making sense of heritage

London Gateway Port Clearance Programme:
Wreck Site 343/26 5046 Northwest of Sea Reach 1, Thames Estuary

Balustrade Timber WA1168

Timber Survey

Ref: 88632
July 2017

coastal&marine

London Gateway Port Clearance Programme: Wreck Site 343/26 5046 Northwest of Sea Reach 1, Thames Estuary

Balustrade Timber WA1168

Timber Recording

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* I = Internal Draft; E = External Draft; F = Final

DISCLAIMER

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Summary

Wessex Archaeology was commissioned by London Gateway Port to produce a detailed record of the balustrade timber WA1168 prior to any approved discard.

The timber had been recovered in 2010 during the clearance of Wreck Site 343/26 5046 and assessed with a number of other finds by the Thames Discovery Program in April 2010 as part of the London Gateway Port capital dredging works. The timber was not deemed to be of archaeological interest; therefore it was recorded by photograph only and proposed for discard.

Wessex Archaeology acquired the timber in 2012. Since then the timber has been passively conserved by Wessex Archaeology and periodically monitored by Wessex Archaeology's in-house conservator.

A detailed photographic record and drawing of the timber has been produced. During the assessment it became apparent that the timber may have been a stanchion from a fife rail.

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Acknowledgements

The survey of the balustrade timber and subsequent report was carried out by Paolo Croce and illustrations were produced by Kitty Foster. Wessex Archaeology would like to thank London Gateway Port, in particular Marcus Pearson and Chris Webb for the support received. The assistance of Gill Andrews, Archaeological Liaison Officer is also gratefully acknowledged. The project was managed for Wessex Archaeology by Toby Gane.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Assessment Background

1.1.1 The spindle turned timber WA1168 was recovered from the wreck site 343/26 5046 located northwest of Sea Reach 1 in the Thames Estuary in 2010.

1.1.2 This timber and a number of artefacts removed from the wreck were discussed in the Thames Discovery Programme's report of May 2010 (TDP 2010). The reports concluded that the timber was related to the wreck of a vessel built in the late 19th century at the earliest on the basis of the shape and condition of the copper-alloy fastenings.

1.1.3 The use of treenails in conjunction with copper and copper-alloy fastening is known from mid-19th century British shipbuilding when many shipwrights adopted copper and copper alloy fastenings (McCarthy 2005). This seems to suggest that the earliest date for the construction of the ship could be presumed to be the mid-19th century, which is earlier than the date that was previously suggested by TDP. However, the re-assessment of the conclusion drawn in the TDP report within the scope of this report.

1.1.4 The reports identified WA1168 as a balustrade timber *"presumed to come from a balustrade either at the break of the poop deck of the vessel or around a hatchway"* (TDP 2010).

2 ASSESSMENT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1.1 The overall aim of this report was to establish a detailed record of the timber WA1168. No formal brief was issued by Historic England and therefore no recording level or specific products were requested.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1.1 All fieldwork procedures and standards complied with the relevant guidance by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA; website accessed June 2015).

3.1.2 The detailed recording of the ship's timber was carried out on the 15th of September 2015. This consisted of:

- *a measured survey;*
- *a drawn record of the main views and features (**Plate 1**);*
- *a photographic record of general view and details (**Plate 2**); and*
- *a photographic record for the purpose of a photogrammetric model (**Plate 3**).*

3.1.3 **Figure 3** contains an interactive 3D model of the timber (Adobe Reader 9 or higher required). The model has been down-sampled from a much higher resolution model in order to reduce the file size of this pdf. The model can be accessed by right clicking on the image and selecting 'Views'. Clicking on the model in either mode will allow you to rotate (left click and drag), zoom (mouse wheel) and pan (CTRL and drag).

4 TIMBER DESCRIPTION

4.1.1 The timber is a turned baluster and has an overall height of 1210mm (4'), maximum width and length of 175mm. The style is produced by a very simple form of lathe-turning and consists of an elegantly curved vase shape (maximum circumference 550mm, height 560mm) under a straight sided cylinder and cylindrical head (circumference 550mm). The cylinder is damaged on one side and has some concretion on the adjacent side. The damage extends to the upper part of the vase shape. The top and bottom of the bulb of the vase are decorated with a succession of simple mouldings.

4.1.2 The head is covered by metallic sheeting and this is very likely to be made of brass or a 'yellow metal' brass alloy. The lower end of the balustrade tapers to a square section (sides of 150mm, height 150mm) which is supported by a squared base of similar shape and dimensions but is much more concreted. The presence of concretion on the base together with its shape may suggest that the stanchion was bolted into an iron socket. In fact, the hole of the retaining pin goes through the base and measures 25mm in diameter (1''). Two sheaves are attached via a large pin to two opposite sides of the base. The dimensions of the iron cheeks that cover the sheaves are 190mm by 140mm; these are also partially covered by concretion.

4.1.3 The presence of the two vertical sheaves at the sides of the timber suggests that the timber was designed to take heavy running gear. Conventional fife rails in clippers or other square rigged ships were supported by ornamental or plain posts, sometimes with sheaves and sometimes with the timber heads above the flat rail and WA1168 matches closely one of these stanchions.

4.1.4 According to Campbell (Campbell 1974), in American ships the bitts were in wood and extended through two deck levels; whilst in British ships "*the old style bitts to the fife rails were cut short at upper deck level and secured in cast iron sockets and were then referred to as stanchions or standards"*. This adds strength to the possibility that the vessel from which the timber was recovered was of British origin. The style of manufacture and potential use could fit within the date range proposed for the wreck site by the Thames Wreck Discovery Program.

4.1.5 In June 2015 the timber was examined by Roderick Bale for dendrochronological sampling and assessed as containing a ring pattern with insufficient numbers of rings to be used for dating purposes.

5 REFERENCES

5.1 Bibliography

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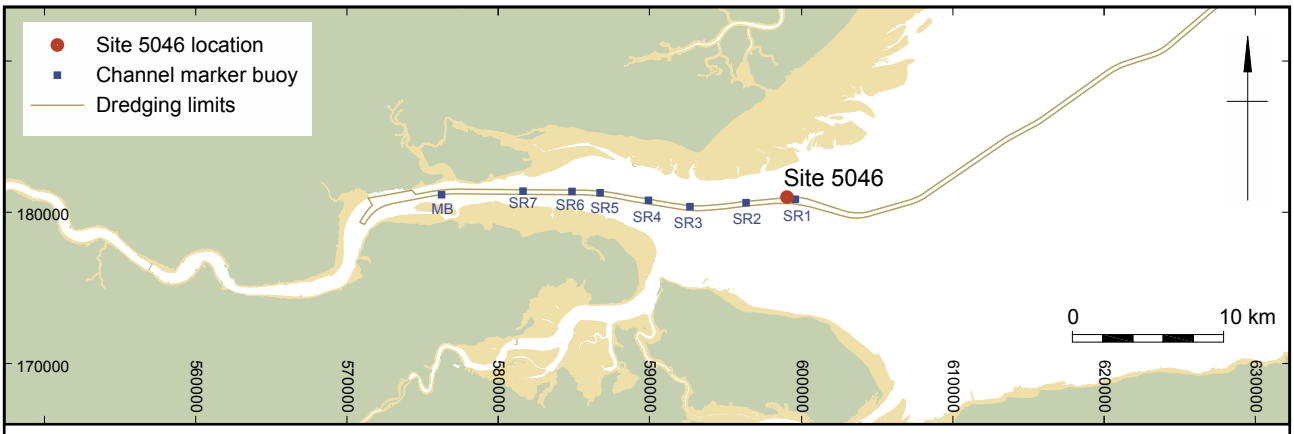
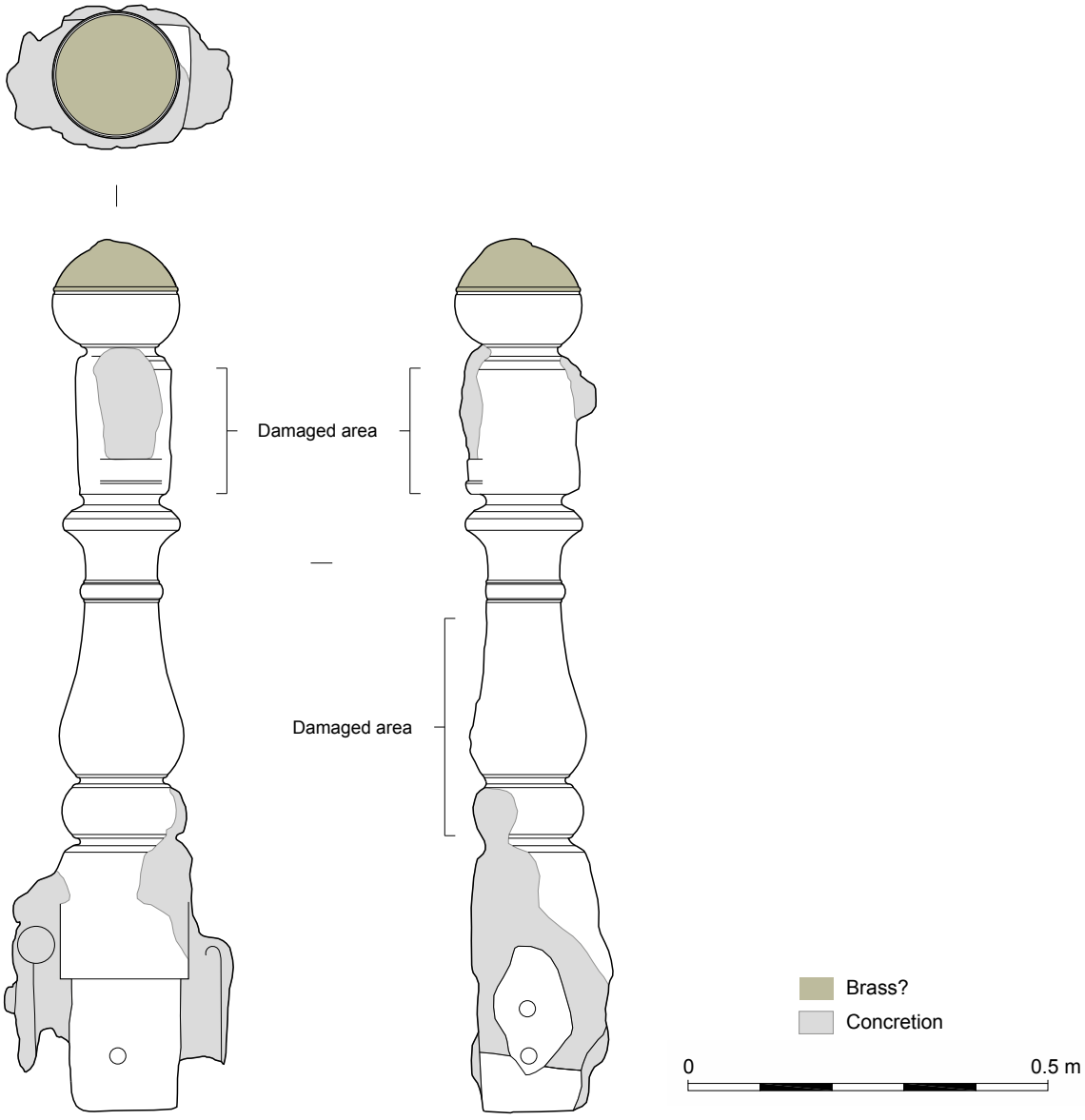
Campbell, G. F., 1974, *China Tea Clippers*, Adlard Coles Limited, London.

McCarthy, M., 2005, *Ships' Fastenings*, Texas A&M University Press.

Thames Discovery Program (TDP), 2010, Artefacts Removed from wreck site 343/26 5046, Unpublished Archaeological Assessment Report, Site code SRE10





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Drawings of WA1168 main views

Figure 1

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Photographs of details

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Photogrammetry model

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