

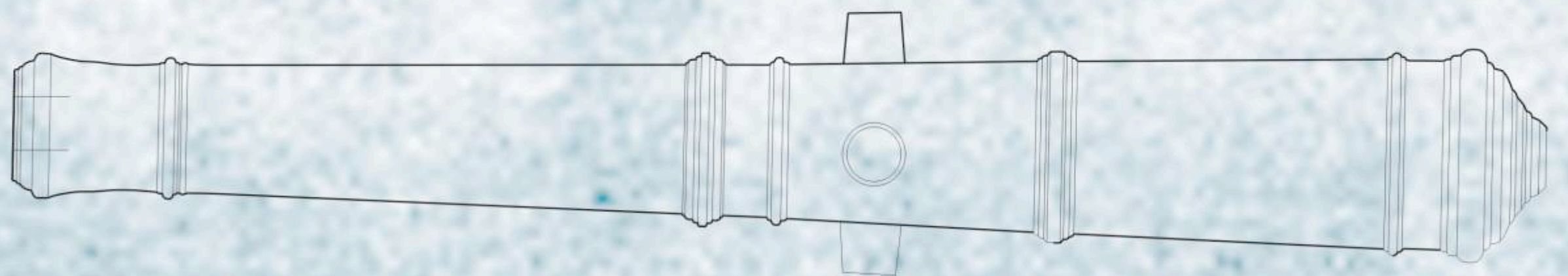
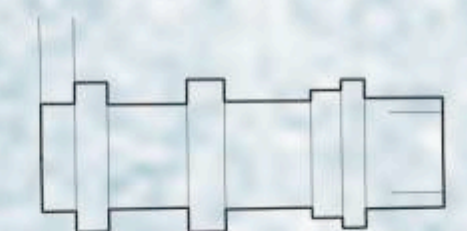
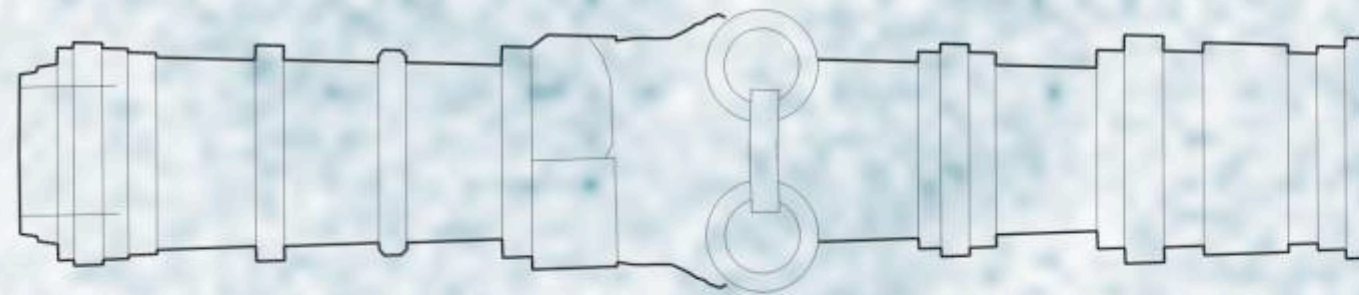
Wreck Discovered in the Thames Estuary

The wreck was first discovered in April 2003 during survey work to assess the feasibility of deepening a shipping channel. Since August 2003, Wessex Archaeology has been involved in recording artefacts and timbers recovered from the wreck.

A sonar image of the seabed shows the main wreck site, and a large section of the ship's side lying 30m away.



Amongst the early items recovered were a 16th century wrought-iron cannon (above) and an 18th century cast iron cannon (below). Both have been taken into the collections of the Royal Armouries at Fort Nelson, Portsmouth.



An anchor with a broken fluke is another of the items that have been recovered.

Iron bars, folded into manageable lengths, are believed to form part of the cargo of the vessel.



Wessex Archaeology would like to thank all those involved in carrying out and supporting these investigations for their kind assistance.



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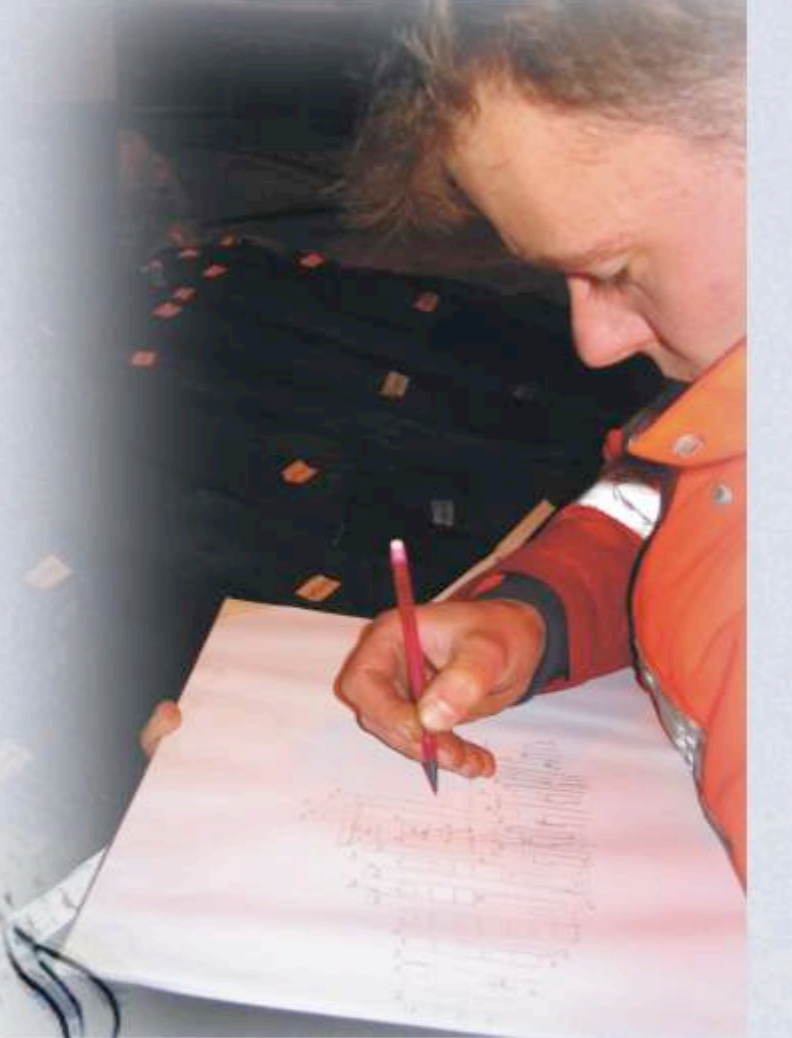
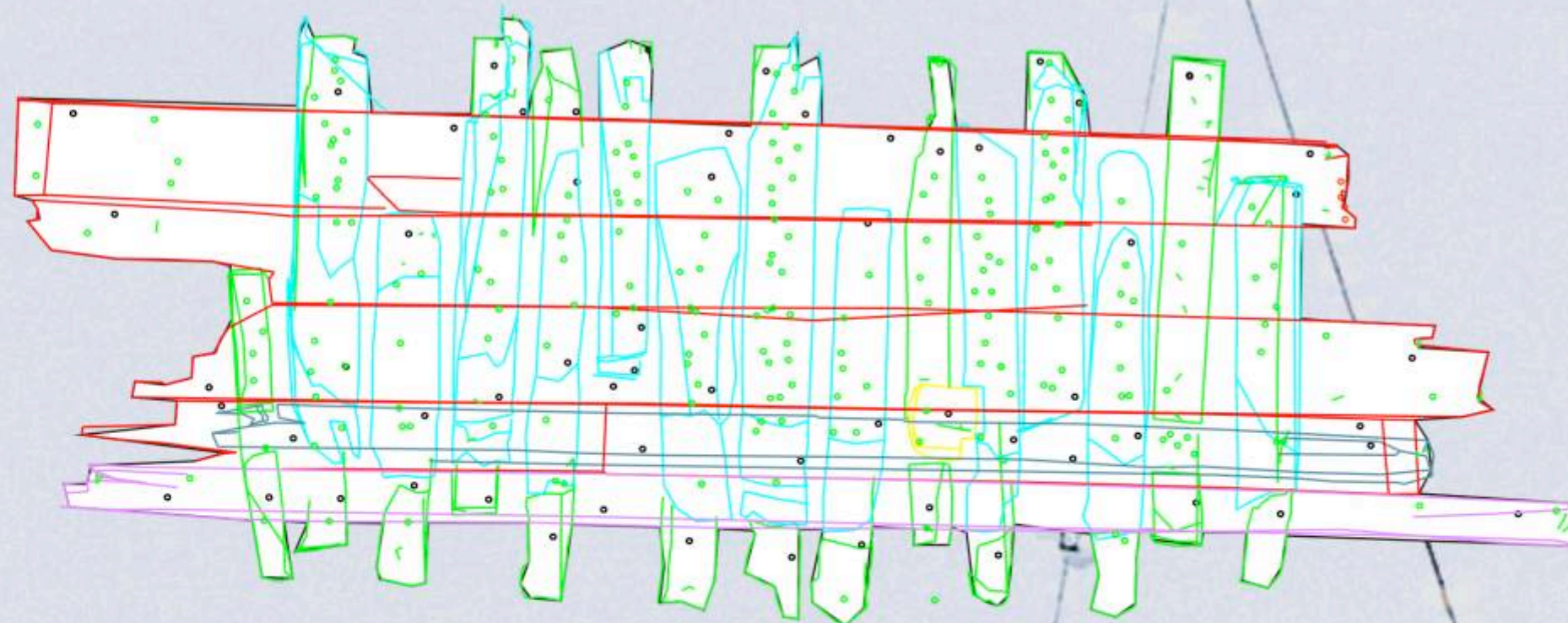
Recording the Artefacts and Timbers recovered from the Wreck

In November 2003, the large section of the ship's side lying to the east of the main wreck site was recovered and brought on shore. In January 2004, Wessex Archaeology undertook detailed recording of the timbers with the aim of establishing the origin and date of the vessel.

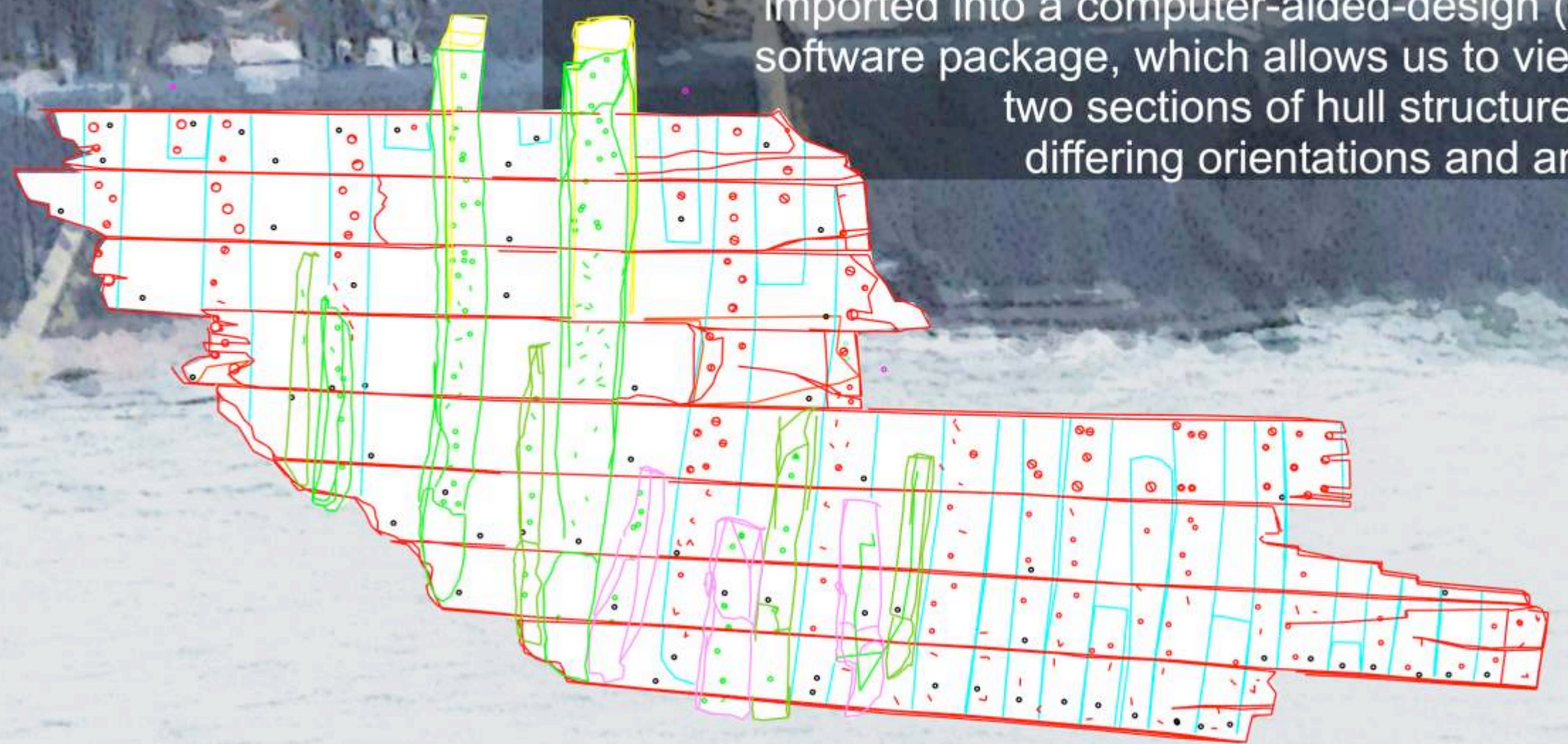
The large section of the ship's side is in two pieces, each weighing over 1 ton. Piece One, seen here on the quayside, shows the curve of the ship's side.



Wessex Archaeology's survey team used a Leica TCR 705 reflectorless Electronic Distance Meter (EDM) to collect measurements from the timbers.



All the measurements taken from the timbers have been imported into a computer-aided-design (CAD) software package, which allows us to view the two sections of hull structure from differing orientations and angles.



The CAD software also allows us to join the two pieces back together to allow us to assess where the two sections may have originally been located along the ship side.

The archaeological fieldwork was conducted by Hanna Steyne, Stuart Leather, Jens Auer, Matt Rous, Gareth Owen, Jesse Ransley and Mikkel Thompson of Wessex Archaeology.



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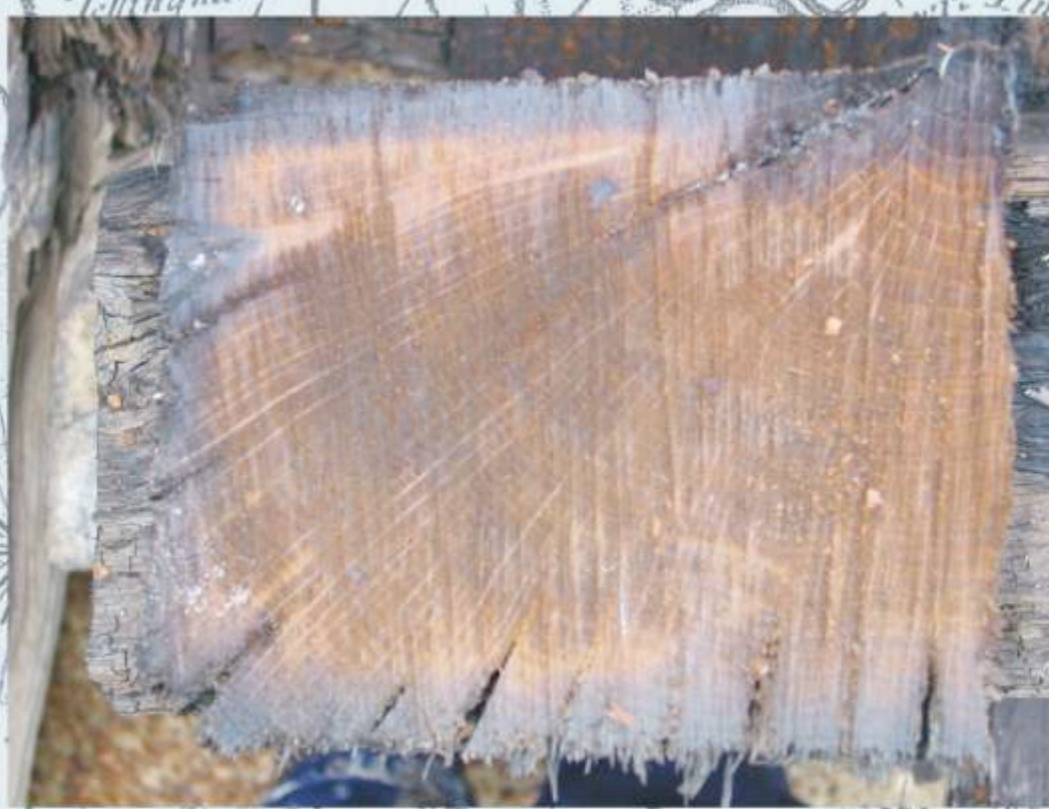


Piecing together the Story of the Wreck

The wreck poses many questions. From the cargo of iron bars, it would appear that it was a merchant vessel. It may have been carrying the cannons and anchor as part of her cargo of scrap iron, or the artefacts may have been in use when it sank. Dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) suggests that the ship was built soon after 1574 in Essex or East Anglia, but some of the details of construction point to Spanish or Portuguese influence. Wessex Archaeology will be continuing their investigations of the wreck over the coming months.



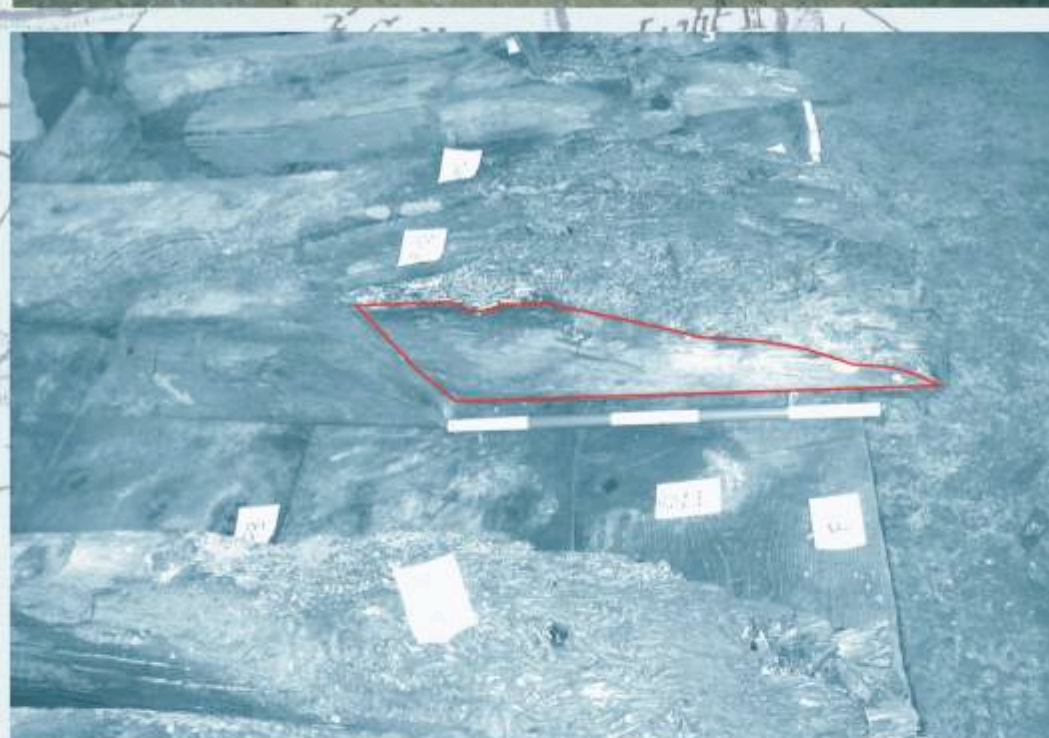
Dendrochronologist, Dr Nigel Nayling, cutting sections through the timbers to retrieve samples for tree ring analysis (right), and a sample showing a succession of annual growth rings (below).



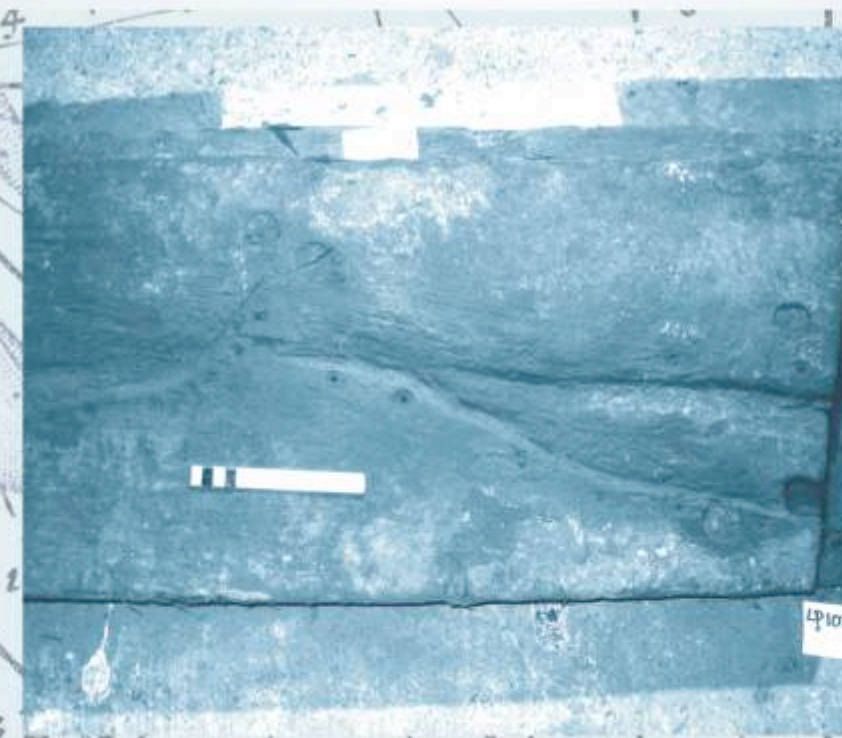
A piece of Spanish Olive jar was recovered on one of the dives, dating to the late 16th-18th centuries



The vessel shows evidence of both large and small repairs to its planking, suggesting that the ship is likely to have had a long working life before the incident which led to its final sinking. It is small details such as these that bring us closer the lives of the people who built and used it, and that we hope will eventually shed light on the vessel's last hours.



Amongst the vessel's most interesting features is how the components of the frames (or ribs) of the vessel are fastened together. Dovetail mortise joints have been used. These are a feature that has also been found on 16th century vessels dating from the time of the Spanish Armada.



Wessex Archaeology would like to thank Phil Magrath of the Royal Armouries and Steve Waring of English Heritage for their kind assistance.



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Timbers come to Portsmouth

The Nautical Archaeology Society has taken ownership of parts of the 16th century ship with the intention of using them as a training aid for divers to practice recording shipwreck structures underwater.

The sections of hull are currently at Fort Cumberland and will remain there until early August 2004, when they will be placed in Horsea Island lake. This saltwater lake in Portsmouth will not only allow the timbers to return to a more stable environment, but also allow divers to see them. NAS Training intends to use one section as a training aid on Part 1 courses and on specialty (Part 3) courses on survey, illustration, photography and video.



Members of Plant Troop, 24 Training Support Squadron, Royal School of Military Engineering, Chatham, transported the timbers to Portsmouth on behalf of the NAS.

A mobile crane was used to lower the timbers into place at Fort Cumberland.