

Fall 2003 Daily Report

Thursday and Friday, September 11th and 12th

The Underwater Archaeology Branch staff arrived on Thursday and quickly went to work preparing the shipwreck site for the photomosaic project using R/V *Snap Dragon* as the work platform (Captain Gillman-Bryan). Although the wind was blowing nearly 20 knots out of the north they were able to work under the protection of Shackelford Banks, which reduces "fetch" or the distance that waves can build up over open ocean. The team located the site and put in several mooring buoys before coming in for the day.

On Friday, *Snap Dragon's* crew was joined by NC Marine Fisheries R/V *Shellpoint* (Captain Tom Piner and Mate Rocky Best), which during the project will provide a stable work platform for setting up and deploying the grid frame and associated equipment. Once positioned on the seabed over the shipwreck, the grid will serve as a guide for the photographers. The day was spent stringing guide lines from the moorings to the exposed portions of the site, as well as putting in the main reference baseline and offset lines. These will help divers station the grid frame and also provide lanes that videographers will use as they make their passes over the site.



The preparation has become extremely important since there will be little room for experimentation due to the impending Hurricane Isabel. While postponement was considered, the impending storm made *QAR* site managers even more interested in obtaining a good overall image of the shipwreck prior to the storm's arrival. If the hurricane seriously impacts the area, images taken afterward can provide important comparative evidence to detail how catastrophic storm events can and will affect the shipwreck's artifacts. With little sand cover, *QAR* is currently very susceptible to damage during hurricanes.. In extreme cases, smaller more fragile artifacts may be lost. Throughout the weekend staff archaeologists planned to anxiously await the arrival of project members Sunday evening while keeping a wary eye on Hurricane Isabel.



Hurricane Isabel as seen on <http://www.weather.com>

Monday September 15



The crew was assembled, the cameras charged up, the photo grid put together and the day absolutely gorgeous. Project crew members were especially happy to have a guest appearance by videographer Rick Allen, [Nautilus Productions](#), who has been an invaluable part of our past work at the site. As R/V *Shellpoint* and R/V *Snap Dragon* made their way through

the early morning fog and moored up on the site, they found the seas flat and still. Water clarity was excellent - the mooring lines could be seen at least fifteen feet as they trailed down through the water column. We had only to wait a few hours for high tide and the photo shoot could begin.



After just a few minutes, however, we began to feel very gentle swells lift the boats every few minutes. The early affects of Hurricane Isabel were beginning to be felt. We still hoped to get our work done before wave intensity made it too difficult to work on the bottom. Unfortunately, we never had a chance. The first divers reported beautiful water until a few feet from the bottom where a cloud of soupy, dirty

water hovered over the shipwreck. And the working conditions were difficult. As swells passed over their heads, divers were pushed one way and then back the other way, as if they were in a washing machine. While the crew hoped that high tide would bring in clearer water on the bottom, conditions only got worse as the swells strengthened and began appearing more frequently.



At 2 pm. conditions became such that safety was a concern and it was time to go, thus failing in our attempt to get a good shot of the *QAR* wreckage before Isabel hit the coast. Given the probability of her having an impact, one important goal was accomplished. That was to disconnect and tow the site warning buoy to safety. US Coast Guardsmen at Fort Macon kindly assisted us by lifting the buoy out and putting on land. The day came to an end with a commitment from all involved to return later this fall

in order to try once again to get an overall picture of *Queen Anne's Revenge* using the photomosaic technique.