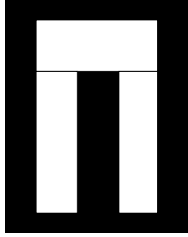




Archaeological Diving Investigation
'The King'



Wessex Archaeology

ARCHAEOLOGICAL DIVING INVESTIGATION
'THE KING'

Prepared by:

Wessex Archaeology Ltd

Portway House
Old Sarum Park
Salisbury
Wiltshire
SP4 6EB

On behalf of:

The Port Of London Authority

London River House
Royal Pier Road
Gravesend
Kent
DA12 2BG

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology Ltd. was commissioned by the Port of London Authority to carry out a series of dives on the wreck site known as the 'King' in order to assess the condition and stability of the site, after the reported salvage of cannons from the site.

The archaeological investigation took place on the 30th October 2007. The diving operation comprised a total of 1 hour 42 minutes on the wreck site in zero visibility, it involve a Wessex Archaeology diver working with the Port of London Authority dive team.

The objectives of the investigation were to establish the presence or absence of cannon on the site, identify exposed archaeological features and to assess the risk of destruction or salvage of exposed archaeological features.

A series of artefacts were identified and recovered to the surface, and the diver noted that there was an abundance of loose material on the river bed in a remarkably well preserved state. This suggests that the site has been recently disturbed. No cannons were seen during the investigation. However, visibility was very poor and the absence of any form of acoustic tracking means that the extents of the diver's search area is uncertain, and it is likely the entire site was not inspected.



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Acknowledgements

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by the Port of London Authority and we would like to acknowledge the staff from this organisation for their help, advice, and knowledge throughout the work.

Wessex Archaeology is particularly grateful to Nicola Clay for commissioning the work and to Peter Steen for enabling the operation to take place.

Wessex Archaeology is also indebted to the professionalism of the Port of London Authority dive team, particularly Kevin Leadbetter the dive supervisor.

Dietlind Paddenberg from Wessex Archaeology undertook the diving investigation and drafted this report. The illustrations were prepared by Karen Nichols. The report was edited by Stuart Leather, who also managed the project on behalf of Wessex Archaeology. Steve Webster provided additional quality assurance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. PROJECT BACKGROUND

- 1.1.1. Wessex Archaeology Ltd. (WA) was commissioned by the Port of London Authority (PLA) to carry out a series of dives on the wreck known as the 'King' in order to assess the condition and stability of the site. The work was carried out by a WA diver embedded within the PLA dive team.
- 1.1.2. The site has previously been subject to several archaeological diving investigations. The most recent prior to this investigation was an inspection undertaken by Nigel Nayling from the University of Lampeter in May 2007, who also dived the site as part of the PLA dive team.
- 1.1.3. However, since Mr Nayling's dive there have been reports of salvage from the site. Divers, allegedly working on a non-commercial basis, reported the recovery of two bronze cannon from the site, and three cannons from a site further out in the estuary, to the Receiver of Wreck. The PLA have considered the possibility that all five cannons originate from the 'King'.
- 1.1.4. As a result of this salvage operation the PLA considered it appropriate to undertake this diving investigation in order to assess the level of damage to the site and any subsequent instability that may have arisen.
- 1.1.5. This document reports on the archaeological diving investigation undertaken on the 30th October 2007 and includes the methods employed, the results and their archaeological implications.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1. AIM

- 2.1.1. The aim of the diving investigation was to assess the condition and stability of the site of the 'King' post intrusive salvage operations.

2.2. OBJECTIVES

- 2.2.1. The objectives were to:
 - establish whether any cannons remained on the site;
 - identify exposed archaeological features;
 - assess the risk of destruction or salvage of exposed archaeological features.



3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

- 3.1.1. This operation was undertaken as a response to the reported salvage activity on the site. The intention was for an archaeologist to spend one day diving the site in order to assess the effects of this salvage.
- 3.1.2. The diver's location and orientation were derived through compass bearing and distance line.
- 3.1.3. The site was located using the dGPS onboard the diving support vessel. The vessel's anchor was positioned close to the site and the anchor line was used by the diver to gain access the site. A search line was secured to the anchor line and used to navigate around the wreck.

3.2. DIVING TEAM STRUCTURE

- 3.2.1. The diving contractor was the PLA and all work was conducted under the PLA's Diving Project Plan (DPP) and Risk Assessment (RA). The WA diver formed part of the PLA dive team. The WA DPP and RA were appended and formed part of the PLA DPP and RA.

3.3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL RECORDING

- 3.3.1. Archaeological recording was limited to visual and touch inspection of the site, and the retrieval of exposed and vulnerable small artefacts lying upon the riverbed.
- 3.3.2. The recovered artefacts were transported to the PLA's passive holding store for underwater finds where they were photographed and placed in passive conservation.

4. RESULTS

4.1. INTRODUCTION

- 4.1.1. The diving operation was undertaken on the 30th October 2007. Two dives were undertaken at Low and High water slacks. A total dive time of 102 minutes was achieved.

4.2. ARCHAEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

- 4.2.1. The site contained an abundance of artefactual material. The distribution of the artefacts can be placed into three broad zones within the overall wreck site.
- 4.2.2. At the eastern end of the site a mixture of material comprising broken timber, various types of metal components, and organic material was observed.
- 4.2.3. The metal components included pipe and pole-like objects and lead sheeting, which may either be material from the scuppers or hawseholes. Organic material was also present including concreted rope, and leather.
- 4.2.4. Towards the middle of the site a number of bricks were encountered as well as a metal cleat that was free from concretion, and a metal ring approximately 0.9 metres in diameter. A 3 metre long wooden beam was also observed.



- 4.2.5. At the western end of the site wooden structure was observed protruding from the river bed, which appeared to be planking. There was also a wooden wheel and musket butts as well as wheels that are thought to be from gun carriages. An object was also noted that could not be identified. It was semi-circular in shape, made of wood with open ends and had poles protruding from the sides. It was approximately 8-10 metres long. The poles were in the order of 0.2 metres diameter and 1 metre high.
- 4.2.6. A rounded wooden beam was also observed that was approximately 6 metres long with a diameter of 0.25 metres. It's function within the vessel was not evident.
- 4.2.7. Modern rope was also identified on the site. The PLA dive team confirmed that at no stage they had left anything on the seabed including rope, therefore this may be debris left by the salvors.
- 4.2.8. The artefacts were lying on the seabed; they were not buried and could be easily moved. It should be noted that the ease with which artefacts could be removed from the seabed was not reported in previous dive reports on the site, suggesting that the area had been recently disturbed.

4.3. RECOVERED ARTEFACTS

- 4.3.1. The following items have been recovered from the site and removed to the PLA passive holding facilities at Denton Wharf
- wooden part (handle) of a gun (**Plate 1 Figure 1**);
 - wooden wheel (gun carriage?) (**Plate 2 Figure 1**);
 - piece of perforated leather string (possibly part of a shoe or boot) (**Plate 3 Figure 2**);
 - piece of rope, concreted (**Plate 4 Figure 2**);
 - lead pipe (**Plate 5 Figure 3**);
 - flat brass ring, diameter c. 0.12m. (**Plate 6 Figure 3**);
 - piece of lead (**Plate 7 Figure 4**);
 - wooden deadeye (**Plate 8 Figure 4**).

4.4. ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERPRETATION

- 4.4.1. The general nature of the wreckage can be attributed to the sinking of the vessel and subsequent salvage attempts in the 1960s when a large grab was used to recover material from the site (Peter Steen pers. comm.). However, the good preservation of material that is lying loose on the river bed would suggest that there has been recent extensive disturbance of the site. This material is vulnerable to damage and loss through both natural process and salvage.
- 4.4.2. It is important to note that there is likely to be extensive vessel remains buried within the river bed.



5. CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1. No cannons were identified during the diving operations. However, conditions were not ideal and therefore there is the possibility that cannons are present on the site but were not seen by the WA diver. Underwater visibility was zero and because acoustic tracking was not used it is not possible to be sure that the diver inspected the whole site.



Plate 1: Wooden part of gun



Plate 2: Wooden wheel

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Plate 3: Piece of perforated leather string



Plate 4: Piece of rope, concreted

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Plate 5: Lead pipe



Plate 6: Flat brass ring

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Plate 7: Piece of lead



Plate 8: Wooden deadeye

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WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY LIMITED.

Registered Head Office: Portway House, Old Sarum Park, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP4 6EB.

Tel: 01722 326867 Fax: 01722 337562 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

Maidstone Office: The Malthouse, The Oast, Weaving Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 5JN.

Tel: 01622 739381 info@wessexarch.co.uk www.wessexarch.co.uk

