



Dan Blankenship, top left, discusses Oak Island plans with a cohort. In the middle are two clues from the past, a wooden scoop and a notched log with chiseled Roman numerals. On the right are some of Blankenship's crew at work looking for new clues or, possibly, the treasure itself.

say that gold to the value of two million pounds was buried ten feet below. The diggers probed with a crowbar and at ninety-eight feet they hit something solid. They were exultant but tired. They went to bed.

The next morning they went back to the shaft and found it almost full of water. They tried bailing to no avail. The water remained, sixty feet deep.

The next spring Lynds hired miners and they sank a 110-foot shaft beside the first one. Then they started to dig over, to get under the treasure and come up from below. The wall broke and the new shaft flooded, miners scrambling to keep ahead of the rush. Lynds gave up and Daniel McInnes, the original discover, died.

There was a long pause. Treasure hunters get discouraged but they never quit.

In 1849 Tony Vaughan, a man well into his sixties now, tried again. This time he had the backing of a wealthy man named Vaughan Smith, possibly a relative, possibly not. There were a lot of Vaughans and a lot of Smiths around Nova Scotia. A syndicate was formed, the latest equipment purchased, including a horse-driven auger, and optimism was reborn.

The hole was still full of water, but the auger could push right through. Its purpose was to bring up samples of what lay below, which it did with almost mathematical precision. Below the ninety-foot plank flooring was an open space, then four inches of oak, then twenty-two inches of metal, eight more of oak, another twenty-two of metal, four of oak and six of spruce. After that, clay. The metal included gold, specifically three links of a gold chain, and a scrap of parchment. The diggers were jubilant.

In 1850 they sank another shaft, 110 feet deep, by the original two. Once more they tried to dig over to the treasure. Once more the water rushed in. This time they noticed something that had been missed before. The water in the shaft rose and fell with the tides and it was salty. Tony Vaughan remembered that a half century before he had noticed after the first hole was flooded that water bubbled up in Smith's Cove as the tides went out. Smith's Cove was 520 feet from the diggings. The men went there and dug. They

found a man-made rock floor under the sand, 142 feet long, covered with coconut fiber and drained by five tunnels. They found neatly crafted tools, a wooden scoop and notched logs with chiseled Roman numerals.

The men who had buried the treasure had protected it with extraordinary ingenuity. The drains were the mouths of a tunnel. The tunnel ran first on a slight slope, then on a precipitous one, 520 feet to the wall of the treasure chamber. When the chamber and the chambers above it were full of clay the water had been held back. When the pressure was removed the water had crumbled the wall and flooded the shaft.

The tunnel was dynamited off. New shafts were sunk. They flooded too. There was, it became apparent, more than one tunnel.

Decades went by with many men trying to get the treasure out of the ground and none succeeding. The latest diggers, a consortium of Canadian and American businessmen, joined as Triton Alliance Ltd., have been at it since 1966. They have at their command the technology of the late twentieth century and have spent \$500,000. The shafts are still flooded, but no matter—men can now dive deep under water and work.

Triton has a new shaft, 185 feet from the original "Money Pit." It is not a true shaft but a hole eighteen inches in diameter, large enough for a camera. At the bottom the driller found a vault, apparently connected to the original shaft by a lateral tunnel. A TV camera was lowered into the vault in 1971 and it disclosed shapes which were interpreted to be human remains, three chests, bits of wood and a pickaxe. The *Montreal Star* reported that later still photos showed clearly two skeletons and three chests, one with an inscription.

Still it may be that at long last the hands of man are about to grasp the buried treasure. If they do they may well also solve the basic mystery—who buried it.

The theories are many—it has been suggested that the government of Spain had the formidable underground complex dug and that it contains the legendary Inca treasure which disappeared from the city of Tumburez in the sixteenth century. There is something to be said for that. It is im-