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Santa Ana Maria wreck location

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Maria, were lost along the way⁶, through a combination of bad weather and ill-advised navigation. While on its way to the Netherlands, the Santa Ana Maria was separated from the Dutch fleet during a storm and was retaken by an English privateer vessel of Bristol, the Dragon, some "four or five leagues" from the Irish coast7. It was while being taken back as a valuable prize to England by Captain James of the Dragon that the ship was lost on the rugged rocks in the outer harbour of Castlehaven. The story of Santa Ana Maria did not end there, however, as convoluted legal wranglings immediately ensued between a number of parties in regard to the salvage rights to the wreck and the rightful ownership of its rich cargo. These interested parties included the Dutch West India Company, who argued that it was theirs under right of war, the High Court of Admiralty in England, who

DOPI LIPPEIN REY DE SPANA



Figure 25.2. Brass cannon recovered from wreck featuring the coat of arms of Philip III (Photo: C. Kelleher).

felt it was wrecked in their jurisdiction, the Spanish Government who claimed ownership of the ship, and Captain James of the Bristol privateer who equally claimed right of prize. A local merchant in Castlehaven pitched in with a claim to right of wreck and an infamous Dutch salvage diver named Jan 'Jacob the Diver' Janson, claimed right of salvage⁸.

A wreck site discovered in the late 1960s by local divers in West Cork is believed to be that of the Santa Ana Maria. This assumption is based on the nature of the material recovered from the site and in particular from the presence of the royal coat of arms of Philip III on one of the brass guns (see Figure 25.2). The Underwater Archaeology Unit (UAU) of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government in Ireland is currently undertaking survey work on the wreck site. The wreck is located in a small bay to the immediate north of Reen Point at the eastern entrance to Castlehaven Harbour (Figure 25.3). The multi-disciplinary assessment combines historical and archaeological research and geophysical and archaeological diver survey, together with cataloguing and analysis of artefacts from the site, now housed in the National Museum of Ireland. The intention is to fully research and scientifically map the wreck for the first time since its loss. It is hoped that this work will inform on the formulation of a long-term management and protection strategy for the site and that it will confirm the identity of the wreck as the Santa Ana Maria.

This paper is presented as an introduction to the wreck, using contemporary sources to detail the history of the capture and loss of the ship and to provide an overview of current and proposed future work at the site by the UAU.

Voyage to Destruction – the Historical Context

The decision to use Matanzas Bay in Cuba in September 1628 by the commander of the New Spain fleet, Juan de Benavides y Bazán, proved to be a costly one. As the Dutch fleet, under the command

⁶ RODDIE 1976: 264; MARX 1977: 245; WALTON 1994: 121 makes reference to two of the galleons being lost off the Bahamas; other accounts report that all made it to Holland except the *Santa Ana Maria*, see for example METS 1902: 119.

⁷ Deposition of Peter Fransen, HCA 1629; APPLEBY 1992: 179-180, Captain James of the English privateer *Dragon*, advised that there was plenty of depth of water in Castlehaven, when in fact there was not.

⁸ RODDIE 1976: 265 – this remains the seminal study of Jacob the Diver published to date; APPLEBY 1992: 179–180; EARLE 2007: 38.



Figure 25.3. The fortified harbour of Castlehaven viewed from the north. The wreck of *Santa Ana Maria* lies in the outer harbour at the top, left hand corner below the headland (Photo: C. Kelleher).

of Piet Heyn, vice-admiral in the Dutch West India Company and accomplished privateer, had blockaded the entrance to Havana, Benavides has no option but to hole up in the nearby port, hoping to off-load the treasure in the galleons, sail out to meet the Dutch, and return to reload his cargo9. Heyn had brought with him from the Netherlands a large privateering fleet of over thirty heavilyarmed ships manned by 4,000 crew and their sole mission was to target the Spanish treasure galleons and to take them as prizes10. Benavides' plan failed and in his effort to escort the ships to a safe berth to facilitate off-loading, his lack of knowledge of the bay and his refusal to consult with his fellow officers resulted in several of the ships running aground. The Dutch then sailed so quickly into the bay that Benavides ordered the abandoning of his vessels and Heyn and his crew were able to capture the fleet without engagement11. The capture of the fleet by Heyn was a national event in the Dutch Republic; never before or after was a complete fleet captured and he was to return home a hero as the value of the cargo was estimated to be over 12 million guilders. The taking of the flota also had international consequences. The loss of

the fleet and its valuable cargo to Spain was an economic disaster and set in motion the eventual collapse of Iberian colonial monopoly in the New World and allowed for the growth of Dutch maritime power overseas¹².

Loss and Salvage Disputes

The High Court of Admiralty papers recount that the ship became separated from the main Dutch fleet on its way back to the Netherlands, when the Santa Ana Maria was taken as a prize by the Dragon of Bristol, the English privateer under the command of Captain James. Although the bulk of the treasure had been transferred by Heyn to his own ship while still in Cuba, the Santa Ana Maria is reported to have been carrying a large quantity of campeche wood, six anchors, ropes, nearly 200

⁹ RAHN PHILLIPS 1992: 4.

¹⁰ Walton 1994: 120-121.

¹¹ WRIGHT 1921: 615.

¹² SLUITER 1942: 38.

pots of gunpowder, 400 muskets, and over 40 guns. On coming into Castlehaven Harbour, and in return for safe passage, Captain James demanded a one-third share in the ship's cargo. The English Captain misjudged the depth of water at the harbour entrance, however, and the Santa Ana Maria ran aground¹³. Other contemporary sources detail the sinking of the ship with 36 pieces of ordnance mounted and others guns in the hold, but all the crew were able to get ashore safely¹⁴.

Salvage operations began immediately, with local merchant James Salmon working on the wreck for over two years, initially recovering two brass guns that were sent to Enkhuizen and retaining most of the remaining goods for the Lord President of Munster, Sir William St. Leger. The chest from the ship was also recovered, reported to contain between 1,000-1,200 guilders. The ship itself appears to have been sold shortly after it was wrecked to Salmon, acting on behalf of local English Government official Sir Thomas Freke, for 500 guilders¹⁵. Immediately, the Dutch West India Company began to petition the Privy Council in London for the right of salvage and the Council found in their favour, ordering St. Leger to assist the Company. This appears to have been ignored locally, as the Company, who vehemently opposed the arrival of and work by Jacob the Diver on the site in 1630, made several more petitions to the Council¹⁶. Such was the persistent salvage on the wreck site at the time that in 1629 Charles I ordered Sir Thomas Crooke, lord-deputy in Baltimore, to arrest anyone who had or attempted to take goods from the wreck. In June 1629, the Lords of the Admiralty ordered St. Leger to fully assist Jacob the Diver to salvage the wreck of the Santa Ana Maria on their behalf and thus began a targeted salvage of the wreck site17. The dispute continued, with representatives from the West India Company arriving, and Sir Thomas Freke, who also claimed right to the wreck, undertaking their own salvage work. The affair was finally resolved in favour of the Dutch West India Company 18.

Wreck Discovery

A number of local County Cork divers discovered the wreck site in the late 1960s, and throughout the early 1970s work was undertaken by them on the site; the nature and extent of this work, however, remains unspecified. From the known material recovered, including a number of brass and iron guns, a large variety of smaller artefacts, as well as information on the divers' activities contained in files in the National Museum of Ireland¹⁹, it appears that the wreck was extensively searched, worked over and negatively impacted upon. Four

large brass demi-culverin guns were recovered from the wreck site and one, weighing 1.2 tons, bears the coat of arms of Philip III. The words 'Do Philippe III Rey De Espana' are engraved on the breech end of the chase. The coat of arms is composite and complex and indicates the supremacy of the Spanish Empire at the time. It consists of the shields of the kingdoms of Lyon and Castile, escutcheons of Portugal, Aragon and sheaves of corn for the two Sicilies; the lower quarter depicts crests for Austria, Burgundy and the Spanish Netherlands and the pomegranate escutcheon is present to signify the kingdom of Granada. The Spanish royal crown sits on top of the coat of arms (Figure 25.2). This gun, with its ornate lifting dolphins and measuring 2.9m in length, like the other three guns, remains in private ownership²⁰.

Almost 200 artefacts were donated to the National Museum of Ireland²¹ by one of the divers involved in the initial investigation of the wreck site. The remaining divers chose to retain the material they had recovered, the details of which were not divulged and thus, unfortunately, remain undocumented²².

Underwater Archaeological Survey

The preliminary dive survey undertaken in 2009 by the UAU identified an iron cannon, a number of cannon balls, and the possible ballast mound of the wreck on the seabed. Dense kelp cover ser-

¹³ Deposition of Peter Fransen, HCA 1629; APPLEBY 1992; 179.

¹⁴ APC 1958: 292.

¹⁵ Deposition of Peter Fransen, HCA 1629; APPLEBY 992: 180.

¹⁶ Petition of the West India Company of the United Provinces to the Council, 1 Aug. 1630. BRUCE 1860: 319–336.

¹⁷ Deposition of Jacob Johnson of Enkhuizen, mariner, 4 Nov. 1630, ff 187-7v, 189-9v, HCA 1632 – this account provides interesting detail as to how the salvage took place, the number of individuals involved and the time it took to raise the guns; Appleby 1992: 195; Roddie 1976: 265

¹⁸ RODDIE 1976: 266.

¹⁹ NMI E995.

Details recorded by the author during inspection of he brass gun.

²¹ NMI E995: 1-196.

²² The legislative process in Ireland to protect the underwater cultural heritage was enacted in 1987 with the coming into force of the 1987 National Monuments (Amendment) Act, which automatically protects all wrecks over 100 years old. The divers were not, therefore, acting outside the law at the time of their discovery and when working on the wreck site.

iously hampered the dive, carried out in late July, but from initial survey results the site appears to extend, when mapping the line of the cannon and cannon balls, in a southeast-northwest direction. The deepest part of the site identified during the survey lies at 13 metres at high water and this gradually shallows out to less than five metres where the reef on the northeast side of the small bay extends. Here the potential ballast mound is evident, lying between the fingers of the reef. The mediumsized iron gun was the only one recorded during the survey but it is documented that the Santa Ana Maria carried 34 brass and 12 iron guns at the time of its sinking²³. Accounts of contemporary salvage at the wreck site, when several of the brass guns were raised²⁴, coupled with the guns raised in recent times by the local divers, suggests the probability that quite a number of the guns were removed from the site in the past. With the identification of the iron gun by the UAU in July, however, it is clear that ordnance still remain to be recorded on the wreck site.

This is a highly dynamic site, being located at the entrance to the harbour and subject to the prevailing south-westerly winds and rolling seas of the open Atlantic. The wreck has, as a result, been subject to impacts from the changing sea and weather conditions over the centuries, and the likelihood is that it may be spread over a wide area. Geophysical survey, involving side-scan sonar and magnetometer survey, was undertaken at the site by Boland Archaeological Services in 2007 and a number of anomalies were identified that may be archaeological in nature. These extend from the known site southwards towards the main harbour mouth and may indicate either the dispersal of wreck material over time or the jettisoning of guns and other heavier material from the ship when it perhaps became clear, on that stormy night in December 1628, that it was going onto the rocks.

From diver accounts taken when the site was discovered, there appears to have been quite an amount of material evident on the wreck site, including iron guns, powder boxes and leather containers. Ship structure was also noted but much of this was reported as being buried²⁵.

Wreck Identity, Significance and Context

As previously described, one of the brass guns recovered by the divers in the 1970s bears the royal arms of Philip III. Below this, close to the breech ring, is also incised the name 'Don Pachecos V, Capitán Generale de La Artilleria' and the date 1614. This perhaps provides the most compelling evidence for the wreck being that of *Santa Ana Maria*, or at least a ship that formed part of the Spanish

treasure flotas. Being the capitana of the fleet, Santa Ana Maria would have had ordnance placed on board in keeping with its command role and its capacity. The government of Spain set out establishments for ships' armaments that matched the number and size of ordnance to the size of the vessels. The brass gun in question, having the date 1614 inscribed on it, suggests it was forged in Seville, where the royal foundry was located from 1611²⁶. While the gun obviously dates to this earlier period, some 14 years prior to the sinking of the Santa Ana Maria, it was common practice during the early decades of the 17th century for the Spanish to move guns around and reuse ordnance. The cost of provisioning and manning a treasure fleet every year was ever-mounting, and thus the re-use of guns was essential to the economic viability of the treasure flotas. It would have been the responsibility of the captain-general of the artillery to oversee the allocation of ships armament and to ensure that everything was in place for the successful journey, and it was he also who would have commanded the capitana, sailing ahead and followed by the rest of the fleet²⁷. Juan de Benavides held that unlucky position on board the Santa Ana Maria in 1628. Although he managed to escape in Cuba, he subsequently met his fate in Seville, after spending five years in jail. In the early morning of May 18th 1633, he was placed upon a mule, led through the streets, and brought to the entrance of the Royal Courts of Justice, where he was tied to a chair and his throat was cut. Such was the depth of anger and frustration felt by the Spanish officials for the loss of the fleet that Benavides was executed as an example to future commanders²⁸.

The Shipwreck Inventory of Ireland²⁹ records the loss of twenty-seven ships in Castlehaven Harbour over the centuries. The earliest of these dates to 1601, when a number of both Spanish and English ships were wrecked whilst engaging each other in the harbour during the Battle of Kinsale. The latest shipwreck entry dates to the end of the 19th century, and only two records relate to the third decade of the 17th century – that of the Santa Ana Maria and the Leopard, an English vessel of

²³ Deposition of Peter Fransen, HCA 1629 APPLEBY 1992: 179–180.

²⁴ Deposition of Jacob Johnson, HCA 1632, this account refers to six guns having been raised by Salmon and a further thirteen being recovered by Jacob; APPLEBY 1992: 195; RODDIE 1978: 264–266.

²⁵ NMI E995; Mr. D. Woosnam, Carrigaline, Co. Cork, pers conun.

²⁶ RAHN PHILIPS 1987: 92.

²⁷ RAHN PHILIPS 1987: 92.

²⁸ Ibid. 5.

²⁹ Shipwreck Inventory of Ireland: Cork.

Weymouth or Poole, lost in October of 1628 in the inner harbour, now known as Castletownsend but referred to in contemporary sources as Castlehaven³⁰ (Figure 25.3). The story of the Leopard, following its loss, highlights the involvement of local merchants and English government officials in maritime affairs at the time, as it bears striking similarities to the accounts concerning the Santa Ana Maria. It is recorded that the Leopard was preparing for a journey to the Straights when she encountered a storm. She was driven onto rocks and was wrecked. The crew of 40 made it safely ashore but Captain Nicholas Strangways and three others were lost. She was carrying a cargo of pilchards for Sir Thomas Freke, who again is recorded as the owner of the ship. The 240-ton vessel was carrying 12 pieces of ordnance, seven of which were retrieved at the time as they could be seen at low tide, indicating that the wreck was lost in the shallows of the inner harbour and not at the entrance. Jacob the Diver is also recorded as working on this vessel in 1630 while salvaging the Santa Ana Maria.

The evidence from the material recovered so far, particularly the brass gun, is compelling and certainly points to the identity of the wreck located at the entrance to Castlehaven Harbour as, most likely, a Spanish vessel, and quite probably the Santa Ana Maria.

The significance of the wreck cannot be underestimated in both historical and archaeological terms. Its participation in one of the major sea-borne events in the seventeenth century - the capture of the Spanish silver fleet - has been celebrated through the ages, as well as its direct link with one of The Dutch Republic's foremost naval commanders, Piet Heyn. Its loss off the southern coast of Ireland and the events leading up to and preceeding its wrecking, have now also entered into Irish maritime history. Archaeologically, the potential to learn more about the construction details and artefactual assemblage of a Spanish galleon from the early 17th century makes it of immense importance, as we know so little first hand about ships from this period, particularly from Northern European waters. It may also prove to be a tangible link to the privateering and piratical activity that was so prevalent and so profitable during this period in the Atlantic waters around the coast of Ireland.

The artefacts in the National Museum of Ireland are varied and tell the human story of life on board the vessel. A large amount of pottery sherds are present, including rims³¹ from a number of olive jars. These have been classed as type C, with a narrow usage period confined to the early 17th century and they may thus be viewed as rare. Similar pottery has come from the better-known Spanish galleon the *Nuestra Senora de Atocha* of the 1622 silver plate fleet³². A three-part copper pot with strainer



Figure 25.4. Set of copper weights now in National Museum of Ireland, Cat. E996:1:167 (Photo: C. Kelleher).

on top33, which would have been used in the galley for food preparation, provides further insights into the domestic workings on the ship. Anomalous pieces of lead and copper alloy also form part of the assemblage, possibly for repair and patchwork, as both the capitana and almiranta galleons belonging to the treasure fleets had their own resident divers, known as buzos, whose responsibility it was to inspect the hulls of the ships and undertake repair work, which also involved using thin lead sheets and oakum to patch any holes34. A perfect set of copper alloy weights35 that would have been used to weigh the silver cargo reflects the main function of the ship itself - the acquisition of treasure (see Figure 25.4). Two brass bedstead finials³⁶ and ornate candlesticks³⁷ provide evidence for prestigious items associated with the officers on board, perhaps part of the bed used by the unfortunate Captain-General Benavides himself. The larger guns recovered are an obvious indication of the defensive capability of the ship, but the numerous lead musket shot³⁸ and the musket stand³⁹ (Figure 25.5) also recovered by the divers would have formed part of the armaments on board, to

³⁰ Deposition of Ralph Freke, esquire, 3 Dec. 1630, ff 205v-6, 207v-8; HCA 1632; APPLEBY 1992: 195; RODDIE 1976: 265–266.

³¹ NMI E995: 1–4.

³² Marken 1994: 20–21, 85, 137; Dr. Colin Martin recorded and categorised the pottery from *Santa Ana Maria* in 1973 and concluded that, along with similar pottery from the Spanish wrecks of *San Antonio* (1621) and the *Atocha* (1622), these small conical jars represent a distinct category.

³³ NMI E995: 153, 155, 196.

³⁴ RAHN PHILLIPS 1992: 139–40.

³⁵ NMI E995: 167.

³⁶ NMI E995: 162.

³⁷ NMI E995: 157.

³⁸ NMI E995: 170.

³⁹ NMI E995; 159.



Figure 25.5. Musket rest in NMI E996:1:159 (image copyright of National Museum of Ireland).

be used by the crew for defence, perhaps in times of attack from other privateers or pirates during voyages to the New World.

Protecting and Managing the Wreck Site

Under the 1987 National Monuments (Amendment) Act in Ireland, all wrecks over 100 years old are protected. Under this legislation anyone undertaking a dive, remote sensing survey or more intrusive investigation on a protected wreck site must make an application to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to do so. Licenses are issued subject to conditions, and for any intrusive work a detailed research strategy and methodology must also be agreed in advance between the applicant and the relevant national institutions. Strict penalties apply for breech of conditions, including a severe fine and/or prison sentence, depending on the nature and extent of damage to a wreck site.

It is essential that further information be obtained from this important wreck site if we are to understand its true nature and extent and if we are to address the damage caused by previous impacts on the site. It is the intention of the UAU to return to the wreck site as soon as conditions allow in order to complete the mapping of the exposed wreck material. Results from this survey should inform on possible areas that may be targeted for archaeological excavation. While the objective is to obtain as much information from the wreck site as possible, it is also the intention to assess the stability of the site, its fragility, condition, depth of deposition, and distribution of artefacts and related wreck material. This information will help inform a strategy for the protection and management of the site in the future by the Department, including the implementation of an appropriate monitoring regime at the wreck site. Not only will such a monitoring regime ensure continual assessment of the site but it will also act as a deterrent to would-be treasure hunters in an area where remoteness and seclusion pose their own threat.

Conclusion

The narrative that can be presented on the story of this ship, from contemporary documentary accounts and the artefactual material recovered to date, relating to its voyage and loss, to hints at life on board, its capture and ultimate demise, is indeed fascinating. What still remains to be revealed and related, however, is the story of the ship itself. The potential exists for a substantial part of the vessel to remain buried at the site and, if this should prove to be the case, then we could yet uncover new and exciting evidence for the construction, typology and technology employed in Spanish shipbuilding during the period in question. Should such evidence emerge then the full story of the *Santa Ana Maria* can finally be told.

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