

GUN ROCKS PROJECT II
Tyneside 114 Branch: British Sub Aqua Club
1970 – 2010

REPORT 2010

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Diving Officer

Issue 0

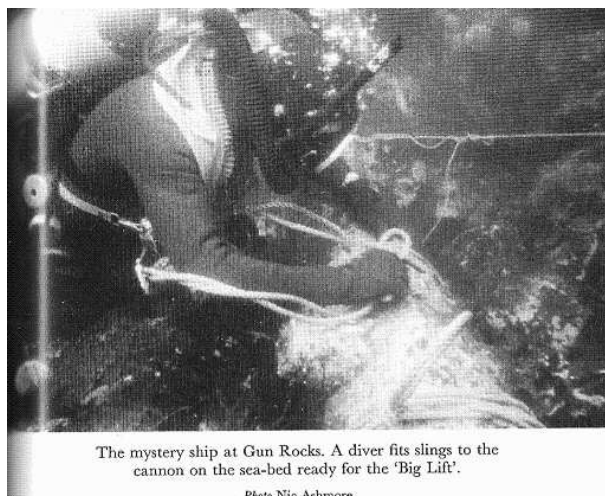
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Background

This year (2010) marked the 40th anniversary of the original Gun Rocks project, a major pioneering archaeological expedition organised by club members in 1970 led by Bill Smith. The expedition was televised by Tyne Tees television and although stills photographs still exist of this the original film footage has apparently been lost.

The present members revisited the site on a number of occasions during 2010 to start an re-survey the site.



The mystery ship at Gun Rocks. A diver fits slings to the cannon on the sea-bed ready for the 'Big Lift'.

Photo Nic Ashmore

Project activities from preparation through to completion of reports and the annual dinner spanned all of 2010 with diving commencing at earliest opportunity as soon as the Seahouses slipway opens again.

The Gun Rocks Site

The Appendix contains an extract from Dive North East on the Gun Rocks Site which is very tidal. It may be that some days both dives will be on the site. Others one dive may be elsewhere depending on the timings of slack water over the site.



Backup Plans

Another cannon site has been identified recently by another local diver from Durham Divers Club in the area. This may be more sheltered if Gun Rocks is un-diveable due to inclement weather.

Purpose

The primary aims of the Gun Rock II project in 2010 were:

- *To re-survey the Gun Rocks wreck site and compare with the original survey.*
- *To conduct a detailed marine life survey of the site and provide data for the national MCS Seasearch database.*
- Produce a report of the Project work suitable for submission as a BSAC or NAS conference paper.

Secondary aims to be completed, time and resource permitting:

- *Identify the name of the wreck.*
- *To provide a purpose behind the Tyneside 114 diving programme for 2010.*
- Produce a high quality video of the site.
- Promote Tyneside 114 dive club and the BSAC through local media.
- Raise money for local charities.
- Organise a major Tyneside 114 reunion in time for the annual dinner (Nov 2010).

Developments in 2010

The project had a lot of aims so how well did it do for 2010.

Dec 2009 to March 2010: Research

We circulated a copy of the plan and met with old members of Tyneside 114 BSAC at the annual reunion in the Bridge Pub. It was a great opportunity to speak with those who had been involved first hand in the initial survey all those years ago.

Bill Smith the Project Leader in 1970 also attended and offered his assistance. Despite illness he later attended a club meeting and donated a copy of the original Project Report and one of the actual Connonades recovered from the site 40 years ago. He had previously sparked our interest in the site on a previous branch night visit when he brought along and donated some photographs from 1970. Richard Booth is currently looking at the

Joe Mallon, a former member of Tyneside 114 BSAC, has continued the research into the site and made contacts with

Mark Sculley had a passing meeting with a Mr Jeff Pratt in a pub in May 2010. He claimed that this father Mark Pratt had discovered the site but we think this was independently to Tyneside 114 members. We have yet to take this lead further.

Roy Lancaster also invested what underwater tools might be available to help us secure datum points into the rock on the seabed.

April 2010: Submission of Grant Application to BSA Jubilee Trust

An application for funding was sent to the BSA Jubilee Trust. Gavin Anthony from the trust acknowledged receipt of the application but we received no further correspondence and therefore we assumed we were unsuccessful.

We would carry out what work we could at our own cost on branch dives.

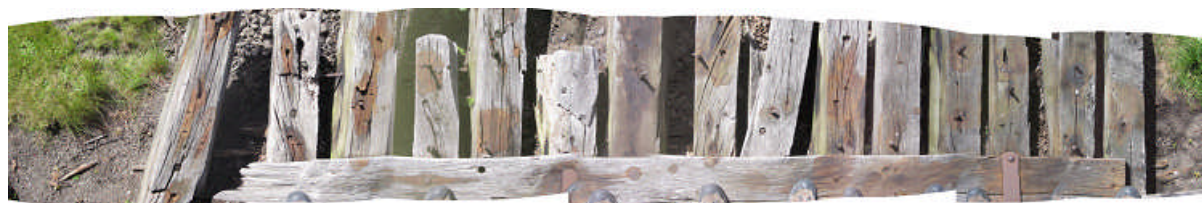
May 2010: NAS Course in Hartlepool

Mike Brown (our resident archaeologist) organised a group of us to head down to Hartlepool to complete a Nautical Archaeological Course. Those who did the course were: Mike Brown, Gordon Lambert, Richard Booth, Hubert Desgranges, Simon Smith, Andy Hunt, Fiona Hunt.

The weekend course provided a great theoretical insight into techniques which we could use to survey Gun Rock s aswell as the opportunity to practice them in benign conditions on land. For H&S reasons apparently this course does not involve getting wet (unless it rains!).



With many club members now having underwater digital cameras and software for stitching images together, taking a photo mosaic of the Gun Rocks site or parts of it is a distinct possibility.



We did practice some skills in the pool after the course but most we have yet to put into practice in open water.

May to October: The Diving

Over the year a number of dives were planned and about 50% of the planned dives were carried out. Poor weather prevented diving on other days.

Logged dives:

Saturday 1st May 2010

Divers: Andy Hunt, Fiona Hunt, Chris Sweeting, Simon Smith, Maurice Daley, Liz McKernan

LW: 11.14am Tidal Range 4m

Weather: Overcast, NE 3 to 4

Water Temp: 7 deg C

Visibility: 4 to 6m

Cost of days diving: £91.00

This was the Predators second trip by sea this year and first successful dive on Gun Rocks. The timing of the tides, the fact this was Liz's first sea dive after completing the Ocean diver pool training and first dive of the year for a couple of the more experienced divers meant we headed to the St Andre first and then Clove Carr before turning up at Gun Rocks slightly later than anticipated.

The tide had already turned but as the tide was flooding the rocks protect most of the cannon site from the force of the water. Liz unfortunately was too cold to dive after braving the waters in a wetsuit in the morning left her cold and tired.

The aim of the dive was to do a quick inspection of the marine life and rough layout of the cannons hidden beneath a thick canopy of kelp.

The shot line was being using as an anchor at the base of Gun Rocks and had actually landed next to a cannon. Over 7 cannon we spotted and a sketch of the site produces to assist planning later dives. See below.

Dr Chris Sweeting, a Marine Biologist by profession and the BSAC's current Environmental Officer, helped look for any protected species on the cannon site. None were spotted.

Maurice had the only working camera underwater. Andy's cameras battery was too low for underwater use.

After completing the dives it became apparent that kelp would need to be cleared to help map the site but first a Seasearch would need to be completed to assess whether there were any protected species than needed to be taken into account.

A rough sketch was produced of the site to help direct how more detailed surveys would be completed. This differed from what was expected from the diagram we had from Bill Smith's 1970 report.

Concretion around some of the cannons were cannon ball shaped indicating cannon balls had been there at one point in time.

Saturday 15th May 2010

Divers: Nicola Fauks, Simon Smith, Richard Booth, Hubert Desgranges, Andy Hunt, Fiona Hunt, Dave Taylor, Mike Brown

LW: 10.12am

Weather: Overcast, NE 3 to 4 W

Water Temp: 7 deg C

Visibility: 4 to 6m

Cost of days diving: £182.00

Both boats were out today to cater for the numbers. Initial sites were the St Andre and Blue Caps whilst we waited for the tide to begin to flood.

We a little bit late arriving at Gun Rocks so the tide had already began to flood hard and the rocks were slowly but surely submerging.

Only Andy, Fiona, Simon and Nic braved the swirling waters around the site. Others watched and waited.

Andy and Fiona covered most of the site and noted that on the flood tide it is possible to cover virtually the entire site without being washed away. Visibility is reduced and there are a few more eddies than at slack but the pair when down the shot and surfaced up it without having to do an impression of a flag.

Nick and Simon successfully demonstrated what happens if you stray to far and got picked up by the surface cover $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile downstream. Andy attempted to get some video footage of the site.

Saturday 27th June 2010

Divers: Richard Booth, John Coyle, Andy Hunt, Fiona Hunt, Richard Booth

LW: 10.09am

Weather: Overcast, SE 2-3

Water Temp: 10 deg C

Visibility: 8-10m

Cost of days diving: £77.00

A successful days exploration of the site from the boats mooring on the north side of the rocks to shelter from the wind. Some localised clearing of the kelp was carried out. Richard and John explored the north end of the site along the wall. Although they discovered no wreckage or cannons they found some fantastic scenic gullies and very friendly seals.

We also located the cave and the cannon that had been illegally removed from the site. It now lies inside the cave with the ropes used to lower it back to the seabed still in place.

Saturday 1st August 2010

Divers: Steve Russell (DD), Cally Cooper, Tiago Moreira (DD), Andy Hunt, Fiona Hunt, Richard Booth, Gordon Lambert, Bill Cooper

LW: 12.30pm

Weather: Overcast, WSW

Water Temp: 12 deg C

Visibility: 8-10m

Cost of days diving: Estimate £180. Cost sheet lost.

Today we had a fantastic days diving with both boats being launched again to support the numbers.

With a couple of our friends from Durham City Divers we conducted a more extensive survey of the site than before, cleared a lot of kelp and attempted to number the cannons for a later detailed positioning survey.

Steve and Cally discovered a cannon to the North of the Rocks in a location that we were not expecting. The position was 55 39 551N, 001 37 760W.

Saturday 4th September 2010

Divers: Rosie Brown, Rob Ellwood (Nottingham Uni SAC), Andy Hunt, Fiona Hunt. Andy Moss, Dave Taylor (Durham Divers), Richard Booth, Simon Smith

HW: 11.30am

Weather: F4/5 SE Sunny

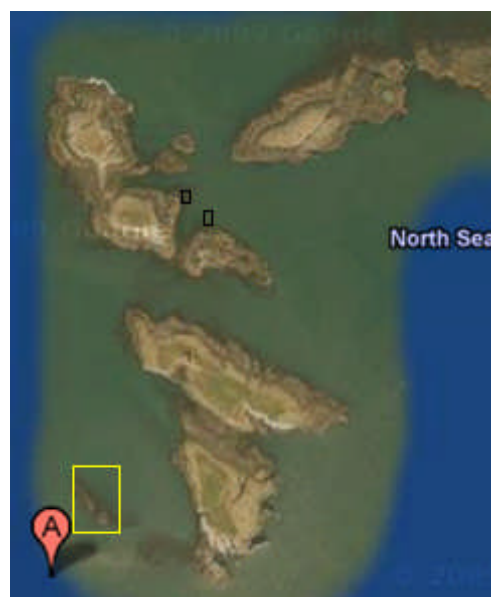
Water Temp: 12 deg C

Visibility: 8-10m

Cost of days diving: Estimate £180. Cost sheet missing.

With the weather and tide against us for Gun Rocks we headed out to dive the North Wamses and Piper Gut.

Dave Taylor assisted us with the use of his boat and knowledge of the location of another cannon site.



We investigated the site to try to local the cannons he had come across on a drift dive and establish if there were any similarities. Gun rocks is highlighted by the yellow box in the picture and the Piper Gut site is one of the two black boxes (exact GPS position not recorded).

Within minutes of descending Andy had located the two cannons and other nearby wreckage in 12m of water exactly where Dave Taylor had described them (much to Dave's surprise).

The Guns were much smaller than those on the Gun Rocks site and given the location of them we don't expect the wrecks to be linked.

However, Dave thought we had found different cannon to those he had found. If he hasn't confused some pipes (also present on the site) with cannon then there may be more cannon to be found.

Conclusions

Not all the aims were completed to the fullest extent possible but the project did achieve a significant amount of preparatory work and research and provided a focus to some of the diving.

The club also got the internal marketing right. Once the committee had decided on a project logo based on 1970 project logo, Roy Lancaster set to work and produced and sold the official gun rocks T-shirt.

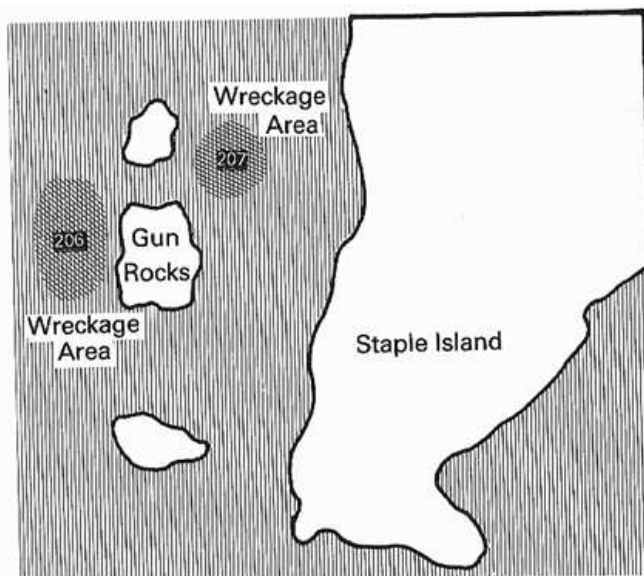
From the dives that were undertaken it is clear that the project can be developed. We know that the site has been extensively salvaged over the years. Getting a fuller understanding of how much is left would be interesting.

It would be good to find conclusive proof that the wreck site is that of the Wapen van Hoorn as Joe Mallon's research has so far indicated.

A realistic aim for 2011 therefore might be to complete a detailed and accurate map of the site and the cannons and assessment of how much the site has really changed.

Appendix 1: Locations of Dive Sites

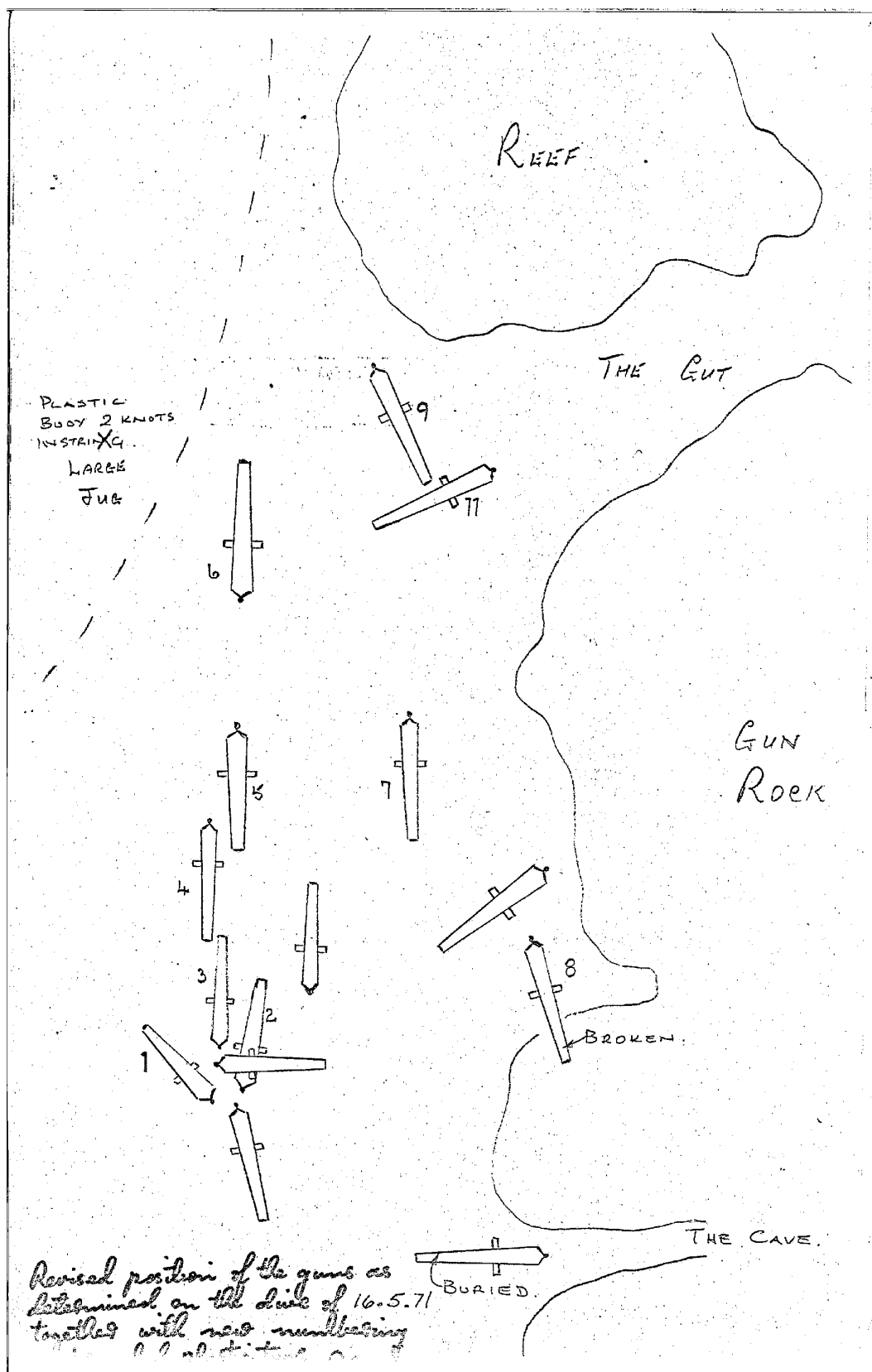
Extract from Dive North East



206 & 207 Gun Rock (East & West). Gun Rock is so called because it was the site of a cannon which was washed up onto the rock and remained there for many years. Coincidentally and perhaps more appropriately, it is also the site of an historic wreck, dated some time between 1650 and 1715. The dates are evident because the site has revealed 26 cannons, cannon balls in encrusted piles, sword hilts etc. but no sign as yet of the actual vessel. When first discovered, it was rumoured that a site of a vessel of the Spanish Armada had been found, as some of these ships were driven north out of the eastern end of the English Channel. It was thought that one had struck Gun Rock, but dating proved the wreck to be of later vintage. Some years ago a bronze swivel gun was found and removed. There are many items still to be found. Cannon and cannon balls are iron and there may well be many an artifact rusting in someone's garage. Please do not remove such articles to be destroyed in such a way. Local divers still work the site and there appears to be quite a depth of buried materials. As work continues downwards, occasional air bubbles escape, which indicates air pockets in an 'unnatural' seabed. Cannonballs, bar shot and pewter candlestick holders have been excavated recently. Some claim that the vessel was Dutch but a while ago a bronze mast pulley, stamped with the Royal Navy 'broad arrow', was found which would indicate either a British vessel or two wrecks on the same site. This latter find was on the north side of the rock so perhaps the latter explanation is the more likely.

There are two main wreck sites in position 55 37 51 N., 01 37 39 W. The sea bed is mainly rock, in 10-15m of water. Quite a lot of wreckage is to be found on the south side of the rock, in about 10m. Three or four different kinds of cannon are to be found, with cannonballs encrusted in the rock. This makes an excellent dive for beginners, shallow and with much historic interest. The west side of Gun Rock has a nice cliff face with depths dropping away to about 20m at high tide.

Appendix 2: Initial survey sketch from Gun Rocks Project in 1970



Appendix 3: Initial survey sketch from 2010

Total of 14 Cannon Identified. Initial numbering system revised. Cannon numbers assigned as below. All positions approximate and based on outline sketch by Andy Hunt.



Appendix 4: The Dutch Flute and Email from Holland

From: gvbenten@quicknet.nl <gvbenten@quicknet.nl>
Subject: in answer on your E-mail
To: joe.mallon@btinternet.com
Cc: "Cees Bakker" <c.bakker@wfm.nl>
Date: Thursday, 18 March, 2010, 14:24

Dear Mr.Mallon,

In answer to your mail in witch you are seeking information of a shipwreck from a probable Dutch flute,found near the coast of the Farne islands,can i only give you the info we have as of now.There has been a ship witch was wrecked somewhere on the coast of England. The year given in the archive`s 1673.

Given as a flute or yacht by the name "Wapen van Hoorn". Not knowing if it would be the same as the model witch I build for the West Fries museum twenty years ago, I cannot confirm that.

The shape and look of the flute is taken from picture`s drawn in that era of time to build a model in good look alike.I already build more than 30 shipmodels out that time and the are accepted as being true reproductions,because the inquiry`s i do before starting to build.

The model itself is a reproduction of a flute from the middle of the 17th century.As you probable know that the Dutch build more than 1500 flute`s in the 17th century, it`s likely that there are more ships with that name.

If one ship had gone and not returned or had been taken out of commision another ship was build with the same name.The name however was not written on the ship at that time,the name of the vessel was taken from the carving in wood on the stern {heck"} from the ship.

People could not read and observed the name from that carving.If anything of the stern of the wreck you discoverd has been preserved,I would advice you to search at that location of the wreck.

I do inclose a picture of the model from the flute I build for the West fries museum over the stern,as you may observe that there is no writing done ,but only the weapon of the city of Hoorn.

The model was build in the scale 1:28 and of course a reproduction in the matter as for the know how at the moment available.

For this moment the information we have,knowing that it wil not give you the answer you are looking for,but hoping that how small, it will be helping you

With regards

Ger van Benten.



From: Cees Bakker <c.bakker@wfm.nl>
Subject: RE: Shipwreck - Wapen van Hoorn
To: joe.mallon@btinternet.com
Date: Wednesday, 17 March, 2010, 13:13

Dear Mr. Mallon,

Both mrs Goos and mr De Jong do not work here anymore. But I have sent your mail to the builder of the ship, Mr Van Benten. As soon as I hear from him I will inform you. He may answer you himself too.

Best regards,

Cees Bakker
Westfries Museum
Achterom 2-4
1621 KV Hoorn
0229 280021
www.wfm.nl

De Kermisborrel
Foto's van Eddy Bosland
14 maart t/m 23 mei 2010

Van: Secretariaat Westfries Museum
Verzonden: donderdag 4 maart 2010 10:40
Aan: Cees Bakker
Onderwerp: FW: Shipwreck - Wapen van Hoorn

Van: JOE MALLON [mailto:joe.mallon@btinternet.com]

Verzonden: woensdag 3 maart 2010 19:30

Aan: Secretariaat Westfries Museum

Onderwerp: Shipwreck - Wapen van Hoorn

Attention of Carel de Jong / Inger Goos

Apologies for this email being in English but 9 years ago I kindly got some information from your museum whilst I was researching a shipwreck of the Farne Islands, Northumberland, Northern England.

In 1970 my diving club discovered a shipwreck off Gun Rock which had 13 cannon, Bellarmine pottery and cases of sword or rapier hilts which suggested a Dutch East Indiaman of late 17th century. Your colleagues at the Rijksmuseum apparently were confident this was a Dutch ship due to the numbers and pattern of sword handles which suggested mass production and that they could not date from before 1670. Pottery of the Bellarmine pattern found was dated to 1650-70.

Information provided 9 years ago suggested a VOC ship called Wapen van Hoorn was lost in february 1673 near England whilst all the rest on the list were specifically located elsewhere.

An internet search for information on the Wapen Van Hoorn has revealed that there was a famous dutch flute ship built in 1619 made 3 trips to Australia 1620 - 1627 and helped map the western coast.

The internet search also picked up a picture of *"Model of Ger van Benton Het Wapen van Hoorn 20th century - Westfries Museum Hoorn*. A virtual tour of your museum appears to show this model in your VOC room. (see enclosed picture)

My question is therefore was there more than one ship called Wapen van Hoorn and is your model of the ship which was sunk near England in 1673. Was this model built in 20th Century and if so was it from plans, sections paintings etc. Do you have any more information on this ship.

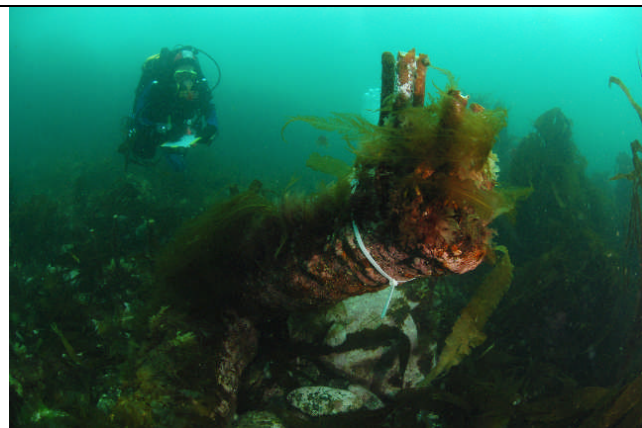
The reason I ask is that my old diving club are about to put together a marine archaeology project to find the ship again and document everything we can find about it. Your museum may be interested in the outcome and if its worthwhile we might want to visit your museum for further research.

Regards Joe Mallon



Appendix 4: Images from 2010

First 6 images by Richard Booth. Others by Maurice Daley and Andy Hunt taken on Maurice's camera.



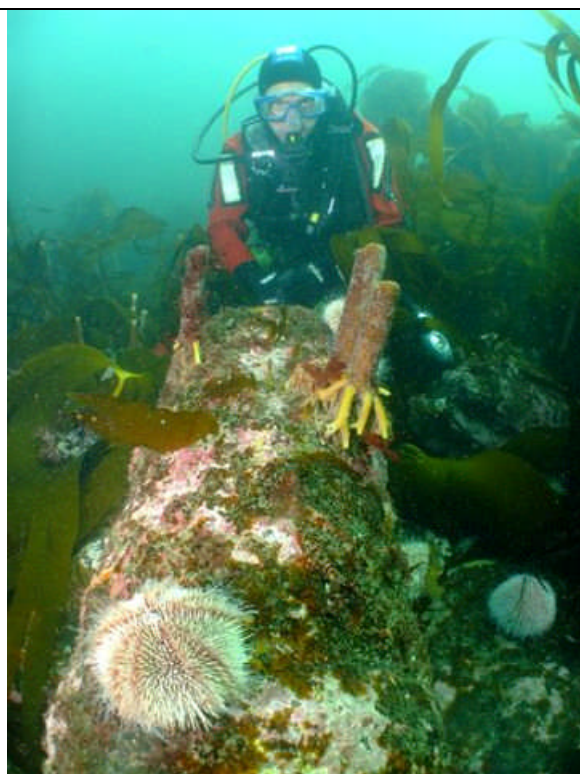
Andy Hunt sketching the site after kelp clearance



Gun Rocks above the cannon site. Cannon 1 is in the Gullet to the RHS



John Coyle looking along the barrel of a cannon



Take 2: John Coyle at the business end of the cannon

