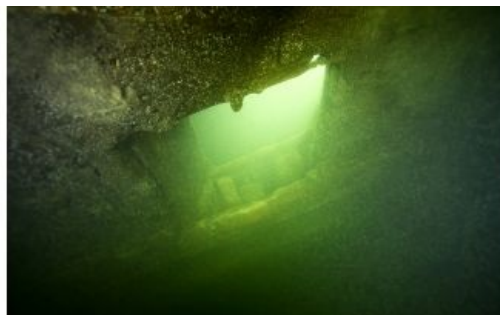


17th-century Swedish warship found by marine archaeologists



Marine archaeologists from Vrak – Museum of Wrecks in Stockholm, Sweden, have uncovered the wreck of the 17th-century warship *Äpplet*. Launched in 1629, the ship was built by the same shipbuilder as the renowned *Vasa*. The identity of the wreck was confirmed as the *Äpplet* by matching the measurements, technical details and wood samples with the archival records.



The marine archaeologists from Vrak had collaborated with the Swedish Navy to survey the waters around Vaxholm, an island near Stockholm. During their survey in December 2021, they made a major discovery – the wreck of a large ship. Despite parts of its sides having crumbled to the seabed, the hull was still intact, extending to a lower gun deck. The presence of portholes on two different levels, one above the other, indicated that the ship was a warship with two gun decks.

Jim Hansson, a marine archaeologist at the museum, described their excitement upon observing the similarities between this wreck and the *Vasa*: “Our pulses spiked when we saw how similar the wreck was to *Vasa*. Both the construction and the powerful

dimensions seemed very familiar. The hope of finding one of *Vasa*’s sister ships was sparked within us.”



Glimpse of eerie light seen through the warship’s sunken gun port. (Image courtesy: Vrak)

Piece of the puzzle of Swedish shipbuilding

In the spring of 2022, a more in-depth survey was conducted to further examine the shipwreck. During the dives, specific ship details were discovered that had previously only been seen on the *Vasa*, and several samples were taken and analyses conducted. The results showed that the oak used for the ship’s timber had been cut in 1627 in Mälardalen – the same source as the *Vasa*’s timber, harvested just a few years earlier.

“The dimensions, construction details, wood samples and archival material all pointed in the same direction – amazingly, we had found *Vasa*’s sister ship the *Äpplet*,” said Patrik Höglund, a marine archaeologist at Vrak.

In 2019, Vrak’s maritime archaeologists discovered two shipwrecks at Vaxholm that initially appeared to be the *Äpplet*. However, further surveys revealed that the vessels were actually the *Apollo* and the *Maria*, two medium-sized ships dating from 1648. Despite this setback, the archaeologists did not give up and continued their search for *Vasa*’s sister ship.

The discovery of the *Äpplet* provides significant new knowledge in the field. “With *Äpplet*, we can add another key piece of the puzzle in the development of Swedish shipbuilding,” Hansson said. “And it’s only now that we can really study the differences in the constructions of *Vasa* and *Äpplet*.”

“This will help us understand how the large warships evolved, from the unstable *Vasa* to seaworthy behemoths that could control the Baltic Sea – a decisive factor in Sweden’s emergence as a great power in the 1600s,” Höglund added.

“The find is also valuable for those who want to uncover a new piece of exciting history through the old ship,” Hansson said. “*Äpplet* is part of our cultural heritage.”



Marine archaeologists bring up a piece from the sunken shipwreck. (Image courtesy: Vrak)