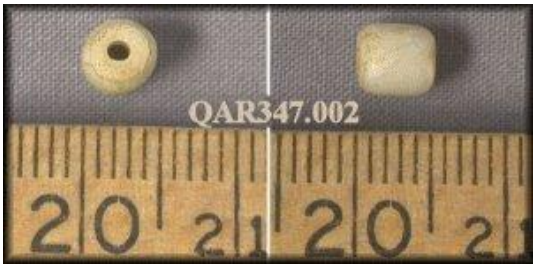
Queen Anne's Revenge

Laboratory Excavation Report, January 2003

UAB Preservation Laboratory, Fort Fisher
Nathan Henry, UAB Conservator
Wendy Welsh, *QAR* Conservator Technician
Chris Southerly, *QAR* Digital Information Manager
Michael Tutwiler, *QAR* Conservator Technician

One-thousand three-hundred and thirty-two artifacts were processed during the month of January. 1281 of these were lead shot of various diameters. Wrought and cast iron artifacts made up the majority of the remaining processed artifacts, 75% of which were completely corroded within the concretion and required casting with epoxy resin.

Several fabric fragments (canvas weight) were recovered from concretions. The largest of these (QAR 387.017, 387.018) appeared to be fragments from the edge of a tarpaulin or sail. A pocket was formed along the perimeter of the canvas, encasing a relatively large diameter rope. The rope was secured within the pocket with lacing using marling hitches.



One glass bead was recovered from concretion QAR 347, the first recovered from the *Queen Anne's Revenge* shipwreck site. This small, unadorned bead is significant because of its possible association with the African slave trade. Glass beads of European manufacture were typically used as trade items by slavers and would be carried in bulk quantities aboard a ship employed in this trade. For example, numerous beads were recovered from the wreck of the Henrietta Marie, a slave ship that ran aground and sank in the Florida Keys in 1700. Historical records indicate that the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, formerly *La Concorde*, was engaged in the African slave trade and, in fact, was carrying human cargo when Blackbeard captured her. Admittedly, an isolated bead is no absolute indicator of a former slave ship: there could be any number of explanations for its presence. It is, however, an intriguing artifact that at least suggests that trade beads were once carried aboard the vessel as cargo.

Along with the bead, numerous lead shot and gold dust were recovered from concretion QAR 347. As has been previously reported, concretions containing lead shot must be reduced in acid to recover the lead shot. This treatment dissolves the calcium carbonate from the concretion leaving only the artifacts and sandy sediment. The sand is collected and processed using a gold pan to recover any gold dust that may have become incorporated into the concretion matrix during its formation on the ocean bottom. Initial sampling has indicated that gold dust occurs at a relatively high rate in the lead-shot concretions.

Concretion QAR 347 was recovered from a trench excavated at the southern portion of the QAR site [See 1998 Field Summary]. Numerous lead shot and a variety of artifacts were collected within this trench along with a small quantity of loose gold dust. It was hypothesized that since loose gold and lead shot were recovered in close

proximity within the excavation, gold would also be found within the lead shot concretions (nearly all of which were recovered from the south trench). Intuitively, this makes sense because both lead and gold are very dense metals, both tend to accumulate in low-lying pockets on the sea floor, and both are less susceptible to current generated sediment transport than the surrounding sand particles. Initial indications support expectations that gold and lead objects have indeed accumulated in a common area and strata of the shipwreck site. Given the results of the initial sampling of the shot concretion sediment, particular care will be given to collecting this sediment and the search for gold will continue.