

Forgotten Wrecks  
of the  
First World War

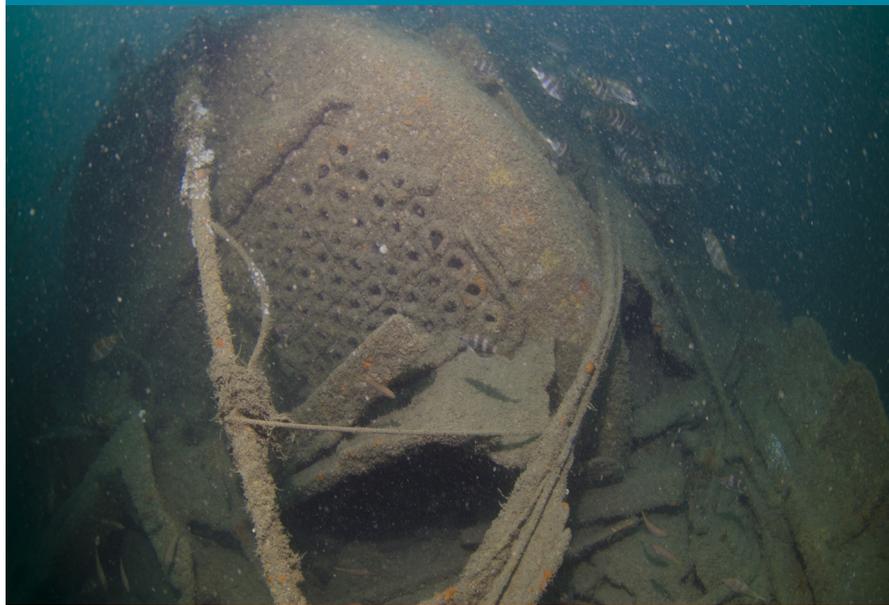


LED BY IWM

May  
2018

# HMT *Dagon*

## Site Report





**FORGOTTEN WRECKS  
OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

**HMT *DAGON*  
SITE REPORT**



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MAT Staff involved in fieldwork, recording, research and reporting: Amanda Bowens, Jan Gillespie, Christin Heamagi, Julie Satchell and Jasmine Noble-Shelley.

## **ii Copyright Statement**

This report has been produced by the MAT with the assistance of funding provided by the Heritage Lottery Fund through their Heritage Grants Programme. Unless otherwise stated all images are copyright of the MAT.

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## 1 Project Background

Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War is a Heritage Lottery Funded project which is dedicated to raising the profile of a currently under-represented aspect of the First World War. While attention is often focused on the Western Front and major naval battles like Jutland, historic remains from the war lie, largely forgotten, in and around our seas, rivers and estuaries.

With over 1,100 wartime wrecks along England's south coast alone, the conflict has left a rich heritage 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 on a daily basis, just off our shores. The study and promotion of these archaeological sites presents a unique opportunity to better interpret them and improve physical and virtual access.

The project focuses on underwater and coastal sites between Kent and Cornwall, which include merchant and naval ships, passenger, troop and hospital ships, U-boats, ports, wharfs, buildings and foreshore hulks. These sites, under water and on the foreshore, have been degrading and deteriorating due to natural and human processes for approximately 100 years and, as a result, are extremely fragile. In many cases, this project represents a final opportunity to record what remains on the seabed and foreshore before it is lost forever.

The project aims to characterise the nature and extent of the maritime First World War archaeological resource surviving on the south coast's seabed and around the coast. This will enable an understanding of maritime activity just off our shores during the conflict and provide a window onto some of the surviving sites. While it will not be possible to visit and record all c.1,100 vessels dating to the First World War, lost off the south coast of England, a representative sample of sites have been selected for more detailed study, analysis and interpretation. This report collates information collected during the project, relating to one of the south coast's First World War wrecks, namely that of HMT *Dagon*.

## 2. Methodology

General detail on the methodologies employed during the project are outlined within *Forgotten Wrecks of the First World War: Project Methodology Report*, this report section concentrates on approaches and resources relating specifically to *Dagon*.

### 2.1 Desk Based Historic Research

Research involved using a range of online resources which included those outlined in the table below. Records at archives local to Dover and to the Dover Patrol were also consulted.

<b>Pastscape:</b>	<a href="http://www.pastscape.org/hob.aspx?hob_id=1238885">http://www.pastscape.org/hob.aspx?hob_id=1238885</a>
<b>Wrecksite EU:</b>	<a href="http://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?145812">http://www.wrecksite.eu/wreck.aspx?145812</a>
<b>Uboat.net</b>	<a href="http://uboot.net/wwi/ships_hit/1539.html">http://uboot.net/wwi/ships_hit/1539.html</a>
<b>Other URL:</b>	<a href="http://www.divernet.com/uk-dive-sites/p316456-kindly-tides-of-the-channel.html">http://www.divernet.com/uk-dive-sites/p316456-kindly-tides-of-the-channel.html</a> <a href="http://www.kentfallen.com/PDF%20REPORTS/DOVER%20PATROL%20VESSELS.pdf">http://www.kentfallen.com/PDF%20REPORTS/DOVER%20PATROL%20VESSELS.pdf</a> <a href="https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=5EwdCwAAQBAJ&amp;pg=PA90&amp;lpg=PA90&amp;dq=grimsby+Dagon&amp;source=bl&amp;ots=KmpIHIPoMK&amp;sig=jxkr5kNjS3bmBjyu76nOe_wextY&amp;hl=en&amp;sa=X&amp;ved=0ahUKEwic1bqK5YTZAhVqB8AKHbjMA1oQ6AEIVjAM#v=onepage&amp;q=grimsby%20Dagon&amp;f=false">https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=5EwdCwAAQBAJ&amp;pg=PA90&amp;lpg=PA90&amp;dq=grimsby+Dagon&amp;source=bl&amp;ots=KmpIHIPoMK&amp;sig=jxkr5kNjS3bmBjyu76nOe_wextY&amp;hl=en&amp;sa=X&amp;ved=0ahUKEwic1bqK5YTZAhVqB8AKHbjMA1oQ6AEIVjAM#v=onepage&amp;q=grimsby%20Dagon&amp;f=false</a> <a href="https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-war-dead/results?unit=Dagon">https://www.cwgc.org/find/find-war-dead/results?unit=Dagon</a>

Desktop research included studying bathymetric imagery of the wreck of the *Dagon*. Data was kindly provided by the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office which had been collected by the Maritime &

Coastguard Agency, under the Open Government Licence V2. The dataset used was: HII 476 2015-83465 Hastings to Beachy Head.

## 2.2 Associated Artefacts

While the Forgotten Wrecks Project had a non-recovery policy, where possible, the project aimed to 'virtually reunite' artefacts historically recovered from the Forgotten Wrecks, however, research did not reveal any information about artefacts recovered from the site of the *Dagon*.

## 2.3 Site Visit/Fieldwork

Forgotten Wrecks site visits and fieldwork aimed to:

- Provide opportunities for volunteers to access and take an active role in the recording and research of a range of different types of maritime First World War sites.
- Record extant remains for heritage records.
- Record extant remains for public dissemination, enabling 'virtual' access for those not able to achieve physical access.

The most appropriate methods for site recording were chosen from the following, on a site-by-site basis: site sketch, measured survey, photography (photogrammetry were possible), and/ or video.

Diving as part of the Forgotten Wrecks project was undertaken on the wreck of the *Dagon* from dive boat *Dive 125* out of Eastbourne on 20 July 2017. Initial dives aimed to assess the condition of the remains then to build on this information with a measured sketch/survey and photographic recording where possible. Over 1,400 photographs were taken using photogrammetry, measurements of specific features were recorded.

A total of six divers undertook a total of 341 minutes diving on the wreck. The dive team used self-contained breathing apparatus (SCUBA) with enriched air nitrox (EANX) a breathing gas mix. The diving conditions were generally good with visibility being around 4m.

## 3. Vessel Biography: HMT *Dagon*

His Majesty's Trawler (HMT) *Dagon* was chosen as one of the Forgotten Wrecks case study sites because it is an example of a fishing trawler commissioned by the Admiralty and converted to a minesweeper during the First World War, it is also a fairly intact example of this type of vessel. The ship also represents one of the many casualties lost along with all of the crew during the First World War (Taprell Dorling, 1935) and was the only trawler to be torpedoed in the Dover area (Figure 1).

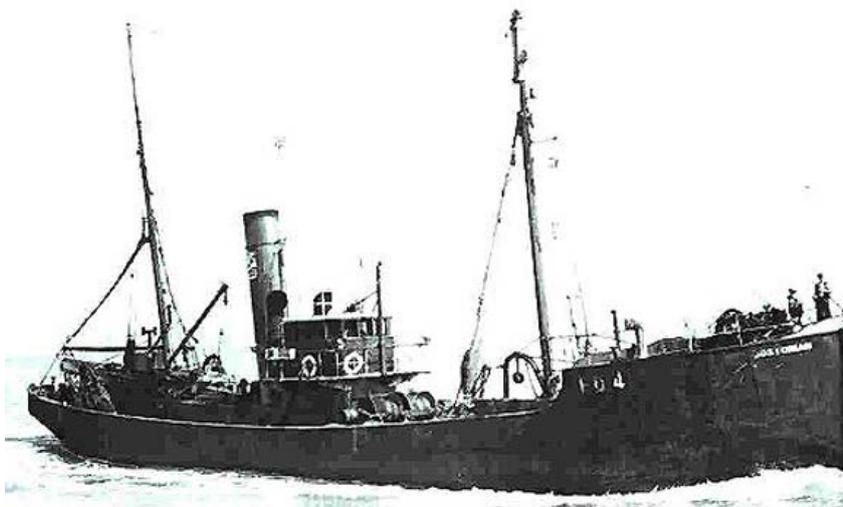


Figure 1: ST Bostonian FD41, similar vessel to *Dagon* (John Stevenson [www.fleetwood-trawlers.info/index.php/2009/01/s-t-bostonian-fd41/](http://www.fleetwood-trawlers.info/index.php/2009/01/s-t-bostonian-fd41/) Reproduced with permission from the Bosuns watch)

### 3.1 Vessel Type and Build

The *Dagon* was built by Smith's Dock Company, in Middlesbrough and completed in 1914. The steel ship was a British steam fishing trawler having a gross tonnage of 250. The 125ft (c.38.1m) long ship had a beam of 23ft 7ins (c.7.2m) and was powered by a triple expansion engine with one boiler, a single shaft and screw.

### 3.2 Pre-war Career

The *Dagon* was built as a fishing vessel (trawler) registered in Grimsby, before being hired by the Royal Navy and converted to an armed trawler to be used as a minesweeper in 1915 (Larn & Larn, 1995).

### 3.3 First World War Use & Loss

HMT *Dagon* was a British trawler that had been converted to a minesweeper, owned by the Royal Navy and operated at the time of loss by The Royal Navy (official number 135991, yard number 568, Fishing Boat Registration Code FY3202 (Fowey at time of loss, previously GY957, Grimsby (Pastscape, 2015)). At the time of the sinking the *Dagon* was on patrol off the Sovereign Light Vessel, East Sussex, and was armed with a 12 pounder gun near the stern.

On 8 December 1916 the *Dagon* was on patrol as part of the Dover patrol but there is conflicting information about whether the ship was torpedoed by an enemy submarine or whether the ship hit a mine which had been laid by the German submarine UC-21 (Kent Fallen, 2017). This resulted in the loss of all of the crew of two officers and ten ratings.

### 3.4 Associated Vessels

The German submarine thought to have laid the mine that possibly sank the *Dagon* was the type UCII German minelaying submarine UC-21. The Captain of the submarine was Oberlaeutnant zue See Reinhold Saltzwedel. The following year he was awarded the prestigious Pour le Merite (the Blue Max) on 20 August 1917 for his exploits, he had sunk a total of at least 111 merchant vessels while in command of six different minelaying submarines. He died on 2 December 1917 when UB-81, the submarine he was in command of, hit a mine (Kent Fallen, 2017).

### 3.5 People Associated with HMT *Dagon*

A local war memorial plaque installed in the Holy Trinity Church in Dover in November 1918 listed all of the ships lost in the Dover Patrol and all of the casualties. The Dover Patrol included 65 trawlers of which 29 were lost. This plaque was moved when the church was demolished in 1945 first to the Dover Sea Cadets at Archcliffe Fort, then in the 1970's to Dover District Council. It is recorded as now being held in safekeeping by the Dover Museum and in 2006 it was being held in a store in Deal (Kent Fallen, 2017). The names and details of those lost on the *Dagon* can be seen in Appendix 7.1.

### 3.6 Post-loss Activity

A quote from Captain Taprell Dorling, DSO, FRHistS in his 1935 book 'Swept Channels' was 'The *Dagon*, stationed on patrol near the Royal Sovereign Light Vessel, was the only trawler torpedoed in the Dover area during the war. The incident occurred on December 8, 1916. The explosion was particularly violent and the ship sank almost at once, none of the officers and crew below being saved'.

There was some uncertainty about the actual position of the *Dagon* and whether the wreck in question was in fact this ship. Local sub-aqua club Sovereign Divers, identified the wreck a few years ago after finding the maker's plate and examining the wreckage after which they concluded that it was a perfect match for the *Dagon* (Pastscape, 2015). The *Dagon* is not regularly dived by sport divers (Dive 125; pers. comm).

## 4. Seabed Remains

### 4.1 Site Location and Environment

The wreck of HMT *Dagon* is located off the Royal Sovereign light vessel, East Sussex, at position 50.66666667 0.5 WGS84 (UKHO). It lies on a flat sandy seabed in around 25m of water (Figure 2).

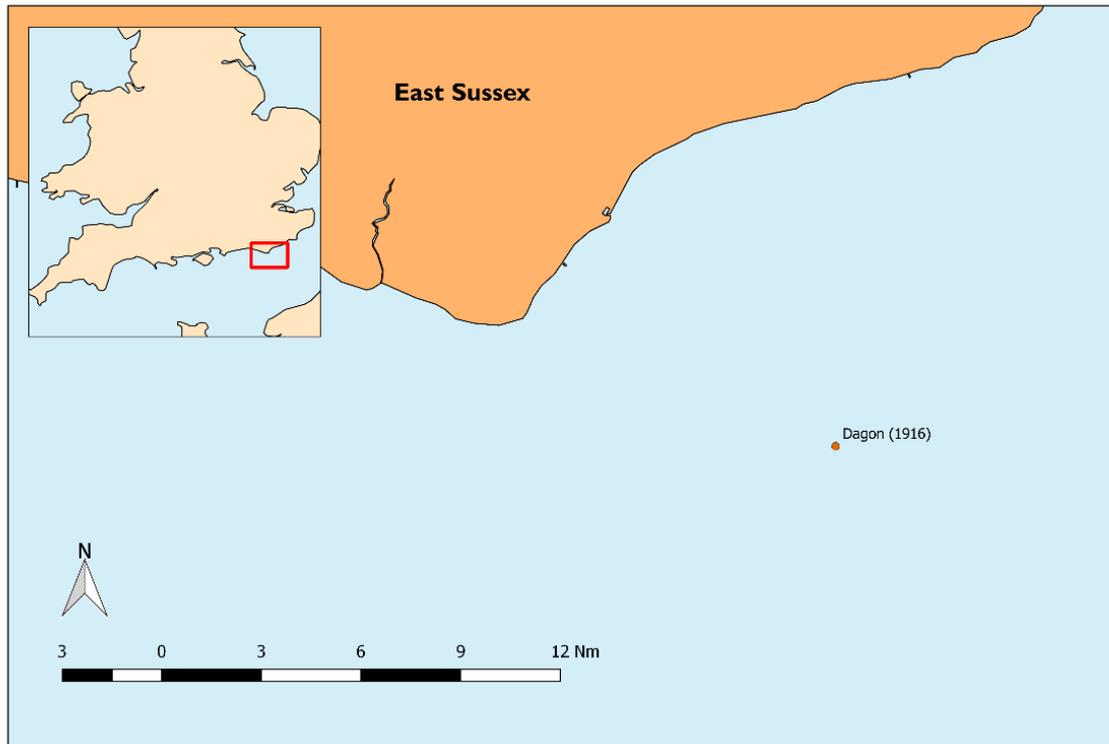


Figure 2: Position of HMT *Dagon*

### 4.2 Archaeological Methodology

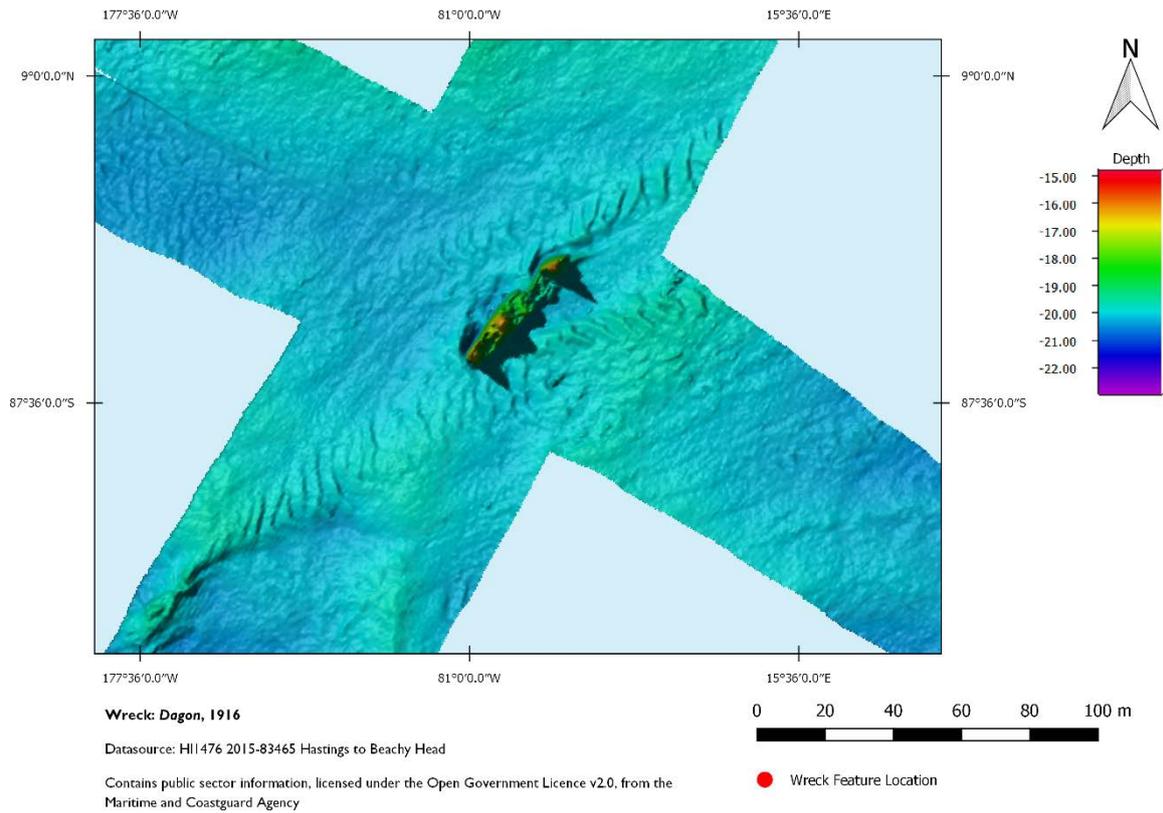
The methodology for diving the *Dagon* was to include:

- Photographic and video survey
- Collection of dimensions and orientation of the site and key features
- Photography of key features

Photogrammetry was carried out around the wreck by two divers each using a Nikon D700 DSLR camera in a Sealux CD7000 camera housing with one Orcalight Seawolf 1860 diving light in a rugged casing. One started from the stern moving forwards and other from the bow moving aft. Other divers took photographs and measurements of specific features. No video footage was obtained.

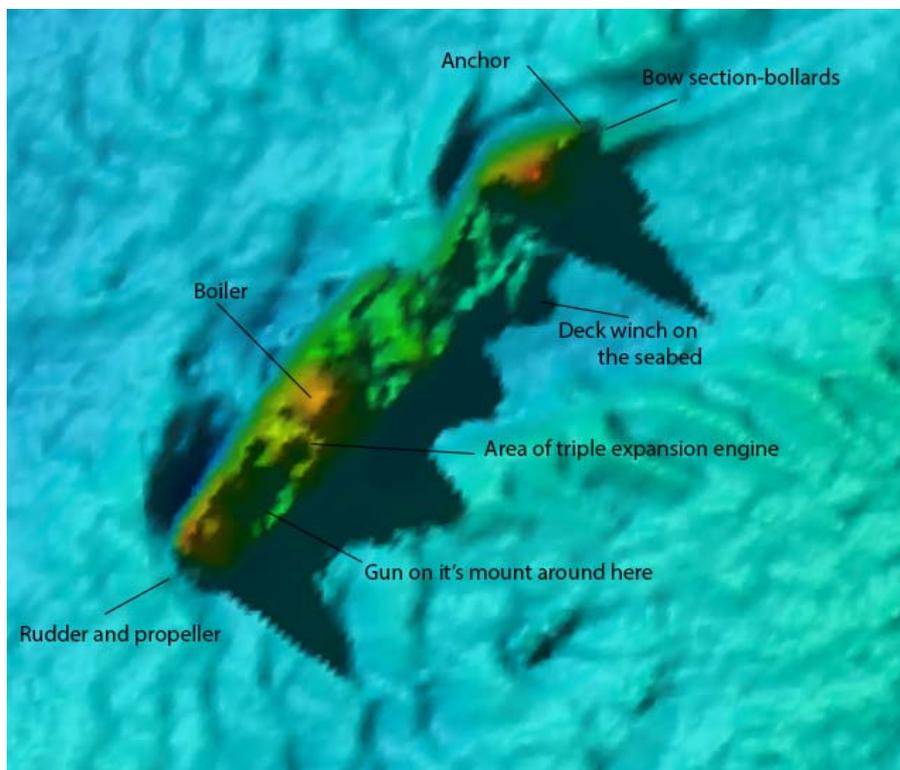
### 4.3 Description of Surviving Vessel Remains

The wreck of HMT *Dagon* sits upright on a flat sandy seabed and is orientated with the bow pointing to the north east. The geophysical image (Figure 3) indicates the wreck is fairly intact but is broken down and collapsed just behind the bow of the ship. No scour was recorded on the Forgotten Wrecks dive but the geophysical image shows areas of scour close to the wreck on both sides.



**Figure 3: Geophysical image of the *Dagon* indicates the vessel is still quite intact**

A close up view of the geophysical image (Figure 4) shows areas that relate to Figures 5-12.



**Figure 4: A close up geophysical annotated view of the *Dagon***

The remains of the *Dagon* are relatively upright lying over towards the starboard side with the port side mostly intact. The length of the wreck is 35m, and the beam measures 6.1m (measured 3m forward of the stern). There is a break forward of the boilers where the wreck is much damaged, and the bow is broken lying over on its starboard side (Figure 5) with bollards visible. The bollards (bits) are 30cm apart and are 30cm tall, there are two sets approximately 90cm apart alongside the remains of the starboard deck rail (Figure 6).



Figure 5: The broken bow lying over to the starboard side



Figure 6: Bollards and starboard rail near the bow

The maximum depth of the site is within 30m, with the highest part of the wreck being the boiler, which is 4m wide, standing around 3m high. On the seabed alongside the bow (starboard side) is a large winch that has fallen from the deck measuring 3.15m in length by 1.29m in width (Figure 7).



Figure 7: Winch fallen from the deck

On the port side of the bow the anchor lies in place still sitting just outside of the hawse pipe (Figure 8).



Figure 8: Anchor still in place on the port side of the bow

The wreck is broken just behind the bow, then moving sternwards the boiler takes up much of the beam of the vessel with a mass of steam pipes (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Boiler and steam pipes

Just behind the boiler is the triple expansion engine with the gun situated near to it on the starboard side of the ship 5m from the stern, rather than at the stern itself (Figure 10). The gun is mounted on its pedestal and points downwards, the length of the gun being 3.1m with a circumference of 60–83cms as it tapers at the barrel.



Figure 10: The gun is still mounted on its pedestal and pointing downwards

Moving to the stern of the vessel the rudder and propeller are in good condition and look impressive standing upright beneath the ship (Figure 11 and 12). The rudder stands 2.7m high with a width of 1.4m, the propeller blades measure 1.30m in length.

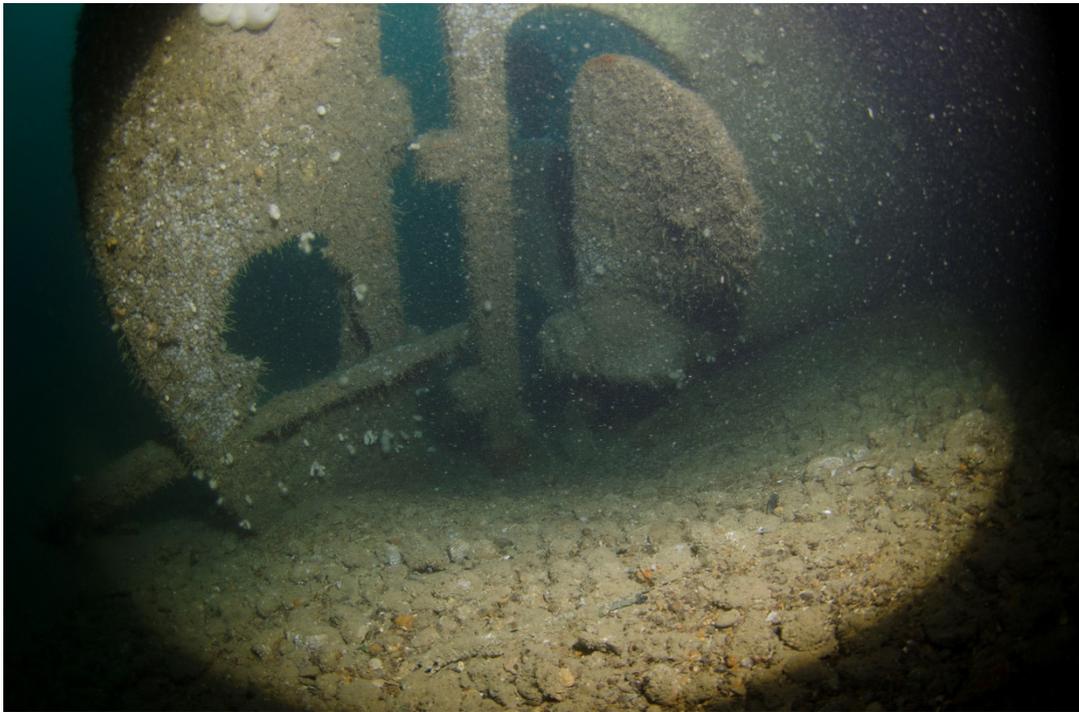


Figure 11: The rudder and propeller are impressive



Figure 12: Looking upwards towards the stern next to the rudder

The remains are in good condition for a wreck that has survived the natural processes within the area in which it lies for nearly 100 years. Although the remains are partially broken down in places, many of the features are still in place.

No scour was recorded during diving on this project and none was found to be recorded. The geophysical image does indicate that there may be some scouring around the port side of the vessel.

## 5. Site Significance & Potential Further Research

*Dagon* was the only trawler torpedoed in the Dover area during the First World War and constitutes a rare case for study, with the loss of the entire crew making it particularly appropriate for commemoration. The many photographs taken using photogrammetry could be used to make an interesting comparison with the model of the protected wreck HM Trawler *Arfon* which was sunk just off Dorset and is in relatively intact condition. Future research, visits, and the possible production of a model of *Dagon* may fill in gaps to help formulate a good comparison between the wrecks.

The site of the *Dagon* is archaeologically significant due to its preservation and its historical associations. The relatively intact nature of the site makes it relatively unusual, with other sites of a comparable age fairing poorly. This provides an opportunity for further detailed study of the remains to develop greater understanding of the physical changes to wrecks that were requisitioned by the Admiralty for use as minesweepers. This function as a minesweeper also confers special interest on the site as it is representative of the measures taken by the Admiralty to supplement the military vessels in operation during the period.

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DiverNet, (No date) Kindly Tides of the Channel. Available at: <http://www.divernet.com/uk-dive-sites/p316456-kindly-tides-of-the-channel.html> Accessed (December 2016)

Dover Patrol (trawler and minesweepers) (No date). Available at: <http://www.kentfallen.com/PDF%20REPORTS/DOVER%20PATROL%20VESSELS.pdf> Accessed (December 2016)

Google Books, (No date). Grimsby Dagon. Available at: [https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=5EwdCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA90&lpg=PA90&dq=grimsby+Dagon&source=bl&ots=KmplHIPoMK&sig=jxkr5knjS3bmBiyu76nOe\\_wextY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwic1bqK5YTZAhVqB8AKHbjMA1oQ6AEIVjAM#v=onepage&q=grimsby%20Dagon&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=5EwdCwAAQBAJ&pg=PA90&lpg=PA90&dq=grimsby+Dagon&source=bl&ots=KmplHIPoMK&sig=jxkr5knjS3bmBiyu76nOe_wextY&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwic1bqK5YTZAhVqB8AKHbjMA1oQ6AEIVjAM#v=onepage&q=grimsby%20Dagon&f=false) Accessed (December 2016)

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Larn, R. & Larn, B. (1995). *Shipwreck index of the British Isles, volume 2: Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Sussex, Kent (Mainland), Kent (Downs), Goodwin Sands, Thames*. Section 3, Sussex (BC)

Pare, A. (2015). *Call the hands, Bridlington's lost mariners 1914-1919*. Lodge Books

Taprell Dorling, Captain, DSO, FRHistS. (1935). *Taffrail 1935 Swept Channels*. pp297

## 7. Appendices

### 7.1 Names of those lost on HMT *Dagon*

Below are the names of the officers and crew who lost their lives on the *Dagon* (Commonwealth War Graves Commission, 2016).

- BRAY, ROBERT. Trimmer, 3085TS. Royal Naval Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Aged 29. Son of Peter Palmer Bay and Mary Ann Bray of Grimsby, Lincolnshire. Husband of Emily Ellen Bray of 143, Barcroft Street, New Cleethorpes, Grimsby, Lincolnshire. Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 20.
- BURGESS, ALFRED. Deck Hand, 2901DA. Royal Naval Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Aged 24. Son of Jeremiah and Phoebe Burgess of 17, Rope Walk, Bridlington, Yorkshire. Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 18. (Pare, A. 2015).
- GREAVES, RICHARD. Ordinary Telegraphist, Mersey Z/1447. Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Aged 19. Son of Richard and Hannah Greaves, of Blackpool, Lancashire. Commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Panel 19.
- O'CONNOR, WILLIAM TURLOUGH. Ordinary Telegraphist, Wales/Z/3126. Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Aged 19. Son of William and Margaret O'Connor, of Abemant House, Argoed, Newport, Monmouthshire, Wales. Commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Panel 19.
- PEARCE, ISAAC. Skipper. Royal Naval Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 18.
- PARTON, GEORGE. Aged 26. Second Hand (no. 1751SA), H.M. Trawler *Dagon*, Royal Naval Reserve, †08/12/1916, Husband of Ivy Parton, of 81, Park St., New Clee, Grimsby. Chatham Naval Memorial.
- RAPER, WILLIAM THOMAS. Deck Hand, 6353DA. Royal Naval Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Husband of Emma Eliza Raper of 128, Rutland Street, New Clee, Grimsby, Lincolnshire. Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 19.
- ROBERTS, EDWARD ELWOOD. Lieutenant. Royal Naval Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Panel 22. Data accessed shows this R.N.R. officer to be in command of the vessel at the time of loss.
- SHEA, PATRICK. Seaman, 2025D. Royal Naval Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Aged 42. Son of Timothy and Nora Shea of Knockadoon, County Cork, Ireland. Husband of Hannah Shea of Ballymacoda, County Cork, Ireland. Commemorated on the Plymouth Naval Memorial. Panel 19.
- SMITH, EDWARD. Engineman, 1952TS. Royal Naval Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Aged 26. Son of George Smith of 17, Saltburn Street, Hessle Road, Hull, Yorkshire and the late Harriet Smith. Commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial. Panel 19.
- SPARKES, SAMUAL. Aged 19. Seaman (no. 2047X), H.M. Trawler *Dagon*, Newfoundland Royal Naval Reserve, †08/12/1916, Son of Susan Janes (formerly Sparkes), of St. John's, and the late Ebenezer Sparkes, Memorial: [Beaumont-Hamel \(Newfoundland\) Memorial](#)
- WALKER, JOSEPH. Signal Boy, 345SB. Royal Naval Reserve, H.M. Trawler "*Dagon*." Died 8 December 1916. Aged 16. Son of Jack Walker of 3, Swan Yard, Coleham Head, Shrewsbury, Shropshire. Commemorated on the Portsmouth Naval Memorial. Panel 24.