

# Tours of the hull of the DeBraak, a shipwrecked 18th-century British warship

**-STARTING JUNE 13, 2019-**

(DOVER, Del.–June 6, 2019)–Beginning on June 13, 2019 and continuing through Sept. 26, 2019, the [Delaware Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs](#) will offer informational tours of the surviving hull of His Majesty's Sloop DeBraak, a British warship that was escorting and protecting a convoy of British and American merchant ships en route to the United States when it capsized and was lost off the Delaware coast on May 25, 1798.



Artistic rendition of the capsizing of the DeBraak by Peggy Kane, 1990

Tours begin at the [Zwaanendael Museum](#), located at 102 Kings Highway in Lewes, Del., where visitors will take part in a lecture on the ship's history, its role in the Royal Navy and what life was like on board. Visitors will also be able to connect the information with the museum's exhibit "[A Seaborne Citizenry: The DeBraak and Its Atlantic World](#)," which includes a variety of recovered artifacts, firsthand information, photographs and more. Participants will learn about global trade and war, marines and sailors, prize ships and why a British warship was in Lewes long after the Revolutionary War, how it sank and what was kept buried with it for almost 200 years. The remains of the DeBraak brought together salvagers, archaeologists and historians who finally solved her longtime mystery. Attendees will then be transported, via van, to the DeBraak conservation facility at Cape Henlopen State Park for

an interpretive viewing of the hull, a section from stem to stern which includes a view of the keel and the copper sheathing that lined the ship. Each tour lasts approximately two hours.



Visitors enjoying a tour of the DeBraak hull which can be seen in the left of the photo

Lecture/tours will take place on the following Thursday mornings at 9 a.m.: June 13, 20 and 27; July 11, 18 and 25; Aug. 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29; and Sept. 5, 12, 19 and 26. (**Note:** Tours will not be held on Thursday, July 4.) Lecture/tours will also be offered on the following selected Saturday evenings at 5 p.m.: June 29, July 27 and Aug. 31. Tickets are available at the Zwaanendael Museum. Admission is \$10 per person (cash or check only). For reservations, e-mail [hca\\_zmevents@delaware.gov](mailto:hca_zmevents@delaware.gov) or call 302-645-1148. Tours are restricted to individuals age 10 and up with space limited to 12 participants per tour. Walk-ups are welcome but space is not guaranteed. Special tours, for groups of 10 to 15, may be arranged in advance by contacting the museum.



Visitors listening to a lecture on DeBraak at the Zwaanendael Museum. Sections of the exhibit "A Seaborne Citizenry: The DeBraak and Its Atlantic World" are on display in the room.

### **Significance of DeBraak ...**

During the late-18th and early-19th centuries, sloops of war such as DeBraak played an increasingly important role in Royal Navy campaigns. These relatively small vessels combined speed, agility, shallow draft and increased firepower, all of which made them formidable naval warships. As the only Royal Navy

sloop of war from this time period that has been recovered anywhere in the world, DeBraak serves as an invaluable historical resource for a time when Great Britain was the world's preeminent naval power. The artifacts and hull have given archeologists a view of the innovative technologies being used in not only shipbuilding but ship functions, as well as fashion trends, war techniques, crew diversity and hierarchy and much more.

The surviving section of the DeBraak's hull and its associated artifact collection have been curated by the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs since they were acquired by the State of Delaware in 1992. Approximately one-third of the hull survives and is being preserved including the keel, keelson and lower framing elements, as well as a large section of the starboard (right) side. The Lost Off Lewes summer lecture/tours are an excellent way to see and experience some of Delaware's most important maritime history, a history that continues to grow and excite visitors from across the country.

#### **About the Zwaanendael Museum ...**

Built in 1931, the Zwaanendael Museum commemorated the 300th anniversary of the state's first European colony, Swanendael, established by the Dutch along Hoorn Kill (present-day Lewes-Rehoboth Canal) in 1631. It continues to celebrate the town and state's Dutch heritage as well as other local history. Designed by E. William Martin (architect of Legislative Hall and the Hall of Records in Dover), the museum is modeled after the town hall in Hoorn, Netherlands, and features a stepped facade gable with carved stonework and decorated shutters. The museum's exhibits and presentations provide a showcase for Lewes-area maritime, military and social history.

*The Zwaanendael Museum is administered by the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, an agency of the State of Delaware. The division enhances Delaware's quality of life by preserving the state's unique historical heritage, fostering community stability and economic vitality and providing*

*educational programs and assistance to the general public on Delaware history and heritage. The division's diverse array of services includes operation of five museums which are [accredited by the American Alliance of Museums](#), administration of the State Historic Preservation Office, conservation of the state's archaeological and historic-objects collections, operation of a conference center and management of historic properties across the state. Primary funding for division programs and services is provided by annual appropriations from the Delaware General Assembly and grants from the National Park Service, Department of the Interior, a federal agency. However, the contents and opinions expressed in the division's programs and services do not necessarily reflect the views and policies of the Department of the Interior.*



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