



## Record Details

It should not be assumed that this site is publicly accessible and it may be on private property. Do not trespass.

### Monument details

**HER Number:** TR 34 SW 594

**Type of record:** Maritime

**Name:** Langdon Bay [Wreck](#)

### Summary

[Site](#) discovered in August 1974 by members of the Dover sub-aqua club on the eastern side of Langdon Bay. The site consists of flat fissured chalk bedrock covered in parts by mobile sandy sediment. A hoards of 96 bronze objects (including 25 winged axes, 14 spatulate axes, 2 spearheads, 8 daggers and 24 palstaves) was purchased by the British [Museum](#). More than 350 bronze objects including tool weapons, ornaments and scrap dating to 1100 BC have been found. This is probably a [wreck](#) site due to the close concentration of finds, their quality, and the undoubted French provenance

### Monument Types

- [WRECK](#) (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)

### Associated Finds

- AXEHEAD (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)
- BRACELET (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)
- DIRK (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)
- PALSTAVE (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)
- RAPIER (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)
- SOCKETED AXEHEAD (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)
- SPEAR (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)
- SWORD (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)
- WINGED AXEHEAD (Middle Bronze Age to Late Bronze Age - 1200 BC to 1000 BC)

**Protected Status:** Protected [Wreck Site](#) 1000059: Langdon Bay

### Full description

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Site discovered in August 1974 by members of the Dover sub-aqua club on the eastern side of Langdon Bay. The site consists of flat fissured chalk bedrock covered in parts by mobile sandy sediment. A hoards of 96 bronze objects (including 25 winged axes, 14 spatulate axes, 2 spearheads, 8 daggers and 24 palstaves) was purchased by the British [Museum](#). More than 350 bronze objects including tools, weapons, ornaments and scrap dating to 1200-1000 BC have been found.

This is probably a [wreck](#) site due to the close concentration of finds, their quality, and the undoubted French provenance.(1)

Professor R.F Tylecote, Newcastle University, examined the damaged edges of some of the implements and was able to show in 1977 that the collection consisted of lead-free high tin bronzes. The weapons were normally cast in moulds of clay, stone or bronze from a bronze solution of about 12% tin and heated to around 900 degrees centigrade. (2)

Additional information (3, 4)

From the EH Protected Wreck Sites information:

This site (like Moor Sand) comprises a collection of bronze objects dated using the typology of the metalwork to c 1100 BC. These items have been identified as types of tools, weapons and ornaments made in France and rarely found in Britain. The current hypothesis suggests this site represents the remains of a Bronze Age vessel carrying a scrap metal cargo from France to Britain which implies cross-channel trade in the Middle Bronze Age (see also Moor Sand). It is possible that the boat was attempting to make Dover [harbour](#) when it was blown off course. This is supported by the discovery of the famous Dover Bronze Age boat only 2½ miles away.

The site was discovered in 1974 by Simon Steven and Mike Hadlow, divers from the Dover sub-aqua club on a training dive, who noticed a number of bronze objects exposed on the seabed. By 1978 135 finds had been recovered and a preliminary investigation by Keith Muckelroy uncovered many more objects and led to designation of the site. Work on the site continued after Muckelroy's death in 1980 under the direction of Martin Dean, then of the National Maritime Museum and Stuart Needham of the British Museum and the site licensee, the late Alan [Moat](#). Much of Muckelroy's work was published in archaeological journals.

Since the discovery of the site in 1974 360 objects have been properly recorded and raised through systematic survey and excavation. These were acquired and analysed by the British Museum, but are currently on loan to Dover Museum where they are on display in the Bronze Age boat gallery. The collection is unique in terms of its object composition and is by far the largest group of metalwork in north-west Europe for this part of the Bronze Age c 1300 – 1150 BC. It contains some finds that are common in neighbouring continental regions but extremely rare in Britain, some that are continental in origin but not uncommon in Britain, and others that are rare at this date anywhere. Provisional interpretation has seen this as a cargo of scrap collected from dispersed locations mainly along the continental sea-board of the Channel and southern North Sea.

In recent years work on the site has been affected by the construction of the Channel [Tunnel](#) which produced a blanket of fine chalk sediment, however, this has now dispersed. In 2002 the ADU produced a detailed swath bathymetry survey of the area which will provide a basis for further monitoring of the site. Bournemouth University, in conjunction with St Andrews University, the British Museum and the Department of Materials at Oxford University are currently assessing the documentary and material archive as part of the English Heritage-funded 'Bronze Age Designated Wreck Site Archive Assessment' project, with a view to publication.

From the NMR:

Middle Bronze Age finds from Langdon Bay, near Dover. On the 14th August 1974 Mr S Stevens and Mr M Hadlow of the Dover Sub-Aqua Club began diving on the eastern side of Langdon Bay east of Dover where they had frequently dived over several years. On this occasion they came across a total of 86 objects of Bronze Age date. The finds mostly came from a narrow gully in the chalk about 79 ft long, 2 to 10 ft wide and 1 ft deep. The site was marked by a [buoy](#) and was plotted on a chart.

A further eight objects were recovered in July 1975.

The group is middle Bronze Age in date c.1200-1000 BC. The finds include flat winged axes (nos 1-3), spatulate axes (nos 4-7), daggers(nos 8-10), palstaves (nos 11-17) and spearheads (nos 18-19) (see

illustration card no 1).

The large group (25) of unusual winged axes is particularly interesting as they are very rare. The origins of these axes may be central Europe. The 24 palstave probably have a continental origin and some have similarities to the 'Breton' palstave of the 12th century BC.

The site, which is located 500 yards from the present white cliffs suggests a wreck possibly belonging to a trader or bronze-smith who was bringing a cargo across the channel in a small craft to a location in Dover harbour. The remains of any vessel has long since disappeared. The hoard is the property of Dover Harbour Board.

Systematic investigation of the area began after further finds were made in 1977 and 1978. In the 1979 a season or work was undertaken by the Dover Sub-Aqua Club. The site was gridded into 2 metre wide corridors, within which an intensive visual search was made for all surface bronze; in addition one [trench](#) 15m long was excavated in one of these corridors. The bronzes lie at a depth of 7.13m on a chalk sea bed where visibility is 2m or less. Most of the finds discovered lie within a radius of 50m. A total of 189 objects have now been recovered (see illustration card no 2) and they are of French provenance. Because many of the items were cut it is suggested that this is a cargo of scrap, the items being carried for their metal value rather than for use.

Recovery of objects from the sea bed continued up to 1984 (and presumably beyond) with ever smaller quantities being recovered each year. The total haul by 1984 comprised 61 winged axes, 49 palstaves, 4 axe blade fragments, 18 socketed tools of various kinds, 178 pieces of swords, dirks and rapiers, 7 spearheads and ferrules, 10 ornaments including bracelet fragments, and 17 objects described as miscellaneous and/or unidentified. The objects are regarded as representing the surviving traces of a shipwreck rather than a hoard which has eroded out of the cliff at some point in the past. Although ballast represents a possibility, it is suggested that the material represents bronze as raw material, rather than finished objects, for exchange. Although many of the object types are not without parallel from southern Britain, most are more commonly found across a wide expanse of northern and western France, though some are rarely, if ever, found in association there. The assemblage also dates to a period when very few hoards, if any, were being deposited in southern England, effectively restricting the number of comparable assemblages.

From the National heritage List for England:

The recovery of Middle Bronze Age artefacts from Langdon Bay, Kent, has pointed to the possibility that the wreck of a cargo vessel of the same date lies within the Bay, although no remains of the vessel have been recovered. The location of this material is tangible evidence of cross-Channel connections that, either from shipwreck or a hoard deposited soon after arrival provides a rare chance to view trade in action, rather than trade as inferred from redistributed material.

In 1974, members of the Dover sub-aqua club found bronze objects just outside Dover Harbour. These were identified as types of tools, weapons and ornaments, made in France during the Middle Bronze Age and rarely found in Britain. The typology of the metalwork indicates a date of c.1100BC. More than 350 objects have since been recovered from the site and are in the care of the British Museum.

Designation History: Designation Order: (No 4), No 764, 1978 Made: 25th May 1978 Laid before Parliament: 25th May 1978 Coming into force: 26th May 1978 Protected area: 75 metres within 51 07.60 N 001 20.80 E

Designation Order: No 56, 1979 Made: 19th January 1979 Laid before Parliament: 26th January 1979 Coming into force: 16th February 1979 Protected area: 150 metres within 51 07.60 N 001 20.80 E

No part of the restricted area lies above the high-water mark of ordinary [spring](#) tides.

Documentary History: Middle Bronze Age finds from Langdon Bay, near Dover. On the 14th August 1974 members of the Dover Sub-Aqua Club began diving on the eastern side of Langdon Bay east of Dover where they had frequently dived over several years. On this occasion they came across a total of 86 objects of Bronze

Age date. The finds mostly came from a narrow gully in the chalk about 79 ft long, 2 to 10 ft wide and 1 ft deep. The site was marked by a buoy and was plotted on a chart. A further eight objects were recovered in July 1975.

Archaeological History: The first artefacts were found by members of Dover Sub-Aqua Club in August 1974 and to date a total of 360 finds have been recovered from the site, all of bronze and comprising tools, weapons, ornaments and miscellaneous pieces. A high proportion of these finds are of continental forms with potentially widespread origins between Brittany and the Lower Rhine region. The bronzes have suffered varied degrees of abrasion as a result of their periodic exposure on the seabed during three millennia, but a good proportion is still identifiable to specific types. There is also clear evidence that many pieces were already bent and broken up in antiquity. Because of this damage and their likely continental origins, it has been hypothesised that the assemblage forms a cargo of scrap metal being imported into the Britain for recasting. In that context it is significant that the Bronze Age Dover boat was found only 2.5 miles away.

In 1977, a Professor at Newcastle University examined the damaged edges of some of the implements and was able to show that the collection consisted of lead-free high-tin bronzes. The weapons were normally cast in moulds of clay, stone or bronze from a bronze solution of about 12 per cent tin and heated to about 900 degrees centigrade.

The site lies on a chalk wave-cut [platform](#) in 6 to 10 metres of water, 500 metres seaward of the white cliffs of Dover. A blanket of mobile sediment formed during and after the Channel Tunnel excavations, which has now dispersed, although fine sediment lies in shallow gullies across the site. There are strong currents and poor visibility.

Since 1978 to the present day there appears to have been a noticeable amount of artefact movement, demonstrated by the fact that previously searched or barren areas have yielded new artefacts, whilst a bronze artefact was found weighing down crisp packets in a [hollow](#).

Coombes D, 1976, *Archaeologia Atlantica* (Article in serial). SKE6706.

Coombes D, 1976, *Archaeologia Atlantica* (Article in serial). SKe6706.

Simon Stevens and Brian Philp, 1976, *Kent Archaeological Review: Major Discovery of Bronze Age Implements at Dover* (Article in serial). SKE31854.

1980, *Article Bronze Age wreck site Antiquity* (Article in serial). SKE6705.

1980, *Article Bronze Age wreck site Antiquity* (Article in serial). SKe6705.

K. Muckelroy, 1981, *PPS* (Article in serial). SKE6707.

K. Muckelroy, 1981, *PPS* (Article in serial). SKe6707.

Needham, S., Dean, M., 1987, *Congres Prehistorique de France 1984* (Article in serial). SKE6708.

Needham, S., Dean, M., 1987, *Congres Prehistorique de France 1984* (Article in serial). SKE6708.

<1> Simon Stevens and Brian Philp, 1976, *Kent Archaeological Review: Major Discovery of Bronze Age Implements at Dover*, *Kent Archaeological Review No 43 p67-72* (Stevens, S. (Article in serial). SKE31854.

<2> Council for Kentish Archaeology, 1977, *Kent Archaeological Review No.49 1977*, *Kent Archaeological Review No.49 1977* (Mynott, E.) (Serial). SKE6704.

<3> Cluttons, 2002, *Desk-Based Assessment of Dover Eastern Docks Supply Main* (Unpublished document). SKE8212.

<4> Barham, A. J. & Bates, M. B., 1991, *A Preliminary Research Report on the Palaeoenvironmental & Geoarchaeological Significance of the North Kent Marshes* (Unpublished document). SKE11863.

## Sources and further reading

### Cross-ref. Source description

- Article in serial: Simon Stevens and Brian Philp. 1976. Kent Archaeological Review: Major Discovery of Bronze Age Implements at Dover. Vol. 43. pp. 63-73.
- Article in serial: 1980. Article Bronze Age wreck site Antiquity.
- Article in serial: Coombes D. 1976. Archaeologia Atlantica.
- Article in serial: K. Muckelroy. 1981. PPS.
- Article in serial: Needham, S., Dean, M.,. 1987. Congres Prehistorique de France 1984.
- <1> Article in serial: Simon Stevens and Brian Philp. 1976. Kent Archaeological Review: Major Discovery of Bronze Age Implements at Dover. Vol. 43. pp. 63-73. Kent Archaeological Review No 43 p67-72 (Stevens, S..
- <2> Serial: Council for Kentish Archaeology. 1977. Kent Archaeological Review No.49 1977. Kent Archaeological Review No.49 1977 (Mynott, E.).
- <3> Unpublished document: Cluttons. 2002. Desk-Based Assessment of Dover Eastern Docks Supply Main.
- <4> Unpublished document: Barham, A. J. & Bates, M. B.. 1991. A Preliminary Research Report on the Palaeoenvironmental & Geoarchaeological Significance of the North Kent Marshes.

## Related records

- [TR 34 SW 88](#) Parent of: Bronzes from Langdon Bay - possible prehistoric shipwreck site (Findspot)

## Related thematic articles

- [Bronze Age Kent \(Thematic Essay\)](#)

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