

Tonight will be a party just for the MAGS youth members. December will be a party for everyone.



Blackbeard: A Pirate of the Caribbean

By Sherida Eddlemon Helms



Pirates, that one simple word invokes romantic images of damsels in distress on the high seas, seas and peg-legged, parrot-toting, rum-drinking men engaged an infamous search for gold. The “Golden Age of Piracy” left its mark in the romantic legends of these outlaws. Movie characters like Captain Jack Sparrow in the blockbuster movie, *Pirates of the Caribbean*, shows that today’s audiences are still in love with the mysteries that surround these privateers.

Chop away the shroud of legends and what do we know as facts about the pirate, Blackbeard? Historians, and archaeologists are trying to piece together the life of this true pirate separating fact from fiction. Edward Teach alias Edward Thatch was nicknamed Blackbeard. He had a huge black beard that was known to have woven hemp and matches that he often lit when engaged in battle. His prey of choice was the coastal settlements and ships of the Atlantic coast of North America and the West Indies.

Blackbeard’s flagship was the Queen Anne’s Revenge. In true pirate fashion he took his flagship. In 1717 he overwhelmed the French slave ship *La Concorde* in the eastern Caribbean.. He renamed her and the Queen

Anne’s Revenge was reborn as a pirate ship. In 1718 Blackbeard ran the Queen Anne’s Revenge aground in four feet of water in Beaufort Islet, North Carolina in June, 1718. As the ship slowly broken apart, Blackbeard and his 300 plus crew off loaded the valuables and scattered into the country side. Blackbeard was captured and hung on November 22, 1718.

For 278 years the Queen Anne’s Revenge lay on the ocean’s floor shrouded in mystery. In 1996, a private shipwreck recovery company, Intersal, Inc. located in 22 feet of water what they believed to be Blackbeard’s flagship. Underwater archaeology has many problems that challenge the preservation of artifacts. As objects lay on the ocean floor over time they become encrusted with salt. Salt will react to oxygen when objects are brought to the surface and artifacts will simply fall apart. Objects have to soak in a desalting tank sometimes as long as three years before they can be safely studied.

The Queen Anne’s Revenge is slowly revealing her secrets about pirate life and about life in both the New and Old World. Isotope analysis finger prints where the lead from on the ship can from. One of the wooden anchors was made of black olive wood, Non traditional cannon balls were also found along with the “normal” ones. These cannon balls had spikes to help tear down a ship’s rigging. Geoscientists are checking the geochemical compositions of the ballast stones to try and track when the ship sailed.

Some many people when they think of archaeology they think of Hollywood’s Indiana Jones. Archaeology is the study of hidden temples in the jungle or sandy, dusty pyramids in the desert. Archaeology is so much more. Even the pirates of the Caribbean reveal their secrets thanks to the careful study to today’s archaeologists.