



International Marine Archaeological & Shipwreck Society

News Letter

No. 1

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IMASS Officers & Committee Members:

President - Richard Larn; Vice Presidents - Alan Bax & Peter McBride

Chairman - Neville Oldham; Vice Chairman - Allen Murray

Secretary - Steve Roue; Treasurer & Conference booking secretary - Nick Nutt;

Conference Ticket Secretary - Paul Dart; Technical advisor & Speaker

Advisor/Finder - Peter Holt; Conservation Officer & University contact - Martin Reed;

NAS. Contact Officer - Jon Parlour; Web Master – Richard Knights

IMASS - Who and What are we?

By Chairman - Neville Oldham - (nevilleoldham@btinternet.com)

We are a group of dedicated sport and commercial divers, some of whom have been diving for over 50 years, in fact our President who is still diving, started 62 years ago, and in the course of our combined underwater activities realized that the sea, rivers, lakes and canals held many secrets regarding our past. We had great difficulty getting the archaeological establishment to accept that in northern Europe and Gt. Britain in particular, historic shipwrecks survived. They felt that there would be very little left to discover in the gale lashed seas of the Atlantic coasts, and that the main area to explore was the sheltered waters of the Mediterranean. In fact at a Conference held at Dartington Hall College in 1962, an eminent lady archaeologist stated that nothing of significance would be found in the waters around Gt. Britain. Since she is no longer with us I will not give her name. All I will say is how wrong she was!

The wreck of the *Mary Rose* was found in a reasonably sheltered situation, and the discovery of HMS. *Association* in one of the most exposed areas of our coast completely altered their point of view. In a sense the two wrecks typified the situation regarding underwater finds. The former was excavated to archaeological standards, and set a bench mark, whereas the latter was an uncontrolled excavated for the value of what was left on the seabed.

During the early days of diving if we put our hands on our heart, we must all admit that we were guilty of raising cannon balls and portholes without recording them. The important thing that was coming out of the sea were the stories that these finds were telling us when they were researched, and it was these stories that encouraged a group of dedicated divers in the south-west to create a forum whereby divers, treasure hunters and archaeologists could come to Plymouth to relate their experiences. Hence a South-West section of the Nautical Archaeological Society came into being, and the 1st Shipwreck Conference under NAS(SW) was held in 1982. We have run these conferences continuously now for 26 years, the longest running event concerning History from the Sea and Marine Archaeology in the world, its coverage reflected in a change of title to the 'International Shipwreck Conference.

Supporting the Nautical Archaeological Society all the way, these conferences were always run as a NAS(SW) activity, but in 2007 we became independent of NAS and formed the new organisation known as IMASS by mutual agreement. Most of the Committee and IMASS members continue to be members of NAS, and we intend to run the conference as we have in the past, with an average attendance of between two and three hundred delegates attending. It will continue as a forum for sport and commercial divers, treasure hunters, archaeologists, non-divers and purists to relate their stories of the sea, giving them complete freedom of speech and every opportunity to make their point of view, regardless of what others may feel.

Every activity has extremes of action and opinion, maritime archaeology being no exception, so IMASS seeks to hold the middle ground, to encourage common sense, give everyone an opportunity to have their say but most importantly, to meet and talk!
Neville Oldham, Chairman IMASS. (nevilleoldham@btinternet.com)

The IMASS. Newsletter

By President - Richard Larn - (richardlarn@tiscali.co.uk)

At the 2008 International Shipwreck Conference it was suggested that the organization should have a News Letter, and a volunteer was invited to become the first Editor. Denis Gibson of Scorrier, near Redruth kindly volunteered and I offered to act as his assistant. Unfortunately, Denis suffered a very nasty accident in the summer, and advised that he would be unable to undertake this commitment, which left me with no alternative other than step into the breach and adopt the mantle (hopefully only temporary) of Editor.

Several Committee members have submitted material, for which a grateful 'thank you', otherwise the contents of this first edition come from me, in the hope that future editions will include articles and news from the IMASS membership generally. All of you must have picked up some item of news about shipwreck, wreck diving, artifacts, finds etc. and these are what I am asking for. So, please send me an e-mail with whatever you feel might be of interest. Don't worry about the grammar, spelling or composition, we can turn any story into something acceptable, and of course your contribution will be credited to you personally.

Reflecting on what our Chairman had to say earlier, I feel the breakaway from NAS, whilst unfortunate, was inevitable, since they have never been comfortable with our Shipwreck Conference. NAS(SW) showed a way ahead as far back at 1982, the first regional group of divers to band together with marine archaeology as a common interest, and at the time it was hoped other areas would follow. I believe there was a brief NAS(SE) organization, but the central organization did not want dissemination - despite distance and travelling preventing members from attending events in London. At the time, the south-west had the predominance (and still does) of Protected Wrecks, and is still the most popular area for visiting divers. Somehow NAS(SW) was never accepted by the establishment, which has resulted in the formation of IMASS, which I personally welcome and commend those Committee members whose initiative brought it about.

I find it hard to believe that it was 26 years ago, that my wife Bridget and I, Peter McBride and the late Roy Davis, called a meeting of any divers interested in forming NAS(SW) in the Parish Hall, Charlestown. The support was fantastic, some 40 divers arrived from all over Cornwall and Devon, and the late Alex Flinder representing NAS, came down from London to preside. Fort Bovisand were still holding their annual Archaeological Symposiums at the time, and in a sense we set up the Shipwreck Conference in semi-competition. Bovisand then stopped their Symposiums for financial reasons, and we were well placed to offer an international alternative, which continue to this day.

May I wish you all a Happy & Prosperous New Year, safe diving, lots of archaeologically important finds - and hope to see you at the 2009 Shipwreck Conference.

The 27th International Shipwreck Conference

Saturday 7th February 2009 - University of Plymouth, Robbins Centre, Devon. Doors open at 0900 and close at 6pm.

Invited speakers include:

Professor Ufuk Korabas (Istanbul University)	The Yenikapi Byzantine Shipwrecks
David Mearns (Blue Water Recoveries Ltd)	The discovery of HMAS Sydney
Mike Rowley (BS-AC Technical Chief Examiner)	Deep wrecks exploration off Lebanon and the story of HMS Victoria
Mike Williams (Senior lecturer in Marine Law)	Marine Provision of the Heritage Bill
HM. Receiver of Wreck (MCA. Southampton)	A background to her duties
Nigel Overton (Plymouth City Museum Heritage)	History of the Eddystone Lighthouse
Bob Peacock (Archaeological diver/project leader)	Recent finds in the English Channel
Neville Oldham (IMASS Chairman)	The role of women at sea at Trafalgar and the story of Lucky Jeannette

Tickets £15.00 - for location and more information visit; www.shipwreckconference.org
Advance tickets available from Paul Dart: the.pauldart@btinternet.com
Lunch will be available in the Conference centre at a reasonable cost, but is not included in the price of the admission ticket.

Poster stands and sales stalls are welcome, advertising events, organizations, clubs, groups, societies, government organisations, books and equipment.

There will be a Raffle at the end of the Conference, and anyone with a suitable Prize they are willing to donate is requested to pass it to Nick Nutt or any Committee member on arrival.

Delegates are invited to meet up at the Holiday Inn, Plymouth at 7pm on Friday 6th February for discussion and drinks.

Sunday 8th February – There will be a tour of the Hoe and historic Barbican on the Sunday. Details will be announced at the Conference.

Advance notice of other Conferences:

Ships, Saints and Sealore - Maritime Ethnography of the Mediterranean and Red Sea

Thursday 16th April to Sunday 19th April 2009 at Exeter University. Sponsored by the NMM. Malta; the Centre for Maritime Historical Studies; University of Exeter; Institute of Arab & Islamic Studies; supported by the Aurora Special Purpose Trust and Midsea Books.

For further information visit the Conference website at:

www.um.edu.mt/events/maritimeethnography2009/maritimeconf_index.html

or contact: Julian van Rensburg, MARES Project, University of Exeter, School of Humanities & Social Sciences, IAIS. Building, Stocker Road, Exeter. EX4 4ND

Marine Bill Symposium

January 9th 2009 - those interested should contact paul.todd@plymouth.ac.uk. Details can be seen on www.plymouth.ac.uk/pages/view.asp?page=24370

Articles

The following express the views of the correspondents only, and should not necessarily be taken as an overall opinion of IMASS or its Committee officers

Idiots in charge of the Asylum

'The preservation in-situ of underwater cultural heritage shall be considered as the first option before allowing or engaging in any activities directed at this heritage'.

This is the current thinking by our tax paid government Archaeologists at English Heritage, and their loony mates at UNESCO.

Text book academics all, as opposed to practical time served, self-funded divers, who for the past 50+years have researched, found, excavated, conserved, reported and often publically displayed 95% of all our known history from under the sea. Museums across the world are full of artefacts that have been recovered by these amateur groups increasing the knowledge of mankind, and have provided many of the missing links from our past. Some artefacts have been lost or destroyed by poor conservation etc, but this is a very small price to pay against the mass of information gained.

The few individuals who have managed to worm their way into positions of power at English Heritage have attempted to put an almost complete stop to any further useful or important information coming to light from historic wreck in the UK. The bar has been set so high for site survey, and the fact that excavation can only be carried out if the site is at high risk, practically no real underwater archaeology is currently being carried out in UK. Waters.

Sites are being surveyed so they can monitor the natural deterioration or destruction of wrecks by erosion, corrosion and physical damage, but EH feels this is more useful than actually recovering artefacts to gain the information they hold.

Questions that need to be answered by the archaeologists are;

- 1 - Which is more important? An artifact or the information gained by its study regarding what it was used for, how was it made, where was it made, its weight, size etc?
- 2 - If a wreck is so important that it needs protection, how can it be that at the same time it is so insignificant that it, and any valuable information it holds can be left buried in the seabed forever? (as is the current policy).
- 3 - How can they justify to future generations, that we have deliberately left known wrecks to continue to deteriorate rather than recover 90% of the information and history contained within a wreck?
- 4 - How can NAS still take money off divers for training courses, when they know there is next to nothing for them to work on after they have trained, as most work on historic wreck has been stopped?
- 5 - Does anyone know of a government paid Marine Archaeologist who has ever had the interest or motivation to work a wreck, at their own cost or in their own time?
- 6 - How was it acceptable for the likes of George Bass and Robert Stenuit to excavate every wreck they were involved with, but now it is such a taboo, no one has the balls to criticize their behaviour?
- 7 - Why is it so wrong to fund wreck excavation and conservation of artifact material, by the sale of coins for example, when the coins are often identical and were never intended to be

kept together as a collection?

- 8 - Is archaeology 'important' or merely 'interesting' to the small percentage of the population that can be bothered to read, or look at what has been published? Medical Science and Ecology is 'important' as it effects lives - 'archaeology' does not.

The general public like looking at artefacts rather than reading academic reports, which is why museums in general are so popular. The public go to look - not read. I believe it is far better for society if thousands of individuals own and treasure a piece of history, than it is to keep it all together on the remote chance that a PhD student may at some time in the future, want to study the wear on coin die's etc. for example!

All the archaeological reports ever written are generally an assumption of what might have happened when a vessel sank. All the 100's of hours spent surveying a wreck, only records how it was at one small moment of time, with little or no relevance as to what may have happened at the time of sinking. If all reports had to undergo proper review, cross-examination or close scrutiny by maritime experts, most people would realize what a waste of time, effort and money measuring to a high degree of accuracy really is.

As examples, two Plymouth wrecks which were found at around the same time, the *Cattewater* and *Catharina von Flensburg*. All that is known about the former came from artefacts recovered and limited excavation at the time. We have learned nothing new since, and never will if the site is not excavated. The latter has been excavated by amateurs and hundreds of artefacts recorded, in addition to the vessels construction being established. As a result, thousands of people now own a piece of history, there have been artifact exhibitions in Plymouth and elsewhere, divers have given talks to hundreds of people, and there are years of lengthy reports on file should anyone be interested.

Let us hope that the idiots in power see sense, and let underwater archaeology again flourish in the UK.

Steve Roue. www.faldive@aol.com

The Diving Diseases Research Centre (DDRC) Plymouth - a brief history

The DDRC evolved from a small unit in converted boat sheds run by volunteers at Fort Bovisand diving school, as a facility to treat divers suffering decompression sickness, more generally known as the 'bends'. In 1980 the DDRC became a registered charity with a remit to research the effects of the undersea environment on human physiology, and to use this information to educate and train the diving industry.

The DDRC has gradually developed into a fully staffed Hyperbaric Medical Centre. It's objectives expanded to include the use of hyperbaric oxygen on problem wounds, as well as educating and training the medical, clinical and diving industry. In 1996 the DDRC moved into its current building adjacent to the Derriford NHS Hospital in the city of Plymouth, Devon.

Now known as the Hyperbaric Medical Centre, it comprises a two-story block of offices, treatment areas and classrooms, joined to another building purpose-built to house the current 'Comex' multiplace chambers removed from Bovisand, together with the larger 'Krug' chamber and a 'Hyox' monoplace chamber.

In 2006 the DDRC opened a satellite centre at St.Joseph's Hospital, Newport, South Wales, which comprises a 'Hypox' monoplace chamber and wound care facilities.

Paul Dart, DDRC. Plymouth. www.paul.dart@ddrc.org

Editor's note - During a recent conversation with John Selby, the inventor and supplier of the portable, flexible Hyperlite one-man compression chamber, of which over 40 have been purchased by the United States military and Coastguard, it has been discovered that 100% oxygen treatment under pressure greatly assists people, soldiers in particular, suffering post traumatic stress disorder. This treatment has been so successful in the United States, whose military now officially recognize the medical condition, that it has been renamed Battle Trauma and is now used extensively in the field in war zones.

New Book - 'The Old Ship's of the New Gate', by Ufuk Kocabas

Published 2008 - 245 x 320mm - Publisher Ege Yayinlari, Turkey - ISBN 9-789-758072-163

224 pages Turkish/English bilingual. Price NK - e-mail: info@zerobooksonline.com

Professor Ufuk Kocabas of the Istanbul University is the lead speaker at our 27th International Shipwreck Conference. The Directorate of Istanbul Archaeological Museums was appointed to lead the archaeological excavations at Uskudar, Sirkeci, Sultanshmet and Yenikapi rail station constructions of Marmaray and Metro Projects, among the most important transportation projects in Turkey. The largest excavation area is at Yenikapi on the Marmara coast, the area known as Langa, which housed the harbour of Byzantine Istanbul.

Excavations at Theodosian Harbour brought to light a total, to date, of 31 shipwrecks of various sizes, types and age. Archaeological work on these shipwrecks requires an entirely different expertise; therefore our Museum has authorized Istanbul Universities Department of Restoration and Conservation with the documentation, lifting, conservation-restoration works as well as preparing the shipwrecks for display at the Museum. The team have completed the lifting and taken into conservation eleven shipwrecks so far. This book presents the work conducted by the IU team, the technology used, scientific approach, and the care and importance paid to this work, which is of international importance.

Maritime History sunk by Neglect - Telegraph Weekend - 18 October 2008 pW17

'Jack Watkins finds a ship graveyard on the banks of the River Severn going to ruin in a legislative no-man's land.'

They call them the Purton Hulks, a mile and a half long stretch of ghostly boat wrecks that once formed the oddest of makeshift tidal erosion barriers on the River Severn. They include nothing of Mary Rose antiquity, but local marine historian Paul Barnett thinks they are precious just the same. "What we have here is the largest boat graveyard in maritime Britain, but they have no protection whatsoever. I cannot understand that," he says.

Between 1909 and 1963, at least 80 vessels were beached at Purton, originating from a stormy night 100 years ago when there was a massive landslip in a bank between the river and the parallel Sharpness to Gloucester Canal. A plea went out to commercial boat owners for old vessels to be run aground to plug the breach. Boats were towed over to the far side of the river just before the onset of high tide, and then released so that they thundered into the bank. As the tide fell away, a holes were drilled in the ship's side to allow water to enter and, over time, mud, silt and sand. It worked brilliantly. What was once a narrow bank is now a broad, cliff-like expanse of grassland. Not only that, its vast array of old working boats has become a magnet for marine archaeologists, historians and boat fanatics. Paul Barnett has spent the last 10 years trying to record, locate and identify as many of the hulks as possible. He admits it has become an obsession

The most impressive are the FCB's (Ferro-Concrete barges) of WW2. Nineteen of the hulks now have their individual plaques, often paid for by the families of men who worked on them. One of the wrecks is the old 'Briton Ferry', her captain took his life in the cabin and his ghost was seen two days later walking the deck. This fragile heritage is disappearing to trophy hunters or vandals. "I came down last summer to find a family of three generations feeding boat timbers onto a barbecue. In another incident, a single arsonist destroyed eight boats for fun.

An application to have the site designated by English heritage was rejected in 2008. "A vessel on the seabed can be protected by the Wreck Act. Inland it can be protected as a scheduled monument, but on the foreshore they fall between the two and no one cares, they can sit and rot. The Marine Bill, due in 2010, could afford the opportunity for reconsideration, "but what is going to be left by then?" www.morturn.com or call 07833 143231

White Star liner wreck identified off North Cornwall

Chris Lowe of Newquay found and identified the wreck of the 9,000-ton Aurania in April 2008 after spending time over 5 years to find her. She lies in 160m of water, and thousands of animal bones along with a dinner plate bearing the White Star Line crest, finally identified the ship. She sank carrying 3,000 mules destined for the trenches of WW1, when torpedoed by a U-Boat

on 28 June 1915 some 20 miles W of Trevoise Head, but was found 50 miles off Newquay. The story of the find was shown on ITV1 in two parts, on 20th November and 4th December 2008.

Wreck of UB-38 moved 3.2km from 23.5m depth to 40m to reduce collision threat.

This German mine-laying submarine was lost when it ran into the British laid Dover Barrage mine-field whilst trying out run British destroyers on 8 February 1918. She sank with the loss of Captain Olzs. Bachmann and all 27 crew members and lay undisturbed until July 1918 when Royal Navy divers led by Captain Damant entered the wreck and removed code books and equipment. Bob Peacock and Dave Batchelor of Kent found a submarine very close to the location given by Damant, and thought it was UB-38, possibly UC-78. Trinity House have since become concerned that with the increasing draught of large vessels through the Stratis of Dover, the wreck presented a collision hazard, the minimum clearance depth required in this area being 87ft.

J/V Totan Marine(UK) Ltd. and Scaldis Salvage & Marine Contractors NV, were then contracted to locate the wreck, lift it clear of the seabed and move it 3.2km further east, and drop it in 131ft. Titan Europe's MD, Mark Hoddinott commented, "This was a very delicate job with a lot of history that needed to be preserved. The remains of six torpedoes and deck-gun ammunition were found on board, along with the remains of the 27 crew lost." Trinity House said that the operation was the biggest of its kind that the organization had undertaken in modern times. The submarine's displacement was 303-tons.

May I take this opportunity on behalf of the IMASS Committee to wish you and your families a Happy & Peaceful 2009, safe diving, and please support this IMASS News Letter initiative by sending us stories, accounts, reports, photos - anything connected with shipwrecks, that we can use in the next or some future edition. We also hope to see you all at the Shipwreck Conference.

Richard Larn - President . richardlarn@tiscali.co.uk www.shipwrecks.uk.com