

The Salcombe Shipwreck

About 3,000 years ago, during the Bronze Age, a trading vessel sank in the waters off Salcombe, a coastal town in Devon, south-west England. The ship was loaded with cargo: hundreds of ingots made of copper and tin, collected from various places across Europe. These metals were hugely important because, when combined, they produce bronze — a strong material used to make swords, axes, tools and jewellery in ancient times.

The site was first discovered in 1977 when a diver on holiday stumbled across a Bronze Age sword on the seabed. In 2004, further investigations were carried out by the South West Maritime Archaeological Group (SWMAG). Working alongside experts from the British Museum and Oxford University, they recovered nearly 400 artefacts, including bronze weapons, metal ingots, and a pair of magnificent gold bracelets made from twisted gold wire.

Historians believe the ship sank close to the shore when it struck rocks — the coastline near Salcombe is known for its dangerous reefs. The wooden hull has completely rotted away over the centuries, but scientists think the vessel was about 12 metres long, powered by paddles, and crewed by around 15 men.

The find is considered one of the most important Bronze Age discoveries ever made in Britain.



Questions

1. Where was the ship sailing when it sank?
2. What period of history does this shipwreck come from?
3. What cargo was the ship carrying?
4. What metal is made by combining copper and tin?
5. What was the first object found when the site was discovered in 1977?
6. What is the name of the group of archaeologists who explored the site from 2004?
7. Name two organisations that worked alongside SWMAG.
8. How many artefacts were recovered in total?
9. Describe the gold bracelets that were found.
10. The ship sank very close to the shore. What does this suggest about why it might have sunk?

