

Fall 2008 Recovery Plan

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The Primary goal of the 2008 *QAR* Project Expedition is to continue the implementation of the full recovery plan begun in 2006, which is to recover all remains from the *Queen Anne's Revenge* shipwreck site and secure them in safe storage and the care of the *QAR* conservation laboratory on the campus of East Carolina University. This has been undertaken to remove sensitive archaeological evidence related to colonial North Carolina and its maritime history including the internationally recognized pirate Blackbeard and his crew.

Objectives include:

- The excavation and complete recovery of artifacts from seventy 5- x 5- foot grid units from the midship and forward hold area.
- One of the ship's largest main deck cannons (C13) will be recovered for close examination and safe storage.
- A thorough investigation of the ship's main mast rigging attachments will provide insight into how the vessel was constructed and what happened at the time the pirate flagship wrecked.
- Working in the midship's area will also allow a comparison of artifacts lying on the ship's deck, such as cannonballs rigging elements with those that are likely to be deep in the hold.
- In keeping with past discoveries, artifacts will no doubt include the unexpected, such as the whole wine bottle found nestled amongst the ballast deep in the bilge, the delicate nesting cups for weighing gold and medicine, and the bones of piglets and cattle showing what pirates feasted on, all of which have been found previously in this area during test excavations.

This year's 8-week expedition runs from September 15th - November 7th, and will bring the project past the halfway point in terms of site area covered. Excavations are designed to skirt the main mound because of its complexity. It consists of two large anchors, 7 cannons, a grapnel hook, and countless ballast and other objects overlying intact hull structure. Storage at the *QAR* conservation facility at ECU currently does not have the capacity to handle large artifacts of this number and magnitude.

QAR expeditions take place in the fall of each year because the weather (with the exception of when hurricanes pass by) is, by far, the best in terms of calm winds and seas. This is also when *R/V Shell Point* is available, which provides an ideal work platform with its large pump for excavation and is offered to the *QAR* project at negligible costs. With experienced staff and proven equipment, the expedition is one of the most efficient, accurate, and cost effective underwater archaeological teams in the nation. The field recovery over the course of 8 weeks will generate a backlog of archaeological materials and data that will require the remaining part of the year to catalogue, process, and provide an interim findings report.

This year's expedition would not be possible without the participation and support of agencies and institutions in partnership with the Department of Cultural Resources and under the direction of its Underwater Archaeology Branch. Participants include NC Marine Fisheries, US Coast Guard - Ft. Macon, NC Maritime Museum, Ft. Macon State Park, and Nautilus Productions.