

GUN ROCKS CANNON SITE

2015 entry for the British Sub Aqua Club Wreck Award.

This report contains a compendium of information about the cannon which lie on Gun Rocks, Farne Islands, Northumberland. This is a site which BSAC branch Tyneside 114, has been involved with for more than 45 years.

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For the photographs herein there are many people to thank, but Richard Booth in particular warrants a mention; ever present at all events armed with his camera.

Finally a huge thank you to all past and present members of Tyneside 114 for their enthusiasm for this project - trying to establish the origin of the cannon on Gun Rocks.



Two teams, four decades apart.

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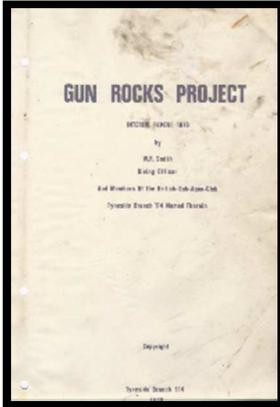
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

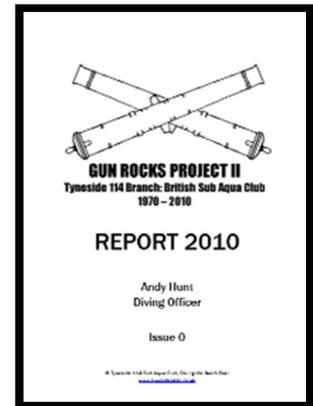
1.1 A Brief History



Tyneside 114's association with the cannon on Gun Rocks began back in 1970 thanks to a curious Diving Officer of the time, Mr. W.R. Smith (known as Bill). He had been reading a book by a well-known historian which gave an interesting account of the battles and the epic voyage by the defeated Spanish Armada around Britain and Ireland. During this time, he also read with interest an article about the finding of a cannon on the Farne Islands. This was the start of the Gun Rocks project. During the project in the 1970s, a cannon was raised, a TV programme made and a huge amount of diver participation was involved in the surveying of the cannon site. All of the findings were recorded in the Gun Rocks Project, Interim Report 1970, written by Bill Smith.

In 2010 Andy Hunt, the Diving Officer of Tyneside 114 at the time, started a Gun Rocks Project II to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the initial project. The aims of this project were:

- To re-survey the Gun Rocks cannon site and compare the results with the original survey;
- To conduct a detailed marine life survey of the site and provide data through the Seasearch recording system;
- Produce a report of the project work suitable for submission as a BSAC or Nautical Archaeological Society (NAS) conference paper.



One of the secondary aims was to identify the name of the wreck.



Following the Gun Rocks Project II, in 2013 Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Historic England (previously English Heritage) to undertake an "Undesignated Site Assessment" of the wreck on the Gun Rocks site. The work was undertaken as part of the "Heritage at Risk - Designated Wrecks at Risk". The fieldwork was part of a staged investigation of a number of wreck sites in the Farne Islands, beginning in March 2013. The Gun Rocks site was dived between the 28th August and 5th September 2013 and included 14 dives, undertaken by both WA divers and Tyneside 114 divers.

A report was subsequently produced by WA, which has an interesting conclusion as to the reason for the wreck and its potential origins.

1.2 The BSAC Wreck Award

It has now been 45 years since Tyneside 114's investigations into the cannon and other wreckage at Gun Rocks began. During this time, many of our club divers and visiting divers have dived on this site located within the Farne Islands. In the intervening years technology has changed and so too have the tools available for undertaking recording and investigations.

The BSAC Wreck Award has been devised in order to give BSAC clubs a chance to tell the story of their favourite wreck site. It is the story of the Gun Rocks site and Tyneside 114, which this report aims to present; not just as an entry for the Wreck Award, but for posterity. As stated previously, technology has developed a lot since the 1970, therefore this entry is a chance to gather together all of this information in one place: paper, forms, photographs, You Tube videos, Power Point presentations; the lot. The ultimate aim is that these resources will help form an interactive Gun Rocks page on our club web site (www.tynesidebsac.co.uk) for all to see and investigate.

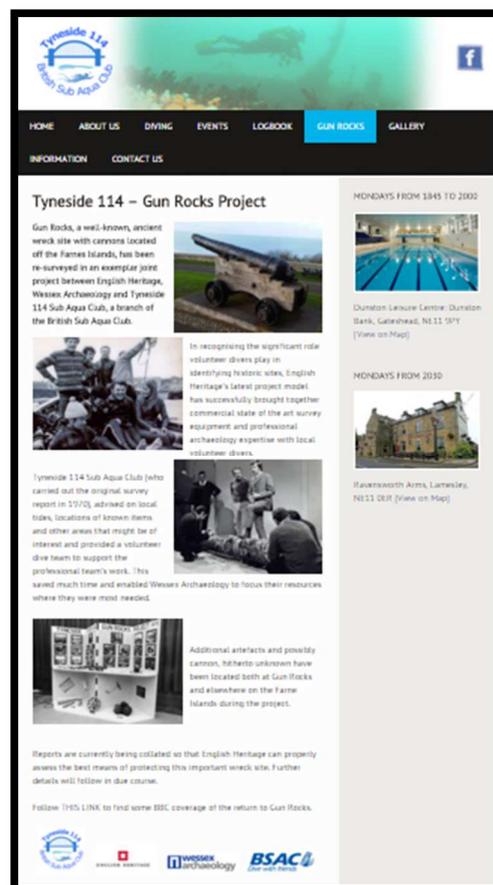
1.3 The Aims Of This Report

In writing an entry for the BSAC Wreck Award, the following aims will be met in this report:

- Provide a summary of the 1970s Gun Rocks project;
- Provide information on the intervening 40 years;
- Collation and presentation of the data for the 2010 Gun Rocks Project II;
- Provide information on, and a summary of, the WA site investigations in 2013;
- Discuss the future of Tyneside 114's involvement with Gun Rocks.

In writing an entry for the BSAC Wreck Award the following aims will be met outside the scope of this report:

- Collate photos and make a PDF available of the 1970s Gun Rocks project for the club web site;
- Track down and seek permission to link You Tube videos of Gun Rocks to the club web site;
- Seek permission to upload the 2010 Gun Rocks report to the club website;
- Create a link on the club website to the WA 2013 Gun Rocks report;
- Finally, make this report available to down load from the club web site.



2.0 GUN ROCKS

2.1 Where Is It?

Gun Rocks is located within a group of islands, located off the Coast of Northumberland called the Farne Islands. Inner Farne is the closest island to the coast and lies c3.8km from the village of Bamburgh. Although Bamburgh is the closest urban conurbation, the islands are generally accessed from the harbour town of Seahouses, located just 4km to the south.



Gun Rocks above the tideline

The Farne Islands consist of 33 islands, islets or rocks. At high tide this number of exposed areas reduces to about 23. The islands can be roughly divided in to two groups; Inner Farnes and Outer Farnes. Gun Rocks lies on the south western point of the Outer Farnes, just on the eastern side of an area known as Staple Sound. The Sound channels some quite strong currents as the tide runs north-south or the reverse on this coast.

The photograph to the right shows Gun Rocks at high tide just sticking up above the water level. In the distance the ruined tower of Staple Island can be seen, with the house that is located adjacent to it.

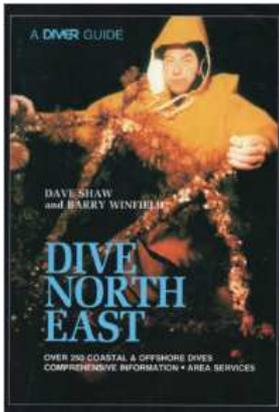
2.2 Not Just A Group Of Rocks

The Farne Islands are the most easterly point of what is known as the Great Whin Sill; a 30 metre high seam of igneous rock, generally comprised of dolerite, which can also be seen along the spectacular route of Hadrian's Wall. As well as the fascinating geology of the Farne Islands, it is also very important for wildlife. The Farne Islands are protected by law and have been designated as follows:

- Northumberland Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty;
- Farne Islands National Nature Reserve;
- Farne Islands Site of Special Scientific Interest;
- Berwickshire and North Northumberland Coast Special Area of Conservation;
- Farne Islands Special Protection Area.

The Farne Islands are owned and administered by the National Trust and are considered to be an absolute dream for visiting ornithologists. For divers these islands are also a special place where you can dive a large number of wrecks, play with seals and see some beautiful reefs.

2.3 Gun Rocks - The Site Guides

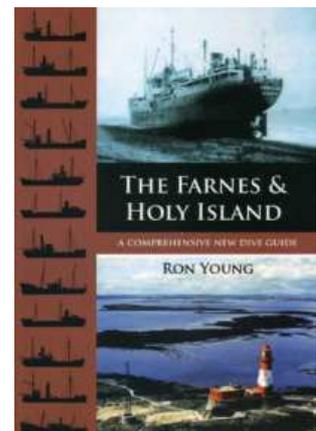


The Dive North East (Shaw 1988¹) guide describes the dive site as follows:

“There are two main wreck sites in position 55° 37' 51" N 01° 37' 39" W. The sea bed is mainly rock, in 10 - 15 metres 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 much historic interest. The west side of Gun Rocks has a nice cliff face with depths dropping away to about 20m at high tide.”

Ron Young (Young 2012²) describes the site as being:

“...on the south side of Gun Rocks in 7-10 metres, but you really have to look hard to find the rusting concretion under the thick covering of kelp. Even the remaining cannon are not as obvious as you might expect because they lie half-buried, with some even concreted into the surrounding the rocks. The first time I visited the site in the early 1970s, I swam right over them, and at the time the guns were all over the place. The site is fairly sheltered on the bottom half of the flood tide, but the current is exceptionally strong away from the rocks in the sound.”



The North East Diving Site³ which is internet based and provides a free source of dive site information, describes the site as:

“This is an old site (circa 1700), so old in fact that there's no wreckage just cannon and a few cannon balls. The area where the cannon are - the south side - is very shallow (4m) and heavily infested with kelp although a few metres to the west it drops rapidly into Staple Sound - more than 20m deep. This channel is scoured with strong currents - do not descend into it!

¹ Shaw D., and Winfield B. (1998) Dive North East - A Diver's Guide. Published by Underwater Publications. ASIN: B000LF4G3Q

² Young R (2012) The Farnes and Holy Island, A Comprehensive New Dive Guide, Whittles Publishing.

³ The North East Diving Site (2011) Information on the Farne Islands including Gun Rocks. Online Available at: <http://www.dcordes.freeuk.com/farnes.htm> [Accessed 16 October 2015]

This can be an interesting dive with the ever present hope that you might discover something of historical importance. As it's usually a second dive - used to "finish off" a bottle - it's invariably spoilt by divers being under-weighted, I'm sure you know the formula:- buoyant cylinder + shallow water = bums in the air. Quite a lot of archaeological work was carried out here in the '60's, sword hilts and other assorted bits were found including a small bronze cannon but alas, of the wreck itself nothing remains with the result that nobody can say with any certainty what nationality it was or how it came to be here."

2.4 Suitability For Club Diving

As described above, the cannon and other interests of Gun Rocks lie in 10 metres or less of water; but the tides of Staple Sound can be very strong. Essentially however, during the bottom half of the flood tide, if the divers stay within the lea of Gun Rocks, the site remains out of the current and is safe to be dived by all dive grades.



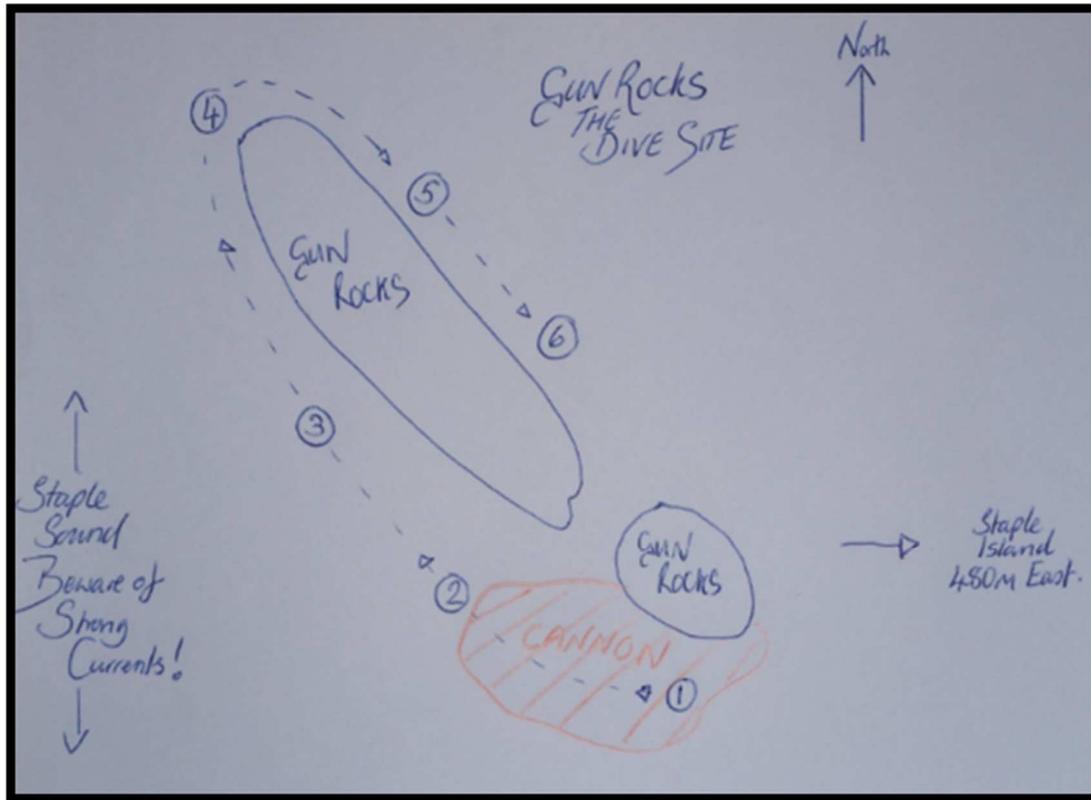
Club divers kitting up in the sunshine

In recent years, the site has been dived by a range of Tyneside 114 divers, from recently qualified Ocean Divers through to the highly qualified and experienced 'old and bold'. Many Seasearch dives have been undertaken here in the last few years due to the shelter it can offer in the early season. The site is an ideal early season warm up dive site (metaphorically speaking!).

All of the dive boat skippers who run boats to the Farne Islands, like this dive site and it is often used as a sheltered but interesting second dive site. The configuration of the Farne Islands mean that Gun Rocks is one of the few sites sheltered from those obnoxious large easterly swells.

2.5 The Dive Site

Gun Rocks may have reached notoriety due to the presence of cannon and other artefacts; but it is in its own right an interesting dive site. The tidal nature of the surrounding area means that this site is rich in marine life, both around the cannon site and further afield. The numbers on the hand drawn map (below) mark features of interest at this dive site and the dotted line between shows a basic dive route. The route is described below. This is a site which caters for all interests, not just the rust lovers!



Nature enthusiasts can find lots of marine life here and photographers can also find lots of interesting features to film.

1. This is generally the location where divers are dropped in, as close to the cannon as possible. Most will spend some time looking at the cannon, seeing how nature has tried to claim them as her own.
2. Just to the north of the cannon site there is a small wall/drop off down to 12 metres or so. Here you enter a boulder field, where lobsters, dead man's fingers, sun stars and many other critters may be found.
3. As you head north, stay close to the rocks; for if you turn west you will find the sandy bottom of Staple Sound and its associated currents. At slack however you may happen upon yet more cannon.



Cannon covered with kelp.

4. The north of Gun Rocks gets shallow again, so if your time is used up this is a good place to do your safety stop and look for critters and wreckage in amongst the kelp.

5. If you do make it around the far side of Gun Rocks you will find a boulder slope full of squat lobsters, urchins and star fish.

6. Finally heading south east you may happen upon a lonely cannon, reported to be on the site during the 1970s survey. But does it still remain?

3.0 PROJECT HISTORY - 1970

3.1 The 1970s - An Idea Is Born

Bill Smith writes in the opening chapter of his report:

“My interest was first aroused when I read a book by a well-known historian some two or three years ago. In this book he gave a very interesting account of the battles and also the epic voyage by the defeated Fleet around England, Scotland and Ireland before returning home to Espana [sic]. More to the point, he wrote of ships which went missing in North Eastern waters, that is to say somewhere North of 56° Lat. The information concerning the wrecks that are known, is pretty well documented elsewhere in this article, mainly the ones which were wrecked on the Northern coast or Ireland....”

At about the time my interest started to gather momentum, I also read that a cannon was found some years ago on the Farne Islands and from that date, I started to ask questions and later to look for the answers. I was told that it was supposed to be Spanish. More reading then became the order of the day and to this end I have been reading books by Historians, Naturalists, Coil Experts and Arms Experts which all lend themselves to my pet theories that one of the Spanish Ships ran onto what is now called Gun Rocks sometime in August 1588.”

Bill went on to do a lot of research into cannon, accessing archive information and drawing up the dimensions of various cannon from known dates of manufacture and nationalities. The premise was that if the Tyneside 114 divers could do an underwater survey of the cannons, the resulting measurements would enable Bill to identify the origin of the cannon and therefore perhaps the ship from which they came.

<u>II. Spanish c.1603</u>	<u>Weight of Gun</u>	<u>Weight of Shot</u>	<u>Len. of Gun</u>
Demi-Cannon	2400 lb	16 lb	18 calibres
Culverin	5530	16	30
Demi-culverin	2800	8	26
Saker	1750		
Falconet	1050	3	30

(Diego de Prado y Tovar, Encyclopaedia de Fundicion de Artilleria y su Platica Manual (1630), pp. 8 et seq.)

An example of the data describing Spanish cannon.

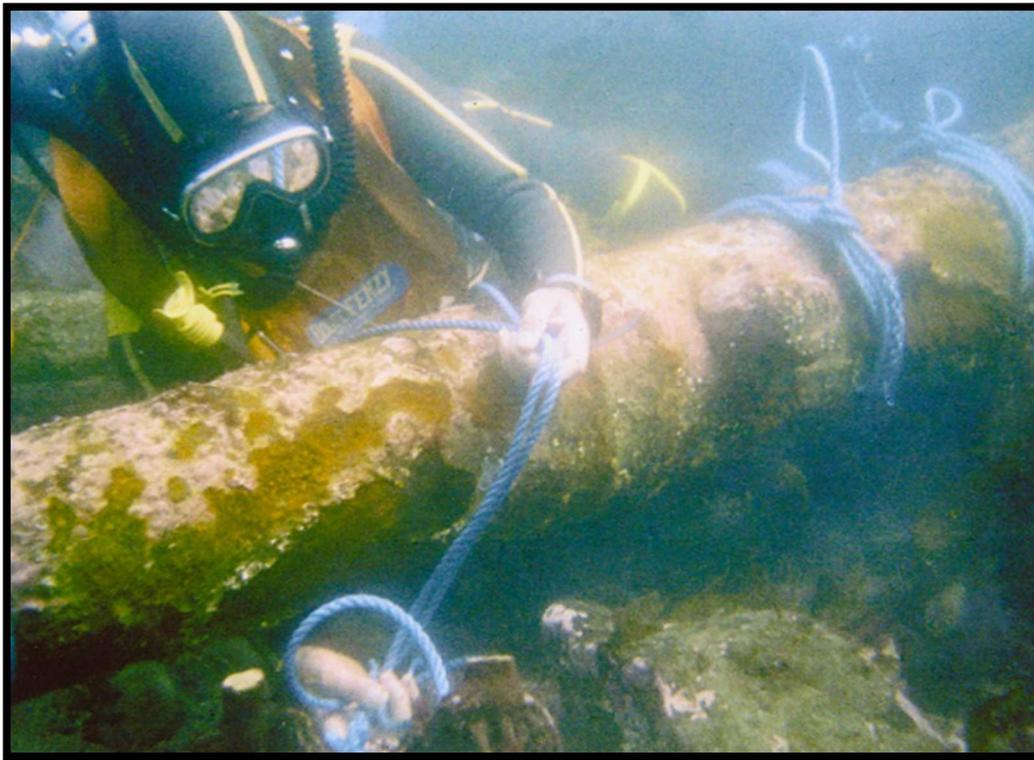
3.2 Site Investigations

The site investigations begun in earnest on 17th May 1970. Seventeen dives were undertaken on the site, with the final dive taking place on the 2nd August 1970. During this time a large number of club divers participated in the investigations undertaking such activities as scuba diving, snorkelling and coxing/skippering. Table 1 below shows a summary of the dives which were undertaken. The comments shown in italics are quotes from the dive logs.

Table 1 Summary of the 1970 Gun Rocks dives

Date	Boat name	Divers	TV crew	Comments
17 May	Zokko John Wesley	14		Located 8 to 10 cannon, found a metal pulley.
31 May	John Wesley	11		Conditions not good for surveying. Too much wind and swell.
7 June	John Wesley Ran	12		Sword handles, blades, cannon balls and scabbards recovered. Cannon marked, referenced and photographed.
21 June	John Wesley Ran	14		Placed pitons in rock to create reference points. Little floats were attached to cannon to create a numbering system. Plan of cannon drawn and inserted into dive report.
4 July	John Wesley Ran	10	6	<i>"The camera man was put into the water for the first time but he was not too happy - he swallowed a lot of sea water."</i> The filming was subsequently completed by branch members!
5 July	John Wesley Ran	10	2	Replacing of piton C as this had pulled out. Re-drawing layout in light of new finds. Re-measuring dimensions of cannon number 1.
6 July	John Wesley Ran			Continued clearing of kelp from cannon. The log also goes onto write about Monday 6 th July: <i>"Note - Monday's programme went out on National ITV network as well as local Tyne Tees Television Studio Station. The under-water films were very good and it looks like the site has been dated as early as 17th Century."</i>
7 July	John Wesley	4		Three more cannon found, more filming, measuring and searching.
8 July	John Wesley	7		Musket shot found, but seas a bit choppy. Main purpose of the day to measure.
10 July	John Wesley	12		Task for the dive - to make sure that cannon number 5 is ready for lifting, with slings fitted. Film crew also present to organise filming for Saturday's lift.
11 July	John Wesley Clan Gillean	15	7	The day of the cannon lift: finally the buoyancy bag had arrived; so too the rope, however the rope was the wrong dimension. The weather was worsening.

Date	Boat name	Divers	TV crew	Comments
				Unfortunately the lift on this occasion was not successful, the cannon went vertical and could not be controlled.... See section below for a full account of the lift.
12 July	John Wesley Clan Gillean Ran Telestar	30	5	The second attempt at the big lift. This time success was achieved with cannon number 5 being lifted to the surface. This event took a full day, with the cannon finally being beached at Seahouses at 2045hrs.
18 July	John Wesley Ran	8		Mr A Bax of the Nautical Archaeology Society also turned up. He advised that a grid be used for the mapping but was impressed with the work done to date.
19 July	John Wesley	14		Due to tides and weather, the Crumstone was dived instead.
24 July	John Wesley	7		<i>"Mr D McFarland of Thames Television wished to view the site in connection with a programme he will probably do in September this year. The programme called 'Magpie' will do a documentary about the project and the persons who are working on it in connection with the Branch"</i>
26 July	John Wesley	12		Laying of a line to place out a future 'grid' for surveying. Cutting of kelp continued. Rock samples were also taken so that they could be analysed to find out if they are natural, or concreted ballast from a ship wreck.
2 Aug	John Wesley	13		Photographs taken, but the team may be tiring of the project and just wanted to 'mess around'.
29 Aug				<i>"We acted as hosts to Tamworth Branch who came out to the site with us to observe only and take a few photographs (which were lost on the following day together with a very expensive camera)."</i>



Tying ropes on to cannon number 5.

3.3 The Raising Of The Cannon



The film crew and divers

One of the big events of the 1970 Gun Rocks project was the raising of the cannon. This took days to plan, with an initial trial (?) lift on the 11th July followed by a successful lift the following day. The following passages are excerpts from the dive log for those two days:

“We started by putting down two 56lbs shot weights next to the cannon. Next, ropes were run from the boat down through the eyes on the blocks back to the boat where the buoyancy bag was made ready for the hauling down to the cannon. Bag hauled down with the help of four divers who then started the job of attaching the bag to the cannon with ropes. This job completed, they then signalled to the diver in charge of the filling

cylinder to go to the bottom to start his job which was slowly to fill the bag.

At this stage the T.V. camera was going strong, getting every operation on film for the record. The bag was at this stage O.K. then, just as the cannon was getting ready to lift, the pressure of air in the bag appeared to move, throwing all the weight to the wrong end making the bag unstable, (the reason was that the bag moved in the net).

We tried putting a small trimming bag on the muzzle end but this failed because perhaps one or two divers were too enthusiastic putting air into the bag. It suddenly went critical and the cannon took off up to the surface the wrong way. The cannon at this stage was in a vertical position with the cascabel end about 5ft from the sea-bed swinging about not in control by divers who, at this stage, went in all directions leaving a very surprised diver-cum-cameraman looking for his extras – all he was left with was a swinging menace which sounded like some very large bell. What a sight, 2500lbs of cast-iron

swinging around. Speed was needed to put this potential hazard back on the sea-bed. The area was cleared and two divers released the bag and allowed cannon to sink back to the sea-bed. Cannon checked for damage and also the surrounding areas where it lies - found to be O.K."

The following day a second attempt to lift the cannon was undertaken. The dive log describes this as follows:

"... I sent Harry Harvey over first, to check the conditions of the cannon and the slings after having had to drop it back to the sea-bed on Saturday. He reported that everything O.K. and proceeded to put a sling on the muzzle end complete with a ring so that the buoyancy bag could be hauled down to the cannon. (Note we did away with the blocks by using cannon as anchor point). A rope was fastened on prior to hauling down. We were now ready for the attempt.

The four man team now went into the water together to start operations - others on deck stood by at their posts: air control, ropes, haulers, divers etc. Some difficulty was had hauling down until all air had been squeezed out of the bag. The divers promptly attached the bag by its appropriate eyes and then returned to base craft for air hose. Air was slowly let in and after a total of 17 minutes had elapsed since the start of the sea-bed operation, the gun came to the surface under reasonable control. The divers on the bottom experienced something which must be very rare feeling of doing something really spectacular. One diver said "If I dive for another 100 years, I will never get the same thrill again".



Attaching the lift bag to the cannon

On the surface, speed was the order of the day - the towing rope was attached complete with a safety tow rope. I signalled to the T.V. crew boat that we were washing out the rest of diving as the cannon was now under tow and all haste was needed to get it out of the dangerous fast rip tide which was still just off our port hand. Waves in this rip were still 6-8ft. in places and very agitated. The air hose was left attached to compensate for loss due to pounding through the heavy seas. We left our no. 2 anchor buoyed for picking up by our no. 2 boat as we could only go ahead with no degree of latitude to manoeuvre.



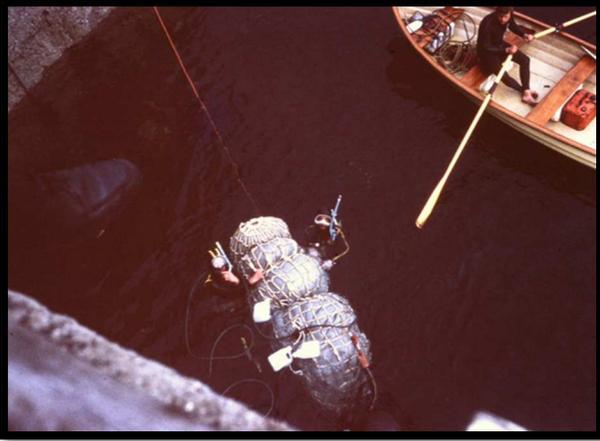
"The big grey whale following in our wake"

THE BIG LIFT: A very precise exercise in boat handling followed by Jim Trotter, the skipper of the 'John Wesley' when he took the boat through the bad rip tide which the wind was once again whipping into a frenzy. The boat was just making way and the bag, complete with cannon and umbilical cord looked like some big grey whale following in our wake.

Anxious moments were experienced as we started on the first leg of the four mile trip back to Seahouses through very choppy water. Our first stop, we decided, would be Longcarr Hole which is in the Inner Farne Group where checks on equipment etc., would take place. The T.V. boat (Clan Gillean BK) was on our Starboard side all the way across the Staple Sound filming progress as it happened and another

Seahouses boat came out to note progress (Silver Dawn). We arrived in Longcarr Hole very relieved.

The last leg of the crossing was now in the offing after Harry Harvey reported to me that everything was O.K. with the bag and towing rope. All the time we were underway, the crew were standing by with sharp knife and marker line in the event of having to cut the load free, 150 ft of line and marker are also attached - the biggest danger of losing our load is that the water is 120ft plus in places in the 'sounds'. We made steady progress across the Inner Farne Sound and approached harbour at approximately 1600 hrs where we had to cast off our load as water was still only half tide. Nick's boat 'Ran' came alongside and took tow rope and air cylinder for manoeuvring in shallow water of harbour. We manoeuvred the load against the harbour wall where a large crowd looked on and the film crew were doing their stuff. The cannon was then anchored in the clear waters of the



The cannon arriving in the harbour.

harbour and we replaced and waited for high water and the last leg of this operation which was removing it from the water.

Removal. Approximately 2000 hrs I sent a diver down to check how far the muzzle of the cannon was hanging down and to swim across the harbour and check the depth of water. What a shock! The muzzle had dropped to 16ft and the harbour check showed 12ft. We then put a trimming bag on and drew the bag up to almost level and started the shifting operation. We towed the load over with Nick's boat and divers helped by pushing towards harbour slipway some 500 yards away. Yard by yard she went towards the waiting trailer which we had borrowed and had taken underwater to meet the load. The trailer was attached, by 200ft of rope to shore where a Land Rover was going to pull it out of the water. By this time, a few hundred people had turned up to see the cannon brought out of the water. Once on the trailer and roped etc., we started to haul - at this point many of the watching crowd got on the line and started to haul - it flew up the slipway to the delight of the spectators



Cutting from local paper

Well after 200 years plus, its [sic] out of the water and waiting for the transport which will take it down to Tyne Tees Television Studio in Newcastle where it will get a very close inspection by the experts.



“Gun up the ramp after two hundred years”

3.4 The Finds

During the whole summer of the first Tyneside BSAC 114 Gun Rocks project, a lot of objects were found and catalogued. The Receiver of Wreck, Mr Murray, based up in Berwick, was informed of the project and all subsequent finds. Bill Smith, Diving Officer, also filled in all of the relevant salvage paperwork too and became, and remains, the Salver in Possession.

On the 29th August, while acting as hosts to the Tamworth Branch, P. Nap and B. Price were cleaning the trunnions of the cannon, making sketches of the maker's marks. Clearly shown on one of the trunnions was a letter "G". Further surveys however found cannon with the letter "S" and "F" as well. More on these marks later...

During the summer a lot of the artifacts found had been sent off to specialists to be analysed and dated. A report was received back from the Victoria and Albert Museum, which dated some of the pottery which was found to the 17th century. The pottery was described as salt glazed stoneware of German origin, manufactured in the town of Frechen on the Rhine.

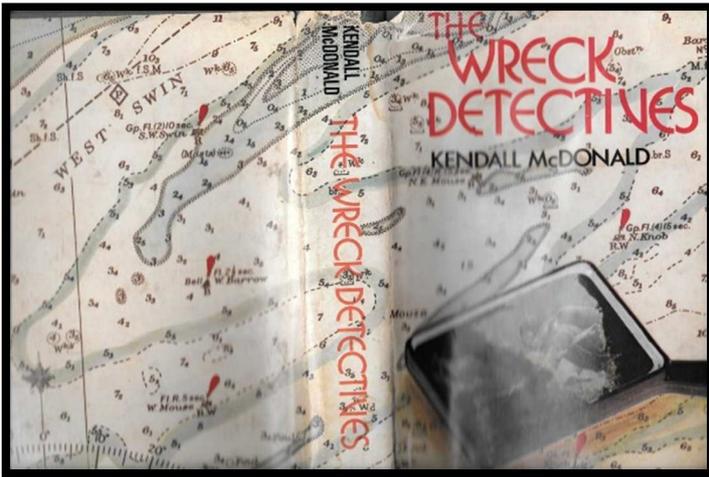


The heavy glass base which was found was identified as being from a wine bottle. However the type of wine bottle the base came from was commonly used until recent times, so can not be used for dating.

The table below lists the finds (other than cannon) which were made over the summer of 1970. Where known the dates or other known information had been given in the description of the item found.

Table 2 Summary of recovered finds from the 1970 Gun Rocks surveys

Find	Description of item found	Location of find
Bronze wheel well	Bronze wheel well, very corroded, lying in 30-35ft water	Northeast of rock
Metal pulley wheel		
3 rapier handles	Made of bronze or brass. Drawings in report. Hancock Museum and Laing Art Gallery have dated the handles to 1500- 1620 and 1720	Northwest of Gun Rocks
Metal tube	Cuprous tube with a small bore (11/16") at one end and larger (1.5/16") at the other	
Scabbards		
Parts of blades		
2 sounding weights		Cave entrance
3 assorted cannon balls		
Cannon balls	7 inch cannon ball weighing 35 lbs	North of Gun Rocks
Wrought iron piece	21 3/8" piece of wrought iron with 2 square slots and a pivot piece at one end	
Piece of copper with square nail holes on edge	Identified by P. Annis of National Maritime Museum as a hatch cover rather than copper hull sheathing	Northwest of Gun Rocks
Small knuckle guard		
Pottery and glass	One piece of pottery has a coat of arms or design on it	At northwest base of Gun Rocks
2 eroded sword handles		West of Gun Rocks
Pieces of copper and lead		West of Gun Rocks
Piece of pottery	Including salt glazed stoneware of German origin, manufactured in the town of Frechen on the Rhine. V and A dated to 17 th C.	West of Gun Rocks
Large sounding lead		
Musket balls	Two 3/4 inch lead	Between the rock and the reef

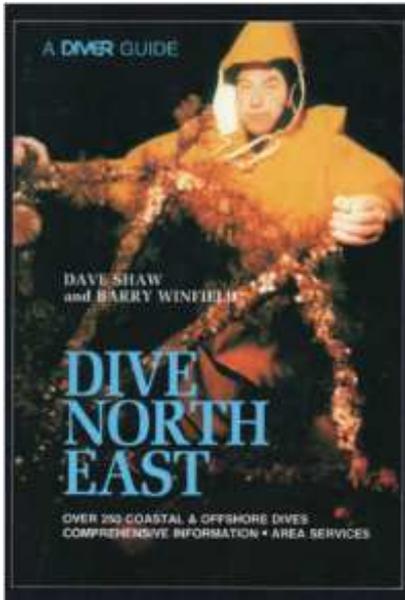


Following on from the 1970 Gun Rocks project and all of the publicity that the project received, Kendall McDonald published a book in 1972 called *The Wreck Detectives*. He devoted an entire chapter to Tyneside 114's exploration of Gun Rocks, detailing all of the finds and the theory that the wreck which deposited the cannon was most likely of Dutch origin.

4.0 THE INTERVENING YEARS

Due to the location of Gun Rocks and the shelter that it offers from the larger easterly swells, it is a site which is frequently dived by the commercial dive boats. So in the intervening years, it was definitely a dive site which wasn't forgotten, each diver probably felt it was a personal discovery of their own, diving down and searching for cannon and other artefacts dotted amongst the kelp.

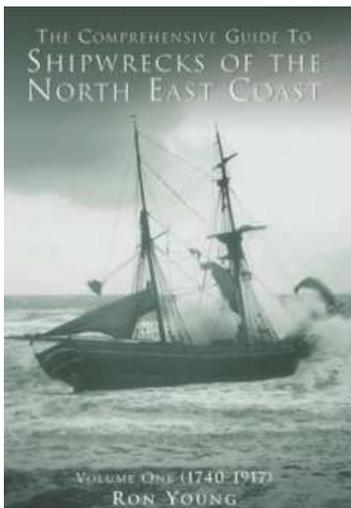
4.1 Who's Been Diving "Our Site"?



The Dive North East (Shaw 1988⁴) guide describes the dive site as follows:

“Gun Rocks is so called because it was the site of a cannon which was washed up on to the rocks and remained there for many years. Coincidentally and perhaps more appropriately, it is also the site of an historic wreck, dated sometime between 1650 and 1750. The dates are evident because the site has revealed 26 cannon, 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 artefact 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 indicated 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 at the same site. This latter find was on the north side of the site so perhaps the latter explanation is the more likely.”



The plot thickens: the extract above mentions 26 cannon, when the 1970 expedition found only 20.

Other articles have, however, been brought up in the intervening years:

- 1995 - The Archaeological Diving Unit (ADU) brought up a pewter candlestick holder. They also made a short video of their single dive.
- Sometime before 2000 it is understood that a university diver found and brought up a tin box with inscribed lid⁵. Sadly history doesn't relate as to what the inscription was.
- 2008 - The Receiver of Wrecks (RoW) reports a black 'onion' type bottle with neck missing was reported. It was dated as being from the 1600s.

⁴ Shaw D., and Winfield B. (1998) Dive North East – A Diver's Guide. Published by Underwater Publications. ASIN: B000LF4G3Q

⁵ Young (2000) The Comprehensive Guide to the Shipwrecks of the North East Coast, Vol. 1, 1740-1917. Whittles Publishing Ltd.

There is a strong suspicion that a number of items have in fact been taken from this site and not reported. Off the record conversations with various skippers and divers suggest that sword handles, cannon balls and other small artefacts have been removed over the years. It is a huge shame that they are not recorded, for it may be one small seemingly insignificant object which will enable the dating of the wreck and reveal its origin once and for all.

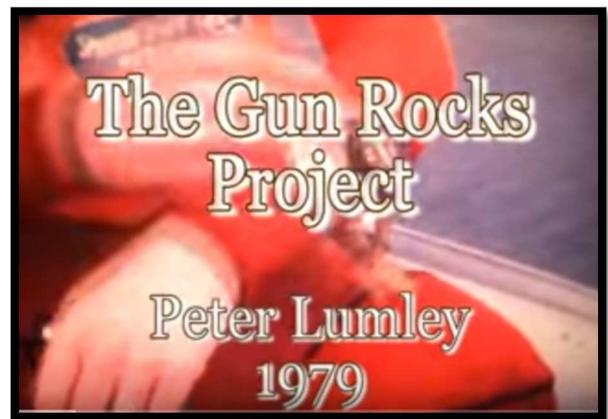
4.2 Cannon Go Missing

Records indicate that since the 1970s a number of cannon have been removed from the Gun Rocks site. Quite how someone manages to raise a cannon from this site without being noticed is anyone's guess. Records contained within WA (2013)⁶ state that in 1996, two cannon were raised and then confiscated by police and the matter decided by the RoW. Northumberland County Council records also indicate that three cannon and an iron shot were also recovered in 1996, though it is not known if these two records made in the same year are in fact one and the same.

4.3 You Tube Mystery

During research for this report, a video of a diver on Gun Rocks was found on You Tube. The video is open source and can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5z1PggwalqY>

The video is entitled "The Gun Rocks Project Peter Lumley 1979" and was posted by Ken Crow. Ken has since been emailed to ask about the history of this well-made video, but there has been no response to date.



A number of the cannon seen in the video are easily recognisable today, especially the cannon which stands proud of the sea bed. The two divers in the video are measuring the cannon and trying to uncover the letters on the trunnions as recorded by Tyneside 114 during the 1970s expedition, leading the viewer to think that the divers have done their research.

Interestingly the voiceover for the video says that the cannon found with the letter F on the trunnion has a duplicate sitting in Copenhagen, which has been dated to the late 17th century. He also goes on to say that a number of other artefacts found on the seabed lead to the conclusion that the wreck which happened here is of Dutch origin.

4.4 Seasearch Paradise



Life on the muzzle

IN 2003 Seasearch was launched as we now know it: "every dive can be a Seasearch dive". Gun Rocks was finally subject to a marine surveys rather than archaeological surveys. Since this date a number of Seasearch dives have been undertaken on this site. The combination of rocky reef and strong tides make it an interesting site marine life wise. A good look in each of the cannon muzzle can often reveal squat lobsters, short spined scorpion fish, mermaid's nipples and any number of hydroid species. On the cannon, dead man's fingers, kelps and encrusting bryzoans can be found.

⁶ Wessex Archaeology (2013) Gun Rocks Wreck, Farne Islands, Undesignated Site Assessment, November 2013

The kelp forest which covers the cannon acts as a nursery ground for other species. Even divers who are obsessed by rust can't help but notice lobsters, velvet swimming crabs, edible crabs and dahlia anemones also sharing the site.

To the north of the main group of cannon, the reef drops off to about 12 metres: here walls covered in dead man's fingers are present. The boulder and cobble seabed below provides suitable habitat for horse mussels, elegant anemones, leafy bryozoans and of course those ever inquisitive ballan wrasse.

All of the data gathered by Seasearch has been entered on to the marine recorder data base and is available on line through the National Biodiversity Network: <https://data.nbn.org.uk/Reports/Sites/NU23/Groups> This website allows you to search for data both by location and by species.



Seasearcher at work



Nudibranch from Gun Rocks - crystal sea slug.

5.0 GUN ROCKS PROJECT II - THE SITE REVISITED 2010



5.1 Gun Rocks Project II - The Development

In 2010 Andy Hunt was the Diving Officer (DO) for Tyneside 114. In light of the fact that 2010 represented the 40th Anniversary of the initial Gun Rocks project, Andy decided to set too and organise a Gun Rocks Project II. The purpose of the Gun Rocks Project II henceforth referred to as 'Gun Rocks II' was to fulfil the following primary aims (as stated in his resulting Gun Rocks II report):

- 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.

The Secondary aims to be completed as part of the project, and subject to time and resource availability are stated as:

- Identify the name of the wreck;
- 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 (November 2010).

Prior to diving into the water and doing some surveying, the Tyneside 114 project group undertook research into the wreck site. Since 1970 with the development of the internet, digital cataloguing and a number of additional published sources of information, including wreck guides, a further search for information was considered necessary.

The project group met up with some of the original 1970 divers in The Bridge pub in Newcastle to discuss this 2010 project. Bill Smith, the project leader in 1970, also attended to offer his assistance. Later on, he donated a copy of the original Gun Rocks 1970 Project report. He also showed the project group one of the actual cannonades recovered from the site in 1970. Joe Mallon also attended the meeting; he has continued to research in to the history of the wreck and to try to determine its likely origin.

5.2 Training For The Divers

In May of 2010 Mike Brown (Tyneside 114 diver), organised a training course through the Nautical Archaeological Society (NAS). Seven divers attended the course which was run over a weekend. According to the attendees, the course provided a good insight in to the techniques which could be used to survey Gun Rocks, as well as giving the opportunity to practice those skills on land. For 'elf and safety' reasons, this course was run on dry land was not an 'in-water' practical course.



Dry land archaeological practice

Following this NAS training, the club purchased some software for stitching images together. This could be used by divers with digital cameras to make a photo mosaic of Gun Rocks or parts of the site.

Following the course, skills were even practised in the swimming pool too!

5.3 The Diving

A full calendar of dives were planned during the 2010 diving season; however the weather gods were being a bit stroppy, so only about 50% of the planned dives actually took place due to fog, swell, wind and timing of the tides. Table 3 below sets out a summary of the aims and results for each dive which was undertaken.

Table 3 Dive summary for Gun Rocks II

Date 2010	Number of divers	Comments
01 May	6	<p>The aim of the dive was to do a quick inspection of the marine life and to locate the cannon hidden beneath the thick canopy of kelp. Seven cannon were located and a sketch of the site produced to assist in the planning of later dives and to compare with the diagram the 1970 report.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>It was concluded after this dive that the kelp would need to be removed if the canon were to be mapped; but first a Seasearch survey would be undertaken.</p>
15 May	8	<p>Arrived a little bit late at the site and the tide was beginning to flood. If you know the site it is possible to stay in the lea of the tide and to make a dive on the site. If you stray out of the calm, you go for a fairly rapid drift dive, as two divers proved (one being the author of this document!)</p>

Date 2010	Number of divers	Comments
27 June	5	<p>A good day on site, with some kelp being cleared. The north side of Gun Rocks was explored but no wreckage was found, only a friendly seal and lots of other marine life.</p> <p>The cave, from which a cannon had been previously removed illegally, was located. The returned cannon was lying in the cave, still with ropes around it from being lowered back into the water.</p>
01 Aug	8	<p>The dive team today included two members of Durham Divers. The divers were able to clear a lot of kelp from around the cannon so that they could be numbered for a later proposed positioning survey.</p> <p>A separate cannon was discovered to the north of Gun Rocks which had not been previously logged.</p>
04 Sept	8	<p>Team headed out to Piper's Gut to look at some cannon previously discovered by a fellow diver Dave Taylor. Andy, based on Dave's description, actually found the cannon, but ascertained that they were much smaller than the cannon of Gun Rocks and probably not linked to them in any way.</p>

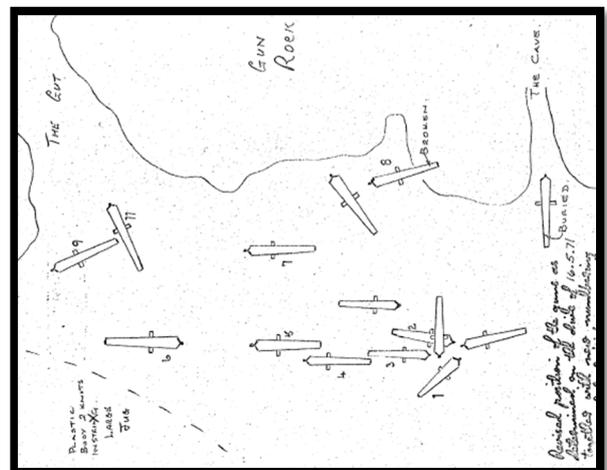
5.4 The Cannon

During the dives, the locations of the cannon were marked and a sketch drawn up. The figure is shown below left (with thanks to Andy Hunt for producing the figure):



A total of 14 cannon were identified. The cannon were numbered but using a system which differed from that used in 1970.

All locations are approximate, but if this figure is compared with that reproduced in Section 3.4 (below) there are some striking similarities between the patterns of cannon lying on the seabed. See below:



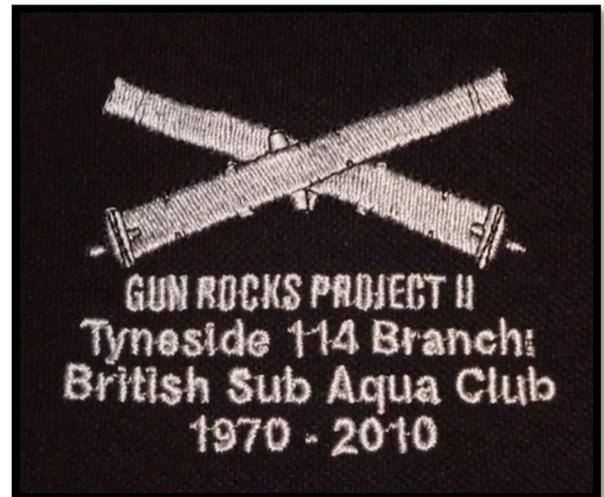
5.5 Gun Rocks II - Conclusions

Andy Hunt provides a number of conclusions in his report.

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 2010 club diving.

A project logo was developed based on the 1970 cannon logo. Roy Lancaster then set to work, producing and selling the official Gun Rocks T-shirt.



From the information gathered during the 2010 dives, it was clear to the project organiser, Andy Hunt, that the project could be developed further.

The site has been extensively salvaged over the years and so continuing to seek a fuller understanding of how much is left would be beneficial.

Everyone involved in the project agreed that it would be good to find conclusive proof that the wreck site is that of the Wapen van Hoorn, as Joe Mallon's ongoing research has so far indicated.



Photographs taken by Richard Booth.

Left - John Coyle surveying one of the cannon.

Below - Andy Hunt in Piper's Gut looking for cannon.



6.0 THE WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY REPORT

6.1 Introduction

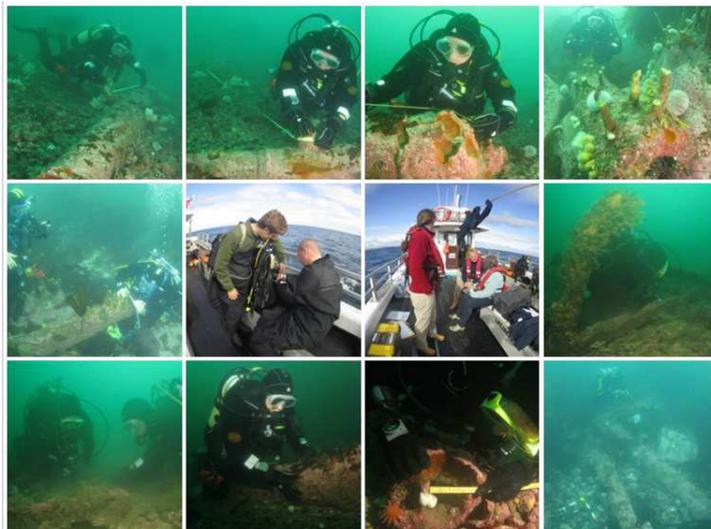
Wessex Archaeology (WA) was commissioned by Historic England to undertake an Undesignated Site Assessment of the wreck of the Gun Rocks wreck site. The fieldwork was part of a staged investigation of a number of wreck sites in the Farne Islands. The diving project on the Gun Rocks site took place between 28th August and 5th September 2013 and included 14 dives connected with the investigation of the Gun Rocks wreck site. As part of the diving investigation WA liaised with Tyneside 114 to undertake the photographic, acoustic and hand measuring survey of the cannon present at Gun Rocks in order to confirm the nature and extent of the in situ artefacts.

The resulting report is called the Gun Rocks Wreck, Farne Islands, Reference 83803.12 November 2013; henceforth referred to as 'the report'.

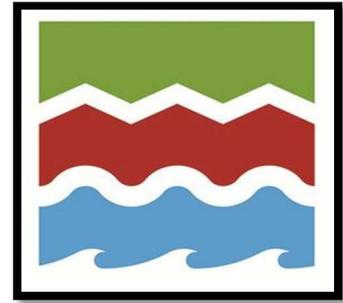
6.2 Assessment Aims And Objectives

The overall aim of the WA project was an undesignated site assessment. However the final aim can be broken down in to a number of objectives:

- Contact the Receiver of Wreck to gain a list of droits relating to the site;
- Undertake a diver survey of the exposed remains. Confirm position, extent, stability and character (plotted by tracked diver survey) of the site;
- Locate and accurately position (plotted by tracked diver survey and probing as appropriate) any additional archaeological material;
- Produce a structured record of field observations; preferably including a photographic record of the site and a basic site plan;
- Review the site against the non-statutory criteria for scheduling under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979.
- Involve divers from Tyneside 114 during the site investigations.



Photographs taken from Facebook courtesy of Andrew Hunt - Surveying Gun Rocks with WA



6.3 Findings

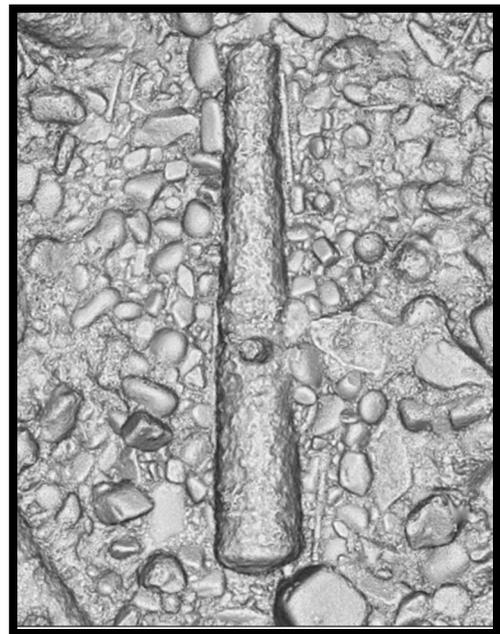
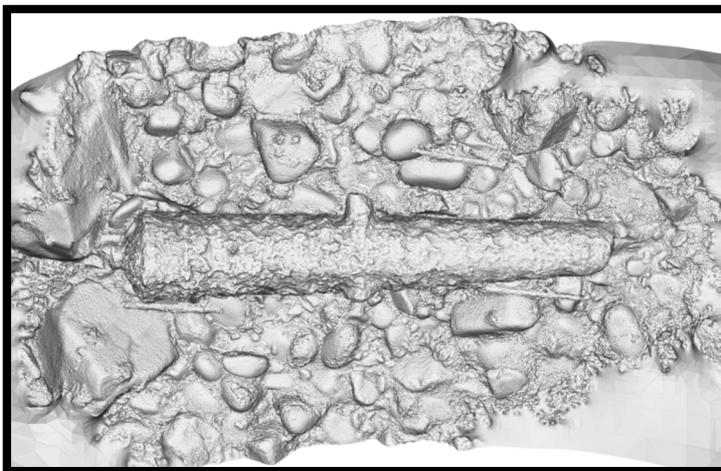
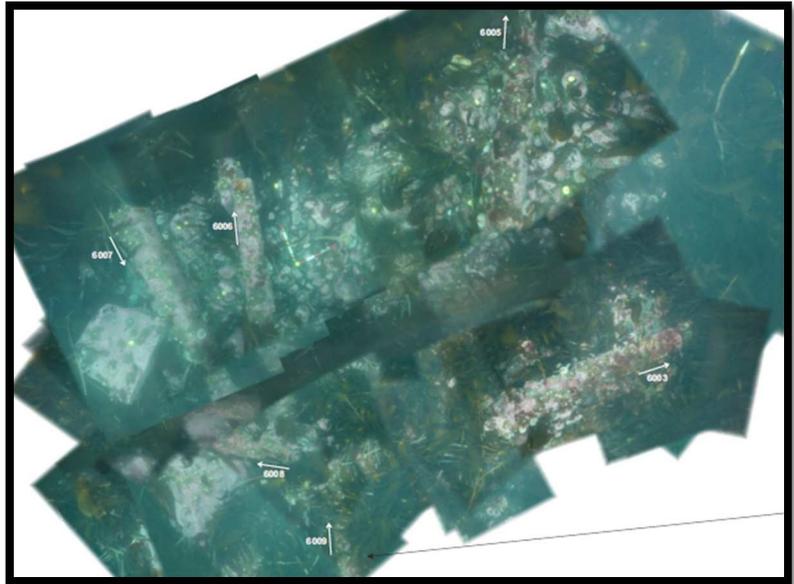
During the initial survey of the site, thirteen concreted iron cannon were recorded lying in a scattered formation off the south west side of Gun Rocks. Several cannonballs and a section of lead sheet were also located in this area. During the survey, a section of the site with cannon was recorded by photomosaic and three cannon were also captured through photogrammetry.

Several other anomalies identified by the earlier geophysical survey were investigated. These revealed an anchor and wooden object, with cuprous bolts and a modern metal box or section of ducting.

The picture to the right, taken from the report, shows a photograph mosaic of the main area of cannon. Six cannon can be seen here, but only because the kelp had been removed, otherwise they would have been hidden and the photo mosaic not possible.

Tyneside 114 now have the software to enable photographs to be stitched together. All you need is a diver with a decent camera and good buoyancy control! For future projects this will be put to use.

The photogrammetric rendering required much more skill and powerful software. WA were able to make some fantastic three dimensional imagery of the cannon which were found, using this technology. The cannon on the left is cannon 6011 and on the right is cannon number 6009.



Intriguingly, the report concludes that there appears to be no pattern to how the cannon are arranged adjacent to Gun Rocks which might reflect their position on board the wrecked vessel. The report

goes on to give detail about each cannon, such as measurements, location, orientation etc. All of which can be compared with the 1970 and 2010 survey maps - see below. However, and probably most interestingly, during the surveys a second cannon site was also found:

The second site is located 30 metres west of the original or main cannon site and consists of six cast iron artillery pieces on a cobbled flat seabed. No evidence of these cannon had been found in earlier surveys. It is therefore presumed that they have not previously been recorded. The six cannon were clearly identified on the side-scan sonar images of the area, as the elongated shapes were distinctly visible on the very flat seabed.



All six cannon were recorded by taking measurements of discerning features and through photographs. The nature of the flat seabed allowed for divers to measure between the cannon, and these measurements in lieu of a tape measure, when combined with compass bearings, allowed for a site plan to be created. The accuracy of the site plan was then confirmed against the side-scan sonar anomalies that indicated the positions of the cannon.

The photograph (right) shows a diver (Ethan Lisk) photographed next to some wreckage within the broader Gun Rocks area. This turned out to be an old anchor,

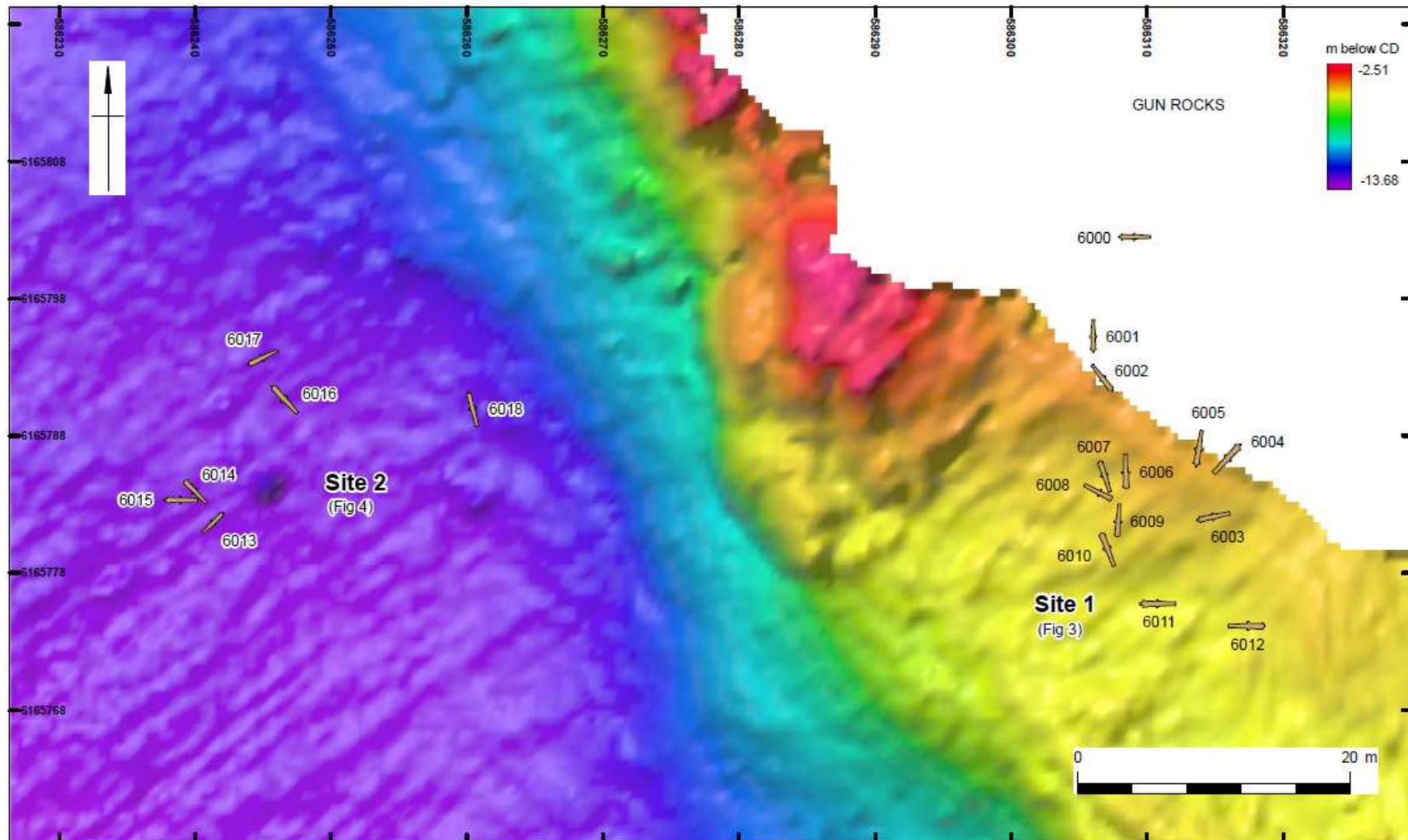
but not as old as the Gun Rocks wreck. The diver's dimensions were used to gauge the measurements of the wreckage.

A number of maps have been produced of the site showing where the cannon are located. The map on the following page shows the two cannon sites with the cannon numbered. The next page shows a comparison of the main cannon site layout between the three survey periods: 1970, 2010 and 2013. Table 4 below summarises the cannon finds. The WA ID is the Wessex Archaeology Identification number used in their final maps of the cannon site.

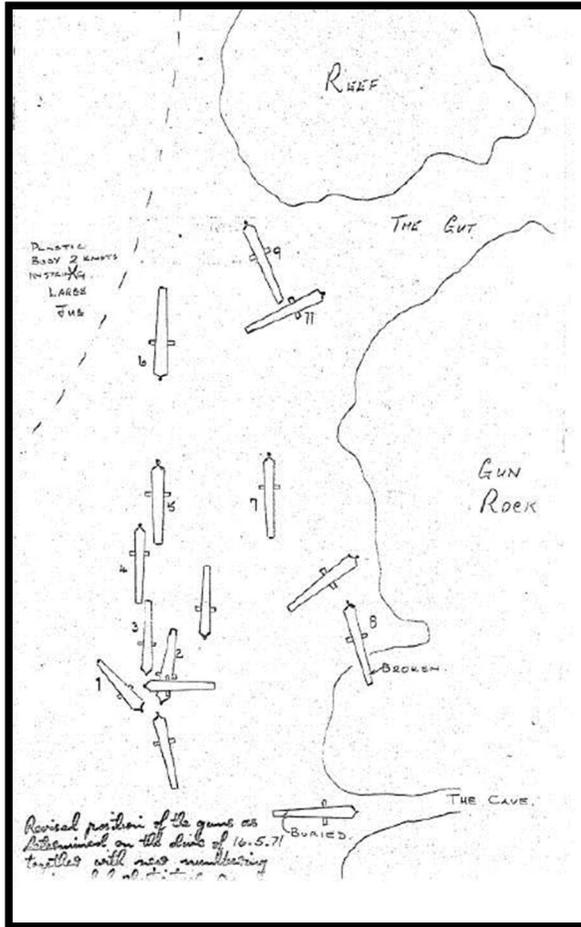
Table 4 List of cannon and other artefacts found during the WA surveys

WA ID	Description	WA ID	Description
6000	Cast iron cannon of unknown calibre	6012	Cast iron 6 pounder cannon
6001	Cast iron 6 pounder cannon	6013	Cast iron 2 pounder cannon
6002	Cast iron 6 pounder cannon	6014	Cast iron possibly 6 pounder cannon
6003	Cast iron 8 pounder cannon	6015	Cast iron 6 pounder cannon
6004	Cast iron 18 pounder cannon	6016	Cast iron 18 or 24 pounder cannon
6005	Cast iron 8 pounder cannon	6017	Cast iron 6 pounder cannon
6006	Cast iron 6 pounder cannon	6018	Cast iron 8 pounder cannon
6007	Cast iron 8 pounder cannon	6019	Anchor
6008	Cast iron 8 pounder cannon	6020	Cylindrical wooden object
6009	Cast iron 8 pounder cannon	6021	Cannon balls
6010	Cast iron 6 pounder cannon	6022	Lead Sheet
6011	Cast iron 6 pounder cannon		

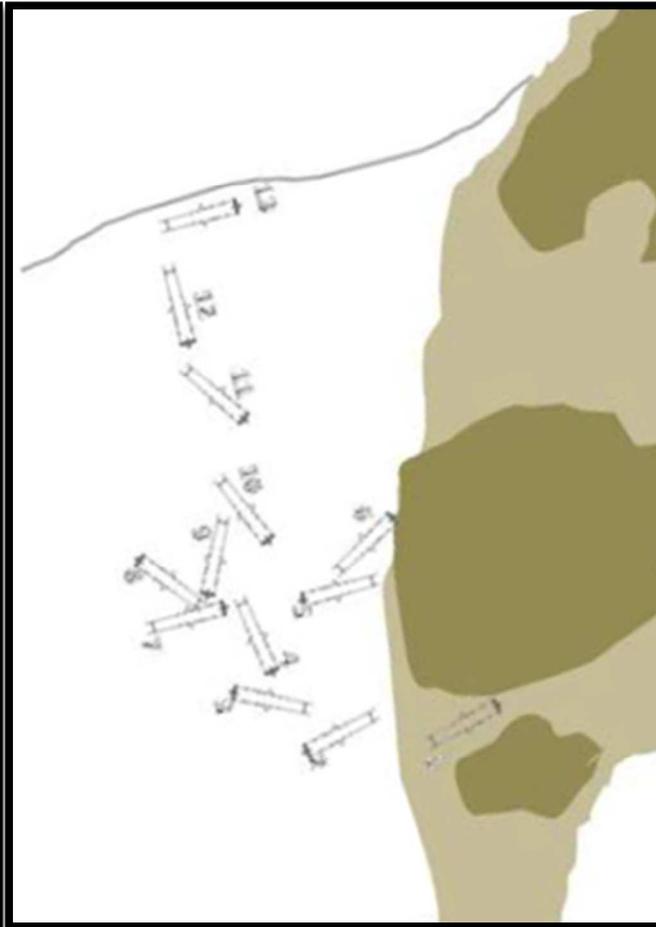
The two cannon sites mapped by WA in 2013. Site 2 had not knowingly been recorded prior to this date.



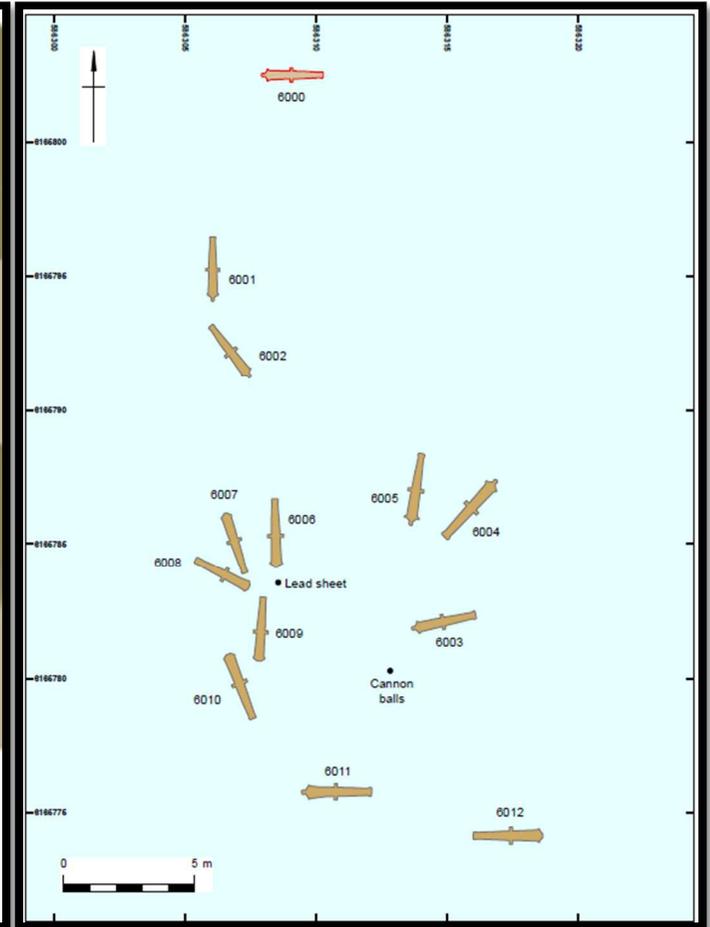
Comparison of the cannon maps for Gun Rocks.



1970



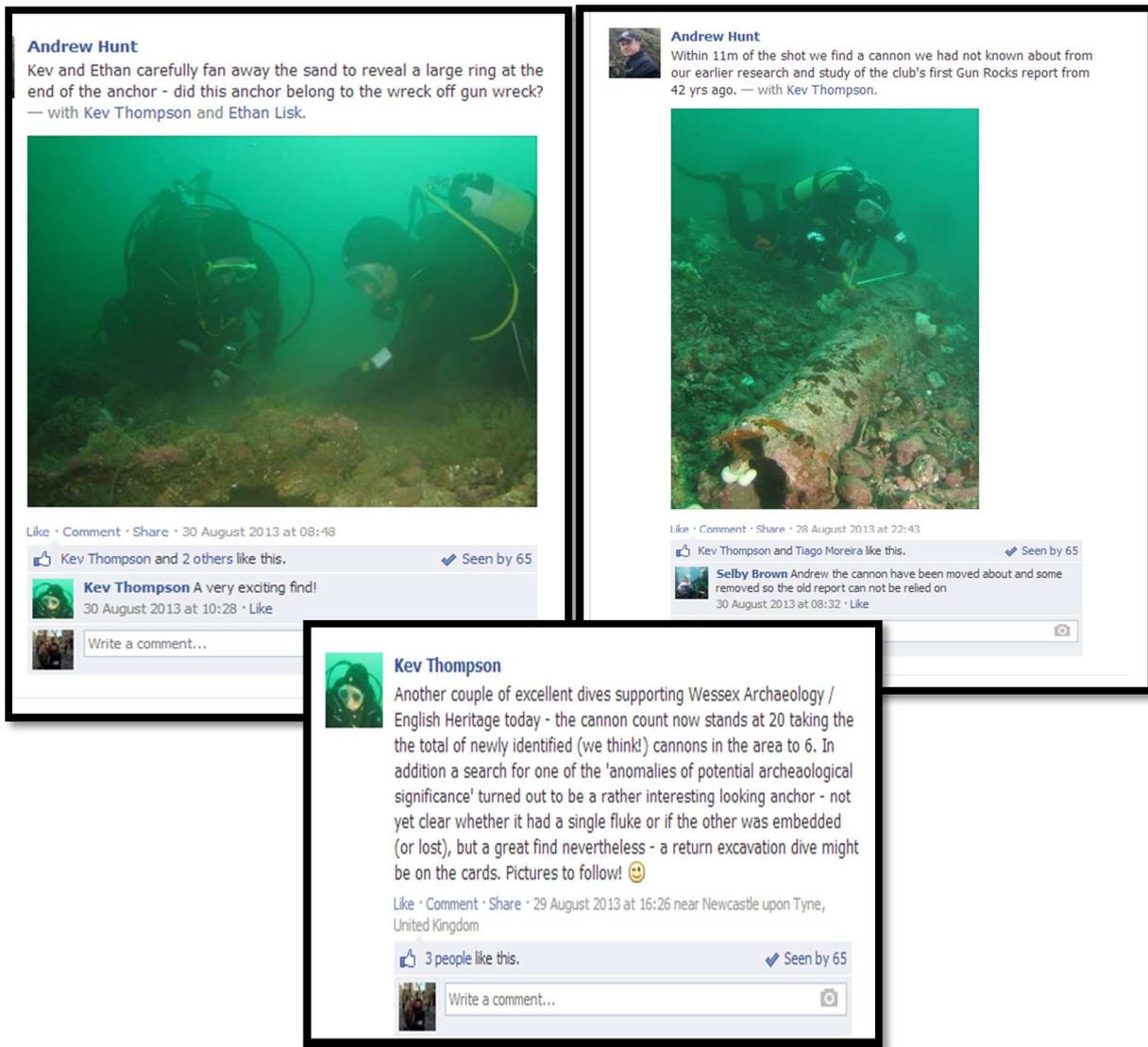
2010



2013

6.4 Summary Of Conclusions

During the WA investigations a number of Tyneside 114 divers were involved: Andy Hunt, Kevin Thompson, Liz McKernan, Andy Moss, Brian Dinsley, David Mitchell, Hubert Desgranges, Michael Hunt, Tony Horsfall and Ethan Lisk. Everyone came home with tales of new finds and learning to use new survey techniques and equipment. All in all it was judged to be a very successful and enjoyable experience. All of the comments on Facebook evidenced this:



What about the finds? Well, the initial survey of the known cannon site recorded thirteen iron cannon lying in a scattered formation, close to the south west side of Gun Rocks. Several cannonballs and a section of lead sheet were also recorded in this area.

A second, previously undiscovered, area of cannon was located 30 metres to the west and consisted of 6 cannon.

Several other anomalies identified by the earlier geophysical survey were investigated. These revealed an anchor and wooden object with cuprous bolts and a modern metal box or section of ducting.

No vessel remains were conclusively identified at the site. However, at the conclusion of this fieldwork, the design and type of the cannon were identified as having been produced in Finspong, Sweden in the late 17th or early 18th centuries.

The majority of cannon are 6 or 8 pounders (Table 4) with one 2 pounder, one 18 pounder and one 18 or 24 pounder cannon also found. The variation of cannon sizes (calibre types) has led to the conclusion that the cannon were cargo rather than artillery. Damage noted by the WA surveyors on several of the cannon also lead to the consideration that the cannon may have been used as ballast rather than transported for later use as artillery pieces.

The overall conclusion of the report, is that a Dutch cargo vessel was transporting cannon from Sweden to the Netherlands when it was blown off course and wrecked on Gun Rocks in the early 18th century.

During the surveys, the relatively new technique of automated photogrammetry was used. The results have, since the issuing of the report, been put on the internet: explore the cannon site in 3D <http://www.wessexarch.co.uk/blogs/news/2015/08/20/explore-18th-century-dutch-shipwreck-3d>

Subsequently, in September 2015, this research was presented at the Ordnance Society conference, where detailed photogrammetry renderings of some of the cannon were shown. Cannon experts attending the conference identified that not all the cannon were Swedish, and some may be in fact English. This has prompted a call for further detailed photogrammetry recording of these cannon to allow for more detailed analysis.

6.5 Questions Remaining



During the Geophysical survey of the site and surrounding area a number of anomalies were found: objects which could not be identified, that that could be archaeological artefacts or just natural land forms. In order to find out what these artefacts are, each one will have to be dived and investigated - a future project for Tyneside 114?

The search goes on for conclusive proof to the hypothesis that this was a cargo ship carrying an assortment of cannon for ballast or recycling.

Left: Action shot of Kevin Thompson measuring a cannon at the new cannon site – Site 2.

7.0 PUBLICITY AND EVENTS

7.1 Gun Rocks And Robson Green



Robson Green's Tales from Northumberland had a successful first series, which aired on ITV. The producers then started thinking about a second series. They decided that for this new series, they would take the action underwater and record some of the many ship wrecks that are present along the seabed of the northeast coast.

As part of their research they contacted Andy Hunt, a member of Tyneside 114, for help in planning which wrecks Robson Green should dive on. Andy was able to advise the film crew and producers and also acted as Robson's dive buddy.

The filming day arrived and the footage shows two happy divers heading out to the site of Gun Rocks, with Andy explaining that it is an unidentified wreck site which was discovered by Tyneside 114 divers more than 40 years ago. It was first thought that the wreck was a man 'o' war from the Spanish Armada as there are lots of cannon which scatter the seabed; however it

was finally decided that the ship was most likely a cargo vessel carrying damaged cannon.

Andy is quoted in the local press as saying:

"Robson's enthusiasm shines through and he really wants to show his audience a side of Northumberland, such as her many wreck sites, they wouldn't normally get to see. In diving, exploring and researching and recording this site our club members have derived a great deal of enjoyment. It was clear that this was a really enjoyable dive for Robson too, which highlighted the value of our underwater heritage."



Andy telling Robson all about Gun Rocks!

Robson is quoted as saying:



Andy pointing out the cannon to Robson

"I'm from Northumberland of course and have recently returned to live in the area. Diving with Andy Hunt and the rest of the BSAC team has been a wonderful and unforgettable experience.

There are three words very close to my heart when it comes to diving; that's health and safety, and during my BSAC training, I have never felt in safer hands.

The Farne Islands is a place of such beauty and yet tragedy too. It really has been an amazing experience. But, when it comes to my BSAC training, I couldn't have

had better preparation for diving off the Northumberland coast to record Tales from Northumberland."

The programme which aired April 2015, is still available to watch on You Tube - Tales from Northumberland with Robson Green, Series 2, Episode 4: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0awzUaUHs2g>

7.2 Gun Rocks Night At The Ravensworth Arms

Gun Rocks Revisited
Tyneside BSAC 114

Ravensworth Arms (Lamesley, Gateshead NE11 0ER)
Monday 16th March 2015 - Starting at 8.30pm prompt.
If you would like to come please email: contact@tynesidebsac.co.uk

What is Gun Rocks?

Gun Rocks is an historic cannon site located on the Farne Islands, Northumberland.

The site was first surveyed in the 1970s by Tyneside 114, a project which was also televised.

In 2013 Gun Rocks was re-visited in an exemplar joint project between English Heritage, Wessex archaeology and Tyneside Sub Aqua Club.

There will be a number of talks over the evening including:

- Harry Harvey, part of the former 1970 exploration team, will talk about the surveys during this time;
- Peta Knott, from Wessex Archaeology, will talk about the finds and conclusions of the 2013 surveys;
- Some of the actual artefacts recovered will be on show too;
- A brief look at the future of the site and where Tyneside 114's research goes from here!

Gun Rocks will soon feature on ITV "More Tales From Northumberland With Robson Green" – the day he dived with Tyneside 114!

Following on from the Wessex Archaeology survey, with the results and conclusions prepared, an evening event was organised to bring together divers from two different decades, to discuss the past present and future of the Gun Rocks project.

Richard Booth reported on the meeting of the Tyneside 114 website, this report is reproduced below:

"Over 70 past and present Tyneside members and other guests attended the Gun Rocks presentation evening at the Ravensworth Arms. Indeed a number of attendees had travelled considerable distances for the event with Nic and Linda Ashmore driving up from Weymouth and Andy Hunt from the Isle of Wight.

The event kicked off with Harry Harvey, one of the original Gun Rocks team in the early 1970s giving a personal account of his

memories of the project illustrated with some of his photographs from that time.

Peta Knott from Wessex Archaeology then presented some of the findings from the most recent survey conducted in 2013 and which involved some of the more recent Tyneside 114 members. Perhaps one of the most interesting and potentially controversial findings was that some of the

cannons appeared to be 'scrap' iron, with a number appearing to have blown muzzles. Was this vessel carrying a cargo of scrap iron cannon from Sweden to the Netherlands, which had been blown off course and wrecked on the Farnes? We shall probably never find out the truth, but Peta's talk raised some interesting issues, which threw new light on some of the mysteries that surround this wreck site, as well as raising more questions than answers.

The final presentation was by Nicola Faulks, the current club Diving Officer, with a number of suggestions about how present members of Tyneside 114 could take the Gun Rocks Project into the future.

All in all an excellent and informative evening and it was great to see so many ex-members of the club still interested in the Gun Rocks Project."



Divers past and present at the Gun Rocks evening.

7.3 Gun Rocks Makes Scuba Magazine

In 2014 following the publicity from the archaeological investigations Scuba Magazine ran an article summarising Tyneside 114's involvement with the Gun Rocks investigations. The article provides a brief summary of the findings to date as well as a summary of what the project achieved; not just for Tyneside 114, but also for Wessex Archaeology, Historic England and the locals at Seahouses.

Below is a photograph of the article. If you would like a copy of the article, it will be shortly available on the Tyneside 114 website: <http://www.tynesidebsac.co.uk/>

8.0 THE FUTURE OF TYNESIDE 114 AND GUN ROCKS

8.1 Members' Current Thoughts

At the 2015 Tyneside 114 AGM in November the assembled club members were asked to write one or more words about their experience of diving on and learning about, the Gun Rocks site. These are the results:

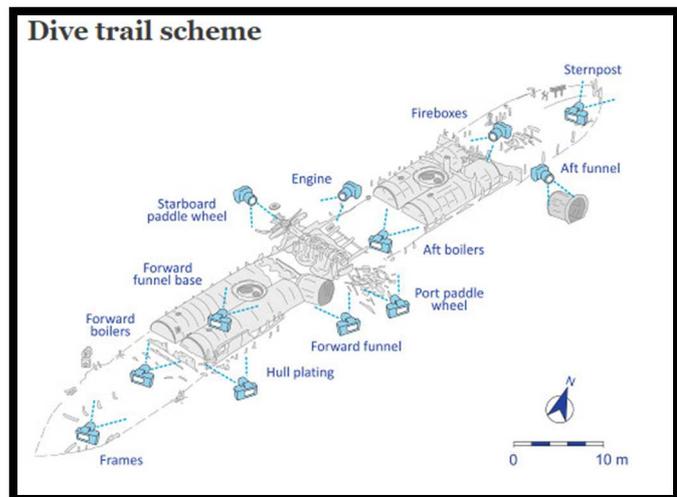


Even the new members who haven't yet dived Gun Rocks said that they are looking forward to it. Rust and cannon seem to be a recurring thought and the strong currents just off the cannon site are well remembered too!

8.2 A Dive Trail

Following on from all of the publicity received about Gun Rocks, and conversations with other divers and boat skippers up at Seahouses, the general opinion has been that a dive trail of some sort would be a great idea for Gun Rocks. Gun Rocks is a site that is often dived by beginners, or as a second dive; so having a dive trail to enable divers to find the cannon and learn about the history of the site would be very beneficial.

Tyneside 114 members have therefore been researching dive trails and how to implement them. Peta Knott from WA has been particularly helpful with our considerations, providing examples of trails that she has helped to implement. The figure right, shows an example of the site layout for the Iona II dive site. The trail which WA developed has been expanded into a detailed web page with information on the history, layout and natural history of the wreck. It can be accessed here: <http://www.landmarktrust.org.uk/lundyisland/discovering-lundy/activities/diving/divesites/iona-ii-dive-trail/Wreck-Monitoring/>



Iona II Dive Trail

Funding would also be required in order to implement a dive trail. Leaflets would be needed to describe the trail and the artefacts to be found. Annual site maintenance would need to be undertaken to ensure that the diver drop off point is clearly buoyed and that the start and end of the trail is visible. At the time of writing, this is being researched through organisations such as the Sharing Heritage Grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund and also the Landmark Trust. This report will likely also form part of any funding application.

8.3 Further Exploration

WA consider their site survey of Gun Rocks to be incomplete. They have therefore made the following recommendations for additional work:

1. Full measured survey and photographic recording of all known cannons, including the cannon reported to be to the east of Gun Rocks, followed by further specialist analysis to identify them;
2. Further searches on the east side of Gun Rocks to investigate historic reports of wreck material associated with Site 1;
3. Searches around Sites 1 and 2 to define their full extent;
4. Further ground truthing of cannon-like geophysical anomalies;
5. Further investigation of wooden ship timber **6020** and its vicinity.

These recommendations have been discussed by Tyneside 114 Members and Committee. It is our aim to conduct further exploration on this site. The site has such a history with our club, we would like, eventually, to conclusively identify its origin!

During the winter of 2015-16 a programme for undertaking some of these recommendations will be put together. It would, after all, be fantastic if the origin of the wrecking event could be conclusively identified.

The WA Report goes on to state:

“Tyneside 114 is entirely capable of completing these tasks under the direction of Historic England and with assistance from Wessex Archaeology. They are clearly motivated to continue working on the site and have already ground-truthed further geophysical anomalies in the Gun Rocks area. They have also show interest in using photogrammetry as a recording method for the site.”

One of the tasks which will be undertaken in 2016 and beyond is task number 4 - further investigation of cannon-like geophysical anomalies. These have been provided as geo-referenced points in a spreadsheet, so we can pop them in the chart plotter and drop divers on the anomalies. Wouldn't it be wonderful to finally identify the wreck of Gun Rocks? Or to find some new and interesting artefacts?

There are still some exciting times ahead..... As always, updates and findings will be posted on our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/293503003865/> and on our club web site <http://www.tynesidebsac.co.uk> . This report will also become available on the website too, for anyone to download and read.



Bye bye... Do remember, if this report has inspired you to come and dive Gun Rocks, then please get in contact!