

## **RYE A, c. 1500**

*Austin Siess*

**Country:** United Kingdom

**Place:** To the north of Cyprus Place, by the railroad, 30 yards east of the railroad crossing on Ferry Road, and 150 yards east of the Tillingham River, at Rye, East Sussex, England.

**Approximate Coordinates:** *Lat.* 50°57'4.73"N: *Long.* 0°43'42.37"E

**Type:** Unknown

**Identified:** No

**Dated:** Circa 1500 (estimated): The timbers lay “in blue creek mud,” resting on about 20 cm of sand, below which were around 90 cm of blue mud, “and then peat.” Based on the stratigraphy and the history of the site the Rye A Vessel was tentatively dated to around 1500.

**Beam:** Unknown

**Keel Length:** Unknown

**Length Overall:** Unknown

**Number of Masts:** Unknown

### **History of the shipwreck**

The Rye Vessel A was found in 1963 by construction workers on the bottom of a pit, about 4 m deep, together with the remains of a clinker built ship (Rye B). The remains of the ship are believed to be still in place. According to the workers, “the vessel lay roughly NE-SW and was nearly horizontal,” and consisted of a portion of a maststep and fragments of frames and planking. The ship's scantlings suggest that the vessel was large, but there is no way to attain exact dimensions. Because of the extensive damage and premature removal of the timbers, reconstruction is impossible.

### **Description of the site**

The site lies to the north of the village, on dry land, where once there was a marsh intersected by a herringbone of creeks. These two ships may have been scuttled there sometime between the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century and the late 16<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Cargo**

No artifacts were associated with these hull remains.

## **Hull remains**

The hull remains consisted of a small number of fragments of frame timbers, planking, possibly ceiling, and the remains of a keelson, encompassing a maststep.



*Figure 1. Picture of the site (Lovegrove 1964).*

## Keelson

A 5.5 m long portion of a keelson that was salvaged, encompassing the remains of a maststep. The keelson 40 cm sided and 30 cm molded, and showed a complex section. Below 16.5 cm is

was beveled to the base, being 15 cm sided on the face that set over the floor timbers. It had a 6 x 6 cm notch, 5 cm deep, to receive a stanchion, next to the maststep.

### Maststep

The assembly of the maststep was similar to that of the Cattewater shipwreck. It was an enlarged portion of the keelson, 52 cm sided and 46 cm molded. The mast mortise was rectangular, 25 x 56 cm, and 18 cm deep.

### Frames

Some fragments of frame timbers were preserved, with sections of 28 x 23 cm and 18 x 18 cm. The remains of three frame timbers showed dovetail scarves joining the presumed floor timbers to the corresponding first futtocks. Another timber fragment is described as having a hook scarf and being still treenailed to its associated timber.

### Planking

The planking was laid flush, in one single layer. Preserved plank fragments were around 35 cm wide and 7.5 cm thick.

### Caulking

One plank had a preserved "layer of caulking" was found on one the planks, suggesting either a second layer of planking, of which no traces were found, of some other kind of protection coating. Remains of hair have been found as well.

### Fasteners

All the structural pieces seemed to have been fastened with 2.5 cm treenails. There were square nail holes 6 mm on a side, with countersink holes to lodge the nail heads. It seems that in some cases treenails were not flush to the planking surface, and the holes were filled with a bitumen-type substance.

## **Size and Scantlings**

There is very little that can be concluded about this site. Because most of the data is under great security, there is little access to the small amounts of information that can be gathered from this site. A further analysis is impossible without more information.

**Table 1. Scantling of the timber remains of the Rye A Ship**

<b>Timber</b>	<b>Sided [cm]</b>	<b>Molded [cm]</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Keelson	52	46	All fragments added to 5.5 m
Maststep	40	30	Lower portion beveled to 15 cm sided
Frame Timbers	28 18	23 18	Two main sizes
Planking	35	7.5	Badly preserved
Ceiling planking	18	4	Badly preserved

### **Wood**

The timbers analyzed were identified as oak.

### **References**

- Carperner, A, Ellis, K.H, & McKee, J.E.G. 1974, *Interim report on the wreck discovered in the Cattewater*, Maritime Monographs and Reports 13, National Maritime Museum.
- Lovegrove, Capt. H., 1964, Remains of two old vessels found at Rye, Sussex,' *Mariner's Mirror* 50.2: 115-122.
- Mortlock, B. and Redknap, M., 1978. "The Cattewater wreck, Plymouth, Devon, Preliminary results of recent work," *International Journal of Nautical Archaeology* 7:195-204.
- Redknap, M., 1985. "The Caterwater wreck," in C. Cederlund (ed.), *Postmedieval Boat and Ship Archaeology*, BAR International Series 256, Oxford, 39-59.