

Fall 1998 Assessment Plan

The archaeological field work planned for 1998 at shipwreck site 31CR314, believed to be the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, Blackbeard the pirate's flagship, will be a continuation of efforts begun in 1997. These field studies will provide critical information on the vessel type, period of use, country of origin, and function for this shipwreck. Investigators will also gain insight into the site's layout, makeup, and surrounding environment. The North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch (UAB) staff will use the results of the 1997 and 1998 field work to develop a comprehensive site operations and management plan for 31CR314 to be completed by July 1999. This plan will address overall site development, protection and preservation. It will include the following:

- Environmental and archaeological data recovery
- Artifact preservation, curation and storage
- Museum display
- Publicity and public education
- Report generation

Although periodic site visits are likely to occur throughout the year, the primary field investigations will take place during five weeks from September 14th through October 16th. Principal participants will remain the same as last year, which include staff and volunteer divers with UAB and members from Maritime Research Institute (MRI). The University of North Carolina at Wilmington (UNCW) will supply a research vessel and operator, the North Carolina Maritime Museum (NCMM) will provide vital support in the way of building storage, vessel dockage and land based personnel, and the Institute of Marine Sciences of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (IMS) will be overseeing environmental studies conducted at the site. The 1998 field crew will be a small, experienced group in order to concentrate on the recovery of vital field data. Cameramen from UNC-TV will also be on site to document archaeological activities, both topside and underwater, throughout the field session.



Objectives

Last year's field activities were very successful. Given the clarity of the water a considerable amount of time was expended on mapping the site's exposed portion, or main mound, which consisted of anchors, cannons, ballast and miscellaneous remains. Exploratory probing and test excavations provided researchers with a sense of the amount of the shipwreck that is buried. Sediment covering cultural materials is shallow, probably not exceeding three feet, and consists of highly mobile sand. In relation to the exposed mound, it appears that the main portion of the ballast pile and hopefully, intact portions of the ship are on the east side. Those remains extend out to the east approximately 50 feet, 100 feet to the north and 100 feet to the south. Very little

seems to exist buried on the west side of the mound. Therefore, the major focus of the 1998 field work will be to explore the buried remains and get a better understanding of the site layout and condition.



Testing equipment also remains an important goal of the project in preparation for future full-scale archaeological excavations. This year a larger dredge and/or airlift system (6") will be employed to remove the sandy overburden from portions of the wreckage. A smaller 3" dredge will be used to excavate the layer containing artifacts. The use of digital video imaging will be tested to determine its applicability in documenting field work. It is hoped that controlled video will be able to greatly assist mapping exposed remains, especially in this sandy environment where

artifacts cover over almost as quickly as they are uncovered.

Specific objectives are as follows:

1. The installation of a permanent reference system based on findings from last year's efforts. A north/south baseline, consisting of 1/4" chain will be anchored in place on the east side of the main mound.
2. Test units or trenches will be excavated on the east side of the mound where the ballast pile and hull remains are thought to rest. These units will remove the highly mobile sand layer from the top of cultural remains to determine their extent and nature.
3. Additional excavation units will be employed to further explore diagnostic remains, hull structure and areas with vertical stratigraphy.
4. As the opportunity presents, samples of wood from structural timbers will be gathered, as well as ballast rocks for identification of type and origin. Organic materials will be systematically collected for radiocarbon dating. Although general artifact retrieval will be kept to a minimum, diagnostic pieces will be brought up for analysis and identification.
5. Sediments will be collected for geological analysis and a biological survey will be conducted on the artificial reef created by the exposed mound.
6. Remote sensing and target assessment will continue in the vicinity of 31CR314 in an attempt to locate a second shipwreck site that may represent the remains of Blackbeard's other vessel, which was "lost within a gun shot" of *Queen Anne's Revenge*.