

Guy not Gosnold: a correction

By WILLIAM GILBERT

SUMMARY: Over the past 25 years a copper-plate engraving created and first published in 1628 by the de Bry family in Part XIII of their *Americae* series has been reproduced in a number of publications. Often this image is presented as a depiction of Bartholomew Gosnold trading with Native Americans in New England in 1602. However, a careful examination of the relevant documents indicates that the image actually depicts Bristol merchant John Guy's encounter with the Beothuk Indians in Trinity Bay, Newfoundland, in 1612.

Volume 40:1 of *Post-Medieval Archaeology* featured on its cover a detail from a copper-plate engraving that was credited as follows: “‘Captain Gosnold Trades with Indians’, from Theodore de Bry, *Americae Pars Decima* (Openheim, 1619)’ (Fig. 1).¹ This is incorrect.

Americae Pars Decima is the tenth in a fourteen-volume series of illustrated books on the European exploration and settlement of the Americas produced by the de Bry family between 1590 and 1634. Perhaps the best known of all these is Part I, which features 28 copper-plate engravings by Theodor de Bry based upon John White's watercolours of Native Americans encountered by the English during their attempt to establish a colony at Roanoke Island in the 1580s.² Theodor de Bry died in 1598, shortly before Part VIII of the series was published. After his death the work was taken up by his sons, Johann Theodor and Theodor Israel.

Each of the fourteen parts drew on the writings of various individuals involved in the exploration and/or colonization of the Americas. These texts were edited and translated into German or Latin, depending on the edition, and copper-plate engravings of illustrations were created to accompany the text. Part I was the only volume which was also published in both English and French. Where possible, existing images were used — those in Part II were based on Jacques le Moyne's paintings of the Native People of Florida — but

where none were available, the engravers created their own, sometimes fanciful, images. In almost every case the images were created to illustrate events described in the accompanying text.³

Apparently Theodor Israel died in 1612. Part X, which was the work of Johann Theodor, was first published in the German town of Openheim in 1618. A Latin version appeared the following year. It begins with an introduction describing the voyages of Amerigo Vespucci in 1497 and 1499, followed first by an edited version of Ralph Hamor's *A True Discourse of the Present Estate of Virginia*, first published in 1615, and then by an edited version of Captain John Smith's *The Description of New England*, first published in 1616.⁴ Unlike most of the other volumes in the series, in which the images were interspersed throughout the text, Part X has them appended to the text and accompanied by headings and captions describing events which they are meant to illustrate. These include depictions of Vespucci in South America and events in Virginia described by Hamor, but they do not include the image which forms the subject of this paper; that was first published in the German edition of Part XIII in 1628. Six years later it appeared in the Latin edition of Part XIII, which incorporated material from both the 1628 edition of Parts XIII and XIV, which was published in German in 1630.⁵

The ‘Captain Gosnold’ referred to in the *PMA* credit is Captain Bartholomew Gosnold, a Suffolk



FIG. 1

John Guy's party meets a group of Beothuk at Bull Arm, Trinity Bay, Newfoundland. Matthäus Merian, *Dreyzehender Theil Americae*, 1628 (© Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland).

mariner who led an unsuccessful expedition to establish a colony in the Cape Cod area of New England in 1602 and was one of the principal promoters of the English colony at Jamestown, Virginia.⁶ The image in question is often presented as being a depiction of one of Gosnold's encounters with Native Americans during his 1602 voyage. In his excellent study of Indian-European relations in New England between 1500 and 1643, Neal Salisbury published it as being 'Bartholomew Gosnold trading with the Indians at Martha's Vineyard, Mass., 1602. . . . Theodor de Bry (pt 13, Latin edn, Frankfurt, 1634)'.⁷ The image is not, however, a depiction of Gosnold.

The first three chapters of Part XIII deal with the discovery, exploration and settlement of the island of Newfoundland. Chapter I starts with an

introduction that discusses the activities of Sebastian Cabot (who is credited with his father John's 1497 voyage of discovery), Humphrey Gilbert, who claimed the island for Elizabeth I in 1583, and the establishment of the first English colony on the island. This is followed by a series of extracts from Devon sea captain Richard Whitbourne's *A Discourse and Discovery of New-Found-Land*, first published in 1620, including his description of the harbours around the Avalon Peninsula and his estimate of the value of the Newfoundland fishery to England.⁸ Chapter II begins with Whitbourne's description of the native people of Newfoundland (the Beothuk) and goes on to describe 'a strange creature' which, Whitbourne says, may have been 'a Marmaid or Mareman', which he saw in St John's harbour, 'in the yeere 1610 in a morning

early, as I was standing by the Riuer side'.⁹ The description is accompanied by an illustration, the first in the book, depicting this fantastical event (Fig. 2).

The image that concerns us appears in Chapter III, which is mainly about the Beothuk and is mostly a translation of excerpts from John Guy's Journal of his voyage into Trinity Bay in 1612 and his meeting with the Beothuk on 6 November of that year.¹⁰ Guy was governor of the first English colony in what is now Canada, established at Cupids, Newfoundland, in 1610. In October 1612, Guy and eighteen others sailed into Trinity Bay in an attempt to meet and establish friendly relations with the Beothuk. On 24 October they entered Dildo Arm, which Guy called 'Savage Bay'. From there they sailed north-west to Collier Bay which Guy called 'Allhallows', and then on to Bull Arm,

where the meeting took place.¹¹ Samuel Purchas published abbreviated versions of both Whitbourne's *Discourse* and Guy's Journal in his second edition of *Purchas his Pilgrims* in 1625, and it seems clear that the material from Chapters 1, 2 and 3 of Part XIII are edited translations of Purchas' text.¹² The text immediately before and after the image is almost an exact translation of Guy's description of his party's encounter although, for some reason, the German and Latin versions mistakenly give the year as 1618. Unlike Guy's Journal, no names are provided in the translation. Instead, the colonists are simply referred to as the English.

Exactly when the image first came to be associated with Gosnold is uncertain, although it appears to have been fairly widely accepted in many places outside Canada by the early 1980s.¹³



FIG. 2

Devon sea captain Richard Whitbourne sees 'a strange creature' in St John's, Newfoundland, in 1610. Matthäus Merian, *Dreyzehender Theil Americae*, 1628 (© Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland).

When we look at Gabriel Archer's account of the Gosnold voyage, it is easy to see how someone who was familiar with that account but not with the Guy narrative, and who either did not have access to or could not read the accompanying text, might have made this mistake.¹⁴

The incident from Gosnold's voyage that most closely resembles the event depicted in the engraving took place not at Martha's Vineyard but on Cuttyhunk Island, where the English built a fort. Archer, who accompanied Gosnold on the voyage, describes it in a narrative, also first published by Purchas in 1625. On 5 June 1602, while collecting sassafras and building the fort, the would-be colonists were approached by 'fiftie Savages stout and lustie men with their Bowes and Arrowes'. After some negotiations, the eight Englishmen on shore began trading with the natives. Gosnold and the rest of the party had been off exploring in a bark, but he and twelve others arrived on-shore shortly after. To indicate that Gosnold was their leader, the Englishmen formed an honour guard through which he passed and walked up to a Native whom Archer called the 'Seignior'. Then, according to Archer, 'Our Capitaine gave him a straw Hat and a paire of Knives'.¹⁵ Given that the image shows a European on a beach exchanging various items, including a hat and a knife, with Native Americans, the assumption that this must be Gosnold is understandable.

However, the image incorporates so many details found in Guy's narrative but not in Archer's that anyone familiar with both would have no problem telling the difference.¹⁶ Guy tells us that the party they encountered consisted of two canoes with four Indians in each, just as depicted in the image. Guy also says that the Indians approached them waving a white wolf skin on a pole, 'which we tooke to be for a parley'; the engraving shows the Indians waving a white skin on a pole. According to Guy, the first Englishman to go ashore, a Master Whittington, was approached by two 'savages'; the image shows the first man ashore being greeted by two Natives. Guy also states that 'the foremoste of [the Indians] presented unto [Whittington] a chaine of leather full of small perwinckle shells, a splitting knife, & a feather that stucke in his hair', and that 'the other gave him ane arrow without a head'. The engraving clearly shows the first Englishman holding a chain of shells, a knife, a feather and an arrow without a head. Guy recorded that Master Whittington gave the first Indian 'a linen cap & a hand towel'; the image shows one of the two Indians holding a hat and what appears to be a towel. The second Englishman to come ashore was Francis Tipton, 'unto whom one of the savages came running & gave him a chaine such as is before

spoken of'. The depiction shows the second man on shore being presented with a shell chain by one of the Natives. In exchange for this, Tipton gave the Native 'a knife and a small piece of brasse'; the image shows the second Englishman giving the Native what appears to be a knife. Guy also says that one of the Beothuk 'tooke the white skinne, that they hayled us with, & gave yt to master Whittington'; the engraving shows the white wolf skin flag lying at Whittington's feet.¹⁷ Finally, after more negotiations, the rest of the Beothuk and four more colonists, including John Guy, joined the others on the beach, exchanged more gifts and shared a meal. In the distance we see four more colonists arriving on-shore. The dress of one clearly indicates that he is of higher status than the other three.

There are also some obvious details missing from the image that would almost certainly have been present if it was in fact a depiction of the encounter described by Archer. These include the fort, the eight Englishmen on shore, the honour guard, and the 'fiftie Savages stout and lustie'. Given the de Bry family's fondness for depicting Native Americans, it is hard to imagine them leaving out this last important detail.

Some have criticized the image for being inaccurate because it shows more than one vessel,¹⁸ but this indicates a basic misunderstanding of the nature of these depictions. The engravings created by the de Bry family were not meant to be snapshots of events but were intended to illustrate the story told in the text. The three ships do not represent different vessels but the same one at different stages in the narrative: first from a distance, then preparing its landing boat, and finally being approached by the Natives. Likewise, the two canoes on the water and the two hauled up on the beach in the foreground are the same, shown at different points in the narrative, and the white wolf skin flag being waved by the Beothuk in the canoe and the one at Whittington's feet are one and the same. The engraving also shows Master Whittington and Francis Tipton exchanging gifts with the Natives, apparently at the same time, although we know that Tipton arrived on shore some time after Whittington.

There is one final problem with the provenance of the image. The *PMA* caption credits it to Theodor de Bry and this is the name almost universally associated with it. This too, however, is a mistake. As we have seen, Theodor de Bry died in 1598, four years before Gosnold's voyage and fourteen before Guy's encounter. Some have assumed that the engraver was de Bry's son, Johann Theodor, but, although he produced a number of volumes in the series, he passed away in 1623, five

years before the German edition of Part XIII was published. However, seven years before his death, Johann Theodor went into business with the Basel-born engraver Matthäus Merian and the next year Merian married Johann Theodor's daughter, Maria Magdalena. The year after his father-in-law's death Merian moved his family to Frankfurt and took over the family business.¹⁹ Although it may be correct to credit all fourteen parts of the *America* series to the de Bry family, the covers of both the German and Latin editions of Part XIII clearly state that they are the work of Matthäus Merian. Merian also produced Part XIV in German in 1630, as well as a table of contents for the thirteen Latin volumes in the series in 1634.²⁰

NOTES

¹ The credit followed the listing of the image in the catalogues of the British Library and the Library of Congress, Washington DC (eds).

² Harriot 1590; Sloan 2007.

³ Lorant 1965, 30–1; Hulton, 1977; Cole 1951, 316.

⁴ Smith 1616.

⁵ De Bry 1618; Merian 1628; 1634a; Cole 1951, 316, 401–2.

⁶ Kelso 2006, 31–2.

⁷ Salisbury 1982, 89.

⁸ Merian 1628, 1–6.

⁹ Cell 1982, 194–5.

¹⁰ Merian 1628, 6–8. Transcriptions of John Guy's 'The Iornall of our Voiage in the Indeavour begunne the 7 of October 1612' have been published in Quinn 1979b, 152–7, and Cell 1982, 68–78.

¹¹ Gilbert 1990.

¹² In the 20-volume edition of Purchas published by James MacLehose and Sons of Glasgow between 1905 and 1907, all this material appears in Volume 19, Chapter 7, 'The Beginning of the Patent for Newfoundland; and the Plantation Made there by the English, 1610 . . .', and Chapter 8, 'Captaine Richard Whitbournes Voyages to New-Found-Land, and Observations There, and Thereof; Taken Out of His Printed Book' (Purchas 1906).

¹³ Salisbury, whose book was first published in 1982, acquired the image from the Edward E. Ayer Collection, the Newberry Library, Chicago.

¹⁴ Quinn 1979a, 355–6.

¹⁵ Quinn 1979a, 355–6.

¹⁶ For example, Neary and O'Flaherty, 1983, 28; O'Dea 1985, 2; Pastore 1992, 55.

¹⁷ Quinn 1997b, 154–6; Cell 1982, 73–6.

¹⁸ For example, Salisbury 1982, 89.

¹⁹ Weil 1944, 142–64.

²⁰ Cole 1951, 316, 401; Merian 1628; 1630; 1634a; 1634b.

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