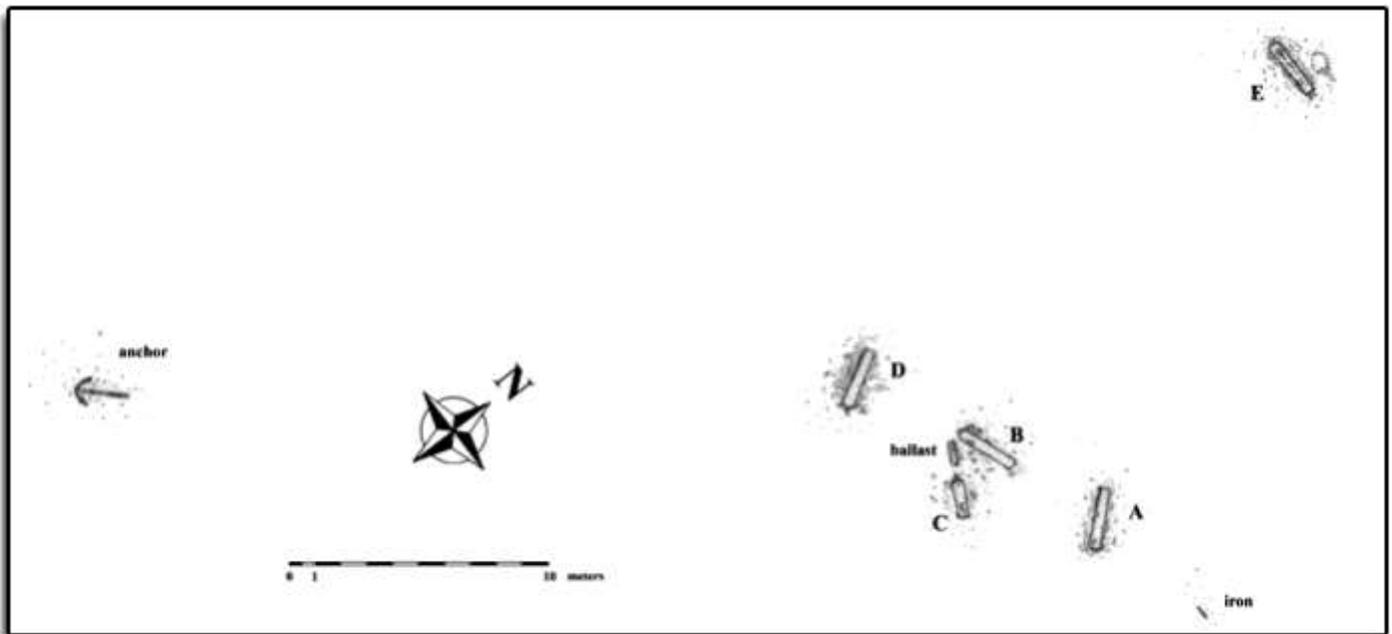


Chris Cartellone

The Nevis Project: A Survey of Nevis Island Shipwrecks

PhD, 2009 - 2015

On 25 January 1782, during the Battle of Frigate Bay, HMS *Solebay* wrecked in shallow waters off the southwest coast of Nevis in the Lesser Antilles. Captain Charles Holmes Everitt scuttled the wreck by detonating 160 barrels of gunpowder to prevent capture to the pursuant French. On 26 March 2010 a team from the Nevis Historical and Conservation Society (NHCS), the Nevis Air and Seaport Authority (NASPA), and Envision Mapping UK Ltd. discovered what appears to be remains of the *Solebay* shipwreck. In June 2010 Chris Cartellone, PhD student in the Nautical Archaeology Program at Texas A&M University, conducted a pre-disturbance investigation to assess the wreckage and recommend plans for future studies. .



Site plan (Chris Cartellone).

During the closing years of the American Revolutionary War, France attempted to capture the wealthy British-controlled sugar islands of St. Kitts and Nevis. The British responded by sending 22 warships from Antigua, under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, to meet the 21 French ships.

As Hood's fleet rounded the southern coast of Nevis and sailed north to engage the French, the Eng-

lish frigate *Solebay* ran aground in the shallow waters just offshore. Separated from the line, and under enemy fire, Captain Charles Holmes Everett ordered his crew ashore, and set *Solebay* on fire lest she fall into enemy hands. After burning for an hour, the frigate blew apart due to the 160 barrels of gunpowder aboard. Though they lost the vessel, the British won a tactical victory against the French fleet and succeeded in halting the invasion.



The remnants of this vessel have remained scattered across the ocean floor since its loss in 1782. Discovered in March 2010 by an ad hoc team of Nevisian and international researchers, the author went to the site in 2011 with simple and clear goals: delineate the site, identify materials, affirm or deny the wreck as *Solebay*, and establish a precedent for high quality underwater archaeological investigations on Nevis. It is expected this precedent will allow the author to locate and study other shipwrecks in Nevisian waters, thereby revealing the maritime history of Nevis through underwater archaeology.

While *Solebay* may have been subject to salvaging, metal materials still remain on the seafloor including cannon, carronades, ballast, musket balls, copper tacks and keel staples, and various encrusted artifacts.

To record the artifacts, the author led a research team of faculty, students, and volunteers from multiple institutions for a month this summer. Techniques consisted of scuba diving with direct measurements, bearing-distance relationships, circle searches, photography and video recordings, metal detecting, and use of INA's magnetometer to help locate cannons or ballast in the greater debris field. The team has identified a total of six guns, including two carronades that are both unique in their design.

Publications

Parkoff, J., and Cartellone, C., 2012. "HMS *Solebay* Shipwreck: An 18th-Century British Frigate in Nevis, West Indies." in *CMAC News and Reports* 3.2: 8-10.