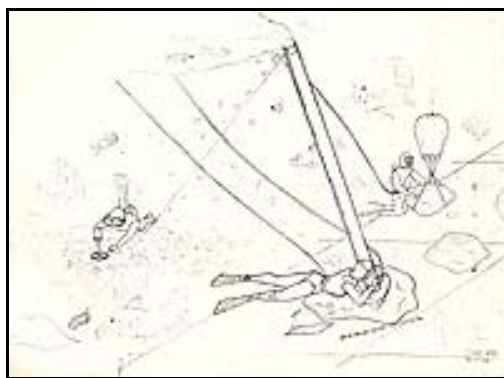


THE EXPLORATION

The wreck of the *Henrietta Marie* was first sighted by Mel Fisher and his crew in 1972. The team noted the find, but bypassed the exploration so that they could continue their search for the *Atocha*. Once the *Atocha* was found, they returned to the *Henrietta Marie* site with marine archaeologists.

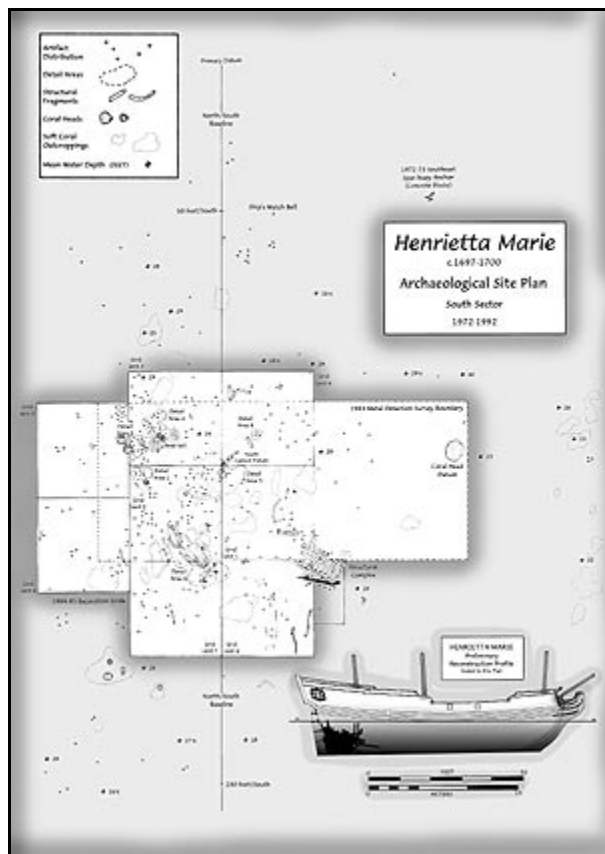


One way that marine archaeologists study past human seagoing activities is through wrecked vessels lying on the ocean floor. The goal of the archaeologists is to understand the ship, its contents, and its mission, as well as placing the ship in historical context. Many things can be learned about the time period a ship sails from the artifacts that are found on board. They are able to study the period technology, economics and cross-cultural influences. Sunken ships are often referred to as time capsules for this reason.



Once the artifacts have been recorded and mapped underwater, it is time for them once again to return to the surface. Shortly after the metal

artifacts were submerged in the ocean, the surface began to corrode. Sand, debris, corals and other marine organisms became trapped in the corrosion process and formed a hard coating around the piece. The process is quite rapid. Within days, a slimy film caused by bacteria was formed on the substrate. Then crust-like algae and corals started to settle and to build. This process is also known as biofouling. The substrate is often totally covered in about 5 years. Over the 300-year period, the concretion is thick, and in some cases helps to preserve and protect the artifact. X-rays are sometimes used to identify the artifacts because the concretion is too thick to identify it.



Images to enrich this activity found in our history section. Please go to <http://melfisher.org/henriettamarie/archaeology.htm>