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Century-Old Champagne Find in Baltic Sea

Discovery of 19th-Century Shipwreck with Champagne and Mineral Water Off Swedish Coast

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In a fascinating underwater discovery, a team of divers has unearthed a 19th-century shipwreck near the island of Öland, off the coast of Sweden. This remarkable find, announced on July 23 by Tomasz Stachura, a renowned Polish diver and underwater photographer, includes a significant cargo of champagne and mineral water bottles, a rare occurrence in the field of maritime archaeology. The discovery was made by the Baltictech team, a group of technical divers with extensive experience in exploring

shipwrecks, led by Stachura, who has spent four decades in this challenging field.

The shipwreck was located after years of dedicated research and exploration by the Baltictech team. Driven by a persistent curiosity to explore new locations, the team decided to investigate an area that had previously been overlooked. Initially, the divers believed they had found a typical fishing vessel, but upon closer inspection, divers Marek Cacaj and Pawel Truszynski realized the significance of their find. Over the course of a two-hour dive, they confirmed the presence of a large quantity of champagne on board the submerged vessel.

The divers counted more than 100 bottles of champagne and mineral water, though Stachura emphasized that the true number could be much higher. Among the finds were ceramic bottles of mineral water bearing the logo of the Selters brand, which is still in operation today. With the assistance of historians and through analysis of the ceramic bottles, the team has dated the shipwreck to between 1850 and 1867.

One of the lingering mysteries surrounding the shipwreck is the origin and intended destination of the champagne. Stachura speculates that the bottles may contain Louis Roederer champagne, a brand that was highly favored in the Russian imperial court during the 19th century. Notably, in 1876, the Louis Roederer champagne house began producing a special cuvée, known as Cristal, specifically for Tsar Alexander II of Russia. Whether or not these bottles are indeed Louis Roederer champagne remains to be confirmed, but the possibility adds an intriguing layer to the discovery.

Despite the excitement surrounding the find, questions remain about the condition and drinkability of the champagne. The team is conducting further investigations in collaboration with the Institute of Maritime Archaeological Research at Södertörn University in Sweden, under the guidance of Professor Johan Rönnby. However, before any bottles can be recovered from the site, there are administrative hurdles to overcome. As Stachura pragmatically noted, "It has been there for 170 years, so it can wait another year while we prepare better for the operation."

The Baltictech team, which also includes divers Michal Iwicki, Maciej Honc, and Paweł Wilk, is planning to share more details about their discovery at the upcoming Baltictech Conference 2024. This event, scheduled for November, will bring together technical

divers from around the world to discuss advancements in diving technology, maritime exploration, and, undoubtedly, this extraordinary find.

The discovery of this 19th-century shipwreck is not just a testament to the skill and dedication of the Baltictech team but also offers a tantalizing glimpse into a bygone era of maritime trade and luxury. As researchers continue to study the shipwreck, the full story of its journey, cargo, and ultimate fate may soon be revealed, shedding light on a chapter of history that has long been hidden beneath the waves.