

The Alderney Elizabethan Wreck

The Alderney Maritime Trust

In 1996 the States of Alderney set up the Alderney Maritime Trust to oversee the security, excavation, conservation, display and publication of the Alderney Elizabethan Wreck and its contents. The purpose of this website is to make the work of the Trust available to scholars and the general public. With the exception of recent finds, everything recovered from the wreck has been published at an academic level in book form. Everything that has been conserved is on permanent museum display, or in museum storage, and is available to the public. Everything that is not on display or in storage is currently in treatment with professional conservators. As far as we are aware no other excavation in British waters can make these claims. As a volunteer organisation we feel we have achieved much of which we can be proud. We hope you will agree.

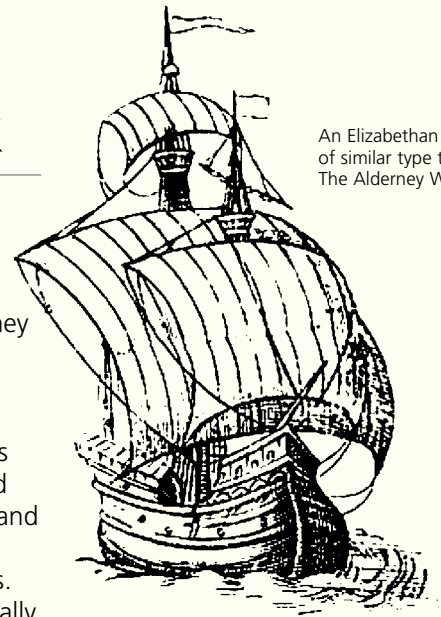
The Historical Perspective

The defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 did not end the Spanish threat. Within three years Queen Elizabeth I had sent England's best known and most experienced soldier, Sir John Norreys, to Brittany with 3000 men to prevent Spain from securing a suitable port from which it might pursue its war against England. The Channel Islands straddled the route between England and Brittany, so most of Norreys' transports and supply vessels would have passed within the near vicinity of Alderney.

In a letter to Lord Burghley dated 29th November 1592, Sir John mentions "a shipp that was cast away about Alderney". Because of its location and period and because it was carrying military supplies (helmets, body armour, muskets, shot, hand grenades, etc.), it is believed that our wreck is the ship that was mentioned in the dispatches to the Queen's Chief Minister.

The Elizabethan Age was when England moved out into the world. Never were its ships more important. Men like Drake, Raleigh, Hawkins and Frobisher fought battles at sea and set out on journeys which, in time, would establish England's maritime and territorial domination of the world. Upon its ships, England under Gloriana achieved wealth, power and greatness it had never known before.

In broad terms, the importance of the Alderney wreck lies in the fact that it is the only ship from this pivotal period to be found and excavated in British waters. Archaeologically and historically, it is second in importance only to the Mary Rose, and illuminates better than anything else that has come down to us, these crucial years in Elizabeth's war with Spain.



An Elizabethan ship of similar type to The Alderney Wreck

Alderney - The Location



The Island of Alderney ([click on image to go to Google map](#))

Alderney is the most northerly of the Channel Islands group. It is 3½ miles long, 1¼ miles across and has a population of around 2500. It is situated on the edge of the continental shelf, just 9 miles from the tip of the Cherbourg Peninsula, Normandy, and 55 miles south of Portland Bill, Dorset ([see its location here](#)).

Alderney is notorious for its fierce currents and hazardous reefs. Over the centuries these have claimed many fine ships, not least of which was this gunned Elizabethan vessel with a military cargo that was discovered in 1977.

