

The Maritime Archaeology Trust activity report in support of the UNESCO, 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage: 2017 – 2018.

The Maritime Archaeology Trust (MAT) is a registered charity with 28 years' experience in research investigations and pioneering techniques for the study of underwater cultural heritage (UCH). Our key objectives are 1, to investigate maritime, coastal and underwater archaeology. To achieve this the MAT conducts maritime archaeological surveys, investigations and research in accordance with professional and museum codes of conduct and practice and the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001 Convention). 2: engage with people, communities and schools through involvement, enjoyment and education by involving people in maritime heritage to develop understanding and enjoyment of the resource. 3: promote the hard to reach and inaccessible maritime heritage, to raise the profile of our submerged and hidden heritage to enhance its significance. 4: to protect the heritage by supporting management for current and future generations. MAT champions and supports the 2001 Convention.

The MAT has a track record of presenting to the States Parties and regional colloquia in support the UNESCO 2001 Convention. This included our work on the wrecks of the Great War at the UNESCO opening commemorations for the WW1 war at sea in Bruges, May 2014; a review of the value of the UCH to our understanding of climate change in the UNESCO Pavilion at COP21 in December 2015 and to inform the States Parties about the threats to the UCH from climate change at the Information Meeting on the 15th Anniversary of the 2001 Convention in May 2016. These, amongst other presentations, set a direction for many of our UCH activities in 2017 and 2018.

During 2017 and 2018 MAT have been actively researching, investigating, presenting, displaying and publishing in support of the UCH. A major area of MAT's research has been the Forgotten Wrecks project that had a core aim of raising the profile and understanding of heritage related to the War at Sea during WW1. This project, funded by the HLF in England, researched 1,130 wrecks within the English Channel/La Manche. This included interrogation of regional and National Archives, detailed reports on 66 sites, fieldwork on 62 sites, interpretation of over 200 geophysical survey images, and the recording of 718 artefacts from First World War shipwrecks. See MAT's Annual Fieldwork Reports at: <https://www.maritimearchaeologytrust.org/annualreports>.

The research was complemented by a programme of activities that disseminated the results to increase awareness and commemorate our heritage through the UCH. This included contributions from over 300 volunteers to research and fieldwork, and 245 outreach events. At these events, direct contact was made with over 32,000 people. In addition, there were 61 workshops with schools and youth groups, dozens of talks given to community groups, and 44 sites were visited with our mobile exhibition that reached over 500,000 people. The MAT also began running the Shipwreck Centre and Maritime Museum on the Isle of Wight in 2017. Within this we curate thousands of UCH artefacts with new additions of two boats, listed on the UK's National Small Boat Register, that would have otherwise been being sold into private ownership in 2018. The Centre receives over 6,000 visitors each year.

Social media has been another outlet used to inform the public and promote the significance of the UCH. In the last couple of years, we have received almost a quarter of a million views on our website (www.maritimearchaeologytrust.org) which has been increasing steadily with the release of our Forgotten Wrecks Viewer that hosts the data sets for each wreck site on a web based portal (<http://forgottenwrecks.maritimearchaeologytrust.org/wreck-database>). The Viewer is a powerful tool used to present all aspects of the project and in particular the 3D digital models that were created by MAT using photogrammetry and can be viewed in Augmented or Virtual Reality. These include models of shipwrecks, hulks on the shoreline and artefacts: <http://sketchfab.com/maritimearchaeologytrust>.

MAT's expertise and practices have been taken overseas where we have worked with government curators and academic institutions from many parts of the globe to share techniques, help build capacity, support the UCH, and promote the 2001 Convention. Surveys of shipwrecks in the Persian/Arabian Gulf in 2017 produced digital records of wrecks for the first time in Qatar while excavations in 2018 recovered ceramics from the important anchorage in the World Heritage Site of Al Zubarah. MAT worked closely with the Qatar Museums to share experiences and build local capacity. In Spain, MAT archaeologists worked with a multinational team and Spanish authorities on the 16th century Spanish Galleon lost at the mouth of the River Ribadeo to record and preserve artefacts in accordance with the Convention. In Madeira, Portugal, the MAT created and published a 3D model of the *Pronto* online. In Greece we also took our Maritime Bus/travelling exhibition to Cyprus where we spent over a month touring local schools and events to highlight the significance of the UCH.

In addition to shipwrecks, the MAT has extensive expertise looking at the prehistoric UCH within submerged landscapes. Over the last two years its staff have contributed to eight peer reviewed published papers and chapters in international books and journals. Projects have included the study of the prehistoric landscapes of Saudi Arabia that would have been home to some of the earliest humans to leave Africa. Further north in the Solent, UK, the MAT has conducted rescue excavations on an 8,000-year-old Middle Stone Age site off Bouldnor Cliff, sampled a 5,000-year-old New Stone Age submerged forest and put evaluation trenches across a multiphase structure that dated from the Bronze Age to the Roman period. This last feature is in the intertidal zone and is now threatened because of climate change. It is also a tangible indicator of the changing coastline and is an example of many such sites that are now being incorporated in a new EU funded project that is using the UCH to understand past changes in sea level. The MAT is the maritime archaeological partner.

The results of our fieldwork activities are complemented with presentations in the UK and abroad. This can be to the public, or to stakeholders, specialists and curators. In addition to the dozens of talks given in the UK, notable international presentations included the European Scientific Divers Conference, Madeira, March 2017; an EU Interreg Workshop, Lille, December 2017, UISPP Commission on Coastal Prehistory and Submerged Landscapes, Paris, June 2018, Contributing to the International Decade of Ocean Science, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris, April 2018, European Association of Archaeologists conference, Barcelona, September 2018, Underwater Cultural Heritage Forum in support of the ratification of the 2001 Convention by Germany, Berlin, December 2018 and the meeting of 2001 Convention, Accredited NGOs, Dec 2018, in the UNESCO Headquarters Paris where the MAT Director presented and Chaired the meeting. The MAT sits on the working group and is helping to shape the agenda of the Accredited NGOs' future actions.

MAT continues to champion and support the 2001 Convention and will be doing so within the framework of its ongoing projects during 2019. This includes shipwreck and submerged landscape studies in the South of England, supporting capacity building in Qatar, recording and protecting the coastal UCH in the Channel/Manche area as part of the EU, Interreg 2 Seas SARCC project (in England, France, Belgium and the Netherlands), taking an active role within the Accredited NGOs Working Group meeting and Scientific and Technical Advisory Body (STAB) meeting at the UNESCO Headquarters in June 2019 as well as attending the High-Level International Meeting on the 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage, organized by the French Government immediately preceding this in Brest.