

The Warship Hazardous Project Site Report - October 2007.

Introduction

No extension to the licence for the winter period was sought at the end of the 2006 season. Weather conditions deteriorated in September 2006 and as the previous year, there was considerable shingle movement along the coast from an easterly direction; this again made the slipway at Bracklesham unusable for long periods, severely restricting easy access to the site.

As stated in last year's report the nearest useable launching point is an hour and fifteen minutes boat ride away at Itchenor in Chichester harbour, making the whole exercise very expensive and a little impractical in the very changeable weather and sea conditions experienced at this time of year. However approaches are being made, to the management company of a private slipway in the area, with a view to using their facilities, although this will further increase the projects financial burden, if viewed favourably it would enable us to visit the site later in the year, weather permitting.

This year again it was decided to use one weekend a month, on the best neap tides to work on the site and run the diver trail, with additional trail days added later in the season. A second weekend per month was programmed to carry out work on the artefact display, to continue work on the archive and to monitor the wet-stored artefacts. Therefore ten site working/diver trail weekends were scheduled for this season.

The weather in April was particularly good allowing a first visit to site on the 9th April; the conditions enabled a good inspection of the site to be carried out during the month (See "Diver Observations" written by the Licensee).

No damage from commercial fishing activities was noted during this first inspection.

However weather conditions in the area deteriorated for the whole of May, June and July, allowing only two visits to site during that time.

Year 2007 Objectives

Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels and timber degradation, using points set up in 2002.

Continue surveying positions of dummy "artefacts" for ongoing research into environmental effects on site conditions and formation processes.

Carry out further planning of areas / artefacts exposed due to continued erosion.

Survey and recover artefacts exposed by erosion and under threat of loss or damage.

Continue with conservation of artefacts in wet storage at present.

Continue operation of the diver trail.

Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.

Web site development.

Develop Project Design to EH for project to outline the research potential of the wreck site, prior to a further project application that will take forward excavation.

Develop a further "Awards for All" application to take forward further community site initiatives.

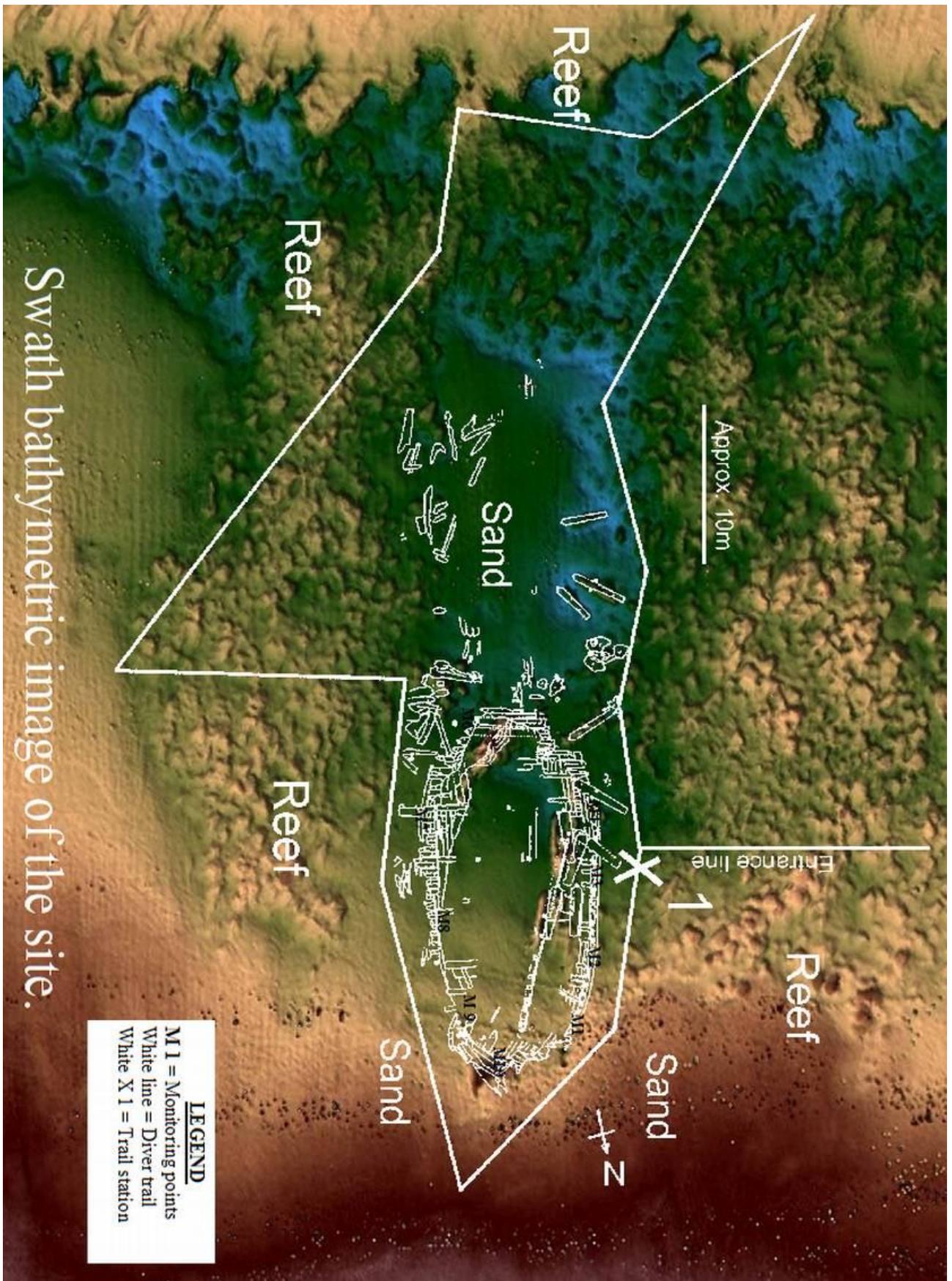


Figure: site plan and diver trail overlain on swath bathymetric survey results.

Field work

Twelve days of diving have taken place on site this season, at these times monitoring of seabed levels and timber degradation were carried out, however, due to loss of monitoring points through gribble worm activity, this work was limited.

A number of loose artefacts were recovered, diver trail cables were replaced as required and a new set of trail numbers were attached.

Various datum points were re-tagged, a number of new datum's were established on the north and east sides of the site in preparation for planning to be carried out and the recovery of surface finds in that area.

Results

The weather this year, although somewhat unpredictable has enabled members of the team to carry out some planning of the areas found uncovered within the hull remains at the start of the season, however as at time of compiling this report a new section of hull structure to the northeast has only been recorded by video and still photography.

Nine new datum's were set in place, north and east of the main hull structure and linked into existing datum's, in preparation for the positioning and recovery of a number of surface finds in that quadrant.

It was also necessary to replace some existing datum numbered tags due to general wear and tear.

Twenty-four artefacts have been recovered, after positions were surveyed in and where possible photographed in-situ, these were then placed in wet storage. Work on conserving these and previously recovered artefacts is ongoing and will continue through the winter months.



Figure: (left) - pottery vessel recovered from site (right) pewter syringe recovered from site

A base line was established within the hull structure, to enable the planning of a number of eroded barrel sections, the area was also recorded on video film.

The development of a digitised site database is continuing and will be further added to this winter, along with the updating of site plans.

The dummy artefacts that were placed on-site in 2004 and periodically monitored, in order to observe artefact movement patterns and assist research into the site dynamics and site formation processes of the Hazardous site, have been largely dispersed and only a few remain within the main site area. Some of these dummy artefacts are visible on the seabed well out in the reef and far removed from their original locations. Many are 'missing', presumed buried or lost off-site. Time available and distances involved, has not permitted a comprehensive survey to be undertaken this year. Data is being entered into Site Recorder, although the results of this initiative have yet to be fully assessed.

Observations

9th April 2007

This was the first dive on site for the 2007 season, water temperature was 10 degrees centigrade, visibility underwater 2 metres +, sea conditions flat with light winds from the south west, bright sunshine.

A great deal of scouring has taken place from the north west side of the hull structure around the beak and down the east side to just short of the cannon ball mound. In some areas outside the hull structure, there has been a loss of up to half a metre of sand overburden, with considerable undermining of the hull, in places down to fossil bed material. It appears that this loss of sand stretches away from the north end of the site towards the shoreline. This area has yet to be checked fully, however a short distance north of the beak there is a gun carriage axle, complete with wheel attached, loose on the seabed (see figure 4). The artefact is in good condition with no gribble worm damage, implying short-term exposure. A number of other artefacts are uncovered in the northeast quadrant along with a number of paired frames with planking attached, not seen in this area before.

There has also been considerable loss of sand overburden within the hull structure, resulting in two barrels being exposed midway between the cannon ball mound and the pile of three guns, also a number of large timbers, possibly displaced deck beams are visible in this central area. The port side guns have been further undermined, showing new timber structure inboard of them.

The gun deck beams and decking forward, last seen during the 89/90-trench excavation are well proud of the seabed, as is the top breast hook, also located during the above excavation. The gun and carriage sitting on the gun deck which was sheeted and re-buried after the trench excavation is in danger of also being exposed if this trend continues.

There are also a number of wooden artefacts uncovered in this area.

Large numbers of lead tangles are spread through out the whole area, along with much lead caulking material.

A complete earthenware pot, grey in colour and 121mm high x 75mm diameter at it's widest point was measured into the site and recovered from a position 4.3 metres north of the beak (see figure 2).

The diver trail cable east, north and west of the beak is loose on the seabed as are many of the datum's re-positioned last season. The trail cable and sinkers in the extreme south of the site are buried under sand, as is the low cliff in that area.

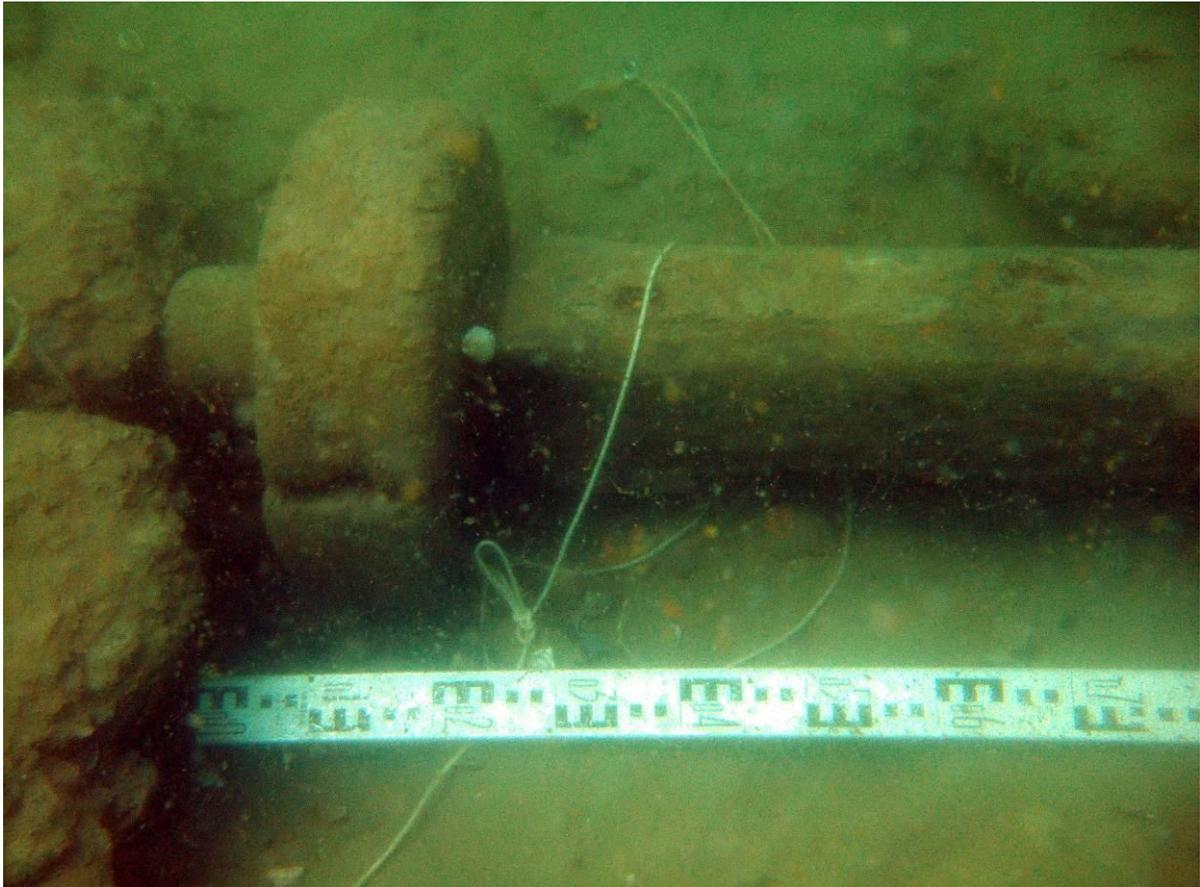


Figure: gun carriage axle complete with wheel *in-situ*.

29 April 2007

The whole of the north end of the site is uncovered to new levels on the hull timbers on east and west sides, both inside and outside the hull.

The sand overburden outside the beak has been lowered by about half a metre down to fossil bed materials, continuing north approximately ten metres.

There has been considerable loss of sand overburden west of the site, stretching approximately twenty metres plus, past the mooring chains for the site marker buoy.

Some infilling has taken place south of the site around the low cliff, this now stands proud of the sand by only two hundred millimetres approximately.

There are the remains of four barrels within the hull between the pile of guns and the cannon ball pile, two standing on their ends and two lying on their sides. In the same area there are some sections of heavy textile, possibly canvas, partially exposed but trapped under timber and concretion.

The gun and carriage that was sheeted and buried after the trench excavation in the early nineties, has become partially uncovered to show the rear wheel and the stepped area of the carriage cheek. In the same area there is a wooden carriage wheel partially uncover and unattached (see figure 5).

There are a number of large sections of bone in and around the north end of the site. Many lead patches of assorted sizes and much lead caulking are in evidence all over the site. A number of sections of red earthenware, along with the complete neck of an earthenware storage jar are visible, North, East and West of the site.

Overall there has been a reduction in sand overburden of between two hundred and fifty and five hundred millimetres throughout the site area, extending west beyond the marker buoy. Much of the fossil bed

materials, which is in sheets up to a metre across have been moved about on the seabed and in some areas has buried the diver trail cable completely.



Figure: gun carriage wheel.

Weather conditions generally in the bay through May, June and July were not at all favourable. This resulted in the cancellation of a number of the planned diving weekends.

Over the course of the season increased turbulence on site has caused further erosion of seabed material in and around the north end of the hull structure, adjacent to the buried gun and carriage on the 7th October a drop of a further 150mm was recorded. The hull structure which supports the cannon ball mound, continues to be undermined, last seasons recorded half a metre on the east side has increased in places to 750mm. Serious destabilisation of the remaining hull structure at the north end would appear to be imminent. This will, as reported last year, add further to the 33% loss of wreck and associated information, witnessed by the licensee over the last twenty-five years.

Artefacts

Work continues on stabilisation of artefacts in wet store.

All the navigational dividers recovered from the site since the start of the project and in dry store or on public display were taken to Edinburgh Museum by the Licensee, where Dr. David Caldwell kindly arranged for them to be submitted to XRF analysis. "XRF is an entirely non-destructive way of analysing materials, particularly metals. By shining a narrow beam of low energy x-rays onto the sample, secondary (fluorescence) x-rays are generated whose energy depends on the metals present: by measuring the energy spectrum of these fluorescence x-rays we get a "fingerprint" of the metal and can thus deduce its composition".

The report of this work will be added to the site archive in due course.

The Mary Rose Trust has completed conservation work on a number of fragile artifacts, these have now been returned to the Project store.

Diver Trail

Cleaning and repairs plus repositioning of the southern section of the diver trail cable and refitting of trail numbers was required before any trail days could be run.

All though there were a number of bookings, it was only possible to run two of the scheduled diver trail days due to bad weather, it was therefore not possible to “catch up” last seasons booked, cancelled trips either. As a result there were only sixteen visiting divers to the site this year.

All visiting divers were given lectures on the history, discovery and present work, taking place on the site, along with an overview of the flora and fauna of the area. Included was a visit to the museum display, which continues to be well received by both public and divers alike.

Website

The development of the website is progressing and is now active at <http://hazardousproject.info>

We will continue to add material as time allows.

Research and Fundraising Initiatives

English Heritage – Work to finalise the Environmental Assessment project has been undertaken. Additionally liaison with English Heritage has resulted in agreement for the development of a project proposal to undertake an evaluation excavation on site in the 2008 season.

Awards for All – a successful application to the Heritage Lottery Awards for All fund resulted in funding to develop the project base and capacity to undertake work on the collection and site archive. This project was completed and reported on. A further application is now being developed for funding in support of the 2008 season and work on the archive.

Diving Schedule

Diving operations were carried out on twelve separate days. This resulted in 3803 working minutes underwater by seven divers.

In excess of 720 minutes was spent underwater by sixteen visiting divers.

Plans for 2008

Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels and timber degradation, using points remaining from those set up in 2002.

Set up new monitoring points to increase monitoring coverage.

Continue surveying positions of dummy “artefacts” for ongoing research into environmental effects on site conditions and formation processes.

Carry out further planning of areas / artefacts exposed due to continued erosion.

Survey and recover artefacts exposed by erosion and under threat of loss or damage.

Continue with conservation of artefacts in wet storage at present.

Continue operation of the diver trail.

Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.

Continue web site development.

Submit project design to EH for evaluation excavation during the 2008 season.

Submit a further “Awards for All” application to take forward further community site initiatives.