

The fruits of our three-year excavation of HMS *Invincible*
are now the subject of a major exhibition

The Invincible Project

In 2016, MAST, in partnership with Bournemouth University, the site licensee, Dan Pascoe, and the National Museum of the Royal Navy, launched the project to raise, conserve and exhibit HMS Invincible, which was in peril from exposure due to the shifting Horse Tail sands – the result is the Diving Deep exhibition in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

The National Museum of the Royal Navy

Three full seasons of emergency excavation of HMS *Invincible* between 2016-2019, funded largely by a £2 million grant from LIBOR and a further £360,000 grant from National Lottery Heritage Fund, have finally yielded their fruit.

“She’s like a Ferrari in comparison to an estate car. The Royal Navy loved her design so much that by the Battle of Trafalgar, 16 out of the 28 ships were based on *Invincible* lines, so she became the backbone of the Royal Navy. It was commonplace in Europe for countries to capture each other’s ships to measure them and copy them” Dr Eileen Clegg of the NMRN.



The Princess Royal visits the exhibition



The excavation was a “really exciting process...this exhibition tells that story...and you get a real understanding of the anatomy of the ship”
 Dominic Tweddle
 Director-General of the NMRN

Some of the many tonnes of pristine tarred rope from the site

Even during moments of national lockdown the exhibition is still open to virtual visitors. During the lockdowns there is plenty still to watch and see on the NMRN’s website and its [YouTube links](#) here, and tickets can be booked [here](#). We recommend that visitors also take in HMS *Victory*. The ships were from the same era. Most of the artefacts you will see in the Diving Deep exhibition would have been in regular use aboard *Victory*. Now it is finally possible to fit the puzzle together.

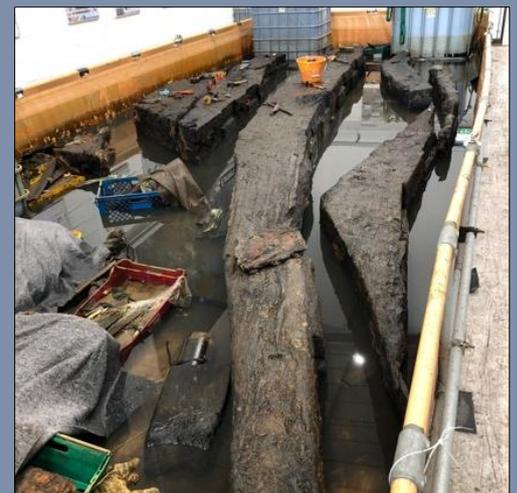


And we celebrate the help of volunteers, without whom none of this would have been possible



MAST trustees and CEO. From the left, Peter Goodship, Vice Admiral Sir Anthony Dymock, Jessica Berry and Major-General Patrick Cordingley

Meanwhile the cutwater - the projecting curve from the ship's bow and the first ever to be raised from the seabed - is over 9 metres in length and weighs about 6 tonnes. It has now been broken down into its constituent parts so that we can better conserve it, using a polyethelene glycol solution. It will be ready to view in about three years' time.



The raising ... and then the dismantling over four long days

Maritime Observatory

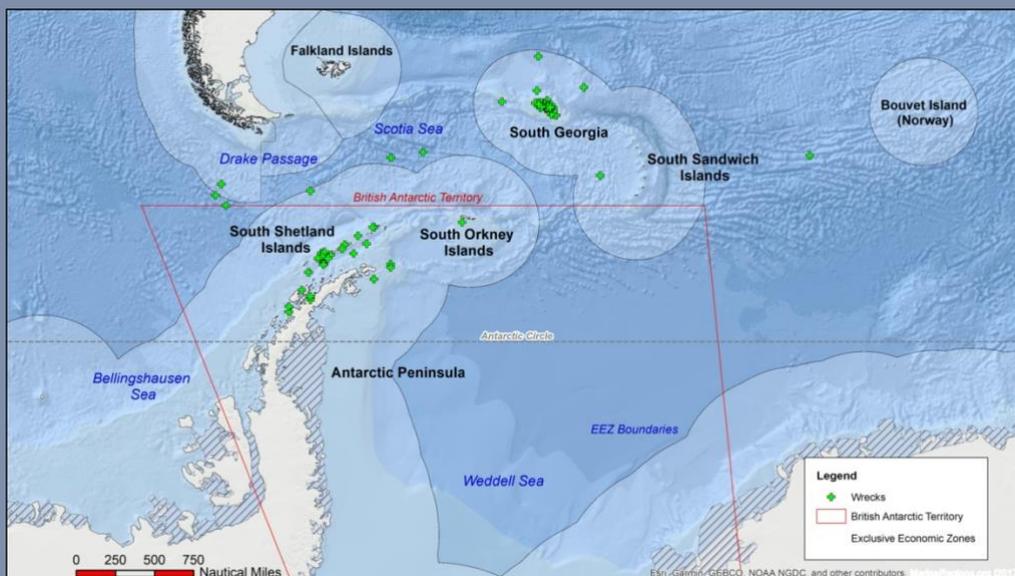
Last year MAST and OceanMind, a not-for-profit organisation which specialises in the monitoring of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for governments and the private sector, joined forces to harness the growing capabilities of the space sector to better protect important maritime sites from unauthorised salvage.

This maritime observatory function has been proven nationally and we are now extending it to European partners. It establishes a cross-sector team with strong government input that creates a hub for monitoring the maritime domain and sharing intelligence with relevant stakeholders to protect important maritime sites. New technology for finding and exploiting wrecks has allowed increased unauthorised salvage activity in the high seas beyond territorial waters where criminals exploit the limited jurisdiction and absence of enforcement. There is a huge disparity between the protection afforded to military remains ashore and those on the seabed which has enabled WWI and WWII wrecks to be ravaged. The Observatory is combining OceanMind's satellite surveillance with specialist intelligence to enable much more effective monitoring of known wreck sites and the tracking of bad actors.

It aims to help detect and thus deter unauthorised recoveries from wrecks, both historic and modern – eg. merchant ships carrying valuable cargoes, ancient wrecks, warships which may contain human remains, and sites at risk due to their pollution potential (oil and ordnance). Although the Observatory has identified that most looting targets recent metal wrecks, no wreck is immune from interference. MAST is currently focused on improving the protection of military wrecks because the ownership is usually clear and their possible status as naval war graves raises public concern, but similar principles apply to merchant shipwreck preservation - a much larger challenge but one that will increase in importance as steel corrodes and pollution occurs. This criminality is not limited to the maritime domain and often enmeshes wider illegal activities.

British Antarctic Territory – an underwater cultural heritage assessment

MAST was commissioned by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to develop their strategy for Underwater Cultural Heritage in the British Antarctic Territory. These territories were the last on Earth to be visited by humans, having being discovered progressively from 1675 until the early 20th century. The first phase delved into the history of exploration and exploitation in the region.



The BAT study area

The full report is available [here](#) on MAST's website. Now, based on this current research, MAST will continue with the next stage of the project, recording all known archaeological remains and historic accounts of wrecks in South Georgia, the South Sandwich Islands and the British Antarctic Territories. Due to the COVID pandemic, work is expected to take longer than usual.

COVID stops play

Due to the COVID pandemic MAST and its partners have been unable to conduct any fieldwork in 2020 and have had to put some projects on hold. However, our team is still attending important sector meetings, holding online meetings with stakeholders and progressing international virtual outreach. We hope to resume normal services, like the rest of the world, next year.

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