

The Warship Hazardous Project Site Report

November 2016.

Introduction

The weather conditions over winter were similar to those experienced in past years, with south westerly winds predominant with fairly mild temperatures, the hoped for early site visit did not take place much earlier than usual due to prevailing conditions.

This summer has seen quite strong winds from the southwest mostly, although warm sunny weather prevailed, the light northerly breezes that were the summer pattern in the 1990's did not materialized until late September this year, the first dive for the year in April recorded very poor visibility.

Strong south westerly winds & changeable conditions have prevailed for much of the summer; this has made dive planning difficult.

Underwater visibility has been generally better this year on site.

The shingle movement along the coast from an easterly direction throughout the year continues unabated & in fact shows signs of an increase of the shingle bank in front of & above the level of the sea wall.

The Environment Agency & Bunn Leisure's major sea defence works east of the site completed in 2013, cannot be proved to be directly linked to seabed movement around the site as such, although there are major changes in evidence in the Medmerry area, this must surely be contributing to the considerable changes witnessed in the Bay area as a whole, & the wreck site in particular.

The breach opened in the shingle bank at Medmerry to allow the Environment Agencies "Managed Realignment" of the coast (*at a cost of many millions of pounds*) as previously stated in past reports, has changed the shape & the general profile of the shingle banks in the Bay considerably from twelve months ago.

It remains to be seen what effects this work will have on the wreck site & its surroundings over the long term, as well as the shape of the bay generally.

The slipway at Bracklesham remains unusable for long periods during the predominant south-westerly weather patterns. As stated previously, from late September through to early April, when the district council close their safety boat office & tractor powered launching facility, the public slipway is inoperable for normal boat launching & recovery, severely restricting easy access to the site, even if weather conditions are favourable.

Launching from Chichester harbour during "out of hour's times" adds another two hours & considerable fuel expense plus harbour dues, to the diving day.

The District Council still persist with locking of the gate in the public access to the sea, during "out of office hours" making access to the slipway out of the question when the council staff is not in attendance.

The alternative option i.e launching & recovering from Itchenor is now being made use of to increase available on site time, it seems unlikely that The District Council will alter or improve launch facilities at Bracklesham in the foreseeable future.

This year it was decided to use as many neap tides as possible when conditions were favourable, to work on the site & if conditions allowed some spring tides as well.

Although the project design & application for a limited site excavation was accepted by H.E & was in place along with agreed funding by the end of last year, the MMO license application for this year's work was an entirely different matter & resulted in many delays & considerable man hours answering questions already addressed in the project design & elsewhere, this additional work was mainly carried out by team member Dave Johnston.

Weather was favourable on site slightly earlier this year & a first dive was possible on the 17th of April. The next visit to site was not possible until 15th May, at which time it was possible to make various observations of site conditions, (*See "Diver Observations" written by Licensee*).

Plans for 2016

- Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels, using points remaining from those set up in 2002 plus those set up in 2009/10 & more recently, adding more if required. The funding of a hull mounted side scan sonar system as part of the recently-approved test excavation P.D. will allow ongoing monitoring of the wider area by identifying areas of sand & of exposed reef.
- 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 & those in chemicals, under guidance from Mary Rose Trust.
- Continue developing site exhibit at Earnley Gardens.
- Continue web site development.
- Raise additional funding to continue work on site & artefact conservation.
- Carry out metal detector search in new areas of gullies in the southwest for further artefacts as conditions allow.
- Carry out further geophysical surveys of surrounding area of site as conditions & funding allow.
- Commence test excavation as laid out in recently approved project design.

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

Field work

This year has proved difficult to plan for a number of reasons, aside from the quite strange weather patterns experienced locally; however ten days of diving have taken place on site this season, on a number of occasions visibility was somewhat poor & reduced the amount of meaningful work that could be achieved on a given day.

A number of loose artefacts were observed on early visits to site & have now been recovered, all from within the main site area; the gullies north east of the main site appear to still be covered by sand overburden. The diver trail cables were found to be more uncovered than last year & even more breaks in its length were noted. Some datum points around the site have been lost or damaged over time & some re-labelling was carried out to facilitate measuring in of artefacts.

Additional datum's have been placed along the east & west side, attached to hull remains, measured into old established datum points & linked together on Site Recorder to form an effective web.

The plan to start the limited exploratory excavation trench across the site, north of the break in the hull was not realised again this season, although some preparation work was carried out late in the season.

Results

As previously stated, weather conditions were generally poor with strong south-westerly winds over winter, by early April conditions started to improve, & it was possible to make the first dive on site on the 17th April, however underwater visibility was recorded as near zero, although the summer has been very warm, strong south-westerly winds have been persistent for a large part of the summer, resulting in diving weekends being cancelled at the last minute. Underwater visibility in the bay has been generally better through the season, although care was needed so as not to disturb the layer of very fine sediment that seems to cover the whole of the Bay area, as this reduces visibility very quickly. This fine sediment is believed to emanate from the Environment Agency's managed retreat at Medmerry & seems to have increased further since last year.

The planned for early start to the Historic England funded, trench excavation on site was not realised this season for a number of reasons.

Firstly in an attempt to future proof the project & make long term arrangements for the care, storage & display of all artefacts raised from the site going forward, it was decided in February to produce a new "Hazardous Project Group" constitution, however after a number of attempts to produce such an agreement, the process stalled due to the intransigents of two members of the original core team. The end result was, Historic England naturally suspended the excavation, surface recovery licence & funding until an agreement could be reached.

Finally in an attempt to move forward, Historic England asked the site Licensee to put together a new core team & constitution, this was successfully brought to fruition in early April & the project was reinstated. The MMO licence proved to be much more difficult to obtain, this process was started in 2015, and the licence to carry out work on the seabed was finally issued at the end of July 2016, all other permissions were applied for & granted in less than a month!

Monitoring points were not measured during visits to site as in previous years; however localized changes were noted on the second visit to site (*see Diver observations 15th May*). It has been necessary to re-label a number of datum pins around the site & also re-establish some pins in their existing positions, it is believed this damage has been caused by fishing gear coming through the site, the remains of which was removed during early visits to site. Additional datum's have been added along the east & west side hull timbers, these have been measured into old established points on site & each other, these were added to the Site Recorder file.

Although as previously stated work on-site was held up, much preparation work for the excavation was completed on shore, along with the purchase of various materials & equipment, such as tube & fittings for the excavation frame, this was taken to site & erected in at the end of July.

It was deemed necessary to recover the frame in early October ahead of the predicted weather change, for safety reasons.

The cannon ball mound & the three large cannon stand well proud of the seabed to a greater extent than last year; along with substantial loss of sand overburden around the line of guns, to the south of the break in the hull remains (*see Figures 1 to 3 showing prevailing seabed movements over recent years*).

The general loss of seabed material within the hull seems to be increasing at a greater rate than the surrounding area, this will be monitored more closely next season.

Thirteen artefacts were recovered from the site this season & placed in wet store; these items have been reported to the Receiver of Wreck.

Due to the number of cancelled site visits, it was not possible to carry out the wider area searches we had planned for; however a short dive searching the area of the newly discovered guns located during the 2014 geophysical survey, did reveal a number of what may be bar shot, this will be further examined next year. At the same time a section of lead scupper & what may be a lead gun apron was recovered close to one of the guns.

Some very useful video film in somewhat difficult conditions was recorded on site by Dan Pascoe our archaeological adviser.

The site buoy & new sinker were successfully placed onsite by the Chichester harbour master's barge in June.

A number of hours by team members were devoted to work on wet stored artefacts as well as general maintenance.

Since Paul Simpson retired from the position of conservation advisor to The Hazardous Project, we have had talks with & a visit from The Mary Rose Trust conservation team who are now advising on future work required to artefacts in wet store, they will also complete final conservation as required as per the Project Design.

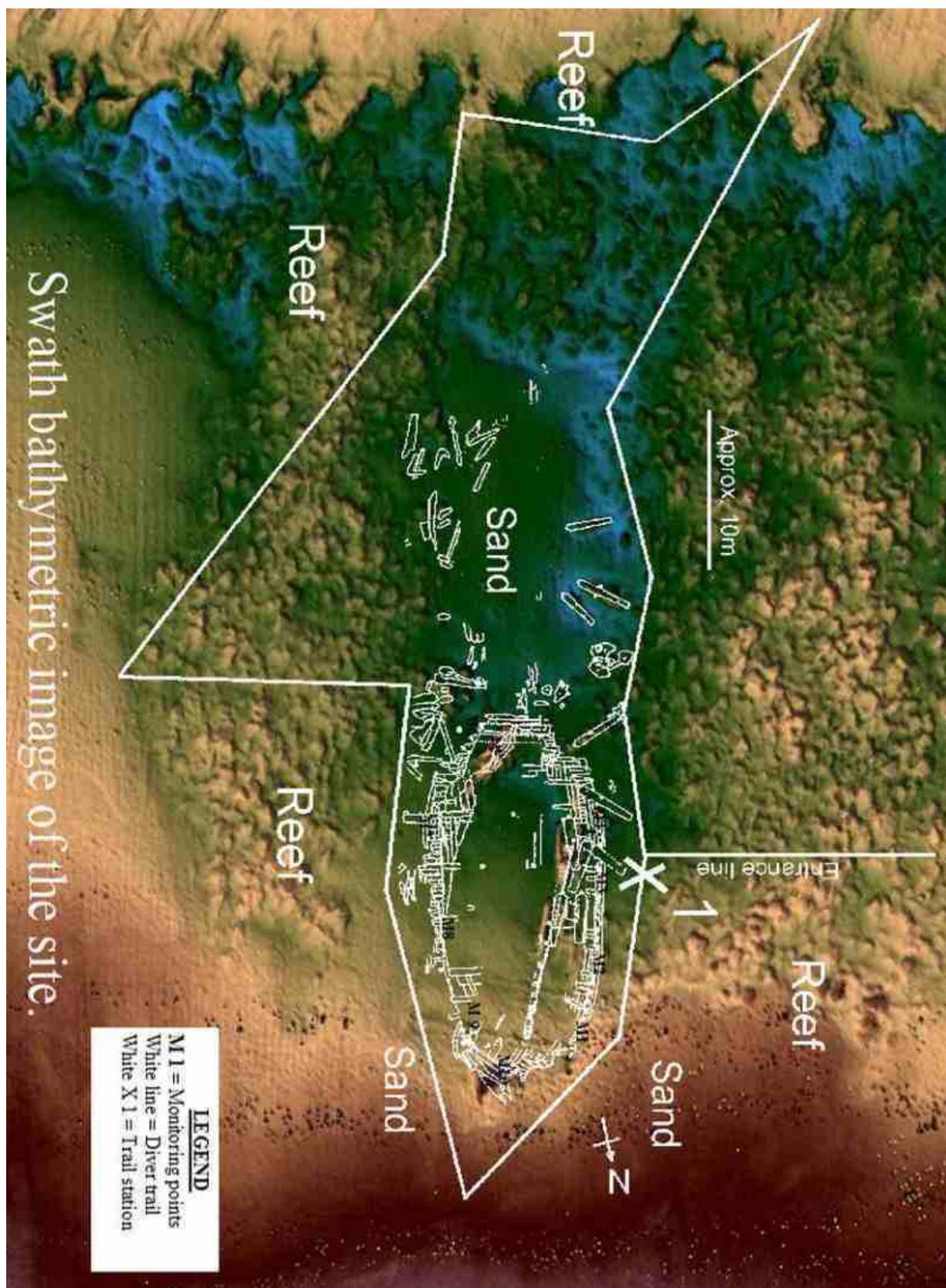
Talks were also held with Portsmouth Historic Dockyard who has expressed a wish to take all future artefacts recovered, curate & display them in the future, we feel this is very positive for the future of the project & its archive.

After discussions with the producer of "Digging for Britain" we have compiled a short video diary along with a visit to a London studio, it is hoped this will be included in the television programme due to be aired in December, we hope this will further promote the project in the media & generate interest in a possible follow up (*see figure 4*).

The project website is being improved & added too as time allows, many hours have been spent carrying out on line research, along with many visits to Kew, this has produced an almost complete “historical time line” of the ship from laying down the keel in France in 1699 to her sinking in Bracklesham Bay in 1706. This work has proved to be somewhat difficult, although rewarding, it appears *Historical fact and history is not necessarily the same thing!*

Swath bathymetric image of the site.

Figure 1. showing site plan & diver trail overlain on past 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 17th October 2010.
 Purple line = sand movement from the south to the north as at 21st August 2011.
 Light brown = 2013 localized scour.

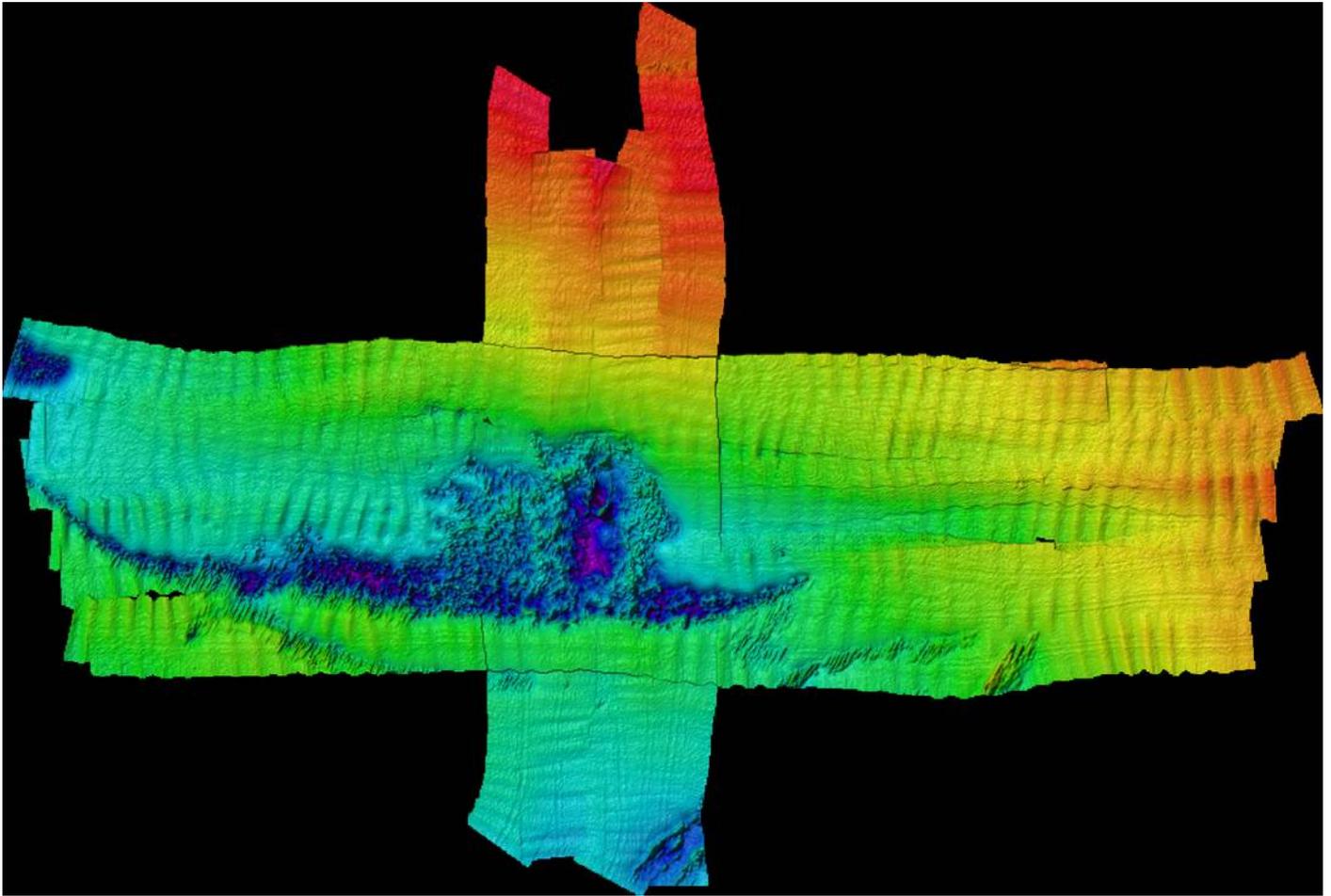


Figure 2. Swath bathymetric survey results July 2014. North up. Showing erosion over the site & out to the west.

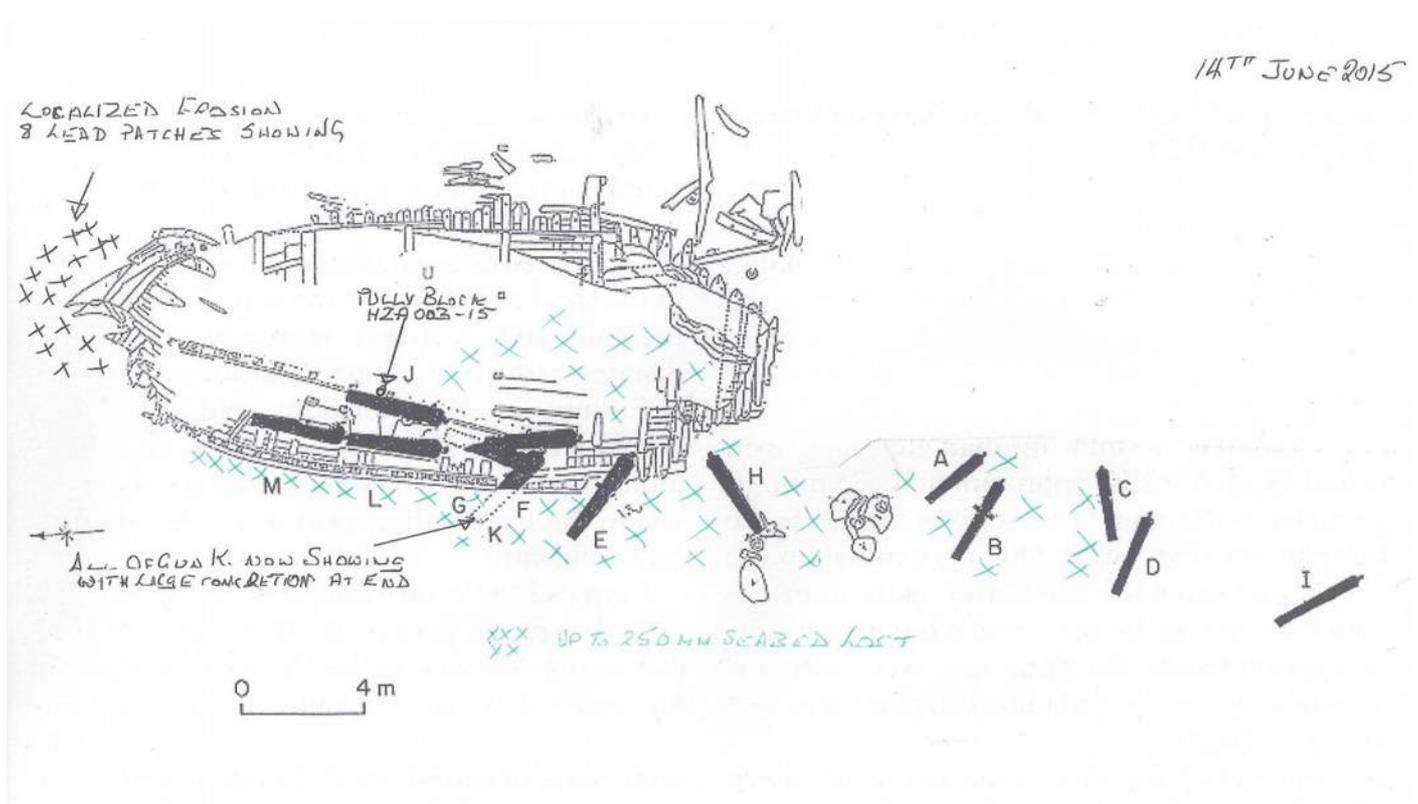


Figure 3 Seabed changes June 2015, areas of reduction marked xx, xx.

Diver Observations.

15th May 2016.

Compiled & written by Iain Grant

The plan for today was to inspect the main site in reasonable vis, after the first visit on the 17th April was conducted in zero vis, when it was impossible to ascertain what changes had taken place over winter. There is loose rope draped over the three big guns which looks to be an old pot line or net bolt rope, it was noted that D8-05 in the centre of the hull has been bent over & in the same area some of the barrel staves show signs of being partially pulled up from an almost horizontal, half buried position, they show some damage on the upper ends, possibly caused by snagging.

There is much evidence of erosion in several areas within the main site, most notably within the hull on the west side amounting in places to an estimated 300mm; similarly the beak area is showing pristine timber uncovered within the hull amounting to approximately 400mm in places, the timber above this that was uncovered last season is showing a lot of gribble activity.

There is a reduction in sand overburden both inside & outside of the frames on the east side of the hull remains, this varies between 200 & 300mm generally with the greater loss inside the hull, it was also noted that the top of the breast hook that stood proud of the seabed by approximately one metre (starboard side) has been foreshortened, this had carried the monitoring point M9, it was not possible to ascertain if this damage was caused by gribble activity or further damage caused by something being dragged through the site.

A number of artefacts were seen uncovered, both inside & outside of the hull as follows: at least two partial rims of pewter plates loose on the sea bed, one seemingly complete pewter plate at least partly buried just outside the east side frames, a section of lead scupper close to D8-05, very close to a complete large pulley sheave, many more sections of barrel both large & small have become uncovered within the hull remains & a brass buckle of a totally different design to any found on site so far lies loose close to the east side frames, this could be a belt buckle.

There is much animal bone & lead caulking in evidence, both inside & outside the hull along with lead tangles of various sizes, it is feared that many of the smaller, light artefacts could disappear if we have a period of rough weather.

I suspect there are other artefact uncovered on site, however due to a sudden change in the weather it was necessary to halt diving for safety & make for shore & a difficult rib recovery.

It was not possible to check the area of new guns located in 2014 at this time.



Figure 4. Alice Roberts, Dan Pascoe & Iain Grant, Digging for Britain.

Artefacts

Thirteen artefacts were recovered from site this season, as follows:

1. HZA001.16 Pewter plate rim.
2. HZA002.16 Wooden pulley sheave.
3. HZA003.16 Pewter plate rim.
4. HZA004.16 Copper alloy buckle.
5. HZA005.16 Ruler hinge (*pos. sector rule*).
6. HZA006.16 Copper alloy dividers.
7. HZA007.16 Copper alloy buckle centre.
8. HZA008.16 Wooden cartridge box.
9. HZA009.16 Leather fragment.
10. HZA010.16 Turned wood 550mm long (*pos. handle*).
11. HZA011.16 Pewter spoon handle.
12. HZA012.16 Lead (*pos. gun apron*).
13. HZA013.16 Lead scupper (*section*).

All artefacts have been reported to the Receiver of Wreck & are held in wet store.

Diver Trail

The diver trail, although more uncovered than in recent years is in a very poor condition & at present is unserviceable. It was decided not to spend time on any repairs; funding for a replacement cable to reinstate the trail in future was included in the test excavation P.D.

The trail cable will be reinstated after completion of the test excavation.

Website

The website at <http://hazardousproject.info> has been updated in an effort to make it more user friendly across all platforms & additional content has been added.

We will continue to add further content as time and source material allows.

Looking to the Future.

As mentioned last year, major works now completed along the coast to the east of the *Hazardous* wreck site, by the Environment Agency & others in 2013/14, could have considerable effects in the area as a whole & in particular on the wreck site, as at time of writing this document, we understand that further work by Bunn Leisure is planned. However it is difficult at present to say whether the seemingly increased degradation of the site is caused or indeed exacerbated by those works or work that may take place in the future.

This year has seen major seabed movement again, taking place mainly over winter in & around the site, to the point that it is now uncovered in some areas to a greater extent than for many years. The new guns to the south west of the main site remain uncovered & there are signs of additional seabed loss in this area, as yet to be quantified.

We believe the reinstatement of the Hazardous Wreck site to the English Heritage "At Risk" register was timely & it is hoped that Historic England will hold this position into the future; however this move alone will not record & protect the sea bed archive for future generations, this we believe can only be achieved by excavation within the hull as laid out in the now approved project design, recording & recovering artefacts at risk before everything is lost forever.

We thank Historic England for granting approval & the necessary funding for the Hazardous Project Group to carry out this important work.

Preservation by record may be the only option for much of the remaining structure.

Diving Schedule

Diving operations were carried out on ten separate days. This resulted in 3441 working minutes underwater by ten divers.

Plans for 2017

- Continue monitoring variations in seabed levels, using points remaining from those set up in 2002 plus those set up in 2009/10 & more recently, adding more if required. The funding of a hull mounted side scan sonar system as part of the approved test excavation P.D. will allow ongoing monitoring of the wider area by identifying areas of sand & of exposed reef, this work will be undertaken as time & conditions allows
- 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 & those in chemicals, under guidance from Mary Rose Trust.
- Progress agreement with Portsmouth Historic Dockyard to house & display all recovered artefacts into the future.
- Continue web site development.
- Raise additional funding to continue work on site & artefact conservation.
- Carry out metal detector search in new areas of gullies in the southwest for further artefacts as conditions allow.
- Carry out further geophysical surveys of surrounding area of site as conditions allow.
- Progress test excavation as laid out in the approved project design.
- Continue raising public awareness of Hazardous & the project with presentations etc.

Names of divers that have been on the site under our licence between the end of August and the end of November are as follows: Iain Grant, Dave Johnston, Andy Chater, Dan Pascoe & Rachel Bynoe.

Licensee



Archaeological Adviser.

