Half a century ago, archaeology entered a new field of work with the excavation of ancient ships found under water. A new discipline emerged: maritime archaeology.

In this book, Ole Crumlin-Pedersen, the Danish pioneer of maritime archaeology, gives a fascinating overview of more than forty years of work.

Beginning with the natural conditions for seafaring, the author explains the evolution of basic water craft into those plank-built, sail-carrying ships which enabled the seaborne activities of the Viking Age and the following medieval period, concluding with case studies of the maritime cultural landscape of Roskilde Fjord and the ship as symbol.

The themes of this volume were first presented in six Rhind Lectures for the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in Edinburgh in 2008.