

# **Cattewater Wreck: Developing the archive Interim Report**

## **1.0 Introduction**

This Project aims to improve the long term care and management of the Cattewater Wreck Excavation Archive held by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery (called the City Museum from now on). The project has received funding from English Heritage's National Heritage Protection Commissions Programme (Project Number: 5439 MAIN) under the provisions of Section 45 of the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. Stage 1 of the project (involving archive consolidation of the documentary archive) was due to be completed on 17<sup>th</sup> September, but due to an unforeseen conservation issue a variation was agreed with this stage now due for completion on 18 October 2010.

## **2.0 Stage 1: Archive consolidation**

### **2.1 Repackage the documentary archive**

The plans/sections have been unrolled and are in the process of being flattened prior to being stored in the plan chest. This has had to be scheduled to fit in with the workload of the City Museum Conservator (Paper) so as to enable the stability of a small number of plans to be ensured.

Several plans had small self adhesive labels attached, indicating the positions of small finds on the site, some of which were becoming detached. Four of the plans showing finds distributions had a large number of these labels and have been transferred into large Melinex sleeves on inert boards for temporary storage.

The importance of the relationship of the sticker positions to other information on these four plans were discussed with various maritime archaeologists who highlighted the need to create a 'moment-in-time' photographic record of the plans, pending any longer term conservation. The opportunity was taken during the photography of the artefacts for the four most unstable plans to also be photographed (totalling 65 photographs). For the purposes of photography, these plans were given numbers starting with 2001 to ensure that they were certain to be distinguished from finds numbers. This extra photography has been funded by the City Museum.

The documentary archive has been repackaged in archival quality folders and boxes in accordance with Plymouth City Museum & Art Gallery's 'Deposition of Archaeological Archives 2007'. The repackaging has used 7 boxes and 52 folders.

### **2.2 Documentary archive index**

The listing and indexing of the present documentary archive has been completed. 249 items are separately listed including a Masters dissertation, several books/booklets and over 1096 pages of documents and correspondence.

Some documents have been added to the archive from files in the City Museum. These include correspondence relating to the Cattewater Wreck Model and Diorama which were donated by Mark Redknap and correspondence relating to research into the finds by Andrea Hamel for her University of Southampton Masters dissertation 'Life at Sea', a copy of which has also been included in the archive.

There was insufficient time to include correspondence and notes relating to the conservation and display of the Cattewater gun (2002-9) also present in the City Museum files. These will be added at a later date.

### **2.3 Documentary archive audit**

An audit has been carried out of the documentary archive. The most notable missing items are finds drawings and some sections.

A draft audit has also been carried out on the material archive (this is required during Stage II of the project), excluding concretion removed during conservation but passed on to the City Museum by English Heritage.

The artefacts from the 1973 excavations were given individual finds numbers, but the subsequent excavations restarted the sequence from 1, leading to potential numbering confusion. Another problem is that during the 1977 excavations many finds numbers consist of several finds. This is due to all the artefacts from a single dive, often of several different materials, being given the same finds number. The survey in 1976 used unique finds numbers and there is a note at the top of the 1978 finds lists saying that each object was to be given a unique number. However even in 1978 several artefacts of the same material, generally ceramics, were given the same finds number, only later to be recognised as being from different artefacts. The process of inking finds numbers onto artefacts also seems to have taken place at a later date as several of them have the wrong year.

The number of finds numbers recorded in the collection are to some extent misleading as the original find number sometimes contained up to five fragments, particularly of ceramics. Often only one or two of these are now present in the material archive.

### **2.4 Artefact records and digital photographs**

Artefacts have been recorded on the City Museum's database record forms in preparation for later database entry. It is intended that this database will eventually become web accessible.

Digital photograph/s have been taken of each item. These have been to the City Museum standards to fit in with their recording system.

In total 744 photographs were taken of 150 artefacts or groups of artefacts. Where reconstructions of ceramics, or sherds from the same ceramic have been grouped together in one finds bag, these were photographed together. For purposes of photography, unlabelled finds were given numbers starting with 1001 to ensure that they were certain to be distinguished from actual finds numbers.

### **2.5 Feature/context descriptions**

A context record form has been completed for eleven contexts using a form kindly supplied by Kevin Camidge.

## **2.6 Plan matrix and overall site plan**

Establishment of a plan matrix and overall site plan. Further advice is being sought on what is required for this.

Site plans from the 1970s surveys and excavations and more recent geophysical surveys have been added to a GIS put together by Peter Holt. This has included some corrections to the original plans and correct orientation. This has already been made publicly available initially via the 3H Consulting website.

<http://www.3hconsulting.com/SitesCattewater.htm>

## **2.7 Harris matrix**

A Harris matrix has been completed showing the interrelationship between contexts.

## **3.0 Strengthening the Archive and Consolidating the Collection**

One of the aims of this Project has been to trace or locate material relevant to the Archive and to re-unite them with the City Museum holdings.

In support of this, interviews have been held with Cynthia Gaskell-Brown, Steve Roue, Dr Richard Merritt, Paul Dart and Peter Holt. Email correspondence has taken place with the original excavation Director, Mark Redknap, and his co-director, Berit Mortlock.

A visit to Fort Bovisand took place in early August with Cynthia Gaskell-Brown, formerly Keeper of Archaeology at the City Museum, who collected together most of the remaining archive from various sources in the early 1980s. The aim of the visit was to try to locate where the keelson had been thrown over the cliff in the early 1980s. Cynthia organised a group to recover the timber in 1983, but only part of the keelson was moved partially up the cliff and left on a shed. This part of the keelson was subsequently recovered by the Archaeological Diving Unit in 1990 and is now in the archive in the City Museum. The area where the keelson was disposed of was found, but there was no evidence of any remains of the keelson.

Subsequently reliable information has been provided that the lost elements of the keelson were broken up and burnt on a fire.

Two fragments of wood in the museum archive labelled 'CW Ariadne' have subsequently been identified as being part of the keelson. These had been separated and used in drying experiments (documented in Carpenter *et al* 1974).

The conservation tanks, containing most of the structural timbers recovered during the excavations, which had stood outside the conservation laboratory in Fort Bovisand, are now known to have been broken up and the timbers disposed of in the early 1980s.

It has not been possible to confirm if Alan Baxs was correct in saying that the remaining missing elements of the archive were thrown away. Boxes of

artefacts were left in unsecured areas of Fort Bovisand, such as under the stairs by the reception to the Centre, and may have been taken by divers for souvenirs.

Boxes of artefacts were also kept in Alan Baxs' flat in Fort Bovisand. Some of this material has now been recovered, such as the box of leather from Joint Service Sub Aqua Diving Centre (JSSADC) added to the archive in 2009 and the small box of leather from Wessex Archaeology. It is unknown what happened to the remainder of this material.

### **3.1 Recovered material**

A small box of leather, containing three finds (CW78 344 fragment, CW78 382 x4 and CW78 371 fragment) was recently added to the archive in the City Museum. This was recovered by Peter Holt and Simon Adey-Davies approximately 5 years ago and taken to Wessex Archaeology. The box was passed on by Wessex Archaeology together with unrelated documents from Alan Bax' archive. The leather finds have been included in Stage 1 of the Project and have been documented and repackaged.

Mark Redknap has recently passed on copies of original reports and correspondence relating to pottery, geology, wood, dendrochronology, Carbon 14 dating, conservation, finds register, biological remains, animal bone, minutes of the CWC, 1973 timber, samples, guns, leather, textiles and gunpowder to the City Museum, but these arrived too late to be included in the audit, indexing and repackaging and will be included at a future date.

Mark Redknap retains a file of his original pencil drawings of finds. He has plate negatives and bromide prints of drawings in Cardiff. The drawings include unpublished drawings on concretions, the leather (with annotated notes on stitch spacing etc), and drawings of the breech chamber (CW78 SF450). They will all be donated to the City Museum with the remaining archive in due course.

Mark also still retains some samples of ballast and wood. These will eventually be transferred to Plymouth Museum. One specimen of wood is being re-examined with the results planned to appear in a new edition of the report.

The archive he retains is at present stored in his office at the National Museum Cardiff, Cathays Park, Cardiff. These are in one box file (BW prints and bromides), two storage boxes (letters, related research files, drawings, samples); BW negatives are on one negative ring binder; colour slides in 31 slide hanging files in a filing cabinet.

### **3.2 Remaining missing archive**

It is hoped that several more artefacts and groups of artefacts will be relocated during the project:

Three wooden items (CW78 363 Bucket lid, CW78 336 Plug and CW78 312 Parrell ball), and some samples, were taken to the National Maritime Museum (NMM) in 1979 and are believed to be still there. The objects were apparently conserved by the NMM, but never collected. It is hoped that these can be located.

A box of clay pipes were taken to Scotland in 1979 for further examination and reporting, but never returned. Enquiries are ongoing to see if these can be located.

It is doubtful that many more artefacts will be located. A note will go into the next newsletter of the International Maritime Archaeology & Shipwreck Society (IMASS) appealing for information on missing parts of the archive, but no great hope is held out for this.

#### **4.0 Conservation**

The archiving of the plans and drawings was delayed due to an unforeseen conservation issue. Late in the development of the Project Design it was realised that there were problems with the stability of information associated with some of the plans (see 2.1). By special arrangement, and with assistance of the City Museum Conservator (Paper), these four plans were carefully unrolled and transferred, flat, into large Melinex sleeves on inert boards for temporary storage. By storing the plans unrolled and flat, future handling and the accidental displacement of these sticky labels will be minimised. The work of the City Museum Conservator probably totals about an extra days work and was provided by the City Museum.

Various minor conservation work was undertaken during the repackaging of the documentary archive, mostly involving the removal of staples, pins and cello tape from documents. Some photocopying of documents took place to ensure that the relative positions of documents attached by cello tape were recorded.

The leather finds recovered from Fort Bovisand in 2009 had mostly been stitched to cardboard backing and wrapped in clingfilm. The clingfilm was removed during photography and replaced by inert polythene bags. The leather finds from Wessex archaeology were in a box separated by paper and these too were put into polythene bags.

#### **5.0 Listing of documents produced during this stage**

Project\_5439\_MAIN\_Documentary\_Audit.doc

Project\_5439\_MAIN\_Documentary\_archive\_index.xls

Artefacts recorded on City Museum database record forms

Digital photographs recorded on DVD

Feature/context descriptions

Project\_5439\_MAIN\_Harris Matrix.doc

#### **6.0 References**

Carpenter, A.C., Ellis, K.H. / McKee, J.E.G. 1974 The Cattewater Wreck  
National Maritime Museum Maritime Monographs and Reports 13 - 74

Martin Read

18<sup>th</sup> October 2010