

Forton Lake Archaeology Project Forton's Forgotten Fleet



A joint NAS and HWTMA community archaeology project

Forton's Forgotten Fleet Site Guide



FL3
Motor Minesweeper 293

Priddys Hard
(munitions)



Royal Clarence Yard
(victuals)



FL9
Motor Fishing Vessel

FL26
Unknown

FL2
Motor Fishing Vessel

FL27
Groyne

FL6
Metal Barge

FL30
Lifeboat

Unsurveyed hulk

FL15
Buried hulk

FL5
Unknown
(on slipway)

Site of Tide Mill



Unsurveyed hulk

FL23
Burnt Scow

FL1
Motor Fishing Vessel

FL29
Wooden Barge

FL7
Pinnacle (only boiler/engine)

FL20
Landing Craft &
FL21
Lifeboat

Vadne Gosport Ferry

FL22

FL8
Metal Barge

FL16
Landing Craft &
FL17



FL10
Landing Craft



FL11
Medina Chain Ferry

Motor Gunboat/ RAF Ferry Boat

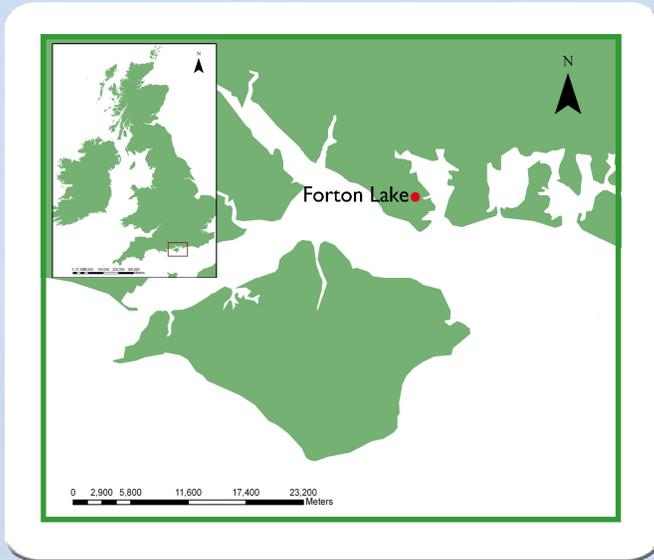
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The foreshore at Forton Lake has a wealth of maritime remains

Forton Lake Archaeology Project: 2006 – 2009



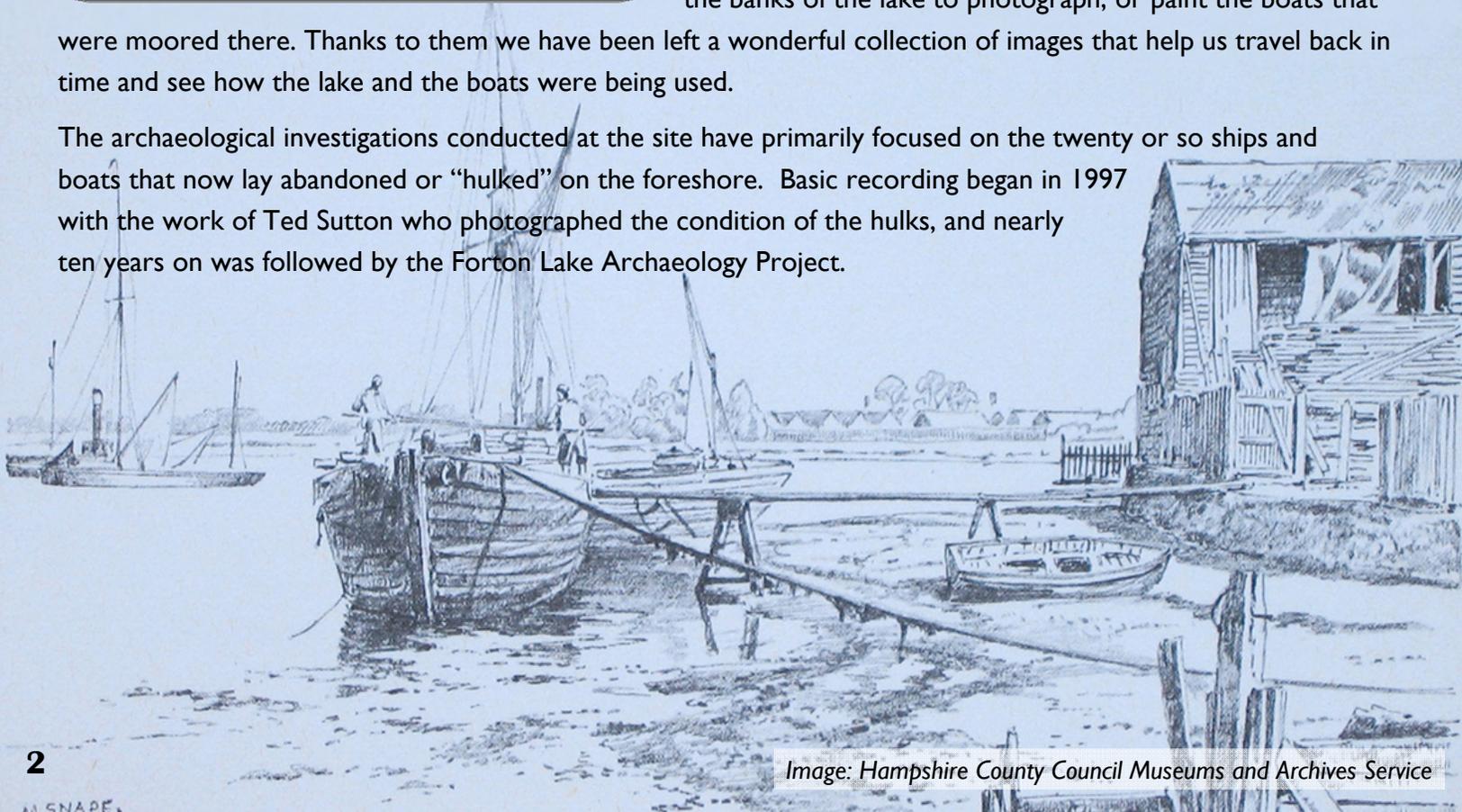
Forton Lake is located in the town of Gosport in Hampshire. The tidal lake lies just to the east of the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour and over the years has changed its shape as a result of land reclamation.

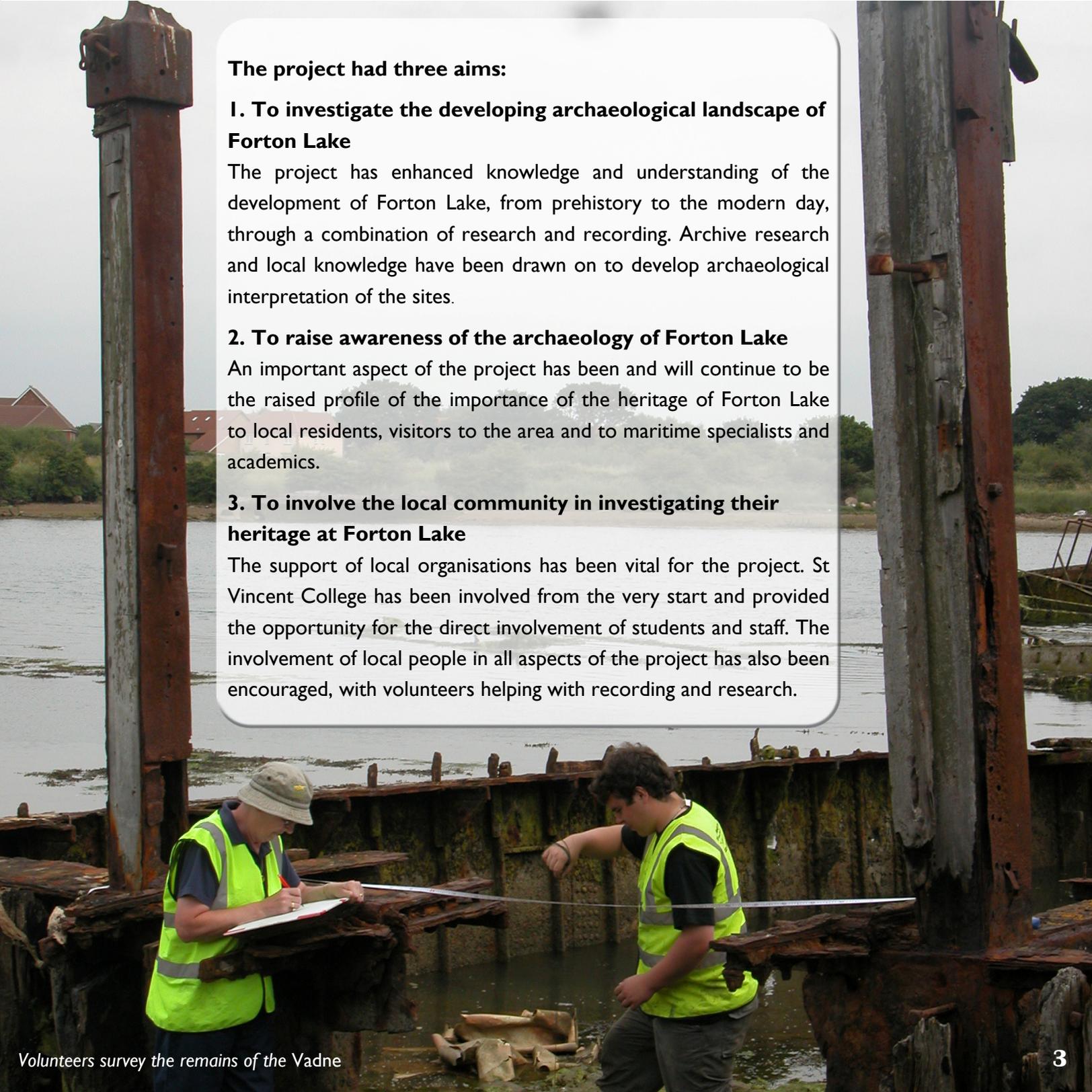
The Forton Lake Archaeology Project carried out between 2006 and 2009 aimed to allow the local inhabitants of Gosport to research, record, and display their maritime heritage.

Up until 2006 there had been little archaeological work carried out at Forton Lake. However, local maritime enthusiasts, like Jack Smale in the 1940s and 1950s, and artists including Martin Snape (1853-1930) who drew the image below, often visited the banks of the lake to photograph, or paint the boats that

were moored there. Thanks to them we have been left a wonderful collection of images that help us travel back in time and see how the lake and the boats were being used.

The archaeological investigations conducted at the site have primarily focused on the twenty or so ships and boats that now lay abandoned or “hulked” on the foreshore. Basic recording began in 1997 with the work of Ted Sutton who photographed the condition of the hulks, and nearly ten years on was followed by the Forton Lake Archaeology Project.





The project had three aims:

1. To investigate the developing archaeological landscape of Forton Lake

The project has enhanced knowledge and understanding of the development of Forton Lake, from prehistory to the modern day, through a combination of research and recording. Archive research and local knowledge have been drawn on to develop archaeological interpretation of the sites.

2. To raise awareness of the archaeology of Forton Lake

An important aspect of the project has been and will continue to be the raised profile of the importance of the heritage of Forton Lake to local residents, visitors to the area and to maritime specialists and academics.

3. To involve the local community in investigating their heritage at Forton Lake

The support of local organisations has been vital for the project. St Vincent College has been involved from the very start and provided the opportunity for the direct involvement of students and staff. The involvement of local people in all aspects of the project has also been encouraged, with volunteers helping with recording and research.

Prehistory and Changing Landscapes

Changing Landscapes

Forton Lake has changed over time. Originally it stretched from the mouth of the creek right the way up to Mill Road, where the main Post Office sorting office stands. To the west it would have reached right up to the Criterion Bingo Hall on Forton Road. There was also another creek that went north. This has various names, including Mud Cottage Lake. Now it is the recreation area and playground that stretches between Forton Lake and St John's School.

Forton Lake had a wide, shallow basin that could hold a lot of water, the creek was tidal, the area around it quite fertile, and was used for farming. Much of it has now been reclaimed, and many of us are living on land that was once water, especially those who live in Mill Pond Road, and the housing estate which surrounds it.

The first evidence of human activity yet discovered in Forton Lake is from the early Bronze Age. Several scrapers were found during an archaeological watching brief in 2003, when St George's Barracks were being developed for housing.

Currently we have no evidence for the use of Forton Lake during the Iron Age or Roman period. However we do know that Portchester Castle sits at the northern edge of Portsmouth Harbour, and that Roman pottery has been found at Fareham, just up the harbour from Forton Lake. The Romans would have known about Forton Lake, but to date we have not found any artefacts or sites to give us direct evidence they were using the lake.



Bronze Age scrapers like those found at Forton Lake

Saxon – Medieval

There is evidence of Saxon settlement locally, however we have no direct evidence yet of Saxon activity on the lake. The first evidence we get of medieval activity is in 1268, when St Swithun's Priory transfers Forton and the tide mill to the Bishop of Winchester. The mill must have been in existence for the ownership of it to be transferred. The Bishop of Winchester continued to own the tide mill until 1858.



Illustration of the tide mill by Robert Strickland Thomas

The mill was a tide mill. The large shallow basin became a catchment area for the incoming tide. As the tide went out the rushing water would turn the mill wheels and grind the grain. Boats as well as carts could have been used to take the flour away.

The mill was owned by powerful religious organisations. Farmers would have to bring their grain to the tide mill to be ground into flour. They would then be taxed. The tide mill straddled at least part of the creek in the early years, so boats could use the lake freely.

We know that Forton expanded as a settlement because John de Forton was in tax arrears in 1301, and Sarah de Forton broke the 'Assize of Ale'. The Assize of Ale was a Medieval Assize (statute) that laid down the quality and price of ale in a particular borough. Bread and ale had to be tasted by the Sheriff and local sergeants who would impose fines and other punishments if the ale did not meet the quality level it was supposed to achieve. It was the first law to regulate food products. We also know that early Forton was right by the creek and it is possible to suggest that the materials needed for the community could be brought across from Portsmouth by boat, as well as overland by foot or by cart.

Post Medieval

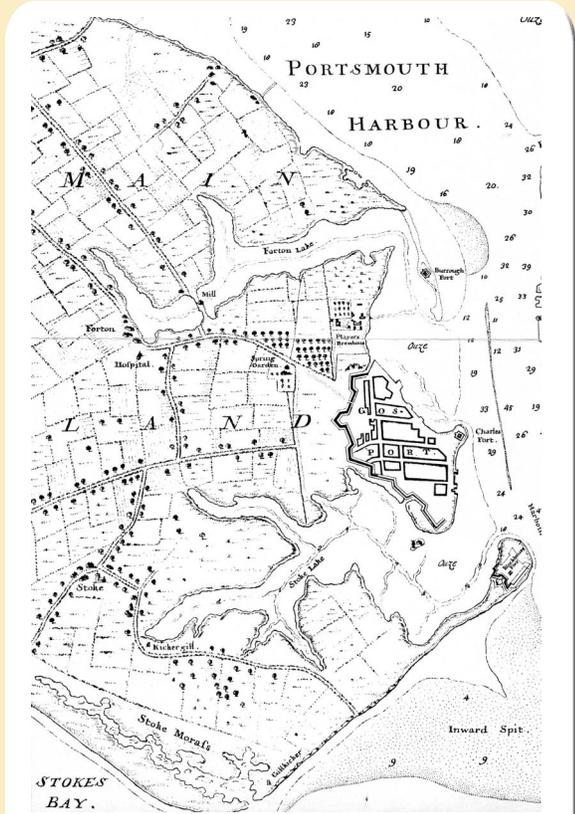
From 1665 Samuel Pepys and associates began a large shipbuilding programme as they started to build the King's navy after the restoration of Charles II. In 1678 a fort was built 'upon Borowiland' called St James's Fort. The ruined fort still exists, but we now call it Burrow Island. This area marks a sandbar that protects the lake from direct entrance by larger ships. The area is important as it is linked to the development of the Royal Navy.

By 1713 Fortune Hospital had been built. It was closed down as Haslar took its place by 1730. Later prisoners of war from the Napoleonic Wars, and privateers from the American War of Independence were housed at Forton, and in prison hulks, some of which were believed to be on Forton Lake.

By 1774 the entrance to Forton Lake would be very imposing. On the north side the King's Land at Priddy's Hard housed a large magazine, with its own docking and loading facility. On the south side of the entrance the King's Land shows large revetments where the Royal Clarence Victualling Yard would be built.

In 1858 the tide mill was sold to the Board of Ordnance. Ships up to 60 tons burthen had been going to the mill, indicating that the channel from the entrance to the mill causeway, which now reached from side to side of the Lake, was kept clear enough for vessels to get to the mill. They would discharge or take on cargo, then go out again, probably using the flood and ebb tides, with a drying period for loading. From this time the mill pond became Mill Pond Land, the mill fell into disrepair, boat traffic changed, and by World War Two the Forton site had become a military establishment that covered a lot of the Lake area. Part of it is now St. Vincent College.

After World War Two many small vessels were brought up to Forton Lake and abandoned. The lake had no commercial use now. The gently sloping bank of the lake was ideal for beaching vessels. They could be left to break up over time, and later to be a resource for us to investigate over three years of the Forton Lake



This 1716 map shows the Mill & Forton Lake

Archaeological Techniques

Plans were made to gain detailed information on the range of hulked and buried vessels that lie around and within the margins of Forton Lake. Very little was known about most of the vessels, so a range of archaeological survey and excavation methods were used to gather information on the nature and extent of the surviving remains. This was complemented by research through contact with local residents to try to find out the identity of the vessels, gathering oral history accounts and searching various archives and libraries.

Prior to venturing out into the inter-tidal zone a site visit was undertaken to review the conditions. As the foreshore can be hazardous due to deep sediments, rubbish and the ever changing tidal cycle, plans were put in place to ensure all the appropriate safety measures were taken.

Survey

Once a basic position was gained for each site to enable it to be plotted accurately on a map, a detailed visual survey of the hulk was undertaken. The size and shape of the site were noted and entered on a pro-forma record sheet, then any features such as parts of the hull or fastening types that might be diagnostic and help identify the type of vessel were noted. The elements that make up the vessel hull, fixtures and fittings have technical maritime terms that are used to describe them. A photographic survey of the site and its individual component parts was then completed, this involved placing a scale measure in the image to gain an impression of the dimensions.



Although photographs provide a reliable impression of the site, they do not provide a detailed understanding of the precise size and shape of all the component parts and how they all relate to each other. To gather these higher levels of detail a combination of off-set survey and planning frame survey were used. Both of these techniques are used to develop scale drawings, these are two dimensional representations of the surviving remains. For the sites at Forton Lake a plan view (as if looking down on the remains from above) was first developed and then a number of sections across the remains (what you would be able to see if a slice was taken out of a particular part of the vessel) were recorded to show the vertical nature of the remains.

The same survey techniques were used on vessels whether they were substantially complete or just visible sticking out of the foreshore. Gaining a scale record provides information on which further research on the age and type of a vessel can be based. It also gives a 'snap shot' record of the condition of the remains at a particular date and can be used to monitor the sites in the future so we will be able to tell whether their condition is deteriorating.



Using surveying equipment



Producing a scale drawing



Taking survey measurements



Excavation

For the sites that were substantially buried in the foreshore it was not possible to see enough detail to determine what type of vessel they represented and how much was still intact below the sediments. Excavation was needed to reveal more. As excavation is a destructive process it is undertaken in a controlled fashion to ensure all parts of the vessel, its component parts, in-fill sediments and any artefacts that might be within the hull are uncovered gradually and are numbered and recorded.

There were three sites that were excavated, these were all wooden vessels and were potentially the oldest vessels within Forton Lake. Each site had a number of trenches excavated, they ran across the hull from side to side, and aimed to show how deeply buried the remains were, the variety of component hull parts and features in that area and the dimensions of the vessel.

When survey and excavation work was completed the records gained in the field were developed into a series of scale drawings. Alongside this work, research on the individual vessels revealed their fascinating histories, adding a historic dimension to the archaeological records.



Excavation reveals the complex archaeology



Ferries – Gosport to Portsmouth Ferry: *Vadne*

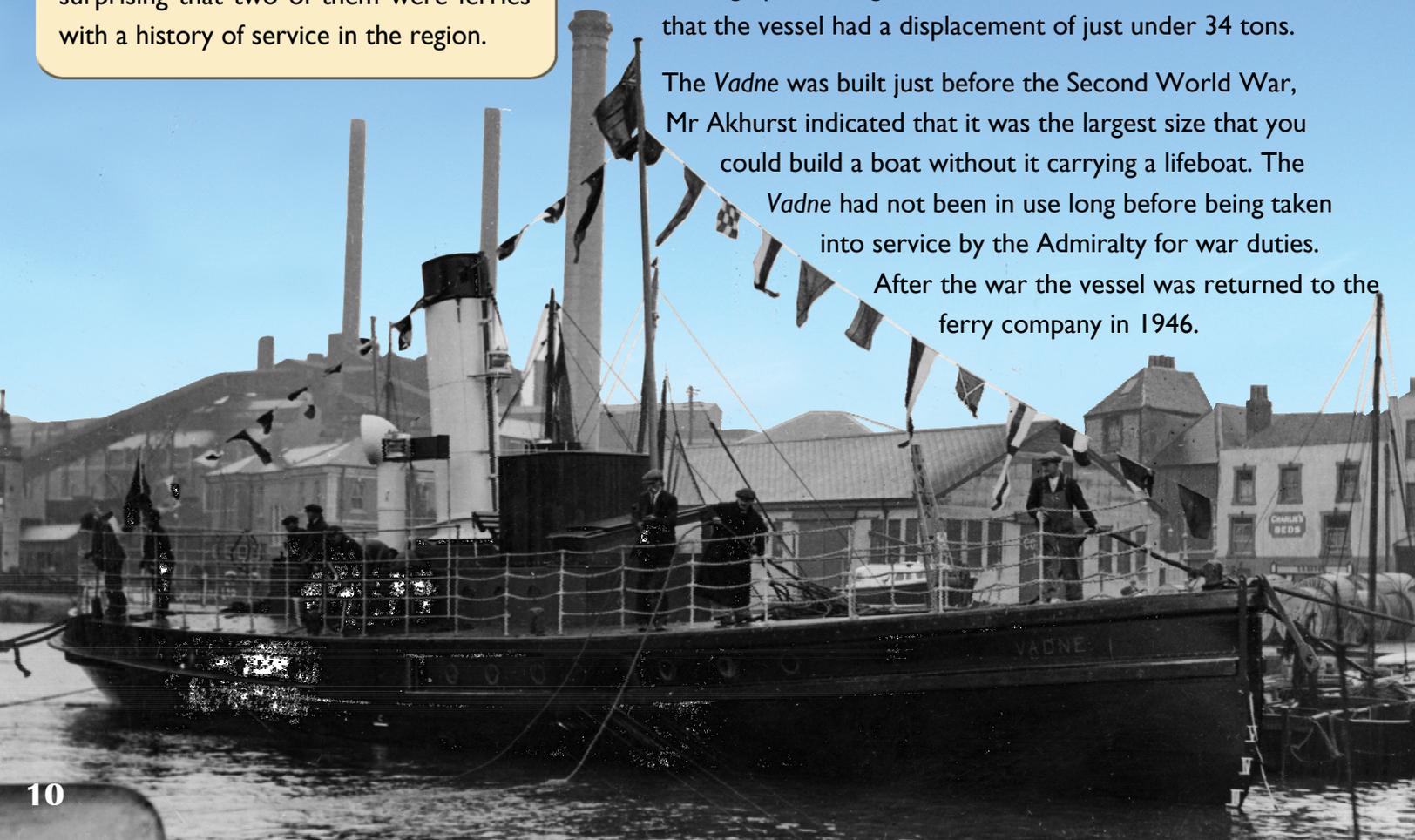
In such a maritime focused region like the Solent the transport of people and goods across water by ferry is a vital service. Even today there are many well used ferries, such as those travelling to the Isle of Wight from a range of mainland locations, and closer to Forton Lake, the Gosport to Portsmouth service. Considering the large number of hulks that are in Forton Lake it was not surprising that two of them were ferries with a history of service in the region.

This is one of the largest and most prominent hulks in Forton Lake. The *Vadne* is a former ferry which worked transporting people and goods between Gosport and Portsmouth between the 1930s and 1950s. Of any of the sites in the Lake this one was most frequently mentioned by local residents when asked about their memories of the vessels. Information gained, particularly from Mr Akhurst, has helped piece together some of the vessels history.

The oral histories have been used alongside data gained from archaeological survey to increase our knowledge of the site. The vessel measures over 23 metres long by 5.75 metres wide with the hull surviving up to a height of 3.22 metres. Historical records show that the vessel had a displacement of just under 34 tons.

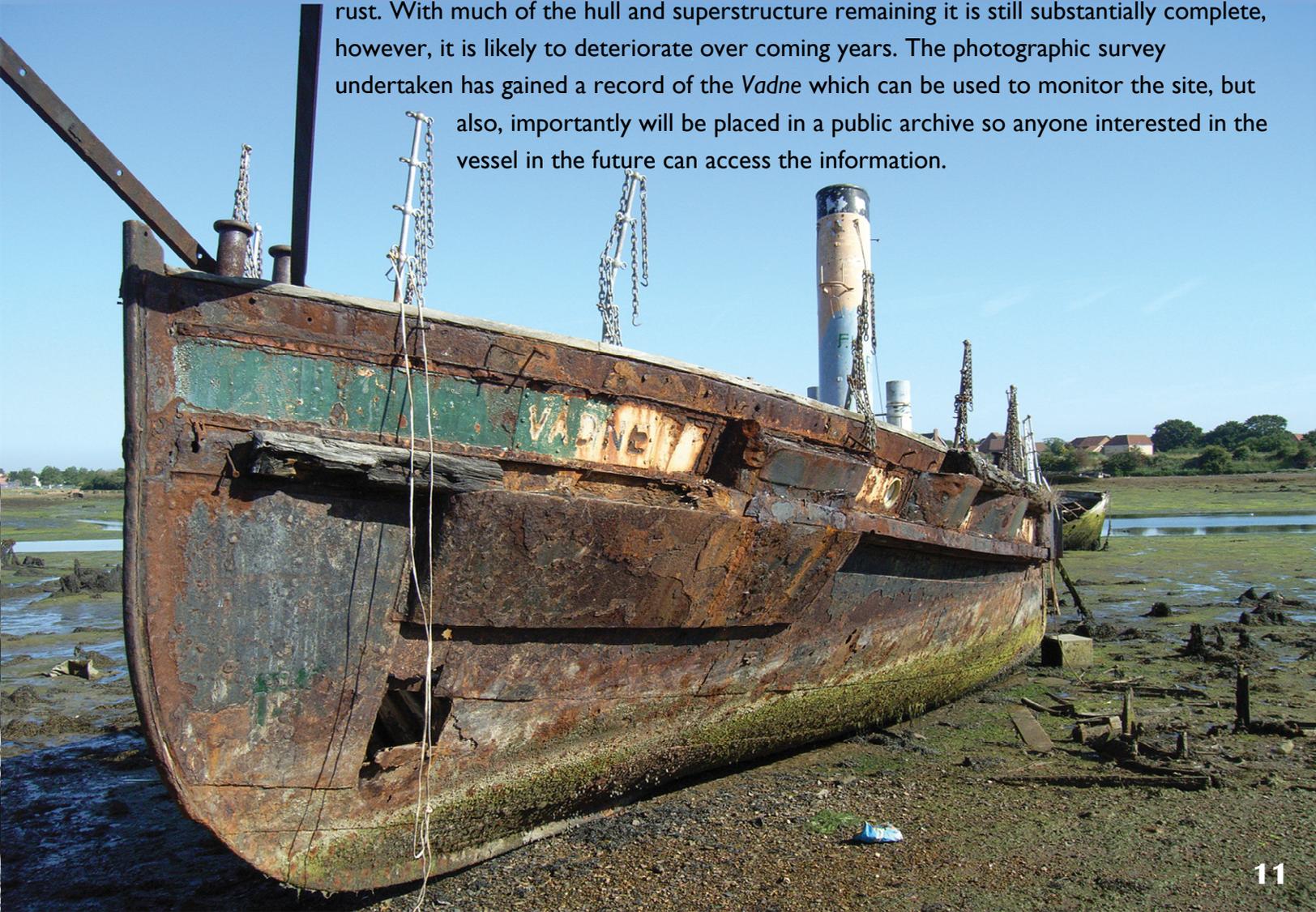
The *Vadne* was built just before the Second World War, Mr Akhurst indicated that it was the largest size that you could build a boat without it carrying a lifeboat. The *Vadne* had not been in use long before being taken into service by the Admiralty for war duties.

After the war the vessel was returned to the ferry company in 1946.



The owners were keen to increase the carrying capacity of the *Vadne* and later in its working life a bulk head was removed to create more space. It is believed this weakened the hull and led to the withdrawal of the vessel for safety reasons. The *Vadne* was laid up within Portsmouth Harbour where it began to rust, eventually the corrosion breached through the hull and it sank at its moorings. After an attempt to refloat the vessel by filling the hull with concrete it was eventually moved to its current location and abandoned.

Little is currently known about the precise design type of *Vadne* and what it was involved with during war service. This means there are more secrets to be revealed about this prominent hulk whose strong local significance and connections are enhanced through it having been used during the lifetime of some local residents. Today the *Vadne* is degrading within Forton Lake, its steel plate construction and frames fastened with rivets are rapidly succumbing to rust. With much of the hull and superstructure remaining it is still substantially complete, however, it is likely to deteriorate over coming years. The photographic survey undertaken has gained a record of the *Vadne* which can be used to monitor the site, but also, importantly will be placed in a public archive so anyone interested in the vessel in the future can access the information.



Ferries – Medina River Chain Ferry

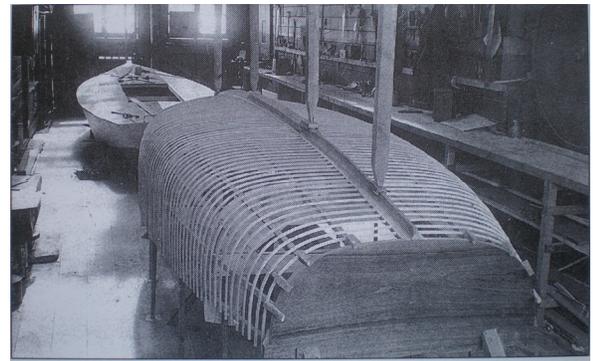
From the rusting metal remains of the Medina Ferry on the foreshore it is perhaps difficult to appreciate the local significance and history of this vessel. These are the remains of a chain ferry, a type of vessel often used for river crossings; they are attached to cables or chains which run across the river and guide the ferry backwards and forwards. This vessel is also known as the Summer Bridge, the Floating Bridge and the Cowes Chain Ferry. It had a career crossing the Medina River from East to West Cowes on the Isle of Wight, before later being used as a shipbuilders workshop, and then ending up in Forton Lake.

As the remains of this Ferry are degrading relatively rapidly an extensive survey of the site has been undertaken. This revealed that the hull measures 14.4 metres by 8.93 metres, and is constructed from overlapping metal sheets bolted together. The different compartments of the hull can still be seen. When compared with the construction plans it is possible to identify what each of these was used for.

Like many vessels the Medina Ferry was built for a particular task or function, but later in life was used slightly differently. Historical research has shown that this steam powered vessel was in use on the Medina River from 1896 to 1909, it remained at Cowes until 1925 as a spare ferry. During its time on the Medina it would have carried a variety of people, vehicles, animals and goods across the river. Two large ramps at either end would have been lowered to allow access to the main deck area which was open to the elements. There were cabins on either side to provide some shelter from poor weather. Also housed within the hull was the steam propulsion system and all the associated machinery.



The Medina Ferry between 1896 – 1909



Inside the Ferry when it was being used as Uffa Fox's workshop.

Photo: HAMPSHIRE the county magazine



The Ferry abandoned at Forton Lake, around 1980. Photo: David Fricker

This drove two wheels with cogs that worked to drag the ferry along the chains and move it from one side of the river to the other.

The Medina Ferry served for three decades on the river before being sold to Mr Uffa Fox, a man with a distinctive local connection and history. Mr Fox became a renowned boat designer and sailor and was also a prolific writer. The Ferry was converted to become his house and workshop. During this time it was referred to as the 'Summer Bridge', and was moored at a variety of parishes around the Isle of Wight. As the propulsion system had been removed from the vessel it had to be moved using tidal currents and oars.

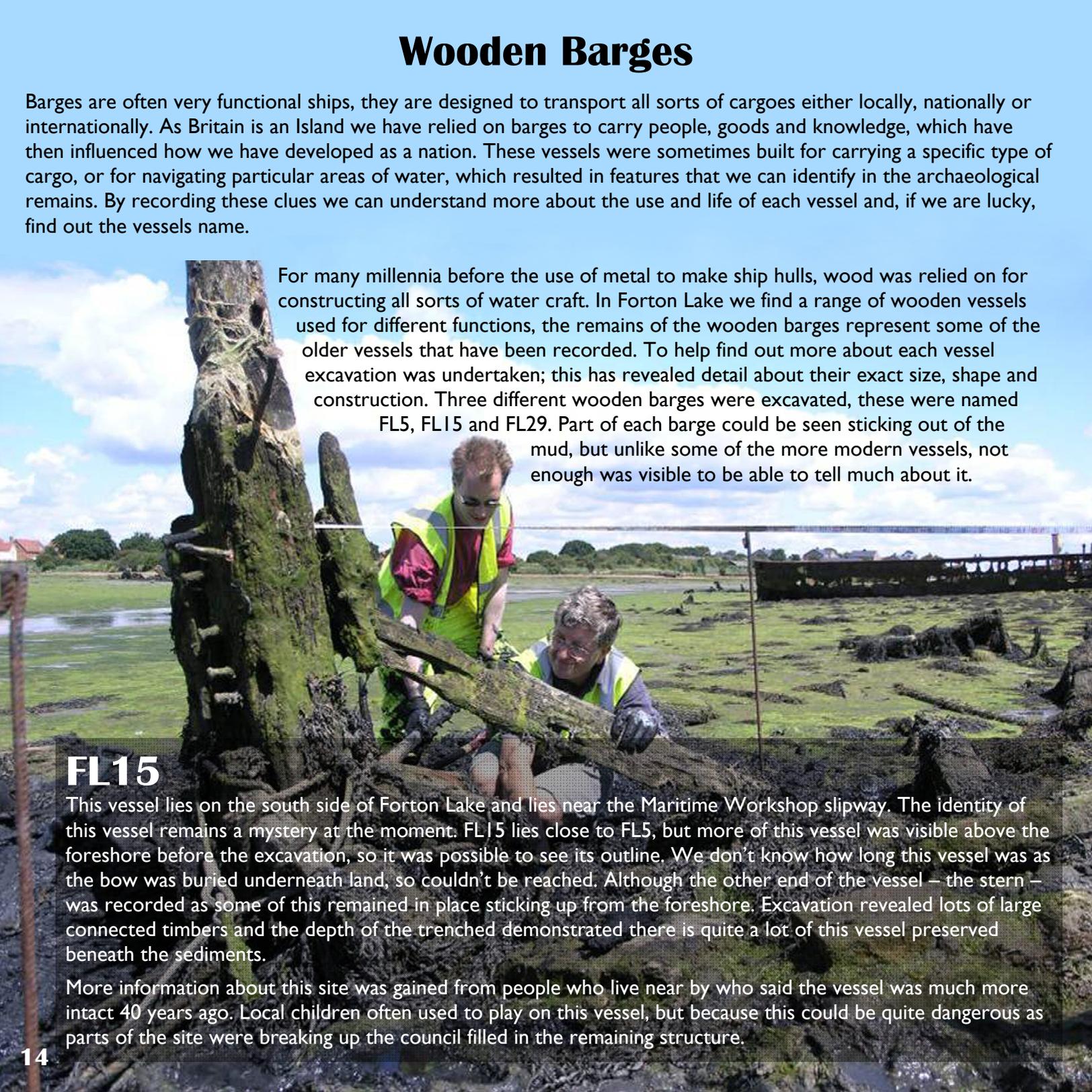
Around 1948 the Medina Ferry was sold to a Gosport shipbuilder who planned to dismantle the vessel and use the parts in the construction of other boats. It is in this year that the Ferry was moved to Forton Lake and to its present position. Over subsequent years various parts and components were stripped from the vessel hastening the gradual decline of the structure.

While the remains on the foreshore may appear to be simply a selection of rusting metal components, they actually have a strong regional significance. This vessel has played an important part in the maritime transport system of the Solent and also has connections to a prominent local boat builder. The physical remains are all that is left of the vessel, and are a valuable part of Solent history.



Wooden Barges

Barges are often very functional ships, they are designed to transport all sorts of cargoes either locally, nationally or internationally. As Britain is an Island we have relied on barges to carry people, goods and knowledge, which have then influenced how we have developed as a nation. These vessels were sometimes built for carrying a specific type of cargo, or for navigating particular areas of water, which resulted in features that we can identify in the archaeological remains. By recording these clues we can understand more about the use and life of each vessel and, if we are lucky, find out the vessels name.



For many millennia before the use of metal to make ship hulls, wood was relied on for constructing all sorts of water craft. In Forton Lake we find a range of wooden vessels used for different functions, the remains of the wooden barges represent some of the older vessels that have been recorded. To help find out more about each vessel excavation was undertaken; this has revealed detail about their exact size, shape and construction. Three different wooden barges were excavated, these were named FL5, FL15 and FL29. Part of each barge could be seen sticking out of the mud, but unlike some of the more modern vessels, not enough was visible to be able to tell much about it.

FL15

This vessel lies on the south side of Forton Lake and lies near the Maritime Workshop slipway. The identity of this vessel remains a mystery at the moment. FL15 lies close to FL5, but more of this vessel was visible above the foreshore before the excavation, so it was possible to see its outline. We don't know how long this vessel was as the bow was buried underneath land, so couldn't be reached. Although the other end of the vessel – the stern – was recorded as some of this remained in place sticking up from the foreshore. Excavation revealed lots of large connected timbers and the depth of the trench demonstrated there is quite a lot of this vessel preserved beneath the sediments.

More information about this site was gained from people who live near by who said the vessel was much more intact 40 years ago. Local children often used to play on this vessel, but because this could be quite dangerous as parts of the site were breaking up the council filled in the remaining structure.

FL5

Before excavation started only a few timbers could be seen above the mud, but these were enough to show that there was part of a ship buried beneath. Excavating a number of trenches across the site revealed a large section of wooden hull which was 25 metres long and just over 4 metres wide. The wooden hull is fastened together using a mixture of 'treenails', which are a kind of nail made from wood, with some iron fittings.

FL5 is a flat bottomed barge, this means it was able to sail more easily within estuary and river environments which are often shallow. It also means it could rest upright on the sediments when the tide went out, meaning that loading or unloading could continue. It has not yet been possible to find out the name and date of use for this vessel, but it is hoped that further research in the archives will help identify it, and reveal its full history.



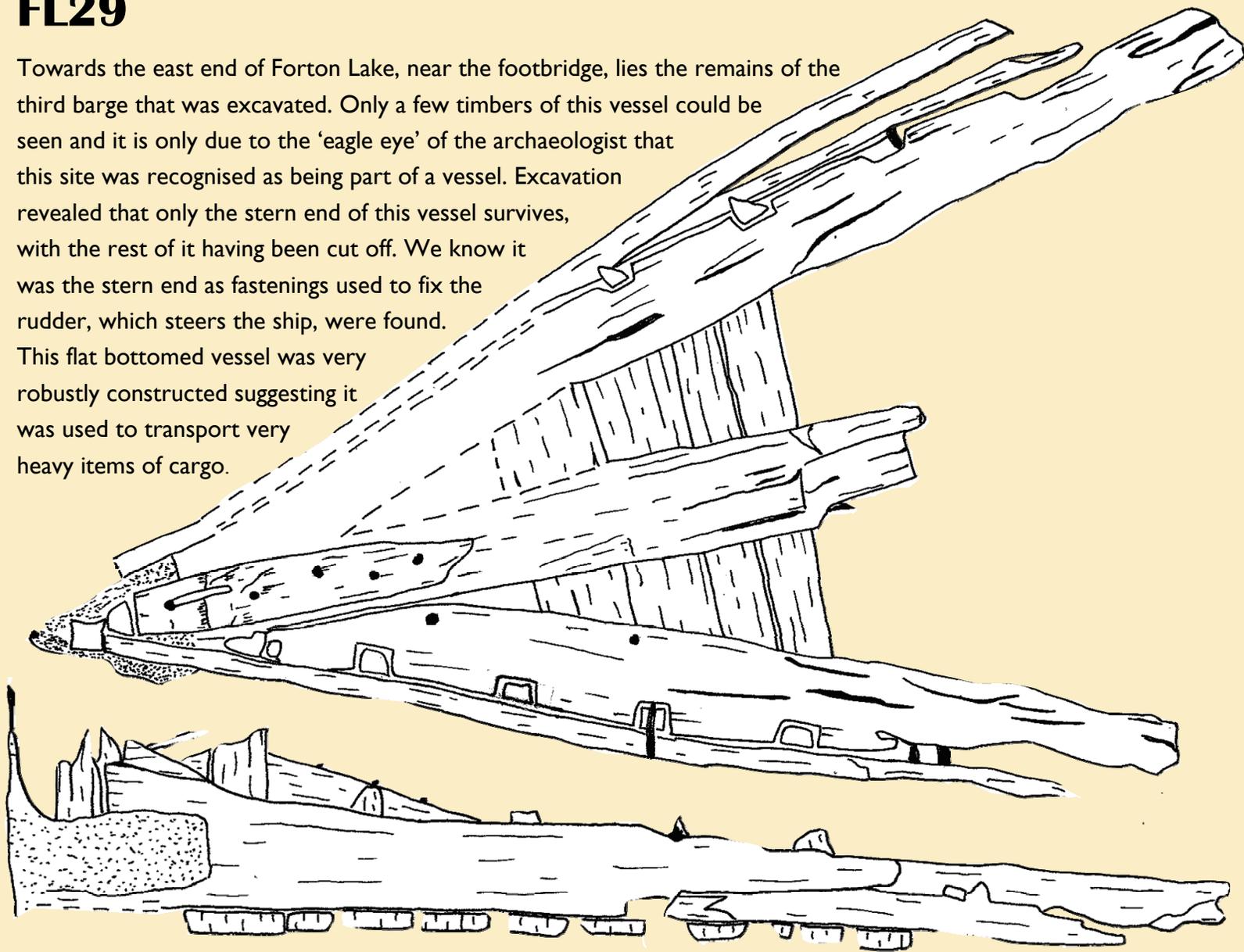
Just one of the excavated areas of FL5



*Background Photo: FL5 before excavation
Drawing: Full plan of FL5 produced by
archaeologists during the project*

FL29

Towards the east end of Forton Lake, near the footbridge, lies the remains of the third barge that was excavated. Only a few timbers of this vessel could be seen and it is only due to the 'eagle eye' of the archaeologist that this site was recognised as being part of a vessel. Excavation revealed that only the stern end of this vessel survives, with the rest of it having been cut off. We know it was the stern end as fastenings used to fix the rudder, which steers the ship, were found. This flat bottomed vessel was very robustly constructed suggesting it was used to transport very heavy items of cargo.



Investigation of these three barges has shown how important it is to create detailed records during excavation. Through all the clues that have been gathered, such as the size of the ships and how they were fastened together, it will now be possible to do more research to find out more about their identity and reveal their fascinating histories.

Metal Barges



The remains of FL8

Over time metal gradually replaced wood as the most common material to build ships out of. Using metal meant that ships could be built more quickly and they were not affected by boring worms which continually attacked the hulls of wooden vessels. Also the use of sails for propulsion was replaced by engines, which provided a more constant power source than relying on the patterns of the wind. Many metal barges have been constructed for a range of transportation needs, just a few examples now lie within Forton Lake.

Two examples of metal barges are FL6 and FL8, like the earlier wooden barges, they are flat bottomed to allow them to navigate shallow waters. These two vessels were made of metal sheets fastened together with rivets to form the hull. They have quite a

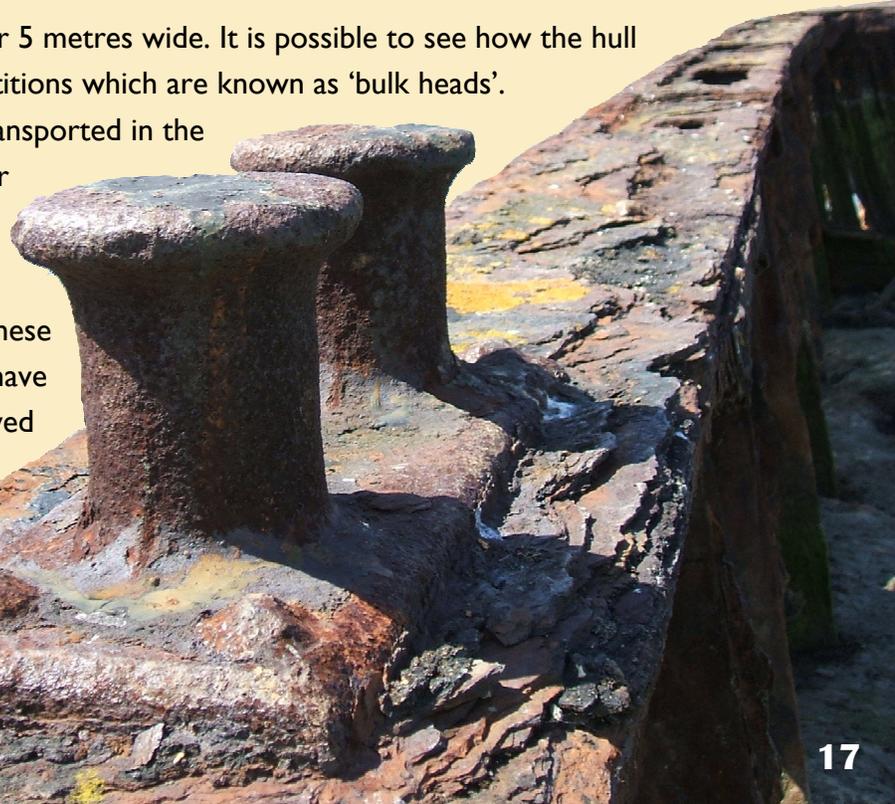
lot of their hull which survives above the sediments, so detail of their shape and construction can be seen.

FL8 measures over 10 metres long and is just under 5 metres wide. It is possible to see how the hull was divided up into different compartments by partitions which are known as ‘bulk heads’.

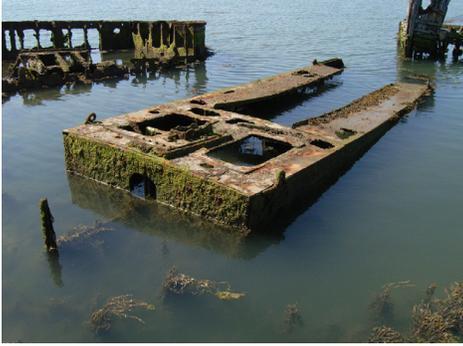
These would have allowed different things to be transported in the hull if it had a mixed cargo. It is not known whether this barge was used for dry or liquid cargoes, or even both.

No evidence of any engine was found in either of these vessels, this is thought to be because they did not have their own propulsion, but were designed to be towed along by other vessels. Although these vessels are probably relatively modern it is still important to record them as they represent a type of vessel that was once much more common than today.

The remains of FL6



Vessels from World War I and II



FL10: Landing Craft

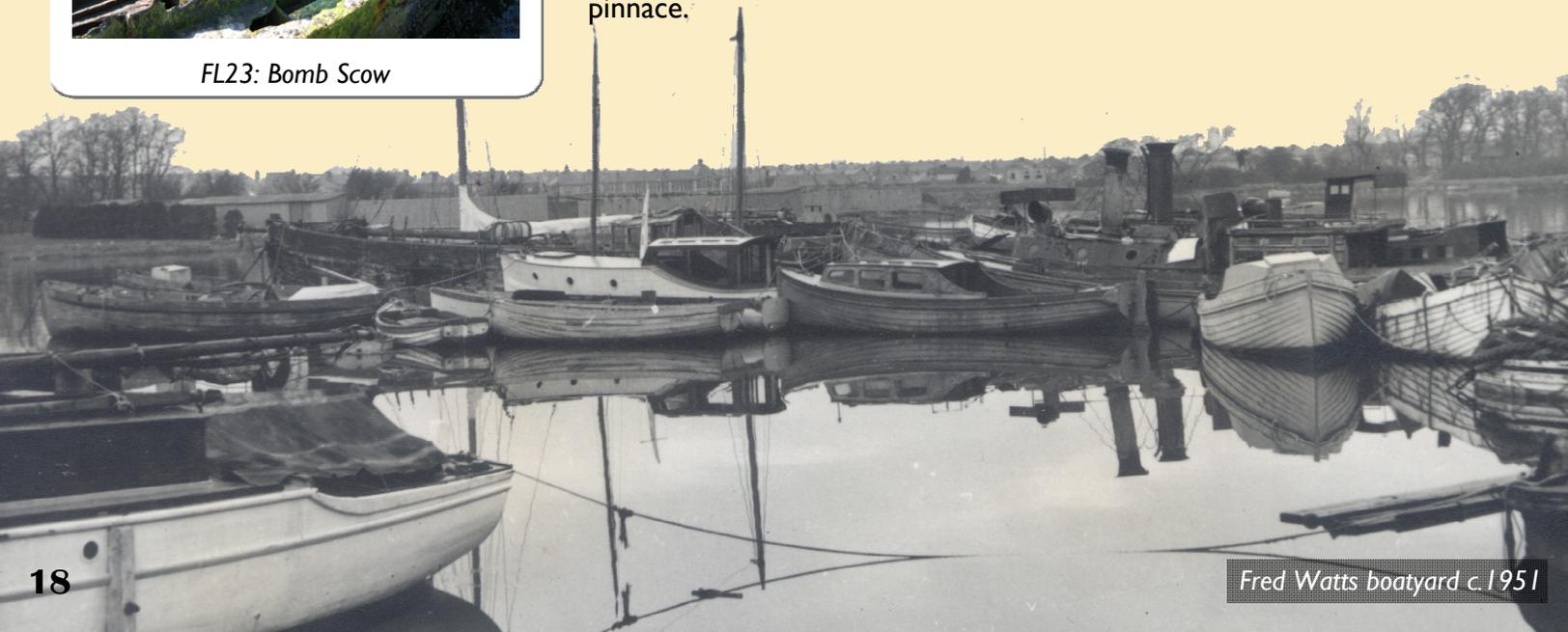


FL23: Bomb Scow

At least five of the vessels now lying on the mud in Forton Lake are believed to have had their origins with the military. The archaeological survey work undertaken by project volunteers followed by historical research has help to uncover the identity of some of the vessels.

It is not certain why all these military vessels have ended up in Forton Lake, but the presence of boatyards is a likely reason. Records indicate that there has been a small boatyard located on the south side in the area of Ferrol Road since 1795. The evidence that there has been a yard here since at least the late 18th century means that Forton Lake has been an area for the repair and possible construction of vessels since then. As time passed many boatyards would have become involved in the disposal of vessels; research indicates that a local character Fred Watts was actively involved in the repair and breaking up of vessels in the 1940s and 1950s.

The military vessels at Forton Lake include a motor minesweeper, a bomb scow, an RAF Ferry Boat, several landing craft and at least one pinnacle.



Fred Watts boatyard c.1951

FL3: Motor Minesweeper 293

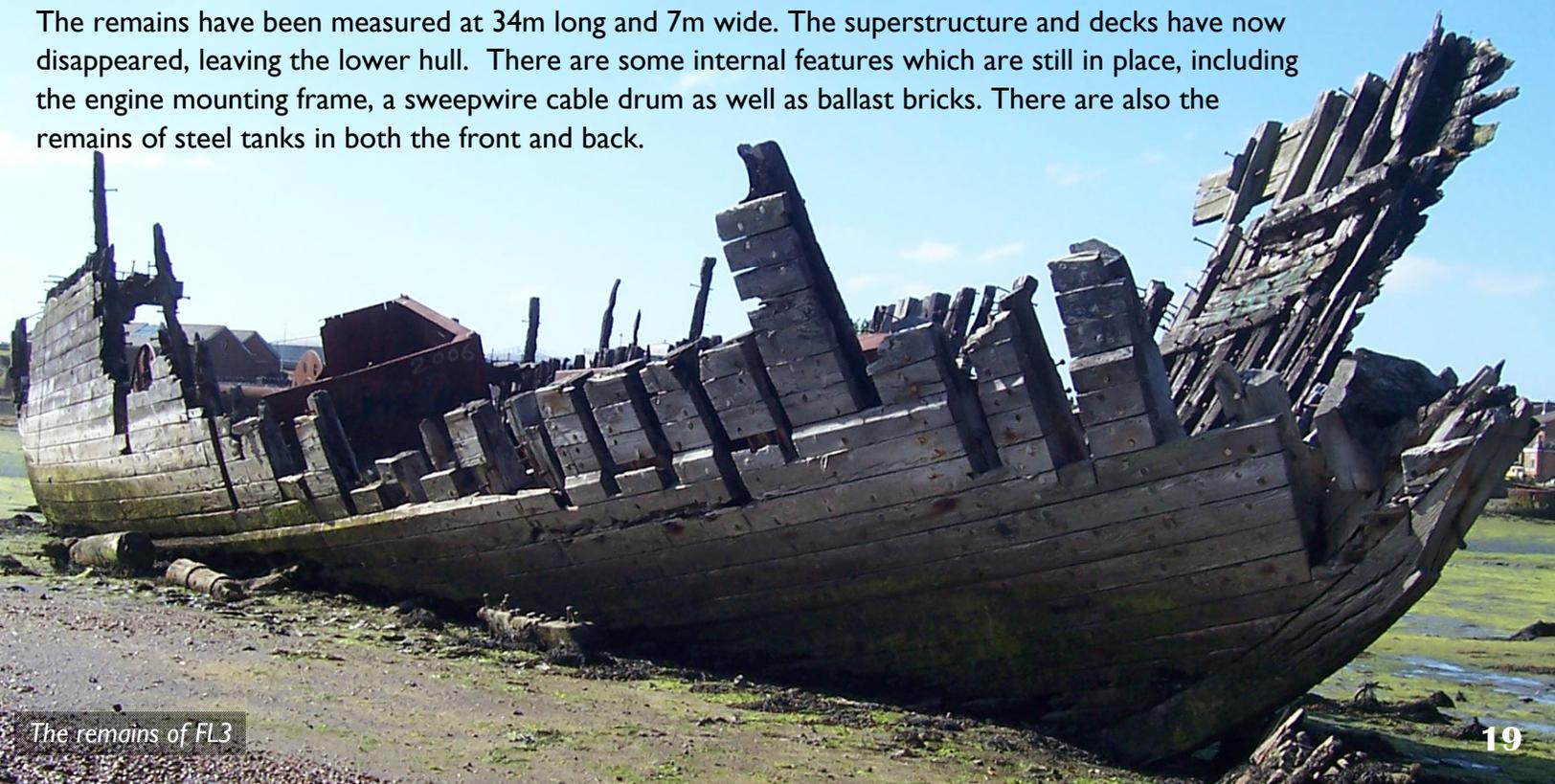
Motor Minesweepers (MMS) were vessels designed or adapted to sweep or explode mines laid at sea. Often they were originally fishing trawlers taken up in wartime and converted as minesweepers to tow an underwater sweep of serrated wire with explosive cutters inserted at intervals. These were designed to catch and cut the mooring wire of a mine, so that it came to the surface where it could be destroyed. 226 MMSs were in Royal Navy service during World War II. There were two types of standard MMS, nicknamed as "Mickey Mouse" Minesweepers, due to their type abbreviation. The "Short Mickies" were of 105 ft, the "Big Mickies" 126 ft. Today there are very few known survivors of the 105ft type MMS.

Thanks to local researchers FL3 has been identified as MMS No.293. The ship was built by Frank Curtis at Par, and launched on the 10th January 1943 with building completed on the 3rd June. Service records show that in 1944 MMS 293 probably saw service at Normandy as is recorded being allocated to the Normandy Invasion Force. By 1947 MMS 293 was serving at Portsmouth, relegated for duty as a Degaussing Vessel and after final paying-off from service, was sold-off locally (presumably to Fred Watts' yard) in November 1950.

The remains have been measured at 34m long and 7m wide. The superstructure and decks have now disappeared, leaving the lower hull. There are some internal features which are still in place, including the engine mounting frame, a sweepwire cable drum as well as ballast bricks. There are also the remains of steel tanks in both the front and back.



The sweepwire cable drum in-situ on FL3



The remains of FL3

FL17: RAF Ferry Boat



FL17 in the 1980's. Photo: David Fricker

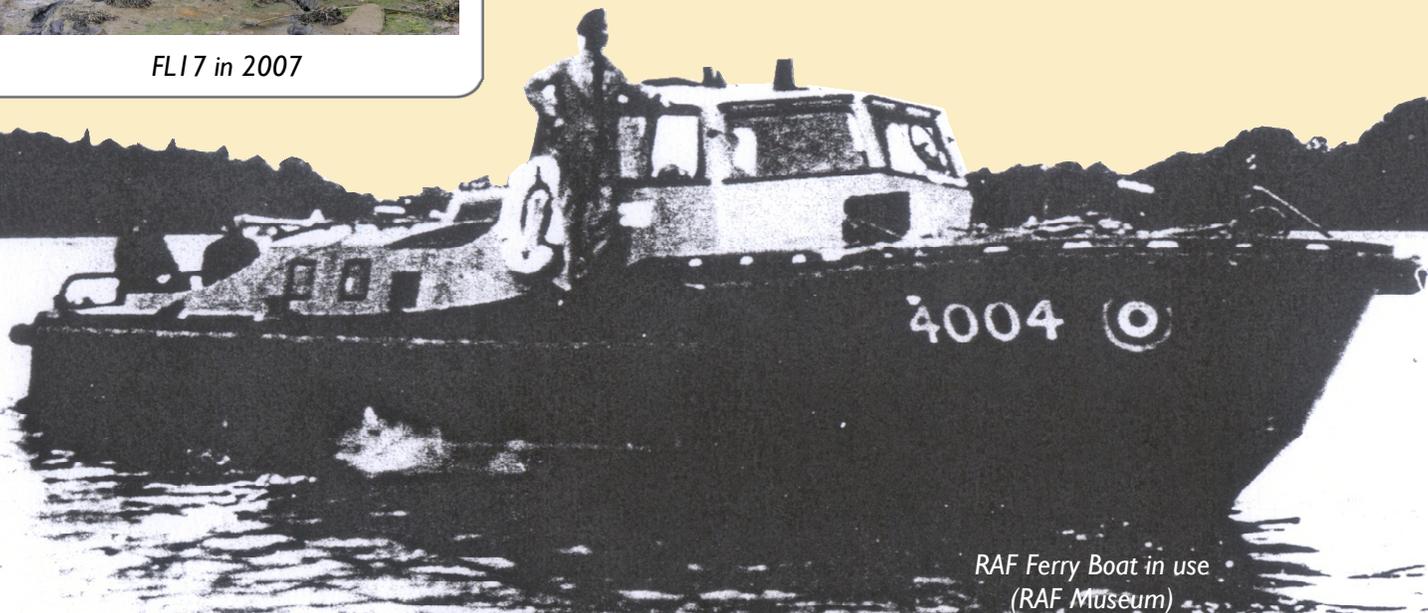


FL17 in 2007

This vessel located on the south bank probably represents the remains of a Second World War RAF ferry boat. The 40ft long Mark 2 (Mk II) and Mark 3 (Mk III) ferry boats were built for the RAF between 1944 and 1946 by *Carrier Engineering* in Wembley (London), *Brooke Marine* (Lowesoft), *Aldous Successors* (Brightlingsea) and *Newell's* of Doncaster.

Ferry boats were used by the RAF to transport people, cargo and munitions to RAF flying boats. Most Mk III craft saw service in the mid 1950s with many ending up at Calshot where engines were removed before being sold. It is believed that this is how this RAF Ferry Boat ended up at Forton Lake.

With both the bow and stern intact remains were measured as about 13m / 42ft long and 1.75m / 5ft wide. There is external iron sheeting which has been welded, and thin wooden planking in the interior. In the deck near the forecabin there is a circular opening, with a coaming running around the edge. This has been interpreted as the gun mount. Towards the stern there is a small amount of superstructure remaining on the port side, within which there two square openings where windows would have been located.



RAF Ferry Boat in use
(RAF Museum)

FL10, FL16 and FL20: Landing Craft

The most common vessel type represented at Forton Lake is the Landing Craft Assault (LCA). These boats were used for the transportation of troops during amphibious assaults on beaches during WW2, with a large number constructed prior to the Normandy invasion of 1944.



*Landing Craft FL16
Left: 1987 Photo: David Fricker, Right: 2006*

A number of LCAs have been found abandoned on the foreshore of the Solent region, including Chichester Harbour and the River Hamble. A complete example of such a vessel can be seen at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

FL16 shows signs of modification as in the cargo bay there are five steel tanks present, with associated pipe-work which would not have been part of the original fit. It was common for these vessels to be re-employed in their later careers in a variety of functions. The vessel appears to have been converted from a troop-carrying vessel to a fuel or water cargo-carrying vessel.



*A complete Landing Craft on display
at Portsmouth Historic Dockyard*

FL7 and FL24: Steam Pinnaces

It is believed that the two hulks FL7 and FL24 are the remains of pinnaces. Pinnacle boats were communication vessels that were employed by the navy for the transfer of small stores and personnel to larger ships that lay at anchor. The steam pinnacle was a highly successful concept from its introduction in 1867 to its general demise between the two world wars. Royal Navy battleships normally carried two pinnaces, one of their additional roles being to provide training in command for midshipmen. Being fast and maneuverable, they could also be employed as torpedo boats and Admiral's barges. Towards the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century they were of steam propulsion, with later versions developed with combustion engines.



The engine of FL7

The Royal Naval Museum maintains *Steam Pinnacle 199* which was built for the Royal Navy at Samuel White's Yard at Cowes in 1911. *Steam Pinnacle 199* was sold from the Navy in 1949 and stored in Weevil Lake in Portsmouth Harbour and is today believed to be the last remaining naval steamboat and has been made a designated vessel in the National Historic Ships Register.

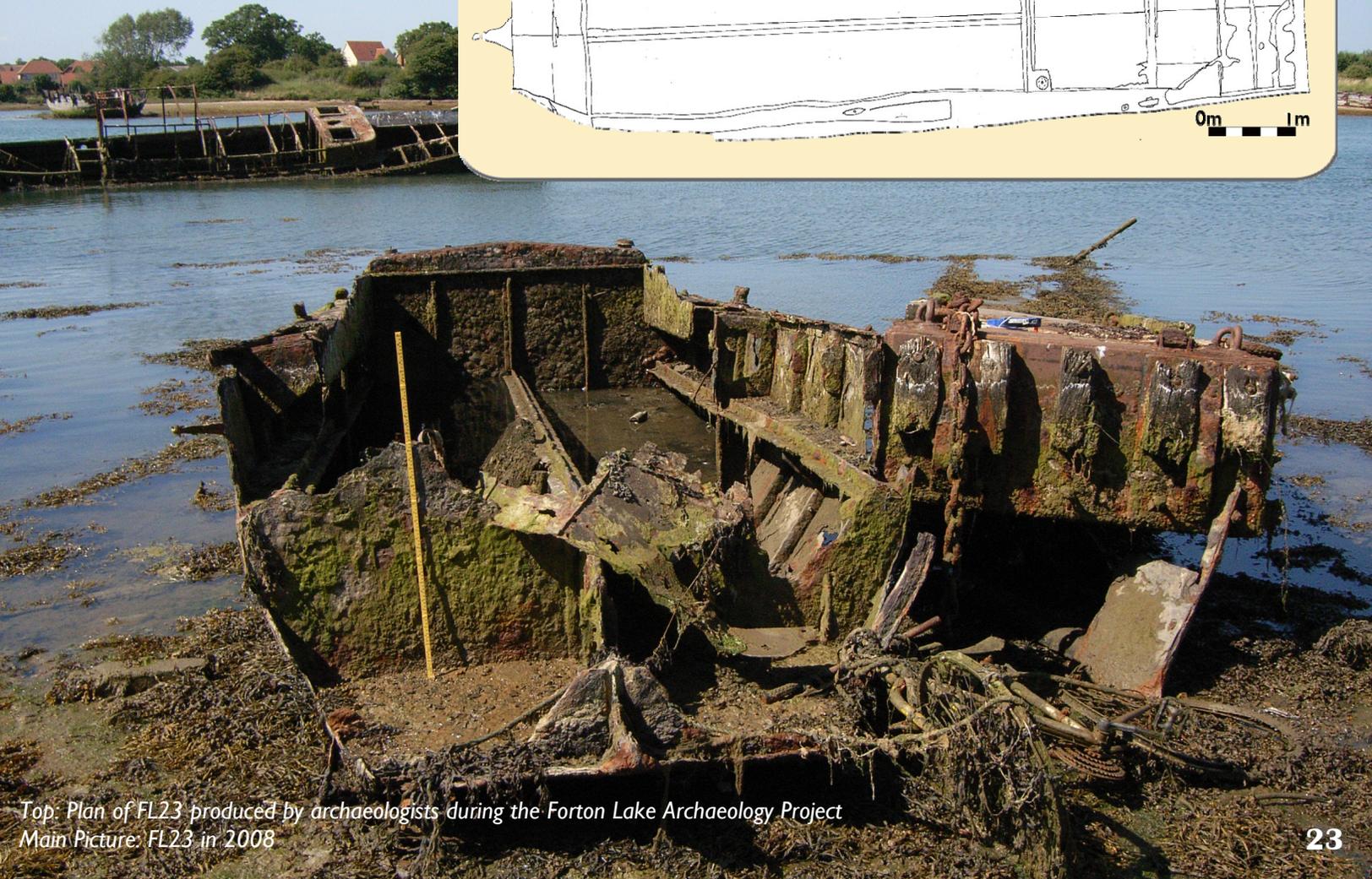
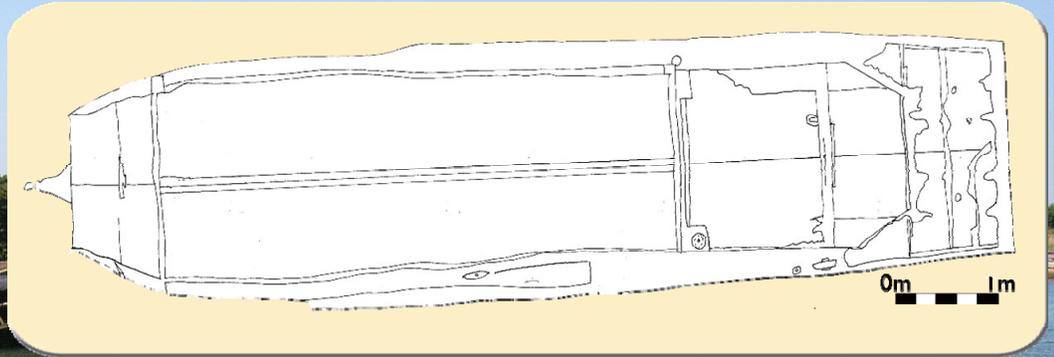
Due to its position further offshore in the mud, the remains of FL24 proved inaccessible for survey. The hull is complete but there are no decks. The wheelhouse is still in place although only the frames remain of what is almost certainly a later addition. The rudder, some cabin structure, the keel, and collapsed deck survive. Very little survives of FL7 other than small parts of its hull and its engine. However from historical photographs taken by maritime enthusiasts FL7 has been identified as *Steam Pinnacle No.704* built in 1917, unusually made from steel.



FL23: Mark III Bomb Scow

Survey work and research led to the identification of FL23 as a Mark III Bomb Scow. Seventy two Mark III bomb scows were built by *Philip and Sons* of Dartmouth (1864-1999), who during WW2 were busy making mine sweepers, pinnaces, landing craft and other vessels for the war effort. FL23, the only bomb scow recorded at Forton Lake would have been used for transporting bombs out to flying boats.

FL23 was recorded in plan with the survey demonstrating the vessel is 9.20m long and 2.40m wide and constructed of a steel plate outer hull, whilst the wooden inner skin no longer survives. A substantial amount of this vessel's hull remains, but all the propulsion system has been removed.



Lifeboats

An important aspect of life at sea is ensuring the safety of those onboard. The sea can be a hostile and unforgiving place when large storms are raging, and most vessels carry a lifeboat in case of emergency. Evidence of this is found in Forton Lake with the remains of two lifeboats, one is substantially intact (FL21) with very little of the other one surviving (FL 30). Although these were boats carried on other vessels, their history is just as important, making them equally deserving of recording for the future.



Unknown Vessels

As has been seen in this booklet, when we know the name of a vessel it is often possible to find out much more about its history than when its identity is unknown. Through archaeological recording as much information as possible was gathered about each site to try to find out a name, or at least to understand about its size, shape and possible function to help research. It was not always possible to identify a vessel, so a number of them remain as 'unknown'. One example of this is FL26.

Not much of FL 26 survives, with only a section of wooden hull lying on the foreshore. The vessel was clinker fastened, meaning the hull planks slightly over lapped each other, and was fastened with copper nails. There is evidence of a later repair using fibreglass, but at the moment we don't know the original age of the vessel.

It is hoped that in the future more will be learnt about the vessels that remain unidentified so we can understand more about their place in history, whether that was local, national or international.



The incomplete remains of vessel FL26

Forton Lake Today and for the Future



Volunteers survey the remains to create a record for the future



*Left: Local memories are recorded
Right: Volunteer draws remains on site*

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. St Vincent College, at the western end, no longer uses the Lake for training future seamen. The Maritime Workshop on Ferrol Road is no longer a centre for scrapping ships but rather restoring them.

The change in use should not mean that its history is forgotten. It is hoped that the fleet will survive through an active interest by members of the local community. The Forton Lake Archaeology Project has worked with local schools to ensure the next generation is engaged and enthused with the rich maritime heritage of the area.

As well as undertaking archaeological surveys and excavations of the hulks at Forton the project has tried to uncover as much as possible about the history of the area, from prehistory to the 20th century. It is hoped that further research will help shed more light on the remaining rich heritage.



Pupils from Bridgemary Sports College participate in the Forton Lake Archaeology Project by taking part in 'Maritime Archaeologist for an Hour' sessions



The Forton Lake Archaeology Project has increased local awareness and will continue to foster a sense of ownership to ensure it has a positive effect on the long term conservation of the maritime heritage of Gosport.

Getting Involved

A photograph of two people, a man and a woman, wearing high-visibility yellow safety vests over dark clothing. They are kneeling on a dirt and gravel surface, likely an archaeological excavation site. The man is holding a large, rectangular wooden board with a black border, and the woman is looking at it intently. In the background, there are some rocks, a small concrete block, and a yellow caution tape. To the left, there is an orange toolbox. A red and white striped pole is visible in the foreground.

People have lived on our shores since prehistoric times; the waters around our coast have been used for trading and warfare as well as being exploited for their resources. Through the investigation of this heritage we can unlock secrets and begin to tell the stories of our past.

There are many different ways to get involved with maritime archaeology. The Nautical Archaeology Society and Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology run projects and often rely on volunteers to help with survey and excavation work, as well as sharing memories and photographs of sites. You can also attend local talks, exhibitions and events in order to discover more about our maritime past.

If you find an object on the beach or on the seabed you can report your discovery to the local Historic Environment Record at the address opposite. If you recover anything from the beach or the seabed from the wreck of a vessel it must be reported to the Receiver of Wreck.

If you are interested in learning more about maritime archaeology and the techniques used to investigate sites, the Nautical Archaeology Society offers training courses starting with an Introduction to Foreshore and Underwater Archaeology.

Contacts

Nautical Archaeology Society

Fort Cumberland
Fort Cumberland Road
Eastney
Portsmouth
PO4 9LD

02392 818419

www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org
nas@nauticalarchaeologysociety.org

Hampshire Historic Environment Record

Environment Department
Capital House
48 - 52 Andover Road
Winchester
SO23 7BH

historic.environment@hants.gov.uk
01962 832338

The Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology

Room W1/95
National Oceanography Centre
Empress Dock
Southampton
SO14 3ZH

02380 593290

www.hwtma.org.uk
Info@hwtma.org.uk

Receiver of Wreck

Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

02380 329474

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Without them this project could never have happened.

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Written by Julie Satchell, Mark Beattie Edwards, Jane Maddocks and Mary Harvey.

Designed and produced by Alison Hamer.



Gosport Borough Council is pleased to have supported the Forton Lake Archaeology Project. Carried out over four years, this community archaeology project superbly illustrates that maritime heritage is everywhere, and anyone can take part in recording and researching the heritage that exists on our doorstep. Both local Gosport residents and maritime enthusiasts will find something of interest in this booklet, including fascinating facts about the many boats that have ended their life in Forton Lake. Despite the detective work the identity of some of these boats still remain unknown, but hopefully the Gosport community may one day be able to shed more light on the unsolved mysteries of Forton's Forgotten Fleet.

Councillor Mrs Diane Searle
The Worshipful the Mayor of Gosport, August 2009



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