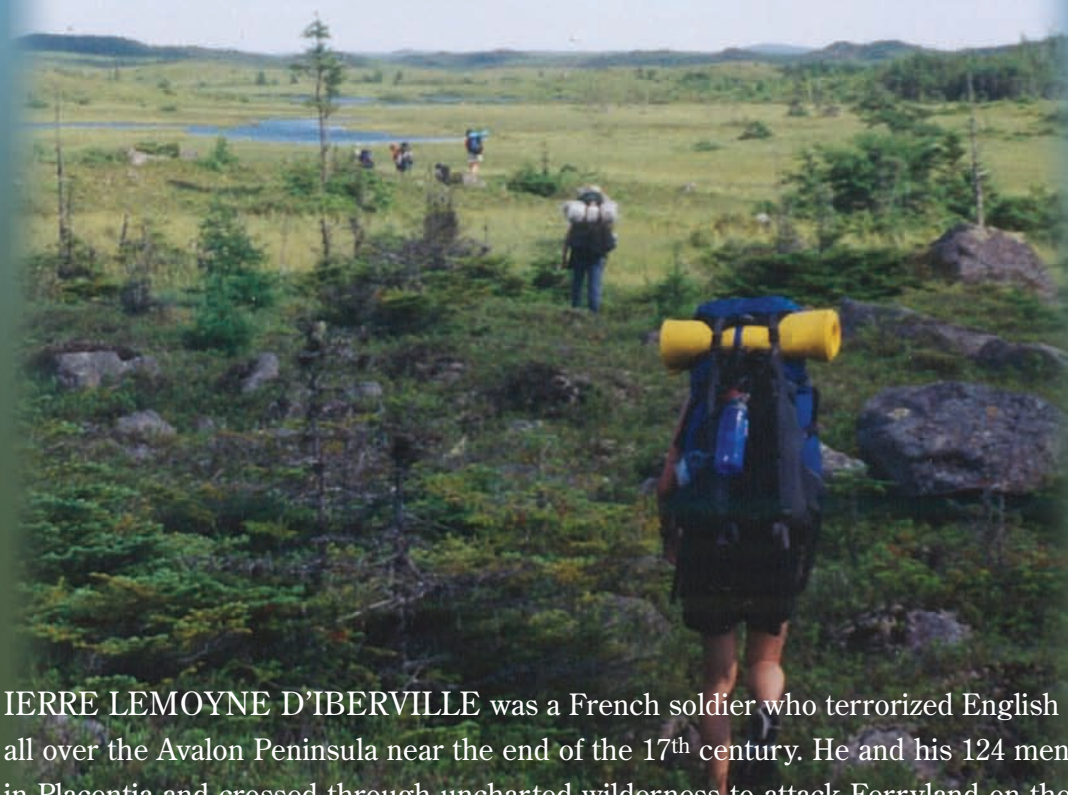


In the Footsteps of a French Conqueror

Amory Adventure Award Second Place Winners

by the 1st Torbay Venturer Company, Newfoundland and Labrador



PIERRE LEMOYNE D'IBERVILLE was a French soldier who terrorized English settlements all over the Avalon Peninsula near the end of the 17th century. He and his 124 men assembled in Placentia and crossed through uncharted wilderness to attack Ferryland on the east coast. It took them nine days. Since several of our Venturers are of French heritage, we were intrigued by this French conqueror's historic march across Newfoundland as he attempted to destroy English settlements. We determined to follow in his footsteps, spending most of our hike in the Avalon Wilderness Reserve, starting in the small community of St. Catherine's and emerging in Aquaforte.

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Once the route was decided, the company quickly jumped into action. Dividing into small teams, each team took on a task; planning menus, preparing food, gathering equipment and gaining permission. Since there isn't a trail following D'Iberville's route, we obtained a map with his route recreated by the Memorial University research students. Adrian and Nicolas learned how to prepare a Global Positioning System (GPS) using maps of the area and programmed in the proper coordinates. They also gave everyone in the group a short map and compass refresher course in case the GPS failed. The last task was to obtain a camping permit for the Avalon Wilderness Reserve. Everyone was relieved when permission was granted – the last hurdle was completed and we were set.

Entering the Wilderness

Everyone arrived excited at our advisor's house. As Adrian read out the checklist, we made sure that we had exactly what we needed and nothing more. Equipment and food were distributed equally and packs were carefully weighed to be sure they didn't overburden any one person. After a short drive and a quick lunch at our departure point, we were ready to go. One problem: we couldn't find the start of the trail! Finally a local resident kindly pointed out the entrance and we were off. Thirty metres into the trail, we came across a large shallow river. Off came the boots and on went the sandals so we could cross the water. With our boots back on, we travelled very quickly in the open forest, making good time. This ended as soon as the trail turned into marshes, bogs and very thick bush – plus it started to rain, pouring for several hours. We followed caribou trails and crossed more rivers until finally we stopped. Setting our tents up in the rain, we quickly celebrated Skye's birthday, then tumbled into bed. – *Kyla Fisher*

Seeking Caribou

Three rather large boys don't fit well into a slightly less-than-two-man tent. Nursing stiff muscles, we ate our break-

fast of oatmeal (tasting little better than scrapings off the bottom of our boots). After beating through the trees for a few hours, we came across a series of bogs winding up a hillside, like a giant wet staircase. Newfoundland's the only place I've ever been where water practically runs uphill! However it was easier walking than through the forest. Once we hit the barrens, I couldn't wipe the smile off my face. Finally, open space with no trees. Nico and I were determined to see caribou so we took the lead, trying to stay ahead of the noisy group behind us. All day we searched for signs of these elusive creatures, but alas, never spotted a caribou the entire trip. Sadly, as we found out after returning home, the once 6000 strong caribou herd has been depleted to under 2000 animals due to illegal hunting and disease.

We set up camp beside a large boulder near a pond of water. Adrian and I climbed up on the boulder and held up our wet tents like kites until they were dry. Since it was a really clear night, most of us slept under the stars. That day had to be my most favourite of the trip! – *Colin Price*

Deep In Avalon

Day three dawned nice and sunny. At this point we were in the middle of the Avalon Wilderness Reserve and the scenery was spectacular. After weaving around several small lakes, we scrambled up the side of a ridge for a panoramic view of the area. Then there was a long hike across bogs and barrens until we stumbled onto a dirt road, the only road in the Reserve. After eating lunch sitting on a bridge, we sped off down the dirt road for nine kilometres. The easy hiking ended far too soon and back into the thick undergrowth we went. The flies descended like a thick cloud, but we couldn't stop because the whole land appeared to be infested with red ants. After another two kilometres we emerged onto a high hill with some wind which helped keep the flies at bay. Deciding that we had walked far enough, we dropped our packs and set up camp. We had come 17 kilometres in one day – eight of them with no trail. There is no way anyone did this with a cannon! – *Beth Spencer*

Photos: 1st Torbay Ventures Company



Tuckamore Nightmare

We must have found the rockiest, most uneven piece of ground in the whole of the Avalon Wilderness to set our tent on. My back hurt, my calves were stiff and my side was killing me. It took a lot of breakfast-smelling encouragement for me to crawl out of my sleeping bag. Poking my head out of my tent, my sleepy eyes opened up to an incredible view of wild ponds, barrens, misty hills, and my best friends. After breakfast we jokingly fought over whose food was breakfast. Nobody wanted the slightest bit of extra weight in their packs. It's interesting how the way we moved and interacted as a group revolved so much around our backpacks.

Our old Beaver motto of sharing, sharing, sharing became everyone's favourite saying when we stopped for breaks. I've never seen teenage boys try so hard to give away food! (Once again, to reduce our loads.) That unusual element of cheerful, teasing helpfulness in everybody created a great atmosphere of optimism and unity in the group, no matter what challenge we were literally up to our knees in.

Today we had a new challenge – heat. The stiff winds had deserted us and with no breeze the sun was brutal. Every uphill stint was torture with our heavy packs. Spying a lovely pond with a patch of sandy beach, it wasn't a hard decision to drop our packs and stay for a while. While some went swimming, more adventurous souls climbed Bread and Cheese Hill, the highest point in the Avalon. They said they could see the ocean on both sides of the peninsula. Refreshed, we started our trek again; into some of the harshest terrain we had yet to encounter.

For those of you not acquainted with tuckamore, let me describe it to you. Basically, you take a pine forest and squish it down so it's about four feet high in about half the original area. You end up with a massive, impenetrable, prickly misery that even moose tend to avoid. The only way through is to tunnel.

It was a nightmare; our bloody shins could attest to that. Over the barrens we hiked five kilometres an hour. Through the tuckamore we averaged one tenth of that. Most of us finally stopped caring about pulled hair, scratched arms and ripped clothing, and just ploughed our way through – teeth gritted and arms thrashing. After five kilometres of this, no one wondered why D'Iberville had burned his way through.

We eventually ended at a beautiful campsite overlooking a pond. We were all disappointed to see a cabin roof in the distance. Being so isolated had spoiled us and coming back to the fringes of civilization was really hard to get used to.

Since it was another clear night, it wasn't long before we were cocooned in our sleeping bags staring up at the Milky Way. The stars were so close you felt like they were going to fall on you. Our incredible journey was coming to an end and tomorrow would bring cars, noise, roads and houses. These had been good days. I went to sleep happier than I've ever been and sad at the same time. – *Hilary Price*

Countdown

Another sunny day and the sweltering sun didn't make much difference from the overheated tent. The hiking was better today – less tuckamore, more caribou trails and a couple of marshes. We crossed a river and saw a big school of fish. When the trail disappeared we decided it would be better to go around a large bog and hike around a lake for some easier terrain. Somehow we still managed to get our feet wet. At the end of the lake we found an ATV track which would lead us out. It seemed to go on forever. Lunch consisted of everything we could find at the bottom of our packs (tuna, raisins, pitas and a bag of crispers.) As we reached the end, we all joined in with a countdown (provided by GPS) of the final 500 metres. We emerged onto a road near Aquaforte River and walked a little further to our pick-up location. We piled into the cars and celebrated with the best fish and chips we had ever had. – *Skye Fisher*

An Incredible Journey

Our D'Iberville hike was an incredible journey. It will continue to stand out in our minds as the largest and most demanding challenge any of us has ever accomplished. We had to endure extreme terrain, deep in one of the wildest areas of Newfoundland, and face the trial with only the weight on our backs and ten years of Scouting under our belts. We all grew up a little on this trip, everyone walked out a little bit stronger and a better person – this trip of a lifetime with an awesome group of friends. – *Adrian Charron*

This story was told in their own words. Together, the 1st Torbay Venturers achieved their goal and became Amory Adventure Award Second Place Winners. Congratulations to: Adrian Charron, Margot Doucet, Kyla Fisher, Skye Fisher, Ann Jennings, Nicolas Morin, Sarah Osmond, Colin Price, Hilary Price, Elizabeth Spencer, and their advisors Marian Wissink, Donald Spencer and Abigail Steel. X

Linking to Strategic Direction #4.