

# ADMAT Newsletter



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## The Third Newsletter

By Dr. Simon Q. Spooner

President ADMAT, ADMAT-FRANCE & Vice President ADMAT USA

I am delighted to introduce you to the third issue of our new format newsletter and to thank all of you who kindly commented on how much you liked the issues.

Since our last newsletter a number of exciting developments have occurred. Work continued on the French 1690's shipwreck called *The Tile Wreck* site which we believe sunk between 1720 and 1723 in current water depths of 2-3 metres off Monte Cristi. The finding of the ships rudder during one of the field schools was a major find and for some students it was something which they could only dream of as this 12 ft long section slowly became uncovered. The research into the construction sheds new light on ship construction of the period and so far nothing like this rudder has ever been found and documented.

The latest press release in February 2009 regarding the identification of *The Carron Wreck* as *Le Dragon* was an important announcement. It yet again demonstrates how the study of the taphonomic wrecking process of an unknown shipwreck and analysis of artefacts can give enough clues for our research team to find it in the archives. Florence Prudhomme and Dr. Francois Gendron over a year researched this ship and it was an excellent piece of team work.

In January 2009 the maritime archaeology conference held at the ADMAT Centre went well with over 60 people in attendance, which was televised and shown nationwide. This was followed by the special "Informe" program which gave 10 minutes coverage on national TV channel.

2009 will be an interesting year for all at ADMAT and as usual a unique opportunity for those who wish to actively get involved to take part, and to assist in our quest in protecting these historic shipwrecks.

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## ADMAT's New Artefact Handling Course Is a Success

During the last six months we have introduced a new field school course. This course is designed for non divers and divers alike, but for non divers or those just learning and are not experienced enough yet to work on site, it gives them an excellent opportunity to take part. Our new Artefact Handling course gives the student much more hands on experience than the previous one which was an integral part of the Underwater Survey Diver Course. Students can now come for this non diving course for one or more weeks.



Photograph 1: Student Sheri Philips on ADMAT's Artefact Handling Course (© ADMAT- Rami).

ADMAT is a Non Profit Organisation, based in Surbiton, UK.

ADMAT USA is an American Charity (Section 501 (c) 3), based in Columbus, Ohio, USA.

ADMAT- FRANCE is a non profit organisation at the Institut de Paléontologie Humaine, Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris.

ADMAT USA & ADMAT FRANCE are sub divisions of the Anglo ~ Danish Maritime Archaeological Team.

## My Time on *The Tile Wreck*

By John Downing – Student.

A lifelong interest in archaeology and a recent passion for diving brought me to the science of Maritime Archaeology. As I learned how to dive, the thought of exploring shipwrecks intrigued me as it does so many others. Then, after reading an article on maritime archaeology in *Archaeology Magazine*, I thought: Could I contribute to our knowledge of history by diving on wrecks and have some fun too?

After researching maritime archaeological field schools for over a year I decided upon the Anglo-Danish Maritime Archaeological Team (ADMAT). Particularly because of the fine work they had done in the Dominican Republic and in the Florida Keys on other shipwrecks. They also offered a unique certification with the ADMAT Survey Diver course which was of interest to me.

In April, 2008 I applied to ADMAT for a field school to be held that winter. Shortly thereafter I received an email from Dr. Simon Spooner asking me if I would spend two weeks with him in May working on *The Tile Wreck*. I decided to go for it and made a plan, with Simon's help, to get to the D.R. in less than two weeks. I would not only work to accomplish the ADMAT Search Survey Diver certification but also Search and Recovery Diver.

Upon my arrival in Santiago I was met by Simon and his associate Rami Rodriguez who would become a dear friend through the two weeks training. The first two days in the ADMAT center was spent learning how to scientifically record artifacts. This was the beginning of my Survey Diver training. As a sample I used seven granite blocks from the cargo of *The Tile Wreck*. These blocks were in a conservation tank placed in the exact alignment as they had been found in the wreck's hold. Afterwards I drew a plan of the artifacts positions and recorded my measurements. This was followed by performing the same routine with a one meter grid of pottery shards.

After demonstrating to Simon I was capable of recording artefacts we dove on the wreck. We spent the first four hours underwater removing sandbags to uncover the grid of one meter squares which lay over it. This preparation was a good orientation for me and an opportunity for Simon to



Photograph 2: The granite block cargo of *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT - Spooner).

evaluate my diving skill level. My next task was to record a 1 meter square which contained seven granite blocks. Doing this underwater wasn't quite as easy as dry land! After we had finished this we set up the archaeological water dredge, screen, and hoses in preparation for excavating a nearby 1m square which was covered with sand.

During the next nine days we continued our work spending 3 to 4 hours each day underwater. Rami and Simon continued to excavate their squares while I finished my recording and then recovering the granite blocks. Learning to truss and then lift them was part of my Search and Recovery Certification and by the time I was finished with the square I certainly had a lot of practice trussing and raising artifacts. Once 'my' square was excavated I began assisting with the other excavations.

By removing the blocks we uncovered a portion of the ships hull which Simon studied. Other artifacts recovered were clay pipes, floor tiles, and pottery shards.



Photograph 3: Terracotta floor tiles being uncovered on *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT - Downing).

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One of the most important artifacts we recovered during my stay was the smallest. No, not a gold doubloon, but one tiny pewter button whose unique design may contribute a little more to our knowledge of this ship and perhaps someday we shall know her name.

Throughout the two weeks we were very busy. Up early for breakfast, preparing our gear and equipment, loading the truck, loading the boat, completing our day's dives, unloading the boat, you get the picture. After returning to the center we filled tanks for the next day, cleaned artifacts, recorded them, had dinner, a lecture, and if time was available a movie before retiring for the night.

My time at the ADMAT center was certainly interesting and educational. By working directly with Simon both underwater and in the lab I was able to learn a great deal and gain valuable experience. An additional benefit was living in a small Dominican city far away from the tourists and resorts having an opportunity to experience the culture. But most important was the satisfaction of knowing that I had spent my time contributing to our knowledge of our underwater heritage, very gratifying indeed.



Photograph 4: Above Student John Downing finding a French Faienceware handle to a cup on *The Tile Wreck*.  
Photograph 5: Below the same sherd during the recording process (© ADMAT - Spooner).



## My Time on *The Tile Wreck*

By Leslie O'Donnell – Student.

“Think you can handle some more?” Rami asked. “Oh sure, why not?” Even as I was saying the words I was thinking about every cartoon I had ever seen where the character holds on for dear life to the fire hose as it flings them around. I suddenly discovered that I had a better understanding of how they felt. But it was completely worth it - I was in one of the outdoor conservation tanks, using the hose to clean two anchors and three cannons, all from the 17<sup>th</sup> century – an activity I consider to be a highlight of my life.



Photograph 6: Student Leslie hard at work documenting French musket balls (© ADMAT - Spooner).

It was a humbling experience, working with the artifacts reclaimed from the ocean by the ADMAT. Having the opportunity to handle small pieces of delicate faience ware, cannon balls with the fleur de lis emblazoned on them and terracotta floor tiles with the imprints of both man and beast forever held on their surface is most assuredly an experience that a very few people can legitimately and legally lay claim.

I was fortunate enough to spend three weeks with members of the ADMAT in the Dominican Republic working on the *Tile Wreck*, measuring, recording, cleaning and cataloguing some of the artifacts recovered from the wreck site as part of the Artefact Handling Course, thus making myself one of those select few. Regardless of the tropical storms, abundance of mosquitoes and inconsistent electricity, I participated in a field school, the calibre of which none of my peers can lay even the slightest claim, and I can not say thank you enough to Dr. Spooner and ADMAT for the opportunity.

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My main task during my time was to record the individual terracotta floor tiles in the computer system. Working one-on-one with Dr. Spooner, I learned about the different materials used in the tiles, their possible one-time purpose and the techniques used in their construction. As mentioned earlier, some of these tiles bore the fingerprints of the masons and I was simply unable to stop grinning the first time I placed my fingertips into those left by men who lived and died a few hundred years before I was even born. Otherwise, while I was down there, we entertained and educated church officials about maritime archaeology and the work being done by ADMAT.



Photograph 7: Student Leslie holding a 24 pound cannon ball with the fleur de lis from a 1670's French shipwreck (© ADMAT – Spooner).

At other times we would have locals come by, either wanting us to help find land crabs, or to learn about ADMAT's work. I went to the local English school and talked to the students and teachers about the States and the difference between archaeology and treasure hunting. I went to a banana plantation and enjoyed coffee Dominican style (lots of sugar), I went snorkelling and to a casual game of baseball with some professional players who were visiting home.

In reality, a great deal happened during my stay with ADMAT. From experiencing a culture that is very different from my own to learning about the conceptual idea of archaeology versus the reality, my time in the Dominican Republic with ADMAT is one that will never be forgotten.

## ***The Tile Wreck Rudder is Found!***

By: Dr. Spooner & Christine Nielsen

During the summer one of the field schools led by Dr. Simon Spooner has been working with Oficina Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural Subacuático (ONPCS) to conduct a maritime archaeological survey on this possible French shipwreck. ***The Tile Wreck***, so named after the cargo, is one of the most important wrecks discovered in the Dominican Republic to date. The remains are very well preserved and although the site has been extensively looted, the ships construction is providing vital understanding of shipyard methods during the late 1690s which is when we currently believe the ship was built. Currently there are over 30 metres of keel and the bow and stern cant frames have yet to be found. Everything below the cargo deck which was the ceiling planking is intact, including the remains of part of the cargo

The new information expanded ADMAT's original survey conducted in 2005-6 which found over 2,000 artefacts, three iron cannons, three anchors and many important French faience ware sherds. Research in Paris since then led by Dr Francois Gendron and Dr. Jean Rosen from CNRS, has confirmed that the faience ware came from the "Nevers" foundry and dates the sinking of this wreck between 1720 and 1723. In 2007 students found one breach loading swivel cannon intact with the tiller bar and yoke still attached which may be still loaded. ADMAT aims to send this piece to the Centre de Recherche et de Restauration des Musées de France, Paris (C2RMF-Louvre) for conservation when funds can be found. It is believed that this ship was well armed with over 12 four pound cannons which were used for defensive purposes.

This summer, with students coming from Europe and America. The main part of the rudder was discovered 27.3 metres from the main mast step on the wreck site using an Aquascan AX2000 proton magnetometer. ADMAT has developed a new system of operating the magnetometer. The problem of using magnetometers in the conventional way by towing them behind a boat, means that the targets which are extremely small can't be accurately pinpointed. Therefore using OTS underwater communications and AGA masks, divers can swim the magnetometer. By reading the magnetic information from the AX2000 down the underwater

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communications the divers can form a picture in their minds as to the magnetic field. By marking the field with flags the buried magnetic items can be pinpointed with great accuracy, which has resulted in a number of important discoveries. As the wreck is situated in three metres of water in a well sheltered bay, students diving on the wreck site were limited to four hours per day, by their endurance only.



Photograph 8: Student Valentine Verrijken learning how to use an AGA full face mask (© ADMAT – Spooner).



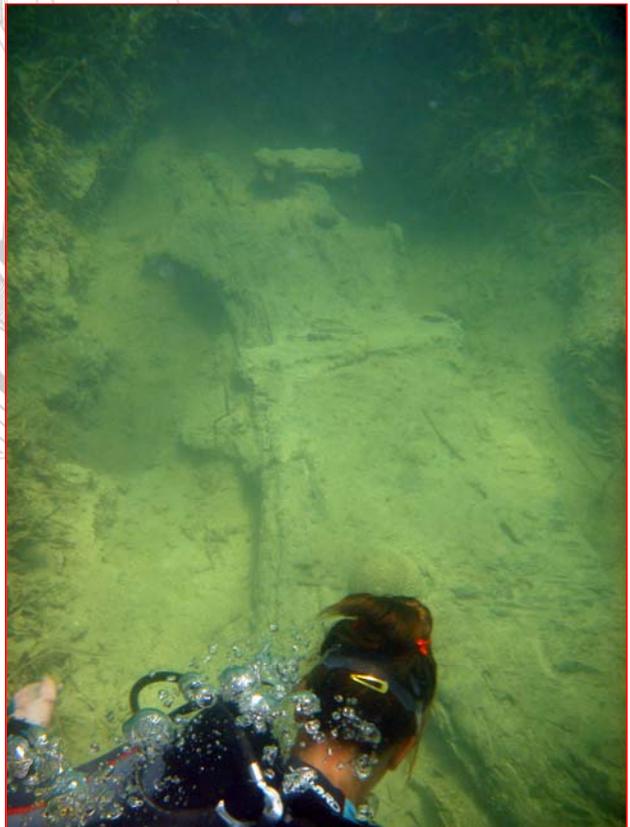
Photograph 9: Training in the practice pool (© ADMAT - Spooner).

The rudder was buried on its side and about 28 cm deep in the mangrove mud and sand and shell. The construction of the rudder is very interesting and follows certain characteristics of the ship. The rudder is missing the upper 1/3 including the upper pintles. Only two pintles were discovered on the 4 metre long rudder which was broken, leading to a hypothesis that the rudder was ripped off the ship during the wrecking process leaving half of the “main piece” still attached to the stern post. The aft cant frames and sternpost have yet to be found. Other interesting features of this were that the rudder was covered with 20 cm wide sacrificial planking and tar and horse hair between.

This matched the hull of the ship which was covered in horse hair and tar and then a layer of sacrificial planking to protect it from the worms. Even the keel was covered. The sacrificial planking was held on by trunnels and square headed nails throughout.



Photograph 10: Student Valentine Verrijken measuring the rudder from *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT – Spooner).



Photograph 11: The extent of the lower section of the rudder is uncovered (© ADMAT – Spooner).

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Photograph 1: The complete middle and lower section of the rudder. The lower section is missing the wood and only the iron bar frame remains. The pin can clearly be seen rising from the side of the rudder. The red line indicates the original width of the rudder (© ADMAT – Spooner).

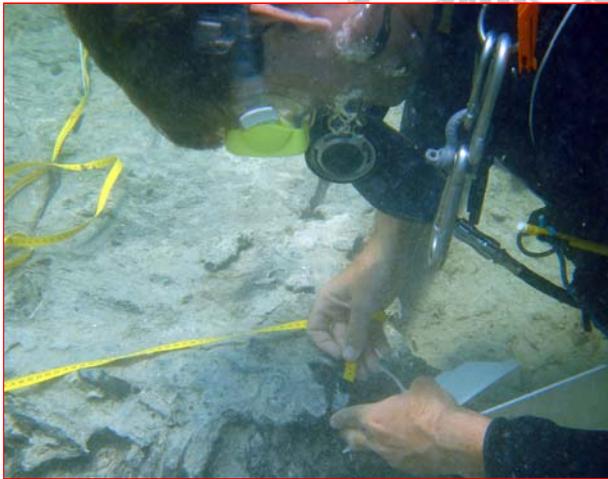
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The bottom section of the rudder which has a skeg cut out, has a bar protruding from both sides and is assumed to be for the emergency steering chains which unusually in this case would have been below the water line (but protects it from being shot away).

Below this the lower section of the rudder had internal radiating iron bars for a quadrant which together with an iron "hoop" system which ran the length of the rudder appears to have been designed for internal strength. The iron hoop system may also have been a type of spring positioned between the aft, middle and main pieces of timber to absorb any impact shock.



Photograph 13: A close up of the middle of the rudder showing the broken pintle (© ADMAT – Spooner).



Photograph 14: Dr. Spooner measuring the sacrificial planking on the rudder from *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT – Verrijken).

The cargo of this ship is also part of the mystery. Thousands of terracotta floor tiles were found together with pre cut granite blocks. Some of these were raised by the students as part of their recovery and lifting course and placed in ADMAT's Maritime Archaeological Centre in Monte Cristi.

Current belief is that these blocks were shipped across the known world from France and were probably destined to be re constructed to form a building or fortification of importance in the new world. Students studying the granite blocks have yet to find the prema or code for the reconstruction. One block was found with a possible north arrow inscribed on one of the surfaces and research is still ongoing.

Students spent many days on documenting the artefacts as part of the Artefact Handling Course which further added to their practical experiences. A number of unique blue and white French faience ware designs were discovered, including scenes of houses, churches, huntsman riding in the forest, a man walking his hound, ladies in their hats, and a variety of interesting clothing from the 1700's. This was also published in the winter 2008 NAS newsletter which has just been released.

## Longboat Keel Found on Beach

In one of the summer storms, the local beach was badly eroded. However when the storm had passed it revealed part of a keel and sternpost. This fine example was recovered and taken to the centre. Initial information has revealed that this is part of the keel from a possible cutter or longboat built possibly around 1800's. It was copper sheeted and the copper headed nails are still visible. In addition one of the lifting eyes which were set between the keel bolts is still present. Further research is being undertaken on this and will be reported on in due course.



Photograph 15: Valentine Verrijken cleaning the keel of sand prior to it being placed in the conservation tank (© ADMAT – Spooner).

## ADMAT Scholarship Awarded

The summer ADMAT scholarship for 2008 was awarded to Valentine from Belgium. She was given an extra five weeks stay at the Centre. During this time she took part in the discovery and uncovering of the rudder from *The Tile Wreck* and played an important part in its documentation.

## A *The Tile Wreck* Is Digitized on Site Recorder Program

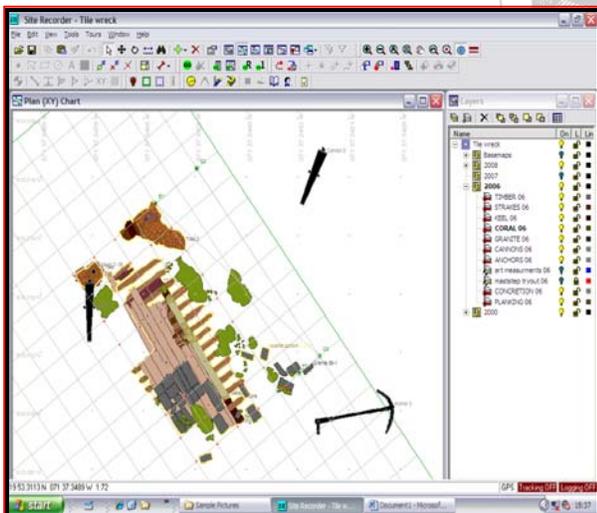
The Site Recorder is a GIS mapping specialist program designed by 3H Consulting for maritime archaeology. Peter Holt the creator of the program sponsored ADMAT 3 copies of the full program and we are using it to great effect. The program was used for the documentation of the 1760's French *Faience Wreck* and we have now used this program to document *The Tile Wreck*.

Student Valentine Verrijken undertook the challenge to learn how the program worked and to enter all our data to create a scale map of the wreck site. This is a very complex task requiring all measurements from the surveys to be entered on different layers which are then colour coordinated.

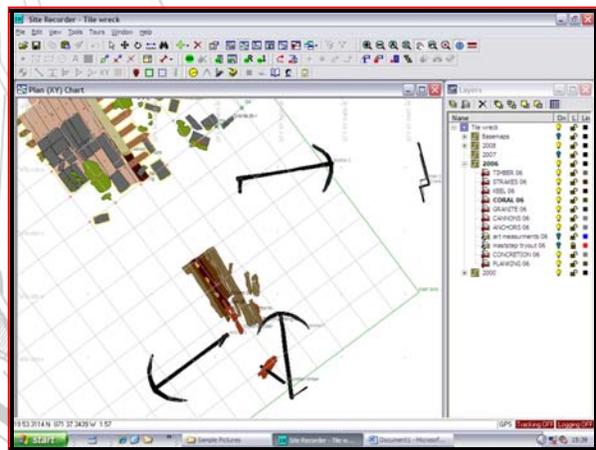
After a long time we can report that the work documenting our findings is progressing well. The rudder, the main timbers, granite blocks, anchors and cannons have now been digitized and entered.

All of these items are not only scaled in their own right but also in relation to each other. They can also be geo-referenced.

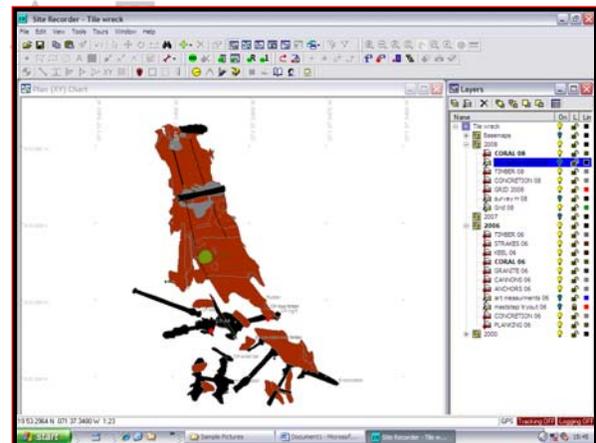
The Site Recorder program is complex and time consuming, allowing different information to be shown and different layers to be illuminated or not. This is very helpful when looking at the hull timbers as we can reveal planking under the cargo, or hull timbers under the cargo deck. It is planned that photographs and video can also be referenced to the locations of the artefacts and when selected will run showing the artefacts in question. This together with the ability of making the whole survey publishable for the web will make public access to the information in the future a real and dynamic possibility. This can also be used in museums as a display tool and it can be programmed to give guided tours around the digitized site with Spanish narration. This will greatly assist our educational work in Monte Cristi.



Photograph 16: The Site Recorder program showing the central section of *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT).



Photograph 17: The Site Recorder program showing the central section of *The Tile Wreck* with the two recovered anchors and the end of the current survey (© ADMAT).



Photograph 28: The Site Recorder program showing the broken rudder remains of the rudder, 27 meters from the wreck (© ADMAT).

## ADMAT-FRANCE Speaks at Epaves 2008 Conference in Paris



In November 2008 Florence Prudhomme and Dr. François Gendron gave two papers at this conference. Florence was talking about ADMAT's discoveries on The Tile Wreck and François on the identification and excavation of *Le Casimir*. Both papers went down well with the audience.



Photograph 19: Dr. François Gendron and Florence Prudhomme speaking at the conference (© ADMAT - FRANCE).

## Artefacts Handed In By Fishermen

One of the challenges of our work here in Monte Cristi is to educate the fishermen not to remove and sell to the treasure hunters, artefacts found in the bay while they are fishing. Whilst most of the fish have been fished out of existence by a practice of over fishing, the attraction of making a week's wages from selling one item is a challenge. ADMAT staff especially Rami have been talking with fishermen trying to educate them to leave the artefacts in-situ. This has been successful in a small way but has a long way to go. One of the local fishermen Filipe did at least show us his finds recently and enabled us to contact Oficina Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural Subacuático (ONPCS) to see, if he donated his find he would receive some incentive to cover his petrol. This was on this occasion allowed as the olive jar and

were of great interest to ONPCS. However we had to be careful that we did not create a president in that fishermen would bring us all they found instead of leaving the artefacts on the sea bed, as they would receive some petrol assistance. A difficult position to be in and one which we will monitor carefully.



Photograph 20: The Bellarmine found by the fisherman (© ADMAT - Spooner).

the Bellarmine was a great example of Rhenish stoneware bottle with an iron-oxide slip which created a brown mottled finish when fired in a saltglaze kiln. This piece was unfortunately missing the handle. We estimate this artefact dates from 1580-1610 (I. Hume 1985).



Photograph 21: A pointed Spanish olive jar found by the fisherman (© ADMAT - Downing).

## Tile Wreck Survey Continues

During January 2009 the Team returned to *The Tile Wreck* to continue the survey as part of the field school. ADMAT's Proton Magnetometer Diver, Underwater Survey Diver and Artefact Handling courses were given.



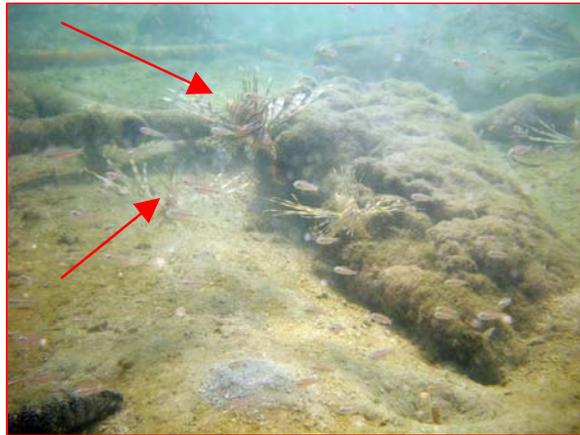
Photograph 22: The team in the mangroves on route to *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT - Spooner).



Photograph 23: A tight fit with diving and proton magnetometer equipment on board (© ADMAT - Rami).

Students John Downing, Grant Johnson and Chris Stephenson attended. The AX2000 Proton Magnetometer was used for the course utilising the OTS Communications with the AGA's to pinpoint the targets. An important find was made. In Sq G2-E2 about a metre below the bottom strakes, off the centre of the wreck, a pair of dead eyes concreted together with the chain plates were discovered. A number of terracotta floor tiles and one almost intact French faience ware bowl was also concreted. This important artefact held vital clues as the wooden section of the dead eye was charred, raising the hypothesis that the fire on board had gone up the starboard side from the hold and had burnt the dead eyes holding the mast stays. We also knew that from charring in the hold that the fire was localised.

More gunpowder was found and the usual assortment of tiles, pipe stems and sherds.



Photograph 24: Four lion fish in attack mode. Two are shown by red arrows, can you see the other two? (© ADMAT - Spooner).

This year however we did have a different problem. About 20 lion fish had made the wreck their home. These fish, whilst very beautiful are poisonous as the spines will penetrate the wet suites. We therefore had to have a "lion fish watcher", one of the team keeping a watch on them. These fish had made the centre of the wreck their home and were very territorial, some times charging and attacking the team!



Photograph 25: One of the mature lion fish on *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT - Downing).



Photograph 26: Student Grant Johnson measuring in one of the granite blocks from the cargo deck on in Sq:B8 on *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT - Rami).

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The team found more square cut granite blocks on the cargo deck which were measured in to the grid.



Photograph 27: Student Grant Johnson holding a French faïence ware part bowl, found during the excavation of *The Tile Wreck* (ADMAT - Downing).



Photograph 28: Student John Downing preparing to attach lift bags to the dead eye concretion (© ADMAT - Spooner).



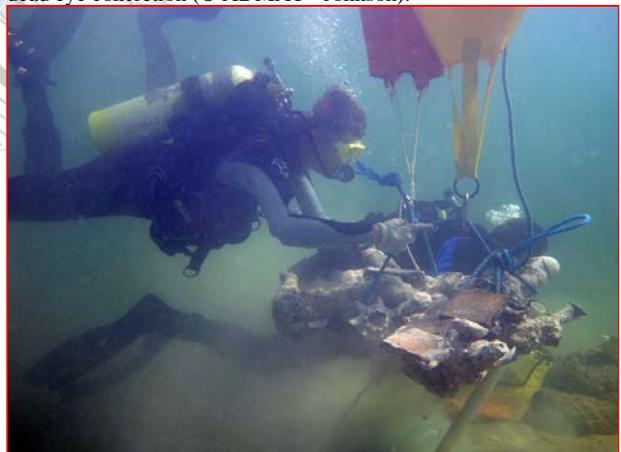
Photograph 29: Student Grant Johnson cleaning bones, possibly goat rib bones, found on *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT - Rami).

Evening lectures were given as well as time for the Team to document the day's finds using the special programs ADMAT uses.

The raising of the dead eyes was well planned. First it was moved out of the current position to a sand area away from the lion fish. It was raised and towed by divers to the shallows where the team lifted it into one of the boats. The dead eyes concretion weighed about 300 kg and due to the positioning of the tiles, very fragile.



Photograph 30: Dr. Spooner and John Downing prepare to lift the dead eye concretion (© ADMAT - Johnson).



Photograph 31: The dead eye concretion being towed by divers to the shallows (© ADMAT - Rami).

John Downing led the lifting team and the whole exercise went according to plan and the concretion was then placed in a truck and taken to ADMAT's centre. As it was much heavier out of the water, it took about seven men to lift it from the truck into the conservation tank.

Once in the conservation tank, Grant then spent many hours underwater measuring the concretion and producing a scale plan of it.



Photograph 32: The team happy with the success of the endeavour (© ADMAT - Spooner).



Photograph 33: Dr. Spooner awards student Chris Stephenson the course certification (© ADMAT - Johnson).



Photograph 34: Student Grant Johnson hard at work measuring the concretion (© ADMAT - Downing).

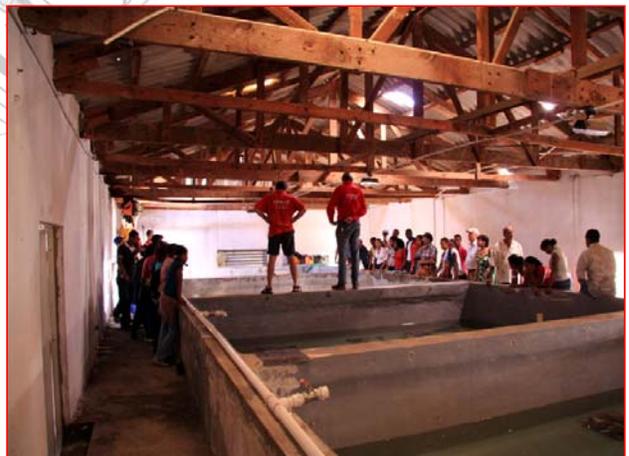
The field school successfully documented another part of the ships cargo as well as important artefacts. Two granite blocks were raised as well as the dead eye concretion and most importantly none of the Team got stung by the lion fish!

## ADMAT Runs The First Maritime Archaeological Conference in Monte Cristi

ADMAT was delighted to run the first maritime archaeological conference in January 2009 at its Centre. We were asked by Jean Solito, Director General of Alliance Française to organise a conference about our work and maritime archaeology and the protection for French historic shipwrecks on the north coast. The conference was over booked with over 60 delegates attending, The local organisation was catered very well by the local representative Fani and an English translator Nadia Fawcett was translating all day. The excellent lunch was provided by the Alliance Française.



Photograph 35: Some of the 60 delegates listening to the lectures (© ADMAT - Downingi).



Photograph 35: The iron concretions from *The Tile Wreck* in a conservation tank being explained (© ADMAT - Rami).

In attendance filming the conference was Evlio Cabrera from Canal 8 Monte Cristi Cable Vision. He filmed the conference and it was later shown on national TV and repeated on local TV. After lunch the delegates were then taken into the conservation

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laboratory where Dr. Spooner and John Downing explained the artefacts currently being conserved and the ones completed.



Photograph 36: Student John Downing explaining how the students documented the dead eye concretion (© ADMAT -



Photograph 37: Showing the cannons and anchors from *The Tile Wreck* (© ADMAT - Rami).

Once the inside tour was complete, the outside conservation tanks were shown. These contain the three iron four pounder cannons and two small nine foot long anchors from *The Tile Wreck*. Then after a short break the lectures continued finishing on the story of *Le Casimir*. The day was a complete success.



Photograph 38: Dr. Spooner and Rami during a break in the conference (© ADMAT - Downing).

## ADMAT IDENTIFIES FRENCH 1783 WARSHIP *LE DRAGON* The Last French Warship Lost During The American War Of Independence Found In The Caribbean.

Out gunned, surrounded by a fleet of English warships including a 74 gun third rate ship of the line, the French 18 gun warship *Le Dragon* fights for her life and is blown up by her own Captain to save her crew, the French "Spy", and secret documents onboard.

This wreck was located a few years ago and an initial survey was undertaken by ADMAT members Dr. Simon Spooner and Christine Nielsen. Since then they have been working with Oficina Nacional de Patrimonio Cultural Subacuático (ONPCS) the government department responsible for Underwater Cultural Heritage in the Dominican Republic, to monitor the wreck and protect it from looters and treasure hunters, while the team researched the archaeological findings.



Photograph 39: Christine Nielsen about to conduct another inspection of the *Le Dragon* site (© ADMAT - Enlow).

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Dr Spooner, Principal Investigator of the shipwreck site stated:

“This is a very important find. It is excellent news that the story behind the brave Captain and the French warship *Le Dragon* can now be finally be told. We have partially documented the wreck and analysed the wrecking taphonomic process of the wreck site to produce clues, which allowed our researchers to find the story in the French archives. The wreck is almost 20 metres long, 4 meters high, and has almost the entire lower hull intact with cannons still on the wreck. ADMAT has been working with the French Government authorities and DRASSM in relation to the findings. This shipwreck holds no interest to treasure hunting companies as there is nothing of much monetary value on it, but to archaeologists whose goal it is to gather information about the past by investigating the material remains left of past peoples, it is of great significance as it is a combination of English, French and American design.

Miss Florence Prudhomme and Dr Francois Gendron from ADMAT-FRANCE based at the Institut de Paléontologie Humaine, Muséum National d’Histoire Naturelle, Paris together with assistance from Madam Frédérique Chaplay the Curator of Musée national de la Marine, have taken our archaeological evidence and as a result, have confirmed the full story in the archives, an excellent piece of detective team work all round”.



Photograph 40: Dr. Spooner with a possible galley brick from the bow of *Le Dragon* (© ADMAT - Nielsen).



Photograph 41: Patrick Enlow from ADMAT USA finding another brick on *Le Dragon* site (© ADMAT - Nielsen).

*Le Dragon* was originally an English privateer travelling probably under a Royal Warrant or letter of Marque. She was captured in August 1781 in the English Channel. She was taken into the French Royal Navy and the King of France paid 9438. 16. 6 livres.

She was then transferred to Lorient and converted into a Corvette with a brigantine rig. She was “pierced” for 20 cannons and was eventually armed with 18 Scottish nine pounders (the last of the nine pounders just before the “Carronade” was first made) made by the Carron Iron Foundry in Falkirk in Scotland and sold in America. She was rigged for up to 12 swivel cannons and had a crew of up to 120 men.

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 1782 she was on convoy duty escorting merchant ships from Lorient to Brest and during this escort the Captain received orders to go to Philadelphia under the command of a French Nobleman, Captain le chevalier de L’Espine Marquis du Puy. During the voyage she encountered bad storms was severely damaged, and was not able to make it to Philadelphia. The Captain then sailed to Boston direct and arrived on the 16<sup>th</sup> May 1782. *Le Dragon* was placed in dry dock to inspect the hull and they found so much damage that it was necessary to build a new hull, this time using American shallow water design. *Le Dragon* then sailed back to France in September.



Photograph 42: The French research team, Dr. Gendron and Florence Prudhomme with Dr. Spooner at the office of ADMAT-FRANCE at the IPH in Paris (© ADMAT - FRANCE).

On the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1782 *Le Dragon* was ordered to Cap Français (Cap-Haïtien) on the north coast of what is now Haiti. On January 21, 1783, she carried onboard an important passenger, Mr. de Courregolles who may have been a “Spy” and was certainly a courier, as he carried secret packages and documents for the Governor of the French colony. The mission of this officer was vital, because France and England were drafting the peace treaty which was signed in Paris on February 3, 1783 and was ratified in September 1783. On the 21<sup>st</sup> January 1783,

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*Le Dragon* encountered on the north coast an English Schooner the *HMS Dorkin* and an English Frigate. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January she encountered a blockade which stretched from one league west of Point Isabellique to Monte Cristi. These 18 warships blockading her were from the English Admiral Hood's squadron with orders to capture the ship and the packages at all costs. *Le Dragon* realized the trap and fled as she entered the Punta Rucia reef system heading towards Monte Cristi, because although she was outgunned and outclassed by 18:1, Captain du Puy had to save his "Spy" and the documents from capture.



Photograph 43: The ballast section of *Le Dragon*. (© ADMAT - Nielsen).

*Le Dragon* went between the reefs and the English sent two larger ships (according to the archives from the "Spy", one was a third rate 74 gun, and the other a 54 gun) to follow her, each ship firing at *Le Dragon* and the battle commenced. You do not risk a third rate ship of the line of 74 guns so close the reefs to capture a 18 gun ship, unless there is something of vital importance on the French ship. *Le Dragon* was damaged and the Captain realized that he had no chance of escape, to save his crew on board and more importantly the "Spy" and the essential packages from capture, if he stands and fights or goes out from the coast. His only chance was to find somewhere to beach the ship, this was the only way he could enable all the crew and the "Spy" to get off safely. He posted lookouts on the topsails and they spotted, at the end of the reef chain, a channel through the inner reef and to the shore.

As *Le Dragon* had an American designed hull with shallower draft than the other vessels, she managed to get close to the shore and the Captain sailed his ship straight up the beach missing the reefs in a superb example of master seamanship.

He therefore saved the documents, the "Spy," and his loyal crew (of 110) who on the beach were armed with muskets. He kept on board a few "determined" crewmen, who removed the bow chasers and fixed them as stern chasers firing at the English ships.



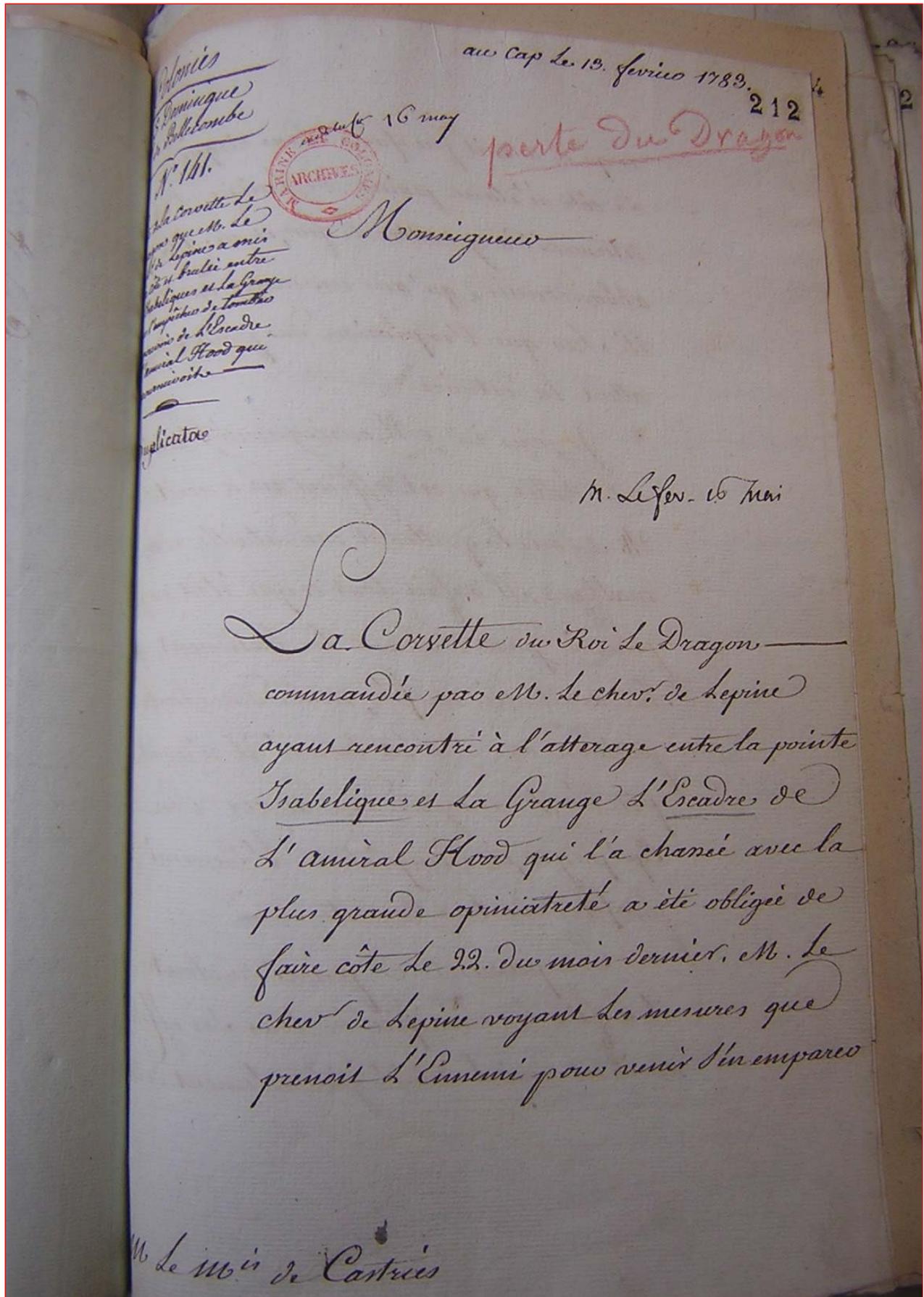
Photograph 44: The beach where *Le Dragon* fought her last battle out gunned by a 74 and 54 gun ships (© ADMAT - Spooner).

The English lowered a small boat which was rowed, and found a cut in the reef where their deeper drafted 74 and 54 gun ships could enter and anchor in a firing position at the beached 19 gun *Le Dragon*. The English then lowered small launches filled with armed men to capture *Le Dragon*. But these launches were "discouraged" from boarding by the stern chasers. The captain realising that he has done all that "the honour or war requires of him" gave orders to scuttle the ship, and he and seven men set the charges. When the stern of the ship blew up, all the crew on the beach was showered with pieces of ship and rigging. Whilst the ship was lost, the crew, "Spy" and packages were saved and the packages delivered to the Governor.



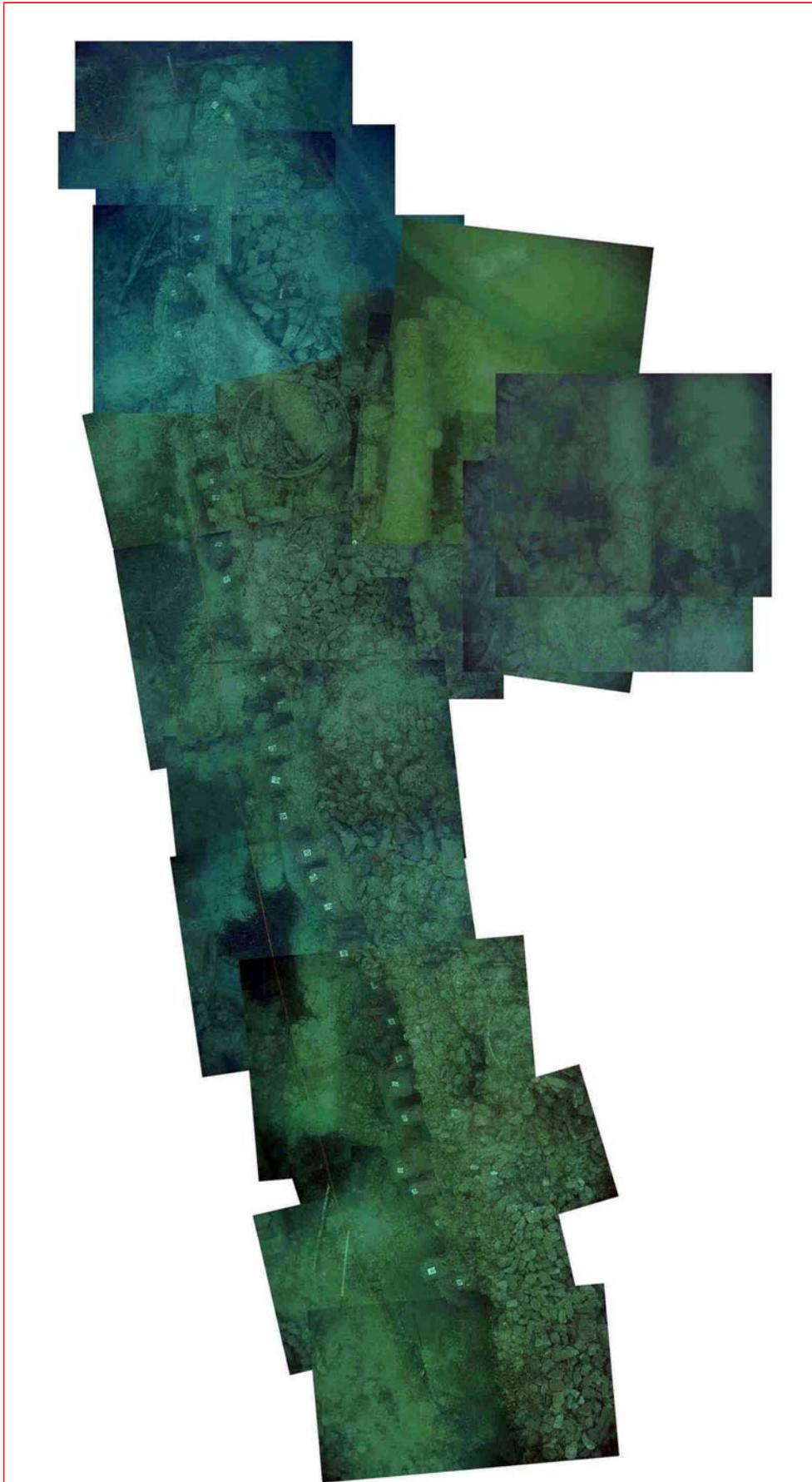
Photograph 45: Christine Nielsen holding a wooden fiddler block from *Le Dragon* which is at ONPCS for conservation (© ADMAT - Spooner).

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Photograph 46: One of the many pages from the French Archives, telling the story of *Le Dragon*, found by Dr. Gendron and Florence Prudhomme (© ADMAT – FRANCE & The French Government Archives).

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Photograph 47: A photo mosaic of *Le Dragon* published in Dr. Spooner's thesis (© ADMAT – Spooner).

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ADMAT plans to continue the survey in the near future to further document the important hull construction.



Photograph 48: The Punta Rucia reef and channel where the battle was fought (© Google Earth).



Photograph 49: A wooden pulley block with a fiddler block behind on *Le Dragon* wreck site (© ADMAT - Spooner).



Photograph 50: An intact and still functional fiddler block from *Le Dragon* (© ADMAT - Nielsen).



Photograph 51: A pewter barrel tap with the key in position to act as a tap, from *Le Dragon* (© ADMAT - Nielsen).

## ADMAT on National TV in The Dominican Republic

During January 2009 the conference was filmed and shown on Chanel 8 ~Monte Cristi Cable Vision on national TV, as well as being repeated due to popular demand, on the local Monte Cristi TV network. This was clearly great publicity for ADMAT and the importance of protecting the Underwater Cultural Heritage in the Dominican Republic. As a result from this we were interviewed by Alicia Ortega for her weekly show El Informe which is one of the main documentary programs in the country and widely viewed.

Alicia and her 15 man team arrived at the ADMAT Centre and were filming for five hours to make the ten minute film segment for her show. This prime time show was watched all over the island. It showed ADMAT's great work in assisting with the preservation of the historic shipwrecks on the island and the battle against treasure hunters. Artefacts in ADMAT's Maritime Archaeological Centre were also filmed as they were going through the long conservation process.



Photograph 52: TV presenter Alicia Ortega interviewing Dr. Spooner for National TV... note the block she is standing on (© ADMAT - Rami).

At present most of the artefacts at ADMAT's Centre are French dating as early as 1676. This includes many thousands of French faience ware broken pieces. It is planned that upon completion of the conservation process, that most of the pieces will be checked to see if they can be matched and pieced together piece by piece. This will be a massive jigsaw puzzle without a guiding picture and will take many months of dedicated work.

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## Dunkirk Little Ship Adopted by Jeremy Schomberg

Jeremy Schomberg, ADMAT's Finance and Media Director, has recently acquired one of the last remaining "Little Ships" which was used to evacuate the English troops from Dunkirk in northern France during the Second World War.

Further information on this news will be in the next issue of the newsletter.



Photograph 53: Dunkirk Little Ship *Whala*  
(© ADMAT – Schomberg).

## Denmark's "Q" Magazine Interviews Christine Nielsen

In Denmark there is also continuing interest in our maritime archaeological work in the Caribbean. Christine who is currently visiting her native country Denmark was recently interviewed by journalist Gitte Holm from the Danish "Q" Magazine, about what it is like to be a maritime archaeologist working on field projects and about ADMAT's dedicated work to protect Underwater Cultural Heritage. The article is due to be published in May this year.



Photograph 54: Christine Nielsen being interviewed by Gitte Holm for "Q Magazine" (© ADMAT).

## GEEST Continues To Sponsor ADMAT's Equipment Transportation.

ADMAT is delighted to report that following a meeting with Captain Peter Dixon (Operations Director) and Jim Porteous, (Commercial Manager) from GEEST LINE, Geest will continue to sponsor ADMAT's shipping requirements. In 2003 Geest Line sponsored the vital shipping of about 20 tonnes of equipment in two 20 ft containers from England to St Kitts for the White House Bay Project. On this project ADMAT had to build a base camp on the beach, as well as take all the necessary equipment for the survey of this important wreck site.



Photograph 55: Capt. Peter Dixon, Jim Porteous and Dr. Spooner following the confirmation of GEEST LINE continuing sponsorship.

The survey was a great success and possibly identified the type of ship to an English Troopship taking part in the famous Battle of Frigate Bay in 1782, where the English beat the French. Maritime archaeology requires a large amount of heavy equipment including, boats and compressors. This type of sponsorship is vital in assisting our work, as it is obviously impossible to take items by plane and all our work in the Caribbean is island based. We are all very grateful for this continued sponsorship and thank Peter, Jim and Geest Line very much.



Photograph 56: The bow section of *The White House Bay Wreck* in St. Kitts (© ADMAT – Schomberg).

## White House Bay Wreck Cannons Stolen from St. Kitts.

At the time of writing this news letter we received the very disturbing news from *St. Christopher Heritage Society (SCHS)* which is the NGO responsible for heritage on the island of St Kitts, that the five iron cannons we documented as part of the survey of the *White House Bay Wreck* has been stolen. The press release issued by SCHS stated:

*Five Cannon, belonging to the people of St Kitts and Nevis, have been removed from their inshore resting place at historic Whitehouse Bay. These historical artefacts have delighted visitors and locals alike since their discovery and unique finds like these have helped put St. Kitts on the map as one of the most historically significant of the Caribbean islands. So the mysterious disappearance of these objects of national importance is a particularly saddening incident, hitting tour operators directly in the pocket and denying us access to our own history. Our heritage has been plundered as surely as it was in the days of pirates.*

*Reports coming to the St. Christopher Heritage Society (SCHS) in late December 2008 indicated that the five cannon that were part of an historic 18<sup>th</sup> century wreck site had disappeared. Seen days before by divers in the area, overnight they appeared to have been taken.*

*While we are aware of several wreck sites in our coastal waters, this was the only site that had been surveyed and studied. Facilitated by the SCHS in 2003, ADMAT a team of maritime archaeologists led by Dr. Simon Spooner, along with local volunteers and the Coast Guard conducted a Maritime Archaeological Project there. It had been intended that the survey would expand to other sites but further study did not win support from the authorities. Artefacts that were taken from the site were given to the SCHS for months of preservation treatment – the cannon and the remains of the 18<sup>th</sup> century wooden ship, thought to be an English Troop ship, remained in situ and had become a favourite diving spot for locals and visitors alike. Several Dive Operators worked in the area and underwater photographers systematically recorded the wreck*

ADMAT is in contact with SCHS in St. Kitts and will be reporting back regarding this theft of their Underwater Cultural Heritage.

## Sponsorship & Donations Required For ADMAT to Continue Our Scientific Work.

For ADMAT to continue our maritime archaeological and educational work, we need grants and sponsorship from companies and persons. Maritime archaeological work is an expensive process and as of yet we do not receive grants from France or the Dominican Republic so we rely solely on these grants and donations.

There are plenty of ways in which you can assist and for those in America there are tax advantages for donations via ADMAT USA which is an American Charity (Section 501 (c) 3).

For companies there are excellent PR opportunities for company logos and positive publicity. The areas in which we need support in are as follows:

- ❖ Sponsor a student to attend a field school costs in the region of US\$1,300.00 Per week.
- ❖ One 23ft long yola (local made open boat) with outboard engine Cost US\$ 7,000.00
- ❖ One years rent for the Centre 2008. Cost US\$4,000.00
- ❖ A researcher in the French Archives. Cost \$2,000 Per Month.
- ❖ Sponsor the archaeological survey of one of the wreck sites, *The Tile Wreck* 1720's, *Le Casimir* 1829, *The Faience Wreck* 1760's and *Le Dragon*.
- ❖ Sponsorship to cover new diving equipment and servicing the old equipment.
- ❖ Sponsorship of the running costs including staff of The Centre, to enable research and documentation on the artefacts.
- ❖ Sponsorship for a new truck or Landrover.

For further information on how you or your company can assist, please contact ADMAT's Finance Director Jeremy Schomberg at [jeremy@admat.org.uk](mailto:jeremy@admat.org.uk)

On behalf of ADMAT we thank you.