It was originally believed that this pump could have been used to collect bilge water from the bottom of the ship or used to pump sea water into the boat for cleaning or fighting fires. However, Carlo Beltrame, a marine archaeologist from Ca' Foscari University, believes that chain pumps would have been used for the bilge water and that this ship was not large enough to need a system like that for cleaning or fires.

While they have not yet located a tank, they have calculated that the ship could have held one with about 4 cubic meters of water. The pump would have allowed it to pump and replace the water every 16 minutes, keeping it well oxygenated for fish transport.

This find would completely change what historians had believed to be true for the fishing market in Roman times. This opens up the possibility that they were transporting and marketing fish beyond their local market far earlier than previously thought.


Abstract
The Roman wreck found off Grado, not far from the city of Aquileia in the north Adriatic Sea, was recovered in 1999. The ship carried various kinds of amphoras with processed fish. A lead pipe, inserted in the hull near the keel, is curious evidence which the authors try to explain. The pipe could be connected to a piston-pump to suck water. A theoretical reconstruction demonstrates how this apparatus could work and that it could be used to feed a tank to allow trading in live fish over a long distance.

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