

Fresh information: recent fieldwork.

The wrecks of the Hangö Headland, August 1974.

The position: on the South-Coast of Finland the Headland of Hangö (Hanko in Finnish) was always of serious importance to shipping and naval warfare. In medieval times it was a dreaded position to tackle in rough weather, during the 17th and 18th centuries it was noted as a sheltered anchorage for large-sized warships, and from late 19th century it constituted the only cargo-handling port on the Finnish South-coast, open to winternavigation before the advent of fullpowered icebreakers in the 1920:ies, when even the capital Helsinki was opened to winternavigation.

Immediately to the West of the modern city and the artificial port a sandy headland, the southernmost point of the country of Finland, protrudes into a broken archipelago of steep rocks and shoals continuing seawards for about 10 nautical miles. This vast area of dangers to navigation, especially under sail, holds a limited number of located ancient wrecks. Thanks to the increased activities by the local scuba-clubs, new sites will probably be found annually.

A narrow channel, known as the "Customs channel" (Tullundet) is of great interest to historians and marine archaeologists alike. This site housed coastal vessels of all descriptions, weatherbound either East- or West-bound, at anchors or tied up in the lee of a suitable islet. Hundreds of rockcarvings -armorial bearings, devices, names etc.- tells about days spent here weatherbound. This collection, "a guests log" from mid-17th century onwards, is of immense interest to students of Finland's history under the centuries of Swedish rule, as the carvings represent civil servants, officers of high rank, naval commanders, and even royal persons.

Obviously a number of smallish vessels, riding at anchor off the Custom House, have been caught by heavy weather from the East and smashed against the rocks. Close to the channel two underwater wreck-sites were located by local divers some years ago. These sites have been investigated by the Bureau's divers, and by the assembled staff in August 1974. A superficial inspection of the various remains confirmed the opinion that underwater work should continue here in 1975.

The wreck of the "grain-carrier".

During survey of a sub-marine cable some years ago it was observed that this crossed remnants of a medium-sized, badly fractured hull. Later air-lift operations amidships brought evidence that the hold once contained grain, apparently in bags. No objects were raised. A single heavy barrel-type windlass was observed.

Investigations in 1974 presented a better picture of the hull, representing the shallow-draught, bluff Dutch type. The windlass was found torn loose from its correct position, and is now situated close to the main hatch. Deckbeams with attached hanging knees and two standing tubular wooden pumps situated close to the rails (indicating a flatbottomed hull) are visible.

From the forward portion of the hull, silted in with mud, tiles of Dutch pattern were found. These are dated to mid 17th century by Dutch museums (hereby acknowledged with thanks) The tiles indicate the site of a cramped kitchen in the extreme bow-compartment.

The vessels l.o.a. is roughly 50 feet. The remains observed give the picture of a shallow-draught, singlemasted coastal craft of kaag - hoeker - lemmeraak type.

Working conditions at the Hangö headland are extraordinary, with clean water and extremely good visibility.

The superimposed wrecks.

Opposite the Customs Channel, close to the rocks of the modern Pilot Station, a complicated wreck-site was observed a year ago. Divers reported an agglomerate of timbers which could only be understood as a wreck superimposed on an elder wreck (indicating the importance of the anchorage).

In August 1974 this site was investigated by the Bureau's divers. The remnants were found tilting at a steep rockside, with their respective bows intermingled, indicating a similar fate to both ships: they had been caught by a strong SE-wind, maybe at anchor, and smashed against a steep rock. The younger hull is obviously from the 19th century, and lacks interesting details. The underlying wreck is lightly built, partly of clinker-construction?, and resembles an 18th century galley with a pointed bow. - Diving at this site continued for 2 hours only. No objects whatsoever were raised, Work will probably be resumed in 1975.