

[Page 45 - Pirate Shipyard on the Mira River](#)ISSUE : [Issue 17](#)

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ized for their benefit. The Mira farmers would have been well rewarded for their produce. The forge is very interesting, In the early days of sailing ships, the only items of iron or steel were weapons, swords, guns, etc. Later there was a shortage of hardwood for knees and other essential hull parts and iron was substituted. Cannon needed frequent repairs because the acids produced by the exploding powder and the abrasive blast wore the touch holes until the loss of explosive power drastically reduced the range of the shot fired. They were continually being re-bushed, and this required forged bushings. Mira is within easy reach of the coal seams which outcrop on the neighbouring cliffs. A forge could get all the coal necessary without having to use charcoal. Doubtless their shacks were heated with roaring coal fires too. Then too, the Mira never freezes completely. Occasionally, the entrance plugs with drifting sea ice in an easterly gale, but soon clears as the prevailing westerly wind sweeps it to sea again. The area in summer is frequently fogbound, and what better cover could a seaman who knows the coast require? There are sufficient islands and capes around the area which could have been used as signalling points for night approaches, safety for friends and in all probability destruction for enemies. Wrecking was part of the scene in Cape Breton until the latter part of the last century. So I believe that this was the pattern of life in Cape Breton until 1720, when the British fortified Sydney Harbour and the French built Louisbourg. The Fortress would not have interfered with the pirate base to any great extent. Pirates were of all nationalities, including the French, Deserters from the Fortress would find a ready welcome and a safe haven only 20 miles away, and no doubt much information about expected shipments to Louisbourg was obtained from deserters to everyone's benefit except the proper owners. Could this be why the Fortress cost so much to build? As long as the British and French were fighting each other or someone else, the loss of ship in good weather could be attributed to enemy action. However, when peace finally came in 1815 people would start asking awkward questions, especially if many ships mysteriously disappeared in the same area. Then, too, around 1800, settlements protected by British forces were spreading and commerce in the shape of coal mining came to the area. There were too many outsiders for comfort and, most serious of all, the British had perfected the bomb ketch which could lob an explosive shell 1500 feet in the air and drop it exactly on target up to a mile away. The descent of the shell or bomb was almost vertical and so the canyon was no longer safe from attack. Around 1810 the pirates left. In a recent conversation David Dow added this: Actually, pirates started way back in about 1500 I would, think, when the Portuguese under Henry the Navigator first sailed out this way, got to the cod banks off Newfoundland and started taking fish back. That's before Columbus. And a ship's captain had to sign a sort of bond and put up quite a lot of money before he sailed, guaranteeing that there would be settlement of the land over here. And if they did not return with the men they hired, they either had to prove their deaths or lose their bond. Of course, the boats they came over in were very small • not much



bigger than lobster boats today • across the North Atlantic in springtime, which isn't very pleasant anyway • and a lot of guys deserted. Their heads were on the block literally for desertion. They ran away just in what they stood up in, 7' and perhaps a knife • ran into the woods-- "" and of course they had nothing. So over the years there were dozens of them, collected _ in the woods both here and in Newfoundland • and we know them as the Masterless Men. Their existence is fact. A boat would come ashore--like the Chancewell • and these Masterless Men would come roaring down for the sake of the boat and clothes and things they could get. They would kill the crew. Then once they got a boat it was very easy to become a pirate. (But, David, you don't see Cape Breton as a place for buried treasure.) That's right. It may have been buried earlier, but the pirates faded out; they weren't suddenly chopped out as they were elsewhere • so there was no reason for them to bury their treasure and leave it there, provided they survived. I think they took it with them. 'T'v 'R.A KjeveKr