

# **The Warship Hazardous Project Site Report - October 2009.**

## **Introduction**

Weather conditions deteriorated at the end September this year as opposed to the beginning of the month as in previous years.

The shingle movement along the coast from an easterly direction through out the year continues unabated; this again has made the slipway at Bracklesham unusable for long periods during south-westerly weather patterns. As stated previously, at the end of September through to the beginning of April, when the district council close their safety boat office and tractor launching facility the slipway is inoperable for normal boat launching and recovery, severely restricting easy access to the site even if weather conditions are favourable, this year further problems have occurred due to tractor breakdowns, particularly during a large part of September, when visibility underwater was good.

At time of writing this report, it is hoped that we will be able to visit the site if we have some settled weather during November, as one of our team has purchased a hard boat complete with cabin, which is moored at Sparkes marina, Hayling island, close to the entrance of Chichester harbour. Weather permitting this will make visits to site through the colder months somewhat more bearable.

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 if conditions allowed. Therefore nine site working/diver trail weekends were scheduled for this season. It was decided to use as many weekends as possible through the year, when not diving and team members were available, to carry out work on the artefact display, to continue work on the archive and to monitor the wet-stored artefacts.

In addition a nine day period, from the 18<sup>th</sup> July was set aside for the rescheduled trench excavation planned for but aborted last year on the site.

Weather conditions early in the year were quite good through April, May and June therefore the first dive on site for this year was conducted on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April in poor visibility, (See "Diver Observations" written by Licensee) No damage i.e. bent datum's were observed in and around the site at this time, however there was considerable sand movement into the site noted, it is believed this had taken place of winter, although there were no particularly bad storms in the area.

Weather conditions in the area deteriorated through July, making it impossible to carry out the rescheduled excavation.

It was noted later in the year, that the ingress of sand into the middle of the site had in fact halted and by mid September a marked drop was recorded around the central area.

---

## **Year 2009 Objectives**

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.

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 if conditions allow.

Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.

Continue web site development.

Carry out evaluation trench excavation and associated post-excavation work.

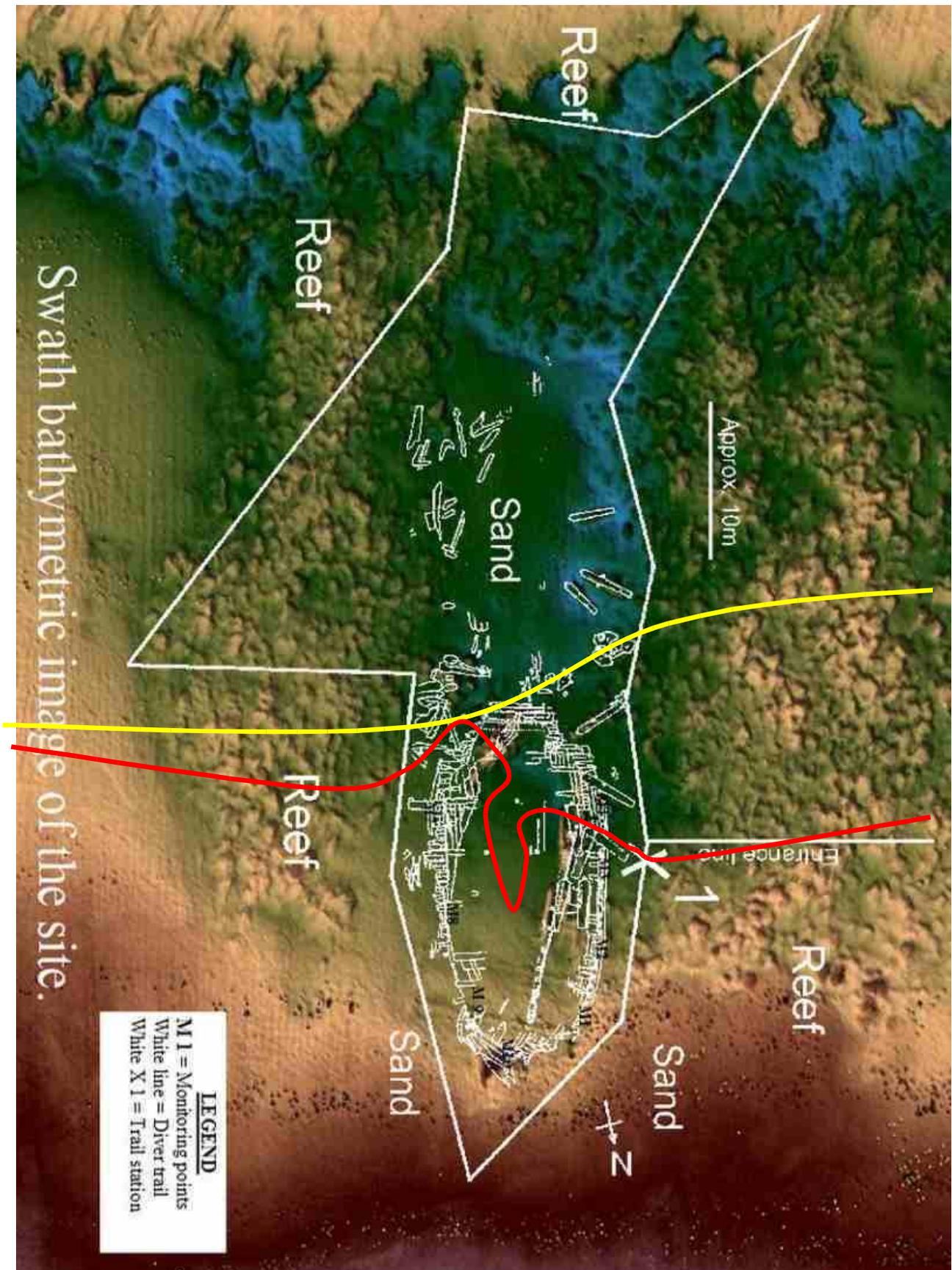


Figure: site plan and diver trail overlain on swath bathymetric survey results. Yellow line = 2008 sand movement from the south to the north. Red line = 2009 sand movement from the south to the north.

### Field work

Nine 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 continued loss of monitoring points through gribble worm activity, this work was limited.

A number of loose artefacts were recovered, diver trail cables were found to be buried under sand overburden for an even greater part of the total length than last year.

Various datum points were re-tagged as required; a number of new control points were established on a section of frames and planking north east of the main hull, in preparation for planning of this section to be carried out and future monitoring of timber degradation.

---

## Results

As previously stated, weather conditions have been variable throughout this year, this has resulted in a number of dives being aborted due to low visibility on site and/or bad weather.

Re-scheduling of diving dates had limited results, due to team members other commitments.

However it was possible to re-establish a number of the datum tags lost/damaged through the winter months.

Limited monitoring of seabed levels was carried out; due to insufficient time on site this season it has not been possible to add new monitoring points to those remaining from the originals placed in 2002, although an area of frames and planking, now completely uncovered north east of the main hull has been tagged in preparation for planning. This area will also be used in the future to monitor timber degradation and seabed levels.

Three artefacts were recovered after positions were recorded.



Figure: recovered artefact (believed to be a pistol pommel similar to a previous recovery on site).

The sea bed movement noted last year, south and west of the main wreck site, has now increased in the south east, further covering the diver trail. Therefore the trail was not run at all this year.

Members of the team spent some time searching an area of clay gullies uncovered in the north western extremes of the restricted area last year. No artefacts were recovered, however it was seen that the remains of the large doubled sheaved rigging block has degraded further allowing the two hardwood sheaves to fall to the seabed, these were recovered for conservation.

The sections of timber, (possibly spar) and iron concretions found last year close to the iron gun also found at that time, have also been uncovered more, due to seabed movement, revealing more iron concretions. Further evaluation of this area will be required in the future.

The majority of the wet stored artefacts from previous seasons have now been processed and packaged, those remaining will undergo further processing over winter.



Figure: pulley sheaves

Additional cabinets are being constructed and added to the display at Earnley, when completed they will enable a wider range of artefacts to be displayed to the public.

The new site marker buoy, funded by English Heritage was deployed by members of the diving team in May.

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

Improvements to the web site are on going.

All preparations were made for last years planned excavation to re-commence on the 18<sup>th</sup> July; however this was aborted, yet again due to bad weather. A back up date was not possible due to other commitments.



Figure: new site buoy

With the acquisition of a hard boat, by one of the team members and the loan of side scan sonar equipment from the NAS, it has been possible to carry out some limited testing over the site this year, with a view to searching for anomalies in the wider area around the site in the future, when conditions are not favourable for diving.

The licensee has asked questions at the Parish Council meeting; reference the poor condition of the public slipway at Bracklesham that hinders launching for the project team boats, this has been followed up by a letter to the District Council. We await answers.

---

## Observations

### 5<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

Wind south westerly; water temperature 11 degrees c, on the rising tide visibility 0.5m.

Visibility on site was very poor; because of this, it took some time to locate the mooring point at the cannon pile. The beak is still undercut as last season, although there appears to be additional scouring in the area to the north east. As reported last season the large concrete weight used to anchor the dredge pipes during the first excavation in the early 90s and subsequently sunk below the sand level west of the hull, is still completely uncovered on the clay substrata, the opposing concrete weight east of the hull is now uncovered also.

East and north of the hull, appears to have lost further sand and general sediment beyond last years levels, although the area between the bow and the cannon ball mound on the east side, appears not to have altered since last year.

The sand encroaching from the south appears to be increasing; the three guns to the south are completely covered.

Datum peg D32 is showing only by 150mm and the adjacent gun is half buried.

The barrel staves visible within the hull last year are now buried. The lower of the three guns in a pile, is now touching the sand again (2-300mm increase) in this area.

The diver trail cable only shows in the area from the gun pile north to the beak and south to the cannonball mound. There appears to be more erosion north and west of the site.

No small artefacts were observed on the site, although there is a considerable amount of lead calking in evidence.

### **Artefacts**

Three artefacts loose on site were recovered this season after their positions were recorded, these are currently in wet store awaiting processing.

The processing of artefacts in wet store has continued and many have now been dried, tagged and packaged, only those requiring long term immersion in chemicals remain, along with those recovered this season.

#### **Diver Trail**

Due to the vast sediment movement over the winter months, the entire southern end of the site was covered with sand to a depth of one metre+ in places (Figure 1 See red line on site plan showing extent of sediment coverage from the south). This has made it impossible to run the diver trail this season.

---

### **Website**

Improvements to the website are progressing at <http://hazardousproject.info>

We will continue to add material as time allows.

---

### **Research and Fundraising Initiatives**

Awards for All – Due to our inability to complete the excavation on site and associated work, by the end of the award period, it has been necessary to return a small percentage of the awarded fund to the Lottery Awards for All people. Funding from English Heritage via the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology is being carried over to next year for the excavation. The HWTMA are likely to be able to cover the short fall amount from the Awards for All, through match funding with a new European Project Atlas of the Two Seas.

---

### **Excavation**

As previously stated the excavation could not take place due to bad weather.

---

### **Diving Schedule**

Diving operations were carried out on nine separate days. This resulted in 1874 working minutes underwater by eight divers.

---

### **Plans for 2009**

Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels and timber degradation, using points remaining from those set up in 2002 plus those set up in 2009.

Set up new monitoring points to increase monitoring coverage.

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 if conditions allow.

Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.

Continue web site development.

Raise additional funding to complete evaluation excavation and associated post-excavation work.

Carry out evaluation trench excavation and associated post-excavation work.

Develop plans for specialist analysis of the object collection and material recovered from excavation.

Search area of gullies for further artefacts if conditions allow.

Continue raising public awareness of Hazardous and the project with presentations etc.