

Just Toxic Legacies of War? Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities of Potentially Polluting Wrecks (PPWs)

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Session Description

The session will explore international efforts to manage the environmental and safety risks associated with Potentially Polluting Wrecks (PPW) from WWI and WWII. It will draw upon case studies from around the world to examine the techniques used to research, survey and manage the wrecks and to address the growing challenges posed by these toxic legacies of war. The news is not all bad though and the session will highlight the interplay between addressing these concerns and the archaeological study of WWI/WWII wrecks. It will showcase the potential to link environmental and archaeological work by exploring both the significant background research conducted on the ships and the work to survey and manage their wrecks. This information provides a growing and as yet largely untapped archaeological resource with the potential to inform the study of WWI/WWII at the level of individual ship engagements through to national/international strategy (notably, much work on PPWs focuses on merchant vessels which have received little archaeological attention compared to their warship counterparts). In addition, the monitoring and assessment of PPWs utilises many techniques familiar to archaeologists and has the potential to inform work on site formation processes and the management of historic wrecks.

Keywords

WWI; WWII; PPW; Polluting; Wrecks; Environmental