



## Tarmac\_0627: Bullet

This bullet was discovered by David Ling at the Swansea wharf on the 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015. The find was recovered in material dredged by the *Arco Dart* from Licence Area 472, some 24km west of Weston-super-Mare.

This bullet was recovered following dredging operations in the Bristol Channel. It was found in debris (as shown in the photograph above) washed onto the wharf while the *Arco Dart* was ballasting.

The bullet measures approximately 33mm long and 6mm in diameter. Photographs of the find were sent to Jonathan Ferguson, the Curator of Firearms at the Royal Armouries Museum, Leeds. On review of the photographs, Mr Ferguson stated that based on its general profile and diameter, the find may represent a possible standard .303 calibre bullet. A bullet of this type would also display an angular groove around the cylindrical part of the bullet, although it was unclear as to whether this groove was present or not based on the photographs provided.

The .303 calibre bullet, known as the .303 British, is a rimmed rifle cartridge which was first put into service in Britain in 1888 as a black-powder round for the Lee-Metford rifle. Black powder, also known as gunpowder, is the earliest known chemical explosive used widely in ordnance until the introduction of smokeless powder in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The .303 was the standard British and Commonwealth military cartridge from 1889 until the 1950s, with some 26 variations. The .303 British also has a history of civilian use for sporting activities such as hunting, with the cartridges still readily available today. Due to the variety of calibres of bullets in this length range, for the identification of this bullet to be conclusively confirmed, precise measurements would need to be taken using a micrometer or Vernier caliper.

It is not known how this bullet came to be on the seabed. It may be a relic of a military or sporting activity, fired from a rifle on a vessel or washed into the sea from ashore. At present, it is considered to represent an isolated find. Nonetheless, wharf and vessel staff are encouraged to remain vigilant and report all discoveries as and when they occur. A high concentration of seemingly isolated finds have the potential to unveil areas of archaeological sensitivity on the seabed which could in turn indicate the presence of a wreck or an aircraft crash site.

Information about this discovery has been forwarded to:

- Historic England
- BMAPA
- The Crown Estate
- The Receiver of Wreck
- The National Record of the Historic Environment
- The Historic Environment Record for Bristol
- The Local Government Archaeology Officer for Bristol
- The Finds Liaison Officer (Portable Antiquities Scheme) Bristol