



MARINE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

GUIDE: WOODEN FINDS



WHY ARE WOODEN FINDS IMPORTANT?

Wooden components of a shipwreck, such as parts of the hull, are extremely important as they can reveal how the ship was designed and built. Tool marks on timbers show the woodworking techniques used by shipwrights. Wood can also be dated and provide information on the raw materials used in ship construction or may even rarely be connected to submerged former landscapes. Dark, waterlogged wood is usually an indication of an older wooden object.

WHAT WOULD I EXPECT TO DISCOVER?

Wooden finds on the seabed are most likely to be part of a shipwreck, such as hull timbers. These timbers are usually identifiable as they may have been shaped or jointed and comprise some form of fastener – be it treenails (wooden pegs), copper bolts or nails. Other integral features of a ship are made from wood, including masts and spars, fixtures and fittings such as rudders and wheels, and rigging elements like blocks and deadeyes. Aside from shipwrecks, wooden parts of maritime infrastructure, such as jetties, wharves and groynes, can also make their way to the seabed.

LEAVE WOODEN OBJECTS WHERE FOUND

Wooden objects that have been lying in water for a long time become very brittle and may split, collapse and disintegrate when brought up on land and be allowed to dry out. The best way of preserving shipwrecks and wooden finds is therefore to leave them at the bottom of the sea, where conditions are close to perfect – dark, cold and without oxygen.

There is a statutory obligation to report wreck to the Receiver of Wreck, part of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. Recovered material believed to be ‘wreck’ needs to be reported to the Receiver of Wreck within 28 days of the discovery.

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

The Marine Antiquities Scheme is supported by:

