The Australian Historic Shipwreck Protection Project: the *Clarence* project

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Chief Investigator
On behalf of the Australian Historic Shipwreck Protection Project Research team
ARC Linkage Grant

- Awarded a large ARC (Australian Research Council) Linkage grant in May 2011 - $500,000

- Research will be conducted between late 2011 and the end of 2014 with fieldwork in April/May 2012 and monitoring after that

- Chief investigators - Peter Veth (UWA), Mark Staniforth (Monash) and Tony Barham (ANU)

- Partner investigators - Vicki Richards and Ian MacLeod (WA Museum)

- Ten participant organisations including Heritage Victoria and AIMA

- A national collaborative project = flagship maritime archaeology research project for the next 3 to 5 years
Clarence (1850)

- Built on the Williams River, NSW in 1841
- Dimensions 51 x 16.3 x 8.7 feet
- Two-masted wooden schooner of 67 tons
- Found by MAAV members in 1981
- Located near St Leonard’s, Port Philip
- Shallow depth - 4 m of water
- Survey and test excavation by Peter Harvey in mid 1980s
- Protected by the Victorian Heritage Act 1995
- Monitored over a 25 year period
Clarence in 1986

Close-plot magnetometer survey
Sub-bottom profiler
Metal detector survey
Marine biology survey
Sediment level recording
Clarence at risk

- Fishing boat anchors
- Increased numbers of fishing boats
- Environmental changes - reduction in sediment level
Project objectives

- Add to the knowledge base about Australian colonial wooden ship-building
- Develop a protocol for the rapid recovery, recording and reburial of artefacts
- Develop a methodology for the *in situ* preservation of historic shipwrecks considered at risk
Australian shipbuilding

- Longstanding research tradition
- Tasmania, NSW, Victoria and SA
Australian shipbuilding 2

- Historic Shipwrecks National Research Plan (HSNRP) identified Australian shipbuilding as a research theme of national importance
- 2,786 Australian built vessels wrecked
- 271 vessels have been located to date
- 14 Australian-built vessels surveyed and/or excavated
Australian shipbuilding 3

- How did the early Australian settlers adapt to a new land?
- How did they build small wooden vessels from the local timbers?
- Focus on construction of Australian built vessels
- British & American influences on Australian shipbuilding
- Focus on timber analysis
  - Australian timbers were markedly different to European timbers
  - What timbers were used for different parts of a vessel?
  - How quickly did Australian shipwrights adapt to the local environment and the different properties of the indigenous timbers?
Recovery, recording & reburial protocol 1

- Advances in recording technology
- Digital photos and video
- Portable XRF, X-ray equipment 2D and 3D laser imaging
- Bring excavated material to the surface
- Record, measure and analysis
- Reburial on site or next to site
- Some samples taken - destructive testing
Recovery, recording & reburial protocol 2

Will allow more excavation to take place at less cost

Application in Asia and the Pacific

Sites cannot be left in situ

Reburial in a secure location
In situ preservation 1

- Victoria has long standing experience with in situ preservation
- Cegrass matting was used on William Salthouse and tried on Clarence
- Sediment core samples on and around the site
In situ preservation 2

- Continuation of Deb Shefi‘s PhD research on anaerobic conditions in the seabed
- Aims to stabilise and decrease the overall deterioration rate particularly by limiting oxygen levels
- To develop a remediation strategy for the long-term preservation of the site
Fieldwork

- 16 April to 11 May 2012
- Based at Portarlington
- Using a jack-up barge = a stable platform for in-field recording
- Excavate 25-50% of the *Clarence* site
- Boats to ferry people to and from the barge
- Volunteers for both diving work and recording work on the barge
Responsibilities

- Excavation methodology will be overseen by Mark Staniforth, Peter Harvey (Heritage Victoria) and Peter Veth

- Conservation and *in-situ* preservation protocols, analyses and pre- and post-reburial monitoring by Ian MacLeod and Vicki Richards

- Imaging co-ordinated by Dudley Creigh (and colleagues) and Andrew Viduka

- Geoarchaeology and GIS by Tony Barham and Masters of Archaeological Science candidates from ANU.
Outputs

- GIS database
- Website
- Media coverage
- Protocols
- Reports
- Articles in Journals
- Development of national, and international policy and technical guidelines for site managers of historic wrecks
Spin-off projects 1

- Shipwreck glass corrosion project - Ian MacLeod
- Using portable X-ray fluorescence (XRF) spectrophotometers (in the field)
- Measurements of the elements in the layers of degraded and undegraded glass
- Provides evidence of changes in the depositional microenvironment (variations in burial and the site environment over time)
Spin-off projects 2

- Education about maritime archaeology
- Collaboration between Wendy Van Duivenvoord (Flinders University), CI Mark Staniforth and others
- Aimed at Masters students getting involved in the fieldwork
- Aimed at school children through video and online teaching
Acknowledgements

- The Australian Research Council (ARC) and the state and territory institutions for the provision of funding that have made this project possible - The Western Australian Museum, Heritage Victoria, The Northern Territory Department of Natural Resources, Environment, Arts and Sport, Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management, NSW Department of Planning, Norfolk Island Government, Australasian Institute for Maritime Archaeology (AIMA), Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water, Parks and Environment, The Australian National Maritime Museum and the Commonwealth Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC).