

# Forgotten Wrecks of WW1

Photo: Mike Pitts / Maritime Archaeology Trust



Photo: Maritime Archaeology Trust

Left: A diver explores one of the Camberwell's boilers. Above: The bow of the Camberwell emerges

One hundred years after the end of the First World War a major project to research, record and raise the profile of the war effort at sea has come to fruition with the support of UK marine aggregates companies.

HISTORIC remains from the First World War lie, largely forgotten, in and around our seas, rivers and estuaries. So to coincide with the centenary of the Great War, the Maritime Archaeology Trust, based at the National Oceanographic Centre in Southampton, launched a research project to raise the profile of an aspect of the conflict many believe is under-represented.

'Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War' is a Heritage Lottery Funded four-year (2014-2018) project to explore wreck sites along the south coast of England, from merchant and naval ships to passenger, troop and hospital vessels, alongside ports, wharfs, structures and foreshore hulks.

These remains are often unrecognised and unprotected and have been degrading and deteriorating for the past century. As a result they have become extremely fragile and the project is seen as a final opportunity to record what's left on the seabed and foreshore before it is lost forever.

With over 1,000 wartime wrecks along England's south coast alone, the conflict at sea left a rich – albeit poignant – legacy and many associated stories of bravery and sacrifice. These underwater memorials represent the vestiges of a vital, yet little known, struggle that took place just off our shores.

## But how do you set about gathering data from the sea bed?

As a limited number of wrecks can be dived, the Maritime Archaeology Trust turned to industries working in the marine zone, including members of BMAPA, the British Marine Aggregate Producers Association, which is part of the MPA.

Existing geophysical survey data from Cemex UK Marine, Tarmac Marine and Volker Dredging, has been used to gain detailed information on some of the surviving remains on the seabed.

Julie Satchell, head of research at the Maritime Archaeology Trust said: "The Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War project has benefited from the generous support of BMAPA members who have provided geophysical survey data of wrecks lying within aggregate extraction areas."

The data has been bolstered with support from the Heritage Lottery Fund and has assisted in the planning of diving investigations and extended research on a number of case study sites.

Geophysical surveys are invaluable in confirming wreck positions and identities, as well as interpreting archaeological features and assessing condition.

*The striking images derived from survey data are one of the most important ways of visualising these otherwise inaccessible sites.*

Mark Russell, executive director for BMAPA said: "I am delighted that the marine aggregate sector has been able to play such an important role in this research project. Geophysical surveys are an important tool of the industry. The data that has identified the precise location of wrecks to allow licence areas to be sustainably managed has now become an invaluable resource for this project."

With the dedicated work of volunteers who have researched, recorded and reported findings, the Maritime Archaeology Trust has been able to transform raw data into educational resources, exhibits, videos, talks and presentations.

The final result of the project is an accessible database of information regarding the shipwrecks, associated finds and additional relative information to provide a lasting legacy of information and learning resources relating to the First World War wrecks for future generations.

For further details visit [www.forgottenwrecks.org](http://www.forgottenwrecks.org)

## The SS Camberwell

Above: Framing of the vessel visible in the mid ships area behind the boilers

**THE wreck of the SS Camberwell lies five miles off the east coast of the Isle of Wight, within marine aggregate licence area 340. The site was surveyed as part of the assessment and monitoring work associated with the regulation and management of marine aggregate operations. Geophysical survey data was provided for study by Volker Dredging Ltd and Cemex UK Marine Ltd.**

Built in Sunderland in 1903, the Camberwell was a 'steam screw' vessel with a crew of 65. It was sunk on a journey from London to India, carrying a diverse range of cargo – from asbestos, billiard table accessories and cement, to wine, x-ray apparatus and zinc sheets.

The ship hit a mine at 7.15am on the 18 May 1917 and, after a massive explosion, took a very heavy list to starboard and began to sink quickly.

The Camberwell now lies at a depth of 31 metres on a seabed of sand and shingle, the mast extending to within 21m of the sea surface. The vessel is well broken up but the bow and stern are intact and the 4.7 inch gun is still in situ on the stern. The ship's remains, including the cargo, are relatively well preserved.

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Close up image of the Camberwell wreck from geophysical survey data

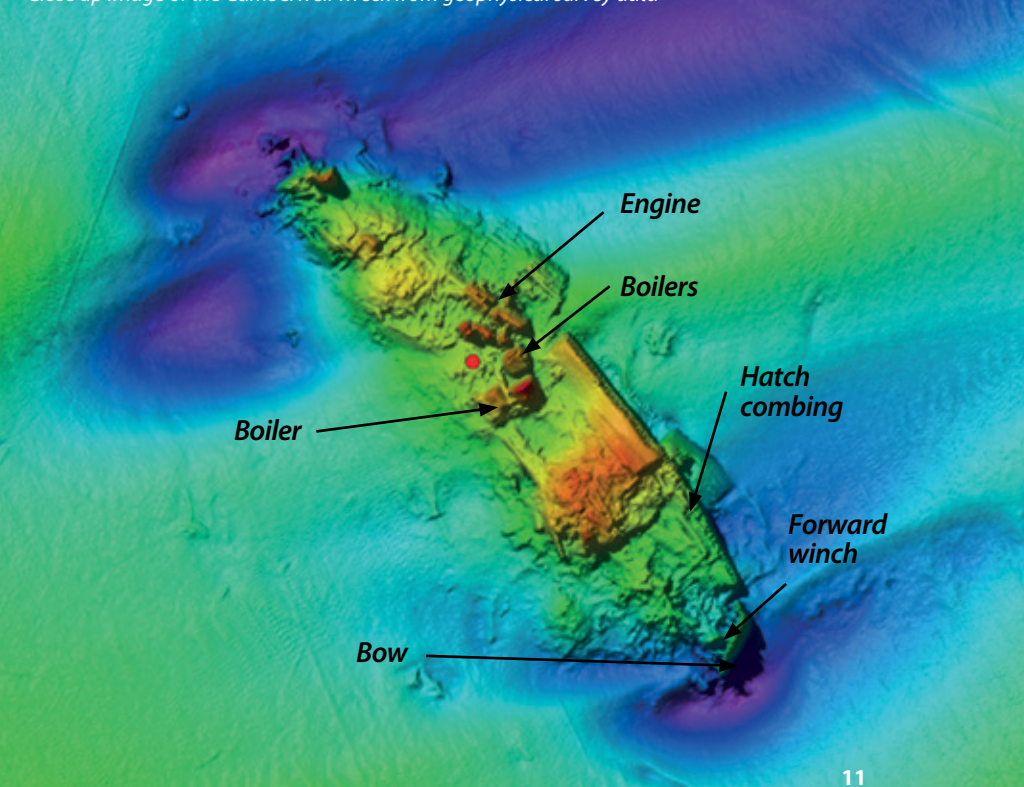


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