



# INTERNATIONAL MARINE ARCHAEOLOGICAL & SHIPWRECK SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER NUMBER 2 MAY 2009

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## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Despite the weather the International Shipwreck Conference was a great success once again, and the credit for this must go to the members of the IMASS Committee who put in a tremendous effort every year in the planning, organisation and running of the Conference. A big thank you to the

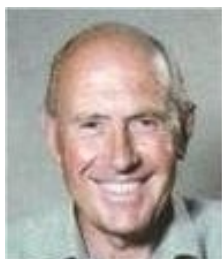
Committee, namely: Steve Roue; Paul Dart; Allen Murray; Peter Holt; Martin Read; Jon Parlour and out Treasurer Nick Nutt.

The number attending were down due to the weather but the 150 brave people who attended were treated to a fine array of speakers. Only one speaker was unable to get to Plymouth due to road conditions.

From a financial point we would have lost money were it not for the generosity of many of the speakers who gave of their services free, plus the skill of our treasurer Nick Nutt who negotiated the best possible terms with the University for use of the premises and equipment.

[More:](#)

## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS



Congratulations to all members of IMASS for yet another successful Conference, also to Neville Oldham, our Chairman, who richly deserves his recent nomination for the 'Champion of England Award'. This award is run by brewer Wells Bombardier, in association with English Heritage

and it was EH that put forward Neville's name as a potential candidate. He has been diving for 50 years, and was the founder member of the Bigbury Bay Investigation Team, which later developed into the South-West Marine Archaeological Group. Sites located and worked by the team now include five Protected Wrecks, the Erme Estuary cannon site (1632); the Erme Ingot site (c1000BC); the Salcombe Cannon site (1635) and the Salcombe Bronze Age site (c3000BC) and Moor Sands (c3000BC). That's in addition to Neville helping organise and run our annual Conference at Plymouth - is there no stopping this man!

[More:](#)

## 2009 CONFERENCE



The 27<sup>th</sup> International Shipwreck Conference took place on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> February in the Robbins Centre, Plymouth University, with some 150 delegates

attending from all over the country. Seven speakers gave excellent presentations, ranging from 'Recent finds in the English Channel', 'The discovery of the wreck of HMAS Sydney'; 'Deep wreck exploration off the Lebanon and HM. Battleship Victoria', to the largest marine archaeological excavation project ever undertaken, the Turkish 'Yenikapa Byzantine Shipwrecks' site at the old port of Constantinople.

[More:](#)

## 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

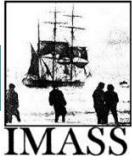
**Conservation Officer & University contact** - Martin Reed

**NAS. Contact Officer** - Jon Parlour

**Web Master** - Richard Knights

**News Letter Editor** - Richard Larn

**Assistant newsletter editor** - Steve Clarkson



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, yet again, the biggest loss was on the lunches. To get the catering department of the University to supply them we had to guarantee that we would sell 80 lunches at £6.95 each. but with only 60 out of 150 taking up the lunch option, IMASS had to subsidise the food to the tune of £139.00.

Similarly, the tea and coffee breaks - we have to guarantee to pay for 200 at £2.00 whether they are consumed or not. Hence this year we asked those attending the Conference for a contribution, and with so many generous donations, it helped a lot.

We have kept the cost of the Conference at £15.00 for a number of years now, and have always sought to simply break even, but with catering costs we are finding it difficult to avoid running at a loss. The Committee and I feel that the coffee and lunch breaks are an important feature of the day, giving every one a chance to meet up, swap yarns, and exchange ideas and views. The Committee are therefore thinking of incorporating the cost of a lunch and tea breaks into the cost of the Conference ticket, which would mean an increase from £15.00 to £23.95, and

we would like your feelings on this proposal please.

E-mail your response please soonest (and don't leave it any later than July, since advance bookings have to be made with the University) to: [nevilleoldham@btinternet.com](mailto:nevilleoldham@btinternet.com)

In closing I would like to offer our congratulations to Bob Peacock on gaining his Master's degree in Marine Archaeology. Well done, and we are all proud of you.

## FRENCH WWII BATTLESHIP FOUND



A French battleship sunk in 1917 by a German submarine has been discovered in remarkable condition on the floor of the Mediterranean Sea. The **Danton**, with many of its gun turrets still intact, is sitting

upright in over 1,000m of water. It was found by the Fugro geosciences company during a survey for a gas pipeline between Algeria and Italy.

[See BBC News Video](#)

## PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS (CONT'D)

The 2009 IMASS Conference was again a great success, and I would like to personally thank all the Committee Members who made it possible and you, the membership for attending. As to numbers and the financial aspects, you will find details in the Chairman's report. We had a wonderful range of speakers again, including the eminent Professor of Archaeology Ufuk Kocabas from Turkey, and provided Conference finances continue as they are, we hope to be able to invite one prominent overseas speaker every year.

I think you will agree that our break from NAS has proven to be a decisive step forward, and that under the new umbrella of IMASS (International Marine Archaeological & Shipwreck Society) the organisation can grow and acquire the recognition it deserves. That NAS(SW) and now IMASS have run annual Shipwreck Conferences

for 27 years without a break, speaks for itself.

Regarding the News Letter, unfortunately Denis Gibson, who volunteered to be its Editor has unfortunately had to stand down following a serious accident. We all wish him a speedy recovery. For the moment I shall continue as Editor, and we are fortunate in having Steve Clarkson on board now as Assistant Editor. His skill and knowledge of IT and layout will ensure that we have at least one professional in the editorial team, which will ensure that the IMASS News letter is of a high standard.

The content of our News letter depends on individual contributions, so please, if you have a news item, some event in your area relating to Maritime Archaeology or Shipwreck, hear of a new book, are involved in some shipwreck activity or project, running a course or diving event or have found a special artefact, then please send it to:

[richardlarn@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:richardlarn@tiscali.co.uk) 01720-423679.

## ODYSSEY BROADSIDE



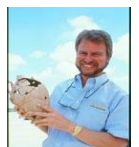
Odyssey Marine Exploration, the US company that salvaged 17 tons of gold and silver coins from a wreck off Northern Spain in the spring of 2007, has produced evidence which, it says, refutes a claim by

Spain to ownership of the finds - even if it turns out to come from the Spanish warship the *Nuestra Senora de las Mercedes*. Normally, a warship would be regarded as sovereign-immune, meaning that, without Spain's consent, no

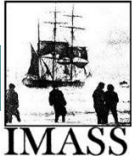
salvage would be allowed under International Law.

Odyssey counter-claims that, even if the wreck does prove to be this vessel, the 'vast majority of the cargo aboard was commercial cargo that was privately owned and was recovered without disturbing any ship remains'. Spain's claim remains, however, as a case pending in US Federal Court in Tampa, Florida.

[Odyssey Marine Expoloration](#)  
Diver Magazine News (p22)







## 2009 CONFERENCE

The Conference opened, after an address by the Chairman and President, with Nigel Overton relating the history of the [Eddystone Lighthouse](#), off Plymouth. His research has uncovered a multitude of early illustrations of the various structures as well as statistics, and with the Conference held in Plymouth, was very much a local subject.



Bob Peacock followed, with an account of recent work and finds on or around the Goodwin Sands, lamenting the failure of finance and encouragement to carry out more work on the [Stirling Castle \(1703\)](#) before the wreck collapses completely. He told of a bronze cannon from the *Stirling Castle*, bearing the number 6829 (which may relate to its weight), and of the potential of 36 Spanish Second Armada wrecks of 1639.



This was followed by our overseas speaker, Professor Ufuk Korabas, from Turkey, who spoke for an hour as the Director on the [Yenikapi Byzantine Shipwreck Project](#).

This is the largest nautical archaeological site ever discovered, involving 58 square kilometres, the equivalent of ten city blocks of reclaimed land, now built over the original 4<sup>th</sup> century harbour which was once the medieval port of Constantinople. The site employs 800 archaeologists and labourers, funded by the Turkish Government. The site came to light as digging commenced to create a rail terminal and tunnel to pass beneath the Straits. A total of 32 craft have been uncovered, ranging from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, including four naval war galleys. The oldest find to date has been an 8,000 year old late Neolithic hut, with stone tools and ceramics.



Lunch within the Centre is definitely a great idea, since it keeps members together, gives them a chance to talk and compare notes, but lunch comes at a price, as our Chairman will relate.

Mike Williams was our first afternoon speaker, discussing Marine Provisions of the [Heritage Bill](#). His talk caused some amusement when it came to determining 'Right of Wreck', which was once measured 'as far as a tar barrel could be seen at sea', but what if the man was sitting on a horse on top of a hill - how far could he see? As Mike said, quoting Dr. Simon Thurley in 2008, 'Our Heritage is a finite resource, if we don't respect it, there won't be here for our grandchildren'.



David Means unfortunately could not make it due to the weather conditions but he had planned to give a talk on the discovery of [HMAS Sydney](#). For those interested just follow the link.

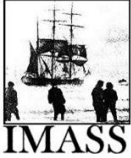
[The Receiver of Wreck](#), Alison Kentuck reminded us of her duties, that in 1993 eighty Customs Officers, who were also Receivers of Wreck around the country, were reduced to one. That in 2007 she had received 290 Droit forms relating to wreck, and in 2008 some 299 Droits. The Wreck Amnesty had produced 37,000 Droits, of which 9,000 were portholes!. Two wrecks were discussed, the *Lowander* off Dover, from which bottles and pipes were declared, also the Varne Bank wreck which yielded crockery.

The last speaker was Mile Rowley, on his deep water exploration of [HM Battleship Victoria](#) off the Lebanon, possibly the only warship wreck in the world which stands unsupported and completely vertical! Some 30m of the wreck's bow is buried in the seabed. She sank on 22 June 1893 with the loss of 359 lives, some 284 being saved, following collision with HMS *Camperdown*, which had on board Admiral Sir Albert Hastings. Mike also mentioned other wrecks in the area, the ss *Lebanon*, destroyer VT-8 upright in 60m, a French submarine and the mv *Alice B*, lost in the 1980's.

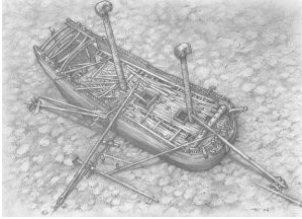


Overall the delegates at the Conference were treated to a great mix of shipwreck interests, with some wonderful photographs, hence maintaining the high standard we attempt to set every year. If an IMASS member knows of a speaker with a great shipwreck story to tell, then please let the Conference Secretary know so they can be contacted.

<http://www.shipwreckconference.org/>



## SCHOONER TREASURE



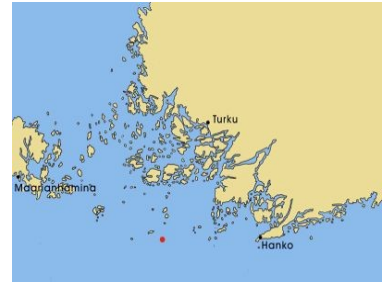
Plans are underway to salvage an 18<sup>th</sup> century schooner that lies off Russia with a valuable cargo of art and other fine goods.

The *Frau Maria* sank in 41m of water off the coast of what was then Sweden in 1771, while under commission by Catherine the Great to transport to transport a cargo of gold, silver, bronze, porcelain and 27 paintings by Dutch masters. The salvage would take place over the next two years, the well preserved vessel possibly being raised whole and brought ashore. It is hoped that there may even be

something left of the paintings, which could have been packed in lead boxes lined with wax. Finds will be displayed at St. Petersburg's Hermitage Museum, given that no successful claim is made to any of the finds by other parties. Russia regards the cargo as its own.

Diver Magazine. News. p22-3)  
[Management Plan](#)

[More details from National Board of Antiquities FINLAND](#)



## DID THE FRENCH SINK THE MARY ROSE?

The warship *Mary Rose* was sunk by a French cannon ball and not poor seamanship - a story invented by the Tudors to save face - according to researchers. For almost 500 years, the sinking of the pride of Henry VIII's fleet has been blamed on a recklessly sharp turn, open gun ports and a freak gust of wind combining to capsize the over laden ship.



Academics now believe the vessel was sunk by a French galley. The *Mary Rose* was sunk in 1545 as Henry watched from shore during the Battle of the Solent between the English fleet and French invasion force. It was raised from the seabed in 1982 and is on display in Portsmouth. Researchers at the University of Portsmouth have analysed the 'Cowdray Engraving', an image of the battle created shortly after the event, and used modern mapping techniques to create a three-dimensional account.

Calculations involving the tides on the day, the prevailing wind patterns and the movements of the ships were used to show that the *Mary Rose* lay directly in the line of fire of the French galleys. The findings, featured in a History Channel documentary, '*What really sunk the Mary Rose*', screened at the end of last year, include possible shot damage to the muzzle of one of the *Mary Rose*'s guns as well as a French granite cannon ball found in the ship. Dr. Dominic Fontana, who led the research, said 'The trigger that made the whole situation uncontrollable was the French getting a cannon ball through the side of the ship. It would have been embarrassing enough for Henry that the ship sank in front of him, but it is not unreasonable that if he discovered what had happened he would not have wanted to have it credited to the French.'

Daily Telegraph.

<http://www.maryrose.org/> (Showing new museum)

## BRITISH DIVERS SENTENCED

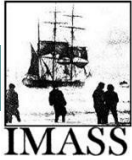
Three British Commercial divers pleaded guilty in a Spanish Court to recovering artefacts illegally from a wreck site off Corrubedo, Galicia, in 2002. Working for Falmouth's Force 9 Salvage, Cornishman Peter Devlin, Steve Russ and Malcolm Cubin had been contracted by the Spanish Government to recover tin ingots from a 19<sup>th</sup> c Dutch vessel.

But they strayed onto the nearby site of the 17<sup>th</sup> c galleon *Don Pedro*, thought to contain valuable treasure. The men were charged with taking and concealing gold and diamonds, and damaging Spain's cultural heritage. Prosecutors sought six-year jail terms. The divers denied the charges, which were dropped during last minute negotiations at the start of the hearing in return for guilty pleas on lesser theft. The men admitted recovery of broken china, bottles and tiles, saying that they did this in an effort to identify the wreck, and were planning to inform the authorities when arrested.

Each was given a one-year suspended jail sentence and fined £900. Cubin has said they decided to plead guilty to the lesser charges because 'our lawyer advised us that the risk of going to trial was too great and that we would get maximum sentences'.

After sentencing, Fair Trials International said: 'This seems to be a case of conflict between the Galician government and central government in Madrid over jurisdiction rights to shipwrecks in Galician waters, rather than criminal issues, indicating that these men are being used as political pawns - at great personal cost'.

[Tugs & Salvage magazine. 3.09](#)



## GERMAN UB-38 SUBMARINE MOVED

German UB--38 submarine physically moved in Dover Strait

UB-38 was destroyed with the loss of all 27 crew on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1918, whilst attempting to get through the Dover barrage. Sighted on the surface she dived and ran into the waiting British minefield. There was a triple explosion as the submarine and her cargo of mines exploded. The wreck was found by Royal Navy divers south of the Varne Bank in July 1918. She remained undisturbed ever since, until a survey showed her to have a clearance depth of only 23.5m, and presented a hazard to ships using the Dover Strait Traffic Separation Scheme.



Consideration was given by Trinity House to marking the wreck, but this would endanger sea room for many vessels. As a War Grave the Foreign & Commonwealth Office was obliged to contact the German government to advise on the possible removal of UB-38. They responded in a positive vein with the proviso that the U-Boat would not be brought above the surface, nor be destroyed. The main concerns were:

- 1 - Was the pressure hull intact and able to withstand lifting? [NORTHERN DIVER \(Eng\) details of UB-38](#)
- 2 - Was the ordnance on board in a dangerous state?
- 3 - Was the wreck intact, would the stern remain attached? [Dive UB38 on YouTube](#)
- 4 - Was the wreck capable of being lifted, was it silted up?

Royal Navy Clearance Divers answered all the questions, confirming that a 'lift and shift' option was a real possibility. With torpedo doors closed and attempts to open them unsuccessful, the ordnance aspect was put aside. Titan Maritime & Scaldis Salvage NV. mobilised their heavy lift ship *Norma* and 12 divers passed lifting wires beneath the hull. The wreck was then lifted clear of the seabed and moved just under a mile to the east where it was placed on the seabed in 40m.

Although the damaged stern section fell off during lifting, this too was raised and relocated with the main hull, giving a clearance depth of 36.5m. The wreck now lies in 50° 57.891N; 001° 23.118E.

Trinity House Navigation Directorate Report. NAV161927

## UNCOVERING NAMIBIA'S SUNKEN TREASURE



A team of International archaeologists is working round the clock to rescue the wreck of what is thought to be a 16th Portuguese trading ship that lay undisturbed for 100's of years off Namibia's Atlantic coast.

The shipwreck, uncovered in an area drained for diamond mining, has revealed a cargo of iron cannonballs,

chunks of wooden hull, imprints of swords, copper

ingots and elephant tusks. It was found in 2008 when a crane driver from the diamond mining company, Namdeb, spotted some coins. Webber Ndoro, rescue excavation project manager, described the find as the 'most exciting archaeological discovery on the African continent in the past 100 years'. Gold coins found bear the Portuguese crown of c1525. Guns include swivel guns, and the copper ingots are circular 'bun' ingots, similar to those found on the UK. Protected Wreck *St. Anthony* of 1526, off Cornwall.

[BBC. News. Oranjemund, Namibia](#)

## WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY SHIPWRECK BLOG SITE

Contact '[splash@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:splash@wessexarch.co.uk)' for details of dozens of new wreck finds around the UK. Recent shipwreck posts include:

- ☐ Unknown steamship in the Nab Channel (Site 5010)
- ☐ Princes Channel wreck: interim report published
- ☐ Unknown wreck near Littlehampton (Site 5031)
- ☐ Thames shipwrecks

- ☐ The Bottle wreck (Site 5013)
- ☐ Unknown steam trawler off Worthing (Site 5008)
- ☐ Concha (Site 5004)
- ☐ Uмба (Site 5005)
- ☐ Swash Channel wreck
- ☐ Unknown wreck off Hastings (Site 5003)

<http://wessexarch.co.uk/>



## LIVERPOOL'S U BOAT 534 CUT UP



The ex. German WW2. U-Boat on display at Birkenhead has been dramatically cut into three pieces, and is now open

to the public at the Woodside Ferry terminal, daily (except for Mondays) 10.30am to 5.30pm. Adults £5.00 with concessions. Tel: 01503-63010 for details.

[See video of the story](#)

## LECTURES

**Lecture** - 'Hornblower & the wreck of the Dutton - Plymouth, 2.June

Commences 1.10pm at the Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery. Contact:

[www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/creativityandculture/museumlectures.htm](http://www.plymouth.gov.uk/homepage/creativityandculture/museumlectures.htm)

Martin Read: [m.read@plymouth.ac.uk](mailto:m.read@plymouth.ac.uk)

**Lecture** - Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2009 - 'Drake, Hornblower and Spice Trade Wrecks', Cornwall Archaeological Society, Truro:

Contact: [www.cornisharchaeology.org.uk](http://www.cornisharchaeology.org.uk) Cornwall Archaeology Unit

## 17TH CENTURY GALLEON

Construction workers excavating the foundations of a luxury apartment block overlooking the River Plate in Buenos Aires, may have dug up something far more valuable than they thought.

The workmen uncovered the well-preserved remains of a 17<sup>th</sup>c Spanish wreck, dating from a time when Argentina was a Spanish colony. Eight metres of silt covered and conserved the wreck site. 300 years ago the now exclusive Puerto Madero neighbourhood of the Argentine capital was just a beach on the shore of the River Plate. Five large cannon and shot have been found, as well as rope, jars of olive oil and iron artefacts. The mayor of Buenos Aires said he was 'praying for gold' to be found. Herman Lombardi, head of the city's Culture Department, said the find was unique and city archaeologists plan to raise the whole ship, which would later be opened to the public.

Nick Nutt -  
IMASS Member

[See Guardian report](#)



## OBITUARY—PAUL LEYLAND



Obituary - Paul Leyland, Exeter branch of the BS-AC, 1<sup>st</sup> class diver.

It is with regret that we hear of the unfortunate death of 53 year old Paul Leyland, of Topsham, Exeter, who died in Plymouth's Derriford Hospital after becoming unconscious during a dive. Paul was an anaesthetic nurse at the Princess Elizabeth Orthopaedic Centre at the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital. Details are sketchy but Paul had completed a dive then re-entered the water to help a fellow diver retrieve a piece of lost equipment when he suffered a suspected heart attack. The divers present got the casualty ashore, and administered chest compression and oxygen, prior to being taken to Derriford. Members of IMASS offer their condolences to Paul's partner Gillian and his family.

## BALTIC YIELDS 'PERFECT' SHIPWRECK

A near intact shipwreck apparently dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century has been found in the Baltic Sea, Swedish television has reported. the discovery was made during filming for an underwater documentary series. Its features resemble the work of Dutch shipbuilders of the period. Thought to be a trading vessel, it measures 20-25m with either two or three masts and lies at a depth of 125m, offering excellent visibility.



BBC. News

[See BBC News](#)

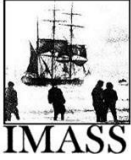
## HMS ONTARIO

A 22-gun British warship that sank during the American Revolution and has long been regarded as one of the "Holy Grail" shipwrecks in the Great Lakes has been discovered at the bottom of Lake Ontario.

[Underwater video](#)

Model of HMS Ontario located in the Maritime Museum in Kingston, Ontario, Canada  
By Jim Kennard





## PERHAPS THE 'IDIOTS' KNOW A THING OR TWO AFTER ALL?

Members may recall that in the IMASS News Letter No.1 an article appeared written by Steve Roue entitled 'Idiots in charge of the Asylum. Mike Williams responded with the following, which was received too late to use at the time.

Steve Roue raised several important policy issues which are worthy of debate and which the nautical archaeology community has neglected to do so to-date. The inevitable and very unfortunate consequence of this is that the policy behind regulation of the UK's Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) is commonly misunderstood and this is reflected in Steve's arguments. In countering Steve's arguments I should point out that I come to this debate not as a professional archaeologist. My only archaeological qualification is a Part 2 NAS certificate. My involvement stems from the fact that I am a keen amateur archaeological diver and a specialist in the law of UCH. My only 'foot' therefore in any 'camp' lies in that of the amateur. Since 1994 I have had the privilege of diving with the South West Maritime Archaeological Group (SWMAG) on the Salcombe and Moorsand designated sites in Devon. Since 1997 I have been Honorary Secretary of the Nautical Archaeological Society (NAS). However, this article is written entirely in a personal capacity and states my personal views. It should not be taken necessarily to represent the views of either SWMAG or the NAS.

Steve's article commences by making a number of assertions, some of which are factually incorrect. He states:

*"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."*

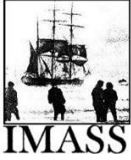
Sadly, if only that were true. In practice the work of most amateur teams has been extremely poor, with only a few shining exceptions. It was even true of the work on designated sites. It did not help that DCMS and its predecessors actively pressurised licensed teams to submit short reports of minimal length. Other than these cursory reports most work went unpublished. Several teams, SWMAG included, consistently ignored this, much to the irritation of DCMS officials. It was only when English Heritage (EH) took over that teams were encouraged to submit lengthier, more professional reports. It was because of the poor archaeological skills of amateur divers, who had no access to training that the NAS Training Scheme was introduced. When EH took over responsibility for designated sites it found the designated site archive was sadly lacking in recording and publication and is ploughing in quite large (for archaeology) sums into rectifying this. Yes, there have been good examples of amateur work and things are definitely improving but this should not blind us amateurs to the fact that by and large for the majority of the last 50 years the record of the amateur community, left without access to training and professional support, has been pretty lamentable, especially in terms of recording and publishing. The result is that museums might have artefacts on display, but the valuable contextual information has been lost, not preserved as Steve alleges. No mass of information has been 'gained', rather a mass of information has been irretrievably lost.

Steve goes on to say that:

*"The few individuals who have managed to worm their way into positions of power at EH 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."*

Perhaps some of you will have watched the 'Time Team Special' programme over Christmas 2008? It featured a collection of Roman decorated silverware that had been excavated, possibly illegally, in Eastern Europe. The recovery had been entirely unrecorded and even its origins were not known. As works of silver art the collection yielded a little information but the most important information it had to yield has been lost, due to its unrecorded excavation by untrained persons. That is cultural vandalism. In terms of UK wrecks, as indeed wrecks anywhere, the following is true:

1 - Unless excavation is undertaken by trained persons, be they amateur or professional, and it is properly recorded the most important archaeological value is lost, that of context. There is no reason in the world why suitably trained and experienced amateurs cannot excavate, record or report. SWMAG has been doing this to an acknowledged professional standard for years. The emphasis here is not on amateur or professional, it is on 'trained' or if you prefer 'competent'. That is why NAS conducted its research exercise, funded by EH, into how we assess competence, so we can tell who is competent, be they amateur or professional.

**PERHAPS THE 'IDIOTS' KNOW A THING OR TWO AFTER ALL? (CON'T)**

2 - Whether a person is professional or an amateur they will need training, so training programmes must exist to provide for that need.

3 - Excavation does occur in UK waters. Six excavation licences were issued by ACHWS between April '07 and March '08. Last year, in addition to Swash Channel in Poole Harbour, the University of Southampton undertook some excavation on the 'Grace Dieu' wreck in the River Hamble, excavation work was undertaken on the Filey Bay wreck, the Mary Rose Trust holds an excavation licence, recoveries from the Nornam's Bay wreck and the Univ. of Plymouth has a licence to recover sediment cores from the Cattewater wreck site. I agree that such licences are not given lightly and that the benchmark for such work is high, but it should be. These are sites of national or international importance.

4 - There are limited conservation and publication funds. Museums have little or no funds for conservation and have so little space that they cannot accept recovered artefacts. In this situation does it make any sense to recover widely yet more artefacts when they can be safely left on the seabed? Does it not make sense to concentrate on those wrecks that are at 'risk' from tidal erosion and leave stable sites untouched, while they remain stable? A case in point is the Swash Channel wreck in Poole Harbour. Natural erosion is now uncovering a third of the site. In response EH has issued an excavation licence and is funding recovery, conservation, recording and publication. Such 'Rescue Archaeology' alone will absorb what funds are available for excavation, recording, reporting and conservation. There will be none left over for the disturbance of stable sites.

5 - To keep tabs on what sites are stable and which are destabilising monitoring needs to be kept up. It is a thankless but vital activity in which amateur divers can play the predominant role.

6 - Even when excavation is restricted to sites 'at risk', where are suitably trained individuals to be found to undertake excavation, recording, reporting and publication? To acquire these skills is time consuming and expensive. The NAS would like to reduce that cost substantially, but would go into liquidation if it did so. Even charities have to exist within a budget. To undertake these activities is expensive and not many can justify such a leisure cost to families. There are many divers out there but not many who can afford both the time and cost of acquiring such skills necessary to properly undertake such activity. Amateur nautical archaeology will always remain a minority diving activity, no matter how much we succeed in encouraging public involvement.

Given these constraints I believe EH's policy is a rational and sensible response to managing much with too few resources, while Steve's approach would simply result in a flurry of untrained, unrecorded and unpublished cultural mayhem. Steve then goes on to pose a number of questions, which I shall attempt to answer:

*1 - Which is more important? An artefact or the information gained by its study regarding what it was used for, how it was made, where was it made, its weight, size etc?*

Unquestionably the information, but all too often amateur divers lack the skills and knowledge to 'study the artefact. Such specialised knowledge often takes a full time career to develop in even a small area. All too often museums would decline the donation of such artefacts, due to lack of resources, and the item would be reduced to a personal trophy for the diver. That does not add to public knowledge in the slightest and has never done so.

*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).*

Hopefully I have answered this. In medicine, when assessing which casualties are a priority there is an old expression 'Bleeders come first'. The same is true of protected wrecks.

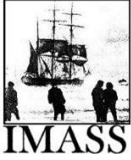
*3 - How can they justify to future generations, that we have deliberately left known wrecks to continue to deteriorate rather than recover 90% of the information and history contained in a wreck?*

We cannot. That is why we need to concentrate resources on those wrecks genuinely at risk (as opposed to those wrecks people say are at risk because its 'fun' to dig them up)

*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 been trained, as most work on historic wreck has been stopped?*

There are 36,000 ship and aircraft wrecks in UK waters, of which around 5,200 ship sites are known and conclusively identified. There are 7,400 fishermen's 'fastenings', which may or may not be wrecks. One estimate suggests that in total UK waters hold over 200,000 wrecks. Only approximately 60 wrecks are protected. If we consider anything pre 1945 to now be historic there seems to be a lot of 'work' for NAS trained divers to do in locating, identifying, recording and publishing these wrecks. Archaeological 'work' does not just consist solely of excavating protected wreck sites. Much valuable recording and publishing has been done by amateur divers under the NAS 'Adopt a Wreck' and 'Dive into History' schemes. Perhaps we should be asking why the National Lottery will only fund 'new' schemes, not continuations of existing schemes? The result is that these two schemes are



**PERHAPS THE 'IDIOTS' KNOW A THING OR TWO AFTER ALL? (CON'T)**

no longer funded beyond what the NAS can afford to put in. There is endless 'archaeological' work for NAS trained divers to do out there, and will be for many decades to come.

*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 ?*

Actually, yes. I know of three personally.

*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 ?*

George Bass had the financial resources of a large American University's research funding behind him. Robert Stenuit has been the subject of considerable criticism.

*7 - Why is it so wrong to fund excavation and conservation of artefact 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 ?*

To me this is the most significant question Steve raises, and it merits an article in its own right (perhaps a 'debate' in another edition of the Newsletter ? There are strong arguments for and against this and I have mulled this question over for several years. I have come to the conclusion that it is wrong to sell artefacts other than to museums with the money going back into the site. My reasons for this conclusion are:

a - There are recorded instances of commercial gain taking precedent over correct procedures, ie. commercially valueless artefacts being destroyed to get at financially valuable artefacts. Correctly executed archaeology is very expensive and few concerns can achieve it *and* make a profit for investors. There are very few examples of commercial salvors conducting, recording and publishing archaeological excavations to an internationally accepted standard.

b - The demand of the antiques trade is a source of much archaeological vandalism (aka the 'Time Team' programme). making these artefacts available just feeds and supports that trade in archaeological artefacts.

c - Returning money to archaeology by sale of 'surplus' artefacts is very difficult to achieve. Unless the salvor is a charity it is extremely difficult to legally enforce this and the salvor could simply pocket the money. Where the salvor has to pay out investors before putting and surplus back into the site a considerable percentage of that money goes to investors, not the site.

Salvage is a high-risk business and investors, in the manner of the market, expect high returns on high risk. Even when it is a government selling the surplus artefacts ensuring that the money goes back into archaeology is all but impossible. What Steve is suggesting is that the money is 'hypothecated' i.e. ring fenced and can only be spent on archaeology. All governments, of whatever political persuasion, have consistently refused to do this for any purpose. The Treasury needs flexibility to spend wherever necessity demands; a banking crisis, a war in the Falklands? Unexpected crisis demand financial flexibility. The money from such sales would go to the Treasury, but not to be spent on archaeology and there is no mechanism for ensuring that it is.

*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 dies' etc. 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 in 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 realise what a waste of time, effort and money measuring to a high degree of accuracy really is.*

*For example, two Plymouth wrecks which were found at around the same time, the Cattewater Wreck and the Catharina von Flensburg. All that is known about the former came from artefacts recovered and limited excavation at the time. We have learnt nothing new since, and never will if the site is not excavated. The latter was 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 artefact 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.*

This is more a series of points than a question. I think most people would agree that archaeology does affect lives. Otherwise why do indigenous people such as native Americans or Maoris fight so hard to have cultural artefacts returned to them ? people need an understanding of who they are and where they came from; why else the widespread interest in family history ? yes, science improves life more than cultural history, but that makes it more important. It does not make archaeology irrelevant. The

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public access history and archaeology at different levels and that level is usually below that of an expert. However, to explain that archaeology to the public the expert needs a deeper understanding and that comes from deeper academic study.. Steve is correct when he says museums are popular but the public, quite rightly, objects to being patronised. It wants an explanation of the significance of an artefact and how it fits into the big picture, but how can that be given if the artefact is not studied and the conclusions recorded, to get our 'big' picture. Steve's argument also contains a total contradiction. He says:

*'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 doin die's etc.'*

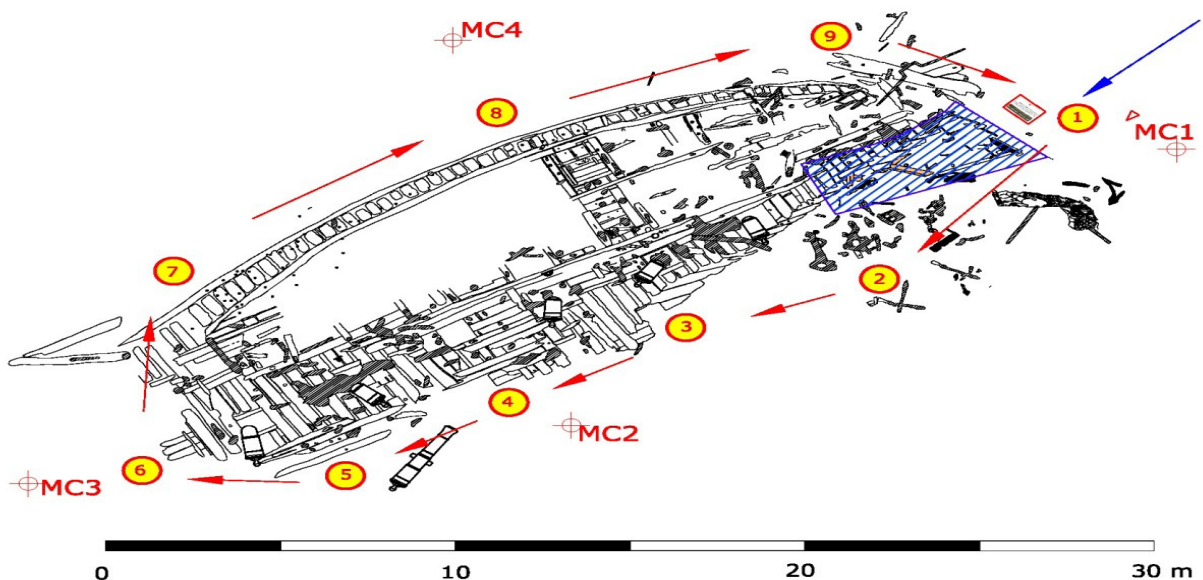
Yes, the public expect artefacts in museum, but museums already have more than they can possibly display. So, what happens is they decline to accept any more and the individual who dug the artefact up, usually in a random manner, gets to keep it and take it home, unrecorded and unpublished. He/she may well 'treasure' it but exactly how do the public get to see them ? The diver will show his/her diving friends but the family regards it as 'junk'. Years on the diver dies and the relatives, clearing out Dad or Mum's junk do just that, junk it! Exactly how does the public access that archaeology, short of scouring rubbish tips ? How many times have we heard of that occurring ? Taking 'treasured' items home denies the public archaeological information from and access to artefacts. Sorry Steve, it is the opposite of public interest, service and genuine interest in our maritime culture. Trophy hunting is not archaeology.

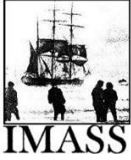
Amateur divers who have the appropriate training and skills have an important role to play at all levels of nautical archaeology but unregulated, unrecorded and unpublished recovery is not a public service; it is a disservice. Provided excavation continues to be permitted where 'rescue archaeology' is genuinely needed then I am with EH and those amateur divers delivering a 'professional' result on this one.

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## HMS COLOSSUS BECOMES THIRD DIVER TRAIL IN UK

A Colossus Dive Trail and interpretation guide is being implemented to guide divers around the site. A waterproof guide book is being made available to the three commercial dive boats that operate in Scilly, Tim Allsop, David McBride and Jo Williams, which will explain the exposed remains and give details of the background to the shipwreck. A web page will be installed on the CISMAS (Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Maritime Archaeological Society website, where accounts and photographs from visiting divers will be posted. The dive trail will be widely promoted by a press release to diver magazines and posters in dive shops.





## HMS COLOSSUS BECOMES THIRD DIVER TRAIL IN UK (CONT'D)

This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> such trail established around Designated Wrecks in the UK, the others being the Alum Bay wreck, Isle of Wight, and HMS Hazardous, west Sussex, near Selsey Bill.

*Colossus* was a 74 gun 3<sup>rd</sup> rate man o'war built in 1787 at Gravesend and wrecked off the island of Samson in the Isles of Scilly in 1798. She was 172ft3ins (52.5m) in length, with a 47ft 9ins (14.6m) beam. Her tonnage was 1703 and carried 28 x 32lb main gun deck cannon; 28 x 18lb upper deck; 14 x 9lb quarter deck and 4 x 9lb guns on the forecastle. Her ballast was 110 tons of iron 'pigs' and 250 tons of shingle

Two main areas of wreckage have been identified, her bow and stern. In 1975 part of the wreck, probably the bow was Designated as a Protected Wreck, but revoked in 1984. The current site, designated in 2001 covers the stern, which is located at 49° 55.471'N; 006° 20.505'W. Previous salvage work is known to have been carried out after she sank, by Braithwaite and Tonkin 1803-1806; the Dean brothers in the 1830's, & the Western Marine Salvage Company in the early 1900's. In 1974 divers working for the late Roland Morris relocated the wreck and raised a large quantity of pottery shards, remains of Lord Hamilton's 2<sup>nd</sup> collection of pottery, which went to the British Museum. At least one reconstructed pot is now on display there.

Exposed timbers and iron guns were discovered in 2001 and later that year the ADU (Archaeological Diving Unit) carried out excavation work. This included work around a large carved timber which proved to be a port side stern quarter-piece figure of a warrior. In 2003 a 2 year site stabilisation trial was commissioned by English Heritage, to determine the most effective method of slowing down the deterioration of the exposed timbers on the seabed. In 2004 and 2005 CISMAS carried out a survey of the debris field surrounding the wreck, and between 2002 and 2007 Kevin Camidge of CISMAS carried out monitoring of sediment levels on the site. This clearly demonstrated that sediment levels around the stern continue to fall.

In 2008 a small area of the stern was protected with a geotextile covering of Terram 4000 material. Timber sample blocks were installed beneath the Terram mat, and a seabed sign installed to inform visiting divers of the function of the Terram protection.

Reports covering all the work on the Colossus since 2001 can be downloaded at: [www.cismas.org.uk](http://www.cismas.org.uk)

The nine seabed 'stations' marking the diver trail will be marked prominently by a concrete sinker holding a numbered floating buoy on wire cable about 1m above the seabed. Directional arrows on each sinker and buoy will indicate the location of the next station going anti-clockwise around the wreck. The floats and wires will be removed at the end of each dive season and replaced the following spring. Kevin Camidge visits the site

2-3 times a year to undertake sediment monitoring measurements, and the condition of the seabed stations will be checked at the same time.

The Diver Trail is an English Heritage sponsored project, undertaken by Kevin Camidge of CISMAS.

### Editors note:

If you have any particular feelings on any of the above points which you would like to air, then send it to me as an e-mail. We do not guarantee to print everything we receive, but if it can be included in the next IMASS News letter we will certainly do our best. If you have not seen a copy of the proposed 'Heritage Protection in the English Marine Zone' paper, it can be seen at:

[www.english-heritage.org.uk/heritageprotection](http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/heritageprotection)