



MARINE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

GUIDE: PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL FINDS



WHY ARE PALAEO-ENVIRONMENTAL FINDS IMPORTANT?

Palaeo-environmental evidence relates to the microscopic remains of plants (e.g. pollen, algae), animals and other organic remains (e.g. wood, nuts, seeds) sealed within layers of peat. These remains can be used to reconstruct past environments and landscapes that help us to understand how early humans and their ancestors lived. They can also tell us about how the landscape has changed by informing us about the configuration of the coastline in the past and the rise and fall of sea levels.

WHAT WOULD I EXPECT TO DISCOVER?

Peat is a black or brown fibrous organic-rich deposit that forms in low-lying boggy ground. As well as preserving microscopic remains which provide environmental evidence, large samples of peat may also contain other important objects such as stone tools, as well as wood, leather, textiles, pottery and other materials. Peat deposits can record when rising sea level flooded coastal land during prehistory. Alongside outcrops of peat, the seabed is composed of flooded landscapes like river valleys, lakes and hills, which are filled in or buried by marine sediments and seabed sand. Bedrock, or glacial till are often found at or under the seabed too. The preservation and extent of palaeo-environmental material depends on the degree of marine influence such as waves, tides and currents, in the past and present, as well as more recent human industry and development.

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

The Marine Antiquities Scheme is supported by:

