

# Dredged Up

from the past

Autumn 2012

Archaeology Finds Reporting Service Newsletter

## Protocol Update

Welcome to issue 11 of Dredged Up, the newsletter of the BMAPA/TCE/EH Protocol Implementation Service.



*Awareness visit at Cemex's Leamouth Wharf*

We have seen a slight drop over the last two years of finds being reported through the Protocol. This may be due to any number of factors, such as less dredging taking place or dredging targeting deeper sediments, the surface layers having already been dredged. Whatever the

cause, it is especially important that you keep reporting discoveries so that we can build a better picture of our submerged heritage, and demonstrate the industry's commitment to dealing with our cultural heritage.

This issue discusses the importance of shipwrecks as sources of archaeological material (see pages 4-5). A case study of the SS *Mendi* can be found on page 6.

There has been an array of interesting finds reported through the Protocol since the last issue. See pages 2-3 for some of the highlights.

Wooden finds are often dredged from the sea. Find out what to do with them in our 'how to' guide on page 7.

### Team News

The team has seen a great deal of change this year. We have said farewell to Sarah Phillips and Katie Card, who have moved on to exciting new projects, and welcomed in their places Laura Joyner and Angus Forshaw. Laura and Angus will be working on the Protocol under the guidance of Gemma Ingason and Euan McNeill, who manages the project on behalf of Wessex Archaeology.



*Laura Joyner and Angus Forshaw*

Don't forget: If you want an awareness talk to refresh staff about the Protocol, get in touch with the team on:

[protocol@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:protocol@wessexarch.co.uk) or call 01722 326 867

Single Sheave Snatch Block - Hanson



5 cm

## Finds from 2011-2012

Since the last issue of Dredged Up a wide variety of exciting finds spanning all time periods have been reported, all helping to increase our understanding of the past.

In March 2012 Darryl Mason discovered a Single Sheave Snatch Block on board *Arco Adur* (Hanson). It dates to the 20th century and would have been important for moving cargo on and off ships. It was dredged from Licence Area 328/1, off the coast of Great Yarmouth.

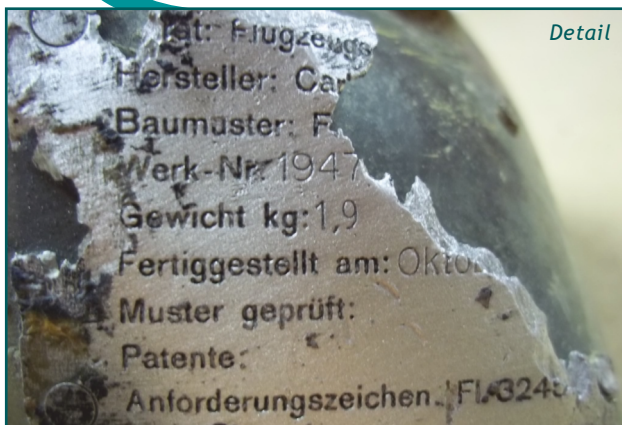


A very small stone bead measuring just 5mm in diameter was found by John Pye in the East Coast Channel region (CEMEX). Beads such as this have been used for decorative purposes from the Palaeolithic period (approximately 970,000 – 10,500 years ago) onwards.



2 mm

There is a huge variety of finds reported through the Protocol every year. Of particular interest were the remains of a Schermuly naval rocket line thrower, reported through the Munitions Protocol and identified by police EOD experts (Tarmac). Designed in the 1920s by British inventor William Schermuly, it was intended as a means of throwing a line from shore to ship, or ship to ship, using rocket propulsion. So successful was the invention that by 1929 it had become compulsory for all vessels over 500 tons to carry line throwers.

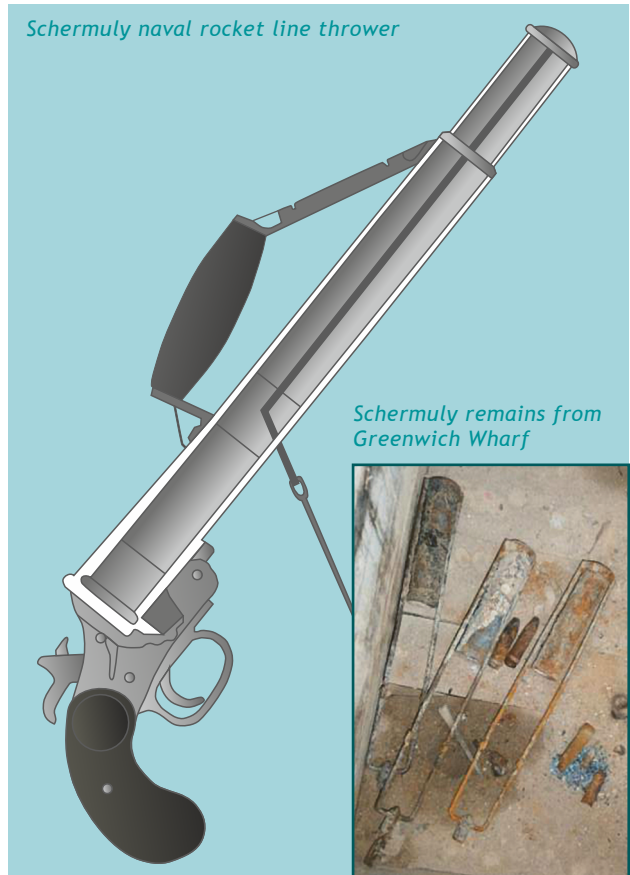


Detail

Recovered from Licence Area 447 Tarmac

The detailed photographs provided by Greenwich Wharf significantly aided the identification of this find (above) from Licence Area 447. A translation of the German wording 'Flugzeuge' (aircraft) and 'Hersteller: Carl...' (Manufacturer: Carl...) identified it as part of a landing light from an aircraft. The partial word 'Car...' refers to Carl Zeiss AG, a manufacturer of photographic and optical equipment.

Schermuly naval rocket line thrower



Schermuly remains from Greenwich Wharf



Greenwich Wharf reported three spoons this year. The spoons are similar in that all have engravings on them. The engravings tell us what material the spoons are made of, as well as hinting as to their usage. All the spoons were made of nickel silver. Despite its name, nickel silver does not actually contain any silver, consisting of copper, zinc and tin.



*Spoons from Greenwich Wharf Tarmac*

One of the spoons also had a serial number engraved onto its handle along with '1GOR'. This information tells us that it was a World War II issue army spoon, as the serial number was a regimental number allocated to the 1st battalion of the Gordon Highlanders.

This year we have had a large number of cannonballs reported from within Licence Area 127. It is likely that the majority of these were fired from sakers, a family of guns used from the 16th century until the early 18th century. Although these finds do not appear to be associated with any wrecks the Licence Area is close to several recorded battles, including Spanish Armada battles, to the south of the Isle of Wight. With the numerous cannonballs reported this year and in previous years, it is possible that a maritime battle may have occurred in the vicinity.



*Cannonballs from Licence Area 127 Tarmac*



### More Spoons!

We had another spoon reported recently through a pilot Fishing Industry Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries (FIPAD), inspired by the success of the BMAPA Protocol.

This was a seal-top spoon made of copper alloy. These spoons were introduced during the reign of Elizabeth I and continued to be common through the 17th century. They were made with the owner's seal at the end of the handle, allowing letters and documents to be sealed with wax.



You can find out more about FIPAD on page 8.

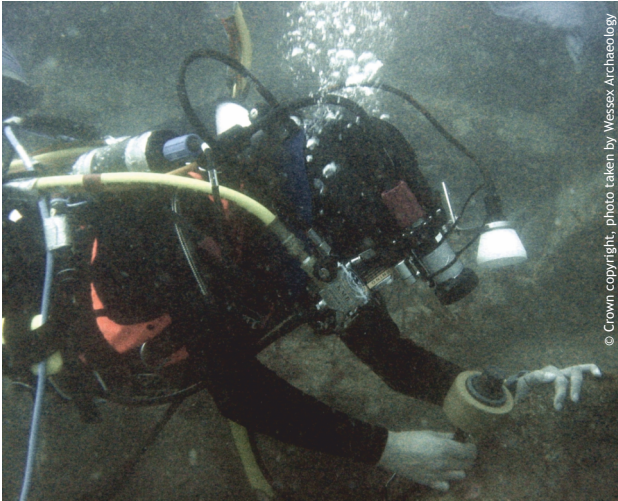


This article has been written by Angus Forshaw, who is learning about the BMAPA Protocol as part of his Community Archaeology Training Placement, hosted by Wessex Archaeology and funded by the Council for British Archaeology.



## Shipwrecks

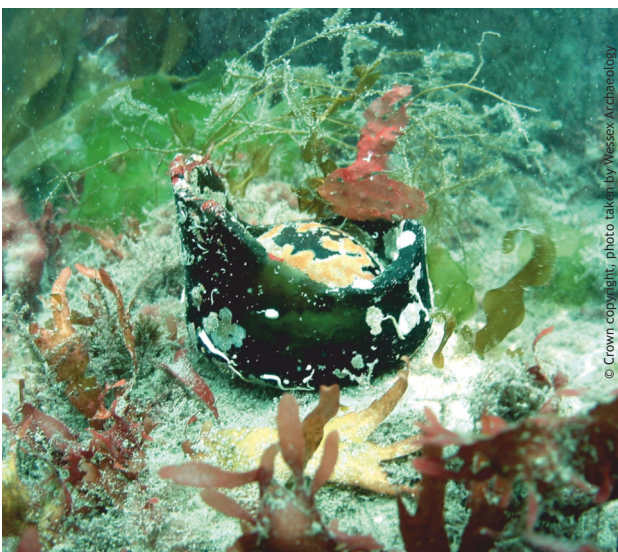
Shipwrecks are an important source of archaeological material. They can provide a snapshot into what life was like on board the vessel at the time of sinking.



© Crown copyright, photo taken by Wessex Archaeology

*Wessex Archaeology diver surveying a wreck site*

Licence Areas are fully investigated prior to the granting of a licence to dredge, in order to locate and identify possible obstructions. However, as is well evidenced by the Protocol, finds relating to shipwrecks are still discovered during aggregate dredging. These finds could be in the form of objects taken on board a vessel or parts of the vessel itself, or could even be an obstruction on the seabed.



© Crown copyright, photo taken by Wessex Archaeology

*Bottle on the seabed near a 19th century wreck site*

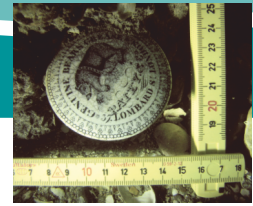
Objects that were used or transported on a vessel can provide insight into maritime activity in an area, as well as a more personal story about the people working or travelling on the vessel. Isolated finds, such as the Victorian marmalade pot dredged near the Isle of Wight, could potentially indicate a shipwreck but are more likely to have been dropped or thrown overboard as rubbish. Where objects are dredged in abundance, see for example the collection of silverware detailed in Issue 8 of *Dredged Up*, this is far more likely to signify the location of a wreck site.

Finds such as timbers, fittings and armaments provide information about ship technology and style, as well as indicating possible locations of shipwrecks. The ships' timber below has, due to the crude nature of the timber, challenged the traditional view that copper fastenings were only used for vessels of some prestige.



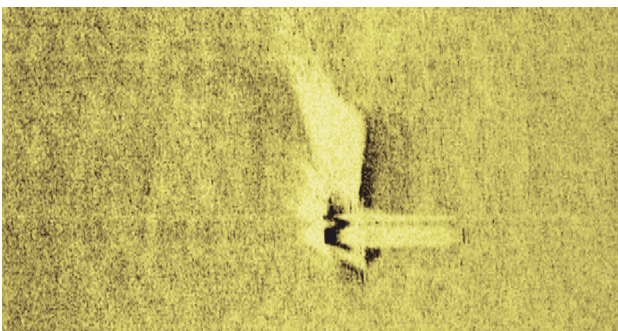
*Ships' timber  
Erith Wharf Tarmac*

In addition, the six ships' timbers from Licence Area 107 reported in recent years, give a strong indication of the presence of an unknown shipwreck.



19th century wreck site

Obstructions encountered whilst dredging could be due to wreckage on the seafloor, and should be reported via the Protocol in the same way as artefacts. Obstructions can cause damage to ships and equipment, as was the case when the dredging gear of the *Arco Avon* impacted with an unknown obstruction in Licence Area 474. It was reported via the Protocol, and Wessex Archaeology carried out an archaeological assessment of the area. The obstruction is likely to be a glacial erratic boulder, rather than an archaeological site, but a 50m exclusion zone has been implemented to avoid further damage to machinery.



Sidescan sonar image of debris on the seabed in Area 474.

As wrecks and wreckage of archaeological, historical or artistic significance are protected by the Protection of Wrecks Act (1973) it is crucial that all further finds are reported. This not only protects our submerged heritage but also ensures that the correct legal procedures are followed when a find is made.

## Tales from the Seafloor

The English Heritage Archive (formerly the National Monuments Record) is a great place to learn more about shipwrecks. As well as telling us how many wrecks lie at the bottom of the sea, the Archive is full of interesting stories of how they got there, which bring them to life.

The archive records indicate that British trade in the 19th century turned the seas into a busy highway for transporting goods. Competition was fierce. On the night of 23rd August 1815 the *Isabella* and *Mary* sank while transporting coal from Newcastle to London. A court case a year later tells us it was not an accident. The Newcastle Courant newspaper reported that the ship 'was run down by the defendant's ship, the *Rolla*'. The court fined the defendant, Mr Brown, £5,000 in damages and 40 shillings in costs.

On other occasions, business was too important to stop and help. A schooner called the *Fly* collided with a ship and then, despite their cries for help, sailed away. Fortunately, a passing ship, the *Neptune* rescued the abandoned crew.

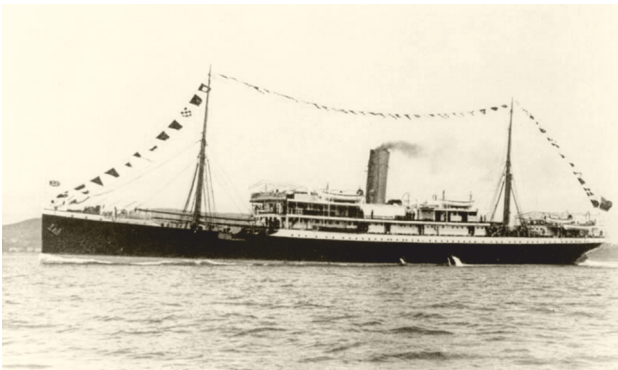


The wrecking of the SS Mendi by Hilary Graham. Image courtesy of Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Museum of Art. For more on this wreck see page 6.



## SS Mendi: A ship history forgot

The SS *Mendi* is a very significant shipwreck. Lying off the Isle of White, in the South Coast dredging region, the wreck site plays an important role in recording the historical links between Africa and the United Kingdom during World War I.



SS Mendi. Image courtesy of the South African Navy

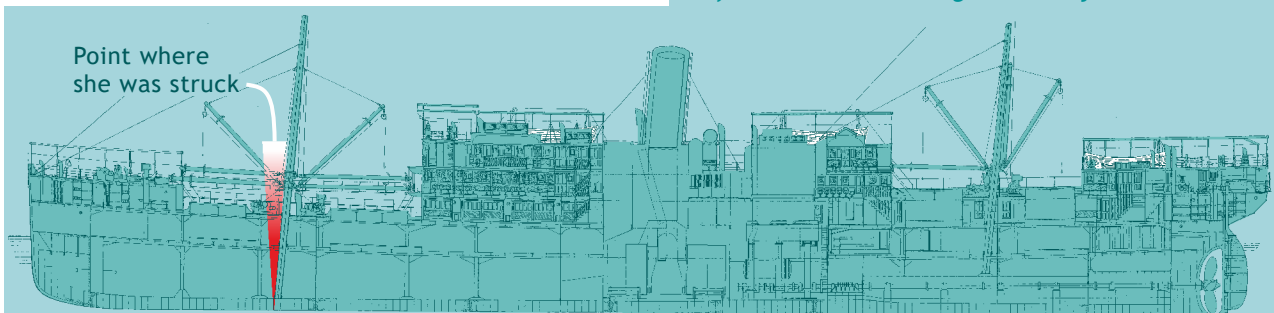
The SS *Mendi* was a cargo steamship owned by the British and African Steam Navigation Company. She transported cargo and passengers on the Liverpool to West Africa cargo route during the war. On the night that the SS *Mendi* sank she was transporting the 5th Battalion South African Native Labour Corps to the Western Front.

In the dark and fog of the night of Wednesday 21st February 1917, the SS *Mendi* was struck and cut almost in half by another ship. It was an accident, but with a deep gash in its side the SS *Mendi* was doomed. She sank 25 minutes later and almost 650 men died. Infamously, none of the black servicemen on the SS *Mendi* received a British War Medal or a ribbon after the war while their white officers did.

In Britain the story of the SS *Mendi* is almost unknown. In December 2006, English Heritage commissioned Wessex Archaeology to undertake an initial desk-based appraisal of the wreck. The project identified a range of areas for potential future research although non-intrusive surveys of the wreck itself show that it is collapsing. Following these developments, the South Coast Regional Environmental Characterisation survey, commissioned by the Marine Aggregate Levy Sustainability Fund, highlighted the importance of the site as a focus for further awareness and as a symbol of commemoration for the brave men that died on the ship.

In South Africa the SS *Mendi* is already famous as one of the greatest tragedies in the history of their military. The South African Government recently announced its intention to make the wreck a flagship project in their war graves policy. Wessex Archaeology has been helping Dr Mothobi Muloaste, the South African playwright, author and publisher, and British researchers Nick Ward and Rachel and Jim Stapleton in their joint research the SS *Mendi*. It is hoped that in the future, funding will be acquired to promote awareness of this historic icon both in Britain and South Africa.

Sue Davies OBE, Chief Executive of Wessex Archaeology said *'this is a special but tragic story that brings together two nations. At Wessex Archaeology we stand ready to work with the South African Government and its people in their quest to give the men of the Mendi the recognition they deserve.'*



SS Mendi showing where she was rammed by the Darro. Plan courtesy of the National Maritime Museum.

5 cm  

## Conserving and Reporting Wooden Finds

Wooden objects dredged up from the sea are likely to be of archaeological interest. They may have been shaped by humans to be used as tools, as art or for transportation. If they haven't been worked they can still give valuable information about past environments and provide absolute dates for interesting and important archaeological layers.

This 'how to' guide tells you the immediate steps to follow if you find a wooden object that you suspect may be of archaeological interest.

### 1 Alert Site Champion

#### 2 Wash it gently



#### 3 Take a photograph



#### 4 Store it



#### 5 Report it

### 1 Alert Site Champion

If you find an archaeological object, report it immediately to the **Site Champion** for your wharf or vessel. If you are on board a vessel the **Site Champion** will be able to note an approximate location of the original position of the find.

### 2 Wash it gently

If the object feels solid enough, wash it with water and a soft brush. Remove only the worst of the mud and silt and do not try to remove any rust, concretion or marine growth. It is important to clean very gently as the outer layers of the object are likely to be the most useful.

### 3 Take a photograph

When you report the find you will need to upload an image so that it can be identified by specialists. The photo should be as clear and well lit as possible and will ideally include a measuring device. Feel free to take more than one image if the object has any interesting features.

### 4 Store it

It is vital that the object is kept cool and wet. Store it in a clean container of a suitable size filled with sea water and cover it. Exclude air from the container either by filling it to the brim with water before covering, or by using a floating lid. A floating lid is something, usually a piece of plastic, that sits directly on top of the water creating a barrier between the water and the air. Store the container somewhere cool and dark.

### 5 Report it

The **Site Champion** should compile a preliminary record for the find, and send this with any photographs or other records to the **Nominated Contact**.

If you have any questions about finds, finds reporting or the Protocol, don't hesitate to get in touch with the team at **Wessex Archaeology** on:

[Protocol@wessexarch.co.uk](mailto:Protocol@wessexarch.co.uk)



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ENGLISH HERITAGE

## Introducing a New Fishing Industries Protocol



Nikki Cook (WA) introduces the Minister of Fisheries to FIPAD

Following the success of the BMAPA Protocol, English Heritage has commissioned Wessex Archaeology to develop and implement a pilot study of a protocol for fishermen in Sussex. The Fishing Industry Protocol for Archaeological Discoveries (FIPAD) is a voluntary system for reporting sites and finds of archaeological interest encountered whilst fishing at sea.

Described by many as the “eyes and ears of the ocean”, the UK’s fishing fleets are responsible for some of the most important archaeological discoveries of the past 40 years, with everything from Palaeolithic flints to modern shipwrecks snagged or dredged up in fishing gear.

An example is provided by oyster fisherman Michael White, who assembled nearly 300 artefacts including prehistoric flint tools while working in the Solent. The collection, which ranges from stone-age axe heads to metal tools from the Bronze Age, has been described by Channel 4’s Time Team archaeologist Dr. Phil Harding as “extraordinary”.



“These discoveries have helped us reconstruct how the landscape was used before the English Channel flooded it 10,000 years ago. If it hadn’t been for Michael collecting all this material and telling us about it, we may never have encountered it - and our knowledge of the prehistoric Solent would be all the poorer.” Dr. Phil Harding, Time Team

### Medieval Stone Statue

Some interesting artefacts have already been reported through the FIPAD.

This stone statue was reported during the project development, by an oyster fisherman who discovered it in Chichester Harbour. The figure is believed to be early medieval in date and was probably associated with the nearby church in Bosham. It is likely that this statue would have been set into a niche in the church wall, and may have represented one of the foundation saints of the original Anglo-Saxon church, which is depicted in the Bayeux Tapestry. It has been suggested that the statue may have been deliberately decapitated and thrown into the harbour during the Reformation in the 1530s, at which time the church was ransacked.



10 cm



Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority



For more information visit

[www.fipad.org](http://www.fipad.org)

The FIPAD was launched in collaboration with the Sussex Inshore Fisheries Conservation Authority in April 2012 on a one year trial basis. If successful there is potential for the scheme to go national.