



Seamless Sea Casebook

HFF Steering Committee
on Underwater Cultural Heritage



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Cover image: Fishers haul a fishing ngalawa onto the beach at Bagamoyo before the tide ebbs. Image from the Bahari Yetu, Urithi Wetu Project. © L.K. Blue.

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Introduction

Marine and maritime cultural heritage is often fragmented. Traditional institutional divisions separate what is in the sea, what is from the sea, and what is by the sea, despite new technologies making marine and maritime cultural heritage much more visible and accessible. There is both a need and an opportunity to develop new models for engaging society in the history of its **seamless sea**.

This Seamless Sea Casebook arose from a Policy Forum held in 2016, organised by the Honor Frost Foundation Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage. The Policy Forum sought to encourage connectivity in public engagement relating to the sea and its human past. It provided an opportunity to discuss how we can increase the social and economic benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage by bringing together audiences and joining-up diverse assets, resources, and research.

Two documents – published in March 2017 – were developed from the presentations and discussion at the 2016 Forum: ‘A Statement of Common Ground’ that summarises a series of broadly accepted statements about marine and maritime heritage; and ‘A Guide for Practitioners’, which suggests practical steps that can be taken by individuals or within institutions. These two documents are reproduced in this Casebook, together with a range of relevant examples that illustrate public engagement relating to marine and maritime cultural heritage.

Marine and maritime cultural heritage can have a strong hold on people’s imaginations, contributing to a sense of place within communities as well as attracting domestic and international tourism.

Since the Policy Forum in 2016 and publication of its outputs, there has been a surge of interest in communicating the importance of the relationship between people and the sea, which is gaining further momentum through the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–30 (the UN Ocean Decade). The Honor Frost Foundation (HFF) strongly supports the UN Ocean Decade, recognising the contribution that cultural heritage and archaeological practices can make to sustainable development. Notably, HFF has supported the Ocean Decade Heritage Network (ODHN) to engage with the UN Ocean Decade, reflected now in the inclusion of the Cultural Heritage Framework Programme as a formally recognised programme of the Decade.

This Seamless Sea Casebook directly addresses the UN Ocean Decade’s societal objective of ‘an inspiring and engaging ocean’ by demonstrating how cultural heritage can be used to engage people about their ocean’s past, present, and future. The Casebook also illustrates how marine and maritime cultural heritage is relevant to other outcomes, such as community resilience, ocean accessibility, and sustainable livelihoods. HFF is delighted to provide this Casebook as part of its continuing support for the Cultural Heritage Framework Programme of the UN Ocean Decade.



A Statement of Common Ground

This section summarises a series of broadly accepted statements about marine and maritime heritage, based on discussion at the Policy Forum organised by the Honor Frost Foundation Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage on 19 October 2016.

The sea provides attractive and powerful places that are important to people today. This was also true in the past.

The sea has shaped our histories in numerous and profound ways; yet the role of the sea in history is often poorly understood or appreciated.

Our understanding of marine and maritime cultural heritage must be broad in order to encompass heritage in different environments, both tangible and intangible, and the involvement of different – often fragmented – sectors: curatorial; university; voluntary; commercial.

There are particular challenges in generating public appreciation of marine and maritime cultural heritage, considering that it includes things that are – and will remain – underwater.

It is important to develop captivating concepts, narratives, and brands – and to engage with the media and creative industries – when representing marine and maritime cultural heritage.

Over-reliance on familiar stereotypes undermines the capacity of marine and maritime cultural heritage to be diverse, layered, challenging, and more engaging to broader audiences.

Factors affecting awareness of, respect for, and the importance attributed to marine and maritime cultural heritage, vary and require tailored approaches.

People-based narratives enable communities to engage with and safeguard marine and maritime cultural heritage that they can regard as their own.



Maritime Archaeology Bus, Cyprus

The Maritime Archaeology Bus is a bespoke vehicle which takes maritime archaeology directly to schools, museums, community centres, waterfronts, and public events.

It was equipped with a range of bilingual display and teaching materials that were developed and produced specifically for a six-week tour of Cyprus in 2017.

The bus welcomed over 2,400 schoolchildren and a further 2,500 other visitors. The reach of the bus extended to even more people through accompanying online material and social media. Feedback from pupils and teachers was very positive.



The Maritime Archaeology Bus was a collaboration between Maritime Archaeology Trust (MAT), MARELab, University of Cyprus (UoC) and the Maritime Archaeology Stewardship Trust (MAST), supported by HFF.

<https://honorfrostfoundation.org/2017/01/01/maritime-archaeology-outreach-bus-cyprus>



GIRT Scientific Divers

Gathering Information via Recreational and Technical (GIRT) Scientific Divers is a conservation focused, no-impact, citizen-science project. It aims to train members to systematically document observable physical and natural features of historic shipwrecks, submerged aircraft, and other underwater cultural heritage in an open sea water environment, to facilitate their ongoing protection and management.

GIRT is led by Dr Andy Viduka and is administered under GIRT Scientific Divers Pty Ltd.

<https://www.girtsd.org>
and <https://sketchfab.com/GIRT>



It is important to share the means as well as the outputs of investigating marine and maritime cultural heritage. The public is interested in the processes by which archaeologists and historians discover connections and meanings, as much as they are in the discovery of artefacts and the conclusions of the research.

When considering marine and maritime cultural heritage, it is unhelpful to separate culture and nature because people's interaction with the marine environment is, fundamentally, a complex blend of both. Recognising the impact of human interaction with the sea over many millennia is essential to understanding the present condition of the marine environment, and to achieving a sustainable future.

Many different interpretations can be determined when investigating marine and maritime cultural heritage, but they are not all equally valid. Marine and maritime cultural heritage depends on sound research for its veracity and authenticity, and that conclusions are reasoned, transparent, and contestable.

It is important to draw attention to the connection between financial inputs and resulting outcomes, so that those who benefit economically from marine and maritime cultural heritage are encouraged to invest in its development.

The circumstances of marine and maritime heritage in the eastern Mediterranean are very different to those in the UK, but the exchange of perspectives and experience is enriched by commonalities as well as contrasts. Making comparisons between marine and maritime heritage is as beneficial to practitioners in the UK as it is to those in the eastern Mediterranean.

Egyptian Traditional Riverine Tangible and Intangible Heritage Rescue Project (TradEGY)

The TradEGY project sought to raise awareness among local Egyptians of traditional sailboats on the Nile, which have witnessed a drastic decline in recent years.

The project encouraged people to re-engage with their heritage, locating, recording, and preserving the remaining tangible and intangible aspects of these dying riverine traditions.

The TradEGY project was carried out by Ziad Morsy along with a number of HFF scholars, and with the support of HFF.

<https://honorfrostfoundation.org/2020/01/14/egyptian-traditional-riverine-tangible-and-intangible-heritage-rescue-project>





Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network (CITiZAN)

CITiZAN was a community-led archaeology project in England that addressed the fragile nature of coastal and intertidal heritage at risk through natural processes, such as wind, waves, and storms, or human impacts. CITiZAN actively promoted local engagement with heritage exposed in the inter-tidal zone through site recording and long-term monitoring.

CITiZAN volunteers used a specifically designed App to record coastal heritage sites and their condition. The App was supported by a downloadable Coastal Guide, recording forms, and training workshops. Digital or physical 'Low Tide Trails' introduced people to the wealth and range of archaeological features exposed on the foreshore.

CITiZAN is hosted by MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), supported principally by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

<https://citizan.org.uk>



A Guide for Practitioners

This section summarises some of the characteristics of marine and maritime cultural heritage and suggests practical steps that can be taken by practitioners as individuals or within institutions. It is based on discussion at a Policy Forum organised by the Honor Frost Foundation Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage on 19 October 2016.

1. Marine and maritime cultural heritage creates social, economic, and environmental benefits. The benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage are recognised – at least in principle – in law, policy, and planning.
 - Have confidence in the value of marine and maritime cultural heritage and the degree of public interest it attracts.
 - Develop a vision for the contribution made by marine and maritime cultural heritage to society, economy, and the environment – both presently and in future – that can be used in coastal place-making.
2. People’s relationship with the sea includes marine and maritime cultural heritage, but it also encompasses coastal and marine habitats and a wide range of social, creative, and emotional connections.
 - Recognise how heritage, nature, and society interweave, and the potential this represents to develop new perspectives and initiatives that can help (re-) connect people to their marine environment.
 - Engage with wider narratives about the character of people’s relationship with the sea in the humanities and natural sciences that go beyond marine and maritime cultural heritage.
3. Seas and coasts are highly dynamic: connectivity and change are not only inherent in marine and coastal processes, but also in the ways in which people have responded to and influenced those processes through time.
 - Use marine and maritime cultural heritage to understand how coastal and marine places have acquired their distinct character, and to anticipate how that character might change in the future.
 - Value the marine and maritime connections between places as a fundamental characteristic of the cultural heritage of those places rather than as an incidental addition.



Bahar Project

The Bahar Project aims to introduce children in Egypt to the field of maritime archaeology.

The project uses a hands-on approach which leads to active and enthusiastic participation by children. Modern technologies such as virtual reality, are used to present maritime cultural heritage.

The project included publication of the first ever Arabic children's book on maritime archaeology, 'The Adventures of Bahar and Nejma', in cooperation with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Through the story, Bahar and

Nejma introduce children to the significance and value of underwater cultural heritage, and raise awareness of the marine environment and the need for its protection.

The project is run by Nada Nofal and a team of students from the Alexandria University Centre for Maritime Archaeology & Underwater Cultural Heritage (CMAUCH), with support from HFF.

<https://honorfrostfoundation.org/2019/10/01/maritime-archaeology-outreach-project-maop>



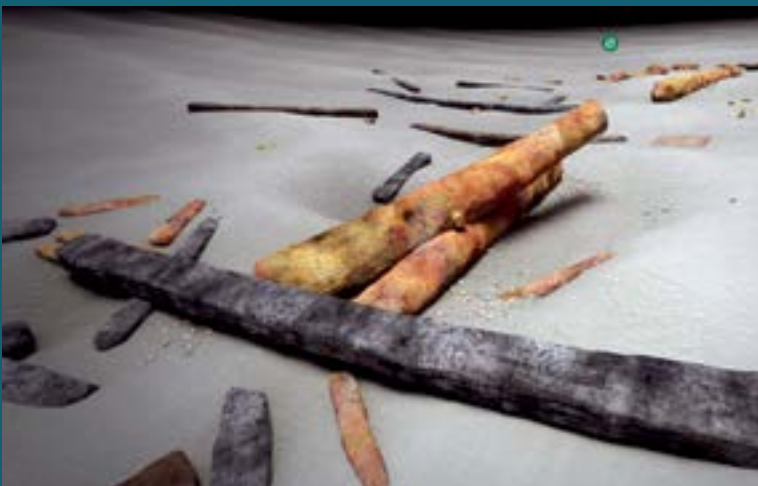
Virtual Dive Trails

Shipwreck sites underwater are only accessible to those with the correct equipment and appropriate training, and therefore the majority of the public are unable to visit these sites.

Historic England has been exploring ways to increase accessibility for non-divers, and have commissioned a series of virtual dive trails of protected wreck sites that allow people to tour the wrecks without getting wet.

Opening up underwater cultural heritage in this way allows for increased access for a wide and diverse audience.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/get-involved/visit/protected-wrecks/virtual-dive-trails>



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4. Institutional frameworks at the coast, such as Coastal Managers, Planners, and other Stakeholders, are complex; boundaries and responsibilities may not reflect the character or needs of marine and maritime cultural heritage.
 - Work collaboratively and through partnerships.
 - Identify cross-cutting themes and create new forms of mutually beneficial organisation that will safeguard marine and maritime cultural heritage.
 5. Marine and maritime cultural heritage can alleviate pressures facing coastal communities.
 - Make express connections between regeneration and marine and maritime cultural heritage.
 - Use marine and maritime cultural heritage to address specific social, economic, and environmental issues.
 6. Data is needed on the specific social, economic, and environmental benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage.
 - Collate and publish data on the benefits of marine and maritime cultural heritage.
 - Encourage third-party data initiatives to address marine and maritime cultural heritage directly.
 7. People expect an enjoyable experience of marine and maritime cultural heritage irrespective of the depth of their knowledge or the degree of their engagement.
 - Create concise and accessible content that combines the familiar with the intriguing.
 - Enable people to delight in discovery – one of the great strengths of marine and maritime heritage – with multiple layers and challenges that can be explored as circumstance and inclination allow.

Big Anchor Project

The Big Anchor Project enables researchers and the public to collect and share information on anchors around the world in a simple, fun, and consistent format.

This successful citizen science initiative has been running since 2009. Through its guidance, forms, and videos, it empowers members of the public around the world to record all sorts of anchors, from ancient stone to modern steel. This valuable information is then made freely accessible via an online database. Over 700 anchors have been recorded globally, and the total continues to grow.

The Big Anchor Project is co-ordinated by the Nautical Archaeology Society, and part funded by HFF.

<https://biganchorproject.com>





Bahari Yetu, Urithi Wetu (Our Ocean, Our Heritage)

The Bahari Yetu, Urithi Wetu project is working with fishing and boatbuilding communities in the Bagamoyo region of Tanzania, to examine the stresses this heritage faces, whilst also documenting its material and intangible manifestations.

The wooden sailing boats and their attendant cultural practices are facing rapid changes in response to extensive overfishing in inshore waters, and rising costs. If lost, they would take with them a wealth of material, spiritual, cognitive, and linguistic heritage.



Bahari Yetu, Urithi Wetu is led by researchers from the Universities of Exeter, Dar Es Salaam, and Southampton, and is supported by Rising from the Depths.

<https://risingfromthedepts.com/bahari-yetu-urithi-wetu>

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8. Responsiveness to public interest requires research to better understand the processes through which marine and maritime cultural heritage contributes to society, economy, and the environment.
 - Examine how you achieve social, economic, and environmental impacts through marine and maritime cultural heritage.
 - Encourage and participate in collaborative research on the social, economic, and environmental impacts of marine and maritime cultural heritage.

 9. Marine and coastal developers carry out extensive and detailed investigations of marine and maritime cultural heritage, which often have value beyond the requirements of the specific development.
 - Encourage developers to present the results of archaeological investigations to the public in the course of consent procedures and construction activities, not just after the development has been completed.
 - Enable the results of development-led work to inform broader chronological, regional, and thematic assessments and interpretations, in order to build better understanding that will benefit all.

 10. There are many good examples of marine and maritime cultural heritage projects that have delivered social, economic, and environmental benefits.
 - Draw on previous existing examples of good practice in developing new initiatives intended to achieve positive social, economic, and environmental benefits.
 - Actively share previous and current best practice through networks of practitioners.

 11. The interpretations that accompany material components of marine and maritime cultural heritage – on every scale from individual artefacts to entire landscapes – are central to the importance of the material itself.
 - Accompany the measures used to safeguard the physical remains of the past with corresponding measures to communicate the stories from which their significance arises.
 - Seek to connect people to physical material – be it artefact or landscape – through narratives of everyday lives, making the past relevant and meaningful to people today.

12. Access to marine and maritime cultural heritage can be limited by a range of factors, including income, educational background, age, ethnicity, gender, disability, and/or health.

- Take specific actions to increase access to marine and maritime cultural heritage across the whole of society.
- Recognise that historical interpretations of marine and maritime cultural heritage are incomplete if they do not account for diversity in the past, a more inclusive approach is required.

About the Honor Frost Foundation

The mission of the Honor Frost Foundation (HFF) is to promote the advancement and research, including publication, of marine and maritime archaeology with particular but not exclusive focus on the eastern Mediterranean, with an emphasis on Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus and Egypt. The Foundation also seeks to foster and promote the protection of underwater cultural heritage (UCH). The Foundation was founded in 2011 with a legacy from the pioneering underwater archaeologist Honor Frost.

www.honorfrostfoundation.org

About the HFF Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage

The HFF Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage (UCH) provides advice to HFF and helps to shape its policy towards UCH. The Steering Committee identifies potential public policy issues relating to UCH, considers the way to strengthen relationships with key audiences, advises on how to communicate activities, and implements its programme of work accordingly.

The Members of the HFF Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage are as follows:

Professor Sir Barry Cunliffe CBE – Chair

Ms Alison Cathie – Chair of HFF Trustees

Ms Jane Maddocks

Dr Adrian Olivier

Mr Peter Wolrich – HFF Trustee

Mr Robert Yorke

Dr Lucy Blue – Maritime Archaeological Director, HFF

Lauren Tidbury – HFF Grants Manager

Dr Arturo Rey da Silva – Technical Advisor



A report for the Steering Committee on Underwater
Cultural Heritage, Honor Frost Foundation

October 2022