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Swash Channel Wreck

The identity of the 17th Century shipwreck is revealed as 'The Fame'



The so-called Swash Channel Wreck was discovered in a sand and shingle bank outside Poole Harbour. Experts believe it to be a Dutch merchant vessel named The Fame which foundered in a storm in March 1631. The name was revealed at an event to mark its rudder - raised from the seabed in 2013 on public display at Poole Museum.

The 8.4m (28ft) rudder, with a moustachioed face carved into it, was lifted on to Poole Quay by Bournemouth University marine archaeologists in 2013 after almost a decade of investigation and excavation work. The wreck had been initially discovered in the 1990s although its name remained a mystery. Following the raising of the rudder, historians were able to study historical records and analyse the timbers to confirm the ship as being The Fame.

Bournemouth University marine archaeologist Dave Parham said finding the name added a "human story" to the wreck. "It's the right name at the right date with the right age of the timbers. Everything fits, although you can never be sure. This is a ship most likely going from the Netherlands to the Americas using Poole as a stopping off point. It is a lens through which we can view the history of Poole."

The ship was anchored in Studland Bay and dragged its anchor in heavy weather. No-one is thought to have died in the wreck although the shipping channel was blocked.

The raised rudder was carefully dried and preserved in a three-year conservation effort by York Archaeological Trust. It has now gone on show at Poole Museum with other recovered artefacts. The remaining parts of the wreck still on the sea floor have been covered with sand to protect them for the future.

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