

news

Early this year, 23 divers working for the National Underwater and Marine Agency (NUMA) came upon the L'Aimable.

Three years ago, La Belle was discovered in 3.6 metres of water in the same bay. Underwater archaeologists raised the remains of the ship and more than one million artefacts.

L'Aimable, about eight times larger than La Belle, promises to reveal a wealth of information about the early colonists.

It took searchers 17 years to find La Belle, but only three weeks to locate L'Aimable, with the help of an aerial magnetic survey that detected the presence of iron in the ocean floor sediment.

L'Aimable was discovered at the fourth site of fifteen possible targets. A French musket and flintlock pistol, which have been X-rayed and dated to 1685, have been recovered from the shipwreck, and confirmed by historical records as belonging aboard the ship.

Archaeologists are preparing to locate four iron cannons, weighing about six kilos each, supplies brought along by the colonists, and possibly also wine kegs, ammunition and more pistols.

Officials are withholding from the public the exact site where the ship is, so as to prevent looting by treasure hunters, and the state of Texas will be given all of the recovered artefacts for conservation.

New plan for Sukhothai site

A long-term plan to maintain the Sukhothai Historical Park of Thailand is being drawn up

Sayan Prishanchit, acting director of the park, told the *Bangkok Post* that the present master plan, made 20 years ago, needed to be updated, and that the new plan, now being prepared, involved the tourism sector, conservationists and academics.

Growing ever more popular as a destination, Sukhothai Historical Park is undergoing difficulties with some of the sensitive areas within the park that received a rising number of visitors as well as a growing local community.

Among the major sources of income for Sukhothai is Tourism, attracting some 500,000 visitors last year.

The Bureaucratic Reform Committee announced earlier this year that the Park would become a profit-making agency to allow its management independence.

Mr. Sayan informed that the local community there has increased tremendously, but conservation work has not been rapid enough to keep pace with the changes; and regulating businesses in the site has not been easy. Although the Fine Arts Department has been making efforts to conserve

the park, some businesses have been exploiting it without regard for the negative consequences.

While Sukhothai Park benefits from being listed by Unesco as a World Heritage site, he cautioned that such a status could be withdrawn if a world heritage agency informed Unesco that the site is deteriorating and neglected.

The current master plan includes a zoning system to designate areas for specific uses. He also called for the sensitive central area to be preserved for cultural purposes only, and contemporary performances or activities to be organised in the outer areas.