Flotsam and Jetsam - August 1995

South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology–University of South Carolina

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Doyle Clifton’s drawing of a stoneware chamber pot he recently found in the Combahee River. (See story page 5.)
Fourteen Divers Complete FTC

Fourteen divers were graduated from the Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program’s Field Training Course (FTC) conducted July 7 to 9 at Fort Johnson Marine Resources Center on James Island.

The FTC consists of both classroom and pool work and is designed to give sport divers the basic underwater archaeological knowledge necessary for sport divers to act as volunteers on SCIAA underwater projects. Instructors for the course were SCIAA staff members, SCIAA research associates, and graduate students.

The Field Training Course students attended lectures on the South Carolina underwater antiquities legislation, concepts and definitions in maritime archaeology, search and survey methods and equipment, site interpretation and ship construction, mapping and surveying techniques, and artifact identification and conservation.

As part of the course work, students spent a half day in the pool conducting a mock pre-disturbance survey of an underwater site. The students mapped in the simulated wreck of a wooden sailing vessel, as well as various "artifacts" associated with the site using a variety of methods. This pool session was held in the pool at St. Andrews Recreation Center.


This was the first time this course has been offered in the Charleston area. The Sport Diver Archaeological Management Program moved to Fort Johnson in April 1994 after being housed aboard the N.S. Savannah at Patriots Point for several years.

Dates for the next Field Training Course have not been set, but persons interested in taking the course should contact Lynn Harris or Carl Naylor at (803) 762-6105 and have their name placed on the roster. The sooner the list fills, the sooner the class will be scheduled.

The Flotsam and Jetsam
(formerly The Goody Bag)

The Flotsam and Jetsam is a quarterly publication of the Underwater Archaeology Division of the South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology at the University of South Carolina

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The Flotsam and Jetsam welcomes submissions from the diving community. We are especially interested in photos and information on artifacts you collect. Send your article, suggestions, ideas, and questions about hobby diving related topics that interest you to: The Flotsam and Jetsam, SCIAA Underwater Archaeology Division Field Office, P.O. Box 12448, Charleston, S.C., 29422.

Short Takes

C of C History Major Joins Charleston Office As Intern
Eddie Weathersbee, a senior History major at the College of Charleston has joined the Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program’s Charleston office as an intern for the Fall semester.

Eddie, who is also minoring in Anthropology, is focusing his studies on Antebellum Maritime History. He has been a PADI Advanced Open Water certified with more than eighty logged dives and has attended SCIAA’s Underwater Field Training Course and the SCIAA Shipwreck Workshop on the Cooper River.

No Reports, No License
Licensed hobby divers are reminded that quarterly report forms must be filed whether they have been diving or not. If a diver has not been diving during a reporting quarter they should check the box marked “No Recoveries Made During This Quarter.”

When no report is received, we have no way of knowing whether a diver is not diving, has moved to Bahrain, or is still on the bottom stuffing their goody bag and missed the end of the quarter. Divers who do not file reports with this office and with the state museum run the risk of having their license renewal denied.

Divers are also reminded that many of the report forms that have been mailed to them with their licenses have the wrong zip code. Our correct zip code is 29422.
200-Year-Old Ring Found In Cooper River

Jimmy Moss (hobby license #2628) of Abbeville found this ring (at right) while diving recently in the Cooper River. Jimmy took the ring to a jeweler who appraised it at about one-half carat. The jeweler also judged the ring to be nearly 200 years old, so you can forget calling Jimmy and telling him you recently lost a ring that looks very much like this one. Besides, Jimmy’s wife, Jan, has already laid claim to the ring.

In addition to his activities as a licensed hobby diver, Jimmy also conducted a Sport Diver Survey of the Cooper River in 1992 with the help of a multitude of volunteer divers and SCIAA. The results of this survey were published in a Research Manuscript titled The Cooper River Survey: An Underwater Reconnaissance of the West Branch. This manuscript is presently being reprinted. For a copy of the report give the Charleston Office a call at (803) 762-6105.

Archaeology Week Focuses On South Carolina's Maritime Heritage

The first week of October has been Fourth Annual South Carolina Archaeology Week by Governor David M. Beasley.

The theme for this year's Archaeology Week is South Carolina's Maritime Heritage and many of the week's activities are centered around this concept.

A variety of events throughout South Carolina have been scheduled for the week, including the Eight Annual Archaeology Field Day to be held at Santee State Park on Saturday, October 7.

The week of events will kick off at Brittle Bank Park in Charleston on Monday, October 2, which will include a welcome from Dr. Bruce Rippetteau, State Archaeologist, and a presentation by James P. Delgado, director of the Vancouver Maritime Museum. The Charleston Submarine and Battery Services Reenactment Group will also be on hand to demonstrate authentic Confederate Civil War uniforms.

For a free Calendar of Events outlining all the activities for the week, contact our Charleston Office at (803) 762-6105 or our Columbia office at (803) 777-8170.
Recording Artifacts Provides A Permanent Record of Finds

So, you found a Bellarmine jug dating to 1575, or a Chinese porcelain vase from the Ming Dynasty, or perhaps a Viking helmet with "Leif Eriksson" scrawled on the inside while diving in Black Mingo Creek, or Cuckold's Creek, or some other body of water in South Carolina.

And you've cleaned your find using enough kitchen counter space and Tupperware containers to send your spouse to a divorce lawyer. And you've conserved it with sufficient quantities of foul-smelling chemicals so that it will last long enough to be put in your last will and testament, leaving it to rich, old Aunt Whats-her-name (provided, of course, she still calls you her favorite nephew). And you've shown it to everyone in five counties, impressing complete strangers, amusing close friends, and boring immediate family.

And, of course, you've reported your find to SCIAA on your quarterly report form.

Now what? Put it on the old mantle place? Donate it to the local museum? Give it to your kids for a piggy bank? Stick on a shelf in the closet? Before you do any of those things, perhaps you should record the artifact.

Recording an artifact entails making a visual record of the item, either by photographing, drawing, or some other means. Archaeologically, recording an artifact allows important information to be passed on through publication in a scientific journal and, at the same time, retains that information should the artifact be damaged during cleaning, conservation, or (heaven forbid) day-to-day handling. But why would you, the hobby diver, want to record your artifact?

Even if there is no book publisher banging at your door, begging for a photo of your artifact for inclusion in some coffee-table book, there are several good reasons why you still might want some record of your artifact. Perhaps you have no idea what your find is, and you want a photo or drawing of the item so that when you go to the library you don't have to take the item itself. Or, perhaps you want to send us a photo of the item to aid us in identifying your treasure for you. We here at the Underwater Archaeology Division of SCIAA have a variety of resources available to us to help the licensed diver gain all the information available on any particular type of artifact. These resources include reference works, scientific journals, and some of the best

Divers Find Photocopying Easier Than Drawing

An interesting means of recording artifacts was shown to us recently by a student at our July FTC, and it seems to be catching on.

During an assignment, part of which required students to record an artifact, one student, George Pledger of Hanahan (Hobby License #0218), turned in a photocopy of a transferprint Pearlware piece showing the transferprint in intricate detail. We were so surprised by the excellent reproduction of the artifact we showed it to the other students and staff.

Subsequently, one of the school's staff members, Robert Bush of Goose Creek (Hobby License #2328), submitted his quarterly report for the second quarter of 1995 with photocopies of some of the artifacts he had found.

Photocopying seems to work fine for some artifacts and not for others, so divers are urged to be selective when sending in photocopies of artifacts. And remember to use a scale on the machine with the items.
Stoneware Chamber Pot Found In Combahee R.

Doyle Clifton (hobby license #0747) sure has a knack for finding things. Doyle recently found this chamber pot (at right) in the Combahee River.

According to Doyle, the pot is about 6.75 inches tall with a diameter of about 7.5 inches. There are three groups of dots in cobalt blue located on the upper shoulder about one inch below the lip. The groups of dots are equidistant from each other but are not of equal number or arranged in a similar pattern.

The piece appears to be salt-glazed stoneware of American manufacture during the nineteenth century. The style appears to be what is called “American Blue and Gray” denoting the blue cobalt decoration on a gray stoneware body. The dot patterns, as far as we know, are unusual.

For examples of some of Doyle’s other finds see the September 1991 and May 1994 issues of this newsletter.

Research Pays Off With Historic Bottle

It’s amazing what a little research can do. Doug Boehme (hobby license # 3042) found an interesting bottle recently in the Cooper River (at right) but was not satisfied with just having a pretty hunk of blown glass. He wanted to know more about it. So Doug, who is also a research associate with SCIAA, went to the Charleston Public Library to see what he could find out.

Having a good idea as to the approximate date of the bottle, Doug began reading through the microfilm records of Charleston’s newspapers for that time period and sure enough, bingo, shazam, eureka, and voila, Doug found an advertisement in the Feb. 8, 1857 edition of the Charleston Courier (at left) for Cohen’s Medical Depot on Meeting Street that featured the very product that had been sold in Doug’s bottle.

Now, not only does Doug have a piece of history, he has the information that places that piece in a specific place and context and at a specific date.
During "Aquatic Antics" Event

Girl Scouts Hear About Archaeology

By Dee Boehme

Lynn Harris, head of the Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program at SCIAA, was one of four professional women with aquatic-related careers who recently took part in "Aquatic Antics," a National Girl Scout Wider Opportunity event held July 22-August 5 in Charleston.

Forty Girl Scouts from twenty-one states participated in the "Aquatic Antics" event which was designed to intrigue and educate its participants in the areas of aquatic ecology, atmospheric patterns in the Southeast, southern history, and career opportunities in aquatic professions.

Lynn was one of the panel members who told the girls about their career choices and answered questions.

Lynn also conducted a hands-on exercise in which groups of girls were given a bag of artifacts and encouraged to try their hand at drawing conclusions based on their "finds."

These Wider Opportunity education adventures offer Girl Scouts from across the nation a chance travel, learn, make friends, and enjoy a new range of experiences. Each year a catalog of these national events is offered to all 331 Girl Scout Councils throughout the country.

Boaters Should Stay Fifty Feet From Dive Flag

With the proliferation of activities on South Carolina rivers, the question has come up as to what is the responsibility of boaters when they encounter divers in state waters and what is the responsibility of divers when their anticipated dive site is already occupied.

According to Section 50-21-87 of the Code of Law for South Carolina, "A person may not operate a vessel within fifty feet of another vessel when a diver is displaying a dive down flag (red with a diagonal white stripe) to mark the location of the diver. When the flag is being displayed in a water body too narrow to allow passage of another vessel other than within fifty feet, a vessel operator may proceed only past the displayed flag at a no-wake speed and allowing as much clearance between his vessel and the displayed flag as is safe and practical."

It is worth noting that for a diver to have any protection under this section of the law, a diver down flag must be displayed.

The law also states that, "A person may not engage in diving activities within fifty feet of a vessel whose occupant is fishing."

It also says that "A person does not violate this section if he fishes or displays a dive flag in an area before another person subsequently engages in diving activities or operates a vessel with fifty feet of a displayed dive flag."

We take all this to mean that it is basically a "first come, first serve" sort of thing. If you intend to dive an area that is already occupied by fishermen, er, fisherpersons, or other divers, you must stay at least fifty feet away from them.

All this legal stuff aside, common sense should be the general rule. If a dive site is already packed with divers or other boaters, go to another location. If recreational boaters, especially those persons on jet skis, become a problem, move to another location, even if you were there first.

We know that boaters can and have become a problem for divers, but unfortunately being rude and stupid is not against the law in South Carolina and is not punishable by death, at least not yet.

(We would like to thank Wateree Dive Center in Columbia for the information about the actual law.)
Underwater Division Assists With Work At Chert Quarry

During August, members of the Underwater Division at SCIAA traveled to Allendale County to assist Dr. Albert Goodyear of SCIAA's Research Division with a project he has been conducting in a creek off the Savannah River.

One bank of the creek is the site of a prehistoric chert quarry dating back to the Paleoindian period that Dr. Goodyear has excavated in the past. In August he wanted to see what was in the creek itself.

Members of the Underwater Division, along with several talented volunteers, systematically dredged the bottom of the creek near the site of the chert quarry.

At right, volunteers and staff members watch the effluent screen while Carl Naylor works the dredge head. His bubbles are visible in the brown water. Below, volunteers (from left to right) John Whaley, Doug Vickery, and Kevin Eberhard pick through the gravel and chert flakes sent up through the effluent hose. (Photos by Dr. Albert Goodyear).
archaeologists in the country on staff, and sometimes we can access information not generally available to the public. (While we happily provide this service, we can only assist currently licensed divers. If you are not currently licensed and you retrieve artifacts from South Carolina waters, we cannot assist you with your artifact in any way.)

Perhaps your artifact is valuable from a monetary standpoint, and you want to include it on your homeowner’s insurance. A photograph of the item, proving its existence, can assure a minimum of delay for an insurance check and even make it possible for your insurance agent to have a smile on his face when he writes that obscenely large check should your Ming Dynasty vase or whatever be stolen.

Perhaps you plan to have your artifacts exhibited at a local museum, library, school, Masonic lodge, or whatever, and suppose you don’t have enough space to exhibit all your amazing and unique finds. An exhibit can often be enhanced by displaying just a few artifacts and backgrounding these with photographs and drawings of others.

Whether you are recording artifacts for your Ph.D. in anthropology, for a slide presentation to show at your daughter’s fifth grade class, for permanent records of items for insurance purposes, or for exhibit at the museum, there are a few things you should remember.

First, there should be something in the photograph or drawing indicating the object’s precise size. This can be accomplished either by adding a scale or by indicating the exact measurements, as on mechanical drawings. The preferred method is to place a scale in the photo or drawing. This allows measurements to be taken that were not included.

Second, you should always keep an account of each artifact; where and when it was found, cleaning and conservation methods used, previous exhibitions, present location, etc. This information can prove invaluable in any number of ways in the future. One way to record these facts is to scribble it on the back of the photo or drawing. A better way is to write the information in a journal or computer database, numbering each entry. This number can be written on the back of the photo or drawing, and what is just as important, can be put on the artifact itself.

If you do get into the habit of recording your artifacts, and should you come across an intact Bellarmine jug from the sixteenth century in Black Mingo Creek or find a Ming Dynasty porcelain vase in Cuckolds Creek, we sure would appreciate a photo or drawing of it. Should you find a Viking helmet with “Leif Eriksson” scrawled on the inside, before you do anything else, we suggest you sit down and make a list of all your friends who are fond of practical jokes.

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