

Marine Historic Environment Recording

The seas around England contain an immense wealth of archaeological sites and remains. As a country that has experienced successive waves of settlement over many centuries and as a major mercantile, naval, industrial and imperial power, the history of England and the experience of many of its inhabitants have been inextricably linked to its surrounding seas.

Maritime archaeology comprises the study of the evidence of all past human activity related to the sea around our shores. The maritime resource includes prehistoric sites that were once land, other coastal features such as early fish-traps, and submerged structures from defending our coast in the World Wars, and shipwrecks from all ages.

Submerged prehistoric sites might be the seabed deposits themselves, which are known to contain in-situ Palaeolithic deposits or artefacts dating back 700,000 years, relating to periods during the many cycles of Ice Age activity when large areas of our present seabed was dry land.

Shore areas, located at or near the retreating coastline from the end of the Palaeolithic and throughout the next 4-5000 years, may also exist. These sites can contain evidence of settlement or early communities use of natural resources, such as artefacts and palaeo-environmental deposits.

Due to the combination of historically high volumes of shipping traffic, a long history of sea-faring and a high energy coast, the density of shipwreck remains in English Territorial Waters is likely to be amongst the highest in the world. English Heritage holds over 40,000 records of wreck sites and seabed archaeological features, documentary references to marine casualties and fishermen's net fastenings.

SWAT Archaeology has immense experience of inter-tidal and offshore work in many parts of the world and is able to quote on most coastal and deep water surveys.



Gunpowder punt excavation and recording at Waltham Abbey

