

## Information Data Sheet

### Category Shipwrecks

**Description** During both WWI and WWII, naval surface vessels, submarines, Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships (DEMS) and cargo ships carrying ordnance and munitions were wrecked by enemy action, accidental collision, friendly fire or bad weather.

Additionally, military aircraft were shot down or crashed into the sea and unarmed vessels were fired upon, mined, torpedoed or scuttled by explosive charges and sunk.



**Example of military wrecks on the seabed**

**Hazard** The locations of known shipwrecks are marked on Admiralty charts as an aid to shipping and dredging activities.

The UXO hazard associated with wrecks varies in quantity and type. For example, there may be minimal UXO sources surrounding an unarmed merchant vessel with an innocuous cargo scuttled by explosive charges; a DEMS wreck may be surrounded by SAA, grenades, small calibre or LAA shells; and bomber aircraft may still have had an intact bomb load on board when they crashed.

Larger sizes and quantities of UXO may pose hazards around wrecked naval vessels or cargo ships transporting munitions.

For example, the American liberty ship *SS Richard Montgomery* was wrecked when it ran aground off Sheerness in the Thames Estuary on the 20<sup>th</sup> August 1944. Its cargo included 13,064No. General Purpose (GP) 250lb bombs; 9,022No. cases of fragmenting bombs; 7,739No. semi-armour piercing bombs; 1,522No. cases of fuses; 1,429No. cases of phosphorus bombs; 1,427No. cases of 100lb demolition bombs and 817No. cases of small arms ammunition.

It should be noted that in some cases where lives have been lost, the disturbance of the wreck may be prohibited due to its status as a war grave.