

Excavating the Marina Camrose Shipwreck Collection

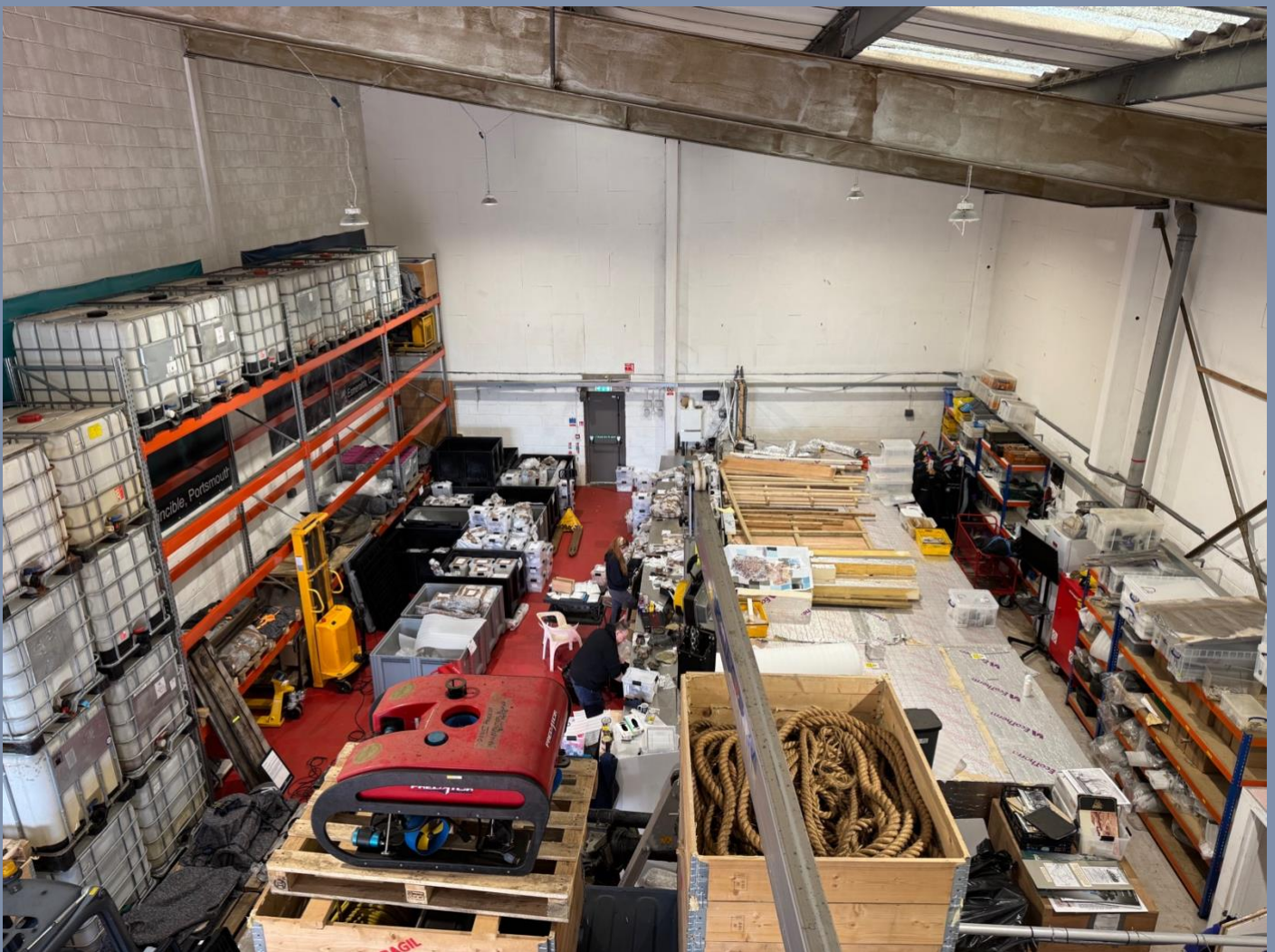
Last year we acquired the largest and most important collection of shipwreck artefacts from the UK which was to have been sold at auction. This year we have been assessing it, building a picture of what we have and how much of it is at risk and gauging our funding needs. Importantly the Collection is now protected by a Trust Deed and can not ever be sold or split.

Our ultimate aim is to be able to share these wonderful objects with museums across the country and internationally to the largest audience possible.

Our biggest challenge is the magnificent gun from the SS *Eastfield*.



It is a WW1 gun, one of only a few known to survive. In 1917 Britain was within weeks of starvation; Germany's U-Boats were torpedoing merchant ships carrying vital fuel and food supplies. The government responded by arming merchant ships – including the SS *Eastfield* (a steamship which was carrying vital coal supplies). There were no spare guns, however, so an old 19th century French land artillery gun was repurposed and a recoil system was added. It was basically a piece of scrap and obsolete, but the country had to use everything it could. SS *Eastfield* was sunk in November 1917 off the coast of Cornwall by a U-Boat, ending her WW1 service. The gun suffered physical damage during the sinking and now exhibits active corrosion to both iron and copper alloy components. A temporary frame and covering are currently being made to stabilize the gun prior to conservation. Black gloss paint has previously been applied to the upper surfaces of the gun which makes it difficult to assess the true condition of the underlying iron – corrosion could be occurring beneath the paint layers, as domestic paints do not form an impervious layer to water vapour and oxygen, and unpainted iron surfaces in close contact with the copper alloy will corrode through a galvanic process.

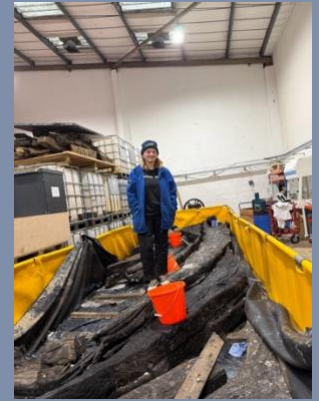


MAST's Archaeological Centre in Poole is now pretty full

Work behind the scenes has been furious as we have slowly built our conservation laboratory and acquired a freeze drier - a D6/14, with a new, semi-automated control system (1.7m H, 1.1m W, 2m L).

BU graduates and a trainee archaeologist

We are very lucky to have two Bournemouth University graduates helping us. One is Holly Hughes, left, now a professional archaeologist who discovered maritime archaeology at university and was part of the team that carefully moved the collection from Cornwall to Poole earlier this year. Also Heather Panter, right, is currently working with us and Bournemouth University as a trainee archaeologist having graduated from BU this summer in Archaeology, Anthropology and Forensics with a 2:1. She became inspired by maritime heritage having grown up by the sea, and loved how humans created great floating machines like spaceships to travel and explore the world. (Above, right, she is in the tank containing HMS *Invincible*'s cutwater. She has just drained it of PEG.)



She's now keen to work on the conservation side of archaeology, applying the scientific element and to be part of the trail from the sea all the way to the museum.



The Maritime Observatory

The Lloyds Register Foundation granted MAST £50,000 for our Maritime Observatory to identify all military and merchant marine vessels lost in the area of the Arctic convoys during both the First and Second World Wars. The project has also used a range of satellite-based remote sensing techniques to assess the sites for historic evidence of pollution and fuel leaks. The number of sunken ships was originally estimated at 100. This project has identified almost 300 vessels ranging from tankers to warships to hospital ships.

Our finds will be published next year on completion of the work. This is a vital part of building the available evidence for [Project Tangaroa](#), which convenes stakeholders and expertise to mobilise action on the urgent global issue of potentially polluting wrecks.





HMS Eskimo escorts an Arctic convoy under fire in 1942

The Arctic Ocean saw millions of tonnes of ship traffic during the First and Second World Wars. In World War Two in particular,

Germany's invasion of Norway and the Soviet Union meant that the Allies needed Arctic convoys to keep these trade routes open. Many of these ships failed to return from these journeys, as they were targeted by German warships, U-boats and aircraft; now, their corroding wrecks pose a potential threat of pollution, both from leaking oil and unexploded ordnance. Unauthorised salvage in many cases exacerbates this threat.

What is the Maritime Observatory?

MAST and OceanMind, a not-for-profit organisation which specialises in the monitoring of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for governments and the private sector, have joined forces to harness the growing capabilities of the space sector to better protect important maritime sites from unauthorised salvage. Our intention is to protect naval war graves and underwater cultural heritage with governments around the world. The Observatory is also able to detect oil leaking from shipwrecks, particularly important post 1870 metal wrecks.

The Maritime Observatory completed a number of important projects this year. Watch this [video](#) that explains what we do.

The Observatory's work is often triggered when vessels try to hide by turning off their AIS. Time is money for most honest people. When boats stop transmitting, this is when we sit up and check.

HMS Prince of Wales

Following MAST and the Maritime Observatory’s intervention to alert the authorities in the UK and Malaysia in March 2024, and the subsequent arrests of crew and the looting vessel itself – Chuan Hong 68 – Giles Richardson, MAST COO, was invited to Malaysia to assist with the



ongoing investigation by helping to identify the artefacts looted from the wrecksite. Below the Chuan Hong offloads its hoard in southern Malaysia.

The most important find from the looters haul is the ship’s anchor, left.

Chuan Hong 68 is one of several barges that had previously targeted WW2 wrecks in the South China Sea from about 2012-2017. In that time 50+



historic naval wrecks belonging to the US, UK, Australia, Dutch and Japanese were damaged or destroyed completely, to worldwide condemnation. Chuan Hong 68 is known to have targeted three Japanese wrecks off Malaysia in Jan 2017 (destroyer IJN Sagari & troop transports Hiyoshi Maru and Katori Maru) among others. Some of the barges were detained by Indonesian and Malaysian Authorities at the time, but all were eventually released. Chuan Hong 68 is the first we have seen to return to the area.

Pre-nuclear steel

Important research by the Atomic Weapons Establishment and MAST this year, published in the [UK Defence Journal](#), identified that there is little validity in the self-perpetuating myth that shipwreck salvors are looting for the value of pre-nuclear steel, citing medical instruments as a reason. These medical devices are never defined and our research suggests that it is most likely being used as a technically accessible term to refer to Whole-Body Counters (WBCs), facilities used widely in the nuclear industry to monitor staff for accidental intakes of radioactive isotopes. There is plenty of evidence of WBCs historically being built with pre nuclear steel but we could find no evidence of such steel being used since the turn of the millennium.



The Defence Radiological Protection Services Whole Body Counter (WBC) (built in 1963) contains almost 40 tonnes of legally salvaged steel from HMS *Vanguard*



MAST Brunei visit

At the invitation of the British High Commission in Brunei, MAST attended the Maritime and Port Authority of Brunei Darussalam trade fair with our Brunei partners Poni Group, who are instrumental in helping to develop and deliver maritime heritage opportunities for the Brunei authorities. MAST is looking forward to partnering with Brunei Government on maritime heritage initiatives.



HMS Anson exhibition

Meanwhile our chief conservator, Ian Panter, formerly of York Archaeological Trust, has been preparing finds (below) from HMS *Anson* for an exhibition at Chatham Dockyard next March 26th. The fascinating collection contains delicate medical

instruments which are rare survivals from Royal Navy shipwreck.

Anson foundered on the Bar Sands December 1807, two years after the



Battle of Trafalgar, with the loss of about 100 lives. *Anson* had a successful career during the French Revolutionary Wars and Napoleonic Wars, mostly operating against privateers, but also in small actions against enemy frigates. *Anson* was wrecked December 1807. Trapped by a lee shore off Loe Bar, Cornwall, England, she hit the rocks and between 60 and 190 men were killed. The subsequent treatment of the recovered bodies of drowned seamen caused controversy and led to the *Burial of Drowned Persons Act* 1808.

This will be the first exhibition from the Marina Camrose Collection. Ultimately we will be building MAST's Centre of Excellence in Maritime Archaeology so that we can not only continue our conservation and archaeology work but also allow us to welcome visitors to see the ongoing work and regular temporary exhibitions.

Alongside the conservation work we are very grateful to RYS *Britannia* for providing their knowledge, time and expertise to help us design and build our state-of-the art cataloguing database.

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