

wreck rap



Alexander Arhipov was the first diver to discover medieval Russian artifacts at the bottom of the Gogol River in Russia's Oryol region.

Text by Oleg Shabunya
Photos by Stanislav Trofimov
and Oleg Radyush

In the spring of 2021, Oryol divers discovered the site where the Battle of Sudbischen took place in 1555. This battle between the Russian army and the Crimean horde was a fateful event, in name and in nature, in the history of Russia during the era of Ivan the Terrible.



STANISLAV TROFIMOV

Stone marker designating the site of the ancient Murava Route, or Muravsky Trail, in Russia's Oryol region

16th Century Discovery

Battle of Sudbischen

STANISLAV TROFIMOV

Within the framework of the project "Water Trade Routes of the Oryol Region," the Oryol dive club "DIVO" organized a mid-spring expedition to the vicinity of the legendary ancient Murava Route, which ran along the cen-

ter of Russia, passing through the Oryol region. This was the main historical road between Crimea and Moscow. Many a trader's and ambassador's travels, as well as ancient wars, took place along this horse trail between the Oka and Don rivers. The Crimean Tatars made numer-

ous raids along it.

In addition to the overland route, waterways along the Murava Route were also actively used. Researching these waterways was very relevant to the expedition because of several significant historical events that took

place in the Oryol region, which until now had remained a mystery. It was these circumstances that determined the primary objectives of the expedition, such as the search for ancient piers and marinas, as well as sites of crossings and bridges, and other historical structures.



wreck rap



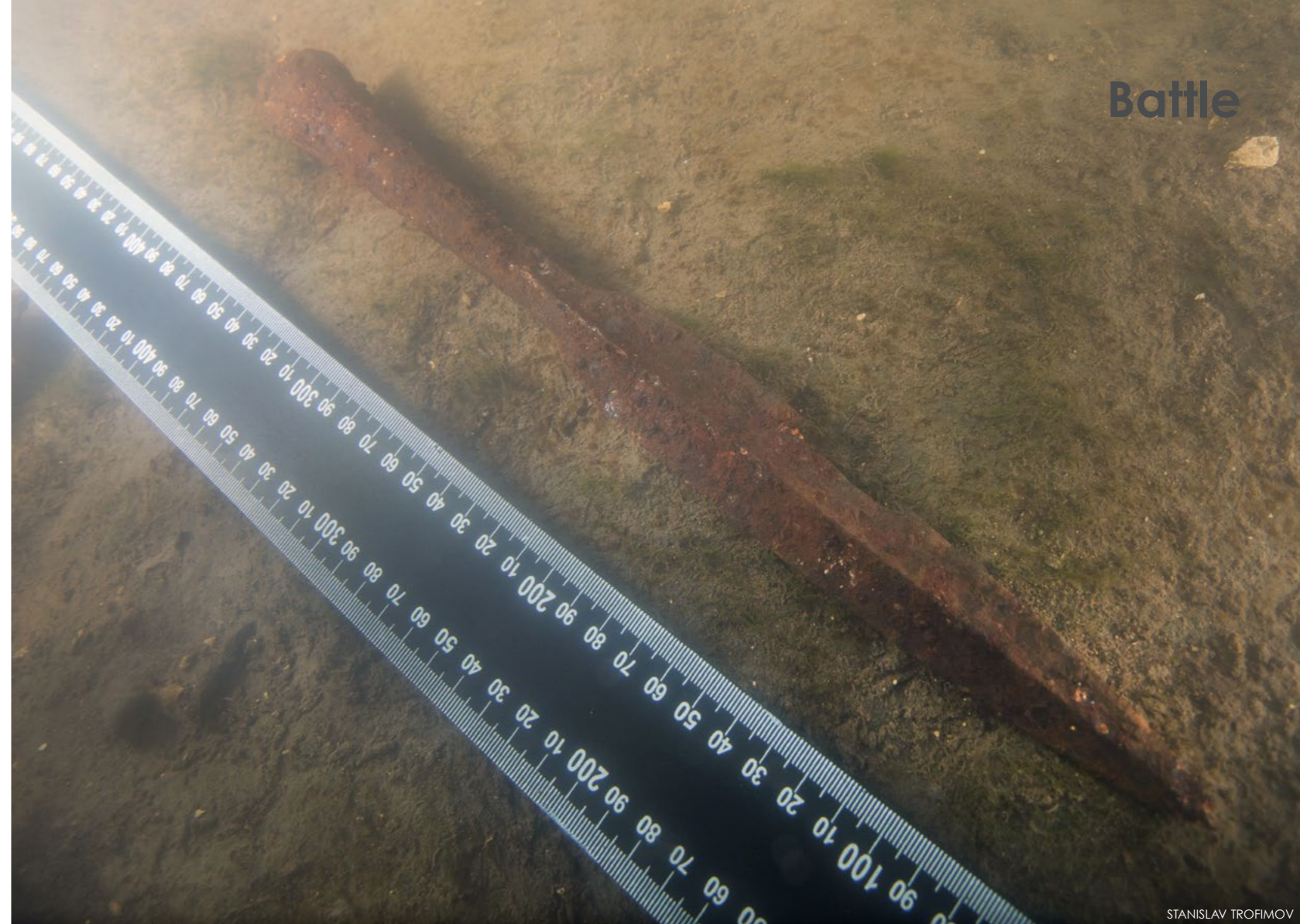
Expedition members prepare the camp and dive equipment (below); Oleg Shabunya photographs artifacts at the bottom of the river (right)



STANISLAV TROFIMOV



STANISLAV TROFIMOV



STANISLAV TROFIMOV

Иное подыпошн з црѣна е в сѣво е
 и мотю . в сѣтрѣтн и е сѣо црѣмъ сѣре
 дѣ полрѣнѣтѣ оубице . и сѣо црѣмъ бн
 лн сѣ и до пѣчѣра . и пѣредо по нго лн сѣ
 црѣмъ . и прѣдъ роукоу . и вѣ оубо по
 по пѣтлн . и з нлмѣ цз лн шрѣнѣ
 сѣнн сѣ лн з нн . и бн лн сѣ до по чн . и пѣ
 сѣ по лн полнн чрѣ сѣ оубо цѣ



The Battle of Sudbischen Miniature from the Obverse Chronicle of Ivan the Terrible written in the 16th century

As part of this work, the Oryol divers studied archival materials, working with local historians and archaeologists, and conducted underwater research under their auspices.

After setting up camp and preparing dive gear and equipment, expedition members began surveying the waters of the Gogol River. As a result of exploring the bottom of the river, a spearhead and several dozen arrowheads were found by the divers. According to preliminary estimates, these artifacts were at least 400 years old. Most likely, the spearhead and arrowheads (used by medieval archers) were none other than material evidence of the legendary Battle of Sudbischen, which, according to

historical records, took place at the surveyed locations.

Background

Prior to these finds, historians, regional specialists and archaeologists had repeatedly tried to identify the battle site for a long time. The study of written sources and documents had not brought the desired result. Only one thing was known for certain: In June 1555, not far from Sudbisch, a battle took place between a squad of 7,000 fighters of the voivode (local governor) Ivan Vasilyevich Sheremetev and a 60,000-member horde of the Crimean Khan Devlet I Giray. The clash was preceded by a surprise attack by Russian warriors, and the enemy con-

voy was repulsed, relinquishing among other trophies, around 60,000 horses and 180 camels. After a fierce two-day battle, the enemy force retreated, leaving 15,000 dead on the battlefield.

The Battle of Sudbischen was not only a measure of the extraordinary steadfastness and fearlessness of Russian fighters, an event in which 5,000 Russian soldiers died in an unequal battle, but it was above all an outcome that saved the Moscow state and all of Europe from another devastating invasion. In the 16th century, the primary basis for the economic prosperity in the Crimean and Kazan states were the raids on neighboring territories, followed by the theft of slaves. According



STANISLAV TROFIMOV

Medieval Russian spearhead, arrowheads and artifacts found on the river bottom (above); Underwater documentation of the spearhead (top right)





Preparation of hydro-ejector equipment for dredging sediments from the river bottom (above); Divers dredge the sediments into a sifter (right) to catch artifacts (left); Archaeologist Oleg Radyush is surprised by the findings from the bottom of the river (lower right two).

tion, the archaeologists highly recommended using a hydro-ejector (or water eductor) to dredge muddy sediments in the sectors of the river where medieval objects might be found. Despite the freezing April water temperatures and rather capricious visibility, the hydro-technical work continued throughout the day. As a result, it was possible to find a significant number of arrowheads, as well as many elements of horse tack and harness, unambiguously indicating the localization of fighting in this area. Archaeologist Oleg Radyush noted: "Most likely, there could have been a shooting battle... probably, during the erosion of the coastline, this part was washed away and accumulated near the dam. Considering that the village of Sudbishi was nearby and the battle occurred somewhere here, we can assume that this was an episode of the Sudbischen battle."



to some estimates, at least three million Russians fell prey to Tatar slave traders over the course of a century.

Excavation

The members of the DIVO expedition decided to seek the assistance of a team of archaeological specialists from the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Archaeology. Further work was carried out under the auspices of the scientists. On the eve of the excava-

tion, the archaeologists highly recommended using a hydro-ejector (or water eductor) to dredge muddy sediments in the sectors of the river where medieval objects might be found. Despite the freezing April water temperatures and rather capricious visibility, the hydro-technical work continued throughout the day. As a result, it was possible to find a significant number of arrowheads, as well as many elements of horse tack and harness, unambiguously indicating the localization of fighting in this area. Archaeologist Oleg Radyush noted: "Most likely, there could have been a shooting battle... probably, during the erosion of the coastline, this part was washed away and accumulated near the dam. Considering that the village of Sudbishi was nearby and the battle occurred somewhere here, we can assume that this was an episode of the Sudbischen battle."

Residents of the surrounding villages and settlements have previously found various artifacts in these places, but these were single specimens, in comparison with the finds made by the expedition divers. In the unanimous opinion of

archaeologists, this was an explicit reference to the Battle of Sudbischen. With the indisputable evidence, it could be argued that the discovered fragments of weapons and

ammunition belonged to the era of Ivan the Terrible. However, only subsequent full-scale archaeological field research will be able to bring final clarity on this matter.



STANISLAV TROFIMOV

Panorama of the site of the Battle of Sudbischen (above); A coin from the time of Ivan the Terrible was one of the artifacts found (right).



OLEG RADYUSH

Staff from the Russian Academy of Sciences' Institute of Archaeology investigate the coastal zone of the river, using metal detectors (right) and conduct geodetic surveys (top right).



STANISLAV TROFIMOV



STANISLAV TROFIMOV



STANISLAV TROFIMOV

Battle

Searching for material traces of military history outside settlements or fortifications is very problematic. Finding items that relate to an episode of a legendary battle at the bottom of the river is a rare piece of luck, offering a unique chance to reconstruct an historical event.

Land-based surveys

After the completion of the underwater part of the archaeological survey, members of the expedition began to carry out complex search activities on land, under the guidance and support of the archaeologists. During these land-based surveys, the site of a real clash was discovered, which took place, judging by the artifacts

excavated from the ground, no later than the middle of the 16th century.

Where the metal detectors signaled a find, historical specialists marked these places with special flags. This was followed by a geodetic survey of the area with an accurate referencing of all detected objects, using a tachometer and GPS navigator.

The list of finds was impressive, and included more than 150 arrowheads of various shapes and sizes, lead bullets and buckshot, a blade fragment, a quiver hook, belt pads and girth buckles, horseshoe nails, and fragments of shoes and horseshoes. During the expedition, more than 900 items were discovered in total, including the artifacts handed over by the divers. There are now

plans to organize further large-scale excavations, which will become a new stage in the historical and archaeological research of the defense system of the southern borders of the Moscow state in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Concluding thoughts

The archaeologist Oleg Radyush summed up the results: "With my archaeological team, upon the invitation of Sergey Kulikov—the head of the "DIVO" dive club—we arrived at the place of unexpected finds and saw



OLEG RADYUSH

Another artifact found was a cross dated to the 16th century.



OLEG RADYUSH

Arrowheads found at the battle site (above); Bullet and arrowhead (top center)



wreck rap



Artifacts found included belt buckles, belt hooks, anvil, and a gun lock mechanism (below)



DIVO dive club team members at the Battle of Sudbischen memorial in Oryol, Russia



OLEG RADYUSH



OLEG RADYUSH

and held in our hands the artifacts extracted from the bottom of the river. We were not confident that there was any relation [of the finds] to the Sudbischen battle. With relative accuracy, it was possible to establish only the historical period—the late Middle Ages.

“Every day, there were more and more discoveries. After studying the

surroundings, we were able to localize the place of events: a plot of land approximately 900 by 400 meters was literally covered with various metal objects of that era, indicating that a major battle came about on this field. Then we found lead bullets and a coin minted in the first half of the reign of Ivan the Terrible, which made it possible to significantly narrow down the time frame of the battle—the middle of the 16th century.

“By now, in these three weeks of archaeological research, more than 900 artifacts have been found in the vicinity of the Gogol River—about 400 arrowheads, more than 50 bullets, many other metal objects, as well as one lead core and a matchlock. All this made an assumption about the discovery of the site of the Sudbischensky battle even more probable. It became one of the first battles in the history of the confrontation between Russia and the Khanate of Crimea, in which both sides used firearms, both relatively heavy and manual.”

The location of this historical discovery has since attracted many people, including scientists and tourists. The governor of the Oryol

region, Andrei Klychkov, noted:

“The event that happened in our region has not only value on a district or regional scale, but at least an all-Russian, or perhaps even a European and global scale.”

Finally, we should note that the discovery of the artifacts, which allowed us to accurately ascertain the battlefield, was a rare event. Even though the tactical course of the battle itself has been studied in detail as reported by the sources of the 16th century, the site where it took place still remained unknown. However, the spearhead, accidentally found by a diver at the bottom of the river near the village of Sudbisch, initiated a cascade of events that would fill the “blank spot” on the map of the legendary battle. ■

A note from DIVO: Dear friends and colleagues, we work all over the world and will be glad to cooperate in archaeological, scientific expeditions and filming projects. Email the expedition team leader, Sergey Kulikov, who is head of the Oryol dive club “DIVO” in Russia, at: ssm.72@mail.ru, or go to: dive-orel.ru



DTX

NYLOTECH



#FACINGREALITY
WWW.WATERPROOF.EU





ARMED FORCES OF MALTA



Watch on YouTube

Malta scuttles patrol boat, creates new artificial reef

The decommissioned army patrol boat was scuttled on Saturday morning off Zonqor Point in a bid to stimulate dive tourism.

The operation was organised by the Tourism Authority together with the Ministry for Tourism and the Association of Professional Diving Schools of Malta, Gozo and Comino.

The boat was scuttled and sank between the wrecks of *St Michael* and *Melita*, two tugboats that also

serve as scuba diving sites.

According to the Professional Diving School Association, the vessel is resting on the seabed at a depth of around 20 metres, whereas Television Malta states the depth is 27m.

The former Armed Force of Malta (AFM) patrol boat was decommissioned in 2005 as the AFM sought to upgrade its ageing fleet, and had long been scheduled for scuttling, but the process took longer than expected. In 2012, it was planned to have been scuttled outside Marsalforn Bay in

Gozo, but those plans were never carried out after environmental authorities flagged concerns.

In a comment to Television Malta, the executive head of the Malta Tourism Authority, Johann Buttigieg, explained the plan to submerge the patrol boat was conceived over a number of years—in fact, seven years—to establish the proper environment after studies. He said that similar arrangements are being made for the vessel *Hephaestus*. ■ SOURCES: TIMES OF MALTA, TV MALTA

the human diver

counter-errorism in diving

Improving diver and instructor performance by recognising and working around our fallability



Human Factors in Diving

Online, webinar and face-to-face training, and consultancy

The human diver is the only company which focuses solely on the research, development and delivery of human factors, non-technical skills, just culture and psychological safety within the diving domain. This training is applicable to all facets of diving: recreational, technical, cave, instructor development commercial, scientific and public safety diving and changes attitudes to success and failure.

“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them.”

Albert Einstein

The training is based on published research and practice from aviation, healthcare, space travel, nuclear and other high-risk industries and then translated into the diving sector to make it real.

With a few exceptions, none of the training programmes delivered by agencies and companies across the diving industry deliver materials which look at how to improve decision-making, situation awareness, communications, teamwork, leadership & followership and performance shaping factors, and yet 99.9% of course graduates believe that our concepts and tools should be included in all diver training materials, but especially instructor and supervisor development.

Course attendees are those who want to develop their own performance. They are not interested in a 'tickbox' course, they want to critically appraise their knowledge, skills and attitudes. Interested?

Visit

www.thehumandiver.com

for training, free materials including THE diving safety documentary 'If Only...'