

## Feature Article

### Destination's development

Daisuke Takahashi (Explorer)

Modern tourists seek destinations in the wild. The Amazon, The Antarctic, the remote part of Sahara desert etc. Most of the sites were discovered by explorers. For example, Machu Picchu in Peru was discovered by Hiram Bingham, the American explorer in 1908. The mysterious lost city of Inca and the historic area has been conserved and developed as a tourist place and now became the most popular tourist site of the UNESCO's world heritage.

As a professional explorer, I am always concerned about this background. An explorer's job is not only discovering new parts of the world but also finding new destinations for tourists. It helps to conserve the site and save for future generations. Tourism can take a role in the sustainable administration of natural and cultural heritage.

In 2005, I discovered the campsite of Alexander Selkirk, the model for Robinson Crusoe in Chile with a National Geographic research team. It is located on the remote Pacific island called Isla Robinson Crusoe. The island is also known for various endemic plants. Together with the history of the real Robinson Crusoe, the island has great charm and potential for global tourism. It provides an educational opportunity to learn

about human's survival in the unique wild life.

Unfortunately, my conservation plan was not put into practice because an earthquake and tsunami damaged the island in 2010.

In 2019, it will be the 300th anniversary year since Defoe wrote the timeless novel "Robinson Crusoe" in 1719. It would be a great opportunity if the castaway site could be managed as a tourist place. It will be a charming destination combining nature and literature.

Here, I will extract and show the document of when the real Robinson Crusoe's site was discovered in 2005. It was published in a winter 2005/2006 issue of "Explorers Journal". I hope this can help to restart tourist development in Isla Robinson Crusoe in Chile.

"Finally I had found him! When our expedition team unearthed navigational dividers on a remote Pacific island, I stood on the site of Robinson Crusoe's dwelling and inwardly shouted for joy. It was thirteen years since I first dreamed about finding Crusoe's home and at last, on 6th February, 2005, I had succeeded

But the beginning wasn't promising. At first, I felt defeated when I saw the many fragments of bricks and roof tiles which were unearthed at the ruin. It seemed to me that these artifacts were nothing to do with a castaway's life. In January 2005, I had landed on Robinson Crusoe Island in the Juan Fernandez archipelago, Chile, in the South Pacific, 416 miles off the coast of the South American continent, and started the excavation project in search of the home of the real Robinson Crusoe.

Surprisingly enough, people do not know much about the Scottish privateer, Alexander Selkirk (1676-1721) who is the model for Daniel Defoe's classic novel of Robinson Crusoe, although Robinson is a hero for all times and his story is still widely read by many people all over the world. As an explorer, my passion for more than a decade was to find the site where the real Robinson Crusoe lived on the island. And luckily in 2001, in the mountains, I came across a rectangular stone building of 5 m by 7 m covered by blackberry bushes. From its



Figure 1: Robinson Crusoe



Figure 2: Alexander Selkirk



Figure 3: Stone building (ruin)

raised hand on his brow scanning the horizon. This is Selkirk as a castaway, seeking a rescue ship from his lookout in the mountains. Although he was a son of a tanner, in his childhood he yearned for the sea. At the age of twenty five, after a violent incident against his family, he was summoned to appear before his kirk session but left Largo. All he wanted was to go to sea. His rough personality seemed ideal for a career as a buccaneer.

At sea, however, Selkirk gradually stood out as a navigational master. In 1703 he joined an expedition to South America mounted by Captain William Dampier, but the voyage proved difficult, few prizes were captured and the crew started to quarrel with each other. Selkirk fell out with Captain Stradling and when they reached a tiny deserted island off the coast of Chile, he declared that he wanted to leave the ship. However, when the *Cinque Ports* was about to depart Selkirk changed his mind and begged to get on board again. Captain Stradling rejected his request on the spot and Selkirk was finally left on the island alone. This is the beginning of the story of the real Robinson Crusoe!

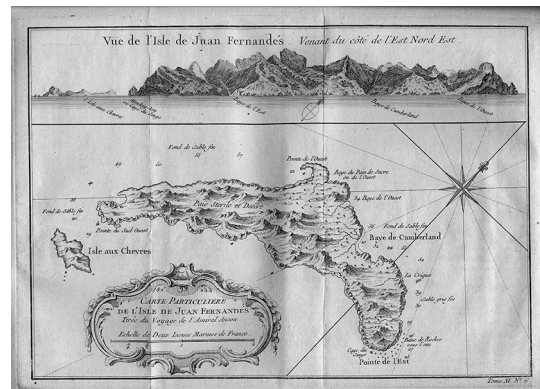


Figure 4: Juan Fernández Islands

size and location, I thought that it must be something to do with Selkirk. I contacted Dr. David Caldwell of the National Museum of Scotland and asked for his impressions of the building. He had also studied Selkirk and mounted an exhibition about him. David considered that stone could be the key material for locating Selkirk's dwelling because, traditionally, Scottish people built with stone. Even on a deserted island remote from his birthplace, it is likely he would have made his dwelling of stone. When I traveled in Scotland with Caldwell later, I would see that most houses were made of stone not only in recent times but through the centuries back to the Roman era. It was then I decided to start the scientific expedition to dig at the site and see whether it belonged to Selkirk or not. But when we started the archaeological research, it appeared that my hypothesis might not be correct because many of the broken ceramics which littered the site were obviously nothing to do with one man's castaway life.

Alexander Selkirk was born in the tranquil sea village of Largo, Fife, Scotland in 1676. Nowadays, visitors to Largo see there a bronze statute of the real Robinson Crusoe with his

He actually spent from October 1704 to January 1709, four years and four months, all by himself on the island. At the end of this period Captain Woodes Rogers, another buccaneer from England, came to the island for fresh water and found Selkirk. Captain Rogers recalled and described Selkirk as "a Man cloth'd in Goat-skins, who look'd wilder than the first Owners of them." This account, *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* by Rogers in 1712 won popularity in the United Kingdom and Defoe got the inspiration for writing his masterpiece *Robinson Crusoe* in 1719.

Now this literary background is widely recognized by scholars, but the real life and adventures of Robinson Crusoe are not more widely known. When I read about them in *The History of World Exploration*, edited by The Royal Geographical Society, 1992, I was surprised and seized with great curiosity. So I started to look for books and documents in libraries to find out more about Selkirk, but it was in vain. Finally I concluded that there was no record of the exact location of the home of the real Robinson Crusoe. Then I had an idea, that if I could discover it, I would learn where the reality lay between fiction and non-fic-



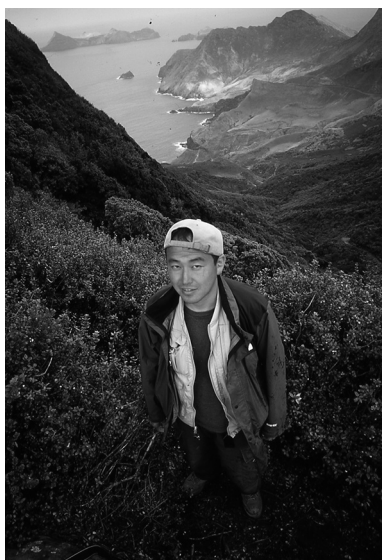


Figure 5: Standing on the lookout of Selkirk

tion. In Rogers' account, there are some sentences mentioning Selkirk's hut. "He built two Huts with Pimento Trees, cover'd them with long grass, and lin'd them with the Skins of Goats." Selkirk is also said to have lived on the mountain from where he could see the other, south, side of the island.

In 1994, I started my expedition to find out the real Crusoe's home and on my third visit in 2001, I found the stone building with the help of local folk. The location was a perfect fit for Rogers' description of Selkirk's hut. Then, after a year's preparation, getting excavation permission from the Chilean Government, support from the Expedition Council of The National Geographic Society, and carrying the Explorers' Club's flag, No. 60, I started the scientific expedition with archaeologists and a soil scientist from Scotland and Chile. It was 2005 - the 300th anniversary of Selkirk's abandonment on the island.

On January 26, when we started digging inside the stone building, it seemed clear that it did not belong to Selkirk because the roof tiles and bricks we unearthed are similar to the ceramics which are found round the Fort of Santa Barbara. The fort was established in San Juan Bautista, the only town on Robinson Crusoe Island, founded by Spanish immigrants in 1750. In Santiago, the capital of Chile, I had found an old Spanish map made in 1795 and it indicates that the stone building was a Spanish gunpowder magazine. When our excavation team made the connection between the stone building and the Spanish occupation of the island I was very disappointed. Our expedition base was in the town and everyday we climbed wearily up the steep slope to the site. However, soon I found that David Caldwell was more optimistic, because he assumed that there was still a chance of finding evidence of earlier human activity under the building. He said, "the building we see is of late 18th century date, but Selkirk may well have been here before that." So I put all my hopes in what might be discovered underneath the building.

The 3rd of February was Day 29 of our expedition. We had

finally reached the bottom of the stone building, 220cm down from the surface. At 11:00, Ivan Caceres, a Chilean archaeologist called me. He pointed to the ground and said, "Look, it is a fireplace!" The color of the ground was red and black, clearly different from the rest of the yellowish brown soil. This was the second fireplace to be excavated at the site. And soon after that, David called me. He was sieving the excavated soil to find any artifacts. I ran over and found him scrutinizing a tiny object. "This is bronze!" said David, and handed it to me. There was a very small piece of copper alloy 16mm long by 3 mm across with a rectangular cross section, narrowing to a point. I put it in a storage bag. And soon after that, Ivan came up with another surprise. "Here are a few postholes!"



Figure 6: Fire place and the postholes were discovered

It was a great day. We had found a ruin of something, perhaps a primitive hut or camp with fireplaces and postholes. As half of the fireplace was under the stone threshold of the later building, we were sure that it is older than the building. We can, therefore, say that the fire place was used before 1750. Clearly it was a good sign for me because before the Spanish established an immigration post here, this island had no permanent occupation. According to the historical documents, only occasional visitors, like pirates and buccaneers, landed on the island. The first person was a Spanish mariner by the name of Juan Fernandez. He discovered the islands in 1574 and this archipelago was named after him. And in 1681, a Mosquito Indian called Will had to spend three years by himself when an earlier expedition by Dampier left him behind. Now some literary scholars think that Will may be a prototype of Friday in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Anyway, our excavation results now suggested that we were uncovering the unknown castaway history of the island.

Expectations and disappointment, anything can happen in an excavation. Nobody knows what will be found under the ground until archaeologists dig. It was a thrilling process for me, day by day. But in the end we did not find anything more around the fire place except ashes, charcoal and fragments of

burnt animal bones. However, the real discovery was provided through the previous experience of one of our professional archaeologists.

On February 6th, when David came to the site after Sunday service in the church, he was very excited and desperate to speak to me. "Yes, now I know. But why didn't I notice it sooner...! The copper alloy is part of a pair of navigational dividers!" Ever since we'd found the tiny object in the sieve, he had been thinking about what it might be. And finally he remembered that he had examined the dividers found on HMS Dartmouth, sunk off the coast of Scotland in 1690, and recovered from the sea in the 1970s. The shape, the size and the material were the same as the HMS Dartmouth's dividers. Later on, we sought the opinion of Dr. Alison Morrison-Low, an expert on early Scottish scientific instruments, and she agreed with our identification of our find as part of a pair of dividers of the 17-18th century.

We'd found two fireplaces, postholes and navigational dividers, all apparently belonging together and of earlier date than the middle of the 18th century. What does this say? And who owned them? Again I carefully looked up the historical documents and archives. And I found that no early visitors and castaways to the island would have been likely to have owned navigational instruments, such as dividers, except for Alexander Selkirk himself. Rogers wrote that Selkirk was a navigational master and had equipment such as "his Clothes and Bedding with a Firelock, Some Powder, Bullets, and Tobacco, a Hatchet, a Knife, a Kettle, a Bible, some practical pieces, and his Mathematical Instruments and Books." According to Mr. Richard Dunn, a specialist on navigational equipment at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, UK, navigational dividers would definitely have been included in the personal equipment of a navigational master. Selkirk's 'Mathematical Instruments' would certainly have included dividers.

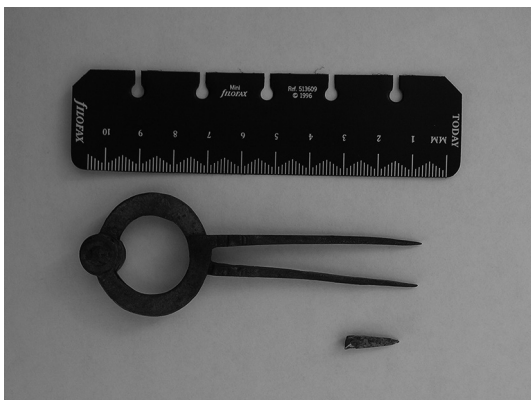


Figure 7: Navigational dividers and copper alloy

So finally, we had discovered the home of Robinson Crusoe! This simple campsite let us know that Alexander Selkirk lived at one with nature. The site is surrounded by the mountains and a river. Birds sing among the twigs and a gentle sea breeze blows. From here we can see the same blue ocean as Selkirk



Figure 8: Home of Robinson Crusoe

did.

It has been thirteen years since I first dreamed of finding Alexander Selkirk's dwelling. Standing on the site, my legs trembled as I knew that I was standing on the same spot as Robinson Crusoe stood once upon a time!"

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