Wrecks in Dutch waters

1945 - present Recent times
1939 - 1945 Second World War
1914 - 1918 First World War
1815 - 1960 Age of Steam
1795 - 1815 Napoleonic era
1600 - 1795 Age of Trade
1500 - 1600 Age of Discovery
1000 - 1500 Late Middle Ages
450 - 1000 Early Middle Ages
12 BC - 450 Roman period
from 8000 BC Prehistory

Mapping wrecks

Beneath the waves of the North Sea lies a valuable archaeological resource. Thousands of wrecks – of ships and also planes – lie like time capsules on the sea bed. Little remains of some wrecks, while others are still virtually intact. We do not know the precise location of some, and sometimes we are unaware of the existence of others.

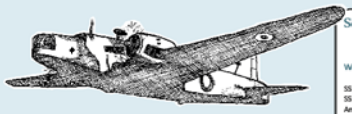
Importance of wrecks

Every wreck is unique and tells its own story. Many ships have sunk in this region over the centuries, from prehistoric logboat to Viking ships, from Dutch East India Company ships to steamships, from submarines to patrol boats, and from fishing boats to more recently lost freighters. Together, these wrecks give us an insight into the maritime history of the North Sea, which gives them cultural value.

Wrecks are also biodiversity hotspots, home to entirely different plants and creatures than the surrounding sea bed. This also makes wrecks interesting for fishermen and divers. Not every wreck is ecologically valuable. This depends on various factors, including the age of the wreck, the material in the wreck and its distance from the coast.

This poster

This poster is designed to raise awareness of the importance of wrecks and gives a visual impression of the maritime history of the North Sea. A small selection of wrecks from each period are shown on the map. One wreck from each period is highlighted with a brief description and illustration. The focus of activity in each period can clearly be seen on the small maps.

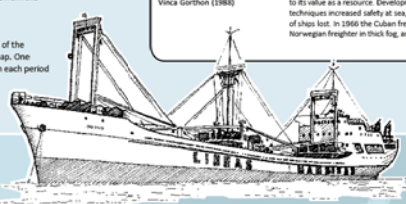


Recent times 1945 - present

Oriente (1966)

Hondsbosch (1973)
SS Spyros Armenakis (1965)
Leliegracht (1973)
Birkenfels (1966)
Eurabia Sun (1974)
Stanislaw Dubois (1981)
Antje Jansen (1973)
Vinca Gorthon (1988)

After the Second World War there was a rapid rise in transport by water. More and more cargo was being transported by ship and freighters became ever larger and more efficient, particularly those used for bulk goods. Container ships began to be used for general cargo transport, and ports underwent rapid expansion. Innovative techniques were developed to make fisheries more sustainable. Offshore activities, first in oil and gas, and later also wind farms and aquaculture, made the North Sea a multifunctional resource. Traditional use of the North Sea made way for a different approach to its value as a resource. Developments in nautical navigation techniques increased safety at sea, sharply reducing the number of ships lost. In 1966 the Cuban freighter Oriente collided with a Norwegian freighter in thick fog, and both vessels were lost.



Second World War 1939 - 1945

Wellington LC (1941)

SS Madrid (1941)
SS Indus (1942)
Amerskerk (1944)
F 920 DM (1944)
SS Empire Blessing (1945)
M 469 (1944)
Baloeran (1943)

The post-war economic crisis led to large-scale poverty and discontent in Germany. In this climate, Adolf Hitler managed to come to power in 1933. His aim was to turn Europe into one big German empire. Germany invaded Poland on 1 September 1939; in response France, Britain and several other countries declared war on the Germans. Minefields, attacks on shipping and the bombing of enemy targets claimed many lives. The Second World War was above all a war of air battles. In 1941 a Wellington bomber with registration number R1322 set off to carry out a reprisal attack on Bremen in response to aerial bombardments in Britain. It was attacked by a German fighter plane over the IJsselmeer, where it crashed.

First World War 1914 - 1918

HMS E 3 (1914)

HMS Hogue (1914)
HMS Cressy (1914)
HMS Abouair (1914)
SMS U 106 (1917)
SS Tubantia ((1916)
HMS E 34 (1918)
HMS Scott (1918)

On 28 July 1914 the Austro-Hungarian Emperor Franz Joseph I declared war on the small neighbouring country of Serbia after the heir to the Habsburg throne had been killed in an attack. Several European countries soon declared war on each other, and within just a few weeks the Great War had broken out. As well as desperate fighting in the trenches, there were also battles at sea. The use of submarines in war was a new phenomenon. Many merchant and passenger ships fell victim to torpedo attacks from submarines. The warring parties laid mines along shipping routes and off the coast. The minefields claimed many lives. On 18 October 1914 the British submarine HMS E 3 was the first submarine to fall victim to an attack by another submarine when it was torpedoed by German SM U 27 to the north of Schiermonnikoog.

Age of Steam 1815 - 1960

SS Gulf of Panama (1882)

SS Countess of Derham (1881)
SS Berlin (1907)
SS Kerwood (1919)
HM Adder (1882)
SS Leerdam (1889)
SS Katowice (1949)
SS Cimbria (1883)

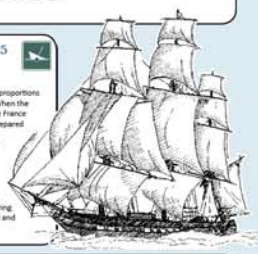
The 19th century saw the gradual advent of steam-powered ships. The Dutch naval officer Gerhard Moritz Roentgen regularly sailed to Britain, which had launched the first steamship in 1814, and he went to study modern shipbuilding techniques there. In 1823 King Willem I sent him to Britain again to investigate the latest developments. In his report he anticipated great potential for the use of steam engines to power warships, and received an honour for his work. In 1823 he helped set up a steamship company (Nederlandsche Stoomboot Maatschappij), of which he became director. The steamship Gulf of Panama was en route from Japan to Bremen in 1882 with a cargo of rice when its coal supply ran out during a heavy storm. It was no longer able to reach the port at Nieuwediep and ran aground on a sand bank off Texel.

Napoleonic era 1795 - 1815

HMS Lutine (1799)

Delft (1797)
HMS Minotaur (1810)
HMS Romney (1804)
HMS Seine (1803)

In the 19th century armies grew to unprecedented proportions and the destructive power of weapons increased. When the French Revolution began in 1789, monarchs outside France became afraid that revolution would spread, and prepared to go to war against France. The French general Napoleon Bonaparte seized power in Paris. In 1799 he appointed himself First Consul and went on to conquer large areas of Europe. The frigate La Lutine sailed as part of the French fleet for 14 years, but fell into the hands of the British in 1793. They changed its name to HMS Lutine. It was lost between the islands of Vlieland and Terschelling during a storm in 1799, while carrying a large cargo of gold and silver worth almost a million pounds.



Age of Trade 1600 - 1795

Vliegend Hert (1735)

Princess Sophia Albertina (1781)
Eendragt (1665)
Burgzand Noord I (1640)
Orangewoudt (1758)

Despite the papal allocation of global trade to Spain (western) and Portugal (eastern), the Dutch managed to exploit ample opportunities to trade spices in the Far East. This led to tough competition between provinces, cities and trading companies which, thanks to the efforts of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, were merged to form the United East India Company (VOC) in 1602. The main aim of the company was to make maximum profits and harm its enemies. The Netherlands itself divided the world into east and west when the West India Company was formed in 1621. The VOC transom return ship "Vliegend Hert" was on its way to Batavia in 1735 when it ran aground on a sand bank in the North Sea during a heavy storm.

Age of Discovery 1500 - 1600

Scheurrak SO1 (1593)

Oostvoornse Meer 12 (late 16th century)
Ritthem (1575)

The Low Countries' golden age began in the 16th century. Under the Pacification of Ghent in 1576 various regions of the Netherlands agreed a constitutional alliance covering matters like defence, taxes and religion. The growing urban population needed feeding, and this led to a boom in trade, with food supplies being brought in from the Baltic region, mainly in the form of grain imports. This became known as the 'mother of all trade'. It gave the towns in the Netherlands growing economic and maritime power. The Scheurrak SO1 shipwreck is an example of a ship used to transport grain; it sank in the Waddenzee in the late 16th century.

Late Middle Ages 1000 - 1500

IJssel cog (post-1440)

Stavoren 17 (1490)
Nijkerk cog (1336)
2 cogs at Doel (1329)

In the 13th and 14th centuries the Hanseatic League in Northern Germany and the Netherlands controlled a large proportion of the European trade. They traded largely by sea, their network extending from Russia to the Bay of Biscay. In this period, a sturdy new type of merchant ship was developed, known as a cog. In 2011 a mid-15th-century cog was discovered during an archaeological investigation in the river IJssel near Kampen. Two smaller ships were found lying next to it. This strongly suggests that the three vessels were deliberately sunk, possibly to form a barricade or to influence the course of the river. Work to deepen the river at this point is due to start in the near future, so Rijkswaterstaat has decided to salvage the vessels and have them preserved so that they can be displayed. This process is due to start in mid-2015.

Early Middle Ages 450 - 1000

Drakkar heads from Viking ships (between 300 en 700 AD)

Solleveld ship burial (7th century)
Vleuten 1 (8th century)
Dorestad (8th and 9th centuries)

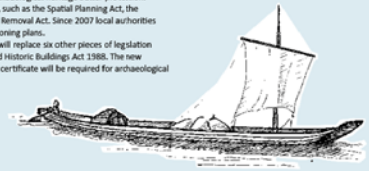
The collapse of the Roman empire sparked a period of great unrest in Northwest Europe. In this age of mass human migration, the Scandinavian peoples – the Vikings – exerted their influence over large parts of Europe, extending as far as Russia. Vikings were without doubt the best shipbuilders of their day. They had fast, robust ships of different types with names like drakkars and knarrs. Remarkably, few Viking ships have been found outside Scandinavia, though between 1934 and 1951 three dragon heads that would have been attached to a ship's bow were dredged from the river Scheldt at Zelen and Moerzeke-Mariakerke (Belgium). Dated to between the fourth and seventh centuries AD, they are now in the British Museum.

Roman period 12 BC - 450

De Meern 1 (2nd century)

De Meern 2 and 3, fragments of logboat (2nd century)
Brittenburg (1st century)
Votive stone for Nehalennia (2nd century)
Zwammerdam ships (2nd century)

At the start of the Common Era the Romans extended their influence northwards. The border of the Roman empire lay along the Rhine, and it was heavily guarded. Many remains of ships have been found in the old bed of the Rhine. They were used to supply the forts along the border. These 'aak-type' ships, punts and logboats carried bulk goods and possibly also troops. Most of the ships that have been found were reused to reinforce riverbanks or were deliberately sunk to influence the course of the river. In 1997, however, archaeologists working at Vleuten-De Meern found remains of a river boat that was probably still in use when it sank. The deck house (where the captain would have slept) was still present, complete with furnishings and toolbox.



National legislation

Government policy on archaeology is based on the principles in the Malta Convention (1992), particularly the aim of preserving archaeological values where they lie in situ, consideration of archaeological interests in spatial planning and the guarantee that environmental impact assessments and the decisions based on them will take account of archaeological sites and their context. Another principle is that any archaeological research required will be paid for by the developer. Protection of the underwater cultural heritage is a condition introduced at national level.

Brief overview of national legislation

- The Wrecks Act (1934) provides the legal basis for the removal of shipwrecks. The legislation sets conditions for the removal of vessels and other objects stranded, sunk or grounded in public waters, or stuck in flood defences or other hydraulic structures.
- The Earth Removal Act (1965) regulates the extraction of sand, gravel, clay and other materials from Dutch soil by means of a licensing system. Under the legislation, the licence holder must take steps to preserve buried archaeological sites. If it is not possible to preserve a site, the developer of the site may be obliged to have it excavated.
- The Environmental Management Act (1979) defines the legal instruments that can be used to protect the environment. It stipulates that the impact on archaeology, including wrecks with cultural heritage value, must be identified as part of an environmental impact assessment before certain projects or spatial plans can go ahead. This applies, for example, to large-scale infrastructural projects (wind farms, sand extraction etc.).
- The Monuments and Historic Buildings Act 1988 regulates the protection of archaeological sites and the performance of excavations. It applies to all Dutch territory, including territorial waters. Since 1 September 2007 a number of provisions in the Act have applied to the contiguous zone (up to 24 miles off the coast). This includes a duty to report and a ban on excavations. A permit must be obtained for the excavation of archaeological monuments, including wrecks, in territorial waters and the contiguous zone. The law also provides for an obligation to report to the Cultural Heritage Agency (RCE) anything that can reasonably be assumed to be of importance in cultural heritage terms.
- The Archaeological Heritage Management Act (2007) implements the Malta Convention in Dutch law.

See also: http://www.noordzeeloket.nl/en/projects/north-sea-2050-spatial-agenda/wrecks/

The Maltz Convention (1992) is designed to afford the buried archaeological heritage better protection. This 'implementation act' also has a bearing on other legislation, such as the Spatial Planning Act, the Environmental Permitting (General Provisions) Act and the Earth Removal Act. Since 2007 local authorities have been obliged to incorporate archaeological values in their zoning plans.

- The Heritage Act is due to enter into force on 1 January 2016. It will replace six other pieces of legislation pertaining to the cultural heritage, including the Monuments and Historic Buildings Act 1988. The new legislation will extend the ban on excavating underwater sites. A certificate will be required for archaeological research and excavations under water.

Cultural Heritage Agency
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Rijkswaterstaat
Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment

DIVETEAM ZEESTER

Coordination and maritime archaeology information: Thijs Coenen, Andrea Otte, Johan Opdebeeck (RCE/Maritime Programme) and Remy Luttik (Zeester diving team)
Project manager: Sander Keijzer (RWS/Water, Traffic & Environment)
Illustrations: Pauline van den Broeke
Design: www.carpyaimagine.nl
©2014

Disclaimer
This poster is based on the best available information. Only a limited number of wrecks have been projected on the map, their rough location indicated with an icon. The map does not therefore show the precise location of wrecks. No rights may be derived from this poster.

Prehistory from 8000 BC

Pesse logboat (8000 BC)

Kadoelerveld logboat (800 – 400 BC)
Vlaardingen logboat (700 BC)
Wieringermeer logboat (3300 BC)
Hardinxveld-Giessendam logboat (5000 BC)

People have had boats since prehistoric times. The earliest known boats were logboats. Boats were probably also made from other materials, such as animal hides, but no trace of them has ever been found. The oldest known boat in the world was found in the Netherlands in 1955, during work on the A28 motorway in Drenthe province. A logboat made of fir, was found near the village of Pesse, and has been carbon-dated to between 8200 and 7600 BC. The boat can now be seen in the Drenthe Museum in Assen.