

Spring 2005 Daily Reports



Entry - 04 May 2005 Director's Log Mark Wilde-Ramsing

With great anticipation researchers and technicians working under the auspices of the *Queen Anne's Revenge* Shipwreck Project, North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Branch, rendezvoused Monday May 2nd. This begins recovery operations for the first time since the fall of 2000 when archaeologists completed the emergency recovery of a section of hull timbers and associated artifacts. The expedition is possible due to the development of a professionally staffed conservation laboratory in partnership with East Carolina University. As importantly, an electronic artifact tracking and analytical system for the large volume of artifacts that result from recovery operations is up and running. Finally, over 15,000 artifacts, recovered during assessment and emergency recovery activities at the *QAR* site, have been processed, stabilized, and transferred for display and long-term storage at the North Carolina Maritime Museum.



This year's expedition, however, would not have happened without a major grant from the Golden LEAF Foundation, which provided the funding to help reinvigorate the *Queen Anne's Revenge* Shipwreck Project through field research and artifact recovery. In turn, the public attention will heighten travel and tourism for those seeking to learn more about the classic shipwreck suspected to be Blackbeard's lost flagship and in turn, provide an economic boost for North Carolina and the coast. A second condition of the grant is job training in high-skill fields that include artifact conservation, marine studies, and computer technology, provided through East Carolina University, Cape Fear Community College,

University of North Carolina at Wilmington and Carteret Community College, respectively. The opportunity to continue recovery at the shipwreck affords archaeologists a valuable opportunity to test current understanding of site layout, and past conditions and processes that have turned a large, heavily armed 18th century wooden ship into a scatter of artifacts lying on the seabed. The detective work continues to untangle the mystery of the infamous pirate ship. Why and how did it wreck on the outer shoals of a seldom-used inlet? Why were many useful items, such as anchors, cannons and pewter plates, left aboard to be swallowed by the sea, while many other items are absent, most notably personal affects like buttons, buckles, coins, and firearms? To get at these and many other questions, archaeologists have developed a rigorous plan to sample areas throughout the site using 5 foot by 5-foot excavation units. They expect to find evidence of the galley stove, explore the officers' quarters in the stern, search for more cannons, and nearly quadruple the number of artifacts recovered over the past eight years. Beyond research, recovering a stratified sample from across the shipwreck will insure that an important collection has been removed from harm's way in the unfortunate event of a hurricane hitting the North Carolina coast in the near future.



Success of this expedition is dependent on many. At the top of the list is the Marine Technology Program at Cape Fear Community College, which is furnishing their research vessel *R/V Martech*, captain and mate in return for training opportunities for their students. The US Coast Guard Fort Macon Station, a situation that logistically couldn't be better, is providing docking and staging facilities. As in the past, the North Carolina Maritime Museum, the Institute of

Marine Science, UNC-CH, and Intersal, Inc. who first found the shipwreck site in 1996, continue to make important contributions. Many people, especially our many friends in Carteret County, have quietly and steadily provided their support for the project and without it, the quality of research and efforts to heighten public awareness of this important discovery would not have been possible. Thanks to all for your support. We are happy you can join us as we explore one of the most exciting, internationally recognized shipwrecks discovered to date, which lies in North Carolina waters a short distance off the coast. Watch for expedition updates on the QAR website at www.qaronline.org to follow our progress during the month of May. And if you want to see things first hand, plan a visit to Ft. Macon State Park, because looking out from the ramparts of the fort you can easily see the recovery vessels anchored on the site. From that viewpoint you can let your mind wonder for it is not hard to imagine a large wooden, three-mast, square-rigged ship flying the black flag sailing directly for you as it attempts to make its way past the treacherous inlet shoals into the protected harbor of Beaufort.

Entry - 06 May 2005 Director's Log

Mark Wilde-Ramsing

The crew had a good day Wednesday during which equipment details were worked out both topside with the pump and sluice arrangements and underwater where the first excavation unit E90N130 was laid out (see excavation site plan). All units are designated by their SW corner and have been chosen to adequately sample the shipwreck site and also address specific research questions. For instance the first unit was placed to explore the nature and extent of materials at the north end where a high degree of artifact dispersal from scouring was expected. This is also projected to be the bow area and therefore, the types of artifacts, such as items from the bosun's locker and crew's quarters, should be present. Researchers will also use this unit as one of four placed on the margins of the site to examine the scour-resistant layer that underlies cultural remains. Wednesday evening Robbie and Debbie Girard hosted the crew for a kickoff dinner.



On Thursday an attempt was made to work, however strong northeast winds soon became too intense and diving operations were called after dredging equipment lying on the bottom was secured. Everyone went home due to forecasts of extreme weather over the next few days. Operations will resume on Sunday with a partial crew and are expected to be in full swing by Monday.



Entry - 11 May 2005 Director's Log

Mark Wilde-Ramsing

Bull's eye! Researchers used the results of the 1999 gradiometer survey to place their second excavation unit at E75/N110 (see excavation plan) to explore an area suspected of being an unrecorded cannon (C24). Wednesday morning after excavators had removed several feet of overburden, the call came up that top of a thick, 8 1/2-foot long 6-pounder cannon had been located lying across the middle of the unit. As mapping began and excavations progressed down to the lower layers where many additional artifacts are expected, the buzz on the deck of *R/V Martech* was how C24 will be lifted and taken ashore.



But, alas, we have gotten ahead of ourselves. At the beginning of the week it was slow going. While the foul weather of last first week was gone, the effects were very apparent on Monday and Tuesday. First off the first excavation unit (E90/N130) that was partially excavated was completely filled and required starting over to the mobile sand overburden. The worst problem from the storm, however, was the extreme low visibility caused by all the rain, which flushed a lot of fine sediment out the inlet. At the same time waves and currents stirred the water up like a washing machine. Researchers complained that often they could not see objects 2 inches in front of their masks. Dave Moore joked on Monday that he moved one step above brail archaeology to psychic archaeology! In those conditions little can be done and whatever the basic tasks are they take much longer to perform. It wasn't until Wednesday that water conditions settled down and by the afternoon divers were happily reporting visibility of 10 feet.



Beginning Tuesday afternoon artifacts began coming up from E90/N130 and they consisted of a few sections of barrel hoops, a couple of ballast stone and several concretions that appeared to contain nails and other undetermined objects. Based on their weight concretions from this unit are not likely to contain much, if any, lead shot. One concretion consisted of the remains of several thick wooden timbers with a large bolt running through it. This would likely was part of the vessel's lower hull or bow, where construction was more substantial. A sediment sample of the very bottom of the artifact layer, examined by Dr. James Craig, was found to be devoid of lead shot, gold dust, or other small artifacts. With all artifacts removed from the first unit excavation moved on to the second unit on Wednesday.

Entry - 13 May 2005 Project Archaeologist/Divemaster Chris Southerly

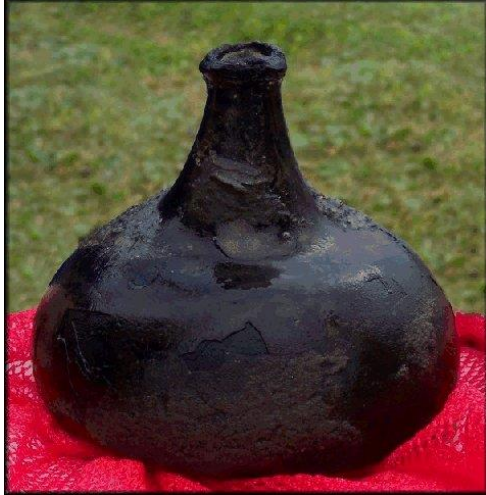
The weather this week continues to be good and work on the site is progressing well. Thursday's work focused on the excavation of Unit 2 (E75/N110). After careful mapping of exposed artifacts to record their precise locations, the various encrusted objects were tagged and recovered. Topside conservators did initial documentation taking measurements and photographs before padding the objects for temporary storage until transport to the conservation lab in Greenville at the end of the week.



One large concretion in Unit 2, too large for a diver to handle, was rigged with a small lift bag, moved under *R/V Martech*, and recovered with the "A" frame and cable winch. The recovery went smoothly and served as an excellent test for the cannon recovery planned for the final week of the project.



As the cleanup of Unit 2 continued with the 3" excavation intake, divers moved the large 6" excavation intake to Unit 3 (E110/N95). In short order, the find of the day showed up just below the sand level in Unit 3. An intact onion bottle, sitting upright between several ballast stones, was exposed. After mapping its location and elevation, and taking digital video of the bottle in situ, it was carefully recovered. The bottle's shape places it in the early 18th century and it makes a total of 3 intact bottles recovered from the site.



Work continued Friday excavating, mapping, tagging and recovering encrusted objects from Unit 3. The final task of the week was the rigging and lifting of cannon C24 from within Unit 2. Weighing in at over 2000 pounds with the concretion and attached encrusted objects, it is a large 6-pounder. Divers placed the cannon in a staging area for the planned recovery in week four.

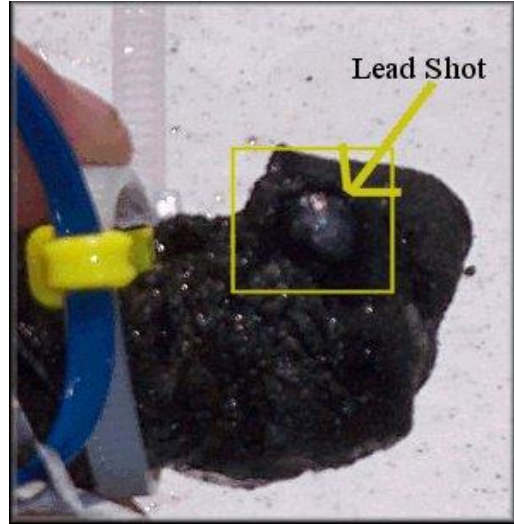
Monday will begin excavation of Unit 4 and the final cleanup of any artifacts from Unit 2 that were beneath cannon C24. Hopefully the weather will cooperate to give us another good week of operations.



Entry - 20 May 2005 Project Archaeologist/Divemaster Chris Southerly

Week 3 began cloudy, with strong swells, and scattered light showers. Conditions improved throughout the day and the week was very productive until the weather changed again and prevented the crew from working on Friday.

Archaeologists completed cleanup and recovery of Unit 3 early Monday, collecting ballast stones and concretions. Excavation on Unit 4 began in the afternoon and in short order exposed part of a previously identified cannon, C15. A 4-pounder, weighing around 800 pounds this cannon is similar in size to the previously recovered C4. The concern was that C15 might be attached to a large buried concretion making it difficult to move. Further excavation in Unit 4 determined that C15 was not concreted to a larger mass and by the end of Tuesday, it was rigged and lifted from the excavation unit in preparation for recovery during the final week of the project.



Wednesday before leaving the dock, the A-frame and winch on *R/V Martech* was load tested to 2500 pounds in anticipation of recovery of cannons C15 and C24 during the final week. On site the final cleanup, elevations, sediment sample, and removal of concretions from Unit 4 was completed while excavation begins on Unit 5.





Thursday a media crew from ABC News joined the expedition to shoot and prepare a story for ABC World News Tonight. Cleanup of Unit 5 was completed and Unit 6 and 7 were excavated and documented. No artifacts or concretions were found in Unit 6 but the highlight of the day is a large lead object recovered from Unit 7. It could be a lead scupper used to channel water from the deck, but because of its size and shape, archaeologists believe it may be an 18th century urinal referred to as a pissdale that was located in the stern for use by the ship's officers. The joke quickly circulated around the boat that Blackbeard's head had been found here in Beaufort Inlet, that Lt. Maynard didn't

take it with him back to Norfolk. Look for the story and video Friday May, 27 2005 on ABC World News Tonight.

Entry - 24 May 2005 Director's Log **Mark Wilde-Ramsing**

By Tuesday morning the southwest winds that had prevented work at the site shifted around to the north and the waters were calm but rolling. *R/V Martech* with an anxious crew got underway early as members of the media began to arrive. When the press boats left the dock at 9 AM they carried 17 members of the press representing AP radio, most of the TV outlets in eastern North Carolina, Carteret News Times, Freedom News Service, and East Magazine. The boats were provided by Coast Guard Fort Macon, Chief Hall captain, and Comfort Inn Morehead City, Tom Bennet captain, who both did an excellent job providing great camera shots of activities occurring off the stern of *Martech*.

Raising Cannon C15, a 4-pounder weighing approximately 1000 pounds, was the target of the morning and divers worked swiftly to attach a large air bag to the lifting harness to the cannon as it rested 23 feet below the ocean surface. Divers slowly filled the bag and within minutes it popped to the surface where divers attached it to a lifting system and it was gently pulled up to the deck. As it broke the surface into the light of day for the first time in nearly 300 years a hearty round of applause greeted the encrusted weapon. Attached to it were pieces of its gun carriage, shards of glass, and hundreds of small lead shot.

Cannon C15 was taken back to the Coast Guard station where it was off-loaded to a trailer and carried to the parking lot at Fort Macon State Park and put on public exhibit for an hour. This rare glimpse of a "fresh catch" from the seabed was a big hit for 85 visitors. One fellow had left Maryland at 4 in the morning and drove down to see the remarkable artifact. Lots of questions

were asked and photographs taken as archaeologists continued to pour water over the cannon with the same care that marine biologists give to a stranded dolphin. At the end of the session, Cannon C15 was placed back in water to await its transport to the state conservation laboratory in Greenville and begin a 3-year cleaning and stabilization process. Eventually it will return to the coast for display at the North Carolina Maritime Museum.

Such a day!









Entry -Final May 2005 Director's Log Mark Wilde-Ramsing

Yes, perhaps Blackbeard still had his thumb on big ole' C24, a cannon which weighs at least 2,500 pounds with all its crusty adornments attached including a lead sounding weight. On Tuesday it didn't want to come aboard *R/V MarTech* and stalled the lifting winch just before it made deck. Researchers put her back on the seabed and called out for help from *R/V West Bay* (Captain Caroon), NC Marine Fisheries, a 153' landing craft with mobile crane. At 11 AM on Thursday, after a long period getting C24 off the bottom with lift bags and a longer period to get the recovery vessel and cannon linked, the encrusted cannon finally hit the surface with little fanfare but a large sense of relief. Unlike the public recovery of C15, researchers quickly brought the artifact into port at the Fort Macon Coast Guard facility, loaded it on a trailer, and whisked to off to the state conservation laboratory and into a large vat of fresh water.











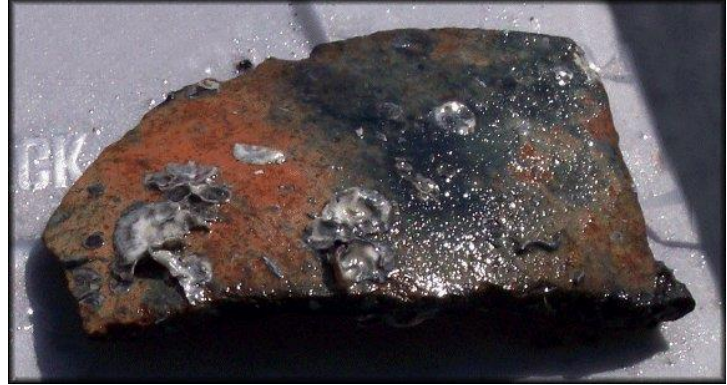
The cannon recovery was by no means all that was taking place over the last few days of the expedition. On Wednesday, archaeologists opened up Unit 8 (E85/N25) and almost immediately began finding identifiable artifacts including two pewter plates and half of a pewter charger, the bottom of a large French square case bottle, a large amount of curious brass wire, a piece of red earthenware storage jar, and the delicate stem of a wine glass complete with molded diamonds and crowns. In the evening researchers eagerly poured over their artifact analysis references and tentatively identified the glass piece as a "Silesian" stem, which was English in origin, replicated German wares beginning in 1714 when George I took the crown. Being four-sided rather than six or eight makes it an early style and places it contemporaneous with the sinking of *Queen Anne's Revenge*.



Two pewter plates



Half of a pewter charger



Piece of a red earthenware jar



Delicate wine glass stem

One never knows what Mother Nature will deliver and on Thursday with winds shifting to the west and the surface conditions marginal for working, the underwater visibility was in excess of forty feet! Anyone with mask and snorkel could put their face in the water and see the entire site and all the activity 23 feet below. With conditions like this, of course, there was a frenzy of activity with photographers shooting tape after tape, roll after roll, while archaeologists examined in detail every nook and cranny of the site. The clear water greatly aided mapping and recovery in Unit 8 which was producing a wealth of artifacts as excavation continued.



Clear water

In the final excavation Unit 9 (E110/N50), explorers found perhaps their biggest surprise. The unit lies on the southeastern margin of the site where all that was expected was a scattering of ballast stone, if any artifacts at all. Here researchers found buried deeply in the sediments what appears to be a portion of the sternpost of the ship. The heavy timber exhibits a grooved edge (rabbet) where the planking ends would have fit and has at least one iron gudgeon strap, one of several that would have held the rudder in place. This large wooden piece, which was in an excellent state of preservation, suggests that the stern must have twisted and fallen out to the vessel's starboard side after the majority of the ship's deck equipment (i.e. cannon) spilled to the port. The find provides exciting new information to help reconstruct the wrecking event, as well as, the ship itself and one that will bring eager researchers back in the future.

