

Spring 2000 Recovery Expedition Summary

Archaeological field work planned for spring 2000 at shipwreck site 31CR314, believed to be *Queen Anne's Revenge* - Blackbeard the pirate's flagship - took place during two weeks between May 22nd and June 2nd. Unfortunately during this period, prevailing southwest winds limited actual site work to a total of four working days. In addition, researchers found that the timbers were buried under three feet of newly deposited sand making their task of uncovering them considerably more difficult. Field objectives were limited to the primary goal of recovering the timbers; associated materials were not recorded or brought up. What time was not spent on the water, was concentrated in setting up the conservation facility at the Institute of Marine Sciences and Carteret Community College and organizing data files.

During the project the following tasks were accomplished:

- Researchers disconnected ten frame timbers from the hull planks, wrapped them in plastic and brought them up individually to the surface. Each of the four hull planks were cut with a hand saw near where they disappeared under the exposed mound. They were placed in on an aluminum ladder, strapped down, and lifted by several divers to the surface where each was lifted by hand onto the deck of *Capricorn*. After the hull timbers were brought up three additional think planks, which served as sacrificial hull sheathing, were recovered in the same manner. While the frame timbers showed extensive damage from exposure, the hull timbers and sheathing were in an excellent state of preservation.
- Recording accurate readings for the elevations of exposed artifacts has proved extremely difficult due to the low visibility and strong currents at the site. A new instrument, consisting of a twenty foot rigid bar and pivot assembly was successfully tested and should prove a very useful tool to record artifacts and excavation levels in the future.
- A 25' x 25' area in a warehouse on the Carteret Community College campus was set up as a large artifact conservation laboratory and storage area. Cannons C-2 and C-4 were moved into place, as were several large vats for holding previously recovered. A temporary holding tank, constructed of cinder blocks and large tarps, was prepared for storage of the recovered timbers.
- A data base inventory was completed for the several dozen videotapes recorded over the past three years.
- A film crew successfully tested a video-transmission from the shipwreck site to Duke University Marine Lab. This is in preparation for *QARLive*, a week long program scheduled for Fall 2000 during which school children around the state will be able to communicate directly with research divers working on the shipwreck.





While accomplishments in the field were limited, the most important objective was completed- removal of fragile timbers prior to imminent disturbance should a future hurricane pass over the shipwreck. Predictions are for an active hurricane season in the Atlantic for the coming year. Since researchers are preparing for full-scale recovery beginning next year, time on shore was well spent by setting up the conservation laboratory, testing equipment and developing data management systems. Excavations are planned in the fall to complete the objectives of the spring dive by removing artifacts from a 20' x 30' area where disturbance has been the greatest during catastrophic storms. It will also allow researchers to study what cultural materials are associated with the hull structure to gain a better understanding of what part of the vessel this area represents and what natural processes have affected the site since *Queen Anne's Revenge* sank.