

**Written evidence submitted by the British Academy/Honor Frost Foundation
Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage [TOU0056]**

Maritime Heritage and Tourism

Summary

- The UK's maritime heritage is one of its greatest assets internationally and at home. This heritage includes major museums and preserved ships, but also the numerous wrecks and maritime sites spread around the coast.
- The contribution of maritime heritage to current foreign and domestic tourism is being overlooked.
- The additional contribution that attention to maritime heritage could bring could be particularly important in drawing tourism beyond London and other major cities to the seaside destinations, especially to some of those that are in decline.
- Data collected for assessing the state of tourism should be framed in ways that make the contribution of maritime heritage visible.
- Specific campaigns should be mounted internationally and domestically to draw attention to the UK's maritime heritage as a resource for tourism and recreation.
- Further research should be carried out to analyse the many ways to grow the contribution of maritime heritage to UK tourism.

Introduction

1. The British Academy/Honor Frost Foundation Steering Committee on Underwater Cultural Heritage was formally established in March 2013 to advise on and help shape policy, and to help develop programmes in relation to the safeguarding of underwater cultural heritage for the British Academy (BA) and the Honor Frost Foundation (HFF). This response to the Culture, Media and Sport Committee's inquiry into Tourism is intended to address in particular the committee's interest in "encouraging tourism outside London and the few other heavily visited cities to other parts of the United Kingdom" and "reversing a long-term decline in seaside destinations".
2. As part of its overall consideration of the importance of underwater cultural heritage, the Steering Committee has been examining the social and economic benefits of maritime heritage in the UK. A report is expected later this year.
3. In the course of these studies it has become apparent that the current contribution of maritime heritage to tourism and recreation is very great but is largely fragmented and overlooked as a sector in official documents.
4. Important changes in coastal and marine planning in recent years provide a mechanism for recognising the value of maritime heritage and mobilising it in development, especially in seaside destinations.
5. These considerations provide the basis for the Steering Committee's evidence to this inquiry.

Maritime Heritage: a unique UK asset

6. The UK's maritime heritage presents a unique offer to the world on many counts. Geographical position and an outward-looking history means that we have a very dense cultural heritage associated with our coasts and seas.
7. Our maritime history is extraordinarily long – perhaps even a million years. The earliest site of human occupation north of the Alps was found on a beach in Norfolk and 200,000 year old artefacts have been found out at sea. Some of our most enigmatic prehistoric sites lie on today's coastline, hinting at what still is to be found offshore. Prehistory is not an esoteric subject. Human origins are a source of fascination to many people both in the UK and from abroad. The UK is at the forefront of discoveries and science relating to submerged prehistoric landscapes; this excitement is ripe for translation for the visiting public.
8. Almost every period of history is represented by the remains of boats and ships around the UK. A recent book by English Heritage on England's shipwrecked heritage was aptly sub-titled 'from logboats to U-boats'. Bronze age seafarers, Romans and Vikings have all left traces of their craft around our shores. Tall ships – whether they be the striking remains of the *Mary Rose*, the preserved *Cutty Sark* or replicas like the *Matthew* – provide a tangible link to art and iconography in collections both national and local. Museums all around the country exhibit maritime imports of every age, both fabulous and every-day, as well as the rich material culture of shipbuilding and seafaring. The features that give character to many of our ports and seaside towns are based on their centuries-old relationship with the sea. As you stand on a quay or pier there is a surface just waiting to be scratched whether you look inland towards waterfront houses, pubs and warehouses; or out towards the shipping channels and sea-lanes. This is a fantastic heritage, rich in variety and cutting across conventional boundaries.
9. Maritime endeavour has brought the UK to the world and the world to the UK, especially since the industrial revolution. Ships built in the UK covered the globe, connecting UK ports to places large and small on every continent. Some of the vessels did not return and are themselves valued as important heritage sites where they now lie around the world. Crews and passengers moved with these ships, adding to the uncountable links between people and the UK's maritime heritage. The UK's maritime past could be a conduit for people to discover afresh their family and community connections.
10. The UK's maritime connections encompass many conflicts, both within sight of our shores and further afield. Naval warfare connects museums to dockyards and fortresses, and to many of the historic wrecks that have been protected around the UK. The casualties of the First and Second World War in particular are an important resource for visiting divers domestically and from abroad. There are probably more wrecks sunk in military action around the UK than in any other country's waters. But again, the links are about families and communities as well as hardware. People from around the world were seafarers in UK waters, and many have no other grave than our seas. Tourism has many facets, and we should keep in mind also those who may wish to visit from the UK and around the world to pay their respects to those who perished just off our shores.

11. On a more local scale, but of intense importance to the character of our coast, fishing has left many traces, ranging from medieval structures on the foreshore to harbours and markets. Fishing has always been a hazardous profession, especially in its contribution to sweeping the sea-lanes of mines in the First and Second World War. The heritage of the fleets as they changed from sail to steam to internal combustion is another key feature of the UK seabed.

Maritime Heritage: an overlooked contribution

12. Despite its unique offer, maritime heritage seems to be largely overlooked by the institutions promoting tourism in the UK. The contribution of maritime attractions, events, seafront townscapes and coastal countryside are implicit at best: drawn upon as stock photographs but not considered as a coherent theme.
13. Maritime heritage provides the basis of some of the UK's top tourist attractions, as indicated by figures collated from a number of publicly available sources:

Attraction	Year	Visitor Numbers
National Maritime Museum	2013	1,437,725
Portsmouth Historic Dockyard	2013	674,434
Merseyside Maritime Museum	2013	622,516
Titanic Belfast	2013	596,777
HMS <i>Victory</i>	2013	375,593
HMS <i>Belfast</i>	2013	332,342
<i>Cutty Sark</i>	2013	321,607
<i>SS Great Britain</i>	2013	173,520
Chatham Historic Dockyard	2010/11	129,125

14. These major attractions are undoubtedly important, but it is also necessary to acknowledge the contribution at a local scale of the innumerable smaller maritime heritage attractions spread around coastal communities throughout the country. Although the visitor numbers and income generated may be much less, smaller attractions can provide a critical focus for local tourism.
15. It is currently difficult to quantify the number of divers who visit maritime heritage underwater, but sites like HMS Scylla – sunk as an artificial reef – and the German High Seas Fleet in Scapa Flow indicate substantial numbers that have a marked effect on the local economy. For many years, the main emphasis in protecting maritime heritage sites underwater has been on exclusion. More recently, however, specific dive trails have been introduced around historic wrecks that have been shown to have distinct economic benefits locally (Nautical Archaeology Society, *The Local Economic Value of a Protected Wreck*, June 2013).
16. There has been an expansion recently in the literature examining the social and economic benefits of heritage on land, and in the separate literature on the social and economic benefits of the coastal and marine environment. Tourism and recreation feature in both sets of literature. Yet there has been virtually no attention to the benefits arising from tourism with respect to the heritage of coastal and marine

areas. Any such consideration is usually implicit at best. A failure to recognise the importance of maritime heritage, combined with a failure to seek to collate even basic quantifiable data means that the potential to build growth on this unique theme is severely hampered.

Maritime Heritage: the potential for expansion

17. VisitBritain's GREAT Britain programme emphasises heritage, culture and countryside amongst the UK's unique selling points. Their research (*Overseas Visitors to Britain: Understanding Trends, Attitudes and Characteristics*, September 2010) refers to the need to combine these strengths with surprise and excitement. Addressing maritime heritage as a specific theme could offer a prime example of combining adventure and discovery with heritage and culture, engaging thousands of additional domestic and foreign tourists.
18. Many coastal visitors and recreational boat users enjoy Britain's coastal landscapes without realising how much history lies just out of sight beneath the waves. Great strides have been taken in recent years in using technology to create imagery of what lies on the shore and seabed that is much more accessible than the occasional murky photographs of just a few years ago. The internet and mobile devices can be used to augment this imagery with rich factual and creative content, allowing people themselves to explore these special places and the multiple links between them. Whether visitors are on a beach, a coastal path, sea kayak or yacht, increasing awareness of and access to maritime heritage could be an easy win.
19. Boosting these diffuse forms of access will enhance visitor experiences without creating a disproportionate strain on infrastructure. By motivating new visits, encouraging repeat visits and extending dwell time, a fresh focus on maritime heritage tourism could energise coastal resorts that are having to look towards new markets. An integrated approach is critical, however, so that diffuse tourism complements visits made to established attractions, and vice versa. A joined-up approach could consolidate and build upon the large numbers that visit maritime heritage attractions in London such as the National Maritime Museum, *Cutty Sark* and *HMS Belfast*, spreading beneficial effects beyond London including to declining seaside destinations.
20. Recent changes to marine planning provide an important platform for developing tourism based on maritime heritage. The UK *Marine Policy Statement* (HMG, March 2011) highlights the social, economic and environmental value of the historic environment of coastal and offshore zones, recognising that it can be a powerful driver for economic growth, attracting investment and tourism as well as sustaining enjoyable and successful places in which to live and work. Marine plans are being introduced that provide a mechanism through which planning authorities across the coastal zone can start to give practical support to developments that will enhance maritime heritage tourism.

Maritime Heritage: assembling the existing evidence

21. Achieving growth in maritime heritage tourism is hampered by the lack of a coherent evidence base on existing visitor numbers and attitudes, or of existing

economic effects. Relevant data may have been acquired, but it is subsumed or implicit within other categorisations. To take visitor attraction data made available by VisitBritain as an example, some visitors can be usefully grouped using the category 'Coastal', but the National Maritime Museum, the Merseyside Maritime Museum and the *Cutty Sark*, for example, are all categorised as 'Urban'.

22. It would be a straightforward step to examine existing data and research to pick out useful information, to identify data gaps and to acknowledge methodological biases that currently preclude quantitative assessment of the scale and character of maritime heritage tourism.

Maritime Heritage: creating a base for growth

23. Maritime heritage tourism could become a distinctive and productive avenue through which the UK can enhance tourism both domestically and from abroad.
24. Although some existing data could be usefully reworked to start providing an evidence-base for action, it is likely that additional research will be necessary. Better understanding of recreational diving patterns, attitudes and economic consequences across the whole breadth of wrecks with heritage interest would be an important advance. Carrying out comparable work with respect to different forms of diffuse tourism in the coastal zone is likely to confirm a low-level of current awareness, but great potential. It would also serve as a baseline for gauging the cost-effectiveness of enhancement strategies. Examining the scope to extend the reach of existing maritime heritage attractions to encompass diffuse access could be another productive way forward.
25. The planning system on land plays an important role in supporting tourism development. As indicated above, the marine planning system could provide an important platform also for supporting the expansion of tourism relating to maritime heritage. The potentially beneficial links between maritime heritage, tourism development and marine planning warrant further examination.
26. The UK has many archaeologists who have gained international experience and reputation in the Mediterranean and further afield and several dedicated university centres for maritime archaeology in the UK. This academic base in underwater archaeology could help to underpin investigations into this aspect of the UK's heritage.
27. Tourism organisations should be encouraged to develop maritime heritage campaigns internationally, nationally and locally. As outlined above, the UK's maritime heritage offer has appeal to communities spread widely across the UK and throughout the world. Our maritime heritage is unique and distinctive and is a key asset to the UK's tourism economy.

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The Academy represents the UK's research excellence worldwide in a fast changing global environment. It promotes UK research in international arenas, fosters a global approach across UK research, and provides leadership in developing global links and expertise.

About the Honor Frost Foundation

The Honor Frost Foundation's mission 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 and Cyprus.

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.