

The story of half a century: *the Nautical Archaeology Society and wreck protection*

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In this 50th year of the Protection of Wrecks Act, the Nautical Archaeology Society (NAS) has reflected on our own half a century of supporting the protection of underwater heritage. Our organisation's long running education programme has been a major player in this support and has stayed relevant by adapting to changes in the sector and the requests of our diverse audience, which includes both avocational and professional archaeologists.

The need for more archaeologically trained divers for the *Mary Rose* protected wreck excavation was the instigating factor for our education programme. We continue that support for protected wrecks and their licensees to this day through individuals attending our courses, or we run specific training based on their professional development needs. While in the past that has been on particular techniques, such as cannon recording or sidescan sonar use, more recently we have assisted MSDS Marine and Heritage with a succession planning project which sought to rejuvenate the ageing licensee teams.

Being the inaugural recipient of the Archaeology Training Forum Award in 2011 demonstrated the continuing success of our education programme, as was stated by Dr Heyworth, Chair of the forum:

'The NAS stood out for its strategic approach and long-term commitment to training, delivered through an established and internationally recognised programme which is coherent, well-structured and tested, aimed at both professional and amateur sectors.'

*Suggest rephrase:
Volunteers developing the next generation of licensees, here studying the protected wreck Hazardous. Credit: MSDS Marine and Heritage*



While over a decade has since passed, we continue to strive to stay up to date, such as through our pioneering use of eLearning to remove the 'death-by-PowerPoint' elements of our training. While our *Discover Maritime Archaeology* eLearning courses were recently shortlisted in the Council for British Archaeology's Archaeology Achievement Awards, it is the positive feedback received from the hundreds of participants that drive us to further improve our training.

While most of our audience comprise avocational archaeologists with a penchant for maritime heritage, we have a strong following of professionals who look to us for their Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Over the years, many of our courses have been mapped to the National Occupational Standards for ClfA endorsement and we look to increase our future CPD offerings to benefit the sector. We can work with ClfA Registered Organisations and ClfA members to provide bespoke CPD packages for their teams based on needs identified in their internal skills audits. Most recently we ran a ClfA-endorsed course *Dendrochronology in the Marine Environment for Archaeologists*, where participating archaeologists assisted experts Nigel Nayling and Rod Bale in actual fieldwork on foreshore wrecks at Sandwich Flats in Kent and gained an excellent understanding of how to replicate these techniques for themselves on other marine heritage sites.

A recent gap in the broader maritime heritage sphere is being filled by our latest course in development – *Maritime Archaeology for Museum Practitioners*. As a result of extensive consultation with museum professionals, this learn-at-your-own-pace online course will be modular to suit the specific gaps in each participant's knowledge and to also be cost effective for the cash-strapped sector. There is great anticipation for the improvements in wreck artefact protection that this course will bring.

While most of our work is at the community archaeology or local professional development level, we are privileged to have a seat at the table with those that have sway over the highest level of wreck protection through the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage. As an accredited NGO to this convention, we

attend key meetings as observers, but also develop our own projects with other accredited NGOs. At a recent meeting of signatories to the convention, several representative ambassadors acknowledged their limited understanding of underwater cultural heritage beyond their expertise in legally enforcing the convention. To empower these people who are skilled in diplomacy and the law, but limited in wreck protection understanding, we are coordinating an international team of accredited NGOs to create a bite-sized awareness course that fills in the gaps in their professional knowledge and helps them to make better decisions for the improvement of our discipline.

This year we are celebrating the last half a century of wreck protection, in which the Nautical Archaeology Society has been

involved throughout. By training licensees, providing individual archaeologists with professional development and assisting diplomats in their work, we have used our education programme to create a more supportive environment to protect our precious and vulnerable underwater heritage.

NAS ClfA-endorsed courses:

- 3D Surveying
- Basic Photography in Archaeology
- Dendrochronology in the Marine Environment for Archaeologists
- Flint Knapping
- Newport Ship: Excavation, Recording and Conservation
- The Archaeology of Sunken Cities and Submerged Settlements
- Underwater Cultural Heritage Law in England and Wales
- Understanding Wooden Ships and Boats



Nigel Nayling passing on knowledge to the two archaeologists attending the ClfA-approved dendrochronology course. Credit: Nautical Archaeology Society



Accredited NGO representatives at the Paris office of UNESCO in June 2023. Credit: Nautical Archaeology Society



Mark Beattie-Edwards

Mark is an archaeologist and diver who has worked for the NAS since 2001. He has been the Chief Executive Officer since 2015. Mark has been heavily involved with protected wrecks, particularly as the licensee of the HMS m Holland No. 5 submarine, the Normans Bay Wreck protected wreck,

and the Unknown Wreck off Eastbourne, now identified as the *Klein Hollandia* (2019 to date), as well as undertaking research on the HMS m/A1 submarine and the *Coronation* protected wreck site, and is the designated archaeologist for the protected wreck of *The London*. Between 2009 and 2018 Mark worked freelance as an NVQ Assessor for the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists.

Peta Knott

Peta is a maritime archaeologist who first became a NAS member in 2003 in Australia as part of her university degree. She then joined the NAS staff in 2017 to run the education programme. She designs and implements

courses and events in the UK, including running protected wreck days to the *Iona II* off Lundy Island. Peta also works with NAS's many international training partners to deliver localised versions of NAS training, and she is the Secretary of the Accredited NGOs to the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage.

