



MARINE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

A scheme to encourage the recording of archaeological and historical objects found by marine users in English and Welsh waters.

– www.marinefinds.org.uk –



Divers on the wreck of the P&O liner *Moldavia*,
sunk in WWI off the south coast of England

Image: Steve Jones, www.millionfish.com

MARINE ANTIQUITIES SCHEME

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Every year interesting objects and sites are discovered by divers, fishermen, boat operators and coastal visitors.

The Marine Antiquities Scheme (MAS) provides a way to record these finds and, at the same time, both help protect and improve the knowledge of our shared underwater cultural heritage. It is a scheme to encourage the recording of archaeological and historical objects and sites found by marine users in England and Wales.

The expert position is that finds should be left in place and undisturbed so that they can be enjoyed by future generations. Nonetheless recoveries are often made, intentionally or by accident, so it is important that these finds are recorded before all knowledge of them is potentially permanently lost.



MAS aims to:

- Provide finders with a basic scheme to record archaeological and historical material that is found on the seabed around England and Wales
- Establish best practice for finds of underwater cultural heritage
- Help guide finders to satisfy the appropriate legal requirements
- Encourage responsible stakeholder management of the seabed
- Increase the knowledge of underwater cultural heritage and history
- Provide information to inform research and study

GETTING INVOLVED WITH THE MAS

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You can contribute by recording any archaeological and historical objects or sites you have discovered while in the marine environment.

The MAS team will research and identify each find and then publish information about it to the online database for you and others to view or study.



RECORD A FIND

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If you have discovered material of interest from a marine site in English or Welsh waters MAS would like to hear from you.

Any details you have could help to enhance knowledge of how people lived in the past, for example how they interacted with the landscape, sea and seabed.

If you are a fisherman, you may have come across an upstanding object on the seabed that could be the remains of an aircraft. If you are a diver you may have found an anchor or cannonball lying on the seabed. Perhaps you have spotted timbers on the beach while walking that could have come from a wooden shipwreck.

Whatever the case and whatever the find, we encourage you to record the details which will be reviewed and then uploaded onto the national MAS database that is available for all to access, and will help to enhance our shared knowledge of underwater cultural heritage and provide opportunities for wider research.

THE RECORDING PROCESS

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To record an archaeological or historical discovery, please use the online recording form or download the MAS app to your mobile device (for iOS or Android only).

The MAS app is easy to use, enabling finds to be recorded in a matter of minutes. To download your MAS app, please visit the relevant app store.

The app allows you to locate, record and submit information about archaeological material discovered anywhere within English or Welsh waters from the Mean Low Water Level. The details required include the location of the discovery and a description of the item or site. Up to 10 photos can be added.

Once you have submitted your find you will receive a confirmation email, which will also include the Report of Wreck and Salvage form for submission to the Receiver of Wreck (an officer of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency). You will need to fill this in if your find is considered to be wreck under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995. The MAS team will research your find and prepare details for addition to the MAS database on confirmation that it has been reported to the Receiver.

By recording your finds with the MAS you can receive:

- Communication as to the importance of the material
- Guidance for identifying objects
- Advice on conservation and storage
- Advice on relevant legislation and assistance with your statutory obligations



PROTECTING OUR UNDERWATER HERITAGE

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The expert position is that finds of an archaeological nature should be left in place and undisturbed so that the character of 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 recorded before all knowledge of them is potentially permanently lost. Equally important is to record objects and sites that are left in situ, to enrich the nation's knowledge and as they may be lost or removed in future.

The MAS app and equivalent online recording form allow you to record objects and sites left in situ as well as those that are recovered.

The MAS offers a way for finders to learn more about the finds they discover, to help characterise the archaeological or historical nature of the marine environment, and allow public access to the data for research.

THE 2001 UNESCO CONVENTION ON THE PROTECTION OF THE UNDERWATER CULTURAL HERITAGE

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The general public has always been instrumental in discovering and recording new underwater sites, and over the years has played a crucial role in creating public awareness and appreciation for underwater heritage.

As divers get to experience this heritage first-hand, they are also among those most invested in protecting and preserving our shared heritage for future generations.

The UNESCO 2001 Convention strongly encourages collaboration with members of the public, and advocates responsible public access to underwater cultural heritage including shipwrecks and all other traces of human existence with a cultural, historical or archaeological character. However, such access should always go hand in hand with site protection and preservation; under no circumstances should the nation's common heritage be disturbed or removed for personal or commercial gain.

The UK is not currently a signatory to the Convention, but has adopted the principles set out in the Annex as UK heritage policy. Divers are encouraged to follow UNESCO's Code of Ethics for Diving on Underwater Cultural Heritage Sites and the BSAC, PADI and SSA's Respect Our Wrecks Code of Practice for Wreck Divers.

The MAS encourages finds to be recorded if they have been discovered in a marine context, but left in situ on the seabed where possible.



Woolly mammoth tusk found
in the Humber region

© Wessex Archaeology

LEGISLATION AND STATUTORY OBLIGATIONS



Legislation relating to the underwater environment must be adhered to whether or not you record your finds with the MAS.

There are three main laws applying to wrecks in the UK:

- Merchant Shipping Act 1995
- Protection of Wrecks Act 1973
- Protection of Military Remains Act 1986

The Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979 may also apply depending on the location of the site.

Under the Merchant Shipping Act 1995 there is a legal obligation to report all finds of wreck to the Receiver of Wreck.

What objects qualify as wreck?

Wreck is legally defined as jetsam, flotsam, lagan and derelict found in the sea, in any tidal water or on their shores:

- Jetsam refers to goods thrown over the side of a stricken vessel in order to lighten it.
- Flotsam describes goods that remain afloat after the sinking of a vessel.
- Lagan refers to goods cast overboard from a ship prior to its sinking, which are buoyed for recovery.
- Derelict describes material, whether vessel or cargo, which has been abandoned at sea with no hope of recovery.

If you are in any doubt, it is always safest to report your find to the Receiver of Wreck.

What should I do if I find something that may be wreck?

You must report all finds of wreck to the Receiver of Wreck within 28 days of the recovery. The obligation to report finds applies to everyone, including archaeologists.

RECEIVER OF WRECK

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All records relating to recovered archaeological and historical material believed to be 'wreck' (objects that were derived from a maritime vessel regardless of size or significance) need to be sent to the Receiver of Wreck (RoW) within 28 days of the discovery being made using their form: 'Report of Wreck and Salvage'.

This form is automatically generated as a result of recording a find using the MAS or equivalent online recording form. Once the find is uploaded to the database, the RoW form is emailed to the finder, who must print and check the details on it and then sign and send it to the RoW using the following information.

Receiver of Wreck
The Maritime and
Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

Phone: 023 8032 9474
Fax: 023 8032 9477
Email: row@mcga.gov.uk

When a find is recorded through the MAS, an unsigned copy of the form (including contact details as supplied) will automatically be forwarded to the RoW. Recording a find on the MAS database does not replace the need for finders to report wreck to the RoW as described.



Admiralty telescope found
off the south coast

© Wessex Archaeology

The MAS is funded by The Crown Estate and implemented by Wessex Archaeology. It is largely based on the British Museum's Portable Antiquities Scheme. The MAS was developed with the assistance of the British Sub-Aqua Club, National Maritime Museum, Marine Management Organisation, Historic England, Nautical Archaeology Society and Receiver of Wreck.



The Crown Estate

The Crown Estate is an independent commercial real estate business, created by an Act of Parliament and returning all its profit to the UK Treasury. Its portfolio includes the UK seabed out to the 12 nautical mile territorial limit and around half the foreshore as well as the rights to generate electricity from wind, waves and the tides out to the Continental Shelf. Its active management of the UK seabed includes awarding leases for offshore energy, cables, pipelines and marine aggregate extraction. It funds the MAS through its stewardship programme, which supports projects that generate value and strengthen relationships across its core sectors, delivering lasting benefits to the community, environment and stakeholders. www.thecrownestate.co.uk



Wessex Archaeology

The MAS is managed by the support team at Wessex Archaeology – one of the UK's leading heritage practices and an educational charity. www.wessexarch.co.uk



Portable Antiquities Scheme

The MAS mirrors the highly successful Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), a Department of Culture, Media and Sport funded programme run by the British Museum that collates information about archaeological finds made by members of the public on land and the intertidal area. Since its initiation in 1997 the PAS database has recorded more than one million objects. www.finds.org.uk



For more information on the
Marine Antiquities Scheme visit
www.marinefinds.org.uk

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