited Sop's Arm in the 1960s and temporarily considered it a promising candidate for a Viking presence but lost interest once first evidence had been found in L'Anse aux Meadows. When Kent Budden died in 2008 the museum was closed. The headstone on his grave reads "Kent Budden of Straumfjord".

When I came to Sop's Arm I entered the local grocery store to see if someone might have known Kent and his museum. I was introduced to Anita Ralph who worked in the in-store bakery and was the wife of Kent's brother, Ivan Budden. She called her husband and Ivan agreed to show me what was left of the Viking Museum. It was a touching visit: Kent's passion, expressed in the careful

arrangement of a wealth of pictures, texts and artefacts, was still very much tangible.

After leaving Kent's place Ivan took me to the woods nearby where a series of roughly rectangular holes had been discovered decades ago by Kent's uncle Watson Budden. The structures have more recently been investigated by Jónas Kristjánsson, Kevin McAleese et al. resulting in the article *Falling into Vinland*.<sup>\*</sup> The theory is that these holes were caribou pitfalls which in turn could indicate a Norse presence as the Natives in Newfoundland had obviously never applied this hunting method while it had been rather common in Scandinavia.

What I can say for sure is that Sop's Arm, where Main River flows into White Bay, is a particularly beautiful and sheltered place, and a place you almost inevitably hit when sailing south along the eastcoast of the Great Northern Peninsula from L'Anse aux Meadows.

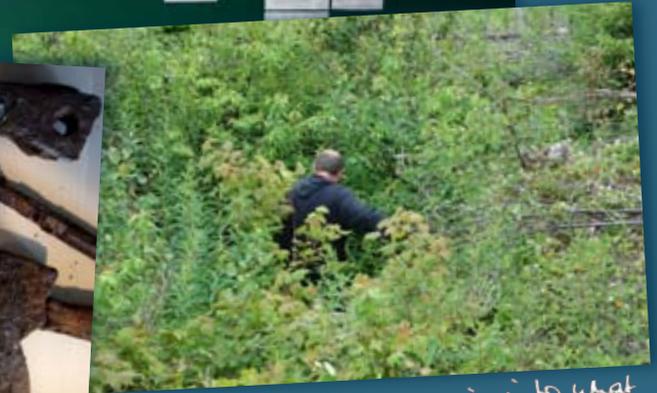
Three years after my trip to Sop's Arm, on another trip to the Northern Peninsula, my host at the B&B in St. Anthony turned out to be Kent's ex-wife, Sandra Sheppherd. Sandra told me that she has heard that Kent's brother Owen intended to go back to Sop's Arm to re-open the Viking Museum and to keep up Kent's legacy.

<sup>\*</sup> *Acta Archaeologica*, Vol. 83, 2012

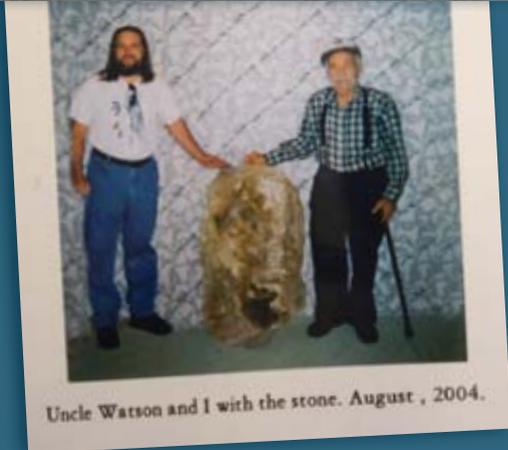




The former Viking Museum in Sop's Arm  
 Below: Kent and his uncle Watson Budden with what he called  
 the Rune Stone (rear page of Kent's book *Vinland Discovery - The  
 Unfinished Story*) Right: Exhibits inside the Viking Museum



Ivan Budden disappearing into what  
 may have been a Norse Caribou pitfall



Uncle Watson and I with the stone. August, 2004.



Kent Budden's  
 head stone

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## FALLING INTO VÍNLAND NEWFOUNDLAND HUNTING PITFALLS AT THE EDGE OF THE VIKING WORLD

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**ABSTRACT.** Two interpretive topics are dealt with: firstly a new interpretation of the Icelandic sagas and historical written sources on the Viking age voyages to North America, leading to a theory on the location of Vinland, and secondly an archaeological survey of short hunting pitfalls in Newfoundland, which were possibly dug by the Norse roughly a millennium ago. According to the theory of the article, Vinland is the western side Newfoundland and the Straumfjord of the sagas, where Thorkel and Karl-sjef and Gudrid Thorvaldardóttir attempted settlement

could be dug in Arns in White Bay on the North coast of Newfoundland. The system of pitfalls that was surveyed and excavated is close to Sog's Arns. The pitfalls form an 82 metre long system that lies in an almost straight line. Individual pits are now 1.3-2.1 metres deep and 1-18 metres long. Two pitfalls were excavated by taking a section into them. Attempted radiocarbon dating of soil from two pitfalls was inconclusive. Considerable soil thickening of 10-110 centimetres since the pitfall construction was observed.



The mouth of Main River