

# The Queen's Report

Update from the  
Queen Anne's Revenge Shipwreck Project  
Volume 5, Number 3  
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## Open House

For four hours on October 22, more than 200 people swarmed over NC *Queen Anne's Revenge* Archaeological Conservation Laboratory located at East Carolina University's West Research Campus near Greenville. The occasion, coinciding with North Carolina Archaeology Month, was the first public open house at the Lab. Many of the visitors were from the Greenville area, including residents and ECU faculty, students, and staff, but others came from various points around the state: Kinston, Raleigh, Durham, Wilson, Chocowinity, Pine Knoll Shores, and Morehead City. Visitors from out of state hailed from New York, South Carolina, Ohio, and California. There was also a time traveler present: Blackbeard himself, portrayed by Assistant Conservator Eric Nordgren, with a jet-black wig and a nearly authentic early 18th century costume. Apparently the buckles on his shoes were a bit too big for Blackbeard's day. Seventeen staff, volunteers, and graduate assistants hosted the crowd by lecturing or answering questions, managing artifact booths, or giving directions.





The staff set up numerous displays and exhibits in its two-building spaces. In the main building and workroom, there were microscopic examinations of lead shot, small concretions and barrel hoops in touch tanks,

ballast stones, pewter and pottery fragment displays, cannon balls, and a video program of divers working under water at the site. In the second building were cannons and wood in their various treatment solutions. Cannon C-15, recovered last May, was hoisted up from its sodium carbonate bath for everyone to see and inspect.



The most excited persons there were the 50 children who were given a sheet of questions and sent off on a scavenger hunt. Some of the questions were deliberately simple: What is the name of the pirate captain; who works on artifacts in the lab; and where is the shipwreck? Others were more complicated: what is a trunnel and where do finished objects go after the lab. And one was tricky: What can be shot out of a cannon? (Obviously a cannon ball, but there are other things, too, i.e. a bar shot, nails, and anything else handy.) Those who found all the items had their sheets pasted with a gold seal of achievement.



Also present were Courtney Jones, a sophomore at Broughton High School in Raleigh, and her mother, Peggy. Courtney had completed a research project on Blackbeard when she was a seventh grader, and she is currently working on a project involving underwater archaeology and the *Queen Anne's Revenge*. She had made previous arrangements to conduct and film an interview with Project Director Mark Wilde-Ramsing.

It was quite obvious that people were pleased with what they saw. Karen Browning, our computer guru, supervising the registration process and the sale of Blackbeard t-shirts, reported that there was a great deal of excitement among the visitors coming and going. It was almost a party atmosphere - a mixture of enlightenment and engagement. Our compliments go out to all who made this a fine show, especially to Chief Conservator Sarah Watkins-Kenney, Assistant Conservator Eric Nordgren, Lab Manager Wendy Welsh and their staff of ECU graduate researchers.





## Archaeology and the Making of A Movie

Most people who are seriously into tall ships, sailing, and shipwrecks have probably read at least one and maybe all twenty of Patrick O'Brian's novels about Jack Aubrey, a swashbuckling English sea captain and his scholarly ship's surgeon, Stephen Maturin. For those who have not read them, we recommend you do and guarantee they will take you on an exciting journey all over the world through storms, battles, intrigue, and adventure.

Recently, Twentieth Century Fox produced a movie starring Russell Crowe as Aubrey and Paul Bettany as Maturin, which combined two of O'Brian's novels, *Master and Commander* and *The Far Side of the World*. As a follow-up, Tom McGregor has written a book, published by W.W. Norton and Company titled *The Making of Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*. The time period for the Aubrey/Maturin novels was nearly 100 years after Blackbeard and the *Queen Anne's Revenge*, but we thought our readers would be interested in what Director Peter Weir called the "archaeology" involved in making the movie authentic for the early 1800's.

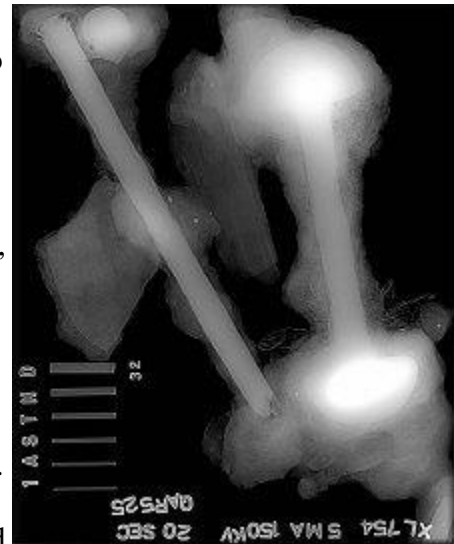
"So little was known," he says, "about the reality of that life, and in particular life below decks, that everything had to be painstakingly researched." For example, he says, "Espadrilles. Those canvas shoes with rope soles that you can buy anywhere in the world. I was sure they must come from the navy so I began to check. We got back as far as we could and finally got in touch with a shop in Spain which has been making them for a couple of hundred years: they said, yes, originally we made those for the Spanish Navy. Toilet paper. I won't go into that. But, boy, did I go into that—a search for what they used as toilet paper." Weir also researched sounds tall ships made in their time periods, located a book on 18th century spectacles so Dr. Maturin's would look authentic, and obtained exact reproductions of lanterns that were on the *Victory*, the ship of the British naval hero, Lord Nelson."

The end result of all this effort and research was that everything involved in the making of the film, costumes, tools, riggings, food, drink, everything, was authentic or an exact reproduction. Except one: none of the filming was done at sea. "The secret of making good movies at sea," says Producer Duncan Henderson, "is to not go to sea." How they did that is explained in detail in this fascinating book. Weir described the effort for authenticity, as "a kind of archaeology--- and it's thrilling." He's right. It is hard, sometimes tedious, painstaking work, but it is also thrilling. And the filmmaker's methods were essentially the same as those of archaeologists. *QAR* personnel search for the identity, the authenticity, of every artifact, and either put it in storage or exhibit so that historians, students, scientists, or even film makers can, in a later time, have a better understanding of what life was like on a ship such as the *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

## Research

Speaking of research, our dictionary defines it this way:  
Research: diligent and systematic inquiry or investigation into a subject in order to discover or revise facts, theories, applications, etc.; to make researches (that is to search again); investigate carefully; to make an extensive investigation into.

As we have reported before, we get a lot of mail. We like that, like to be contacted, like to be asked tough or interesting questions, like to help. But those who are interested in what we do and who have questions, should first carefully study our extensive website and use our index to navigate. Just about everything we know is there so that most questions can be answered by diligent and systematic search of that website. But, of course, not everything (last issue's question on the Origins of *QAR*) and so once you've done your homework and still have questions, comments, and advice we want to hear from you [qar@ncdcr.gov](mailto:qar@ncdcr.gov).



## Director's Report

One of my many proud moments while directing this exciting project has been the completion of the website index, which is accessed from our front page. This is a tremendously valuable tool to



find out just what has been done over the past eight years. While I recognize its value, I still forget that the index is available. The other day I was in a time crunch trying to put together a presentation and needing a particular image to make my point. It concerned the process of making the photo mosaic by stitching individual digital images together... I was certain that there was a

description and the image I needed somewhere on the website - in a past *Queen's Report* or in the Archaeology fieldwork section. I frantically went from one place to another without success. And then it dawned on me - Hey, check the index. When I did, I found several entries but then realized that we had not put any report on the web concerning the work. While these negative findings did not help in terms of my immediate presentation needs, at least now I knew not to waste time looking further. In the long run it also made me realize that it was a subject that we need to include and thus a potential subject for our next *Queen's Report*. It also should prompt you as users to use the index to find answers to questions you have or simply peruse various topics. If you can't find what you are looking for or your research leads you to questions that aren't answered, by all means write us and in that way the index and our research can be an evolving process.

The whole staff is looking forward to a *National Geographic* magazine article scheduled for July 2006 featuring *QAR*'s photomosaic and the laboratory cleaning of Cannon C22, dubbed Baby Bertha. Major funding has just been received from *National Geographic* Expeditions Council for a project entitled "PEERING INTO A PIRATE'S TROVE: A Proposal to Conduct High Definition Radiography on Concretions from the *Queen Anne's Revenge* Shipwreck Site." Proposal states:

"The process of peering into historic concretions from the *Queen Anne's Revenge* using x-radiography is exciting, effective, relatively quick, and provides project staff with the means for making early decisions concerning identification and treatment of concreted artifacts. The proposed project will also offer an excellent opportunity for photography as part of *National Geographic* magazine's upcoming article and related NG Expedition media coverage. It is quite possible that an important clue within one or more concretions, such as a dated coin or personal item, will provide evidence bearing directly on the identity of this historic ship. Collectively, the findings will further our understanding of the many aspects surrounding the loss of the ship and life aboard. It is important to note that artifacts from this historic shipwreck are the tangible record, not of America's elite who wrote our history, but of a disenfranchised segment of early colonial society including outsiders, runaways, renegades, and rogues who left only these traces behind. Archaeological interpretation enables us to understand and appreciate their rightful place in history."

### **Fall Field Season a Bust**

Meanwhile, you've got to know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em. After numerous stops and starts this fall the continuous onslaught of hurricanes finally put an end to our aspirations to conduct additional archaeological recovery and more importantly begin the exciting and highly anticipated public outreach program *QAR* Dive Down. Fall provides a wary window of opportunity. On the one hand, the winds shift to the north, which normally provide calm seas after the blustery off shore summer breezes. However, it is the season of hurricanes and even those far out to sea bring ocean swells that stir up the bottom and make work and visitation an unproductive experience. This year travel restrictions from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and excessive rain from another storm passing inland compounded site conditions and simply made the fall season a bust. Of course, Hurricane Ophelia was most destructive by scouring out portions of the site and exposing previously buried artifacts. So we look to the spring, before warm southwest winds find their way to the Crystal Coast, to invite our diving public to visit the *QAR* site and join us as we continue our archaeological investigations.

Not that there isn't enough work in the office to keep us busy. *QAR* staff and its research associates have been working throughout the year to complete sections of the project interim report schedule for publication in 2006. Most of the research was presented at the *QAR* symposium held last spring on the campus of East Carolina University. Results from these efforts will begin to make their way to the website, specifically in the artifact section, and eventually the entire interim report will be posted here. Of course, for the traditionalists like me, we also are seeking to print hard copies of the report detailing the extensive findings recorded on the site so far. It is an important step in our journey to refine our research objectives and techniques as we seek to learn the most we can about the life and times surrounding an intriguing ship lost so many years ago on the shores of North Carolina.

**In the Morehead City/Beaufort/Cape Lookout area?** Visit the North Carolina Maritime Museum at 315 Front Street, Beaufort, NC and see many of the actual artifacts from *Queen Anne's Revenge*.