Shipwrecks of the Anglo-French Wars

Summary

Bateaux

Quebec City
Lake George

Radeaux

The Land Tortoise

Warships

The sloop Boscawen
The frigate Machault
The barque Elizabeth and Mary

Bateaux

Bateaux were sturdy flat bottomed, double-ended, small boats 5.5 to 7.3 m long. They were designed to be rowed or poled. Bateaux were very good for shallow waters, sturdy enough for rapids, and they were small and light enough for portages. Generally made of pine, they could also be built of oak.

Bateaux are mentioned in 1671 and first described in 1749 by a traveler named Peter Kalm.

By the late 1750s, English bateaux could carry 33 men and provisions for one month. If they were used for provision, they could carry 30 barrels of flour and 16 barrels of pork (about 2 tons).

Bateaux were built bottom first.
Posts and frames were added to the flat bottom.
Sides were planked.
Quebec City Bateaux

The remains of several bateaux were found in Québec City under the city's Musée de la Civilization. They were left under the foundations of a house built in 1752, and a quay built in 1751.

Parts of five bateaux were recovered.

Of the five remains found, three were almost complete, measuring around 10 m in length (9.4, 9.7 and 10.25 m).

Lake George Bateaux

A small fleet of bateaux was found in 1960 at Lake George by sport divers, lying in rows. Many were destroyed by curious divers.

All these boats showed holes drilled on the bottom and sides, and some were full of stones. English records mention hundreds of bateaux being sunk by General Amherst (for preservation) on the shores of Lake George in the Winter of 1759.

The remains of two and part of a third were raised, studied and reassembled.

The stempost was fastened to the bottom and reinforced with a knee.

All frames were cut from natural curves.

Radeaux

Radeaux (radeau means raft in French) were designed in 1755 by a ship chandler from New York as floating platforms with field guns on them, sometimes as many as seven. They were supposed to carry 40 or 50 men.

These were flat bottomed vessels made of flat panels, with sweep ports in them. The upper sides tumbled inward at a steep angle.

Radeaux were rigged with one or two masts and square sails.

Land Tortoise, 1758

Built in 1758 by Captain Samuel Cobb on the shores of Lake George, it was part of a fleet assembled by the English to attack the French on Lake Champlain.

It was finished on October 20, together with another, smaller, radeaux, and tried on the lake. Captain Cob noted that they “rowed well” with 26 oars.

The Land Tortoise was intentionally sunk during the Winter of 1758 to avoid its destruction, should the French attack the English camp.

Because Fort William Henry had been destroyed in 1757, no adequate garrison was available to guarantee the security of the English fleet, and the French had already destroyed a previous fleet in a raid across the ice, during the winter of 1757.
The English troops had sunk this small fleet in late October: The sloop Halifax, the two radeaux, a number of rowed galleys, and 260 bateaux.

Meant to be raised in the Spring, these vessels were sunk with cribs of stones attached to the hulls. In some cases small holes were drilled through the hull.

The Land Tortoise was sunk on October 22. The diary of William Sweat, a shipwright from Massachusetts, reads:

“Sunday 22 Day, I was forced to go to work, a[t] sinking our Radow, which we got Ready at the Sun sect, & we Sunk her once; But one side Rise again, so we were forced to work the chief of the night, Before we could keep her Down.”

It is possible that the Land Tortoise drifted to deeper waters, out of the intended scuttling area. We know that it snowed on the night of October 21\textsuperscript{st}, and the exhausted team, working in the night shift, may have missed this fact.

In the Spring of 1759, when General Amherst started raising the vessels, the Land Tortoise could not be found. A new radeaux had to be built hastily, the Invincible, for use in Amherst’s expedition.

The Land Tortoise was found in 1990 by a group of amateur divers.

They kept its location secret and reported the find.

The hull was recorded and left in situ.

Hull remains

The Land Tortoise was 15.5 m long and 5.2 m in beam.

With a flat heptagonal bottom and sides made of flat panels, the Land Tortoise was rigged with one or two masts and square sails.

The upper sides tumbled inwards at a steep angle.

Sweep ports were cut along the sides.

Artifacts

There were no artifacts on the Land Tortoise.

Warships

Since the late 17\textsuperscript{th} century warships were divided into a number of categories for management purposes. These classes evolved to become a standard applied to all naval vessels in France and England. Of course, this standard changed over time.

In England, ships were classified into 6 different rates. In the late 17th century ships were mainly distinguished through the number of their crews:

1st rate – crew over 300 men
2nd rate – crew over 200 men
3rd rate – crew over 150 men
4th rate – crew over 100 men
5th rate – crew over 50 men
6th rate – crew below 50 men

By the early 18th century, warships became known as ships-of-the-line (of battle), and rates were established according to the number of guns:

1st rate – 3 decks, 100 guns, 54 m (178 ft.) on the gundeck.
2nd rate – 3 decks, 90 guns, 51.5 m (170 ft.) on the gundeck.
3rd rate – 2 decks, 80 guns, 50 m (165 ft.) on the gundeck.
70 guns, 48 m (160 ft.) on the gundeck.
60 guns, 45 m (150 ft.) on the gundeck.
4th rate – 2 decks, 50 guns, 44 m (144 ft.) on the gundeck.
5th rate – 1 or 2 decks, 40 guns, 40 m (133 ft.) on the gundeck.
6th rate – 1 deck, 24 guns, 34 m (113 ft.), and sweeps on the gundeck.

In France warships were divided into four categories:

Ships of the line

110-gun ship – 3 decks
80-gun ship – 2 decks
74-gun ship – 2 decks
64-gun ship – 2 decks
50-gun ship – 2 decks

Frigates

just one tier of guns, plus guns on the forecastle and quarterdeck

Sloops of war

just one tier of guns, no forecastle nor quarterdeck

Smaller vessels

2 masted: brigs, schooners, snows, etc.
1-mast, open boats: gunboats

16-Gun Sloop Boscawen

In 1759, General Amherst conquered Fort Carrillon (which became Fort Ticonderoga), Fort Niagara, and Fort St. Frédéric.
Then, in the Spring of 1760, Amherst moved his forces north through Lake Champlain, and attacked Montreal.

After securing the lower portion of Lake Champlain in 1759, Amherst had two ships built and sailed up the lake.

Amherst's fleet:
- The 18-gun brig *Duke of Cumberland* (115 tons);
- The 16-gun sloop *Boscawen* (115 tons);
- One radeaux mounting six 24 pounders;
- Several gunboats mounting one cannon each.

Amherst took the 3 French sloops that composed Lake Champlain's French fleet, spent the winter on the margins of the lake and in the Spring sailed to Montreal with 17,000 men, artillery and ships.

In 1760, Montreal was conquered.

Although the English army had held Québec City and Montreal since 1760, it was not until 1763 that France acknowledged the loss of Canada in the Treaty of Paris.

After the war was over, the *Boscawen* was stripped of its rigging and guns and abandoned near Fort Ticonderoga.

It was found in 1983 by Dr. Kevin Crisman and Arthur Cohn, together with one of the French sloops captured in 1759 by Amherst and a large bateau, presumably French and possibly a gunboat.

It was excavated in 1984 and 1985.

**Hull remains**

Extensively preserved (around 40%), the *Boscawen* was 21.3 m long and 7.6 m in breadth. It was very sturdy, but had been poorly maintained.

Besides the characteristic way in which it was framed, already mentioned when we spoke of the Clydesdale Plantation wreck, this hull yielded many clues on how it had been designed and built, allowing for a presumed reconstruction.

**Artifacts**

An enormous collection of artifacts was found in the hold of the *Boscawen*. These can be divided into 4 main categories:
- Rigging material;
- Tools;
- Arm's parts;
- Artifacts related to life aboard the vessel.
Rigging material
Deadeyes, blocks, rope, iron hooks, thimbles, one mast cap, chains, parrel beads, etc.

Tools
The type to be expected in a siege situation, including several shovel blades, one pickax, one brush knife, one ax handle, one hatchet head, one hammer head, one mason's trowel, and one awl.

Arm's parts
musket stocks, butts, trigger guards, gun locks, musket barrels, flint gun spalls, bayonets, and one powder flask.

Personal artifacts
The artifacts related to the life aboard during this campaign can be divided into three main categories: clothing, diet, and diversions.

Clothing and personal possessions
Archaeologists found remains of fabric, buttons, buckles, and shoes in the bilge of the Boscawen.

Diet
The artifacts related to the diet of Boscawen’s crew revealed a quite rich and diversified foodstuff, which included nutshells, seeds, and bones of many different animals hunted on the shores of the lake.

The utensils found included one pewter spoon, one plate, one delftware pot, one wooden ladle, fragments of porcelain cups and wine glasses.

Diversions
Game pieces, an iron harp, a few pipe stems – although smoking onboard was certainly forbidden – and lots of fragments of liquor bottles remind us how killing time is frequently part of a soldier’s life during a campaign.

The frigate Machault
In 1760, France sent a small fleet of six vessels to supply New France. Two vessels were taken by the English navy in the Atlantic, one sunk during a storm, and the other three were scuttled to avoid being captured, after three weeks of fighting with the English on the Restigouche River.

These were the Machault, the Bienfaisant, and the Marquis de Malaize.

The Machault was found in 1967 by Parks Canada together with the remains of the Bienfaisant.

It was excavated between 1968 and 1972, yielding many artifacts.

Hull remains
It was a sturdy 28 to 32-gun frigate. The stem and stern assemblies were recovered, together with a section cut amidships.

After conservation, these timbers became part of the *Machault* exhibition in a museum at the Battle of Restigouche National Historic Site.

**Artifacts**

Towards the bow were stored shot, cables, ropes, and sail-maker's tools, as well as the boatswain's stores.

Amidships were foodstuffs, water, spirits and ammunition.

Towards the stern were stored hundreds of shoes and clay pipes. Two barrels of Chinese export porcelain and a small cache of tin-glazed earthenware bowls were probably part of a small personal cargo. Small arms, religious objects and surgical equipment were also found on the *Machault*.

**The bark *Elizabeth and Mary*, 1690**

The remains of one of the vessels lost by Phips after his attempt to conquer Quebec (King Williams War), were exposed through natural causes in 1995 on (l’Anse aux Bouleaux) Trinity Bay, in Quebec.


Based on the dates of the artifacts and on a series of initials incised on some artifacts, it was possible to relate this vessel with Phips’ failed attempt to conquer Quebec. These initials matched the names of 17 men of the Dorchester company.

Further evidence linked this wrecksite with the *Elizabeth and Mary*.

**Hull remains**

An area of around 2 x 8.5 m was preserved, presumably part of the portside upper hull, encompassing part of 31 frames, 2 ceiling planks, 4 hull planks, and one wale.

**Armament**

12 firearms and 68 fragments, 2 pistols and 2 fragments were found on this site.

**Artifacts**

Among the thousands of items found were:

- An iron cauldron,
- A leather cartridge pouch,
- Glass bottles,
- Earthenware and stoneware,
- Brass and pewter spoons.

See: Additional texts in the Readings Volume.