



TREASURE FIND IN GRAND TURK

Snorkeling is an easy afternoon pursuit in Grand Turk. An almost bottomless wall is connected to a sprawling reef a short distance from shore. I decided to take advantage of the opportunity in front of the Guanahani Hotel. Hovering over an area of bleached-out coral and sand, I noticed a strange formation. I dove down to investigate and pulled up a small pottery jar. Logic told me it was probably a worthless beer bottle, but something made me keep it. You see, my imagination had been put into high gear by an earlier visit to the Turks & Caicos National Museum on the island. There, I had been introduced to local shipwrecks and pirate lore. Immediately, I headed back to the museum with my treasure in hand. Brian, the curator, explained that the jar in question was actually an inkwell used in the 16th and 17th centuries. Having washed up from a nearby shipwreck, the inkwell had been waiting all these years for me to snorkel over it. Because the inkwell was partially buried in sand, it had remained completely intact. Finding such a treasure is lucky — but not unusual — in these parts. Not bad for an afternoon of snorkeling.

— Betsy Archer



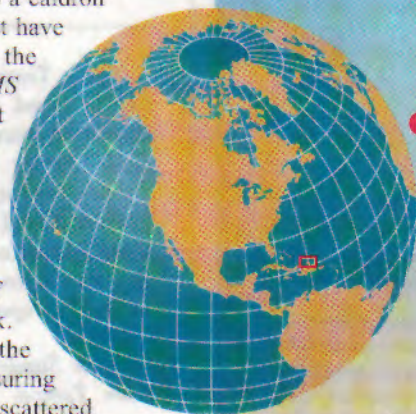
massive anchors give testament to the crew's efforts to spare this vessel from its ultimate fate. Visitors to this wreck site should remember that it was ships like these which protected the loyalists from the wrath of intruding pirates, only proving that there was no safety from mother ocean when she, like the pirates, became unruly!

Treasure Island and Blackbeard Island, near South Caicos are clearly the legacy of ancient pirate lore. These two uninhabited isles are the subject of surface interval time while diving and snorkeling the nearby wrecks.

French Cay, a tiny uninhabited island on the edge of the Caicos Bank, also gained its name via pirates. An early French pirate, Nau L'Ollonis, used this desolate location as a staging area to attack merchant sailing ships as they passed close to the island in the deep water. Today, French Cay National Park Sanctuary is a spectacular vertical wall dive stippled with magnificent sponge growth and is occasionally frequented by schools of transient eagle rays.

Not far from French Cay, and also along the edge of the Caicos Bank, is a site known as Molasses Reef. This reef has the distinction of claiming the oldest European shipwreck known to be found in the New World. Having been excavated by Texas A&M University back in the mid '80s, this early wooden craft and much of the artifacts recovered from this site are now on display at the Turks & Caicos National Museum on Grand Turk. Exhibited within the native stone walls of one of the oldest (now restored) houses on the island, the armament, pottery, tools and personal effects can

which confound the best of navigators, turning tranquility into a caldron of tempests. Such must have been the case when the British warship *HMS Endymion* was thrust upon a submerged seamount. Located some six miles south of Salt Cay and just beyond Great Sand Cay lie the remains of this 40-gun wreck. Today, at least 18 of the 40 cannons (each measuring over 10 feet long) lie scattered like trees toppled by some great force among the coral canyons. Nearby, four



Wrecks of the Turks & Caicos

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Whiteface | 6 Slave Ship |
| 2 Fort George | 7 Salt Ship |
| 3 Bahia del Mark | 8 Iron Ship |
| 4 French Wreck | 9 H.M.S Endymion |
| 5 Capstan | 10 French Cay Wrecks |