

The Anse au Foulon, 1759: Some New Theories and Some New Evidence

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Cette note de recherche est une discussion critique d'un article récemment publié, portant sur les décisions unilatérales de James Wolfe avant le débarquement amphibie à Québec, le 12 septembre 1759. Elle fait voir que même si leur recherche scientifique est louable, les auteurs de l'article semblent avoir négligé de consulter d'importants documents probants liés à leur thèse. Elle contient aussi des extraits du journal, découvert dernièrement, d'un officier de marine qui a participé à l'attaque.

The siege of Quebec in 1759 is one of the more famous episodes in North American history and many historians have written about the operation or its participants.¹ This is perhaps understandable because, as E.R. Adair once commented, the unending fascination with Quebec is partially due to "the appeal of its romantic, but fictitious setting," including "the climbing of unscalable cliffs in the dead of night, the lines of solemn poetry read in the wings," and "the standing at dawn before the frowning fortress-capital of New France."² This fascination shows no sign of abating and the flow of publications about Quebec shows no sign of ending. This note discusses two recent developments in the historiography of the siege.

In late 2002 a most interesting article entitled "Perfect Tide, Ideal Moon: An Unappreciated Aspect of Wolfe's Generalship at Québec, 1759," appeared in the *William and Mary Quarterly*.³ The authors conducted a very thorough scientific investigation of the nautical characteristics of the Quebec basin using the latest technology and reported on their findings. In doing so, they performed a signal service by correcting many of the errors concerning the technical aspects (distances, river currents, tides and lighting conditions) of the famous landing near the Anse au Foulon on the early morning of 13 September 1759. As they rightly point out, some of these mistakes have been repeated for more than two

¹ I wish to thank the following historians who commented on earlier drafts of this note: Dr Carl Benn, Heritage Officer, City of Toronto; René Chartrand, Hull, Québec, and Prof. Don Hickey, Wayne State College, Nebraska.

² E.R. Adair, "The Military Reputation of Major-General James Wolfe," *Canadian Historical Association Report* 1936, 31.

³ Donald W. Olson, William D. Liddle, Russell L. Doescher, Leah M. Burnside, Tammy D. Silakowski, and François-Jacques Saucier, "Perfect Tide, Ideal Moon: An Unappreciated Aspect of Wolfe's Generalship at Québec, 1759," *William and Mary Quarterly*, vol 59, No. 4 (October 2002), 957-974.

centuries and it was time indeed to rectify them.

Unfortunately, despite their commendable diligence and ingenuity, the authors of "Perfect Tide, Ideal Moon" then moved beyond known historical evidence to state that, contrary to the advice of his three brigadiers, it would have been difficult for Wolfe to attack *upriver* from his position at St. Nicholas on the south shore of the St Lawrence because of tidal conditions, and that his decision to wait until the night of 12/13 September 1759 to launch an attack *downstream* from St. Nicholas was absolutely correct as, on no other night in that time of that year, were the river and lighting conditions so perfect for his requirements. They therefore credit Major-General James Wolfe for being a very good sailor as well as a good general, which is a very singular claim for anyone who knows how bad relations were between Wolfe and the Royal Navy during that long and difficult summer.

To evaluate this claim, we must examine the available historical evidence. As the authors of "Perfect Tide ..." state, the "single most complete and reliable" study of the siege of Quebec is Charles P. Stacey's *Quebec 1759: The Siege and the Battle*. Stacey was the first and perhaps the last of the many historians who have written on Quebec to make extensive use of the National Library and Archives of Canada in Ottawa, which holds the largest single collection of British and French primary sources relating to the 1759 siege in the world. Stacey's book was published in 1959 but, in the years immediately following its appearance, the National Archives came into possession of important new sources relating to the siege and Stacey analysed and discussed these items in an article, "Quebec, 1759: Some New Documents," published in the *Canadian Historical Review* in 1966.⁴ The authors of "Perfect Tide, Ideal Moon" apparently did not consult this article (at least it is not cited in their notes), and that is unfortunate because it contains two documents extremely relevant to the subject of their thesis.⁵

The first is a personal account of the siege held by the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland. Stacey was unable to identify the author positively, but was able to deduce from his text that he was on Wolfe's personal staff and suggested that he might have been

⁴ C P. Stacey, "Quebec, 1759: Some New Documents," *Canadian Historical Review*, 48, 4 (December 1966). This article is reproduced as Appendix D in the new edition that I edited, published by Robin Brass Studio of Toronto in 2002, of *Quebec 1759: The Siege and the Battle*. This new edition contains the complete text of the second edition of Stacey's original work and much additional material including 120 illustrations and maps, Stacey's 1966 article discussed above and another article he published about the siege, complete orders of battles for the land and naval forces of both sides (including British and American warships and merchantmen), and an essay on British amphibious doctrine in the mid-18th century and the Royal Navy's contribution to the siege. The bibliography contains a complete list of all sources used by Stacey for the 1959 book, and a comprehensive list of all primary sources concerning the 1759 siege held by the National Archives of Canada current to 2001 and a full bibliography of both French and English-language books on James Wolfe, the siege of Quebec and the Seven Years' War in America current to the same date.

⁵ It is curious that the authors did not consult Stacey's 1966 article because it is cited in the select bibliography of a work they did use - René Chartrand's monograph, *Quebec 1759*, (Oxford: Osprey, 1999). In fairness, though, it should be noted that, in the 1966 edition of his book, Stacey did not make much use of this new evidence although there is a statement in the front matter that it had been revised. In fact, the Vergor account which is discussed in this article is mentioned by Stacey in his main text but not included in his notes or sources. This oversight has been corrected in the 2002 edition of Stacey's work.

either Captain Thomas Bell or Captain Hervey Smythe.⁶ The importance of this account by a witness who was in a position to observe and comment on the decisions made by Wolfe cannot be stressed too much as only fragments of Wolfe's own journal from 1759 have survived and its entries stop at 16 August 1759. The National Archives of Canada obtained a copy of this new eyewitness document and the following lengthy passage, which discusses the events from 6 September to 12 September 1759, is of interest:⁷

... The 6th [September] M^r. Wolfe went up. The ships moved up to Carrouge [Cap Rouge], the following day the General went in his Barge, and reconnoitred the Coast at less than 200 yards distance all the way up [that is, upriver] to Pointe de Trempe [Pointe aux Trembles] and there fixt on a place for the Descent, and gave his orders in consequence; Heavy rain delay'd this operation, and the General fearing for the Health of the soldiers, who were much crowd'd aboard the ships, order'd half of them to be landed on the southern shore and Cantoon'd [canton'd] in the Village of St. Nicolas: During this Interval [9 September] the General went in Captⁿ. Leaske's⁸ schooner and reconnoitered close by the shore from Carrouge down to the Town of Quebec, during his absence M^r. Murray and Townshend came aboard the Admiral, and behaved very seditiously in respect of M^r Wolfe.

The General having observ'd the Foulon, thought it practicable and fixed on it for the Descent, and the Day following [10 September] took M^r. Monckton, Townshend and Col: Howe & Cap^t Shads the regulating Cap^t. of the boats to a Post we had at the mouth of the Echemin [River, commonly called "Goreham's Post"] which is almost opposite to the Foulon, in order to shew them the Places He thought most accessable. The 11th [of September] orders were given to prepare for landing and attacking the Enemy, when Mr. Wolfe rec^d. a Letter sign'd by each of the Brigadiers, setting forth, that they did not know where they were to land & attack the Enemy.⁹ The 12th [of September] M^r. Monckton came aboard the Sutherland in the morning: after He was gone M^r. Wolfe said to his own family that the

⁶ Stacey at first thought the anonymous author was Major Paulus Irving, the Deputy Quartermaster-General of the British army because when the National Archives of Canada acquired the Irish material, the microfilm included a genealogy of the Irving family and notes made by Paulus Irving on his family's history (see N A C Finding Aid for Manuscript Group 18). In his 1966 article, he changed his mind and suggested that the author was perhaps Captain Thomas Bell or Captain Hervey Smythe, both aides-de-camp to Wolfe. Although the identification is not absolutely positive, it is now generally accepted that the account was written by Captain Hervey Smythe. See that officer's biography in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. IX.

⁷ National Archives of Canada, Manuscript Group 18, N45, "Diary of siege of Quebec," on Microfilm Reel A-652.

* Stacey's comment on this officer in the 1966 article was: "I cannot identify this officer in standard references on the Royal Navy. He must, I think, have been a merchant captain."

⁹ The anonymous staff officer is wrong here, the brigadiers' letter was actually written on 12 September 1759.

Brigadiers had brought him up the River and now flinch'd: He did not hesitate to say that two of them were Cowards and one a Villain.

Capt Shads (regulating Captain of the boats) on the Eve of the attack made many frivolous objections such as that the Heat [force] of the Tide wou'd hurry the boats beyond the object &c. &c. which gave reason to suspect some one had tamper'd with him: The General told him he shou'd have made his objections earlier, that shou'd the disembarkation miscarry, that He wou'd shelter him from any Blame, that all that cou'd be done was to do his utmost. That if Capt. Shads wou'd write any thing to testify that the miscarriage was G. Wolfe's and not Captn. Shads that he wou'd sign it. Shads still persisting in his absurdity, the General told him He cou'd do no more than lay his head to the block to save Shads, then left the Cabin. The 12th. [of September] the Troops that landed at S'. Nicolas reembarked. The Ships mov'd up the River as well to receive them as to draw the Enemies attention upwards. The General gave orders that the Troops for the first attack shou'd get into the Boats during the latter Part of the Tide of Flood, as the violence of The Ebb would make it more difficult, The Ebb uniting to its own force, the Natural Rapidity of The River: M^r. Wolfe was desirous that the Boats shou'd arrive at the Foulon as the Day dawn'd, to answer which They fell down about half hour after three, and arrivd at the Foulon half after four¹⁰ [in the morning of 13 September] without striking with the oars, merely by the Force of the Tide which was 9 mile. The Boats were not Discover'd by any of the Enemy's Centinels untill we came opposite to the Battery of S'. Augustine," to the Centinel's Challenge there, Capt. Fraser answer'd according to the French manner, told them we were loaded with Provisions for the Town, and desird them to be silent as there was an English ship of War not far off. (The Enemy expected at this time a Convoy of Provision from their ships, which lay at Batiscan) They did not begin to fire on the Boats untill They drew in towards the Foulon. The ships with the Remainder of the Troops fell down some Distance of time after the Flat Boats, so as not to give the Alarm.¹²

Note that the author is quite definite about the fact that the greater part of Wolfe's army did not move above the city of Quebec until 6 September and that his original plan was to land, not at the Anse au Foulon, but *upriver* at a spot just below Pointe aux Trembles, as

¹⁰ Stacey's comment from his 1966 article was: "Both these times appear to be somewhat late, and the speed of the downriver trip seems to be exaggerated." In fact, we know the exact distance and time from the point of embarkation to the Anse au Foulon thanks to the excellent technical work of the authors of "Perfect Tide, Ideal Moon."

¹¹ A later reference in the Irving account indicates that the "Battery of St. Augustin" is a reference to the Samos battery, adjacent to the Anse au Foulon.

¹² National Archives of Canada, Micro Reel A-62, Memoir of the Siege of Quebec.

suggested by his three brigadiers, Monckton, Murray and Townshend. On 8 September, Wolfe actually issued orders for a battalion of the 60th Foot and his light infantry to make a demonstration at Pointe aux Trembles while the five battalions of infantry that were to carry out the main landing were "to embark in the flat-bottom boats, so as to be in readiness to put off with the first of the morning flood; and captain Chads will be so good as to conduct them so as to arrive at the landing-place an hour and a half before high water."¹³ It would seem that, contrary to the belief of the authors of "Perfect Tide," that neither Wolfe nor his naval officers saw any problems in attacking an objective *upriver* from St. Nicholas. The troops boarded the boats, ready to go, but the operation was cancelled early in the morning of 9 September because of the unrelenting rain. The cancellation order stated:

As the weather is so bad that no military operation can take place, and as the men are excessively crowded in the transports, and in the men of war, so as to endanger their health; it is ordered, that the under-mentioned troops be landed at the mill on the south shore, and that they are cantoned in the village and church of St. Nicholas, in readiness to embark at the first signal.

The authors of "Perfect Tide, Ideal Moon" feel strongly that Wolfe then delayed his next attempt until the night of 12 September to take advantage of the best conditions on the river. In actual fact, the delay was caused by more mundane matters. As Stacey discusses at length in *Quebec 1759*, Wolfe undertook at least two reconnaissances on 9 and 10 September during which he selected the Anse au Foulon as the next landing point. This is confirmed by the eyewitness account quoted above which tells us that the British commander completed a reconnaissance of the river by schooner on 9 September and, as Stacey believes, this may well have been the day that Wolfe chose the Anse au Foulon as the landing place for a second operation. Wolfe, however, was also facing inclement weather which occasioned further delay, a fact he notes in his last official report to London, dated 9 September: "we are now here, with about 3600 men, waiting for an opportunity to attack them when and wherever they can best be got at. The weather has been extremely unfavourable for a day or two, so that we have been inactive."¹⁴ This letter may have been written after Wolfe had chosen the Anse au Foulon, but it does indicate that, on 9 September at least, his plans were not finalized and that unseasonable weather was causing problems. Throughout this period, the weather was not on Wolfe's side. According to the logs of the British warships in Admiral Saunders's fleet, it rained on 2, 6, 8, 9, 10 and 11 September.¹⁵

On 10 September Wolfe made a second reconnaissance of the Anse au Foulon,

¹³ Order, 8 September 1759, in *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers: Also His Orders for a Battalion and an Army...* (London: J. Millan, 1780, reprinted Museum Restoration Service, Ottawa, 1967), 99.

¹⁴ Wolfe to Holderness, 9 September 1759, quoted in Robert Wright, *The Life of Major-General James Wolfe* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1864), 563-565.

¹⁵ Logs of HM Ships *Dublin, Hunter, Lowestoft, Medway, Neptune, Pembroke, Richmond, Sea Horse, Squirrel, Stirling Castle*, and *Sutherland* for the dates indicated, as contained in W. H. Wood, ed., *The Logs of the Conquest of Canada* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1909), 203-321.

taking with him a group of senior officers: Admiral Charles Holmes, commanding all naval forces above the city; Commander James Chads, the naval officer charged with conducting the water movement of the operation; Brigadier Generals James Murray and George Townshend, two of Wolfe's three brigade commanders; and Colonel William Howe, commander of the light infantry which would make the initial assault landing. It is important to note that, on this occasion, Wolfe did not reconnoitre the Anse au Foulon from the water but simply conducted this party to the post of Goreham's Rangers, located at the junction of the Etchemin River and the St Lawrence, which was nearly ~ but not quite -- across from the Foulon. In the excerpt quoted above, the anonymous staff officer is again quite definite that Wolfe did not indicate to these officers the exact location for the forthcoming *downriver* attack but simply showed them "the Places He thought most accessable." The exact landing place and the time of the landing, however, were clear in Wolfe's mind on 10 September as, that day, he wrote to his friend, Lieutenant-Colonel Ralph Burton, commanding the 48th Regiment of Foot, to inform him that he intended to make "a powerful effort" at the Anse au Foulon about four in the morning of 13 September.¹⁶

Unfortunately, the British commander was not so forthcoming with his three subordinates, Monckton, Murray and Townshend, who remained unclear about the exact objective even after orders were issued for the landing at the Anse au Foulon on 11 September. These orders specified that the assault troops were to be ready in their boats by 9 PM the following night.¹⁷ On the morning of 12 September (not 11 September as stated in the account by the anonymous staff officer quoted above) the three brigadiers sent a letter to Wolfe containing a request for information as to the exact place they were to attack. Shortly afterward (perhaps he brought the letter with him) Brigadier General Robert Monckton, who had not been present at the senior officers' reconnaissance of 10 September, paid a visit to Wolfe, possibly seeking clarification about the objective. According to the account by the anonymous officer, after Monckton left, Wolfe commented to his personal staff that, of his three brigadiers, "two of them were Cowards and one a Villain" - an indication of just how bad relations were in the senior levels of the British army.¹⁸ As it was, Wolfe did not see fit to respond to his subordinates' written request until 8.30 PM that evening, just thirty minutes before the troops were to embark. He addressed his reply to Monckton (which would add some credence that Monckton's morning visit had been to seek clarification about the actual objective). As for the location of the landing place, Wolfe had this to say: "the Place is called the *Foulon* distant upon two miles, or two miles & a half from Quebec, where you remarked an encampment of 12 or 13 Tents, & an Abbatis, below it ~ you mentioned to day [i.e. 12 September] that You had perceived a breast-work there, which made me imagine you as well acquainted wh. the Place, as the nature of things will admit

Wolfe to Burton, 10 September 1759, cited in C P . Stacey, *Quebec 1759: The Siege and the Battle* (Toronto, 2002), 123.

¹⁷ Orders, 11 September 1759, in *General Wolfe's Instructions* 101.

¹⁸ Stacey's discussion of the events of the period, 6-12 September, and the communications written to and from Wolfe during that period will be found in the 2002 edition of *Quebec 1759: The Siege and the Battle*, 118-127.

off [sic]."¹⁹

The authors of "Perfect Tide" believe that Wolfe, "presumably informed by officers of the Royal navy of their direct observations of the tidal patterns in the river, therefore had excellent reasons for waiting until the night of September 12-13 to launch his operation."²⁰ As we have seen, the evidence shows that, after the cancellation of the proposed attack *upriver* on 9 September, James Wolfe was forced, both by inclement weather and the need to carry out proper reconnaissance of a location *downriver*, to delay his next operation. Orders were issued for the assault on the Anse au Foulon on 11 September but, given the need to assemble the troops and boats, the operation was timed for the following night. It should be noted that the orders for the assault *upriver* in the vicinity of Pointe aux Trembles were also issued twenty-four hours in advance of the operation so a similar delay for the issue of the orders for the attack on the Anse au Foulon is not unreasonable. Finally, there is the consideration that the operation planned for 9 September was a smaller affair than that planned for the night of 12/13 September. Six battalions of line infantry and the light infantry were detailed for the *upriver* operation; the *downriver* attack on the Anse au Foulon involved ten battalions of line infantry (counting the Louisbourg Grenadiers as a battalion) and the light infantry. This being the case, it took more time to assemble the troops and their amphibious lift capacity and this imposed additional delay. The choice of 12 September therefore appears to have been entirely fortuitous and based on necessity, not on any specialized knowledge of the nautical characteristics of the Quebec basin and the St Lawrence. As for Wolfe being advised about the Foulon landing by naval officers, the record would seem to indicate that the Royal Navy had serious reservations about the operation.

There is no doubt that the Royal Navy, from their experience over the summer, had gained knowledge of the waters around Quebec. From the staff officer's account, however, it would seem that the intended assault on the Anse au Foulon was not popular with the naval officer responsible for actually carrying it out, Commander James Chads, RN, the "regulating Captain of the boats."²¹ In the words of the anonymous staff officer, Chads offered "many frivolous objections" on the day it was to take place. These remarks have to be placed in context as the anonymous staff officer was an intense partisan of Wolfe and no friend of sailors. In fact the concluding words of his account of the 1759 siege are: "How much is the General to be pity'd whose operations depend on Naval succour."²² Wolfe had no real cause to be annoyed with the Royal Navy which had rendered him outstanding support throughout the course of the Quebec operations but it would seem that, by the end

" Wolfe to Monckton, 12 September 1759, contained in Stacey, *Quebec 1759: The Siege and the Battle*, (Toronto, 2002), 126.

¹⁹ Olson, Liddle, *et ai*, "Perfect Tide, Ideal Moon," 961.

²¹ Stacey was unable to identify this officer, whose name is variously given in period documentation as Chads or Shads. The new edition of *The Commissioned Sea Officers of the Royal Navy, 1660-1815*, edited by David Syrett and R.L. DiNardo does list a James Chads, commissioned as a lieutenant 17 May 1746, promoted commander 18 October 1758, and to post rank 2 April 1766. He is almost certainly the officer referred to in contemporary accounts. Confusion of spelling is not surprising, and it was (and remains) quite common to refer to an officer in a command appointment as "captain" regardless of substantive rank.

²² National Archives of Canada, Micro Reel A-62, Memoir of Siege of Quebec.

of the long summer of 1759, James Wolfe was annoyed with almost everyone with whom he had contact. Chads's objections were reasonable as was his concern about his responsibility.

The anonymous staff officer also alludes to the fact that Wolfe had intelligence that the French were expecting a boat convoy of provisions from Batiscan upriver during the night of 12/13 September 1759. He does not specify how Wolfe came by this information but it was almost certainly learned from a deserter as there was a steady traffic of deserters in both directions throughout the siege. This intelligence, however, had no effect on the choice of the night of 12 September for the launching of the *downriver* operation, but it was an additional factor that worked in favour its success. More to the point, this intelligence, rather than any knowledge on the part of Wolfe or any of his staff about the state of the lumination on the river during the night of 12/13, as the authors of "Perfect Moon, Ideal Tide" imply, is the reason why the lead boats were able to get close to the Anse au Foulon before being challenged.

This statement is supported by a second document reproduced by Stacey in his 1966 article: the *mémoire* of Capitaine Louis Dupont de Chambon de Vergor of the *Compagnies franches de la marine*, who commanded the picket at the Anse au Foulon that famous night. Using internal evidence, Stacey was able to date this document, enclosed in a petition for a pension submitted by Vergor to the Duc de Choiseul, Secretary of State for Marine and Colonies, as being written in 1761-1762, or two to three years after the events it describes.²³ Vergor had this to say about the landing at the Anse au Foulon in the early hours of 13 September 1759:

En 1759 pendant le siège de Quebec, Le 2. Septembre, il eut ordre du Général d'aller relever le S'. de S'. Martin au Poste de L'ance du foulon, Il y fut avec 70 hommes. Le 12. il reeçut ordre de Laisser passer un convoy de Batteaux qui dévoient descendre la nuit du 12 au 13, pour porter des vivres dans Quebec; il donna ses ordres en consequence, et fit avertir les sentinelles de laisser passer les Batteaux en question, après cependant les avoir Reconnus. 3 heures avant le jour, les sentinelles le firent avertir qu'il paroissoit des batteaux, il s'y transporta sur Le champ lui même, fit demander d'ou étoient les batteaux, de quel Regiment ils étoient, et où ils alloient à quoi ils Répond *Went, france, Marine et qu'ils alloient à Québec porter des vivres.* Continuant alors d'observer ces batteaux, qui avoient déjà dépassé son poste, il s'aperçut qu'ils remontoient et cherchoient à entrer dans Lance, il jugea alors que c'étoient des ennemis, et ne balança pas un Instant à faire ses dispositions et faire feû sur eux, en même tems, il envoya

²³ A copy of this *mémoire* will be found in the National Archives of Canada, Manuscript Group 1, Archives des Colonies, séries E, E 143 (Micro reel F-614). Stacey made no mention of the Vergor *mémoire* in the 1959 edition of his book, which was consulted by the authors of "Perfect Tide, Ideal Moon," but did cite it in the text of the slightly revised 1966 edition of his book, but without providing a footnote as to its source. This oversight, or carelessness, on Stacey's part has been rectified in the 2002 edition of *Quebec 1759*.

un homme de son détachement au camp, pour avertir que son poste étoit attaqué, et que l'ennemy vouloit tenter d'y descendre; il Etoit alors deux heures après minuit; Cependant il faisoit ses derniers efforts, tant pour empêcher le débarquement, qu'a fin de le retarder, et de donner au secours qu'il attendoit le tems d'arriver, et retint ainsi L'ennemi jusques au grand jour, où se trouvant tourné de toutes parts, par différents piquets que l'ennemy avoit fait descendre à S'. Michel et à Samos, Il fut enfin accablé. La plus grande partie de son monde, tué où blessé, et ce ne fut encore qu'après Reçus Lui même deux blessures. L'une d'une balle qui lui Cassa la jambe, et l'autre à une main, que l'ennemi parvint à forcer son poste et monter au haut de La côte; pris sur Le champ de bataille, il fut embarqué sur une chaloupe, où il se trouva avec 14 officiers anglois, qui avoient été blessés dans cette action; une autre Chaloupe étoit entièrement remplie de leurs soldats blessés.

My translation is as follows:

In 1759 during the siege of Quebec, he [Vergor] was ordered on 2 September by the General to go and relieve the S[ieu]r. de St. Martin at his post at the Foulon Cove where he and 70 men were stationed. On the 12th [of September], he received an order to allow the passage of a convoy of boats that were to go down [the river] during the night of the 12th to 13th, to take provisions to Quebec, and he gave orders accordingly and had the sentries warned to allow the vessels in question to pass through, after, however, having recognized [identified] them. 3 hours before daybreak, the sentries gave notice that the vessels were in sight and they immediately demanded "*where the boats had come from, from which regiment, and where they were going,*" to which they [the boats] replied "*France. Marine*"²⁴ and that "*they were on their way to Quebec with provisions.*" Continuing to observe these boats, which had already passed by their post, the sentries noticed that they were coming round and trying to enter the [Foulon] Cove and assumed that they were the enemy and did not hesitate a moment to make arrangements to fire upon them. At the same time, a man of his detachment was sent to his camp to warn that the post was about to be attacked and that the enemy were attempting to land in the cove. It was

²⁴ That is, the *Compagnies franches de la marine*, the colonial troops who garrisoned New France. The French sentry's hail at the Anse au Foulon and the British reply is a famous episode in Canadian history and has been the subject of much mythology. Stacey discusses it thoroughly in *Quebec 1759*, (136-137 in the 2002 edition), and notes that the British officer who replied to the French sentry was a Captain Fraser of the 78th, who spoke fluent French. Many earlier accounts of this incident state that Fraser's response was "La Reine" or "De la Reine," (from "the *Régiment de la Reine*") but, as Stacey notes, this unit was not at Quebec at that time and that the better response, "Marine," was later corrupted into "De la Reine."

two hours after midnight. They did their utmost to prevent the enemy coming ashore, with the intention of delaying, to give time for help to arrive, and the enemy was thus held back until daylight arrived when, finding themselves turned and outflanked everywhere by different pickets [detachments] that the enemy had sent down to St. Michel and Samos, they were finally overpowered. The greater part of his force was killed or wounded, and this moreover was not until after having himself been twice wounded, once by a ball that which broke his leg, and the other in his hand. The enemy succeeded in forcing his post and climbing up [the heights] above the shore. Taken [prisoner] on the battlefield, he [Vergor] was put aboard a sloop, where he found himself with 14 English officers who had been wounded in this action; another sloop was entirely filled with their wounded soldiers.

Vergor is quite definite that he expected a French boat convoy on the river on the night of 12 September and warned his sentinels of this fact. Despite the supposedly ideal (for the British) lighting conditions suggested by the authors of "Perfect Tide," the French sentries actually spotted their opponents' boats some distance up the river but, thinking they were the expected convoy, did not give the alarm but permitted them to come close enough to be hailed. Satisfied with the response, they let them pass and it was only when the sentries saw the boats attempt to turn into the Anse au Foulon that they realized their mistake and, too late, opened fire.

Let us summarize the lengthy discussion above. Contrary to the suppositions of the authors of "Perfect Tide," the following facts, based on historical evidence, are certain. First, the greater part of Wolfe's army did not go above the city of Quebec until 6 September. Second, neither Wolfe nor the Royal Navy saw any difficulty in mounting an operation *upriver* from St. Nicholas on the south shore of the St Lawrence — far from it, such an operation was actually planned for 8 September but cancelled on 9 September because of weather. Third, the delay in mounting the operation *downriver* against the Anse au Foulon was not caused by a conscious decision on the part of either Wolfe or his naval officers to wait until the night when the tide and moon conditions were most suitable; it was caused by inclement weather, the need to carry out proper reconnaissance and, perhaps most important, the requirement to assemble a larger force (and its amphibious lift capacity). Finally, despite the interesting evidence put forth by the "Perfect Tide" authors about the state of illumination on the river during the night of 12/13 September, the lead British boats were sighted by the French defenders at some distance but were allowed to approach because the French were expecting a friendly boat convoy of provisions from upriver.

The authors of "Perfect Tide" comment that, barring "the discovery of a cache of letters or memoirs in Canada, England, or France, little if any more insight into the actions

of the chief participants is likely than what C P . Stacey provided nearly half a century ago."²⁵ In fact, important evidence that runs directly contrary to their suppositions does exist and was published in 1966 but, unfortunately, they apparently did not consult it. In concluding, it has to be said that, while resourceful attempts using technology to revise our understanding of past events using technology are welcome, it is always better to carry out traditional scholarly research first, before becoming too enthusiastic about new methodologies.

There is, however, one important new document on the siege of Quebec that has recently come to light and that is the journal of Lieutenant Gordon Skelly, RN, who served during the siege and participated in the landing on the Anse au Foulon. It was recently sold at Christie's auction house in New York but, unfortunately, the National Library and Archives of Canada were outbid by a private collector and its current whereabouts is unknown. Shortly before the sale, I was asked to comment on its authenticity and, to do so, was provided with the typescript text of excerpts from the journal. They are reproduced here, exactly as provided, for the interest of historians until this document hopefully becomes available to a broader public:

The signal to proceed to land was two lights in the main top-mast shrouds. . . . We lay all night ready, only waiting for the signal, which the Sutherland was to make. This she did between one and two o'clock, and we all began to move, rowing with the tide of ebb in our favour. As soon as we came near her, the signal was made to proceed to land, the orders being for the four vanguard boats to land, and ours to lead the four, the rest of the boats keeping astern us at as small a distance as possible. . . .

By the time we had run our boats ashore at the foot of the eminence, which seemed inaccessible, and the troops began to draw up, the enemy were no longer in doubt, and now began to fire irregularly from above, into us in the boats, which were scarce perceptible, it being extremely dark, but they killed one or two officers of the army, one midshipman, and several men in a little time. ...

Whilst our people were attempting to mount the eminence, we kept our boats close to the foot of it in case of a retreat, and we for some time heard nothing but a war whoop or cry made use of to make their numbers seem greater, as they fired upon us from the bushes. But presently we were apprised of our troops having found a way up by hearing their voices as they gave a loud Huzza! and fell amongst the enemy, by which means the musketry ceased, and at daybreak we found that they had got possession of the grounds above. ...

The French army under Monsieur Montcalm, which were between the river of St. Charles and the Falls of Montmorency, were now quitting

their camps and crossing the river that was between them and our troops. They then advanced and formed upon the Heights of Abraham, having two pieces of cannon along with them. Gen. Wolfe, upon this movement of the enemy, formed his army also, and sent orders to the cannon which were landed to be brought up immediately to the line. We were ordered to place our seamen to them, who drew them up a small road to the left of the landing place, there being only this one where there was any possibility of getting them up. One piece of cannon we got up time enough to be of service, soon after which the French advanced with apparent resolution and began to attack with spirit.

Our troops marched up and returned this fire, which was so well directed, that the whole line of the enemy soon gave way, ours pushing on with their bayonets, till they took to their heels, and were pursued with great slaughter to the walls of the town.....

How greatly the fortune of this day was favoured by Providence was very evident, from our having so many apparent chances against us, when our noble spirited general resolved to make the attempt.....On the side of the enemy were killed their commander-in-chief, Monsieur Montcalm, he dying the next day of his wounds.....On our side, we lost Gen. Wolfe.....(He) fell the moment he was victorious, just living to hear the defeat was completed and to express his satisfaction and happiness, which in his last moments he showed himself susceptible of. His body was brought down to the landing place, and carried on board the *Lowestoft*..... Besides the wound in his breast, which proved mortal, he received another before that in his wrist, both of which we saw upon putting his body into the boat.²⁶

Nearly two and a half centuries after it took place, the siege of Quebec continues to fascinate historians and it is unlikely that either this fascination or new interpretations of this famous event will ever end.

²⁶ I have been unable to consult the original journal pages from which these excerpts were taken, only a transcription made by a journalist with no training in 18th century historical documents or period naval terminology. The excerpts (or rather, excerpt fragments) are included here for purely historical interest.