

Divers Find What is Thought to be the Earliest Boatbuilding Site in the World



An 8,000-year-old wooden platform has been discovered off the Isle of Wight coast near Yarmouth in the UK, [BBC News](#) reports. The seabed where the structure was found—at a depth of roughly 36 feet—would have been dry land when the platform was built, and still connected to the European mainland. The platform sits adjacent to and may have been part of Bouldnor Cliff, a submerged Mesolithic settlement first identified in 1999, which—among a number of discoveries—has yielded what is thought to be the earliest boatbuilding site in the world.

Divers from the [Maritime Archaeology Trust](#), which oversees the site, first spotted the new structure earlier this year, and excavations have now revealed it to consist of a series of split timbers resting on round wooden foundations. According to Trust director Garry

Momber (photo), the platform doubles the amount of worked wood from the Mesolithic period that is known in the United Kingdom and provides new evidence of technology that was not previously thought to have been developed for at least another 2,000 years. The wood has now been taken to a laboratory at the [National Oceanography Centre](#) in Southampton for analysis and conservation. Many of the wooden artefacts are being stored in the British Ocean Sediment Core Research facility ([BOSCORE](#)), operated by the National Oceanography Centre.

About the National Oceanography Centre

The National Oceanography Centre (NOC) is one of six centres supported by the [Natural Environmental Research Council](#) (NERC) and funded to work on national capability programmes. Funding for the work it undertakes is also secured from other sources including NERC competitive funding, EU grants and from commercial organizations. The NOC has two sites in the UK, Southampton and Liverpool, and employs around 650 staff. The sites are co-located at both sites with leading UK Universities.

A multi-disciplined centre, its research encompasses Marine Geoscience, Marine Physics and Ocean Climate, Marine Systems Modelling, Ocean Biogeochemistry and Ecosystems, and Ocean Technology and Engineering. The NOC is home to the nation's marine data assets; the British Oceanographic Data Centre, the British Ocean Sediment Core Research Facility, the National Marine Equipment Pool, Europe's largest fleet of autonomous and robotic vehicles. The NOC manages two research ships.

About the Maritime Archaeology Trust

The Maritime Archaeology Trust is a registered charity with over 22 years' experience in research, investigations and pioneering techniques for the study of marine cultural heritage. Originating in the South of England as the Hampshire and Wight Trust for Maritime Archaeology, the organization has grown from regional roots to an internationally renowned authority on maritime archaeological issues and research.

The Trust was established in 1991 and today runs a programme of research and fieldwork, which investigates underwater sites such as shipwrecks and submerged prehistoric landscapes, as well as hulks and maritime structures present on the intertidal and foreshore area. Results of this fieldwork and research feed into the Trust's award-winning Education and Outreach dissemination programme and its Sunken Secrets exhibition on the Isle of Wight.

Photo: Garry Momber tagging the structure (courtesy Maritime Archaeology Trust).