

Preface

If we go back far enough in human evolution, we find that we humans once lived quite comfortably in the sea. Even when we stepped onto land and lost gills, fins, and other seagoing apparatus, of necessity we lived *near* water—the sea, lakes, rivers, creeks—any little trickle would do. But we learned rather quickly that we could not return to our old home unless we held our breath under water or found something, a log, perhaps, on which to float. It wasn't long before we again began to explore the watery world but on things that floated, then on floating things we made ourselves. We called them boats.

Gradually, we came to take boats for granted. They were a necessary part of our lives. We used them for moving from place to place, for providing food by fishing, for transporting goods, for war (either for attacking or fleeing, depending on which side we were on at the time) and, we can assume, for the simple pleasure of being out on the water.

The word *boat* has become a staple of our vocabulary in odd ways. Two people facing the same problems are said to be “in the same boat.” If we fail to take advantage of an opportunity, we have “missed the boat.” And in certain circumstances, we really do not want to “rock the boat.” *The Random House Dictionary of the English Language* defines a boat as “a vessel for transport by water, constructed to provide buoyancy by excluding water and shaped to give stability and permit propulsion.”

This definition has been true since the first days of our somewhat uncomfortable return to water. A boat must be built. It must float. It should be stable. It does not absolutely have to be propelled, but it's almost always nice to be able to push it or pull it in the direction we want to go, flowing rivers notwithstanding. Remove any one of the above elements, and we do not have a boat. Either it does not come into existence, or what we have is a wreck on the bottom of a body of water.

Which brings us to our present endeavor—the *International Handbook of Underwater Archaeology*—by what some might look on as a leap of faith unless we consider the following: Sooner or later, after all the millennia through which we had been “messaging about in boats,” someone was sure to become curious or greedy enough to want to know what was Down There and would figure out a way to get to it. This happened much sooner than you might think, which is why we introduce this volume with John

Broadwater's excellent timelines, "Timeline for Deepwater Technology and Exploration" and "Timeline of Underwater Archaeology and Salvage." We learn that nearly 2500 years ago the king of Persia sent a diver to recover material from sunken enemy ships, and that a mere one hundred years later Aristotle described the use of a crude diving bell. At the moment Scyllis dove for Xerxes of Persia, the art (or evil) of salvage was born. When Aristotle described a diving bell, the technology needed for underwater exploration was on its way.

From 460 B.C. to 2002 A.D. is indeed a bit of a leap. But we can easily imagine that throughout prehistory and into written history all manner of people peered down into the water and said, "What *is* that down there?" or stood on a pier in Spain and lamented, "Where *is* that galleon? It's been five years since we sent her to New Spain for gold, surely she should be back by now!" And many have argued, "The story of Noah's Ark may be a myth, but myths don't come from nowhere. If we look in the right place, maybe we'll find out what caused the Flood and what it covered."

According to Broadwater's timelines, salvage has been practiced for a long, long time, but underwater archaeology could be said to have begun only in about 1900 A.D., when an archaeologist supervised the recovery of statuary from a Roman wreck carrying Greek art. These last hundred years have been a time of slow development but now underwater archaeology is a solid discipline that uses ultramodern techniques and has high ethical standards. Broadwater's timelines provide a fine long view of that development.

From the perspective of time, the scope of the *International Handbook of Underwater Archaeology* is considerably more limited than the timelines since it covers developments of only the past ten years. Yet, the *Handbook's* geographic scope could not be broader: We attempted no less than complete coverage of the whole world. Although we did not succeed as well as we would have liked (We were not able to include Canada, Russia, and some other areas in our survey), our chapter authors have covered a huge amount of the earth's surface and waters.

Geography, we felt, was a good place to start our journey through the past decade of developments in underwater archaeology. Our authors take you on a world tour beginning at the northeastern corner of the United States and flowing down through the American South, out west to the Pacific Coast and even farther west to Hawaii, then down into Mexico and South America and out into the Caribbean. Jumping over the Atlantic Ocean, they continue the journey in Sweden, through the Baltic Sea, into the British Isles and back again to northern and southern Europe. From the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt, they head farther east to Asia, the Indian Ocean, and Australia, then down to deepest South Africa.

Wrecks and artifacts abound throughout the tour and, geography being the dynamic process it is, in some weird places: deep under Lisbon, Portugal, in the construction debris of urban works; in abandoned oxbows nearly a mile from the Missouri River's present shore; under a landfill in San Francisco. Testimony of our attachment to water and boats is found eroding out of sand beaches, wedged among coastal rocks, buried in the gravels of the Sea of Galilee, 12,500 feet down in oceans, tossed about in the surf near shore, piled atop one another in a bay on the coast of Israel. We humans have left evidence of our watery travels just about everywhere.

Since underwater archaeology is now a discipline, there are issues to be faced by the discipline's practitioners. In Part III, our authors describe not only how to find, conserve, preserve, and protect wrecks, artifacts, and other objects under water, and what the

objects may mean in terms of human history and prehistory; they also tackle the thorny questions of who owns the resources, how best to disseminate information about them and, indeed, whether certain of the resources should be protected at all. The role of some United States government agencies is explored in a separate section. There is also much on the subject of governments' involvement in underwater archaeology in the geography chapters, since many states and nations have in place or are currently devising strategies to deal with their underwater heritage.

Central to the issues is a discussion on ethics, from the development of high standards for finding and dealing with underwater objects to the treating of salvors and sport divers. It is not all smooth sailing, but the various archaeology groups and societies have provided written standards—"lightships," if you will—for keeping the discipline on an ethical course.

The final word on underwater archaeology probably will never be written unless the world runs out of underwater objects to explore. Nonetheless, George Bass provides the last words as he peers down the long rivers and wide seas of the future and speculates what wind the discipline might sail by and what wonders its practitioners might discover. In "Archaeology in the 21st Century," Bass presents an overview of recent findings that he, Robert Ballard, and other archaeologists unearthed in the Black Sea when they discovered freshwater beaches and human habitation on the bottom of that vast inland sea. If this work is an augury of things to come, the journey of underwater archaeology down the rivers and into the seas of human prehistory and history on water will be one of momentous discoveries in the new millenium.

We like to think of the *International Handbook of Underwater Archaeology* as an elegant, well-equipped ship with a highly professional crew, about to set sail on fascinating waters. *Bon voyage!*

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