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The Goody Bag - June 1992

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

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SCIAA ARCHAEOLOGISTS EXCAVATE FISHING VESSEL

By Christopher Amer

A preliminary examination of the remains of a small wooden boat discovered on the foreshore of Hunting Island State Park was conducted by the Institute's Underwater Archaeology Division staff in 1987 after the wreck was exposed by high tides and storm activity. Since then, the site has continued to deteriorate through normal wave action, storm activity, and the hands of collectors. The boat's pump tube was removed by a collector during a period when the site was exposed in the winter of 1988-1989. Initial observations led to the conclusion that the wreck is that of a seven meter long (approximately 23 feet) fishing boat with a "live well."

Historical references recording a boat being wrecked in that location have not been found. Research into the nineteenth century fishing industry on the Atlantic coast has revealed much contemporary literature on the industry as well as descriptions of, and references to, the types of vessels used. However, few examples of "welled" fishing vessels exist; the smack Emma C. Berry at Mystic Seaport is a notable example. According to David Baumer, who has done extensive research on the subject, this site is possibly the only known welled fishing boat to be recorded in an archaeological context.

Plans were made to relocate the wreckage and record the remaining structure of the wreck, particularly that of the live well, in the spring of 1991 when a four-person team from the Underwater Archaeology Division worked for three days at the site. Of the seven meter long boat examined in 1987, only a four and one half by two meter section of the central port side remained. This section, which was lying horizontally, was fairly intact

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up to the gunwale. Working against the encroaching tide, the crew was afforded less than five hours per day during which the site was relatively dry. During the brief time allowed, the crew tagged timbers with sequentially numbered plastic tags, triangulated, measured, and photographed loose timbers and other artifacts in situ, and prepared the site for mapping. A levelled two by two meter grid was used to map the site in plan, and from which elevations of hull components were taken. Using this information a site plan was produced which includes a plan view, inboard elevation of the extant port side, and hull curvatures at each of the frames.

The fieldwork results indicate that the Hunting Island Vessel was fitted with a decked live well spanning seven frames in the middle third of the vessel’s seven meter length. The central three floor timbers within the well were single timbers, as at the vessel’s extremities. Elsewhere however, the boat was framed with double floor timbers sistered together to increase each frame’s sided dimension. Watertight bulkheads, which once extended from floor timber to deck beam, were placed 2.58 meters apart and defined the fore and aft extent of the well. Each bulkhead was 7.6 centimeters thick. The boat’s bilge pump was placed against the aft side of the well’s aft watertight bulkhead. Holes in the hull planks allowed seawater to enter and circulate within the live well. All that remains of the well structure now are the holes and a number of loose timbers whose function has yet to be determined.

A pulley block, a single sheave, and some lengths of hemp rope found near the forward end of the well indicate the presence of running rigging and hint at a possible location of a mast. Several concreted iron artifacts may be hull fittings or artifacts associated with standing rigging. Cobbles, 20 to 45 centimeters in diameter, found within and aft of the well location, suggest this was the method of ballasting the boat. The vessel’s rig could not be determined from the available evidence. However, many of the smacks used in the offshore fishery industry during the nineteenth century were either sloop or schooner rigged.

The well area also contained two ceramic sherds and a number of iron artifacts, including two pots associated with food preparation. These indicate a late eighteenth or early nineteenth century provenance, while the presence of the live well on the wreck suggests a period of use after the 1830s. The presence of a live well also suggests that the wreck was a “well smack,” a type of fishing vessel which incorporated a live well. The live well was a new development in the American east coast market fisheries during the 1830s to 1840s that allowed the catch to remain alive during transportation to market thereby ensuring a fresh product. These vessels were an integral part of the southern offshore hook and line fisheries, which supplied fresh fish and seafood to southern Atlantic coastal markets from the 1830s through the latter half of the nineteenth century. Charleston and Savannah were the largest of the southern Atlantic coastal markets which were controlled by Connecticut fishermen, who spent their winters fishing for these and other southern markets. Before the Civil War, markets in these two centers received virtually all the catch from southern Atlantic commercial fishing to keep a steady supply of fresh fish for the southern labor force then being employed in agriculture. By the 1880s Charleston had become the principal port for the southern offshore fishery. The industry was also undergoing a small boom in the South as live wells were the most efficient means of storing fish. However, as ice was becoming commonly available during the latter quarter of the nineteenth century, and at a steadily lower price than before, keeping the catch on ice slowly became the preferred method of transporting fish rather than keeping them alive.

In the southern market fisheries there were two principal types of fishing; offshore or from 10 to 20 miles out, and shore fisheries in the rivers, sounds and tidal marshes. These methods necessitated the use of specific types of vessels especially suited to the environment in which they were used. For offshore use the smack was the principal vessel. These sailing boats, which varied from 10 to 30 tons generally were fitted with a live well and called a well smack. Although the origin of the well smacks lies along the New England shores, the influence of these vessels spread southward and they were, no doubt, copied by local shipwrights and constructed of local materials. Unlike the offshore fishing craft, the boats in use for the shore fisheries were varied, using traditional area small craft types, including the dugouts often fitted with live wells.

Live wells, used in fishing smacks of the American market fisheries on the east coast, were generally of two types, the “decked well,” and the “box well.” Both types involved having a watertight structure within the hull of the vessel which allowed seawater to freely enter through holes drilled in the bottom of the boat, thereby enabling the fish to remain alive during the trip to market. Decked wells were characterized by having a watertight bulkhead at either end, with a deck laid over them. Box wells generally were pyramidal in shape and were not decked.

Having established the vessel’s function, and a time period during which the boat could have been used, further questions need to be addressed. First, was this vessel built along the shores of New England as the majority of these vessels were, or was she crafted of local timber by local shipwrights? Species identification of the hull timbers, when complete, may provide an answer. Second, how did the vessel arrive at its present location? Even 40 years ago the shoreline of Hunting Island was more than 100 meters seaward of its present location. During the nineteenth century it would certainly have been even farther seaward. Yet the wreck lies only 30 meters from the present-day dunes. Did the boat come to an untimely demise as the presence of artifacts associated with day-to-day shipboard life suggests, possibly at the hands of a hurricane like the “Great Storm” of 1893 which deposited a trio of lumber carriers along the South Carolina coast? Or was it dragged into what was then the interior of the island and abandoned? Perhaps we’ll never know. Or perhaps the answer lies with the rest of the wreck which is no doubt now buried elsewhere in the shifting sands of this barrier island.

MORE COMPLETE RESULTS OF THIS PROJECT WILL BE PUBLISHED IN THE CUA SHA 1991 JAMAICA PROCEEDINGS. IF YOU NEED MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT CHRISTOPHER AMER AT (803)777-8170
FIELDSCHOOL TO OFFER DUAL CERTIFICATION

By Lynn Harris

Congratulations to recent SCIAA Underwater Archaeology Fieldsghool graduates — Dorothy Bruner, Gerald Guest, Scott Heavin, John Cercopely, Sally Robinson, Billy Semple, and Wally Ketron.

What diverse backgrounds these students have! Dorothy is a cultural anthropology lecturer and scuba diving instructor at the University of North Carolina in Greensboro. No doubt she can now include some underwater archaeology in both her anthropology and diving classes. Scott Heavin is an archaeology student at the College of Charleston who is considering graduate work in underwater archaeology. John Cercopely and Gerald Guest are local hobby divers from the Goose Creek area. They went to high school together and quite independently enrolled in the same fieldschool. What a coincidence!

The two dive store operators, Sally Robinson (Charleston Scuba) and Billy "Oglesbury" Semple (Wateree Dive Center in Columbia), had some interesting discussions about dive equipment quality and prices. Sally excelled in the open water session with her copious fieldnotes and ship construction identification. Wally Ketron, a Tennessee native, attended the fieldschool because he is interested in initiating an avocational archaeology survey project on some unique sites in the Holston River near Knoxville. There is apparently no state underwater archaeology unit in the state, so this project has the potential to be a valuable contribution. Good luck to you all in your various endeavors!

The fieldschool was also attended by two very important guests, Martin Dean and Jim Radz. Martin is the head of the Archaeological Diving Unit at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He gave a lively and interesting talk on their projects, educational programs, and the role of sport divers in archaeology in the UK. Jim Radz, who lives in Florida, is an avocational archaeologist and the US administrator for the NAS (Nautical Archaeology Society). He has also been involved in co-ordinating NAS certification courses for divers in Florida. The aim of the society is to advance education in nautical archaeology at all levels on an international basis, to improve standards of conservation, and to encourage participation by members of the public. Although the NAS is based in the UK, a significant portion of members are from other countries. Members receive a newsletter containing a wealth of information on conferences, expeditions and research all over the world. There is also the option of receiving the International Journal of Nautical Archaeology (IJNA). This journal is internationally recognized as one of the most important publications in underwater archaeology.

NAS also offers an underwater archaeology certification scheme for sport divers which is internationally creditable. SCIAA has recently been incorporated into this certification scheme and from now on will be offering the option of dual certification at our annual fieldschool for a somewhat higher fee. Not only can students receive the local SC Archaeological Sport Diver or Instructor Certificate, but also Part I of the NAS International Scheme. This certification scheme consists of Parts I to IV which have been designed as a series of components with increasing academic and practical archaeological content. Part I is almost identical to our current SCIAA fieldschool and involves theoretical concepts in archaeology and site mapping during a dry or pool session. This component is also open to non-divers. A short archaeological site survey and written report, in addition to attendance at two full day conferences, are the requirements for Part II. Part III involves participation in all aspects of a professional archaeological project for two weeks (or the option of a series of weekends). The highest grade of this certification scheme is Part IV which requires the student to supervise archaeological work on a site and at the termination to prepare a final report to publication standard. To qualify for Part IV, students must have worked on at least three different archaeological sites for a minimum total of twelve full weeks in the time since they completed their Part II certificate.

These NAS certification courses have already been offered in India, Ireland, Bermuda, Canada, USA (Florida) and the UK. Having a common basic standard for underwater archaeology courses will be an obvious advantage for sport divers wishing to be involved in projects outside the state or their country. Any divers in South Carolina who are interested in this certification should contact me (Lynn Harris) at the SCIAA Field Office, 40 Patriots Point Rd., Mount Pleasant, SC 29464 or call at 881-8536. We will be running another fieldschool in the fall of '92.
JOE AND THE ALLIGATOR

By Carl Naylor

Joe Beatty said it was the biggest alligator he ever saw. With his hands no more than a foot apart, he showed us that he was “this close” to it. He said the alligator looked mean and nasty and had a smile like a car salesman, but when he shot one of his fierce looks at the alligator (something he usually reserves for staff meetings) it scurried away in fright. The rest of us are wondering whether Joe will pass the eye test portion of his physical exam this year.

Don’t get me wrong, Joe is a good diver, one of the best on our staff. He holds advanced dive certifications. He acts as diving officer for the Columbia office. He also knows enough not to drink too much coffee before a dry suit dive. But after the incident when he tried to get the jon boat up that mountain, well . . . [See the April 1991 issue of The Goody Bag.]

The encounter with the alligator happened last fall during one of our underwater archaeology field schools. These schools were designed by Lynn Harris with two purposes in mind. First, to teach divers the rudiments of underwater archaeology in the hope they will gain a better awareness of our underwater historic resources. Second, the schools provide one heck of a good excuse for us to get out of our offices and do some diving.

On this day, we had a group of divers in the Cooper River for their open water training. We were anchored over the site of a wreck and the divers were getting a first hand look at the fine points of ship construction, going “ooh” and “aah” through their regulators as they recognized things like scarphs and futtocks and butt joints, when Joe, who had been acting as a guide for the divers, hurriedly came to the surface with his story about the alligator. “Biggest alligator I ever saw,” he blurted out. The relieved looks on our faces must have surprised him. Before he took the regulator our of his mouth we thought he had been mumbling something about a “figure skater.”

A quick conference was convened to decide whether we should recall the divers in light of the figure skater, er . . . biggest ‘gator Joe ever saw. Since the encounter happened some distance from the wreck and the alligator was probably more freaked by the encounter than Joe was, it was decided to continue with the training.

In the meantime we discussed what we knew about the habits of alligators. We knew that they were not generally aggressive or hostile unless the alligator has infants in a nest and decides you are a threat to them.

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We knew that these nests are often in nearby marshes and that entrances to them can be detected by the mashed marsh grass roadways and mud ramps they use to get into and out of the water. Several known attacks on divers have been attributed to anxious mother alligators. We also knew that swimming or hovering over an alligator can be hazardous since the ‘gator sees this as a threat to it getting to the surface and its air supply. I’ve never heard of a diver being attacked by a ‘gator getting to the surface for air, but, well, it sort of just makes sense.

This led to a discussion of what we knew about the habits of Joe Beatty. We knew he was not generally aggressive or hostile. And, he certainly has no maternal instincts. At least none we knew of.

All this talk must have had a soothing effect on Joe. He decided to don his gear and go look for the alligator. As he was about to enter the water I reminded him of the time we had an appetizer of alligator meat at a local seafood restaurant. “Don’t suppose the ‘gator knows you are one of his kin, do ya?” I asked. He gave me this you-gotta-be-kidding look. I shrugged my shoulders. Joe then decided it might be a better idea to stay in the boat and watch for the ‘gator from the surface. Afterall, it has to come up for air sooner or later, he said.

Sure enough, after a few minutes the ‘gator surfaced near the shore with its nostrils flaring and its eyes glaring at us. Joe swears it was breathing fire. Since only its head was above water it was hard to say how long this monster was, but it slowly swam toward shore, fatigued and confused from its encounter with Joe no doubt. We all stared as it hauled its body onto the bank of the river and into the warm rays of the sun — all three feet of it.

Joe still tells the story about coming face to face with the ‘gator — how it looked mean and nasty and had a smile like a car salesman — though he leaves out the part about it being the biggest alligator he ever saw. Usually, anyway.

And, he especially likes the nickname of “Gator Joe” we’ve given him. He thinks it will make us forget about that Jon boat incident.

Hobby Divers Receive Awards

Two important awards were received by sport divers at the Annual Archaeological Society of South Carolina Conference held during March Columbia. Hampton Shuping from Conway was awarded “Distinguished Underwater Archaeologist of Year” for his role in initiating and assisting in directing the Waccamaw-Richmond Hill Waterfront Project during 1991. His enthusiasm, organizational skills, dedication, and high level of archaeological work was awarded certificates of appreciation.

Jimmy Moss from Abbeville received the “Hobby Diver of the Year” status. This is a new kind of award given to a licensed hobby diver who has regularly submitted high quality quarterly reports on his/her sites or finds in South Carolina. Jimmy’s reports were exceptional in that he always sent photographs, drawings, and accurate maps showing site locations. He also discovered what may be a new shipwreck site in the Cooper River and accompanied SCIAA staff on a dive trip to us show the location.

Congratulations to both of you! You have made valuable contributions to the understanding, management, and preservation of our underwater heritage in South Carolina.

Left:

Jimmy Moss receives “Hobby Dive of the Year” Award. This is a new award given by the Underwater Archaeology Division.
The Book Locker: A New Book on Archaeology Underwater

By Lynn Harris

There is some good news for the archaeological and diving community - the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) in the United Kingdom has recently published an important book which contains a wealth of information on the principles and practice of underwater archaeology titled Archaeology Underwater - The NAS Guide to Principles and Practice (Nautical Archaeology Society and Archetype Publications Ltd, UK 1992). This publication is aimed at a wide audience including sport divers, students, avocational and professional archaeologists.

The layout of this guide follows a logical order. The first four chapters deal with concepts in archaeology such as definitions of archaeology, archaeological sites, and how to become involved in the discipline. Not only does this book define archaeology but also “what is not archaeology,” describing the basic differences between archaeology, commercial salvage and recreational collecting. As this is a book written by British archaeologists the advice about involvement in archaeology is predominantly applicable to the UK. In case you are considering an archaeological diving vacation in Europe (and who is ‘nt! ), there is also mention of organizations and publications that can put you in touch with projects requiring volunteers both inside and outside the UK.

Chapters five to ten covers fieldwork practices in detail. This includes everything from search techniques and planning projects to position fixing, recording, surveying and sampling methods. Search techniques include discussions of swim searches as well as remote sensing surveys and associated equipment. Important project planning considerations such as costs, selecting suitable fieldwork strategies, dive safety, equipment, conservation of recovered artifacts, publication of project results, use of volunteers and specialists, team organization, and other logistical problems are addressed.

The chapter on archaeological recording not only answers the questions of what and why it is necessary to record sites, but also provides explicit information and examples of pre-printed recording forms, artifact tagging and numbering systems, and the use of computers as part of the recording system. Detailed suggestions for observations and measurements of timbers from shipwrecks and structures covered in this chapter will be useful to anybody who has an interest in working on these types of sites. As there are an abundance of dock structures and watercraft litter the rivers of South Carolina, this will be a particularly helpful guide to both avocational and professional archaeologists in our state.

The chapter on surveying or mapping a site lists the equipment and methods used and explains the basic theory of setting up datum points. Information on position fixing, to record the location of a site, includes descriptions of the various types of equipment which are currently available as well as the accuracy, relative costs, and expertise required of the operation personnel. The equipment discussed includes compasses, sextants, transits, theodolites, electronic distances measurers (EDMs), Loran C, and satellite systems like the Global Positioning System (GPS).

Chapters ten and eleven cover sampling, excavation and monitoring of archaeological sites. Methods and equipment are described for these activities with specific emphasis on the potential for site disturbance and destruction. The importance of monitoring changes through time on a site is stressed. This section also describes what one ought to observe or measure to have a better understanding of the rate of change.

Post - fieldwork analysis of data and publication and presentation of project results are discussed in chapters twelve and thirteen. Practical guidance for drawing site plans and artifacts is given. Particular attention is devoted to drawing pottery, bottles, ordnance, and timbers. Advice on the analysis of data includes discussion on the value of historical and archaeological literature research, ethnological records, and experimental archaeology. Report preparation, an essential conclusion to any project, is mentioned with ideas about publication forms for different audiences, text layout, and the use of illustrative materials. Presenting work in lectures at conferences and other public forums is discussed. There is some amusing commentry about how to deal with the media and keep control of journalists who are dying to hear exciting words like “treasure” or “cannibalism”!

Appendices provide information on certification courses run by NAS, methods of constructing an air lift and water dredge, how to identify various kinds of ordnance, addresses of useful institutions associated with archaeology in the UK, and an extensive bibliography for further reading.

This comprehensive publication is well illustrated with photographs and drawings of somewhat short, stocky divers conducting various archaeological exercises. The writing style is easy to read and understand, with a refreshing absence of the usual jargon often associated with publications dealing with archaeological concepts and methods. The greatest strength of this book is the coverage of fieldwork practices. The authors objectively discuss the options, as well as the pros and cons of various fieldwork techniques and equipment. This publication would be an ideal textbook for an underwater archaeology class and a valuable addition to the library of any sport diver who is interested in pursuing archaeology as a hobby. Attached to the newsletter is a mail order form. Send in your check or money order of $40 ($30 for members of NAS) now to the address on the form and receive a 1992 copy hot off the press!

This book may also be sold through vendors in the U.S.A. at a later date. We will publish this information in the next newsletter.
"ARCHAEOLOGY UNDERWATER"
THE NAS GUIDE TO PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE

THIS IMPORTANT NEW BOOK, PUBLISHED BY THE NAS AND ARCHETYPE PUBLICATIONS OF LONDON, IS NOW AVAILABLE

INTRODUCTORY PRICE TO NAS MEMBERS

£15
(If picked up)

£18 / $35
including packing and postage by surface mail

£22 / $42 airmail

(The bookstore price is £25!)

THIS OFFER LASTS UNTIL 1ST JUNE 1992

Archaeology Underwater can be picked up at any NAS Part I or II Training Course, the NAS Stand at the C-PEX Diving Exhibition on the 28-29th March, the NAS AGM on the 25th April or, by arrangement, from NAS Merchandising.

ARCHAEOLOGY UNDERWATER MAIL-ORDER FORM

Send to:-
E T Perry, NAS Merchandising, 17 Cowdray Park Road, Bexhill on Sea, East Sussex TN39 4ND

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PLEASE NOTE
Only one copy per member
This concession only applies to those members who have paid for 1992
Your order will not be processed unless it contains a cheque or money order for the right amount in pounds sterling or US Dollars, and is made out to the "Nautical Archaeology Society"
BRIEFS

* Licensed hobby divers should please remember to send in quarterly reports on artifacts or fossils recovered during dive trips. Even if you don't recover anything, we need to know this - it is also valuable information to help us manage South Carolina's underwater cultural resources. We will not renew your license again if you do not abide by the licensing contract: divers keep the artifacts, but SCIAA and the State Museum need the information. In case you are afraid that reporting discoveries will result in the state taking your finds, this is an unnecessary fear. The 1991 Underwater Antiquities Act specifies that the hobby diver keeps 100 per cent of her/his finds.

* The SCIAA Underwater Archaeology Division has a new Administrative Assistant, Elizabeth Collins, who is replacing Jamie Brown. If you need any hobby diver license or renewal forms, report forms, fieldschool applications or information about our licensing system or educational program you can contact either Elizabeth Collins in Columbia at (803) 777-8170 or Lynn Harris in Charleston at (803) 881-8536.

* Dive stores, dive clubs and dive instructors: Do you want us to send or personally deliver a package of license applications, renewals, posters, pamphlets, archaeology manuals etc. to you for your customers, students or members? Simply call Elizabeth or Lynn and let us know how many you need. Also, are you interested in starting to issue weekend hobby licenses yourself? Call and find out more about it before the busy summer diving season starts.

* Do you want to join an avocational underwater archaeology project? Jimmy Moss is starting a survey of sites in the West Branch of the Cooper River starting on the weekend of 25 July. This will involve locating and accurately recording any fossil, pre-historic and historic sites between the trestle bridge and Mepkin Abbey. Only a limited number of participants can be accommodated aboard the boats. Preference will be given to divers who have been through SCIAA fieldschool and already have the necessary skills and experience. Contact Jimmy Moss at (803) 446-3868 or 459-2722. If you have low visibility diving experience, drawing abilities, or simply want to learn more about boatbuilding you might want join the ongoing Waccamaw River Project near Georgetown. Call Hampton Shuping at (803) 248-3717 or 248-1223 for a schedule of the dives.

* The next SCIAA fieldschool will be held in over two weekends - August 28 (Friday) and 29 (Saturday), and September 19 and 20 (Saturday and Sunday). Let us know if you are interested in participating. Application forms will be sent to all the local dive stores. This fieldschool will offer dual SCIAA/NAS Part I certification and is open to divers and non-divers.

* The report on “The Waccamaw-Richmond Waterfront Project 1991: Laurel Hill Barge,” has been printed. It is available free of charge to volunteers who worked on the project last year. Call Elizabeth Collins at (803) 777-8170.
The South Carolina Institute of Archaeology and Anthropology (SCIAA) and Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) will be offering a dual certification field school for sport divers and non-divers. The field school will consist of classroom lectures, a pool session, open water dives in the West Branch of the Cooper River and a day in Charleston at SCIAA's field office to learn artifact identification, photography and drawing. Low visibility diving experience is advisable for the open water dives.

DATES:
August 28-29 Columbia Campus of USC
September 19-20 Cooper River/Charleston

COSTS:
SCIAA Certification = $70
NAS Certification = $30

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT
LYNN HARRIS AT (803) 881-8536
OR ELIZABETH COLLINS (803) 777-8170
DIVERS: We need contributions for the *Goody Bag*. Write us a letter or article about your ideas, projects, and diving experiences in South Carolina. Photographs and drawings are also most welcome. Remember this newsletter serves not only as a means of communication between divers and archaeologists, but also to keep you in touch with divers in different parts of the state.