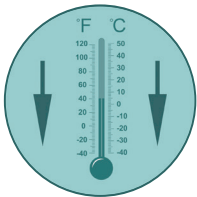# GUIDE: FINDS CONSERVATION

Finds of a historical nature should be left in place and undisturbed so that the marine environment can be enjoyed by future generations. Nonetheless recoveries are often made, intentionally or by accident (for example while fishing), so it is important that these finds are appropriately conserved and stored.

Marine finds are very fragile and can dry out quickly; even seemingly robust objects such as cannonballs can quickly degrade if they are not treated correctly.

WHAT TO DO WITH A RECOVERED FIND?

1 Place the find into a container, preferably plastic to avoid corrosion, and completely cover with seawater. If the find is large, cover as much as possible with seawater and wrap the rest in wet fabric or polythene.
2 Label the container or wrapping and store in a cool dark area.
   Label: date (DD/MM/YYYY), finder name, contact number and site/location.
3 Check the condition of the find regularly. Change the seawater every three weeks and note any cracks or flaking.

THREE KEY RULES

1 Wet – Keep the find wet by covering with water in an appropriately sized container
2 Cool – The hotter the environment, for example air temperature, the more likely it will corrode so place the find somewhere cool
3 Dark – Place the find away from direct contact with light, such as in a drawer or cupboard

THINGS TO AVOID

• **Supermarket bags** – they contain harmful chemicals
• **Drying** – when wet finds dry quickly they crack and disintegrate
• **Tissue paper** – tissue will degrade in water
• **Bubble wrap** – textured wrapping can leave impressions on soft finds
• **Placing different finds together** – some types of material can be affected by contact with others
• **Metal containers** – metal can cause problems such as corrosion
• **Glue** – some glues are harmful; if a find breaks don't fix it

There is a statutory obligation to report wreck to the Receiver of Wreck, part of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency.

For further information about the Marine Antiquities Scheme please visit: **www.marinefinds.org.uk**

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