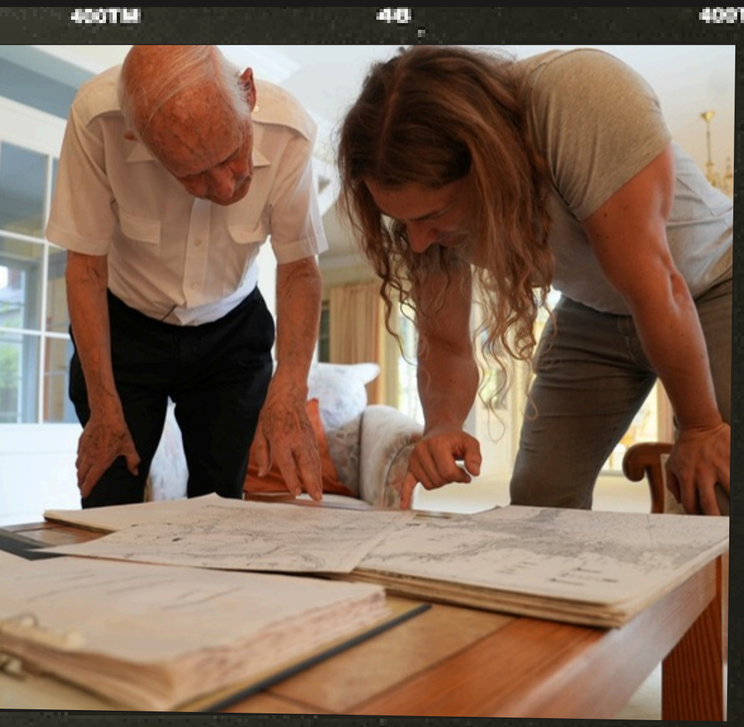


PHARAOHS
OF THE NORTH SEA
IN SEARCH OF THE GOTTFRIED

In March 1822, the Gottfried, a cargo vessel carrying approximately 150 tonnes of Egyptian antiquities sank in the Elbe River in the storm of the century. Six field campaigns the team has identified both an exposed undocumented wreck and buried subsurface anomalies consistent in size and position with the Gottfried. The August 2026 campaign is the physical investigation of that target.

August 2026 Field Campaign — Expedition Funding Proposal







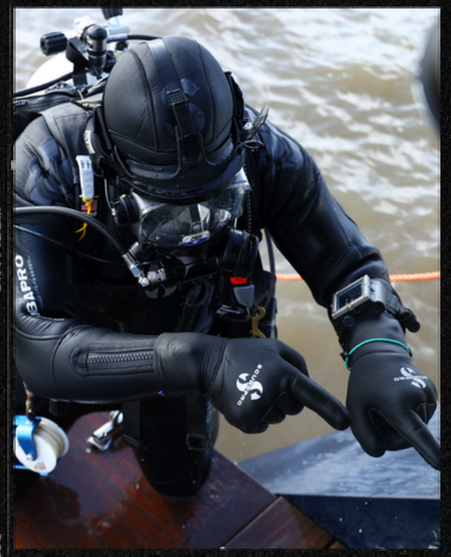
THE CARGO

The Gottfried was not carrying ordinary trade goods. Her hold contained the systematic collection of General Heinrich von Minutoli, a Prussian military officer and scholar credited as the first European to enter the Saqqara pyramid complex. He excavated a granite sarcophagus from a shaft 90 feet deep, a recovery requiring 200 workers over three months. The cargo included mummies, funerary objects, papyri, and artifacts drawn from multiple royal sites with the intention to establish the Berlin Museum’s Egyptian collection.

The Gottfried sank six months before Champollion announced the decipherment of hieroglyphs in September of that year. If recovered, the collection would represent one of the most significant bodies of undeciphered Egyptian material in existence.

THE SEARCH







Dr. Gino Caspari did 4 years of archival research collaborating with Dr. Joachin Karig, German Egyptologist and investigator of the Gottfried mystery for the past 30 years. From there Dr. Caspari identified a new search zone never before tested, based on his interpretation of the historical records.

Six field campaigns have been conducted in the continuously refined search zone, employing multibeam sonar, side-scan sonar, scuba diving, ROV search, and aerial magnetometry. These expeditions were funded by The Explorers Club Impact Grant program, the flagship support for the most ambitious and promising projects.

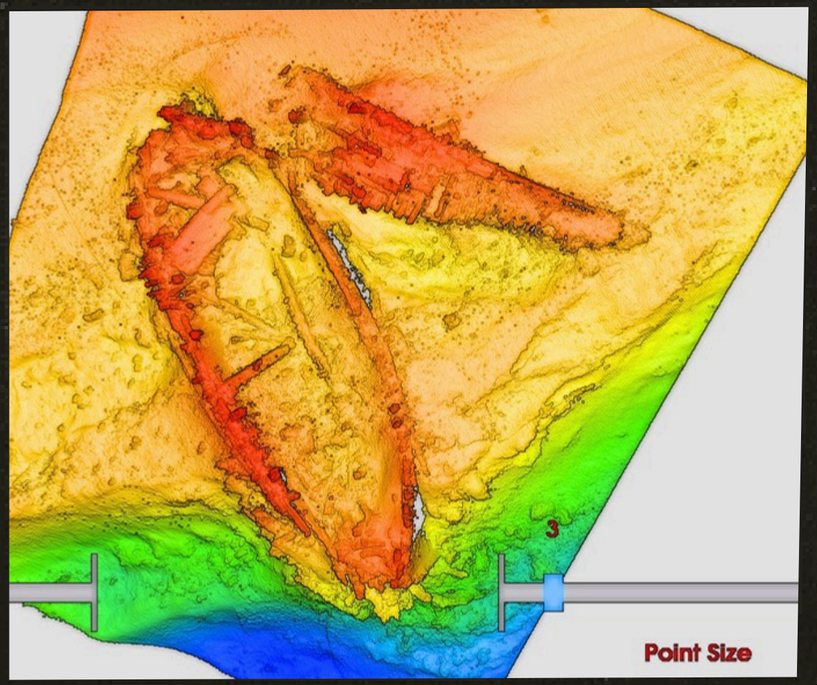


In June 2026, sub-bottom profiling and high frequency sonar will deliver 5cm resolution imaging of the anomaly confirming depth, structural extent, and dimensions prior to dive operations planned for August.











A CONFIRMED DISCOVERY

During survey operations, the team located and dove on a previously undocumented 19th-century shipwreck on the target sandbank. Multi-method analysis identifies this as very likely to be ‘The Black Prince,’ a British coal brig recorded in historical sources as lost on the same sandbank in the 1822 gale force 12 storm.

The identification draws on three independent lines of evidence: naval architecture analysis, radiocarbon dating of structural timber, and stable isotope analysis of recovered coal from the wreck, tracing it back to the closest coal mine to the Black Prince’s port of origin.







AUGUST 2026 CAMPAIGN GOALS

The campaign addresses two defined targets:

The Black Prince: completion of the archaeological profile of this newly identified, previously unrecorded wreck through systematic documentation and artifact recovery.

The buried anomalies: physical investigation of the subsurface target on the Gottfried search ledge, with objectives of site confirmation, condition assessment, and recovery of material evidence.

Operations will be conducted by a 8-10 person international team working within the tidal constraints of the Elbe Delta over approximately 10 days.

TEAM OVERVIEW



Dr. Gino Caspari: Expedition Lead, Life Fellow-The Explorers Club · PhD East Asian Studies · Fulbright , Columbia University · 50+ peer-reviewed publications · Rolex Grantee, Pathfinder Grantee, Impact Grantee

Dr. Joachim Karig: Archival Consulting 60 years of Egyptology research · Primary specialist on Minutoli and the Gottfried cargo provenance



Michal Tokarz: Hydrographic & Geophysical Survey Office Manager, GEO Ingenieurservice Polska (GeoIngs) · Part of GEO Group, operating across European waters since 1997 · Specializes in hydrographic and geophysical survey in offshore, nearshore, and inland waterway environments- FN’25



David Mearns: Lowell Thomas Awardee, OBE. Discovered HMAS Sydney and Vasco da Gama's Esmeralda

Trevor J. Wallace: The Explorers Club Board Member and Fellow· Expedition Filmmaker. New Explorer of the Year 2018 · Founder of Menorca Shipwreck Project. National Geographic, Reuters, CNN, Discovery Channel



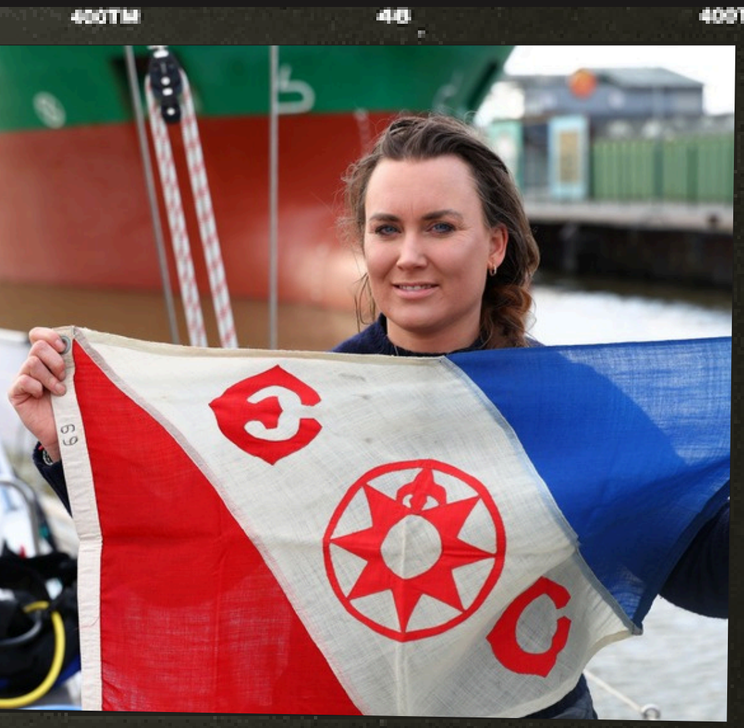
Tommy “Mbogo” Allen: Explorer | Strategic Expedition Leader | Advisor Founder & CEO, Five Oceans Global Solutions (5OGS) · Explorers Club Fellow (FN10) · Expedition leader with more than 200 expeditions across Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia · Subject Matter Expert in African geopolitics, maritime operations, and expeditionary logistics · Speaker of six African languages · Advisor and collaborator across conservation, security, and emerging technology initiatives in Africa and the Indo-Pacific · Maritime strategist for the Voyage of Advancement initiative · Master Diver



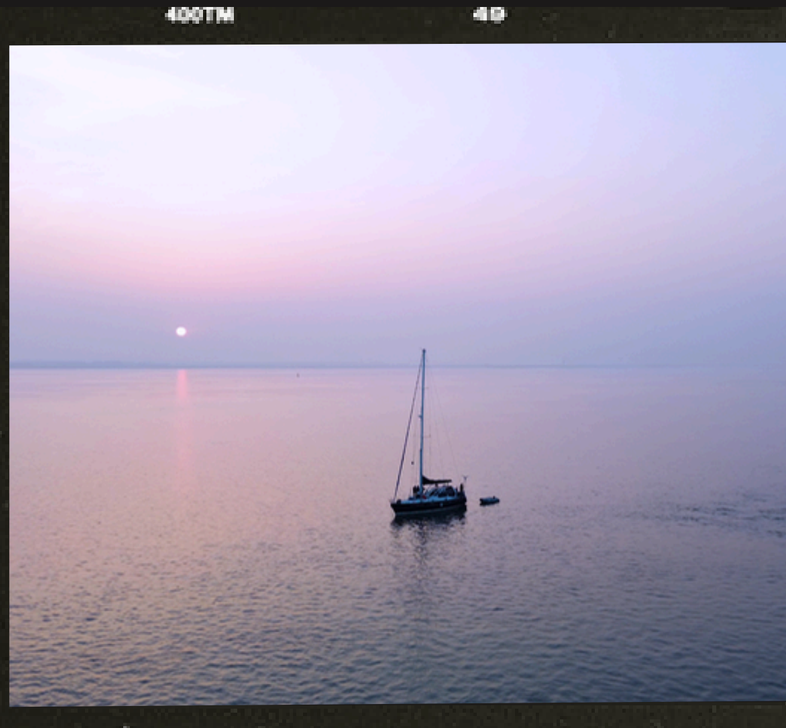
Ret. Col. Marc Langevin, USMC: Lead Diver, international law enforcement and military instructor for the DoJ, DoS, and DoD globally · Military Special Operations Combatant Diver · IANTD TRIMIX Technical and Rebreather Diver · PADI IDC Staff Instructor-Master Scuba Diver Trainer - Explorers Club Fellow



Catharina Frostad — Board of Directors, The Explorers Club · competitive sailor, and sustainability entrepreneur · Co-founder of Clean Sea Solutions, developing autonomous systems to prevent coastal plastic pollution · Co-founder of Gate to the Arctic, connecting youth, science, and expeditions in Arctic environments ·







CASE FOR SUPPORT

August represents the soonest viable operational window for dive work of this scope. The June sub-bottom profiling data will complete the pre-dive characterization of the anomaly target.

A successful recovery would conclude a 200-year mystery with international resonance, the objects Minutoli excavated from Egypt's royal sites are precisely the category of material that anchors major museum collections. Their significance to scholarly and cultural institutions across Europe, Egypt, and beyond would be considerable.

Expedition supporters are credited in all field reporting, academic publications, and the associated documentary production currently in development for global distribution.