

HMS Pomone - The wreck discovered

The chalk stacks of The Needles have proved to be the graveyard of numerous vessels over the centuries.



The Needles from the sea.

The wreck site of the *Pomone* was first brought to the attention of the County Archaeological Service by local diver *Derek Williams*. He discovered the site in 1969 when searching for *HMS Assurance* which was lost off The Needles in 1753. Derek Williams located *HMS Assurance* but there was very little evidence of the ship remaining. What he did discover was the wreck of *HMS Pomone*.



Diver on the Needles wreck site.

By 1977 it was evident that further diving-time was needed on the site. Support was provided by the Portsmouth Royal Naval Sub-Aqua Club. A Licence to Survey was granted with County Archaeologist *David Tomalin* as Archaeological Supervisor and *Commander John Bingeman* directing diving operations.

Over 3,000 items from the site have been excavated and recorded by the Isle of Wight Council's County Archaeological Service. Although no hull was found many artefacts lay scattered in the gullies around the site and are still being discovered.



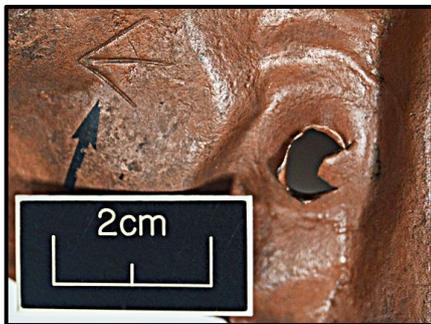
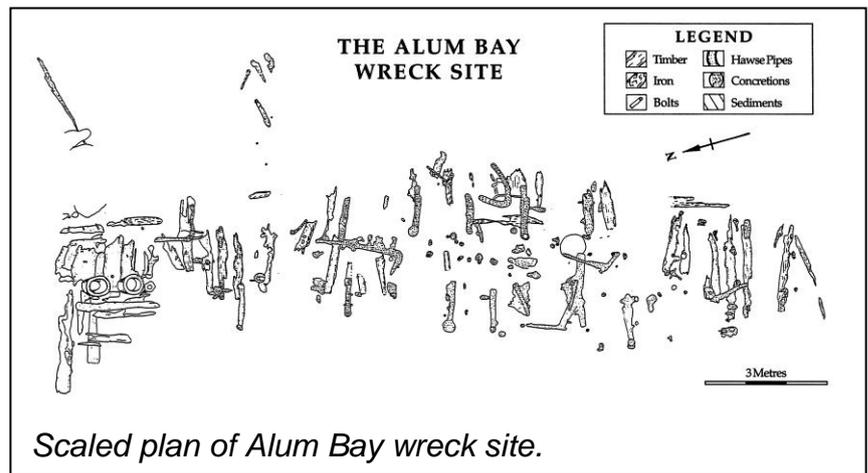
Lead shot resting on the sand of a Needles gully.

© HWTMA

The Needles is now a Protected Wreck Site. The Isle of Wight Heritage Service look after thousands of the objects recovered from the *Pomone*. Artefacts from the *Pomone* are also on display at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard - Royal Naval Museum.

The Alum Bay mystery - Is this also part of the Pomone?

Further along the coast in Alum Bay, remains of an unidentified ship had been known for some time. During 1993 and 1994 the visible wreckage underwent an initial survey, and a scaled plan was produced. The dimensions of the timbers and frames strongly suggested it could have been *HMS Pomone*.

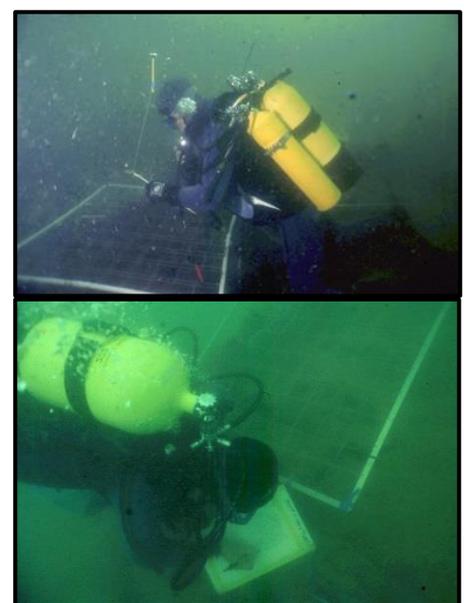


Copper sheathing with the broad arrow stamp of the Royal Navy.

Investigation of the site (Alum Bay 1) was undertaken by the Hampshire & Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology (HWTMA). Copper rivets and a piece of copper sheathing from the underside of one of the large timbers near the bow were found to have the broad arrow stamp of the Royal Navy. This gave additional weight

to the theory that the wreck was a naval vessel.

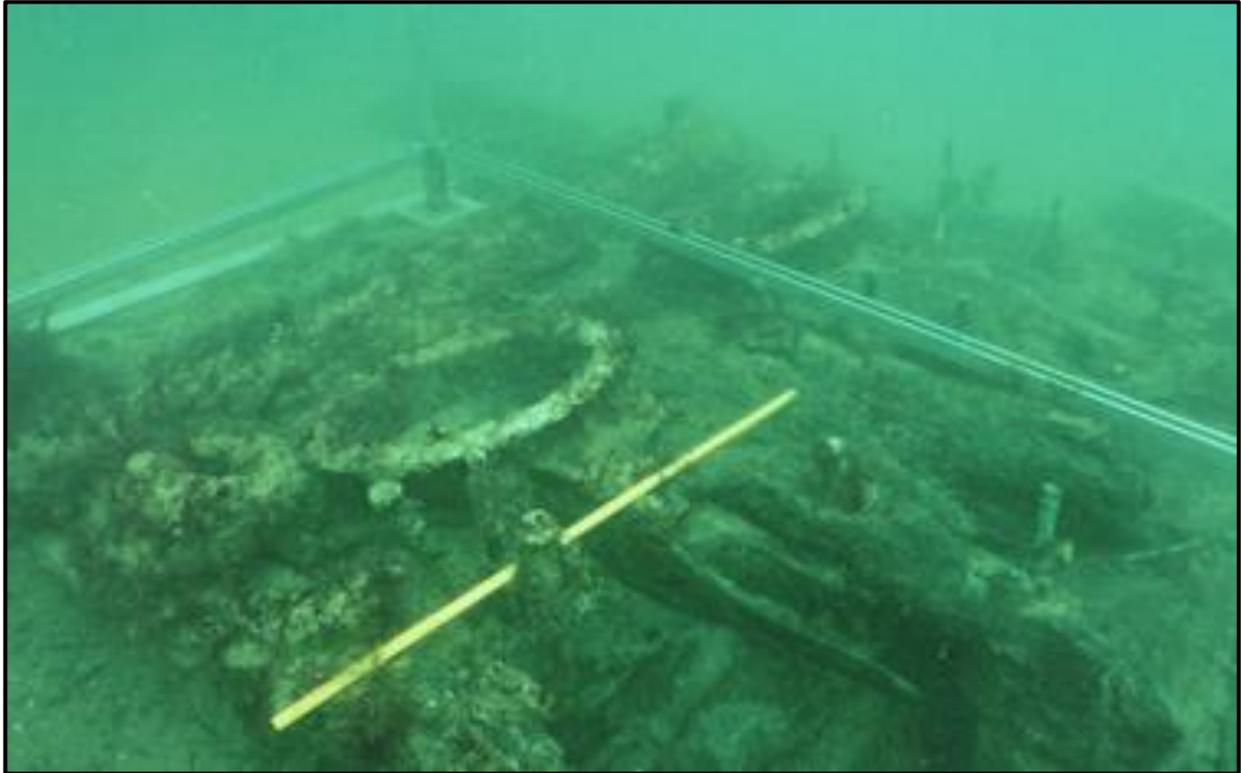
In 2002 an excavation took place to find evidence to support the theory that the wreckage was part of *HMS Pomone*. Dendrochronological (tree-ring) dating provided positive results. Iron hull reinforcement elements are present across the structure and two types of identifiable fastenings survive; wooden treenails and copper bolts. Evidence for the provision of gun ports indicates it to be an armed vessel.



Divers surveying the Alum Bay wreck site. © HWTMA

Finally, at the northern end of the site the remains of a pair of lead anchor holes are preserved, indicating that the bow of the original vessel was towards the

north. This suggests that some of the remains of HMS Pomone have drifted from The Needles into Alum Bay.



Hawse holes & bow structure of the Alum Bay wreck. © HWTMA



A timber sample from the wreck of HMS Pomone.

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