

Preliminary Field Summary

October 27, 1997

Mark Wilde-Ramsing, Director

1. Excellent weather prevailed. During the first three and a half weeks, no field days were lost due to inclement weather. Bottom visibility never dropped below 2 feet and at times was greater than 10 feet. This greatly facilitated mapping the exposed remains and allowed all phases of the project to be photo-documented (primarily video).
2. A genuine sense of cooperation between all those involved was maintained throughout the project. Principal participants included members of NC Underwater Archaeology Branch, NC Maritime Museum, Intersal/MRI, and UNC-Wilmington. Assistance was also provided by:

- Cape Fear Community College, Division of Marine Technology
- East Carolina University, Program in Maritime History and Underwater Archaeology
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- Institute of Marine Sciences
- Institute for International Maritime Research
- North Carolina Marine Fisheries
- Duke University, Marine Lab

3. Nearly all of the goals of the project were accomplished. With regard to understanding the extent of the shipwreck site and its surrounding environment, the following were recorded:

- The currents generally are not strong enough to hamper work at the site.
- Workable bottom visibility can be expected most of the time with periods of good to excellent visibility at light and when seas have been calm.
- Outside of the exposed portions materials appear to be spread over an area in a southeasterly direction. The heaviest concentrations extend approximately 25 feet from the south and east margins of the mound.
- The stratigraphy at the site consists of 6 to 18 inches of coarse sand (highly mobile) over a 6 to 12 inch layer of shell, shell hash and cultural materials; below this is medium fine gray sands devoid of artifacts.
- Excavations were hampered by inflowing sands as deeper levels were reached.
- The sea state at the site was most affected by southerly winds; Shackleford Banks provides protection from northerly winds even as they approach 20 knots.



4. A better understanding of the types and amounts of materials contained at the site were also gained. Beside the cannons and anchors, there are large amounts of ballast rock and

iron concretions. Other materials were found in minor amounts and included: glass bottle shards, ceramic shards, wood pieces, and non-ferrous metal objects. Conservation of these type materials will be lengthy and costly. The excellent preservation of the wood stock on the north anchor shows organic materials may be abundant in the lower levels. There is evidence, such as concretions with relatively recent breaks and the existence of plastic materials in the artifact bearing level, that major storm events and perhaps net trawling have disturbed the site since the initial wreck event. The extent of this disturbance is currently unknown.

5. Most importantly, information has been gathered to address the most pressing question, "Is this *Queen Anne's Revenge*?" While some field evidence and laboratory analysis is still pending, all indications are that this is Blackbeard's flagship. Here are the preliminary findings relevant to the ship's identity:



- 6.
- **Cannons** - The number of cannons exceed the number carried on any candidate other than the *QAR* and all but one appear to be six pounders or larger. Six pounders would have been the maximum size carried on the sloop *Adventure*; the *El Salvador* and other merchant vessels would have been outfitted with smaller guns. In addition, the cannons appear to be of varying sizes, an assemblage that supports a pirate vessel armed with pillaged armament rather than a naval vessel carrying standard-size guns. When cleaning occurs on the recovered cannons, markings are likely to be observed, which will indicate the period and place of manufacture.
 - **Anchors**- The three anchors located on the site strongly suggest the wreck site identity at the *QAR*. They are all rated for a vessel of at least 364 tons. These would have been entirely too big for the much smaller sloops (*Adventure* was 80 tons). The north anchor with its preserved wooden stock is identical to anchors that were in use during the first half of the 18th century.
 - **Ship's fittings** - The size of the deadeyes, calculated from the iron strops found on the site, vary from 8 ½" to 11 ½ ". This size matches well with that carried on the *Blandford*, a 20-gun, English-built ship of the same period at *QAR*.
 - **Small artifacts** - Collectively, the artifacts support a wrecking date that coincides with that of the *QAR*. In addition, several elements of the assemblage readily compare with materials recovered from the wreck of *Whydah*, a pirate vessel lost off New England in 1717.
 - **Glass bottles** - Several fragments from case gin bottles (17th & 18th century) and on onion bottle (tentative date of manufacture is 1714)
 - **Ceramics** - Numerous shards from large lead glazed storage container(s) and salt-glazed stoneware. One of the latter appears to be part of the Bellarmine jug (1550 - 1669).
 - **Iron hoops** - The wreck site is littered with large iron hoops of the size that would have fit hogheads or butts. During the early eighteenth century iron hoops were a

very expensive and desired commodity, since storage of foods and other materials was so dependent on wooden containers. Many of the hoops appear to be stacked inside each other as if stored. Large casks suggested by the hoops found on the wreck site often held liquids such as water and perhaps rum.