

Archaeology of the Hamble River:

Hamble Hulks

Watercraft have been using the Hamble River for millennia. Over time vessels have been abandoned, salvaged and wrecked along its banks and many of them are left as remains along the foreshore. The earliest vessel discovered on the river is a log boat found at Fairthorne Manor that is thought to be Roman.



HWTMA staff and volunteers survey the lifeboat hulk



Barnett Class Lifeboat in Chatham Dockyard

On the shore walk between Swanwick and Warsash there is a hulk with only the keel and two sections of superstructure remaining. After investigations by HWTMA and volunteers, several features were found to identify this vessel as a Barnett Class Lifeboat. These were built from the 1920s and some carried on in service up to the early 1970s. This shows how quickly a boat can disappear.

In 1892 the Training Ship *Mercury*, a school that trained boys for life at sea, came to the Hamble. With it came a small fleet of craft, including *Flash* and *Fortuna* that are believed to be two former North Sea trawlers that were converted to be hospital ships by 1913. The remains of these trawlers can be seen as hulks on the western bank of the Hamble at Satchell Marsh. HWTMA uses these vessels to teach hundreds of local people and students maritime archaeological survey.

*'Flash' and 'Fortuna' in use as hospital ships
Image courtesy of Ian Underdown*



HWTMA staff and volunteer plan the remains of 'Flash' or 'Fortuna'

The hulks that survive on the Hamble River are one of the largest collections of historic vessel remains in the Solent Region. They provide important evidence of watercraft with local, regional and national significance. It is vital that further research, investigation and management programmes are undertaken to ensure that information on our maritime heritage is not lost for present and future generations.

