



English Banks Project

A Maritime Search And Salvage Operation In One Of The World's Most Prolific Shipwreck Zones

LOCATION

Uruguay is a relatively small South American nation on the Atlantic coast, just south of Brazil and north of Argentina. The wide brown waters of the Rio de la Plata (River of the Silver) define its southern and western borders.



The Rio de la Plata, at its mouth is nearly two hundred miles across. Just inside this massive opening lies the English Banks (Banco Inglés), a dangerous area of shallows and underwater sand dunes bending across nearly twenty miles of the river's gaping yaw. Directly next to these shallows stretch the cautiously marked shipping channels leading 18 miles to Montevideo, Uruguay and 120 miles to Buenos Aires, Argentina.



Sailing dangerously close to the English Banks

THE ENGLISH BANKS

The Banco Inglés has been a major obstacle to world navigation since European ships first started sailing here in the sixteenth century. Sailors quickly nicknamed the dangerous Banks “sailor’s hell” and “the devil’s playground”. Its deadly reputation spread quickly and the Banks began to show up on every chart of the region.



The stern of a ship wrecked on the English Banks



Portion of a 1550 Spanish chart of the Americas which clearly shows the Rio de la Plata and the English Banks



A frigate just below the surface on the English Banks



Wreckage on the English Banks

In spite of its worldwide reputation, ships, by the dozens per year, wrecked here. Frigates, galleons, freighters, gunboats, clippers, steamers, ironclads, ...every type of ship imaginable. Today, more than a thousand shipwrecks are strewn within the confines of this relatively small geographic area. Most are completely covered by the constantly churning sands...others have masts, towers and even hulls standing clearly above the shallow waters.

Our group has the exclusive rights to search for salvage in the English Banks Zone.



SEARCH AND SALVAGE IN URUGUAY

Since 1986, Uruguay has granted permits for search and salvage operations along its coastal waterways. Each permit is allotted to a specific area and as of December, 1998, ten survey permits had been issued for various geographic zones. In Uruguay, the permit process is a two-step system. While a “search permit” allows a group to effectively look for and dive on shipwrecks in an area, the “salvage permit” allows the actual recovery of artifacts from a specific shipwreck.

Although many areas of the South American coast will yield ancient shipwrecks of spectacular attraction, the most treasured area, without a doubt, is the Banco Inglés.

Alfredo Etchegaray, a Montevideo businessman, and a partner in the English Banks Project, has obtained the exclusive search permit from the government of Uruguay, for 1,200 square miles of the most prolific shipwreck waters in the world...The English Banks...



Alfredo Etchegaray looking at artifacts recovered from a wreck in the River Plate



Spanish silver coin dated 1809

Over the next several years our search will uncover four hundred years of naval wreckage and result in the discovery of hundreds of shipwrecks from the sixteenth century to the contemporary. Artifacts and treasure will include jewels, gold and silver coins, cannons, precious metal ingots, muskets, swords, ship’s tackle and apparel, cargo, crystalware, china, and much, much more.



Spanish silver coin from the wreck of the Salvador

SHIPWRECKS IN THE RIO DE LA PLATA

One magnificent shipwreck in the Rio de la Plata, the Spanish Armed Freighter “Salvador”, was listed in the Oxford Encyclopedia of Shipwrecks as “the most significant collection of Napoleonic Era artifacts surviving today”.

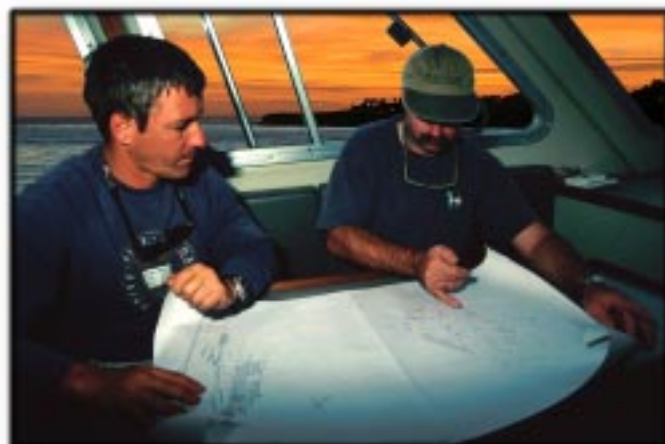


Shipwrecks have been symbols of both nightmare and adventure since sailing began

The Salvador is presently undergoing salvage operations. Artifacts are being carefully brought to the surface, inventoried and preserved in preparation for auction, next year. The Salvador lies very near another famous shipwreck, the HMS Agememnon, Lord Admiral Horatio Nelson’s favorite ship of the line. Neither of these shipwrecks lies within the English Banks Zone. They are in shallow water sixty miles from the English Banks, near the beautiful and fashionable beaches of Punta del Este. These wrecks are owned by The Maldonado Bay Group. One of the partners in that successful group, Hector Bado, is also our partner in the English Banks Project.



Hector Bado holding two brass and ebony sextants from the wreck of the Salvador



Hector Bado and Crayton Fenn checking archeological drawings of a wreck in the Rio de la Plata



THE BEGINNING

In October, 1997, The English Banks Project commenced surveying in Uruguayan waters. We began with the support of the Navy which provided the vessel ROU 72 and its crew for the first six months of survey work in the English Banks area.



The Uruguayan Navy allowed our team to utilize the ROU-72 for initial survey work until our own vessel arrived in Uruguay



When Surveyor arrived, her superior design characteristics and capabilities greatly increased our on-site efficiency

In August of 1998 the newly christened research vessel, Surveyor, designed and outfitted especially for work on the English Banks, arrived in Montevideo from her shipyard in Seattle. At a cost of \$826,000 she is an extremely rugged and reliable work vessel. Her crew of six technicians, divers and seamen commenced the testing and refining of a meticulous and methodical survey of the English Banks Zone under the experienced and able direction of Operations Manager and partner, Crayton Fenn.



Crayton Fenn working around engine #3 aboard Surveyor



Planning a dive with the crew

NEW TOOLS

In addition to Surveyor, we are also developing other sophisticated data acquisition tools designed especially for work on the Banks including a specially engineered side scan sonar, a unique differential global positioning transmitter and an acoustic positioning system for archeological work that will allow us to quickly and accurately map, type and record artifacts as we recover them.



Steve Ladd prepares for a dive (upper left) while Crayton Fenn gets a closer look at a Spanish soldier (upper right). The bottom four photographs show several artifacts recovered from a shipwreck in the Rio de la Plata.

SURVEYOR

Surveyor is particularly suited to shallow water surveys far from shore. She has a draft of less than three feet with four Caterpillar 600 horsepower engines and Hamilton jet drives. Surveyor's Captain is Eduardo Tutor who has many years of commercial and military naval experience on the South American coast.



Eduardo Tutor is Surveyor's Captain



PUBLIC RELATIONS

The English Banks Project has garnered a great deal of remarkable publicity and good will by being available to help in various outside activities ...including assisting in the raising of four bronze cannons off the wreck of the Salvador in Maldonado Bay.

Three of the Spanish bronze cannons were each baptized with the name of a saint. Those names are embossed on the bronze and are visible today.

The S.Rafael (Saint Raphael) was the first cannon to see the surface after 187 years on the bottom of Maldonado Bay. It was soon followed by the S.Miguel and, next, the S.Graviel. Each was built in the year 1801. “Domingo Soriano Me Fecit” is written on the bronze. In Latin it means “Domingo Soriano made me”. A few hours later, Piedad, which means “mercy” arrived on deck.



Each cannon will be worth about \$50,000 to the Maldonado Bay Group. The press and VIP's on four boats burst into spontaneous applause as the cannons were safely lifted from the sea.



These three national news publications carried front page stories about the Salvador and the Surveyor

In addition to lending a hand to another salvage operation and demonstrating the capabilities of Surveyor, this history-making event allowed us the remarkable opportunity to meet and chat with dignitaries such as the Admiral of the Navy and the top men in the Prefectura (Coast Guard), the President of Patrimony (History), the Director of the State Cultural Authority and Naval Captains of the major ports in Uruguay.



The Flores Island lighthouse stands guard near the English Banks



Accomplishments: PHASE ONE

- Obtained survey permits, diving credentials and other necessary on site certification;
- Established working relationships and business operations in Uruguay;
- Designed, built, delivered and tested Surveyor, a one of a kind survey vessel;
- Purchased, imported, tested and refined data acquisition tools;
- Tested and refined marine survey operations and crew;
- Identified targets for future exploration and identification;
- Identified, designed and ordered additional specialized data acquisition systems;
- Installed and tested data and image enhancement computers;
- Created a stream of positive publicity about the role of Surveyor;
- Advanced diplomatic and military relations;
- Identified and recruited an international crew of survey and marine professionals;



To be accomplished: PHASE TWO

- Purchase and install additional data acquisition tools;
- Acquire an acoustic positioning system for archeological work;
- Acquire a diver communication system;
- Locate fifty targets and establish their individual value for salvage;
- Establish and refine a methodology for artifact sales;
- Recruit and train a second survey crew;
- Continue building good public relations;
- Apply for salvage permits on selected targets;



THE FUTURE

Some additional data acquisition tools have been designed and ordered but cannot be purchased until the next phase of funding is complete. When all the necessary equipment has been installed and is operational, the business of searching the English Banks for shipwrecks can begin in earnest.

Once appropriate targets are identified in the English Banks Zone, salvage permits will be requested. When these salvage permits have been assigned, actual archeology and recovery can begin. At the same time, artifact preservation and storage must be operational to protect items that will be conserved and sold. Additionally, a mechanism must be in place that will effect the sale of our artifacts and return monies to the group.



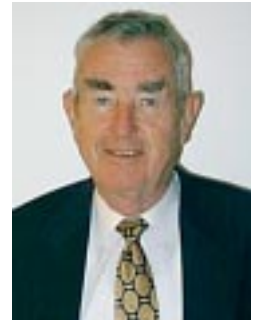
An early chart of the Rio de la Plata showing Montevideo and the English Banks. The green area represents the permitted English Banks Zone.

THE PARTNERS



Hector Bado is an authority on shipwrecks in the Rio de la Plata. His expertise in all matters related to naval history and Uruguayan politics allow the company to work effectively in these waters.

John Dimmer is a North American entrepreneur. His financial expertise and business insight add significantly to the business intellect of the group.



Alfredo Etchegaray owns one of South America's largest public relations firms. He has a lifelong interest in shipwrecks and is the owner of the search permits for the English Banks Zone.

Crayton Fenn is Operations Manager for The English Banks Project. He has conducted survey and recovery operations from the tip of the Aleutian Islands to the southern regions of South America.



Robert Mester is Business Manager for English Banks LLC. His vast experience in the marine survey industry brings a high level of efficiency and practical knowledge to the company.





BUSINESS RESOURCES

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A bronze cannon worth about \$50,000 lays on the bottom of the Rio de la Plata