

# **The Warship Hazardous Project Site Report**

## **October 2011.**

### **Introduction**

For the first time for a number of years early April was very good for both weather conditions & under water visibility, however the summer generally has been poor, although the weather has been warm with little rain, strong south westerly winds have prevailed as opposed to past years when the summers have seen mainly light winds from the north.

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 the predominant 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 & tractor launching facility the slipway is inoperable for normal boat launching & recovery, severely restricting easy access to the site even if weather conditions are favourable, last years extension of those facilities to the end of October has not been forthcoming this year.

Various avenues are being explored to see if it will be possible to put pressure on the District Council to improve this public access to the sea.

At time of writing this report, it is hoped that we will be able to visit the site during the winter months if we have some settled weather, as one of our team has a hard boat complete with cabin, which is moored at Sparkes Marina, Hayling island, close to the entrance to Chichester Harbour making access to the site a little easier.

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, if it became uncovered this year. Therefore nine site working/diver trail weekends were scheduled for the season. It was decided to use as many weekends as possible through the year, when not diving & team members were available, to carry out work on the artefact display, to continue work on the archive & to further process the wet-stored artefacts towards drying & packaging.

Weather conditions early in the year were quite good through April & May therefore the first dive on site for this year was conducted on the 10<sup>th</sup> of April in reasonable visibility of two to three metres, (See "Diver Observations" written by Licensee). No damage was observed in & around the site at this time; however there was considerable sand movement into the site noted again on this first dive, (*see fig 1*) this ingress appears to have continued throughout the winter since last observed on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010, although there were no particularly bad storms in the area over that time.

Sand movement & overburden in the area of the main site, made it impossible to carry out any "diver trail" visits as most of the site is now buried to similar levels first observed by the author in the early 1980's.

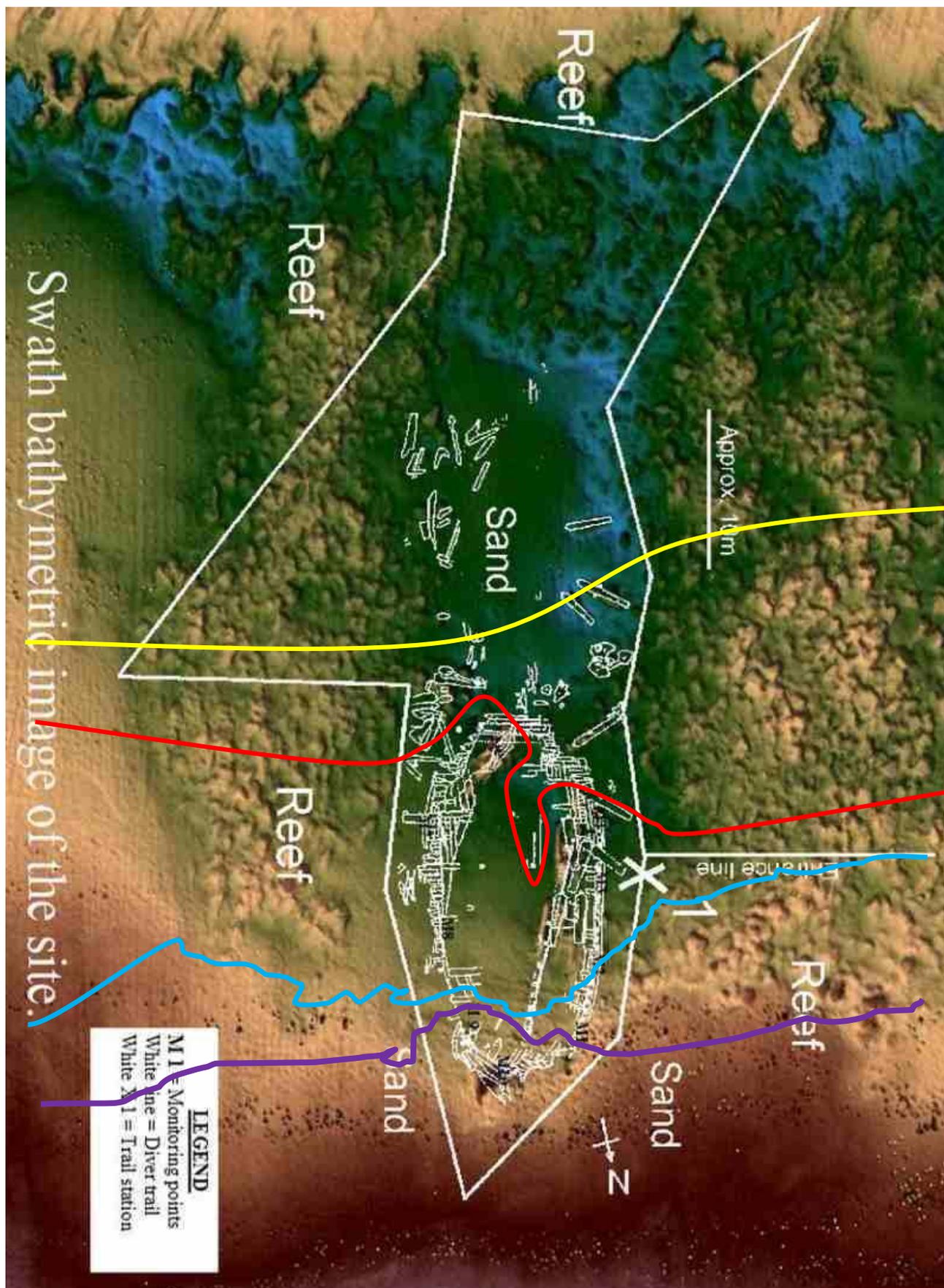
### **Plans for 2011**

- Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels and timber degradation, using points remaining from those set up in 2002 plus those set up in 2009/10.
- 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.
- Re-open diver trail if conditions allow.
- Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.
- Continue web site development.
- Raise additional funding to continue work on site & artefact conservation.
- Continue development plans for specialist analysis of the object collection.
- Continue metal detector search in area of gullies for further artefacts as conditions allow.

- Carry out further electronic surveys of surrounding area of site as conditions allow.
- Continue raising public awareness of *Hazardous* & the project with presentations etc.

Swath bathymetric image of the site.

Figure 1 showing site plan & 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.

Blue line = sand movement from the south to the north as at 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010.

Purple line = sand movement from the south to the north as at 21<sup>st</sup> August 2011.

## **Field work**

Due to the generally poor weather conditions, only 5 days of diving have taken place on site this season, at these times monitoring of seabed levels within the main wreck area were carried out, this showed increased sand overburden levels throughout the site.

No loose artefacts were recovered from the main site area or in the gullies uncovered north west of the main site, all of the diver trail cables were found to be completely buried under sand overburden.

Most datum points around the site have been lost or buried by sand overburden; one of the two baseline points established last year near a section of frames & planking north east of the main hull, still remains in place, although the adjacent timbers are beginning to cover with sand. Also one of the team members believes he saw live Teredo worm in these timbers (this has yet to be proved conclusively).

**Figure 2** *Team members digitizing site data.*



## **Results**

As previously stated, weather conditions were reasonable for the early part of this year, however June, July & September were plagued with strong south-westerly winds, this has resulted in over 50% of planned dives being aborted.

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

However it was possible to carry out some limited searches of various areas in the north & north-west quadrants of the protected area, enabling measurements & sketch plans of various loose timbers in the area to be produced, during this exercise a number of lead tangles, some lead caulking & at least one red brick were also observed (*See Fig. 3*)

Monitoring of seabed levels was carried out in the main site area utilizing remaining datums;

No artefacts were recovered from the site this year, a number of new timbers have been identified measured & recorded in the north to north-west quadrants of the site (*see fig. 3*) & it has been established that they are within the protected area using DGPS.

The sea bed movement noted over the last three years, south, east & west of the main wreck site, has now increased throughout the whole of the main site area, completely covering the diver trail & generally increasing sand overburden to levels first seen in the early 1980's. (*See fig. 1*).

Members of the team continued searching the area of clay gullies uncovered in the north western extremes of the restricted area last year, along with recording various large ships timbers & their proximity to each other (*see fig.3*). However it was seen that the remains of a large doubled sheaved rigging block uncovered in previous years, has degraded further since last year, leaving only the concreted iron hook & frame. The small iron gun located in 2008 appears to be buried again, implying that a wave of sand is gradually moving through these outer areas of the site similar to that on the main wreck area; however more clay gullies further to the north appear to be uncovering.

The seabed movement has increased in this area substantially & in many places the sand has been removed down to the clay fossil beds, more sections of timber & iron concretions are being uncovered along with lead tangles, caulking & at least one red brick similar to examples found within the main site in previous years. Further evaluation, along with metal detector searches of this area will be required in the coming season to recover artefacts that are covered only by 25 to 50mm of overburden at most, if these are not to be further dispersed & possibly lost for ever.

The majority of the wet stored artefacts from previous seasons have now been processed & packaged; those remaining will undergo further processing over winter (*see fig. 4*) & those that require further chemical treatment will be processed as required.

Work on additional cabinet construction for the display at Earnley was completed over last winter, along with re-vamping of lighting within the display generally, further improvements will continue to be made as time & funds allow. People visiting the complex at Earnley between March & October seem to remain fairly stable at between 20 & 30,000, a large portion of those visit the Project Display.

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.

Team member Dave Johnston paid his first visit to the National Archives at Kew to initiate our further historical research relating to *Hazardous*.

Improvements to the web site are on going.

## **Observations**

### **Diver Observations 10<sup>th</sup> April 2011.**

Written by Iain Grant

This was the first visit to site for 2011, visibility was good at 2-3 metres and water temperature was 11 degrees, for the time of year & considering the exceptionally cold winter at the start of the year this was warmer than expected.

This first visit was later than was planned due to poor weather/sea conditions experienced on the first booked diving dates of 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> March.

Positions on site were difficult to locate, even in the reasonable visibility, due to the recognisable coherent timber structure being covered with sand. Although the measurements of seabed levels taken during this visit & taken at the same points as mid October last year, show a drop of between 5 & 100mm, the overall picture is of an increase generally across the main site.

We now find the frame ends & hull timbers that were visible between the beak & the cannonball mound on the east side of the hull structure, completely buried, likewise the hull structure on the west side (port side) is also now buried from the three big guns to the beak.

After some searching I was able to locate a couple of small end pieces of the plastic sheeting used to cover the gun & carriage located during the trench excavation in the early 1990's, where this plastic now protrudes through the sand by about 20 to 30mm, there was a considerable amount of timber structure still visible last year along with two guns, the only guns visible on site now are the pile of three big guns on the portside, which stand proud by 690mm at their highest point.

The bottom most of these three guns was completely uncovered & propped up above the then seabed level by hull timbers in 2008/09, this now is almost completely buried, as are the guns from this point to the south.

The frames & planking to the east of the beak surveyed in 2010, appear to be covering again & whilst only general measurements were taken, it was determined that some timbers still stand proud of the seabed by approximately 200mm.

During this cursory examination one of the diving team (David Johnston) believes he saw live Teredo worm in one of the frame ends, if this is proved to be so, then the remains of Hazardous may have an even shorter life expectancy, under attack from both Gribble worm & Teredo.

The site generally is beginning to look as it did when first dived by the author of this document in the early 1980's.

The area to the northwest of the main site where timber noted as a possible spare, the remains of a double sheaved pulley block & a small cannon were first found in 2008, has suffered greater erosion over the winter, revealing more timber along with brick markers used on site in the mid to late 1980's, some dome shaped iron concretions & one red brick similar in appearance to others recovered from site, were also noted in the area. One datum pin placed on site towards the end of last diving season was also seen loose in the same area.

All that remains of the pulley block on the seabed sadly is the wrought iron work; thankfully the sheaves which were found loose on the seabed in 2009 & recovered have been saved, the timber cheeks of the block however, have been eaten by gribble worm. The small cannon was not seen at this time & is believed to be buried under the shifting sand on the perimeter of the area.

As it will not be possible to do useful work on the main site under the present conditions, periodical monitoring will take place for the rest of the season & the bulk of diving time will be spent searching for, positioning & recovering artefacts in the north-west quadrant of the site.

### **Addendum**

Comparisons noted between last seasons last dive & this years last recorded dive on site.

*Dive undertaken on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2010 recorded sand levels as follows:*

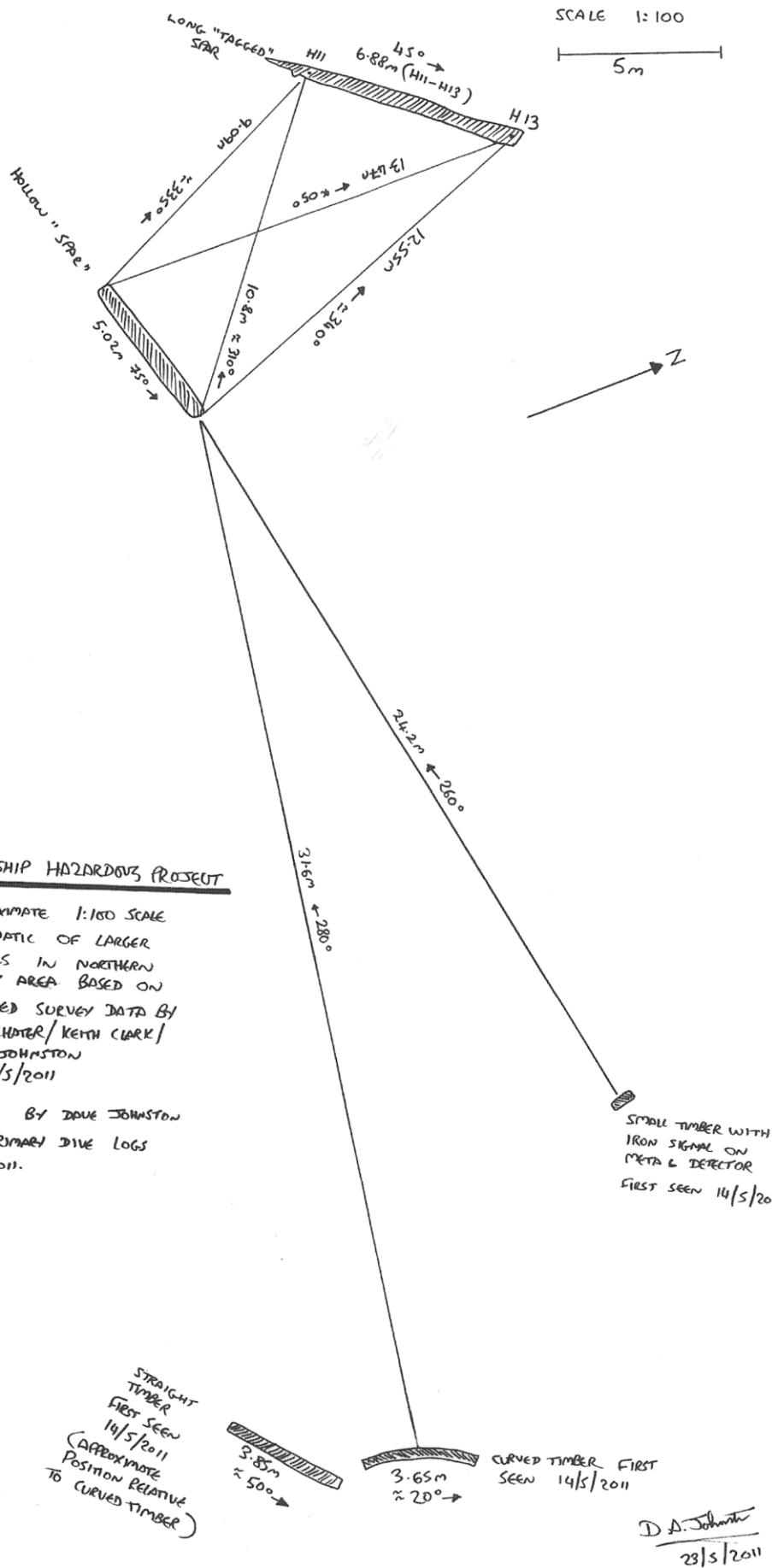
1. Top of the three cannon pile to seabed = 700mm
2. Top of cannonball pile to seabed = 700mm
3. M9 to seabed = 600mm
4. M10 to seabed = 550mm

*Dive undertaken on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2011 recorded sand levels as follows:*

1. Top of the three cannon pile to seabed = 700mm
2. Top of cannonball pile to seabed = 760mm
3. M9 to seabed = 580mm
4. M10 to seabed = 520mm

Although measurements at the various points seem fairly stable there is evidence of much localized scouring around them, this gives a false impression, as generally there is a marked increase in sand overburden within the site.

Figure 3 Timbers northwest of main site.



### **Artefacts**

No artefacts were recovered this season.

The processing of artefacts in wet store has continued & many have now been dried, tagged & packaged, Awaiting further research by experts in various fields, only those requiring long term immersion in chemicals remain.

**Figure 4** *Wet stored artefact undergoing cleaning & recording.*



### **Diver Trail**

Due to the continued sediment movement over the winter & continued through the summer months, the entire site is now covered with sand to a depth of over one metre in places (**Figure 1** See purple line on site plan showing extent of sediment coverage from the south). This has made it impossible to run the diver trail this season & I suspect for a number of years to come, unless there is a major change over winter.

### **Website**

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

We will continue to add material as time allows.

### **Research and Fundraising Initiatives**

A report has been produced on work undertaken as part of a Recording Phase of work, this was initiated due to severe reductions in the seabed levels on site and the need for rescue work, but was subsequently delayed due to poor weather and then halted due to sand build up. This work has been funded by a combination of

the Hazardous Project Team's time and resources, Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology resources, English Heritage, the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Interreg IVA Archaeological Atlas of the 2 Seas project and the Margary Research Grant.

As part of the EH funding an Updated Project Design has been developed to take forward assessment work on the project archive, this should continue over the coming year.

It should also be noted that Warship Hazardous is on the *English Heritage At Risk Register South East* (English Heritage 2010), where it is listed as having 'extensive significant problems', with the trend being 'significant decline' (EH 2010: 84). Although the movement of sand over the main wreck site during the past few years has temporarily reduced the risk for some of the seabed archive, it is likely that future movements of sand will re-expose artefacts and structure again in the future. Should this occur then a further Recording Phase of work will need to be formulated to enable rescue recording, which is likely to include excavation.

### **Diving Schedule**

Diving operations were carried out on five separate days. This resulted in 1805 working minutes underwater by nine divers.

### **Plans for 2012**

- Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels and timber degradation, using points remaining from those set up in 2002 plus those set up in 2009/10.
- Carry out further planning of areas / artefacts exposed due to continued erosion & sea bed movement.
- Survey and recover artefacts exposed by erosion and under threat of loss or damage.
- Continue with conservation of artefacts in wet storage at present.
- Re-open diver trail if conditions allow.
- Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.
- Continue web site development.
- Raise additional funding to continue work on site & artefact conservation.
- Continue development plans for specialist assessment and analysis of the object collection.
- Continue metal detector search in area of gullies for further artefacts as conditions allow.
- Carry out further electronic surveys of surrounding area of site as conditions allow.
- Continue raising public awareness of Hazardous & the project with presentations etc.

### **Licensee**

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### **Archaeological Adviser.**

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