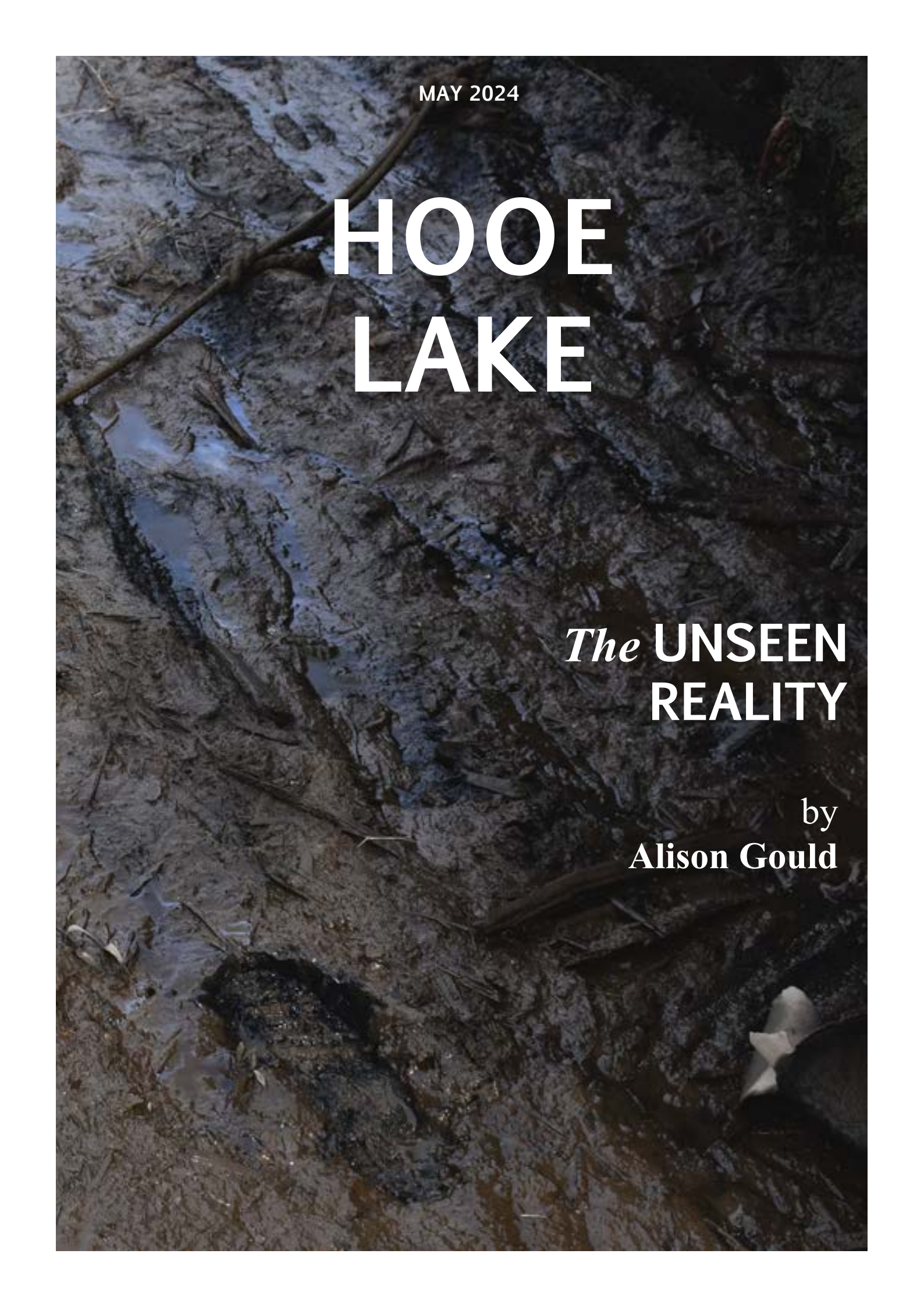




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HOOE LAKE

The UNSEEN
REALITY

by
Alison Gould

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Hooe Lake *A brief history*



Hooe Lake is a tidal waterway originating from the Plym Estuary, boasting a rich historical background.

Hooe Lake and the whole of the area ahead, almost as far as Staddiscombe, is part of the Radford estate, belonging to the Harris family. In Tudor times the Harrises were bankers and friends of local seafarers Sir Francis Drake and Sir Walter Raleigh. On their return from their adventures, the two men would sail into Radford on a high tide to leave their spoils at Radford House for safekeeping before handing them to Queen Elizabeth I for her to apportion them. In 1588 Christopher Harris hosted a banquet celebrating the men's routing of the Spanish Armada.

The unfortunate Raleigh, having aroused the queen's jealousy by secretly marrying one of her maids-of-honour, further blotted his copybook by upsetting the Spanish.

In 1618 a sentence for treason brought against him 15 years before was reinstated, and he was held captive in Radford House before being transferred to the Tower of London and then beheaded.
(southwestcoastpath.org)

Hooe Lake is separated from Radford Lake by a walkway and a 'folly'. This building is over 200 years old, and originally stood in the grounds of the former Radford House. This was the home of the grand Harris family and their successors the Bulteels. But the accommodation in the folly would have been very basic, despite being home to some large families over the many years.

Robin Blythe-Lord, chairman of Plym Valley Heritage, said: "Around 1800 the then owner of the Radford estate, John Harris, reached an agreement with his neighbour, the Duke of Bedford, to rationalise their rather complicated boundary.

"In the process Harris got what is now the arboretum and Radford Quarry. This enabled him to fulfil a lifelong dream which was to create a boating lake by damming the creek that ran into Hooe Lake. "This creek was fed by a small stream, which still runs under the road at Radford dip. Before the road was metalled it was a ford; the soil around is red and so the name Redforde, or Radford. "Using local stone the dam was built around 1815 with a romantic castellated cottage in the middle for the sluice keeper.



Hooe Lake
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The boating lake was enhanced by some pleasure gardens, cottages and a boathouse on the site of St Keverne's Quay. This was originally a simple landing quay that could only be reached at high tide. Drake, Frobisher, Hawkins and Raleigh used it when visiting Radford.

“The idea was that the sluice could be opened to drain the lake for cleaning and help catch fish and cut water plants. The lake soon became stocked with wildfowl and had the alternative local name of ‘The Duckponds.’

“The dam also provided an alternative route to Radford House. The Castle had been built completely across the dam with gates in the arches. Visitors would have to stop and request permission to continue from the Groundsman who lived in the Castle.

Radford House fell into a state of ruin and was subsequently demolished in 1937.
(Plymouth Live)

The folly is currently being converted into an Air BnB.



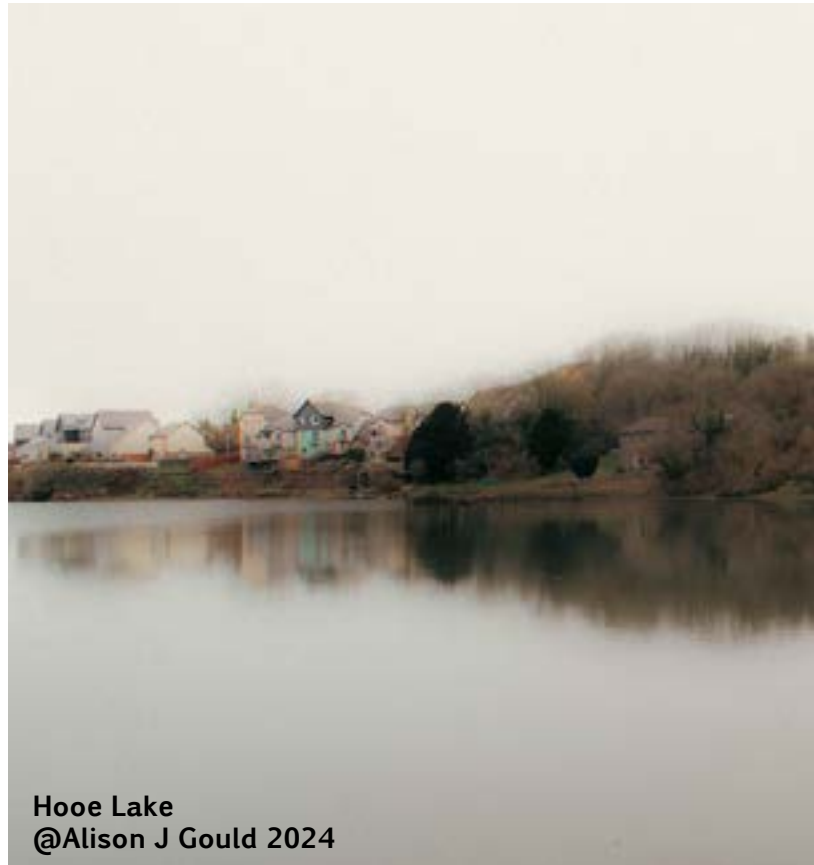
The Folly
@Alison J Gould 2016

Wildlife

Hooe Lake is a picturesque beauty spot located on the eastern outskirts of Plymouth, that attracts visitors from all walks of life. Whether you enjoy physical activity, taking in nature, exploring art, observing wildlife, or capturing scenic photographs, this peaceful location provides something for a variety of interests.

The area supports a diverse range of rare wild life including Herons, Egrets, Kingfishers, Cormorants, Moorhens, Curlews, Whimbrels, Redshanks, Greenshanks, Otters, Bats, Badgers & Foxes etc. The Quarries, Hedgerows and Foreshore are a unique haven for Flora, Fauna and for nesting native local species as well as a sanctuary for migratory birds.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) designated the unique area of Radford & Hooe Lake as one of only four sites in Devon as part of their Nation Wide Survey 'Birdwatch'. (www.hooelake.org)



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Mute swans and their six cygnets on Hooe Lake, Mike (2011)



Sandwich Tern, Bradbury



Grey Heron, Spencer (2021)



Little Egret, Spencer (2022)



“The return route passes Hooe Lake, where waterbirds and wildfowl perch on the hulks of ancient wrecks, and then loops inland through the gardens, woods and arboretum of the Radford estate.”

Plymouth Herald

Situated in the southeast of Plymouth, right next to Radford Lake and Radford Quarry. It is about 14 hectares big and is owned privately but open to the public. You can find mudflats and open water habitats there, which are all affected by the tides.

The place is special and protected because of the mudflats, which are considered a priority habitat by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. (plymouth.gov.uk)

Mudflats, tidal salt marshes, and mangrove forests are super important ecosystems. They provide homes for lots of animals, like migratory shorebirds that fly from the north to the south for different seasons. Other species which can be spotted at the Lake are otters, foxes, bats and badgers.

This beautiful location is abundant with wildlife and diverse habitats. However, without our proactive involvement, the sustainability of this area remains uncertain.



Cormorants , Clarkson (2008)



Drone footage shows pod of dolphins playing in Plymouth's Hooe Lake in 2023 (ITVX)



Foreshore Hulks

Abandoned Watercraft

Boat Wreck
@Alison J Gould 2024

Hooe Lake is a picturesque location characterised by its lush green surroundings and abundant wildlife. At high tide, it transforms into a stunning and captivating sight, often serving as the inspiration for countless photographers and artists.

At low tide, however, a very different scene presents itself. Commonly referred to as the “*ships graveyard*,” this geographical region is home to a minimum of 36 discarded boat wrecks, also known as hulks, which are in a state of decay along its shores. Situated on the periphery of Plymouth, this location has been a longstanding area where boats have been left unused for many years. Its distinctive features make it a suitable location for such abandonment. The shallow and tidal nature of the lake permits boats to be left behind during high tide and easily accessed when the tide withdraws.



Hooe Lake at low tide
@Alison J Gould 2024



Abandoned hulk
@Alison J Gould 2024

Over the course of numerous years, vessels have been neglected and left behind at Hooe Lake, with a notable number of them encapsulating substantial maritime heritage.

**John Sims,
The SHIPS Project**



**John Sims,
The SHIPS Project**



**Arthur
The SHIPS Project**



**Dignity
The SHIPS Project**

The ship arrived in Hooe Lake before 2001. By 2011 when the ship was photographed by The SHIPS Project, she had been stripped and vandalised and there was a hole in her port side so she flooded with the tide. The wheelhouse had a badly painted name Dignity on the headband. The ship was largely intact in 2016 but lying hard over on her port bilge, but by 2020 the port side had collapsed downwards, tearing where the sides meet the lower frames. (The SHIPS Project)

"From what we can understand, this has been a place for abandoning ships since the Roman times, so there's quite a lot of mud around. "But underneath the mud are probably even older hulks and shipwrecks - we just can't see them.

"It's kind of important to understand what this place is, even though the ones that we can see, you know, like some of these are from the 1890s, 1870s, 1920s, and even from the 1960s. "But, collectively, it tells a story of Plymouth and its maritime heritage."

**Mallory Haas
Maritime Archaeologist & Director of
The SHIPS Project**

The 'John Sims', built in 1873 in Falmouth was abandoned in the lake after 1935.

Arthur was a lighter, an unpowered barge used to transfer cargo to and from transport ships, in this case the cargo was timber. The name lighter comes from 'lighting', an old word for unloading a ship.

The only noted event found so far was that Arthur was used as a Boom Defence Vessel in WW1 between July 1918 and August 1919. Photographs of the lake show that Arthur was abandoned before 1957.



**Dignity
@Alison J Gould 2024**



Pollution

Concerns For The Environment

Rotting Hulk, Hooe Lake
(@Alison J Gould 2024)

Although there is a significant amount of historical significance associated with these hulks, there is also a pressing concern regarding the potential damage they may be inflicting upon the ecosystem and the environment.

The presence of abandoned shipwrecks, whether submerged underwater or on the shoreline, can have a negative impact on the environment by contributing to pollution in various ways:

Erosion and Biological Activity: Many shipwrecks are exposed to changing conditions from wet and dry weather, wave action, and wind erosion, which can lead to their degradation over time. Microorganisms, including bacteria and fungi, facilitate the degradation of wood, leading to the release of organic compounds through the process of decomposition. Water and dissolved minerals react with the wood, causing chemical transformations.

Leakage of Pollutants: As wooden structures of the shipwrecks decay, they release pollutants such as heavy metals, oils, and chemicals into the surrounding environment. Wooden structures, particularly those that have been treated with preservatives or coatings, may contain heavy metals such as lead, copper, and zinc. These metals have the potential to seep into the water as the wood deteriorates. Vessels frequently transported fuel, lubricants, and various oils, which, when the wood of the ship deteriorates, may seep into the encompassing water. Chemical treatments utilised for wood preservation, including creosote and pentachlorophenol, can also emit harmful substances.

Impact on Marine Ecosystems: The presence of abandoned shipwrecks can significantly impact marine ecosystems by affecting water quality, sediment composition, and local wildlife populations. Pollutants emitted from decomposing wood can cause a decline in water quality, impacting aquatic ecosystems and posing a potential risk to marine wildlife. Pollutants have the potential to enter the food chain, resulting in their accumulation within organisms over time. This bioaccumulation may have a detrimental impact on fish and other wildlife.

Fiberglass boats have a rich history in the boating industry. However, the disposal of fiberglass boats poses significant environmental challenges. With the increase in boat ownership, there has also been a rise in improperly decommissioned boats.

When fiberglass boats are abandoned or disposed of carelessly, they release harmful toxins into the surrounding soil and water, leading to long-term damage to ecosystems. The main issue with improper disposal is the release of toxic chemicals and materials into the environment. Fiberglass boats often contain hazardous materials such as foam insulation, paint, varnishes, sealants, fiberglass resins, adhesives, and other chemical additives. If not managed correctly, these substances can seep into soils and groundwater, causing environmental harm.

Fibre Glass Hulk,
Hooe Lake, @Alison J Gould 2024



This contamination can have severe consequences for local marine environments, including damage to aquatic ecosystems, harm to animals and plants, destruction of habitats, and contamination of drinking water sources. It is important to handle the disposal of fiberglass boats responsibly to minimize the negative impact on the environment.(Partsvu)



Leakage of pollutants, Hooe Lake
@Alison J Gould 2024



Hulk
@Alison J Gould 2024



Paint and metal from boat
Hooe Lake
@Alison J Gould 2024



Hulk
@Alison J Gould 2024



INTERVENTION

The SHIPS Project

Addressing The Issue

Hooe Lake
@Alison J Gould 2024

Finding a balance between historical preservation and environmental conservation is a multifaceted endeavor that is crucial in safeguarding our heritage while minimizing any negative impacts on the environment.

The SHIPS Project in Plymouth is a volunteer non-profit organisation that undertakes research and exploration of maritime historical sites and events, both on land and underwater.

The team is actively involved in multiple projects, one of which focuses on the preservation of maritime history concerning the foreshore hulks at Hooe Lake. In addition to this, they are dedicated to environmental stewardship, as they work diligently to address the detrimental impacts of pollution in this area.

The SHIPS Project is always keen for more volunteers and funding to continue their vital work, because without intervention, the ecosystem and our environment will continue to suffer the detriments of pollution, impacting not only the wildlife but also our own well-being.

Hooe Lake
@Alison J Gould 2024



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The SHIPS Project

For further information on the hulks at Hooe Lake, or if
you would like to help, please visit:
www.shipsproject.org