

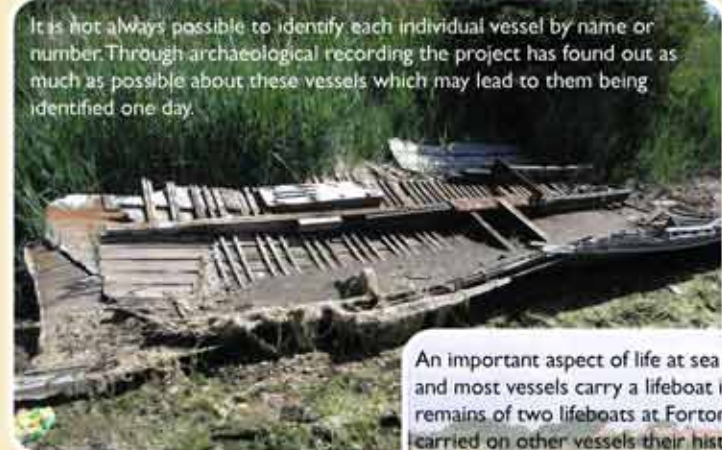
Forton Lake Archaeology



Forton Lake is located in front of you on the other side of the Millennium footbridge. The tidal lake lies just to the west of the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour and over the years has changed its shape because of land reclamation.

The Forton Lake Archaeology Project carried out between 2006 and 2009 allowed the local residents of Gosport to research, record and display their maritime heritage. This resulted in a greater understanding of the historic vessels around the Lake.

The *Vadne* is one of the largest vessels in Forton Lake and is a former ferry that worked transporting people and goods between Gosport and Portsmouth from the 1930s to 1950s. The *Vadne* was built just before World War II and was not in use long before being taken into service for war duty. The photographic survey undertaken has gained a record of the *Vadne* which can be used to monitor the site and will be placed in a public archive for future researchers.



It is not always possible to identify each individual vessel by name or number. Through archaeological recording the project has found out as much as possible about these vessels which may lead to them being identified one day.

An important aspect of life at sea is ensuring the safety of those onboard and most vessels carry a lifeboat in case of emergency. There are the remains of two lifeboats at Forton Lake. Although these were boats carried on other vessels their history is just as important.



Barges are very functional vessels, they are designed to transport all sorts of cargoes either locally, nationally or internationally. These vessels were sometimes built specifically for carrying a certain cargo, or navigating particular waters, which resulted in features we can identify in the archaeological record. The project undertook the excavation of three wooden barges - these were some of the oldest vessels investigated. Excavation has revealed much more detail about their size, shape and construction. It is hoped the knowledge gained may lead to their future identification.

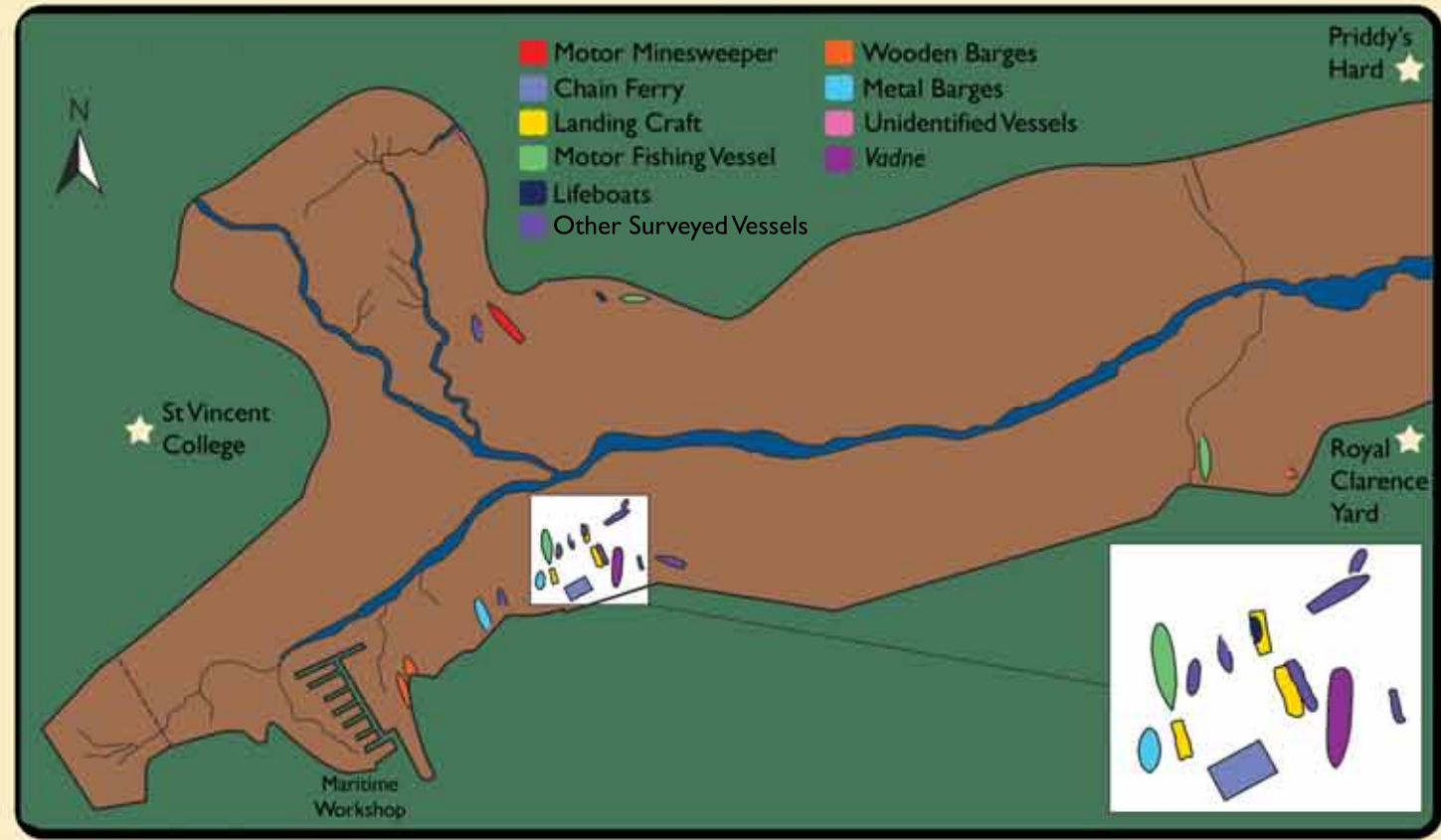
This is the remains of the Chain Ferry that was used to cross the Medina River between East and West Cowes on the Isle of Wight. Like many vessels it had a varied life and was later sold to Mr Uffa Fox, a renowned boat designer, sailor and writer. He converted it into his house and workshop.



Motor Minesweepers (MMS) like this one were designed or adapted to sweep or explode mines laid at sea. This example still has the distinctive sweepwire cable, see inset picture. The project has identified this as MMS No. 293 which probably saw service at Normandy as it is recorded as being allocated to the Normandy Invasion Force.



At least five vessels now lying in the mud at Forton Lake have origins in World War I and II. The remains include at least three Landing Craft such as this one. They were used for the transportation of troops during assaults from the beach in WWII. A large number were constructed prior to the Normandy invasion of 1944.



Forton Lake Today and for the Future

Like every other part of the country Forton Lake is a changing landscape. It has undergone not only a change in shape but also a change in function. At the southern end of the Lake Priddy's Hard and Royal Clarence Yard are no longer used by the military but are being developed as the need for housing grows. HMS St Vincent, now St Vincent College; at the western end, no longer uses the Lake for training future seafarers. The Maritime Workshop on Ferrol Road is no longer a centre for scrapping and selling vessels but rather restoring them.

These changes in use should not mean that history is forgotten. It is hoped that these important vessels will survive through an active interest by members of the community, and that the archaeological investigations carried out will lead to further research on the remaining rich maritime heritage of Gosport.

This project has been funded by The Crown Estate via its Marine Stewardship Programme. The Crown Estate includes extensive marine assets throughout the UK and its stewardship programme provides funding for projects which aim to promote good management of the marine environment.



Find out more:
www.hwtma.org.uk
www.nauticalarchaeology.org

A joint NAS and HWTMA community archaeology project

