

# Rill Cove

Designated Historic Wreck Site



Desk-Based Assessment

Kevin Camidge

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## Summary

The site was discovered in 1975 by Mike Hall and Ken Simpson while they were investigating the wreck of an iron trawler the *Kerris Reed* (wrecked 27.06.1968). They found a number of objects including iron guns and silver coins, all thought to date to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. No ship structure was seen and no positive identification of the wreck has ever been made. The original licensee, Ken Simpson has speculated that the wreck may be that of the fabled silver wreck of 1619. However, although the date is consistent with the finds recovered there are some problems with this identification.

The site is situated close to the cliff face in Rill Cove, on the west coast of the Lizard peninsula. The depth of seawater in the area of the site varies according to the depth of sand overlying the site, but is generally about 9m. In common with the other designated sites on the west coast of the Lizard, the site is subject to varying sand levels over the area of the site.

The archaeological history of the site was constructed from the licensees' reports submitted to the Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites (ACHWS) and the site inspection reports made by the Archaeological Diving Unit (ADU) and Wessex Archaeology, as well as from communication with Mike Hall. The majority of archaeological work on this site was undertaken between 1974 and 1987 by the original licensee of the site, Ken Simpson. The site plans were found with the various licensee reports; a total of 11 separate site plans were found, ranging in date from 1976 to 1987. The finds recovered from this site total 4554 recorded objects, all but 86 of which are silver coins. Two artefacts from this site are on display at the Charlestown Shipwreck Museum.

Finally, a number of recommendations have been made concerning what needs to be done in the future regarding this project. All the documents, licensee reports, contractors' reports, site plans and photographs referenced in this report appear on the DVD which accompanies this report. A contents list for the DVD is included at the end of this report.

# Project Background

## Introduction

This desk based assessment is intended to combine the information contained in the various licensees' reports and the site reports produced by the Archaeological Diving Unit and Wessex Archaeology, as well as information supplied by the site licensees, into a single document

## Site Location

The site is situated on the west coast of the Lizard peninsula in west Cornwall. It lies in shallow water a few metres from the cliff face; the centre of the Rill Cove designated area is given on the statutory instrument (designation No 1) 1976 No. 203 as 67751345 on the 6" to 1 mile Ordnance Survey Map, sheet SW 61 SE. The current designated area is a circle, centred on the above position, with a radius of 100m.



*Fig 1.  
The location of the St Anthony,  
Schiedam and Rill Cove sites on  
the west coast of the Lizard  
peninsula.*

## Licensing History

Licensee	Year	Type of license
K. Simpson	1976	Survey
K. Simpson	1977	Excavation
K. Simpson	1978	Excavation
K. Simpson	1979	Excavation
K. Simpson	1980	Excavation
K. Simpson	1981	Excavation
K. Simpson	1982	Excavation
K. Simpson	1983	Excavation
K. Simpson	1984	Excavation
K. Simpson	1985	Excavation
K. Simpson	1987	Excavation
K. Simpson	1988	Excavation
K. Simpson	1989	Excavation
K. Simpson	1990	Excavation
M.Hall	1991	Excavation
M.Hall	1992	Excavation
M.Hall	1993	Excavation
M.Hall	1994	Excavation
M.Hall	1995	Excavation
M.Hall	1996	Excavation
M.Hall	1997	Excavation
M.Hall	1998	Excavation
M.Hall	1999	Excavation
M.Hall	2000	Excavation
M.Hall	2001	Excavation
M.Hall	2002	Survey
M.Hall	2003	Survey
M.Hall	2004	Survey
M.Hall	2005	Survey
	2006 - 10	No licence
M.Milburn	2011	Visit
M.Milburn	2012	Visit



## **Aims and Objectives**

To determine the current whereabouts of the artefacts recovered from the site. Also to secure, if possible, any records and photographs of the objects.

To determine the whereabouts and extent of the records made of this wreck by the licensees. These are likely to include site plans, dive logs, photographs and records of documentary sources pertaining to the wrecks.

To ascertain what documentary sources exist for the site and produce a summary of the existing documentary data. Sources are likely to include documents at the National Archive and National Maritime Museum, as well as RoW records and secondary sources.

To identify and determine the extent of any existing reports. These are likely to include licensee reports, designated site assessments, IJNA articles and notes and press reports.

Finally, to produce a narrative of the work carried out on this project along with an account of what has been done and written about the project. To create a detailed list of where all the artefacts and records are currently housed and identify what remains to be done on the project.

# Methodology

## Introduction

The vessel wrecked at Rill Cove has never been identified. For this reason it was not possible to compile a list of relevant documents at the Public Records Office (PRO) or at the National Maritime Museum (NMM).

## Sources

The following sources were consulted in compiling this desk based assessment:

Anthony Randall – site team member

Mike Hall – Team member and licensee 1991 to 2005

Rill Cove Finds Record Project 2008 (EH5392)

Charlestown Shipwreck Museum Recording Project Report 2006 (EH4823)

Original licensees' reports (EH registry, Swindon)

Archaeological Diving Unit site visit reports (EH registry, Swindon & EH Fort Cumberland)

Contractors' Designated Site Assessments (EH, Fort Cumberland)

The National Record of the Historic Environment

Cornwall and Scilly HER

Receiver of Wreck

Journal articles (IJNA)

Published works

## Discussion

Wherever possible all source material was photographed; copies of this source material are reproduced in full on the DVD which accompanies this report. An index to the material contained on the DVD appears at the end of this report.

# Results

## Introduction

### Identification of the Rill Cove Wreck

The wreck at Rill Cove has never been identified. The original licensee, Ken Simpson has speculated that it may be the fabled silver wreck of 1619, but while the date is consistent with the finds recovered there are some problems with this identification, the main one being that while the Lizard silver wreck is recorded as carrying silver bars and coins, no silver bars have been found from the Rill Cove Site.

The Shipwreck Index for South Cornwall, while unable to identify the vessel, lists the Rill Cove wreck as carrying a cargo of 'silver coin/specie/plate, silver ingots/bullion' and goes on to say 'About nine years ago (17.08.1628) a ship from St Lucar was wrecked at the Lizard, laden with silver in bars and pieces of 8. CSP.Dom,Ch I, Vol cxiii p258' (Larn & Larn, B, 1995).

The Lizard silver wreck of 1619 is well attested: 'About 1619 a Spanish ship with silver on board ... was wrecked on Lizard, and dwellers there, with Sir John Killigrew at their head, set about recovering it, threatening death to anyone who interfered (S.P.Dom. Jas I, cxiii,11)' (Page, 1906, p.496). Further mention of a salvage attempt follows: 'In 1629 a Dutch diver, Jacob Johnson, who had a patent apparatus, thought he would attempt some salvage on this wreck, but was prevented by the people' (Page, 1906, p.496).

The wreck seems to have been of interest to early divers, due no doubt to the valuable cargo: 'the legend of the ship of 1619, caused diving operations to be undertaken at several periods, and the locality became a favourite one for the trial of new inventions in diving. In 1704 Robert Davis, a shipbuilder of Leith, claimed that he had descended several fathoms at Polpear in his diving engine, and did say the Hundredth Psalm underwater at the Bumble Rocks, where bars of silver had previously been recovered, and that although other inventors had brought their machines, non had been as successful as he' (Page, 1906, p.503).

Sir John Killigrew, who was involved in the salvage of material from the 1619 silver wreck at Lizard, received a patent to build a lighthouse at Lizard in 1619. It is often assumed that this light was built at the present site of the lighthouse at Lizard Point. However, there are the remains of a circular stone structure on Rill Head, overlooking Rill Cove. These remains (HER number 10508) are described in the Cornwall HER as a possible beacon or lighthouse, so it is at least possible that Rill Head was the site of Sir John's early lighthouse. 'With the patent in his hands, Sir John ... writing to Carlton on September 15<sup>th</sup> (1619) ... also told Carleton that near the site of the lighthouse, silver bars worth £3,300 – an enormous sum in those days – had been taken up from the wreck of a Dutch ship, "wch the Prince, his Highnes, hath", and that it was hoped to recover much more' (Noall, 1968, p.140). The nationality of the wreck changes, if the date and cargo remain constant – perhaps indicating that little was actually known about the origin of the vessel.

From the same source we gather that wrecks in the locality were plentiful, but rarely was the vessel's identity recorded. 'All this while, ships continued to pile themselves up on the Lizard. In

1621, Sir John Killigrew told Carleton that he had “a certificate of ye losse of 25 ships there and thereabouts within these dozen or twenty years, besides a great number of others whose ruines lye near these rocks and cliffs, not known of whome or what they were” (Noall, 1968, p.144).

### **Documentary Sources**

Without any identification of the vessel wrecked at Rill Cove it is not possible to seek any documentary sources pertaining to the wreck. The Lizard silver wreck of 1619, itself an unidentified vessel, is explored above. But even this wreck may not be the same as the Rill Cove wreck.

## Archaeological History of the Site

The site was discovered in 1974 by Mike Hall and Ken Simpson while they were investigating the wreck of an iron trawler the *Kerris Reed* (wrecked 27.06.1968). They found a number of objects including iron guns and silver coins all thought to date from the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. No ship structure was seen and no identification of the wreck has ever been made (Hall pers. comm.).

**1974** (No licensee’s report – site not yet designated)

The area excavated in 1974 is shown on the 1987 plan (87/1)

**1975** (No licensee’s report - site not yet designated)

**1976**

The site was designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act (15.3.1976). Ken Simpson had a survey licence. The licensee’s report for this year does not give any details of work undertaken nor of diving activity for 1976. A reference is made to an interim report submitted to IJNA (Simpson et al., 1977). The licensee’s report for 1976 states that two banded iron guns and one cast gun were found, as well as a number of other objects including a large number of silver coins. The report states that the latest dated coin was from 1616. A note accompanying the finds list states that of the 732 silver coins, 532 were recovered prior to the designation of the site. There is an account of the general site stratigraphy (below). The angular rocks are thought to represent recent falls from the cliff face, while the smooth rocks are older falls which have been smoothed by the action of the sea.

Finds List from 1976 report	
No	Object
732	Silver coins
2	Sounding leads
1	Copper ingot
1	Iron swivel gun, breech
1	Lead bottle seal
2	Pewter buttons
32	Lead musket shot
3	Lead objects
3	‘Brass’ objects

Site Stratigraphy 1976	
Depth	Composition
10 – 15 feet	Mobile sand
2 feet	Angular rocks and boulders
1.5-2 feet	Smooth rocks and boulders
No depth given	Discoloured sand containing artefacts

The report states that the extent of the site was defined by the use of an underwater metal detector. A site plan is included (see list of site plans below) showing two ‘cannon’, areas where coins were found and a circle (8.5m in diameter) labelled as ‘approximate limit of the known wreck area’ – some topographic features are also shown. The scale of the plan is stated as 1:500. However, if this is correct the two guns (‘cannon’) shown would be approximately 0.5m long (which seems very small). The project team in 1976 consisted of Ken Simpson (the licensee), Mike Hall, Richard Larn and Roy Davies. Although no identification of the wreck is made, the report states that the site may be the fabled Lizard silver wreck.

The report contains two photographs of an iron banded swivel gun, which appears to be the same gun as that on display in the Charlestown Wreck and Heritage Centre (CT147) and attributed to the Rill Cove.

The project team consisted of:

Ken Simpson (licensee)

Mike Hall

Richard Larn

Roy Davies

A Salvor's Report of Wreck form exists for the period 31.10.1975 to 31.10 1976 (copy obtained from Mike Hall). The objects listed include 200 silver coins and 45 other objects. A copy of this form is reproduced on the DVD which accompanies this report.

### **1977 (No licensee's report)**

The licensee is Ken Simpson, the licence is for excavation. No areas are shown excavated in 1977 on the 1987 plan of excavations (87/1). It seems likely that there was no excavation in this year.

An 'Interim Report' for the site appeared in the IJNA for 1977. The report details the frequent movements of sand in Mount's Bay 'in a pattern which defies prediction'. But goes on to say 'It would appear that in general the sand moves in a direction opposite to that of the wind, but there are exceptions'. A study of the phenomenon is mentioned centred on the wreck of a small iron steamer (*SS Grip*, 1897) in Gunwalloe Church Cove (quite close to the *Schiedam* site). 'During the last twelve years the wreck has only uncovered twice'. The usual depth of sand cover over the wreck of the *Grip* is reported as 4.6 to 6.1m. Interestingly, the report also states that three unknown cannon sites were discovered in the area while the sand levels were low.

The report goes on to outline the discovery of the Rill Cove site: 'It was this movement of sand which caused the temporary exposure of the wreck site near Rill Cove. Whilst investigating the remains of a trawler, the *Kerris Reed*, wrecked against the cliffs some nine years ago, K Simpson and M Hall ... found iron cannon and other evidence of wreck in about 30 feet (9.1m) of water'. A 'considerable number' of silver coins of Philip II and III of Spain were found loose in the sand. These coins were dated to the late 1500s / early 1600s. Before survey could be undertaken 'ground seas' brought the sand back and buried the site again to a depth of 3.1m.

The 'limits' of the site were established using a 'hand held magnetometer' – this survey suggested that 'the Rill Cove site is confined to a relatively small area'. A number of holes were dug (using a reaction dredge), 'down to the original sea bed level'. Objects recovered included pewter buttons, lead bottle top seals, brass objects and 'a quantity of silver coins'. A tentative date for the wreck, based on the coin dates, is given as 1616. The report also contains a photograph of an iron banded, breech-loading swivel gun recovered from the site (Simpson et al., 1977). It should be borne in mind that this IJNA interim report, although published in 1977, was written in 1976 – as evidenced by a reference to it in the 1976 licensee's report.

A document supplied by one of the site licensees (Mike Hall) relating to a sale of coins on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1977 appears to be an auction or sale catalogue, and lists 59 silver coins. We do not

know whether these coins were actually sold, but it would appear that they were certainly offered for sale in 1977.

**1978 (No licensee’s report)**

An excavation licence was issued to Ken Simpson. No areas are shown excavated in 1978 on the 1987 plan of excavations (87/1). It seems likely that there was no excavation in this year.

**1979 (No licensee’s report)**

An excavation licence was issued to Ken Simpson. No areas are shown excavated in 1979 on the 1987 plan of excavations (87/1). It seems likely that there was no excavation in this year.

**1980**

A considerable amount of work appears to have been undertaken in 1980, the licensee’s report stating that diving took place on 30 separate days and that two reaction dredges were used simultaneously. A metal detector survey was also undertaken and the areas showing a positive response were excavated to a depth of four feet. Most of these ‘hits’ turned out to be iron wreckage from the trawler *Kerris Reed*. Excavation was then undertaken to the south east of gun A, where some coins were found. Apparently, the number of coins found decreased as the excavation progressed beyond gun A. Although a site plan is mentioned in the report, no plan accompanies the report we saw. The extent of the 1980 excavations is, however, shown on plan (87/1) which accompanies the 1987 licensee’s report. None of the extant site plans show any labelling of the two guns. However, it is clear from the report that Gun A lies to the north of gun B, so we can assume that gun A is the northernmost of the two and gun B is the more southerly gun. Excavation was then moved to the north-west of gun A where ‘many more coins were found’. In this area concretions, iron nails and iron pins were also found. These were probably not recovered, as no iron nails or pins appear in the finds list.

Finds List from 1980 report	
No	Object
1690	Silver coins
1	Part of bar shot
1	Part of round shot
6	Lead objects
1	Brass object

Site Stratigraphy 1980
Rocks, sand and shingle
Rocks, sand, shingle and trawler wreckage
Rocks, sand, shingle and loose coins
Hard packed sand, shingle and rock, coins

Four Salvor’s Report of Wreck forms exist for 1980 (copies obtained from Mike Hall). The total objects listed include 1670 silver coins and ‘various’ other objects. Copies of these forms are reproduced on the DVD which accompanies this report.

An account of the stratigraphy encountered is given (see the table above); interestingly this differs from the stratigraphy reported in the 1976 report (see above). No depths were given for any of these layers.

The project team was:

Kenneth James Simpson (Licensee)

Michael Hall, Richard Larn, Roy Davies, Anthony John Crabtree, Anthony John Randall

### 1981

Diving was undertaken on 11 separate days in 1981. Use of a magnetometer on the southern part of the site is mentioned in the report – but no results are detailed. Sand levels were reported as relatively high over most of the site so excavation was undertaken in a small area at the northern edge of the site (see plan of excavated areas 87/1).

Finds List from 1981 report	
No	Object
91	Silver coins
2	Musket shot
5	Lead or pewter objects
2	Copper objects
1	Brass disk
1	Small iron shot
3	Iron nail frags
Various	Frag of wood, leather and

There are photographs of the artefacts in the report – these are hard to see as the report is a photocopy, but iron concretion, pewter buttons, coins and wood are shown. Two site plans are included in the report, one showing the area excavated in 1980 and the other the area excavated in 1981. The project team is the same as that listed for 1980 (see above).

A Salvor's Report of Wreck form exists for 1981 (copy obtained from Mike Hall). The objects listed include 91 silver coins and 15 other objects. A copy of this form is reproduced on the DVD which accompanies this report.

### 1982 (No licensee's report)

An excavation licence was issued to Ken Simpson.

No areas are shown as excavated in 1982 on the 1987 plan of excavations (87/1). It seems likely that there was no excavation in this year.

### 1983

Diving was undertaken on 28 separate days in 1983. The report states that the team worked the equivalent of 87 eight-hour man days on the project in 1983, including support activities. An anchor was reported to the team by a sport diver, lying to the south west of the site. A search was made and the anchor was located (see plan of anchor location). The anchor stock was said to be pointing at the centre of the site. A drawing of the anchor is included in the report; this seems to show a



straight arm anchor with a shank length of about 3.8m. The report states that this anchor would have been from a vessel of about 350 tons.

Excavation continued in an area to the south of that excavated in 1981, and a plan showing the extent of the excavation in 1983 is included. The area shown is approximately 1.8m x 1m, a surprisingly small area to have produced such a large number of coins. Interestingly the report states that 'significant pieces of timber were ... found'. This is the only evidence we have that parts of the vessel may have survived. Explosives were used to break up large rocks lying over the area which was excavated. The report concludes with photographs of the finds, but unfortunately these are photocopies and so exhibit little in the way of detail.

Finds List from 1983 report	
No	Object
1598	Silver coins
1	Copper alloy dividers
1	Silver bottle top
1	Iron shot
1	Anchor fluke
2	Copper frags with rivets
2	Copper objects
3	Bronze objects
6	Lead or pewter objects
1	Brass object
Various	Frags of wood, iron nails and

The project team is the same as that listed in the 1980 report. However the only individuals named in the dive log for 1983 are K Simpson, M Hall and A Randall.

#### **1984**

No excavation was undertaken in 1984 due to high sand levels over the site.

#### **1985**

No excavation was undertaken in 1985 due to high sand levels over the site.

#### **1986**

Seven days' diving were accomplished. Renewal of the 'datum pitons' was undertaken in 1986. A small area (100 square feet) was excavated in 1986 to a depth of '3 to 5 feet'. The artefacts recovered were worn and in poor condition. The area excavated in 1986 is shown on the 1987 plan (87/1). The site plan accompanying the annual report shows the area excavated and four datum points (presumably the 'pitons' mentioned above).

Finds List from 1986 report	
No	Object
17	Silver coins
6	Pewter buttons
1	Silver bottle top
1	Brass buckle
1	Copper rivet
	Fragments of lead/pewter
1	Iron pin in concretion
	Pottery sherds

The report states that a magnetometer survey of the site was made. No targets were detected due to geological magnetic anomalies. No further details of the magnetic survey are given.

### 1987

Diving was undertaken on 17 separate days in 1987. This appears to be the last year that excavation took place on the site. The use of datum points is attested by the statement that 'renewal of datum pitons, driven into the surrounding reefs' was undertaken. These datum points (three in number) are shown on the accompanying site plans. A covering letter included with the licensee's report states 'We believe the site no longer warrants protection under the Wreck Protection Act... However if you decide not to de-schedule, the team would seek to be involved with any plans you may have for the site'. The team clearly believed that little more was to be found on the site.

Once again explosives were used during the excavations 'Some of the rocks in this area were rather large and one weighing over three tons had to be removed by the controlled use of explosives'.

Finds List from 1987 report	
No	Object
343	Silver coins
1	Brass rod – cask measure
1	Wood block sheave
2	Musket shot
1	Brass object – figure of eight shape
1	Brass object
1	Lead fragment
1	Bronze fragment
Various	Fragments of ceramic

Four site plans accompany the 1987 licensee's report. These are amongst the best evidence we have for the work undertaken on the site.

### Excavation Record (87/1)

This plan shows the areas excavated. Areas are marked for 1974, 1976, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1986 and 1987. Only one gun is marked on this plan.

### Coin Distribution (87/2)

This plan shows the density of coins found in each of the excavated areas. The plan states that the density shown is approximate. The densities shown are: over 30 coins per square metre, under 30 per metre, and individual coins. No guns are shown on this plan.

### Artefacts (87/3)

This plan shows where all the artefacts recovered in 1987 were found – with the exception of the coins. Two guns are shown on this plan.

### Condition of the Site (87/4)

This shows the nature of the seabed over the site in 1987. The categories shown are:

LS – Light sand up to 0.6m

SB – Small boulders and rocks

LB – Large boulders and rocks

HS – Border of heavy sand overburden 1m and over

NS – Area of reef and large rocks not surveyed

No details of the project team are given in the 1987 report. However, the dive log shows that K. Simpson, M. Hall and A. Randall dived in 1987. This appears to be the last year that any excavation took place on the site.

### **1988** (No licensee's report)

The designated wreck site licensee's reports viewed in Swindon (EH, The Engine House) contain a hand written note detailing a telephone conversation with Mr K Simpson stating that no work was undertaken in 1988 as there was '20 feet of sand over the site'.

### **1989**

No excavation was undertaken in 1989 due to high sand levels over the site.

The Archaeological Diving Unit (ADU) visited the site in August 1989 (ADU report 054). They reported that: 'No archaeological remains were visible during the ADU's visit because of the extensive sand cover'. The ADU undertook one dive of 72 minutes' duration.

### **1990**

No excavation was undertaken in 1990 due to high sand levels over the site. Mr K. Simpson stood down as licensee of the site; he recommended Mr Mike Hall as the new licensee and remained as a member of the dive team.

The ADU visited the site in May 1990 and undertook one dive lasting 29 minutes (ADU Report 059). They stated that they were not able to reconcile cultural material on the seabed with the site plan. They concluded that either the site plan was inaccurate or that material had moved on the seabed. The ADU also carried out a magnetometer survey of the site, which apparently revealed 'several consistent anomalies buried under sediment'. No further details of the magnetometer survey are given.

### **1991**

No excavation was undertaken in 1991 due to high sand levels over the site. Mr Mike Hall was the new licensee of the site.

### **1992**

No excavation was undertaken in 1992 due to high sand levels over the site. The ADU visited the site in August 1992 (ADU report 92/08), and undertook one dive on the site lasting 85 minutes. They stated that due to high sand levels no archaeological material was seen.

### **1993**

No excavation was undertaken in 1993 due to high sand levels over the site. The ADU visited the site in 1993 (ADU report 93/02) but no diving was undertaken due to high sand levels over the site.

### **1994**

No excavation was undertaken in 1994 due to high sand levels over the site. The report states that a list of all objects recovered from the site was in preparation and would be forwarded when completed. A finds list is included further in the file and is probably the list referred to in the licensee's report. This finds list is reproduced below: 'Finds List 1994'.

### **1995**

No excavation was undertaken in 1995 due to high sand levels over the site. An iron object, RC96/166 was recovered from the site in 1995, a drawing of which accompanies the report – it appears to be part of a chain plate. No find position for this object is given.

The ADU visited the site in July 1995 (ADU report 95/16) and dived on the site for 69 minutes. They did not see any archaeological material due to high sand levels.

### **1996 (No licensee's report)**

### **1997**

No excavation was undertaken in 1997 due to high sand levels over the site. The depth of the sand cover over the site was said to be reduced and was stated as 1m deep. The iron anchor was seen.

### **1998**

Despite the sand levels remaining low, no excavation was undertaken in 1998 due to unsettled weather. The iron gun was exposed.

The ADU visited the site in May 1998 (ADU report 98/04) and undertook one dive of 57 minutes' duration. They noted that 'No material that could be associated to the wreck was seen, though some intrusive modern steel debris was noted on the seabed'.

**1999**

No excavation was undertaken in 1999. The sand levels were reported to be low, and the iron gun was still exposed. The site datum 'pitons' were reported to be now missing.

**2000 - 2002** (No licensee's report)**2003**

The licensee was still Mike Hall. No work was undertaken on site due to high sand levels.

**2004**

No licensee activity on site

In August/September 2004 Wessex Archaeology visited the site (WA Designated Site Assessment, 2005). They undertook four dives on the site totalling 217 minutes underwater. They were unable to accurately locate the site due to high sand levels over the site. Working from existing site plans, they concluded that 'the site lies to the east of the centre, and close to the edge of the designated area'. They also searched for the anchor which lies to the south west of the site but were unable to locate it.

**2005**

No licensee activity on site.

**2006 – 20010**

No licence issued.

**2008**

In 2008 the author made a record of the finds from Rill Cove in the possession of Mr Mike Hall (EH 5392). These artefacts were measured, described and photographed. A total of 2166 objects were recorded, of which 2021 were silver coins. A copy of this record is contained on the DVD which accompanies this report. Some of the coins had been sold before the recording took place. Mr Hall stated that he intended to continue selling the silver coins recovered from the site.

**2011**

The licensee (Mark Milburn) reported that he had not yet dived on the site

**2012**

The licensee (Mark Milburn) reported that he had not yet dived on the site.

## The Site Plans

The site plans accompanied the various licensee reports. A total of 11 separate site plans were found, ranging in date from 1976 to 1995. These plans are all reproduced on the DVD which accompanies this report. A summary of the site plans appears below:

Rill Cove Site Plans		
Year	Title	Details
1976	Rill Cove Site	The areas where coins were found are indicated. Two guns are shown. An area labelled 'approximate limit of known wreck area' is indicated. Scale 1:500. The cliff edge, areas of reef and MLW are shown.
1981_1	1981	Shows the area excavated in 1981. Three control points are shown, along with reefs and MLW. No guns are shown on this plan.
1981_2	1980	Shows the area excavated in 1980. Three control points are shown, along with reefs and MLW. No guns are shown on this plan.
1983_1	Position of anchor	A photocopy of a section of the OS map with the position of the site and 'anchor' marked on it.
1983_2	Excavation 1983	Shows the area excavated in 1983 with the positions of the finds shown. Scale 1:500. Three control points shown. No guns shown.
1986	Excavation 1986	Shows the area excavated 1986. Four control points are shown, including one labelled 'new survey reference point'. The area of sand cover is indicated. Scale 1:500.
1987_1	Excavation Record	Shows the areas excavated in 1974, 1976, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1986 and 1987 (x5). Scale 1:150. One gun shown and three control points.
1987_2	Coin Distribution	Shows the density of coins retrieved from all the areas excavated. Scale 1:150. Three control points – no guns shown
1987_3	1987 Artefacts	Shows the locations of artefacts recovered in 1987. Two guns and three control points shown. Scale 1:150.
1987_4	1987 Condition of Site	This shows the nature of the seabed over the site in 1987. The categories shown are: LS – Light sand up to 0.6m SB – Small boulders and rocks LB – Large boulders and rocks HS – Border of heavy sand overburden 1m and over NS – Area of reef and large rocks not surveyed One gun and three control points shown. Scale 1:150.
1995?	Rill Cove Site	Shows the excavated areas – very similar to 1987_1. Marked on margin '1995?' But the latest feature shown is the 1987 excavated area. This plan was found loose and may be from 1987.

## The Photographs

Photographs were included in the 1976, 1981 and 1983 licensee reports. All the photographs (listed below) appear on the DVD which accompanies this report.

1976

The 1976 licensee's report contains two photographs of a breech-loading iron banded swivel gun, this appears to be the same gun as that on display in the Charlestown Wreck and Heritage Centre (CT147) and attributed to the Rill Cove. This is object number 29 in the 1994 finds list (see below).

1981

1. Title page to the photographs: 'The following photographs are of a selection of artefacts recovered during seasons up to and including the brief excavation of 1981'.

2. 'Large mass of concretion, bearing two coins and a well preserved cannon ball'

3. Shows 14 small objects – a brief list is included

4. a) 12 glazed ceramic fragments

b) Two pewter buttons

c) 10 small objects, a brief description of each is included

5. a) 3 objects

b) Copper alloy coin and silver eight-real with attached lead object

c) 11 coins

d) 11 coins

6. a) 11 coins

b) 4 coins

C) 10 coins

d) 14 coins

7. a) 2 (eight-real) silver coins

b) 5 pieces of sheet lead

1983

1. a) A group of about 30 objects from the 1983 excavations  
b) Silver bottle top (object 89 in the 1994 finds list)
2. A pair of dividers (object number 105 in the 1994 finds list)
3. a) Detail of the dividers (object 105)  
b) A detached anchor fluke (number 84 in the 1994 finds list)
4. a) 4 fragments of a 'brass' vessel  
b) 2 fragments of 'riveted' copper
5. Folded sheet lead (c.0.25x0.15m)
6. A half cannon ball (possibly object 58 in the 1994 finds list)
7. a) 7 fragments of sheet lead  
b) 2 fragments of 'cast copper'
8. a) 5 small fragments of timber (there are no fragments of timber listed in the 1994 finds list)  
b) 8 ceramic fragments

### **Finds Drawings**

Finds drawings were included in the 1983 and 1995 licensee reports. All the drawings (listed below) appear on the DVD which accompanies this report.

1983

Titled 'Rill Cove Anchor'. The drawing shows a straight-arm iron anchor with ring still in place. The drawing is 'signed' AJR 15.10.83

1995

1. This is an illustration from 'The Colonial Merchantman' (Susan Constant) page 101 showing how deadeyes are attached to the hull.
2. Wrought iron (object number 96/166) – possibly part of a chain plate and bolt.



## Finds List (1994)

This finds list is referred to in the 1994 licensee's report and was compiled by Mike Hall. The grid references given in the finds list refer to the grid squares shown on the 1987\_1 site plan. In some cases where the 'present location' of an object is cited as unknown, this is probably because the object has been sold – especially as all such objects are silver coins. This amounts to a considerable number of silver coins – 4464 silver coins have present location recorded as unknown in 1994. The total number of artefacts recorded in this finds list is 4556. Anthony Randall (a member of the licensed team) has 56 silver coins from this site in his possession, but he is not listed in the present location field of the finds list (the only entries are K Simpson, M. Hall, On Site and Unknown).

In 2008 all the artefacts still in the possession of Mr Hall were recorded as part of the Rill Cove Finds Record Project (EH5392). All the objects were photographed, measured and described as part of this recording project. In total 2166 artefacts were recorded. Mr Hall stated at the time that many of the silver coins had already been sold. The finds record and photographs from the 2008 recording project are included on the DVD which accompanies this report.

No	Date Found	Grid Reference	Nos	Material	Object Type	Description	Dimensions	Present Location
1	10/09/1974	G 24 B	1	Silver	Coin	Spanish, Philip (II) Mexico assayer O		K Simpson
2	10/09/1974	G 24 B	7	Silver	Coin	Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
3	10/09/1974	F 24 D - G 24 B	1	Iron	Cannon	Heavy corrosion and abrasion		On site - E 24 B
4	11/09/1974	G 24 D	19	Silver	Coin	Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
5	18/09/1974	J 23 B	3	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
6	19/09/1974	H 23 D	22	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
7	20/09/1974	H 24 C	21	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
8	21/09/1974	H 24 C	23	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
9	29/09/1974	H 24 A	28	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
10	30/09/1974	H 24 A	80	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
11	08/10/1974	H 24 D	1	Lead	Sounding Lead	Weight 11 lbs	405 x 50 mm	M Hall
12	09/10/1974	H 24 D	89	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
13	10/10/1974	H 24 B	47	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
14	11/10/1974	H 24 B	53	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
15	26/10/1974	H 25 A	10	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
16	27/10/1974	H 25 A	62	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
17	15/11/1974	G 25 C	8	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
18	16/11/1974	G 24 D	34	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
19	17/11/1974	G 24 D	30	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
20	17/11/1974	G 24 D	1	Lead	Shot	Musket or pistol shot	14 mm	M Hall

No	Date Found	Grid Reference	Nos	Material	Object Type	Description	Dimensions	Present Location
21	17/11/1974	G 24 D	1	Stone	?	Piece of foreign stone	20 x 15 mm	M Hall
22	08/06/1976	K 30 C	1	Lead	Sounding Lead	Weight 6 lbs	265 x 50 mm	M Hall
23	08/06/1976	K 30 C - K 30 D	4	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
24	09/06/1976	K 30 B - K 30 A	20	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
25	11/06/1976	J 30 A - J 30 C	36	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
26	11/06/1976	J 30 A	1	Silver	Coin	Philip (III) 8 reales Seville Assayer B		M Hall
27	11/06/1976	J 30 A	1	Copper	Ingot	Copper ingot, plano-convex, weight 19.25 lbs	215 x 70 mm	M Hall
28	12/06/1976	J 30 D - J 30 B - J 29 B	34	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
29	28/08/1976	H 30 D - H 30 B	1	Iron	Cannon	Iron cannon, swivel breech-loading, banded		Charlestown Museum
30	28/08/1976	H 30 D	1	Lead	Bottle Seal	Lead bottle seal	35 mm Dia	M Hall
31	28/08/1976	H 30	32	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
32	29/08/1976	H 30 A	1	Pewter	Button	Pewter dress button	14 mm Dia	M Hall
33	29/08/1976	H 30 A	1	Pewter	Button	Pewter dress button	14 mm Dia	M Hall
34	29/08/1976	H 30 A - H 30 B	20	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
35	30/08/1976	H 29 B - H 29 D	5	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
36	30/08/1976	H 29 B	3	Lead	Sheet	Pieces of lead, un-identifiable	30 x 20 mm	M Hall
37	30/08/1976	H 29 B	2	Lead	Shot	Musket or pistol shot	20 x 10 mm	M Hall
38	31/08/1976	G 30 D - G 30 C - G 29 D	21	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
39	01/09/1976	G 30 A - G 30 B - G 31 C	12	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
40	02/09/1976	H 31 A - H 31 C - H 31 D	16	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
41	04/05/1980	G 25 - G 26 - G 27 C	15	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
42	06/05/1980	H 26 A - H 25 B - H 25 A - H 25 C - J 25 A	50	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
43	07/05/1980	J 25 B - H 25 D - H 26 C	12	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
44	10/05/1980	H 26 D - H 26 B - H 27	45	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
45	12/05/1980	H 28 C - J 28 A - J 27 B - J 27 A	19	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
46	19/05/1980	J 27 A - J 26	20	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
47	04/06/1980	J 26 D - K 26 B - K 27 A	20	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
48	05/06/1980	K 26 D - K 27 G	5	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
49	02/07/1980	L 26 B - L 27 A - L 27 B - L 26 D	8	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown

No	Date Found	Grid Reference	Nos	Material	Object Type	Description	Dimensions	Present Location
50	03/07/1980	L 26 C - L 25 D - L 26 A - L 25 B	20	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
51	10/07/1980	K 26 C - K 25 D - K 25 B - K 26 A - J 25 D	53	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
52	15/07/1980	J 25 C - K 25 - K 24 B - J 24 D - J 24 B - H 24 D	59	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
53	16/07/1980	H 24 D - H 24 C - H 23 D - J 23 - J 22 B	152	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
54	16/07/1980	J 22 B	1	Iron	Bar Shot	Part remnant of bar shot	?	M Hall
55	01/09/1980	J 22 D - K 23 A - K 22 B - K 22 D - K 23 C	65	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
56	02/09/1980	K 23 - K 24	285	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
57	03/09/1980	L 23 - L 24 - L 25 A - L 25 C	308	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
58	04/09/1980	L 23 D	1	Iron	Cannon Ball	Part remnant small iron cannon ball	?	M Hall
59	04/09/1980	L 23 D	1	Lead	?	Piece of lead, un-identifiable	29 x3 mm	M Hall
60	25/09/1980	L 23 C - L 22 D - M 22 - N 22 B	61	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
61	26/09/1980	M 23 - M 24 A - M 24 B - M 25 A	265	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
62	30/09/1980	M 24 D - M 24 C - N 24 A - N 24 C - N 23	160	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
63	01/10/1980	J 22 B - J 22 A - H 22 - H 23 C - H 23 A	34	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
64	01/10/1980	H 22 A	3	Lead	?	Pieces of lead, un-identifiable	160 x 130 mm	M Hall
65	01/10/1980	H 22 C	2	Lead	?	Pieces of lead, un-identifiable	48 x 20 mm	M Hall
66	02/10/1980	H 21 B	1	Copper Alloy	?	Piece of brass, un-identifiable	48 x 32 mm	M Hall
67	02/10/1980	H 21 B - G 22 - F 22 C	14	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
68	18/10/1980	F 21 C - F 21 B - E 21 D - E 22 - D 22 - D 23 C	11	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
69	19/06/1981	D23 B	2	Lead	Shot	Musket or pistol shot		M Hall
70	20/06/1981	D 23 B	20	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
71	23/06/1981	D 24 A	5	Lead	?	Pieces of lead/pewter, un-identifiable		M Hall
72	24/06/1981	D 24 A	2	Lead	?	Pieces of copper, un-identifiable		M Hall
73	25/06/1981	D 24 A	50	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown

No	Date Found	Grid Reference	Nos	Material	Object Type	Description	Dimensions	Present Location
74	29/06/1981	D 24 B	1	Copper Alloy	Disk	Small brass disc - possible medallion	21 mm Dia	M Hall
75	30/06/1981	D 24 B	3	Iron	Nail	Small sections of iron nail casts		M Hall
76	30/06/1981	D 24 B	1	Composit	?	Fragments of wood, leather and ceramic		M Hall
77	30/06/1981	D 24 B	21	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
78	17/06/1983	G 27 C	3	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
79	18/06/1983	G 27 B	14	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
80	19/06/1983	F 28 C - F 28 D - F 29 C - F 29 A	28	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
81	22/06/1983	G 29 A - G 28	62	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
82	23/06/1983	G 28 D - G 28 C	55	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
83	24/06/1983	G 27 D - G 27 A	35	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
84	24/06/1983	G 27 A	1	Wrought Iron	Anchor	Anchor fluke		M Hall
85	25/06/1983	G 27	33	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
86	26/06/1983	F 27 D - F 27 B - F 28 A - F 29 A	31	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
87	26/06/1983	F 27 D	1	Copper Alloy	?	Piece of bronze - handle shape	64 x 40 mm	M Hall
88	27/06/1983	E 28 C - E 28 A - E 27 B - E 27 D	20	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
89	27/06/1983	E 27 D	1	Silver ?	Bottle Top	Silver/Pewter bottle top	31 x 61 mm	M Hall
90	03/07/1983	E 27 A - D 27 A	21	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
91	03/07/1983	D 27 A	1	Copper Alloy	Sheet	Small piece of copper with brass rivet	73 x 36 mm	M Hall
92	03/07/1983	D 27 A	2	Lead	?	Small pieces of lead/pewter, un-identifiable	90 x 46 mm	M Hall
93	04/07/1983	D 26 B - D 26 D - E 27 A	41	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
94	06/07/1983	E 26 B - D 26 C	28	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
95	06/07/1983	D 26 C	1	Composit	?	Fragments of wood, ceramic and iron nails		M Hall
96	06/07/1983	D 26 C	1	Copper Alloy	Sheet	Small piece of copper with brass rivet	52 x 37 mm	M Hall
97	07/07/1983	E 26 C - E 26 D	47	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
98	07/07/1983	E 26 D	2	Lead	?	Small pieces of lead/pewter, un-identifiable	215 x 30 mm	M Hall
99	27/07/1983	E 26 D - E 27 C	57	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
100	28/07/1983	F 26 A - F 26 B	78	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
101	28/07/1983	F 26 B	1	Copper Alloy	?	Small piece of brass, un-identifiable	45 x 30 mm	M Hall

No	Date Found	Grid Reference	Nos	Material	Object Type	Description	Dimensions	Present Location
102	28/07/1983	F 26 B	1	Copper Alloy	?	Small piece of bronze un-identifiable	70 x 50 mm	M Hall
103	30/07/1983	F 26 B - F 26 D - F 27 C	102	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
104	04/08/1983	F 26 D - F 26 C	68	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
105	04/08/1983	F 26 B	1	Copper Alloy	Dividers	Ships dividers - brass	114 x 27 mm	M Hall
106	04/08/1983	F 26 A	2	Copper Alloy	?	Small pieces of copper, un-identifiable	49 x 20 mm	M Hall
107	05/08/1983	G 26 B - G 26 A	281	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
108	06/08/1983	G 26 A - G 25 B - G 25 A - F 25 D	351	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
109	06/08/1983	G 25 C	1	Iron	Cannon Ball	Small iron cannon ball		M Hall
110	07/08/1983	F 25 D - F 25 C - F 25 B	138	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
111	08/08/1983	G 25 A - D 25 C - D 25 B	10	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
112	13/08/1983	F 25 A - E 25 C - D 25 A - D 25 C	37	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
113	13/08/1983	F 25 A	1	Copper Alloy	?	Small piece of bronze, un-identifiable	71 x 49 mm	M Hall
114	14/08/1983	E 25 D - E 25 B	43	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
115	14/08/1983	E 25 B	2	Lead	?	Small pieces of lead/pewter, un-identifiable	48 x 22 mm	M Hall
116	15/08/1983	E 25 C - E 25 A	15	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
117	02/07/1986	N 19 B	1	Pewter	Button	Pewter dress button	15 mm dia	M Hall
118	02/07/1986	N 19 B	1	Pewter	Button	Pewter dress button	15 mm dia	M Hall
119	02/07/1986	N 19 B	1	Ceramic	Pottery	Various pottery sherds		M Hall
120	02/07/1986	N 19 B	1	Silver	Coin	Silver coin, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
121	02/07/1986	M 20 C	1	Pewter	Button	Pewter dress button	15 mm dia	M Hall
122	02/07/1986	M 20 C	1	Ceramic	Pottery	Various pottery sherds		M Hall
123	02/07/1986	M 19 D	1	Pewter	Button	Pewter dress button	13 mm dia	M Hall
124	02/07/1986	M 19 D	1	Silver	Coin	Silver coin, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
125	03/07/1986	M 19 B	2	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
126	03/07/1986	M 19 A	1	Pewter	Button	Pewter dress button	15 mm dia	M Hall
127	03/07/1986	M 19 C	1	Copper Alloy	Buckle	Brass buckle	18 x 9 mm	M Hall
128	03/07/1986	M 19 B	1	Pewter	Button	Pewter dress button	15 mm dia	M Hall
129	03/07/1986	M 19 B	1	Lead	?	Small fragments of lead/pewter		M Hall
130	03/07/1986	M 18 B	1	Silver ?	Bottle Top	Silver/lead bottle top	35 x 57 mm	M Hall
131	09/07/1986	L 19 C	1	Copper Alloy	Rivet	Small copper rivet	12 x 7 mm	M Hall
132	09/07/1986	L 19 C	1	Iron	Pin	Iron pin in concretion		M Hall
133	12/07/1986	K 18	12	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
134	13/07/1986	K 19 A	1	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown

No	Date Found	Grid Reference	Nos	Material	Object Type	Description	Dimensions	Present Location
135	03/08/1986	K 20 D - K 20 B	1	Lead	?	Small fragments of lead/pewter		M Hall
136	12/06/1987	N 19 D - N 20 D - N 21 A	3	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
137	17/06/1987	N 20	1	Ceramic	Pottery	Small ceramic fragments		M Hall
138	03/07/1987	N 21	34	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
139	03/07/1987	N 21 D - N 22 A	1	Ceramic	Pottery	Small ceramic fragments		M Hall
140	04/07/1987	N 22	49	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
141	11/07/1987	P 22 B	2	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
142	21/07/1987	P 23 A	4	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
143	21/07/1987	P 23 A	1	Wood	Pulley Block	Wooden pulley block	100 dia x 18 mm	M Hall
144	21/07/1987	P 23 A	1	Ceramic	Pottery	Small ceramic fragments		M Hall
145	22/07/1987	P 24 A	1	Silver	Coin	Silver coin, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
146	23/07/1987	G 28 B - H 28 A	23	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
147	23/07/1987	G 28 C	1	Copper Alloy	Rod	Section of square brass rod	165 x 5 x 5 mm	M Hall
148	25/07/1987	G 28 D - H 28 B	19	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
149	25/07/1987	G 28 D	1	Ceramic	Pottery	Small ceramic fragments		M Hall
150	26/07/1987	H 28 C	17	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
151	05/08/1987	J 28 A - J 29 A	7	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
152	05/08/1987	H 29 A	1	Copper Alloy	?	Small bronze fragment, un-identifiable	32 x 29 mm	M Hall
153	05/08/1987	H 29 A	1	Lead	?	Small lead fragment, un-identifiable	35 x 30 mm	M Hall
154	05/08/1987	H 29 A	1	Ceramic	Pottery	Small ceramic fragment, un-identifiable		M Hall
155	05/08/1987	H 29 D	1	Copper Alloy	?	Small piece of brass, figure of eight shape	62 x 40 x 4 mm	M Hall
156	07/08/1987	E 22 C - E 22 A	15	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
157	08/08/1987	E 21	67	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
158	16/08/1987	E 20 - E 19 D	5	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
159	03/08/1987	F 20 - F 19 B - F 19 D	95	Silver	Coin	Silver coins, Spanish, Philip II or III		Unknown
160	30/08/1987	F 20 B	1	Lead	Shot	Musket/pistol shot	20 mm dia	M Hall
161	30/08/1987	F 19 B	1	Lead	Shot	Musket/pistol shot - With mould riser	20 mm dia	M Hall
162	30/08/1987	F 19 B	1	Copper Alloy	?	Brass fragment, 75mm, curved with lip	110 x 25 mm	M Hall
163	10/09/1974	G 24 B	1	Silver	Coin	Philip (II) 2 Reals - (Seville) Assayer (B)		K Simpson
164	10/09/1974	G 24 B	1	Silver	Coin	Philip (III) (2) Reals - Assayer (B)		K Simpson
165	11/06/1976	J 30 A	4	Copper Alloy	?	Brass casting	c. 30 x 30 mm	

## Archaeological Evidence

The site was discovered in 1975 by Mike Hall and Ken Simpson (Hall pers. comm.) while they were investigating the wreck of an iron trawler the *Kerris Reed* (wrecked 27.06.1968). They found a number of objects including iron guns and silver coins, all thought to date to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century.

The site is situated close to the cliff face in Rill Cove, on the west coast of the Lizard peninsula. The depth of seawater in the area of the site varies according to the depth of sand overlying the site – but is generally about 9m deep. In common with the other designated sites on the west coast of the Lizard, the site area is subject to varying sand levels. Large amounts of sand move on and off the site periodically, and the site often stays buried for years at a time. All work on the site is dependent on the amount of sand cover on the site. This makes survey in particular very difficult to plan. The site is also subject to material falling from the cliff face overlooking the site: ‘the cliffs of the area are very unstable and rock falls take place several times a year’ (1976 Licensee report).

The wreck at Rill Cove has never been identified. The original licensee, Ken Simpson, has speculated that it may be that of the fabled silver wreck of 1619. While the date is consistent with the finds recovered, there are some problems with this identification - the main one being that the Lizard silver wreck is recorded as carrying silver bars and coins, but no silver bars have been found from the Rill Cove Site.

The Shipwreck Index for South Cornwall, while unable to identify the vessel, lists the Rill Cove wreck as carrying a cargo of ‘silver coin/specie/plate, silver ingots/bullion’ and goes on to say ‘About nine years ago (17.08.1628) a ship from St Lucar was wrecked at the Lizard, laden with silver in bars and pieces of 8.. CSP.Dom,Ch I, Vol cxiii p258’ (Larn & Larn, B, 1995).

The Lizard silver wreck of 1619 is well attested: ‘About 1619 a Spanish ship with silver on board ... was wrecked on Lizard, and dwellers there, with Sir John Killigrew at their head, set about recovering it, threatening death to anyone who interfered (S.P.Dom. Jas I, cxiii,11)’ (Page, 1906, p.496).

It seems likely that we will never know the identity of the wreck at Rill Cove. The speculation that this is the wreck of the unidentified Lizard silver wreck of 1619 is of interest, but unlikely to be provable.

Excavation was undertaken on the site over a number of years and is explicitly mentioned in the licensee’s reports for the years 1974, 1976, 1980, 1981, 1983, 1986 and 1987. The last year that any excavation took place on the site appears to have been 1987. Interestingly, that year a covering letter with the licensee’s report states that ‘We believe the site no longer warrants protection under the Wreck Protection Act... However if you decide not to de-schedule, the team would seek to be involved with any plans you may have for the site’. The ‘conclusions’ section of the report goes on to say ‘It appears the excavations carried out this year show the extremities of the wreck site... No other artefacts of any significance appear to be left to recover’. The team clearly believed that little more was to be found on the site. The original licensee of the site, Mr Ken Simpson, stood down as licensee in 1990 and was succeeded by Mike Hall.

Excavation was accomplished using a reaction water dredge, and the 1980 report states that two water dredges were used simultaneously in the 1980 excavations. The use of explosives in dealing with large boulders is mentioned in the 1983 and 1987 reports ‘The area nearer the cliff face also contained many large boulders, one of which weighed an estimated 3-5 tons. These had to be removed by explosives, where necessary to fragment, and lifting bags’.

The site stratigraphy is recorded in two separate licensee reports (1976 and 1980). The 1976 report records the following stratigraphic sequence:

Site Stratigraphy 1976	
Depth	Composition
10 – 15 feet	Mobile sand
2 feet	Angular rocks and boulders
1.5-2 feet	Smooth rocks and boulders
No depth given	Discoloured sand containing artefacts

The 1980 report gives a different account of the stratigraphy encountered, and does not record the depths of the layers. The site plan (1987\_1) shows that the 1976 and 1987 excavations are not that far apart (about 2m separates them at their closest points), so it is surprising that such different stratigraphy was encountered.

Site Stratigraphy 1980
Rocks, sand and shingle
Rocks, sand, shingle and trawler wreckage
Rocks, sand, shingle and loose coins
Hard packed sand, shingle and rock, coins

The 1980 report goes on to say ‘The bottom layer was like concrete and coins were virtually cemented to it and highly corroded. All that was left of some of the coins was silver sulphide. We dug deep into this layer but found nothing. This suggests that it was the original seabed at the time of the wreck’. However by 1980 the team had excavated considerably more of the site than in 1976, so they had possibly gained a better insight into the stratigraphy by then.



The finds recovered from these excavations consist mainly of silver coins. Of the 4556 artefacts listed in the 1994 finds list only 86 are not silver coins. This is a very unusual set of finds, the wealth of silver coins and paucity of other objects being very marked. The date of this site is defined by the coin dates. The 1976 report states that ‘a number of coins all minted prior to 1618 have been found’. The 1981 and 1983 reports assign the recovered coins to the reigns of Philip II and III of Spain (1556-1598 and 1598-1621). The record made of the Rill Cove artefacts in 2008 states that the date range of the coins with legible dates (11 coins) was 1590-1606 (Camidge, 2008, p.6). Below is a summary of the 2166 objects from the site in the possession of Mike Hall in 2008.

Object name	Number
Anchor	1
Bell?	2
Bottle cap	3
Buckle	1
Button	8
Chain plate	1
Clenched bolt	1
Coin	2021
Dividers	1
Handle	1
Hook	1
Ingot	1
Measuring rod	1
Object	16
Peg	1
Pot	50
Rivet	5
Sheave	1
Sheet	32
Shot	5
Sounding lead	2
Stone	1
Vertebrate remains	1
Vessel	9
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2166</b>

Material	Number
Bone	1
Ceramic	50
Copper	1
Copper alloy	38
Glass?	1
Hemp?	1
Iron	5
Lead	34
Pewter	11
Silver	2020
Stone	2
Wood	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>2166</b>

*Summary of the finds from the Rill Cove site as recorded in the Rill Cove Finds Record project in 2008.*

Two of the artefacts recovered from this site are on display at the Charlestown Shipwreck Museum. These are the banded iron, chambered swivel gun (CT147, object number 29 in the 1994 finds list) and a silver coin (CT548). These objects were recorded and photographed as part of the Charlestown Shipwreck and Heritage Centre recording project undertaken in 2006 (Camidge, 2006).

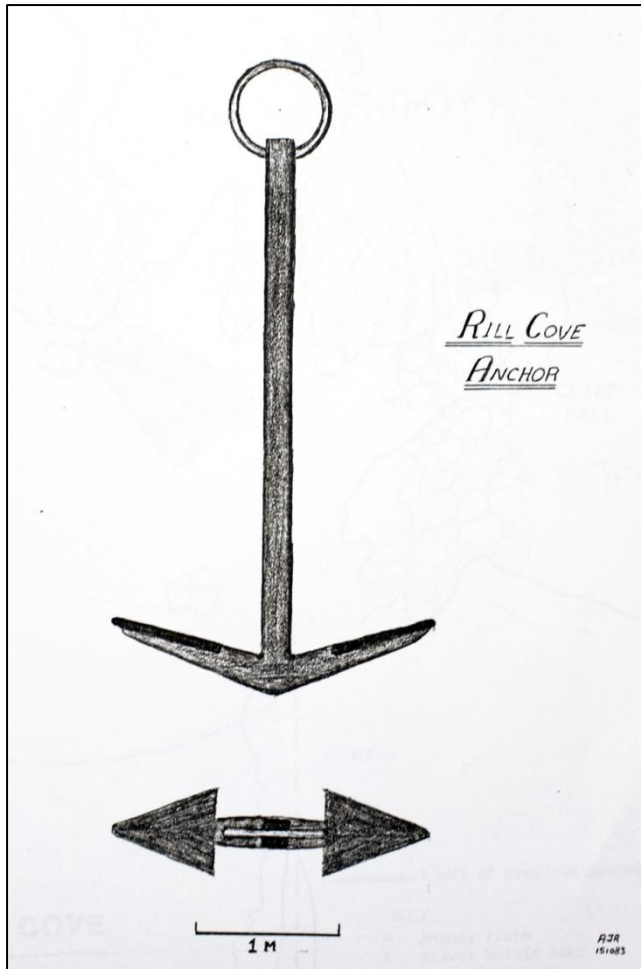
Very few organic artefacts have been recorded from the site; the 1994 finds list shows only (76) fragments of wood, leather and ceramic, (95) fragments of wood, ceramic and iron nails and (143) a wooden pulley block. This may suggest that conditions on the site are not conducive to the survival of organic remains.

The 1976 licensee's report notes three guns on the site: 'During this predisturbance survey two banded cannon and one cast iron cannon have been found'. The 1976 site plan only shows two 'cannon', but one banded, breech-loading swivel 'cannon' was on the list of objects recovered that year. This appears to be the same gun as that on display in the Charlestown Wreck and Heritage Centre and attributed to the Rill Cove. This gun was recorded and photographed in 2006 as part of the Charlestown Shipwreck Museum Recording Project, (object number CT147). The following account of the discovery of the Rill Cove site by Richard Larn perhaps explains how it got there:

'found by accident by Mike Hall and Ken Simpson alongside the remains of the motor fishing vessel wreck *Kerris Reed* which sank 1971-2. Roy Davis and I found the *Kerris Reed* and took out its bronze shaft and prop and other fittings, and helped Mike Hall and Ken Simpson remove the engine which they wanted for themselves. Later, whilst excavating around the hull looking for 'bits', Mike Hall found a pocket of silver coins (8 Reales) and deeper excavation found them in their hundreds. Whilst helping them, Roy Davis and I uncovered an iron breech-loader swivel gun, and Margaret Rule of Mary Rose Trust offered to have it conserved in the Portsmouth Hydrogen Reduction Unit at their cost if Mary Rose could have it on long-term loan for display. Charlestown Shipwreck Centre had not yet started, so we all agreed. About 1978, long after conservation completed and with a change in management at the Mary Rose Trust, someone rang me and said, 'We have an iron swivel gun here of yours we don't want, would you like it back'? It came back to Charlestown and went into the display and has been there ever since' (Camidge, 2006, p.20).

Eleven different site plans have been located; they fall into two distinct groups. Those drawn before 1987 all appear to be based on the 1976 site plan, topographic detail is identical with the addition of detail pertaining to the excavation undertaken in that particular year. The four site plans produced in 1987 show very different topographic detail and are obviously the result of a new survey. They also show a two metre grid over the site – this grid is the one used for the grid references in the 1994 finds list. The 1987 plan (1987\_1) is very useful in that it shows all the areas excavated on a single plan. It is clear from this plan that there are no significant gaps between the areas excavated; possibly one reason why the team thought the site no longer warranted designation in 1987.

The 1983 report details the finding of an iron anchor some distance from the site. A 'casual holiday diver' informed the team of an anchor lying off Rill headland 'well away from the site'. The anchor was located by the team after two days of searching, and is shown on a location plan in the 1983 report approximately 140m to the south-west of the site. The report goes on to say 'its dimensions indicate a vessel of about 350 tons'. The anchor stock was reported to be pointing towards the centre of the site. A drawing was made of the anchor (fig 11 below) which shows a straight arm anchor with the intact anchor ring still in place – the approximate dimensions (scaled from the drawing) give a stock length of c. 3.8m and a distance bill to bill of c. 2.3m. This type of anchor is broadly consistent with a vessel date of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The estimation of the vessel size, no doubt derived from one of the many tables of anchor sizes for vessels, should be treated with caution as we have no way of knowing which anchor this was (ie sheet, bower etc). There is also no guarantee that this anchor is from the same vessel as that in Rill Cove.



*Fig 2*  
*A straight arm anchor found about 140m south west of the site. Drawn by Anthony Randall and reproduced in the 1983 licensee's report.*

No articulated ship structure has ever been reported, and indeed the finds lists show very little pertaining to the vessel itself. The only exceptions to this are (84) an anchor fluke, (75) three iron nails, (132) an iron pin or bolt and (143) a wooden pulley block – all object numbers are those used in the 1994 finds list. There is also the anchor found to the south-west of the excavated area which could be associated with the site (fig 2). In the 1983 licensee's report timber is reported - 'significant pieces of timber were ... found' - but no further details were given and the timber does not appear on any of the surviving site plans or finds lists.

We know that from very early on in this project silver coins have been sold (Hall pers. comm.). The disparity between the number of artefacts recorded on the 1994 finds list (4556) and those recorded in 2008 (2166) amounts to 2390 objects, all of which were silver coins. The whereabouts of these coins is now unknown. Furthermore, Mike Hall continues to sell silver coins recovered from this site. It seems clear that the best record we will ever have of the artefacts recovered from this site is the Rill Cove Finds Record, commissioned by English Heritage in 2008; this includes a description, measurements and photographs of each object then in the possession of Mr Hall.

Ex licensee Mike Hall has stated that there are no records of the work undertaken by him and Ken Simpson other than the information contained in the licensee's reports and the site plans. He has also stated that they have no plans to produce any further reports or publications for the site.

# Assessment of Importance

## Introduction

### Period

Although the identity of the wreck at Rill Cove is not known, the date of the loss is fairly secure based on the dates of the silver coins recovered. This site is dated to the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, probably around 1610.

### Rarity

We do not know what type of vessel the Rill Cove wreck was. Almost nothing of the fabric of the vessel has been found. A warship is unlikely due to the small number (three) and small size of the guns found on the site. The most likely type of vessel represented here is a lightly armed merchantman. The very large number of silver coins recovered from the site is unusual.

### Documentation

As the identity of the wreck has not been established, there are no contemporary documentary sources relating to the site. There are archaeological documents relating to the excavation and survey of the site between 1975 and 1987. These documents consist of licensees' reports, site plans and finds lists. A record was also made of artefacts recovered from the wreck in the possession of Mike Hall in 2008.

### Survival/Condition

The largest collection of material from the site is in the possession of Mike Hall. However this collection consists mainly of silver coins. Sale of these coins began as early as 1977 and continues to this day. The site itself was last excavated in 1987, and little has been seen on the site since that date.

### Vulnerability

The site is subject to variable depths of sand cover, which is moved onto and off the site by natural forces. However, when the sand cover is low or absent the site is susceptible to storm damage. Parts of the site may be covered by rock falls originating from the cliffs adjacent to the site.

### Diversity

### Potential

The site may be of interest to numismatists. It may be possible to undertake a study of the silver coins from the site by studying the detailed photographs which form a part of the 2008 Rill Cove Finds Record. There is always the chance that more of this site will be exposed by exceptional storm action.

## Assessment of Impacts

### Previous Disturbance

We do not know if there was any contemporary salvage on the site as the wreck has not been identified. However, if this is the Lizard silver wreck then contemporary salvage was certainly undertaken – and is well documented.

Excavation licences were issued for this site under the Protection of Wrecks Act between 1977 and 2001. We know that excavation took place between 1974 and 1987, and the position of the areas excavated is shown on the site plan for 1987 (1987\_1).

The position of the site against the cliff face in Rill Cove and the relatively shallow depth of the site mean that it has been subject to damage and dispersion by storm damage since the wreck occurred in the early years of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

### Site Environment

The most striking environmental factor affecting this site is the varying sand levels over its area. Large amounts of sand move on and off the site periodically, and the site often stays buried for years at a time. However, when the site is not covered in sand it is probably vulnerable to storm damage due to its relatively shallow depth.

The site is overshadowed by steep cliffs on the north side. The seabed has rocky reefs, especially to the east and west of the site (see plan 1987\_1). The amount of these reefs that shows on the seabed will depend on how much mobile sand overlies the site at any given time. These differing sand levels will change the appearance of the site markedly.

### Future Threats

The most obvious future threat to the site is that of storm damage on the occasions when the site is not covered with a substantial layer of sand. Storms may have the effect of destabilising the site. However, at least part of the site probably lies beneath rock falls from the cliff face to the north of the site.

The threat from unauthorised diving on the site is very hard to quantify, but to date there have not been any reports of unauthorised diving on the site.

## Recommendations

The last excavation on this site took place in 1987 – that is now (2013) 26 years ago. The frequent rock falls from the cliff face mentioned in the 1976 report have probably deposited tons of large boulders over the site by now. The fact that the team had to use explosives to remove these large boulders demonstrates that they are not easily moved by the sea. It therefore seems likely that at least part of the site may now be covered by material which has fallen from the cliff face. However, shifting sand levels and exceptional storms could still conceivably expose parts of this site at some time in the future. For this reason those applying for licences to visit the site should be encouraged to report on the condition of the site and to watch for newly exposed material, especially at times when the sand levels on the site are low.

The artefacts recovered from this site are predominantly silver coins. These consist of eight, four and two real pieces minted during the reigns of Philip II and Philip III of Spain. Well over 4000 silver coins were recovered, many of which have since been sold. The Rill Cove Finds Recording project undertaken in 2008 made a record of 2021 coins which remained at that time. It is recommended that a coin expert be asked to comment on this remarkable collection of coins – The 2008 recording included detailed photographs of all the coins and may allow something useful to be said about this group of objects.

When Wessex Archaeology visited the site in 2005 they were unable to find the large iron anchor which lies some 140m to the south west of the site. This anchor lies on rocks and is not subject to covering by the mobile sand which periodically inundates the site. A useful small project would be to relocate this anchor, fix its position accurately and make a record of it.

The iron gun which is still on the site should be recorded – there is no record of its dimensions in any of the licensees' reports. An accurate set of measurements, photographs and a good GPS position for the gun should all be obtained. This gun is usually exposed during partial sand cover, but is not visible during the deepest sand inundations.

There seems to be little chance that this site will ever be properly written up. The silver coins which form the bulk of the artefacts from this site have been, and continue to be, sold. None of the team which actively excavated this site are currently licensees. Nevertheless, encouragement should be given to Mike Hall and Ken Simpson to report on the excavation they undertook on this site.

## Contents of the DVD

### Contractor Visits

#### ADU

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#### Wessex Archaeology

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### Designation (SI)

### Finds Drawings

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### Finds List (1994)

### Finds Record 2008

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Finds Record

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### IJNA

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### Licensee Reports

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### Photographs

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1981

1983

RoW (droits)

1975

1980 (x4)

1983

Sale of Coins

Site Plans

1976

1981

1983

1986

1987

1995?



## Bibliography

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