

**Management Summary for North Carolina Shipwreck 31CR314,
*Queen Anne's Revenge***

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**North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
Division of Archives and History
Underwater Archaeology Branch**

PREFACE

On November 21, 1996, the private company Intersal Inc. located a shipwreck near Beaufort Inlet, North Carolina. The site dates to the early eighteenth century, making it the oldest recorded shipwreck in North Carolina. Since its discovery, researchers have attempted to determine whether it is the remains of a vessel lost in the inlet in 1718 by the pirate captain Edward Thatch, better known as Blackbeard. Mounting physical evidence and the absence of another shipwreck candidate provide strong support that this shipwreck is Blackbeard's flagship *Queen Anne's Revenge*. While a definitive artifact has not been located directly tying the shipwreck remains to the historic vessel or its piratical crew refer to the site as *Queen Anne's Revenge* throughout the following pages.

This management summary is an excerpt from the Management Plan for North Carolina Shipwreck 31CR314 [Formerly 0003BUI], *Queen Anne's Revenge*, written under the supervision of project director Mark Wilde-Ramsing of the North Carolina Underwater Archaeology Unit.

"It looks as if the graveyard of the Atlantic yielded one of the most exciting and historically significant discoveries ever located along our coast. The state of North Carolina is working to protect the site and will do everything we can to that end. We look forward to the day when all North Carolinians can see these exciting artifacts for themselves."

-Governor James B. Hunt announcing the discovery of what is believed to be *Queen Anne's Revenge*, at a press conference in Raleigh, North Carolina, March 3, 1997.

MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Researchers have completed two years of intense study of North Carolina shipwreck 31CR314, during which they made great strides toward understanding its nature, origin, and significance. Based on their findings, there can be little doubt that this shipwreck is Blackbeard's flagship *Queen Anne's Revenge*, lost at Beaufort Inlet in 1718. The location of the shipwreck, its tantalizing array of early eighteenth-century artifacts, and the lack of any other possible candidates from the historical record strongly support this conclusion.



Using historical chart overlays, the position of the shipwreck corresponds with the offshore bar near the entrance to the early eighteenth-century channel. David Harriot, who sailed with Blackbeard, testified that "the said Thatch's ship *Queen Anne's Revenge* run a-ground off of the Bar of Topsail Inlet." Royal Navy captain Ellis Brand of HMS *Lyme* corroborated this location with his own report, stating that the ship was "Stuck upon the bar att the entrance of the harbour and is lost." The search for

ship candidates in this area has been extensive and has produced a list of ten vessels other than *Queen Anne's Revenge* sunk during the eighteenth century. All of these ships were merchant vessels, and none were large enough or mounted the armament suggested by historical and archaeological evidence.

Artifacts recovered from the shipwreck provide a reasonably narrow time period from the late seventeenth to early eighteenth century. The most diagnostic of those materials include:

- Bronze bell - Date of manufacture 1709

- Brass blunderbuss - Inspected between 1672 and 1702
- Pewterware - Produced by craftsmen in business from 1690 to 1733
- Cannons - Low-slung, tapered trunnions indicate a manufacture date prior to 1716
- Surveying instruments - Identical examples are found in Stone's treatise (1723)
- Wine bottles - Based on existing typologies date to circa 1710

The artifact assemblage not only points to the correct time period but compares favorably with artifacts reported from *Whydah* Galley, a known pirate vessel lost a year before the loss of *Queen Anne's Revenge*. The cannon and munitions, gun parts, and pewterware recovered from the Beaufort Inlet shipwreck are similar to those from the *Whydah*. Other artifacts such as the lead cannon aprons, decorative lead tacks, dividers, and serpentine side plate are virtually identical.



Given its probable association with Blackbeard, an internationally known historical figure who is interwoven into the fabric of North Carolina lore, this shipwreck and its importance to the state cannot be overemphasized. As an archaeological time capsule representing early-eighteenth-century maritime activities in the New World, the shipwreck can shed light on the period's naval armaments and warfare, ship construction and repair, colonial provisioning, the slave trade, and shipboard life. The site is an artificial reef created nearly three centuries ago that provides a valuable opportunity to study biological growth, sand movement, and mineralogy. General questions can be addressed concerning piracy and pirate lifestyles, as well as more intriguing ones dealing with Blackbeard's activities and actions. The shipwreck's significance is greatly magnified because of its connection to Blackbeard, the most notorious representative of the Golden Age of Piracy.



The *Queen Anne's Revenge* project provides a unique opportunity to promote public education and tourism. Since the public recognizes the pirate and romantic interest in the subject of piracy is keen, particularly among students, the shipwreck will create interest in classroom subjects relating to history,

biology, geology, cartography, underwater archaeology, and artifact conservation. Excavation of the shipwreck and exhibits displaying its remains will bring tourists to eastern North Carolina and can produce substantial economic benefits for the region and the state.

Recognizing the significance of *Queen Anne's Revenge*, North Carolina's secretary of the Department of Cultural Resources (DCR) Betty Ray McCain has declared the shipwreck site a protected area. This designation calls for the development of a management plan to guide all access, recovery, and conservation of Site 31CR314. The plan specifies that all artifacts shall be kept as an intact collection in an appropriate repository. The declaration was a result, in part, of a memorandum of agreement (MOA) among DCR, Intersal Inc., and Maritime Research Institute (MRI), a nonprofit corporation formed to work on the project. The MOA created a unique partnership for the purpose of preserving and protecting the site.

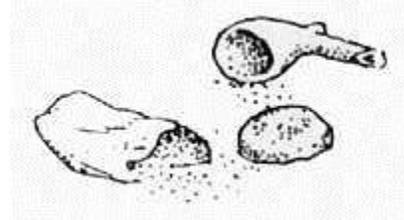
This complex shipwreck site contains a large quantity of varied artifacts that require a concerted effort to record, recover, analyze, conserve, and exhibit. Scientists have also determined that the shipwreck has been repeatedly exposed and buried as a result of inlet dynamics. For most of the time since 1718, the shipwreck remains have been covered by sand. *Queen Anne's Revenge* is currently exposed, however, which provides a rare opportunity to explore and retrieve its remains at a minimal cost. The exposed site is vulnerable to catastrophic storms, such as hurricanes, and the impacts from such storms could significantly alter the shipwreck and cause severe loss of materials and information.



The management plan provides four options for the protection, preservation, and study of *Queen Anne's Revenge*.

1. Nonintervention - No further work would be conducted on the site; monitoring and protection would be minimal. No monetary costs will be incurred.
2. In Situ Preservation - This option consists of covering exposed portions of the site to diminish deterioration and the likelihood of damage from storms and human interference. Occasional site monitoring would be needed. Initial costs are estimated at \$100,000 per year with the cost of annual monitoring and maintenance dependent on the condition of the site.
3. Maintenance and Exploration (limited recovery) - Principal activities would involve maintaining a surveillance system, actively monitoring the site, and mitigating threats to the site by stabilizing or recovering artifacts and archaeological information. Exploratory site testing may continue. The current annual funding level of \$250,000 will sustain this option.
4. Excavation (large-scale recovery) - This option involves the recovery of all or a large portion of the site's cannons, anchors, hull structure, and associated materials and information. Costs for staff, equipment, a conservation laboratory, and exhibit hall is currently estimated at \$6 million dollars.

By selecting the Nonintervention option, a decline in the archaeological integrity of *Queen Anne's Revenge* will occur and could result in irretrievable damage to the site. In addition, there will be little public benefit, and the responsibility for research and recovery of artifacts, if it ever occurs, will be regulated to future generations. In-Situ Preservation may provide some protection for exposed remains but is deemed a temporary measure. While preparing and covering the shipwreck involves predictable costs, monitoring the site and redeposition may end up being just as costly as recovery options. Delaying recovery may also escalate costs and diminish public interest.



The sooner sensitive materials on the site can be properly recorded and recovered using the highest scientific standards, the more likely it is that the maximum information will be available for study, interpretation, and display. Therefore, the Excavation (large-scale recovery) option is recommended. A substantial amount of funding will be required to fully excavate, conserve, and exhibit the shipwreck's remains, whether that is accomplished in a few years or decades. If these funds are not immediately available through government appropriations, it is recommended that the Maintenance and Exploration (limited recovery) option be implemented. This will obligate a small, full-time staff with supporting resources to monitor the condition of *Queen Anne's Revenge*, deal with emergency situations, and continue the laboratory treatment and analysis of recovered artifacts. As a consequence, public interest will remain high, which should generate public and private funding to support the future excavation of one of North Carolina's most remarkable cultural resources.

"This site contains the classic elements of a colonial shipwreck with cannons, anchors and a main ballast pile. Rather than being dispersed over a wide area, these components still retain the same association on the sea bed that they had before the ship sank. What researchers have recovered so far appears to be just the 'tip of the iceberg' in terms of the exciting things that have yet to be found. The presence of the brass instruments and gold dust suggest that the ship was not thoroughly salvaged after it grounded and before it was abandoned. Together with its association with Blackbeard, this shipwreck is an extremely important underwater discovery."

-Dr. Roger C. Smith, after making a reconnaissance dive on *Queen Anne's Revenge* on March 12, 1999. As Florida's state underwater archaeologist, Dr. Smith has explored and managed many sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century vessels lying off the coast of Florida.