

Strategic Options with Regards to Public Access – Awareness Raising in Portugal

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On the occasion of my participation in 1992 at the Lezioni di Archeologia Subacquea di Ustica (Underwater Archaeology Classes of Ustica), I had the opportunity to dive with Edoardo Riccardi along the Underwater Archaeological Trail of Punta Gavazzi, established in the Natural Park of this magnificent small island off the coast of Sicily. The Trail of Ustica, among the first initiatives of this kind world-wide and largely due to the creative instinct of this Italian archaeologist, consists of a circuit marked out using “Ariadne’s threads” which allow the divers to visit the archaeological remains scattered along the trail and which are labelled using small plaques.

The experience was marvellous, and it immediately encouraged us to develop something similar in Portugal. Already by the following year we had set up an analogous system at the site of the wreck of the French flagship *Océan*, which sunk on 18 August 1759 off Salema beach, at a depth of around six to nine metres, west of the Algarve during the Seven Year War (Fig.1). The underwater trail of the *Océan*, which, to our knowledge, was the first of its kind established in Atlantic Europe, met with a resounding success.

The underwater trail of the *Océan* currently represents the first of three initiatives spearheaded by the Centro Nacional de Arqueologia Náutica e Subaquática (CNANS) in this field. In 2005, this trail was renewed using new signposting material, 316 stainless steel plaques screwed onto a concrete base/pedestal, with captions in Portuguese and English over a laser-engraved background image.

The two other pilot projects by the CNANS in this area are the trail of Faro A and that of the Pedro Nunes/Thermopylae. The Faro A trail concerns a non-identified ship wreck located off the Santa Maria cape, near the city of Faro, capital of the Algarve province in southern Portugal. The wreck consists of an oblong tumulus situated at twenty metres below on a sandy seabed (Fig. 2). The wreck was dated not through the large amount of iron artillery scattered around, but rather by pewter plates bearing a hallmark/stamp identified as belonging to the Edgcombe family, from Cornwall, dating to the last quarter of the 17th-century. One of the hypotheses put forward towards its identification is that the ship was part of an Anglo-Dutch squadron, known as the “Smyrna Convoy,” which was attacked by the French squadron of Admiral Tourville at the end of the century. Diving at this site was strictly forbidden until 2003, after which IPA/CNANS signed a cooperation agreement with one of the diving

Figure 1: View of the underwater trail for the *Océan* in 1993



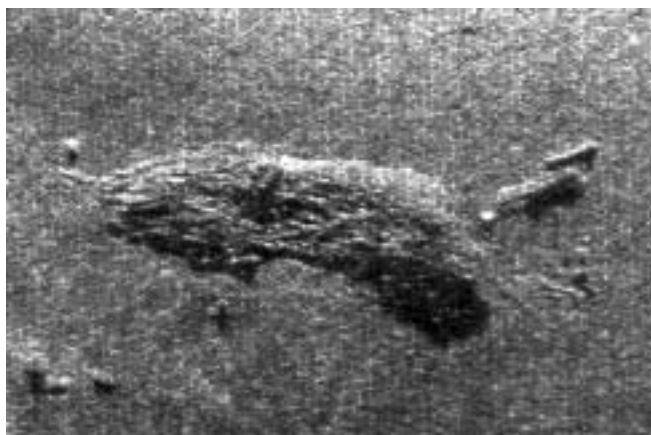


Figure 2: Side scan sonar image of the wreck of the Faro A

schools in Faro (Hidroespaço) in view of organising guided tours. Coordinated by the CNANS, a trail around the wreck was set up and the school's instructors, who had followed introductory training in nautical archaeology organised by the CNANS on the basis of the model developed by the UK's Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS), started supervising visiting divers.

The trail of the Pedro Nunes/Thermopylae concerns the wreck of the "twin" and rival clipper of the *Cutty Sark*. This tall ship, which was considered to be the fastest in the history of the sailing fleet, was bought by the Portuguese navy at the end of the 19th-century and sunk in 1907 during a maritime festival in Cascais, in the presence of the King. Located in 2001 by side scanning sonar at a depth of 30m, the wreck is being examined by several teams of divers, coordinated by the CNANS, in view of setting up a trail that can be visited. The project is supported by the Municipality of Cascais with whom the CNANS has also signed a cooperation agreement.

Furthermore, to raise awareness among and train a wider variety of people, in particular amateur divers, the CNANS adopted the NAS philosophy and training programme, with which it also signed a cooperation agreement giving it the status of a training centre in the framework of the NAS amateur courses. This training course, adopted by several countries across all continents and a number of large international diving organisations, such as CMAS and PADI, is the continuation of a similar experiment started ten years ago by the National Archaeological Museum in Lisbon (MNA) and the non-profit cultural association Arqueonáutica (Fig. 3).

Obviously, the organisation and participation at conferences and scientific meetings, and the subsequent publication of their proceedings and catalogues, as well as the staging of exhibitions, continue to be formidable tools for dissemination, both to the wider public and to specialists. Such initiatives have always taken place in the framework of the overall underwater archaeology strategy developed by the MNA and subsequently by the CNANS, during the past twenty-five years.

With regards to the most recent exhibitions, one must mention the thematic display case created in 2002 at the Maritime Museum of Lisbon, dedicated to the site of the

wreck of the *Nau da India* (a Portuguese Indiaman), *Nossa Senhora dos Mártires*, excavated by the CNANS from 1997-1998, whose results were presented in the Portuguese Pavilion during Expo'98, and which have since then been the subject of much literature. Again in 2002, the CNANS organised together with the Municipal Museum of Portimão an exhibition concerning the underwater cultural heritage of the Arade River, presented at the MNA in 2003. The majority of the information, artefacts, graphic and photographic documentation was provided by the CNANS. The other substantial part of the material evidence came from a totally new project, launched in 2000 by the CNANS in cooperation with a local amateur group (the association IPSIIS), which consisted of archaeological prospecting on beaches using metal detectors.

Furthermore, research by the CNANS on the wreck of the 15th-century ship *Ria de Aveiro A* have led to a novel technical and methodological approach, consisting of full-scale plywood and polyurethane models ("2D" and "3D") (Figs. 4). This method will soon be applied to the wreck of the ship *Arade I*, dating from the 16th-century, which was discovered in 1970 when the river was dredged but which subsequently re-buried itself. Located in 2001 by the CNANS and excavated in a series of annual campaigns until 2005, this wreck has since 2003 been the subject of a PhD thesis at the University of Paris I - IAA under the direction of Eric Rieth.

It is important to underline that the creation of a full-scale model has proved highly effective in museographic terms, as shown by the 2004 exhibition of the wreck of the *Ria de Aveiro A* at the Maritime Museum of Ílhavo, one of the Municipalities on the lagoon of the Aveiro, which witnessed one of the most important maritime adventures in Portugal's history: deep-sea fishing. It coincided with another exhibition organised simultaneously by the CNANS, focusing on the *Ria de Aveiro* and the most important nautical and underwater archaeological finds in Portugal, presented in Aveiro itself, in the emblematic old harbourmaster's building, inaugurated on

Figure 3: Introductory course to underwater archaeology in the swimming pool



Figure 4: 1:1 scale models in plywood and polyurethane, so called “2D” and “3D”, of the 15th century wreck *Ria de Aveiro A*, at the CNANS



this occasion as the seat of the Municipal Assembly and now featuring a vast temporary exhibition hall.

This, in short, is how the CNANS ensures and develops public access –awareness raising in the field of underwater cultural heritage in Portugal.

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