

Nautical Archaeology



The Newsletter of Nautical Archaeology Society - Summer 2016



The John Starkie NAS Ethnographic award

By José Manuel

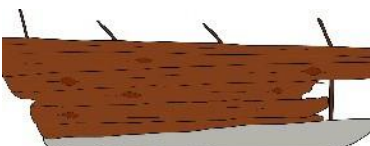
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Missing Aircraft of Scapa Flow, Orkney

By Sandra Henry

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A Lost Keel in the River Meuse at Cuijk

By Peter Seinen

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A water well in an unexpected location

By Peter Seinen

The stoneware "kannenbuis".



Waterwells are supposed to provide easy access to ground water. But what if a well is located on an inhabited hill side, within a valley that holds a large pond. A number of Dutch archaeologists have asked themselves this question, but have had to keep their distance: the hill is part of a private estate, and investigations on the site were not allowed. The earliest mention of the well is on a map of 1890, but its earlier history was a mystery.

In 2015, our foundation was offered the opportunity to do a one-day survey of the site. The goal was to reveal the date of the well as well as its purpose. Even from a distance, it was clear that the structure was fairly modern, but earlier it had been suggested that the well was built on an iron-age or Roman site.

The survey started with measuring the wells position and all dimensions accurately. To get a good look at the interior, the water level was lowered by hand. The great effort that took demonstrated to us

that the well really was fed by ground water. Built on a hill-side we expected it to reach several meters deep, but its circular wooden foundation, 200 cm in diameter, was merely 200 cm below ground level. On top of this foundation a 20 cm thick and 2.6 m high brickwork was made. The material and small size of the bricks immediately ruled out an early iron-age, Roman or even late-Medieval date.

At a depth of 100 cm above the foundation, below the water level, a small stoneware tube was spotted in the brick wall (see above), which had obviously served as a water outlet. This shed more light on the purpose of the well: obviously it had acted as a water tower for one of the farm buildings at the bottom of the hill. The material of this tube also gave a clue for the date of the well, as they are believed to be produced from 1600 until 1890. This provides a fairly wide dating range. Currently we are in the process of getting a better fix on the production dates of these stoneware objects.