REGIONAL TILL-GEOCHEMISTRY SAMPLING AND ICE-FLOW MAPPING ALONG THE SOUTHERN SHORE OF THE AVALON PENINSULA

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ABSTRACT

Till samples were collected from along the southern shore of the Avalon Peninsula, extending from St. Catherine's in St. Mary's Bay along the southern shore highway to the community of Mobile, as part of the continued regional till-geochemistry survey. Sampling along all major roadways was at a spacing of one sample per 1 km². Sampling started on the Avalon Peninsula in 2003, and with an additional 373 samples collected in 2008, the total number of till samples collected on the Avalon Peninsula is currently 2605.

Ice-flow indicators (predominantly striations) recorded on the southern Avalon Peninsula show that the area was affected by three separate ice-flow phases, all of which are tentatively assigned as late Wisconsinan. The earliest phase was southward along the axis of St. Mary's Bay. The second phase, likely at the glacial maximum, shows a radial ice-flow pattern centred over St. Mary's Bay and the Trepassey highlands, and a strong westward flow across the Cape St. Mary's sub-peninsula. Southeastward ice flow was also identified across the tip of the Trepassey sub-peninsula at St. Shotts. The final phase (during deglaciation) resulted from the collapse of the main ice centre toward the Trepassey Highlands, from which ice flow was westward into St. Mary's Bay and eastward across the Trepassey sub-peninsula into the Atlantic Ocean.

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the progress of a regional till-geochemistry project that started on the Bonavista Peninsula (Batterson and Taylor, 2001a, b); continued onto the western Avalon Peninsula and isthmus (Batterson and Taylor, 2003a, b); the central Avalon and Bay de Verde peninsulas (Batterson and Taylor, 2004a, b); the northern Burin Peninsula (Batterson *et al.*, 2006; Batterson and Taylor, 2006); and the southern Burin and southwest Avalon peninsulas (Batterson and Taylor, 2007 and 2008). These and similar projects elsewhere (*e.g.*, Batterson *et al.*, 1998; Liverman *et al.*, 1996, 2000; McCuaig, 2002, 2005), were successful in generating exploration activity, with over 5000 claims staked following the release of the open-file reports. These surveys also provide baseline data for environmental geochemistry applications.

The traditional regional till-geochemistry project combines surficial geology mapping (a combination of aerial photograph analyses and field verification), paleo ice-flow mapping, and sampling of till for geochemical analyses. The latter two components are complete for this project, with the production of a surficial geology map not required for this project. The emphasis of the 2008 field season was on sampling for till-geochemical analyses and ice-flow mapping interpretation.

LOCATION AND ACCESS

The Avalon Peninsula is located in the eastern part of the province, comprising an area of about 9700 km². The peninsula is connected to the main part of the Island by an isthmus that is only 5.8 km wide at its narrowest point.

The till-geochemistry project of the southern Avalon follows the transportation corridor across nine 1:50 000-NTS map sheets (1K/11 Trepassey, 1K/12 St. Shotts, 1K/13 St. Mary's, 1K/14 Biscay Bay River, 1K/15 Renews, 1N/02 Ferryland, 1N/03 St. Catherine's, 1N/04 Placentia, and 1N/07 Bay Bulls; Figure 1).

Access to the margins of the study area was generally good along the southern shore highway, which follows the coast from the community of St. Catherine's at the head of St. Mary's Bay in the west to the community of Mobile in the east. Side roads to the community of St. Shotts and the Cape Race lighthouse provide access to the headlands on the west and east side of Trepassey Bay. Access to the interior of the peninsula was generally poor and restricted to ATV

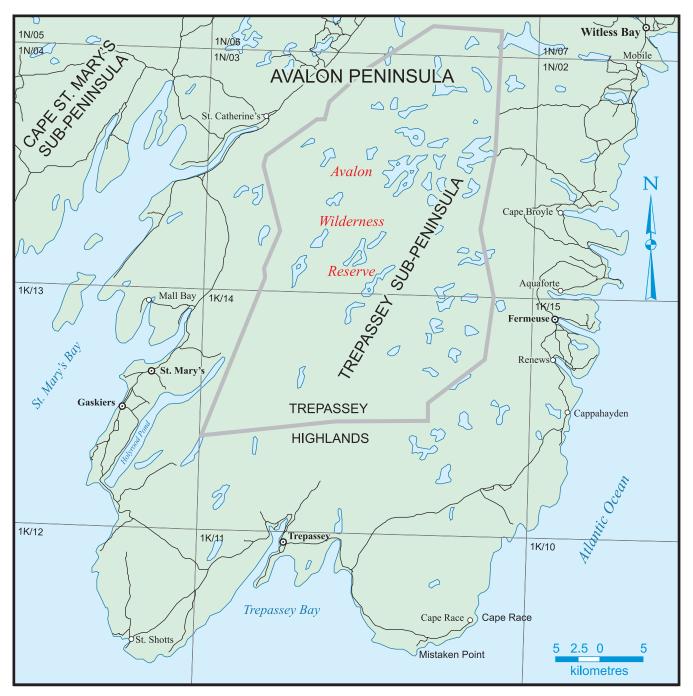


Figure 1. Location map and place names mentioned in text.

trails, most of which are not provincially approved. The interior of the Avalon Peninsula, which includes the Avalon Wilderness Area, is only accessible by helicopter. Sampling of this interior area was not a component of this project.

BEDROCK GEOLOGY

The southern Avalon area is composed of late Precambrian (Hadrynian) volcanic and clastic sedimentary rocks that are intruded by gabbro and granite and folded into broad, upright, gently plunging anticlinoria and synclinoria (Williams and King, 1979; Figure 2).

The oldest rocks, the Harbour Main Group, comprise a bimodal volcanic assemblage. It is overlain by an assemblage of dominantly green, siliceous volcaniclastic sedimentary rocks of the Conception Group (Rose, 1952). Most of the volcanic rocks are bright red to pink and grey tuffs and agglomerates. Some are coarse and unsorted but finegrained silicic tuffs, welded tuffs, lithic crystal tuffs and flow-banded rhyolites are also represented. The mafic volcanic rocks are massive, fine-grained, dark-green to purplish basalts (Williams and King, 1979).

The Conception Group occurs throughout the field area and is dominated by green to grey siliceous sedimentary rocks and is divided into five formations: Mall Bay, Gaskiers, Drook, Briscal and Mistaken Point formations. The Gaskiers Formation includes a thick Precambrian glaciomarine unit toward its base and fossiliferous Precambrian strata at its top (Mistaken Point). In the east, the Drook Formation of the Conception Group conformably overlies the Harbour Main volcanics. In the west, the Drook Formation is underlain by the Gaskiers and Mall Bay formations with the base of the sequence unexposed. The Briscal Formation is coarse clastic facies of the Drook Formation. The Mistaken Point Formation is of uniform thickness throughout the map area, and its fossiliferous beds have been traced 12 km north to Cape Broyle (Williams and King, 1979).

Overlying the Conception Group is the St. John's Group; the latter is divided into three formations, the Trepassey, Fermeuse and Renews Head formations. Grey sandstones of the Trepassey Formation are gradational and conformable with underlying, coarser and thicker bedded, pale-red sandstones at the top of the Conception Group (Williams and King, 1979).

ICE-FLOW HISTORY

Much of the earlier work on the glaciation of the Avalon Peninsula suggested that the area was covered by eastward-flowing ice from the main part of the Island (Murray, 1883; Coleman, 1926; MacClintock and Twenhofel, 1940). However, the erosional evidence, mainly derived from striations, suggests that the Avalon Peninsula maintained an independent ice cap during the late Wisconsinan (Chamberlin, 1895; Vhay, 1937; Summers, 1949; Jenness, 1963; Henderson, 1972; Catto, 1998). The main ice centre was speculated to be located near the head of St. Mary's Bay (Henderson, 1972; Catto, 1998), with ice flowing radially into Placentia Bay in the west, southwest down St. Mary's Bay, eastward across the Trepassey sub-peninsula, and northward over the low cols into the Trinity and Conception bays' watersheds (Catto, 1998). Rogen moraines found north of St. Mary's Bay formed during this northward ice flow (Marich et al., 2005). The radial flow from St. Mary's Bay had little effect on outlying sub-peninsulas, such as Carbonear sub-peninsula and St. John's sub-peninsula, (located north of the study area), which likely maintained their own ice caps (Summers, 1949; Catto, 1998); this is supported by the available striations data and the clast provenance of the till (Catto, 1998).

ICE-FLOW MAPPING

The most effective method of delineating ice flow (in the province) is by mapping striations; scratches on a bedrock surface produced by glacial erosion and oriented parallel to ice flow (Batterson and Liverman, 2001). Data from individual striations should be treated with caution because ice-flow patterns can show considerable local variation where ice flow has been deflected by local topography (Liverman and St. Croix, 1989), and regional-flow patterns can only be deduced after examining numerous striated outcrops. The orientation of ice flow can easily be determined from a striation by measuring its azimuth. The determination of any ice-flow direction can be made using many criteria. These include the striation pattern over the outcrop; where areas in the lee of ice flow may not be striated; the presence of such features as 'nail-head' striations and miniature crag-and-tails (rat-tails), and the morphology of the bedrock surface, which may show the affects of sculpting by ice (Iverson, 1991). At many sites, the direction of ice flow is unclear, and only the general orientation of ice flow (e.g., northward or southward) can be deduced. Where striations representing separate flow events are found, the age relationships are based on the crosscutting of striation sets and the preservation of older striations in the lee of the younger striations. Striation data for the province are compiled in a web-accessible database (through the Surficial Geology options of the Interactive Maps at http://gis.geosurv. gov.nl.ca; Taylor, 2001). The database currently contains over 11 800 observations. Ice flow is interpreted from striations, and large-scale landforms such as either erosional rôche moutonée features or depositional features such as Rogen moraines. These features were identified from aerial photographs or from Shuttle Radar Topography Mission (SRTM) data; (Batterson and Taylor, 2008) clast provenance also helped confirm glacial source areas.

Ice-flow indicators (mostly striations) are recorded from bedrock outcrops. These new data are supplement to previous measurements recorded in the area. Based on all available evidence, the area was affected by three major phases of ice flow, all of which are tentatively assigned to the late Wisconsinan, based on the fresh unweathered appearance of striations.

PHASE 1

Striation evidence indicates that the earliest ice flow in the study area was radial from a centre near the head of St. Mary's Bay. Ice flow was southward along the axis of St. Mary's Bay and northward toward Conception and Trinity bays (Figure 3).

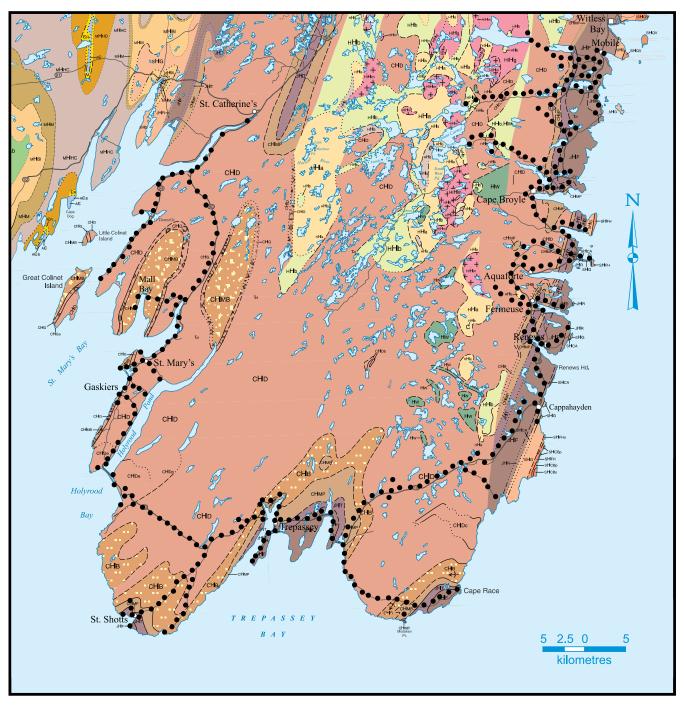


Figure 2. Sample locations on a regional bedrock geology map after King, 1988.

This phase is generally consistent with the reconstruction described by Catto (1998), who identified a southward flow from the White Hearts Pond ice centre north of St. Mary's Bay. Catto also suggests an early eastward frow from Cape St. Mary's sub-peninsula. However, no erosional evidence was found to support this flow, consistent with the findings of Batterson and Taylor (2008).

PHASE 2

The early (phase 1) flow was followed by a later (glacial maximum?) ice flow that shows a consistent radial pattern from a large ice-centre that had migrated and expanded from the head of St. Mary's Bay, to be located over St. Mary's Bay and the highlands north of Trepassey (Figures 1

Legend

ADEYTON GROUP	HADRYNIAN
Red, pink and green shale or slate and thin limestone beds; basal conglomerate where formation rests	ST. JOHN'S GROUP
directly on Precambrian rocks	JHR Renews Head Formation: <i>Thin, lenticular bedded, dark-grey sandstone and minor shale</i>
Random Formation: white orthoquartzite interbedded with green, grey and red arkose and siltstone; local basal conglomerate	JHF Fermeuse Formation: Grey to black shale containing thin lenses of buff-weathering sandstone and siltston mainly light-grey, thinly bedded, contorted shale and
DRYNIAN MUSGRAVETOWN GROUP (not listed in stratigraphic order)	sandstone near base
HC Crown Hill Formation: red pebble conglomerate and sandstone; locally, red siltstone at base; minor green conglomerate	JHT Trepassey Formation: <i>medium to thinly bedded, grad grey sandstone and shale; minor tuffaceous rocks</i>
HD Heart's Desire Formation: <i>olive-green sandstone</i>	WHALESBACK GABBRO (and equivalents)
Heart's Content Formation: grey to black shale	Hw Fine to coarse grained gabbro (age of intrusion uncer
containing wispy sandstone laminae	
HCb Bellevue Beach Member: grey pebble conglomerate Maturin Ponds Formation: red sandstone and	CHMP Mistaken Point Formation (Upper part): red and green tuffaceous siltstone and sandstone (Lower part): medium bedded, grey to pink sandstone and green to
HM mudstone exhibiting distinctive wavy bedding; minor conglomerate	purple and red shale; minor thin tuff horizons; fossiliferous near top
Big Head Formation: <i>wavy bedded, grey to green tuffaceous siltstone and arkose</i>	CHE: Briscal Formation: Thickly bedded, coarse grained, grey sandstone, olive to grey argillite, red arkosic sandstone; local units of thinly bedded grey siltstone
BULL ARM FORMATION	and shale
BAa Felsic flows and tuffs, and clastic sedimentary rocks	DROOK FORMATION (not listed in stratigraphic order)
BAb Mafic flows; includes minor felsic flows and clastic sedimentary rocks	CHD Green siliceous siltstone and sandstone; silicified tuf
IBAt Predominantly crystal and lithic tuffs, commonly reworked	CHDp Peter's River Member: grey, coarse grained sandstor
BAp Mafic to felsic variegated flows, and pyroclastic and clastic sedimentary rocks	CHDe Cape English Member: grey to pale-red, thickly bedd sandstone
SIGNAL HILL GROUP	CHDr Broad Cove River Member: thickly bedded chert and sandstone
Gibbit Hill Formation: <i>Thickly bedded, light-grey</i> sandstone; locally thinly bedded, greenish-grey to red sandstone, siltstone, tuff and conglomerate	GHG Gaskiers Formation: Grey mixtite (tillite); red mixtite overlain by red mudstone at top
QUIDI VIDI FORMATION	CHMB Mall Bay Formation: Green siliceous siltstone, argillite and tuff; thickly bedded quartzose sandstone
Red and green sandstone; minor pebble conglomerate	HOLYROOD INTRUSIVE SUITE
CAPE BALLARD FORMATION	HIHm Medium grained, pink, green and gray quartz monzoi and quartz diorite to gabbro
	HARBOUR MAIN GROUP (not listed in stratigraphic order)
CBs Thickly bedded gray sandstone and quartz-granule conglomerate	HHs Red sandstone, conglomerate, slate; green tuffaceou siltstone and sandstone; includes minor felsic and
Gray shale and siltstone, minor purple shale	mafic volcanic rocks
FERRYLAND HEAD FORMATION	HHa Pink to grey felsic tuff and agglomerate; pink to red rhyolite and welded tuff; includes minor mafic volcani and clastic sedimentary rocks
Thin to medium bedded, gray sandstone; minor conglomerate	Green to purple basaltic flows and pyroclastic rocks; includes minor felsic volcanic rocks, clastic sediment.
High Rocks Member: red, wavy bedded sandstone and shale	rocks and gabbro
CAPPAHAYDEN FORMATION	
Laminated gray siltstone	

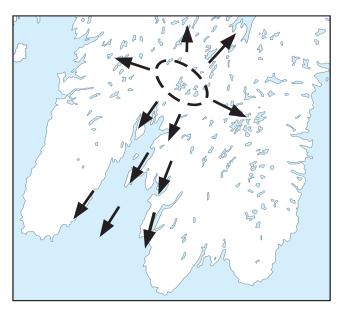


Figure 3. *Phase 1. Radial ice flow from centre located near head of St. Mary's Bay.*

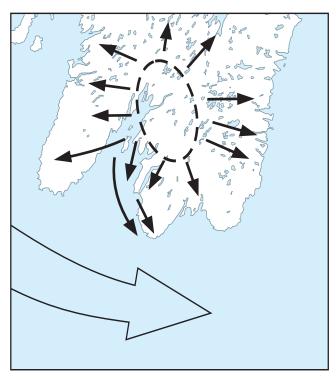


Figure 4. Phase 2 (glacial maximum?). Radial ice-flow pattern from large centre located over St. Mary's Bay and highlands north of Trepassey. Southward flow merged with Laurentide ice flow down the Cabot Strait toward the continental slope.

and 4). Dispersal of tillite clasts onto the west side of St. Mary's Bay from the Gaskiers Formation, which outcrops on the east side of the bay (Figures 1 and 2) and crosscuts the striations, indicate that ice flowed west across St. Mary's

Bay and onto the Cape St. Mary's sub-peninsula. On the Trepassey sub-peninsula, the striation record shows southward flow toward the community of Trepassey and eastward flow across the Trepassey sub-peninsula. Glacially carved valleys at Holyrood Pond, Cape Broyle and Aquaforte are evidence of radial flow from the Trepassey sub-peninsula ice centre. The exception is the tip of the peninsula at St. Shotts, where crosscutting striations indicate a southeastward flow (Figure 4). This southeastward deflection across the peninsula may be explained by the presence of Laurentide ice within the Cabot Strait, originating from the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Shaw *et al.*, 2006). The barrier this created, would have blocked southward-flowing ice along St. Mary's Bay causing it to thicken until it was sufficient to overtop uplands to the east.

This flow pattern is generally consistent with the reconstruction determined by Catto (1998), although it is argued here that the ice centre was located west of that suggested by Catto (*op. cit.*). This slight modification is based on the westward dispersal of tillite clasts, from the Gaskiers Formation near the community of Gaskers, found on the east side of the Cape St. Mary's sub-peninsula, and the lack of onshore striation evidence supporting eastward ice flow on the Trepassey sub-peninsula.

PHASE 3

During the third phase of flow (deglacial?), the ice centre collapsed and migrated eastward from St. Mary's Bay to the highlands north of Trepassey (Figures 1 and 5). The striation evidence indicates the ice centre remained active and

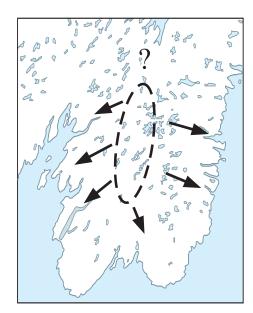


Figure 5. *Phase 3 (deglaciation?). The main ice centre migrated eastward from St. Mary's Bay to the highlands north of Trepassey.*

Table 1. Elements (and EOT) analyzed by the OSNE and commercial faboratories	
Method	Elements Analyzed
Gravimetric analysis	LOI
Inductively-Coupled-Plasma-Emission Spectrometry (ICP-ES)	Ag, Al, Ba, Be, Ca, Ce, Co, Cr, Cu, Dy, Fe, Ga, K, La, Li, Mg, Mn, mo, Na, Nb, Ni, P, Pb, Sc, Sr, Ti, V, Y, Zn, Zr
Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (INAA)	As, Au, Ba, Br, Ca, Ce, Co, Cr, Cs, Eu, Fe, Hf, La, Lu, Na, Nd, Rb, Sb, Sc, Sm, Tb, U, Yb

 Table 1. Elements (and LOI) analyzed by the GSNL and commercial laboratories

ice continued to flow radially toward the coast. Crosscutting striations on the western side of the Trepassey sub-peninsula shows evidence of this late westward flow into St. Mary's Bay. Striations along the southern shore highway between Cappahayden and Witless Bay show a consistent east to southeastward flow throughout the late Wisconsinan, exiting glacially carved valleys at Renews, Aquaforte, and Cape Broyle.

Catto (1998) suggested a similar collapse of the late Wisconsinan maximum ice centre over St. Mary's Bay and identifies several small, remnant ice centres over the Trepassey sub-peninsula. The timing of these ice-flow phases is speculative, as no absolute chronology exists for this area because of the lack of radiocarbon material that can be dated. The exception is an organic lake-sediment sample date, of 10 100 \pm 250 years BP, from Golden Eye Pond on the Hawke Hills. The sample was collected from the base of the postglacial pond, which indicates that the eastern Avalon Peninsula was ice free before about 10 ka (MacPherson, 1996).

REGIONAL TILL SAMPLING

A regional till-sampling program was conducted along the southern shore of the Avalon Peninsula extending from St. Catherine's in St. Mary's Bay along the southern shore highway to the community of Mobile. Glaciofluvial, fluvial, marine and aeolian sediments were excluded as sampling media. Most samples were from the C- or BC-soil horizon, taken from test pits at about 0.5 m depth or from quarries or roadcuts at about 0.5 to 1.0 m in depth. In rare cases, the lack of surface sediment necessitated the sampling of bedrock detritus. Sample spacing was controlled by access along existing roadways, as well as the availability of the appropriate medium. Sample density was about 1 sample per 1 km²; the samples were sieved in the field through a 5mm-mesh sieve and approximately 1 kg of sediment was placed in a paper bag.

A total of 373 samples were collected (Figure 2) and submitted to the Geological Survey's geochemical laboratory in St. John's for analysis, either internally by gravimetric analysis and Inductively Coupled Plasma–Emission Spectrometry (ICP-ES) using an aqua regia digestion, or externally by a commercial laboratory using Instrumental Neutron Activation Analysis (INAA). These methods and the elements analyzed are summarized in Table 1. Data quality is monitored using field and laboratory duplicates (to determine analytical precision), and standard reference materials (to determine analytical accuracy). In all cases, the silt/clay fraction (less than 0.063 mm) is analyzed. Data release is anticipated before the summer of 2009.

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