Flotsam and Jetsam - November 2000

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

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Inside This Issue . . .

... SCIAA staff begins remote sensing project on the Great Pee Dee River (above), see page 11.

... SCIAA staff stays at Rice Hope Plantation (below) while recording the Mepkin wreck, see page 6.

... And of course there was the raising of the *Hunley* (right), see pages 4, 5, and 8.
Wants Law Strenghtened

Dive Club Concerned About Overcollection

by Carl Naylor

Concerned about what they see as overcollecting of fossil shark's teeth in state waters, the Hilton Head Island Dive Club invited me to address their October meeting.

After a slide presentation on The Flotsam and Jetsam

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 articles, suggestions, ideas, and questions about hobby diving related topics that interest you to: The Flotsam and Jetsam, SCIAA Underwater Archaeology Division Office, P.O. Box 12448, Charleston, SC, 29422.

SCIAA, the Underwater Archaeology Division, and the Underwater Antiquities Act, the floor was opened up to questions and comments from the fifteen or so club members who attended the October 12 meeting at Island Scuba Dive & Travel dive shop.

Amber Hester, president of the club and employee at the dive shop, expressed the concern that some divers, with only Hobby Diver Licenses, are commercially collecting shark's teeth from the waters in and around Beaufort County. These divers are then selling the teeth through internet web pages and elsewhere.

While the collection of artifacts and fossils is legal under the present Underwater Antiquities Act (as long as the diver has a valid Hobby Diver License, the fossils were not collected using mechanical means, and the activity is reported to the State Museum on Fossil Report Forms) the law states that Hobby Licenses are for divers who want to conduct "recreational, small scale, noncommercial search and recovery of submerged archaeological historic property or submerged paleontological property."

Unfortunately, SCIAA has no means to monitor the sale of artifacts or fossils or to verify that artifacts and fossils offered for sale on the internet or elsewhere were collected from state waters. Under the law, the South Carolina State Museum is the custodian of all submerged paleontological material and all Fossil Report Forms filed by Hobby Divers go to the State Museum.

When contacted about the dive club's concerns, Jim Knight, who monitors fossil collection by Hobby Divers for the State Museum, stated he was less interested in diver's reports of shark's teeth since they have less value from a scientific point of view than other types of fossils.

Despite this many members of the club felt there should more restrictions on those who sell artifacts and fossils. Some of the restrictions proposed included a higher fee for a license and requiring that "commercial collectors" have business licenses and pay taxes on their revenues. Also discussed was making it illegal for divers to sell artifacts and fossils collected under a Hobby License.

The staff of SCIAA's Underwater Division is taking preliminary steps to revise the current law and would like to hear from the diving public. If anyone would like a copy of the South Carolina Underwater Antiquities Act of 1991 or would like to comment on the law please contact me at (843) 762-6105.

Reminder Notices Sent
To Delinquent Hobby Divers

by Carl Naylor

Licensed Hobby Divers who have gone several quarters without sending in their quarterly report forms will be receiving reminder notices as part of an effort by the Sport Diver Archaeology Management Program to improve diver reporting.

So far, more than seventy-five licensed Hobby Divers have received notices informing them that they are delinquent in their reporting.

Under the S.C. Underwater Antiquities Act of 1991, Hobby Divers are required to file their report forms no later than ten days after the end of the

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Diver Completes Report On Willtown

by Lynn Harris

In 1682, the Lords Proprietors planned a town that would rival Charleston in its facilities for overseas trade and would offer a more salubrious climate. It was called New London, but later renamed Willtown, and had streets and stairways running down a bluff to the Edisto River. Although this riverine community could not compete with Charleston harbor as a trading depot and slowly disintegrated during the eighteenth century, evidence of the old English settlement still exists in the archaeological and historical record.

In 1969, Drew Ruddy, then a college student, secured one of the first underwater salvage licences from SCIAA to recover artifacts from Willtown. Today, 31 years later, Drew Ruddy, has undertaken to tell the story of his early experiences as a diver and collector. As a current SCIAA Research Associate and Hobby Diver, he has recently produced a unique and highly readable report on his Willtown findings.

He writes in his introduction: "It is with amazement that I reflect today on how two teenagers with some diving experience but no archaeological training or background were able to secure a one year salvage license...Today I find myself in a different place in my life, a different level of maturity, and although not a professional archaeologist, I have acquired a greater sense of appreciation for the precision and documentation necessary to work and record an underwater historic site."

Going back to his early maps and artifact logs, Drew and his diving buddy, Steve Howard, attempted to map and reconstruct where they found artifacts in former project years. In his overview of collected materials, Drew explores possible reasons for distribution patterns related to both land and water usage during historic times.

Drew’s report provides a historic background of Willton slanted towards the maritime activities including early English explorations in the area, tensions with the Spanish, Indian trade, the Yamasee War, Stono Rebellion, and the 1863 gunboat expedition. Filled with colorful graphics like historic maps, aerial views of the Willtown waterfront, and photographs of artifacts, the report is indeed an extremely valuable addition to the literature on South Carolina’s underwater heritage. Congratulations Drew!

Editor’s Note: The report is available in various local libraries. Anybody who wishes to obtain a copy should contact Drew Ruddy at (843) 761-3632.

Unusual Find

Hobby Diver Stephen Taylor (#3349) of North Charleston found this intact earthenware jug recently in the Cooper River. Believed to be of French origin, jugs such as this are unusual finds in South Carolina waters.

(Photos by Lynn Harris)
Looking Aft
Various modules clutter the deck of the Marks Tide. Strong tides make the vessel appear to be underway.

Deck Level
Recompression chamber, right, and dive command module, left, leave little working room on the deck of the Marks Tide.

Karlissa B.
Divers work off of the jack-up barge Karlissa B. during the final portion of project.

Hunley Raised!
In case you have been on an alien planet for the past six months, the Confederate submarine H. L. Hunley was raised this summer with the help of SCIAA's Underwater Archaeology Division. Here are some photos you didn't see in the local newspapers.

(All photos by Joe Beatty)
Hall of Helmets
Crew members perform maintenance on dive helmets aboard the Marks Tide.

Dive Module
A Hunley crew member monitors diver communications from inside dive module.

Chow Call
Hungry crew members enjoy a gourmet meal in the galley aboard the Marks Tide.

Final Check
State Underwater Archaeologist Chris Amer gives a diver a once over before dive.
Mepkin Wreck Project Continues

Is Vessel Henry Lauren's Plantation Boat Baker?

by Lynn Harris

SCIAA work on the shipwreck located near Mepkin Abbey on the west Branch of the Cooper River Underwater Heritage Trail continued this fall with the aid of a grant from the ART (Archaeological Research Trust) Board. Lou Edens, Board member and owner of Rice Hope Plantation, very generously offered our underwater team accommodations at this beautiful historic B & B conveniently situated on the bank of the Cooper River.

Historical research, detailed site mapping, and the reconstruction and redeposition of the rudder on the site were the primary objectives for this year.

With the donation of threaded fiberglass rods from Strongwell Corporation in Bristol, Virginia, the separate rudder components recovered in the 1980s have been successfully united and can be viewed on site when the trail reopens in the spring next year. We were also fortunate to have the assistance of our former intern and current graduate student, Sue Vezeau, who joined us from Texas A & M Nautical Archaeology Program along with her goniometer to take hull lines as a reconstruction project for a term paper. We look forward to the results.

The wreck is possibly associated with Henry Laurens, a successful merchant, planter, Revolutionary War leader, and President of the Continental Congress. This would make the wreck one of the few riverine hulks to which we might be able to attach some sort of locational history. Fortunately for us, Laurens was a prolific correspondent, writing not only about political issues, but also about the day to day activities involved in running a plantation. These activities included boat operations.

On December 7, 1773, while Henry Laurens was in England, he received a letter from his brother James, informing him about the condition of his Mepkin plantation boat, the Baker. James explained that the vessel had recently been taken to a carpenter for repairs and "it now appears that her bottom is so bad, that it remains a doubt

Two Hat Day

Lou Edens, left, covers up from the sun as she talks to Jim Spirek during a break in the diving.

Ship Timbers

Loose timbers brought to the surface for recording are lined up on seats of SCIAA's johnboat. These and all timbers recovered from the wreck were subsequently returned to the wreck.
Mepkin

that she will swim with a Load of Wood."

Despite the liability of the worm-eaten Baker, the boat continued to be used for a variety of plantation tasks with the crew "taking care not to Load (the cargo) too deep" in case she sank. Evidently the boat was used for at least another six months when on July 19, 1774, the carpenters advised James that the vessel was unfit for service and it would be as "expensive to repair her as to build a New Vessel of Equal Burthen." In subsequent years a nameless plantation boat is mentioned in the Laurens records as servicing Mepkin, and there is no longer any mention of the Baker.

Did they continue to use the Baker in her unfit state until she finally plummeted into the murky depths of the Cooper River still carrying the cargo of wood we see jammed onto the starboard side of the wreck today? Or was she replaced by a similar boat that came to its demise many years later?

Artifacts found in proximity to the wreck, like stoneware jugs, date to the 1700s and 1800s. Like most waterfront areas adjacent to historic plantations, artifacts may represent the refuse or losses of many years of habitation on the Mepkin tract rather than a cargo that provides archaeologists with a neatly packaged date range.

Riverine shipwrecks, like log piles, also become roadblocks in a riverbend attracting both modern and historic trash. Neither do most wooden wrecks found in the tidal areas of rivers have any decking or superstructure left that would hold cargo items firmly in place. In this instance, the construction of the boat might yield more definitive clues about the identity and context.

We know that the vessel was southern built. The frames, apron, stem, maststep, and sternpost are live oak. The keelson and outer hull planks are southern pine and the treenails are bald cypress. Although the shipbuilding lumber was likely to have been obtained locally, Laurens notes that vessels built in South Carolina have all their materials for rigging and sails imported.

In 1763 Timothy Creamer, the overseer of Laurens' recently purchased Mepkin property, organized for a schooner to be built at a James Island shipyard as the plantation boat. The timing suggests that this was most probably the Baker. In a Mepkin estate inventory dating to 1766, the

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What I Did This Summer...

... helping Drew Ruddy with a particularly tough nut...

A typical day on the Hunley project consists of...
... keeping an eye out for Chris Amer...

... by Joe Beatty, our intrepid diver on the scene and SCIAA archaeological technician extraordinaire

... giving Boyd Matson of National Geographic some pointers...

... and calling the Rush Limbaugh show.
Maststep

This saddle-style maststep clearly shows the mortise for stepping the vessel’s single mast, including the holes made by the auger bit at each corner of the mortise.

Baker was valued at 2, 600 pounds with four slave crewmen aboard. At this time, slave patroon Scaramouch was in charge of Henry Lauren’s boats. He was portrayed as a skillful boatman, but also a rebellious troublemaker and an obvious risk. In 1777, this time, slave patroon boatman, but also a rebellious troublemaker and an obvious risk. In 1777, surprisingly, Scaramouch was placed in charge of one of the coastal vessels. In this year Tom Peas became a plantation patroon—only to die in 1778—much to the distress of the overseer who wrote that “I am at loss for a patroon and white men are not to be hired.”

In 1771 Laurens ordered that the Baker be converted from a schooner rig into a single mast rig. He describes how he saw many sloops in his travels to Pennsylvania and Jersey and that a sloops with a similar hull design to the Baker not only had “some Advantage gained in Point of Sailing,” but also the “Labour and Expence of at Least one Man is saved by such Rigging.”

If we assume the Baker lasted until 1774, this is a lifespan of eleven years for the vessel, which was to be expected of locally built vessels. Comparing the archaeological record to the historical information, it is interesting to note that the keelson of this relatively small vessel is comprised of two distinct sections scarphed just aft of the saddle-style maststep. Additionally, the keelson aft of the scarph was chamfered, but forward of the the scarph it was not.

Generally, for a riverine vessel of this size (around 48 feet), a single timber was utilized for the keelson. This might reflect a later modification in rigging design or alternatively major repairs. Furthermore, a saddle maststep for a small vessel is also unusual. Could this step design have facilitated versatility of mast positioning on a rig that local shipwrights were less familiar with than the more popular Carolina schooner, as noted by Laurens in 1774? Was this mast step more common then to the middle colony boat designs at that time?

More comparative research on this maststep may be our most important construction clue yet.

Other design features observed on this boat that are not present on any other vessels we have studied in South Carolina, are three shallow notches on top of the keelson. These notches were probably used to support stanchions for an awning or tarpauling to protect the cargo. This might suggest that the vessel was undecked or semi-decked.

There is a possibility that early navigation regulations may have influenced boat design in South Carolina. A clause in an Act of Trade that dealt with boat registration in the colonies specified it was only applicable to ‘decked’ ocean-going or coastal vessels, and not to “undecked” watercraft doing business in plantation waters. Instead, boats like the Baker, were given permits by local naval officers and made exempt from taking out bonds. This may have led to a proliferation of building undecked plantation boats with designs and hull lines that would not be construed as sea-going.

Breaches in Navigation Acts occurred frequently in unwatched rivers and sounds. Under the cover of darkness small craft could land and load barrels onto ships and secret hiding places along the shoreline. As part of a class of vessels that did not require formal registration, these undecked smallcraft had much more leeway in illegal trading activities.

Henry Laurens was a successful merchant, but his frustrations with navigation regulations are obvious in his papers. As the colony started to break the economic umbilical with England and tensions grew, he increasingly became a target of the officials. It would seem likely that he might build a boat in such way that it could easily avoid the stifling laws.

Our research into the identity of the boat continues as more of the later Laurens documents become available through the USC History Department.

Editor’s Note: See our next newsletter for the Mepkin shipwreck site plan, hull reconstruction, and research conclusions. Many thanks to all those who helped with this project including Doug Boehme, George Pledger, Rusty Clark, Sue Vezeau, Charleston Scuba Staff, Gunter Weber who helped with photography and video footage, and Lou Edens for providing luxurious housing.
Archival Quest For Le Prince Continues

by James D. Spirek

Recently, Chester DePrattter and I received a Robert L. Stephenson Archaeological Research Fund (RLSARF) grant to continue our quest to learn more about Le Prince, a French ship that sank off Port Royal Sound in early 1577.

The RLSARF grant award of $4,059 allowed us to contract with Dr. Bernard Allaire, a French researcher specializing in sixteenth-century French maritime endeavors, to conduct research in Normandy archives for documents related to the ship. He was, as readers may remember, also responsible for locating the first five documents related to the corsair and detailed in previous Legacy articles (See Legacy Vol. 3, No. 3, 1998, pp. 10-13 & Vol. 4, Nos. 1-3, 1999, p. 27).

Allaire’s mission was to spend three weeks looking for documents in the notarial archives of the Normandy port cities of Le Havre, Rouen, and Honfleur.

Our research strategy was based on information drawn from the previous five documents pertaining to business conducted in the port of Le Havre and surrounding towns. In addition, Allaire was to seek out materials related to privateering and other seafaring activities such as earlier and contemporary voyages, outfitting, and ordnance.

Before launching into the results of our research project, an explanation of the adversary that Allaire was up against—the notarial archive, or tabellionage, is in order. In sixteenth-century France many commercial contracts and transactions were drawn up by notaries, or tabellions, employed by the king. These transactions were prepared in a volume, folio style, written one transaction after the other to fill a page and in chronological order. These volumes were classified based on the nature of the transactions as either héritages or meubles. The héritages volumes consist of contracts related to possessions transmitted by inheritance, bills of sale for houses or land, and mortgage loans. The meubles volumes consist of all other types of documents, and most importantly, commercial transactions involving seafaring ventures. Some volumes, however, contain a mixed bag of documents.

The Rouen tabellionage consists of 10 to 15 volumes per year, Le Havre four volumes per year, and Honfleur one or two volumes a year. Each volume represents the work of one notary and therefore the number of volumes correspond to the available number of notaries at the office. For the most part, the archives are complete for the time period under study.

Results of the Le Prince document search included the identification of 25 additional documents, all from the Le Havre archive, to add to the previous five documents also found at Le Havre. A total of 168 documents related to contemporary Normandy seafaring ventures were also identified from all three archives.

Funds also permitted the transcription from the original French and then their translation to modern French and English of three documents. The newly found documents relate to the 1575 voyage to the Cape Verde Islands or to the adjacent African coast, Sierra Leone on the west coast of Africa, and then to Peru (West Indies) as described in the Le Prince Charter-Party document previously obtained by Allaire.

Based on these new documents the 1575 voyage occurred during a three month period with a departure from Le Havre in mid-May or early June with a return in late August or early September.

Another important aspect of these documents is the mention of other notaries and cities in France where other notarized transactions occurred, most notably in Paris. These documents point Allaire, for instance, to the Paris tabellionage to retrieve the meubles volumes written by specific notaries rather than search, perhaps fruitlessly, through countless volumes of Paris notaries looking for Le Prince related documents.

Unfortunately, no additional 1576 documents were found that relate to the final voyage of the ship, other than the two previously found documents. The absence of documents at Le Havre suggest that most of the major business transactions were occurring in Brest where the ship was at port, based on information from these two 1576 documents. Therefore, the hunt must continue at the Brest archives in search of materials related to the final voyage.

The majority of these documents revolve around the efforts of the noblemen Mathe Fapoco, owner of Le Prince, and Oratio Rosso, captain of the ship, to secure investors to finance the voyage. Investors included two royal officials, merchants, innkeepers, a carter, a butcher, and members of the ship’s crew. These investors bought shares in the voyage that were used to buy victuals for the ship and merchandise to trade and barter during the voyage. The return on their investment depended on the interest they secured, while acknowledging that profits depended on “... the risks and fortunes of the sea, in the said ship.”

Other documents relate to the outfitting and victualling of the vessel. Several documents detail the purchase of two kinds of casks hooped with iron and chestnut, and subsequent payment for them. Other transactions concern the sale of some of the rigging associated with the artillery and the securing of funds for repairs and other necessities for the ship. Two other documents deal with the purchase of “claret” wine and biscuits for drink and food aboard the ship. Another pair of documents unrelated to the voyage concern the purchase of a parrot by Rosso from a Rouen merchant, however, they do

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Remote Sensing Survey of Great Pee Dee River
To Inventory Underwater Archaeological Sites

by James Spirek

During November of 1999 the Underwater Archaeology Division in collaboration with Chip Helms, an ART Board member, and other local individuals inaugurated the Great Pee Dee River Survey.

The purpose of the survey is to locate and inventory shipwrecks, landings, and other underwater archaeological sites between Mars Bluff and Cheraw. When completed the survey will have covered more than 58 river miles.

Our research strategy includes using electronic equipment, interviewing local informants, and reviewing prior archaeological research. Our remote sensing ensemble, the ADAP III system, consists of a cesium magnetometer (to locate ferromagnetic metal, i.e., iron and steel), a side scan sonar (to acoustically picture the river bottom), and a fathometer (to determine river depth), all tied to a Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS).

Information drawn from local informants will help to build a database of potential archaeological sites along this stretch of the river. We also drew on information from the state archaeological site files to determine previously recorded sites in and adjacent to the river.

Data obtained from the survey will aid in planning future work in the river and other riverine areas in South Carolina and to inventory sites to the state archaeological site files.

The survey on the Great Pee Dee River was our first deployment of the electronic equipment in a Piedmont riverine environment. Riverine perils included submerged logs, sandbars, rapids, and the twists and turns of the river. All of these obstacles were more or less successfully navigated while towing the costly array beside and behind us.

We have completed surveying three different stretches of the river: upriver from Mars Bluff, around Society Hill, and downriver from Cheraw for a combined total of approximately 24 miles. This leaves us with approximately 34 miles remaining to complete the survey.

Following the field work, we returned to the comfort of the office to post-process and analyze our data. The survey lanes and magnetic data were overlaid on 7.5 USGS topographical maps of the river for visual representation of our work. We are still analyzing the data to identify magnetic and acoustic anomalies that might relate to significant historical or archaeological submerged cultural resources.

We were greatly assisted in post-processing our electronic data into a Geographical Information System (GIS) format by “Buz” Kloot and Elzbieta Covington from the Center for Manufacturing and Technology at USC, as well as assistance from Chris Gillam and Holly Gillam at SCIAA.

Perhaps the best part about the survey was meeting the many individuals that Dr. Helms rounded up to support and to assist in our venture. There are simply not enough ways to express our appreciation of the hospitality afforded to us by our hosts and the local communities during our first three week phase of the survey. Additional work is slated during the spring of the new year to complete the survey.

Hopefully, during these next survey legs will find the water high, the currents lazy, the weather optimal, and our hosts’ arms wide open to receive us back into their homes.
provide confirmation that the ship was out to sea during June

In addition to looking solely for Le Prince documents, Allaire also noted relevant transactions regarding corsairing and seafaring endeavors during this period. These documents describe the organization and financing of similar triangular voyages undertaken by Le Prince to Africa and then to the West Indies and back to France, the sale of merchandise from these voyages, ordnance, privateering, and other miscellaneous materials.

Other documents are of great archaeological importance, specifically those dealing with naval ordnance and coopery. Some of the transactions describe in great detail the types and markings on the artillery, and the type of woods used to construct the gun carriages and wheels. Documents about coopery mention the use of chestnut hoops, along with iron ones, to bind the cask staves together. This type of specific information will help to distinguish the remains of a ship hailing from France rather than those from Spain, England, or elsewhere in Europe.

In conclusion, the research to uncover documents related to Le Prince and similar ventures was successful from both a historical and archaeological viewpoint. They have expanded our knowledge of the finances, people, and outfitting surrounding the genesis of a voyage to Africa and the West Indies in the 1570s. Importantly, they have revealed other avenues to travel to gather more information about Le Prince in France. All of this information should help in our upcoming survey to look for Le Prince and other casualties on the shoals and sandbars at the entrance to Port Royal Sound.

Reminders

quarter whether collecting has occurred or not.

Divers are reminded that they must submit two report forms each quarter. Artifact Report Forms are submitted to the Charleston Office of SCIAA’s Underwater Archaeology Division. Fossil Report Forms are submitted to the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia. To assist divers in reporting their finds, both the Artifact Report Forms and the Fossil Report Forms, which are supplied to the diver with his license package, have preprinted addresses on the back.

Divers who fail to submit reports after receiving the reminder run the risk of having their license revoked. They will also be barred from reapplying for a license in the future.