

Gun Rocks History

This small outcrop of rock, which lies to the west of Staple Island, and within Staple Sound, is covered at high tide. It has been marked on maps since 1778 as Gun Rocks, likely earning its name following a ship wreck event. Archive data provides evidence of a 40 cannon Dutch merchant ship having foundered here, in the late 17th early 18th century. But none of the evidence is conclusive.

For a time, people assumed that the cannon came from one of the Spanish Armada wrecks. Later analysis of the cannon (F mark on the trunnion, and their overall design) dates them to the late 17th early 18th century, produced by the Finsprong foundry in Sweden for the Dutch market.

But the cannon are all single examples, in a variety of sizes and designs, and ships did not carry such a range of mismatched cannon for use in war. More recent research suggests that some of the cannon may in fact be British. So, why would a ship be carrying Swedish and British cannon? It is also possible that Gun Rocks has been the site of more than one wreck.

This project, co-ordinated by Tyneside 114 a local branch of the British Sub Aqua Club, aims to try and answer these questions, through further research and the use of social media, just in case someone has information that may help us.

Gun Rocks

Further Information

If you are interested in finding out more about the Gun Rocks Project, or perhaps even helping with some of the investigation of the site, then please visit the website:

www.gunrocks.co.uk

On the website you can find:

- ◆ Blog with project updates
- ◆ Details of the Gun Rocks dive trail
- ◆ Downloadable dive maps
- ◆ Marine identification guides
- ◆ History of Gun Rocks
- ◆ Theories on where the ship(s) came from and how the cannon arrived on Gun Rocks!
- ◆ Downloadable past survey reports
- ◆ A gallery of images old and new

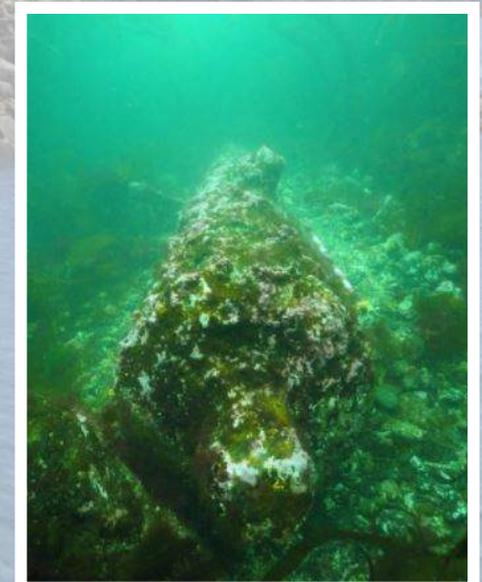
You can also contact us through the website if you have a question or some information relating to Gun Rocks.



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Gun Rocks Dive Trail Farne Islands





Right: Gun Rocks is uncovered at low tide and is covered at high tide; presenting a hazard to shipping as it sits just below the surface in a channel known as Staple Sound. The tide flows through Staple Sound at up to 4 knots: a vessel in difficulty could easily end up on the rocks. Over the years many ships have been wrecked in this area.

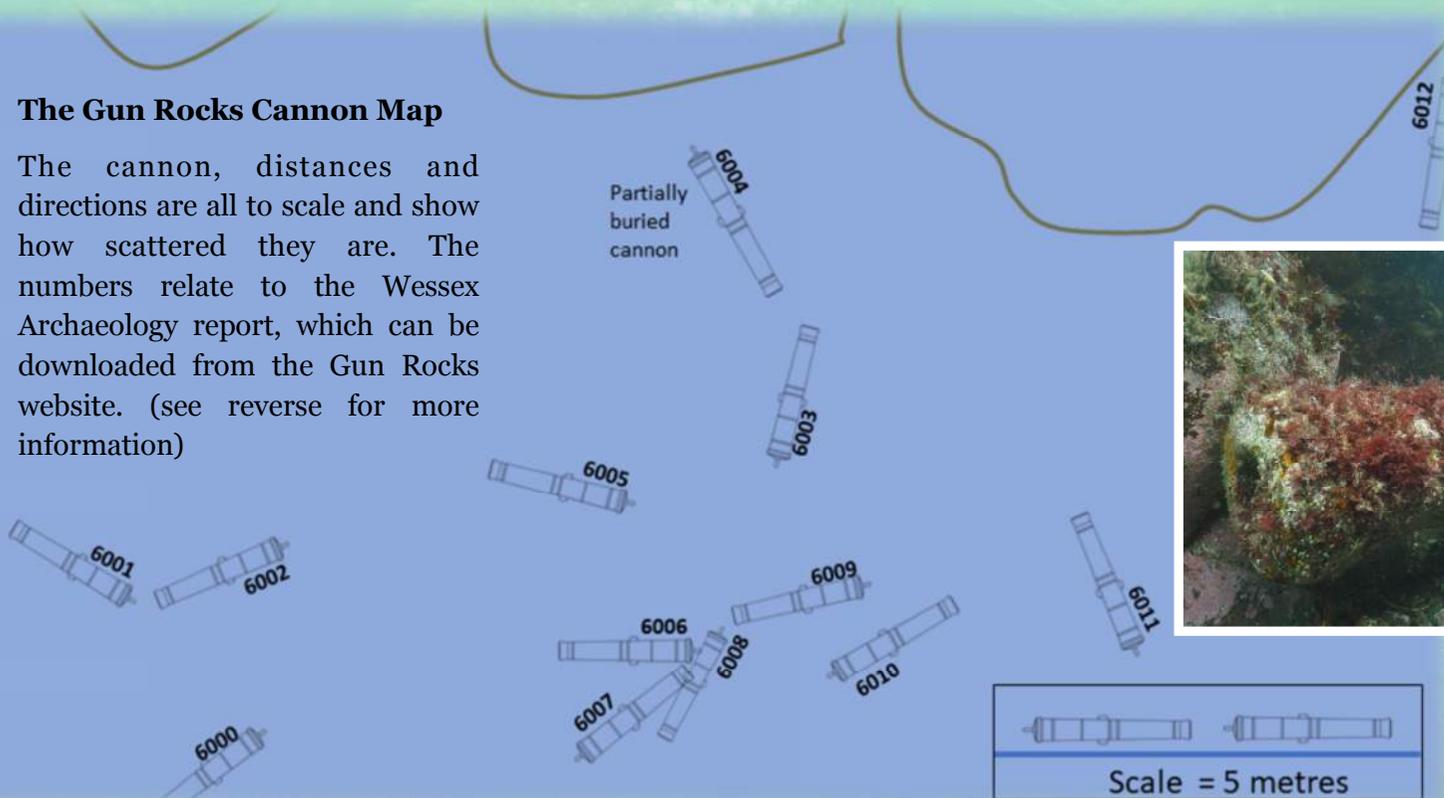


Below: photograph and location of cannon 6012. This cannon lies in a shallow gully, with ropes still attached. Police ordered that it be returned, after an illegal salvage attempt. It is a cast-iron six pounder, so would have been quite heavy to lift in the first place.

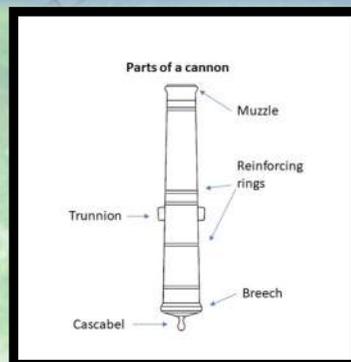
Above: Sword hilt found during the 1970s. Dated to between 1500 and 1720, its origins remain unknown. Many other items were also found including cannonballs. Many are still present on the site, but have become naturally concreted in to the seabed. If you dive the site you can still see them.

The Gun Rocks Cannon Map

The cannon, distances and directions are all to scale and show how scattered they are. The numbers relate to the Wessex Archaeology report, which can be downloaded from the Gun Rocks website. (see reverse for more information)



Above: Grey seals often visit the cannon, alongside divers. When the weather is calm, they haul out and sunbathe on top of Gun Rocks at low tide. On the cannon site there is lots of marine life, including octopus and anemones.



Left: The start of the dive trail is marked by a pile of three cannon with one sticking up. The cannon all show signs of damage: some is due to time and the action of the sea, but several also show signs of battle damage such as blown out muzzles .

Were they scrap cannon being taken back to the foundry?