

Nautical Archaeology

Guests of Gdansk

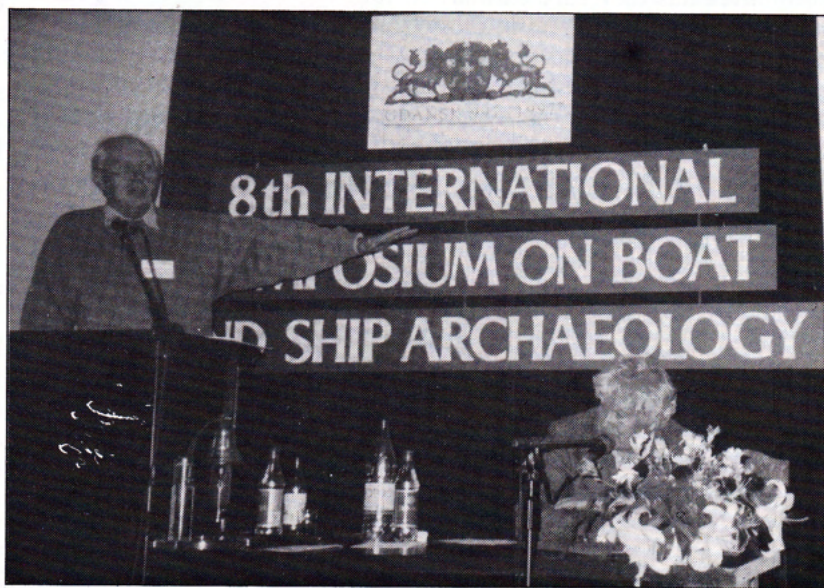
In September Gdansk hosted the 8th International Symposium on Ship and Boat Archaeology (ISSBA) at the Polish Maritime Museum. Over 120 delegates from 23 countries enjoyed special hospitality in the City's millennium year. Four days of papers ranged in time and space from the Classical Mediterranean to the European opening of Canada. Subjects were equally varied, from excavation reports to experiments in Minoan sailing techniques.

The line-up of speakers included pioneers, such as Dick Steffy, alongside those just completing their doctoral theses. Amateurs held their own with a group reporting on their reproduction of the Hjortspring boat.

The buzz of conversation over coffee, lunch and dinner is the secret of the symposium's popularity. Here scholars, field archaeologists, experienced and new-comers meet together to air ideas and swap information.

Only the firing of a galleass's gun completely silenced the gathering. The Mayor of Gdansk provided a civic reception in Arthur's Court, a meeting hall built by prosperous Medieval merchants. The galleass is one of six ship models hanging from the vaulted roof of the ornate hall. It was originally given in thanks by two captives of barbary pirates whose ransom was paid by the merchants. A long taper touched off its loud-firing gun to salute the occasion.

ISSBA began with a conference at Greenwich in 1976. The triennial symposia have been continued so that 'cooperation in important fields of work could be encouraged'. The ever-widening enquiry into ship and boat archaeology was symbolised in the 21st year of ISSBA by the first speaker from Russia joining the platform. The importance of world-wide interaction was underlined by the fact that many delegates had just returned from the Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology's 17th International Conference *The Maritime Archaeology of Long Distance Voyaging*. September had also seen the International Congress of Maritime Museums hold an interim



Ole Crumlin Pedersen faces questions with Chairman Arne Emil Christensen

This Issue

- ♦ Diving Trips
- ♦ Research Award
- ♦ Training
- ♦ Conferences

plus

- ♦ Chatham Timbers
- ♦ Anchors
- ♦ Society News

COPY DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE: 26 December 1997. The issue should be posted to members on 23 January 1998. See back page for advance schedule.

Nautical Archaeology Society





In at the Shallow End

Maryanne Leeton recalls her first six months with NAS

I have been astounded by the many divers whose sole pleasure from wreck diving involves a lump hammer and crow-bar. Diving for me has opened new avenues of interest and study - navigation, tides, emergency boat maintenance. On the East Coast I'm constantly finding limitations in my knowledge - from describing which "bit" of the wreck I had actually dived, to putting names to the creatures which I bump into.

It was time to go back to some books. I started on marine life reference books, only to discover I had no ability to remember exactly how many dorsal fins that third fish had. My attempts at "bits" of boats was a little more successful with help from some sailing books and a trip to the National Maritime Museum. I was rescued from self-tuition when I heard an SAA dive club in Gloucester was holding a NAS Part I weekend. Was I interested? Naturally.

That was back in February. The talks taught me loads and that I had a lot more to learn. The pool session came to an end in no time at all. I had a taste of NAS, and of underwater archaeology.

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As a keen new member when the quarterly NAS Newsletter arrived on my doormat I studied it cover to cover...well almost! I found an opportunity to get involved in August on the Malham Tarn survey. Organised by NAS NE and the Archaeology Department, University of Bradford it offered volunteers a chance to complete a big chunk of the Part II qualification. Since I fancied a holiday at that time of year and York-

shire, which is more famed for pubs than underwater archaeology, sounded perfect I applied for one of the two weeks. Amazingly, since I was sure that such events would be over-subscribed, I was accepted.

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The first morning, over the butty-making table, I met others on the week-one team. Some were professional archaeologists, some had completed NAS II training, but most were like me - enthusiastic amateurs with little archaeological knowledge. Surprisingly everyone was both human and normal. The professionals gave help freely and the atmosphere was completely relaxed and friendly - really inspiring me to continue.

The Tarn is on National Trust land, in a stunningly beautiful area of the North Yorkshire Dales and 375m above sealevel. The survey area had never been dived before and was not accessible by car. The short daily hill walk meant we did not feel guilty about the morning fry-up and the 3-course, home-made evening meal. Our base was the local Field Study Centre - a grand old house with library and classroom facilities.

The mornings were devoted to lectures by experts in particular fields: archaeological principles; advanced on-site survey methods; area search and survey methods; site finds recording systems; photographic recording; and conservation. All were enthusiastic about their subjects and put the information across for everyone to understand.

The afternoons were used to put the NAS I & II training into practice. Methods used included jackstay searches, swimline searches, use of planning frames, levelling and use of a Total Station Theodolite. There

was even a chance for environmental archaeology - collecting snail shell samples, which may help to determine the environmental conditions before the level of the Tarn was raised.

The survey area was shallow (2-4m) and it was easy to stand up with your head above water. It was a beautiful 19 degrees every day, but algal bloom reduced visibility to 1 - 2m at best. The silty bed and problematic buoyancy control (not easy in shallow depths) further reduced visibility. Despite the problems and relative inexperience, the "landscape" finds included a submerged wall parallel to the present lake edge, some possible palaeo-channels (old stream beds), and some interesting (honest!) rock piles. Other finds included possible Medieval pottery, 17th-century glassware, Victorian stone bottles, and a block from a small sailing boat. The 7m keel of the vessel was found in the second week.

I managed to collect enough data to complete the survey report for NAS II which I am now writing up. Once again I had a great time and learnt loads - especially that I still have a lot to learn. Thanks to the patience and enthusiasm of John Buglass, Peter Pritchard and Steve Webster. I plan to continue my NAS training, but also to expand into underwater photography.

Lets hear from you.

Have you enjoyed...

- ♦ taking part in a NAS project?
- ♦ visiting an interesting site?
- ♦ researching an artefact?

or

do you need help to...

- ♦ identify a mystery object
- ♦ extend some research

Why not write it down and send it to NAS News.