

Report on Study Day 2024, Saturday 22nd June (summaries by Sarah Hanna)

Southampton Archaeology Society's Study Day on **Maritime Archaeology of the Solent and Surrounding Areas from the Stone Age to the 20th Century** was held at the Avenue Hall, St Andrew's United Reformed Church, The Avenue, Southampton. We heard from experts on shipping, wrecks and underwater archaeology about Mesolithic shore life; war at sea; trade; travel and life on board ship over the centuries; and in a port city during wartime.

What May Lie Beneath: the potential legacy of Henry V's navy. *Dr Ian Friel*

When Henry V (1413 – 1422) became King England had no regular navy, and in time of war the crown relied on conscripted vessels owned by merchants or other navies. In 1413 Henry owned two royal ships, but a year later ten sailing ships and barges had been added. He built up the navy including several 'great ships', the first of which was *Trinity Royal*, 540 tons, built at Greenwich. It was decorated to proclaim Henry as 'King of France' (spurred by the French king, Charles V's weakness as he suffered periods of incapacity). Henry ordered his ships to Southampton for war in September 1415 and captured Harfleur in Normandy; then marched on to win a great victory at Agincourt. However success was short-lived, the French soon regained Harfleur, and Genoese and Spanish ships raided English ports.

The next great ship was *Holy Ghost*, 760 tons: a Spanish carrack (*Santa Clara*) captured and rebuilt at Hamble. These ships were built for fighting at sea, with Fore- and Aft- castles as platforms for archers and men at arms, and Top-castle on the mast for dropping missiles on to enemy boats. In 1417 Henry again prepared for war, and needed to supply his army in France. He acquired the great ship, *Jesus*, 1000+ tons, and won a naval battle, capturing Calais, with four Genoese carracks which entered service as English ships. Henry landed in France and won victory at Crécy: by 1420 England controlled all of France north of Calais.

After the war two great ships were laid up at Hamble, where the port was built up with a defensive bulwark and chains, stakes on the shoreline and a guardship, carrack *George*. The *Grace Dieu*, at 1400 tons possibly the biggest in Europe at the time, made just one voyage, disrupted by mutiny, and sailed only as far as the Isle of Wight. In 1422 Henry died of disease while on campaign in France. The ship remained at Hamble but was destroyed by fire from lightning in 1439. The hull was discovered in 1875, at first mis-identified as Viking and plundered for souvenirs, then lost again. In the 1930s A C Anderson made a plan of the remains and identified it as *Grace Dieu* by huge iron nails required to hold four layers of wood in place. Only the lowest two metres survived, measuring 50 m in length.

The 760 ton *Holy Ghost* was laid up in dry dock at Bursledon with a keeper on board until 1430 when the ship was considered beyond repair, and reported as broken up and sunk in 1452. But while exploring the lower Hamble river in 1982, a 'shape' appeared on aerial photos of Southampton University. While testing with long poles in 2015/16 'hard matter' was encountered about 6' down: the discovery hit the headlines and a detailed survey was undertaken using ultrasound. An image (Historic England) revealed planking at 2.5 metres under mud very close to the *Grace Dieu* site.

Excavating the Mary Rose. Dr Alex Hildred



The *Mary Rose*, from the *Anthony Roll* (the only known contemporary image of the ship). @Public Domain

Henry VIII's flag ship *Mary Rose* sank in Portsmouth Harbour on 19th July 1545, and several theories exist regarding the cause. It was attempted to lift the ship in August 1545 without success, but salvage at the time included the rescue of some of the guns. As fine silts covered the ship it slowly sank further and the site was lost for three

centuries; rediscovery in 1836 led to salvage of four bronze guns (at the Maritime Museum Greenwich) but most guns remained below. The mainmast was sold at Portsmouth Point in 1836, but by 1840 salvage diving had ceased.

The Mary Rose Committee was formed in the mid -1960s and they leased the seabed from the Crown Estates forming a 300m exclusion zone (still in force). In 1970 a wrought iron gun was brought up by a dredger; 1976 a BP Rangemeter Survey was carried out and in 1979 the **Mary Rose Trust** was formed with the aims: to find the wreck, record, excavate, raise, bring ashore and preserve it. Volunteers were diving four shifts throughout the day, using an oxygen supply to keep divers under water for several hours, working 24/7 with teams of up to 11 down at a time. A grid was put in place for divers to hang on to and to define areas of work for each team. The plan was to empty the ship of artefacts: small items could be taken up in a bag, larger pieces identified and noted how they were placed so this could be replicated for display. One compartment was found sealed by a wedged door: drawings showed the exact find spot of each artefact which was then reproduced in the museum.

In 1982 *Mary Rose* was lifted from the seabed by suspending a cradle and frame beneath the ship's remains, while some of the planks and gun ports were lifted separately, using specialist teams. In 1986 a sub-bottom profile survey was carried out by Dr Jonathan Dix.

The Mary Rose Legacy includes the museum laid out alongside the ship remains; the seabed site; and the Archive, comprising 19000 artefacts; 3000 timbers; and 5000 samples.

The site and its surroundings are monitored with artefacts still submerged sandbagged for protection, and larger items such as the rudder have been lifted. Investigation of spoil heaps has recovered many small items such as pins and lace ends. In 2002 the MOD proposed a new channel for movement of aircraft carriers, to be 200m wide, 14m deep: but this was not permitted, to allow further searches for parts of the ship and artefacts.

Klein Hollandia – discovery was just the beginning. Mark Beattie-Edwards

The ship was built in Rotterdam in 1656, and lost in 1672 off the coast of Sussex. The ship's symbol was a Lion rampant with sword, coat of arms of the Admiralty of Rotterdam. It was listed originally as a 64 gun ship, but reclassified to 44 guns, making it lighter and allowing space for cargo. The dimensions were: 133' 10" long (= 3 D/D buses), by 32' wide.

Klein Hollandia was damaged in a four day battle of Lowestoft 1666 – at this time many battles took place in the North Sea as the English challenged the Dutch for control of the seas. Hostilities ended for a limited time in 1670 with the Treaty of Dover between the English king Charles II and King Louis 14 of France, but in March 1672 Dutch and English parties clashed with one ship sunk; called an “act of piracy” and the Dutch declared war. The English Admiral Sir Richard Holmes attacked the Dutch Smyrna Fleet – a rich fleet bringing luxury goods from the Mediterranean. Eight English ships met the Dutch convoy off the Isle of Wight, and fighting went on as they sailed up the Channel towards Sussex. *HMS Gloucester* captured the *Klein Hollandia* and boarded her but the ship was holed and sank after some hours, with English boarders still aboard. This was the only vessel lost but two ships were captured with rich cargoes of silks.



Holmes' attack on the Smyrna fleet off Beachy Head, March 1672.

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The wreck was located by a dive boat skipper as a metal 'anomaly' on the seabed, 32m down at low tide (maximum dive level is 37m). Recording and research was carried out from 2019 by the Nautical Archaeology Society, Historic England and Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, and it was

named as *Klein Hollandia* in 2023. Examples of French Limoges and Ligurian (Italy) pottery were recovered and further dives discovered bronze and iron cannon. A report was made to Historic England in May 2023 and the site designated as a wreck to protect it. Wessex Archaeology carried out a sonar survey, and the site is marked with a buoy attached by line. Since then 189 dives have been made, with three divers. They have found: 34 cannon (possibly more found than were said to be on the ship); large stone blocks and bundles of Carrara marble tiles; bricks from the galley; with ship's timbers scattered over a wide area.

In August 2021 a photogrammetry model was made, after the site had been trawled and disturbed remains, such as a gun upside down on its carriage: a bronze 6 pounder, dated 1670. Much of the cargo was ceramics, including jugs: one small brown jug was found with its cork which later disappeared. A survey was started on the ship's remains, which has collapsed on the seabed to starboard. The most recent discovery was a gun port separated from the hull, and it is estimated that several more years of excavation are needed.

Archaeology of Submerged Solent Shores; drowned settlements of the Mesolithic to the medieval by Garry Momber

This talk covers Bouldnor Cliff and nearby parts of the Isle of Wight northern shore. In Mesolithic times sea levels were much lower and several rivers ran into what is now the Solent, submerging the land to the north of the Isle of Wight (at this time still joined to the mainland). Sediments then running fast near Yarmouth have cut into the remaining



landmass and created a channel separating the Isle of Wight from the mainland. This erosion is still occurring.

A diver exploring part of the submerged shore at Bouldnor cliff, IoW.

Photo: Maritime Archaeology Trust

Aerial photos show the edge of sediment from the former shoreline and also 7m high cliffs starting at Bouldnor, running to a platform where an oak tree stump is visible. At this point many worked flints were found, drawn out by a lobster from his burrow. On inspection other well-preserved organic material was found, including 8,000-year old oak leaves alongside flint tools. These materials are widespread and the edge of the bank is eroding, uncovering further finds including trees. One very special find was a wooden platform structure with planks which were flat one side and rounded on the other, together with posts with cut marks going across the grain. Dated by Dendrochronology to 6200 BC, it is believed that the timber was trimmed and bark removed before constructing the platform, approximately 2m long and 1m wide, and it's thought to be a boat building site. Also found in this area were bundles of string made from nettle fibre. Evidence of wheat grains 8000 years old were dated by DNA in the sediment, which was possibly traded rather than grown locally. With log boats being made here and wheat for bread, this is a significant site.

Although the northern shores of the Isle of Wight have been eroding for 2000 years, the area may have remained relatively stable until the last 200 years. At Calshot, opposite to Bouldnor, mud flats preserve remnants of channels cutting through the beach and evidence of landslips. Again, trees have been found dating to 5000 years old, with posts dated to 3500 BC. Cores taken from the channels indicate dates ~4500 years ago. A line of posts uncovered recently have since eroded away, but a trench next to them indicated the depth. Two removed for conservation revealed cut marks, suggesting they could be Roman.

A circular run of posts was found on the seabed, one metre in diameter: samples gave a date of 2500 BC – a Bronze Age structure (possibly a basket): to be investigated. Further up the beach a cut up tree was found, dated to the Neolithic. Near the forested area, timbers run parallel to a small channel from the top of the beach to the shoreline, with evidence of

cross timbers showing cut-marks, dated to the Neolithic 2849 – 2729 cal BC; and an 80m line of medieval posts, dated to the 13th century, run at the side of this site.

These investigations have shown human activity present in this region through thousands of years, and reveal an ever-changing coastline. Human migration followed sea level rise as the climate warmed after the last Ice Age, while archaeology on the inundated land gives us information on the landscape and people who lived there.

Uncharted Waters: narrative approaches to the archaeological investigation of shipwrecks *Dr Jack Pink*

Ordinary ships such as merchant schooners are often missing from contemporary stories of 19th century shipping, leaving gaps in our understanding of the maritime history of this period. But documentary records of ships and seafaring can help researchers, as illustrated by examples below, from previously unidentified shipwrecks on the South coast. Useful data include: the *Shipwreck Index of the British Isles* c1990 and *Lloyd's Register of Shipping; National Record of the Historic Environment; National Maritime Museum*; but ship owners and companies also used insurance and these local documentary resources are accessible, providing details for numbers of ships and total tonnage.

Rhoda Mary a wreck found near Chatham Dockyard, known as the 'Medway Hulk' which has been identified as a long-lived wooden schooner used for local trade between 1868 – 1925. Identification was assisted by choices of materials for alterations; dimensions; technological issues such as use of iron knees. These would be verified by reference to *Lloyd's Register* regarding records of any repairs. Towards the end of its life records show the vessel was repaired in Cornwall, but later abandoned in its current location where it slowly rotted.

East Winner Bank shipwreck Situated on a sand bar in Langstone Harbour south of Hayling Island and only clear of water at extreme low tides. The wreck appeared between January and June 2014, orientated Northx3°E. Although keel and frame were still attached with the stern post, carvel-built, only the port side was visible with timber, nails and seaweed: overall size 23m by 4m, estimated >150 tons. A photogrammetry survey was made by use of a drone. After eliminating larger vessels from fifteen wrecks in the area four possibilities remained, and they researched the schooner *Ocean*, built at Dartmouth April 1821, registered at Plymouth 1821 -1865, with further details from *Lloyd's Register* about changes in the ship's condition during its working life. 1825/6 – recorded with iron knees, fastened with iron bolts. 1840: Serious Repairs after damage, including new topside. The presence of copper alloy nails correlates with dates of repairs, and can be compared with material found on site to aid identification. 1850/52 – further serious repairs included a new deck.

They have pieced together the working life of the ship, such as ports visited: mainly local coastal trading apart from one trip to Oporto, Portugal. Registration details included the names of three owners, the last being a broker who installed a master, but no record of voyages were found after the 1860s. It's possible this was a ship recorded as leaving port with a storm brewing and five people on board, which sought assistance from Fort Cumberland; records show a vessel was taken to Hayling Island to take off crew including the master and two others.

Southampton and D-Day: the greatest day by Andy Skinner

Andy explained the two operations involved for the invasion of Europe on 6th June 1944: Operation Neptune - the process of transporting approximately 150,000 British, Canadian and American troops and equipment across to the Normandy beaches on D-Day. Operation Overlord included the Battle of Normandy which continued until the end of August 1944.

in 1947 local Southampton historian Elsie Sandell looked down the bomb damaged High Street remembering D-Day and earlier embarkations, when troops had marched to the docks through the Bargate: from Agincourt and Crécy, the Napoleonic wars, Boer Wars and WWI. She reflected they all led up to D-Day – the largest sea-borne invasion in history. On 6th June 1944 150,000 men were transported across the Channel on to the five beaches: Americans to Omaha and Utah (leaving from areas west of Southampton); while 55,000 British and French (Sword/Gold) and 14,000 Canadians (Juno) left from Southampton. In the months leading up to June 1944 Mulberry harbour sections were built in the docks, while landing craft tanks (LCTs) and other vessels assembled at Southampton. The church of St Michael the Archangel, patron saint of Normandy, made the port a symbolic spot for the invasion of Normandy.

Origins of Operation Overlord A *New York Times* article reported the 1940 bombing raids on Southampton, and speculated that Americans would pass through the port to reconquer France. In August 1942 Canadian troops left from Southampton for an attempted assault on Dieppe, ending in disaster with 900 men lost and 1900 taken prisoner, which led to the plans being reconsidered.

1943 – landing ‘hards’ were constructed at Town Quay/Platform Tavern and at Mayflower Park: they were removed at the end of the war, apart from a remnant in Mayflower Park. 1943 – the US Army Transport Corps (14th Port) arrived in Southampton and set up camp in Hoglands Park, and by 1944 their presence was all over central Southampton. Southampton docks had been closed for a year and a half following bomb damage, which needed repair, and there were problems with the infrastructure so the Americans imported their own. Many dockworkers had enlisted and dockers were brought over from Dublin prompting fear the enemy would be informed through the German consulate; but this did not happen. Another problem was segregation in the US Army, with black soldiers encamped at the Ordnance Survey in London Road, while white personnel were billeted near the docks. The US Army used parts of the Civic Centre offices to co-ordinate ships, men and supplies. A massive camp of 8,600 troops was located on Southampton Common before embarkation. Southampton was involved in the construction of an underwater fuel line PLUTO (pipeline under the ocean) used to supply fuel to the army in Normandy, with the pipeline coiled on giant “cotton reels” before installation.

After D-Day itself many American soldiers embarked on troop ships (Liberty ships) from Southampton: three and a half million men between D-Day and Victory in Europe 9th May 1945. The same ships brought wounded men back to the port, for dispersal to hospitals across the south of England. The US Army stayed until 1946, and around the city there are several plaques commemorating their story, for instance at the Civic Centre and on the Mayflower Memorial. Elsie Sandell organised the production of the Southampton D-Day Embroidery by groups of local women in the late 1940s. It is kept in the Archives under the Civic Centre as it’s sensitive to light, though during June 2024 it was placed on display near the café at SeaCity Museum.