

CISMAS 2021 Scilly Project

This project was originally scheduled to take place in 2020, but had to be deferred until 2021 due to COVID restrictions. The project was funded entirely by CISMAS. Sadly, only one dive charter boat now operates in Scilly, although there were three just a few years ago. It is also apparent that prices have risen steeply in Scilly this year – some accommodation has doubled in price since 2019.

Four different historic wreck sites were visited this year: *Firebrand* (1707), *Empire* (1860), *Colossus* (1798) and the Wheel Wreck (c.1780) – only the last two are designated wreck sites.

The Dive Team

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Wheel Wreck

A single dive was undertaken on the Wheel Wreck. The cargo mound remains largely unchanged since we visited in 2019. It is, however, now covered by a considerable weed growth which makes the site less visible and thus less attractive to visiting divers. It is apparent that different types of seaweed grow on cast iron from those which live on wrought iron, and this might be worth further investigation.



These two pictures illustrate the luxuriant growth of seaweed on the cast iron of the cargo mound. On the left one of the iron sheaves, on the right the large geared flywheel rim [LW1].

A search to the north-east of the cargo mound was undertaken to locate the missing anchors of the vessel. This was a single swim-over by four divers (along a line orientated at 60 degrees magnetic) for a distance of 200m. Nothing was found, but we have established that the seabed is largely

composed of large boulders; hence small anchors might be hard to spot. A careful magnetometer survey of the area around the cargo mound is probably what needs to be undertaken next.



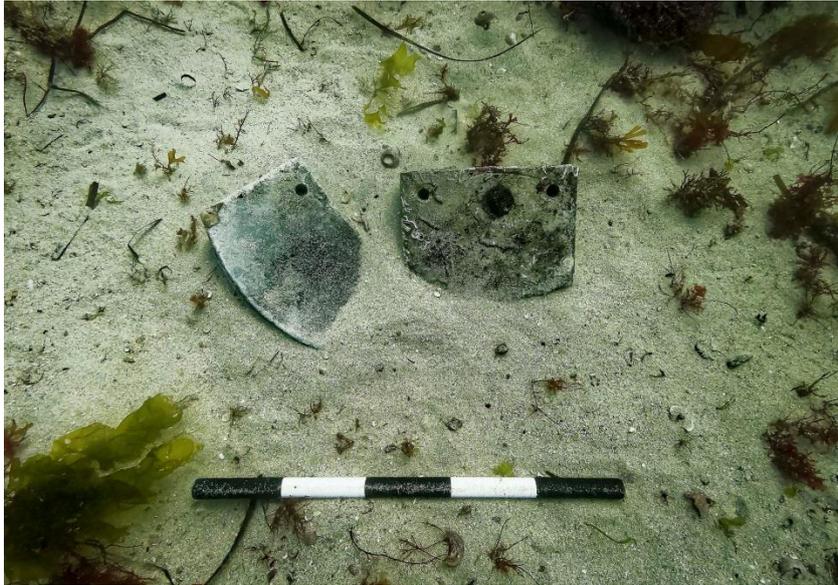
One of the two possible deck windlasses found to the south of the cargo mound [O5]. These were found in 2018, but we were able to get better photographs this year.

Colossus

We had a number of disparate objectives on *Colossus*, mainly concerned with searching for items and photographing the guns.

Early lead dive weights [C10-15]

A pair of identical, enigmatic lead objects had previously been found partly buried in the seabed, some 10m to the east of the stern of *Colossus*. These were recovered in 2019 and further investigation revealed that they were identical to the lead weights used by the Dean brothers in their early diving equipment (for further details see *Colossus Dive Trail Maintenance 7875*). We know that the Dean brothers salvaged materiel from *Colossus* in 1833, so it seems likely that they lost or abandoned the weights at that time. Each weighs 24.5kg (approximately half a hundredweight – 56lb). These items are now on display in the Historical Diving museum in Portsmouth. On one of the weights a circular black stain is visible, possibly indicating proximity to another metallic object. We therefore decided to make a detailed search of the seabed in the area where the weights were located; sadly, nothing was found.

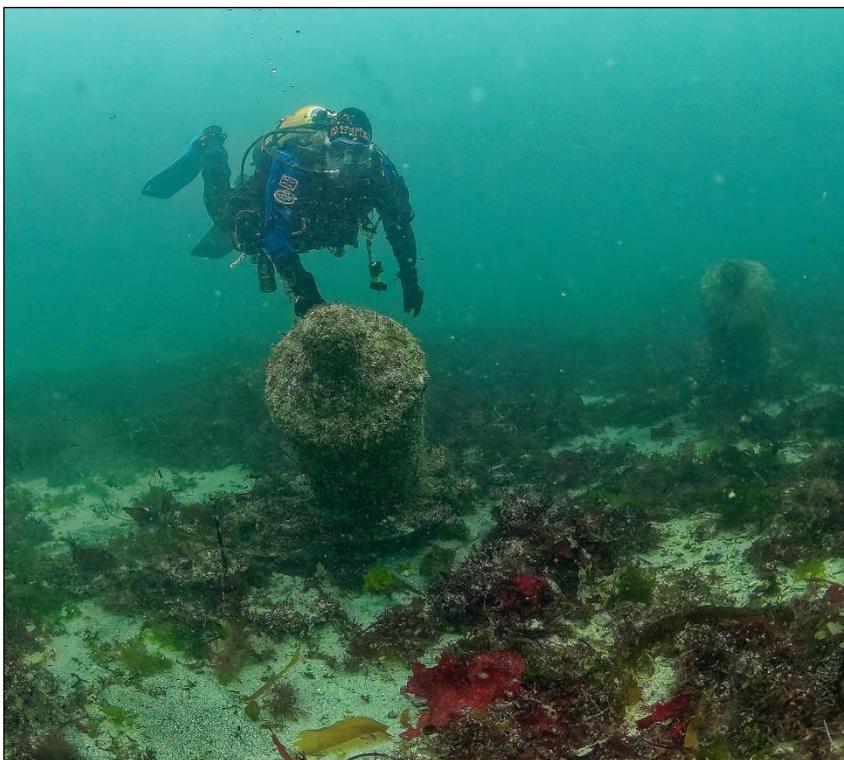


The pair of lead objects C10.15 on the seabed some 10m to the east of the stern of *Colossus*. Note the dark circular stain visible on the right hand weight.

Scale = 0.5m

Photography

After clearance of the loose weed which accumulates on the seabed around the guns, detailed photography was undertaken. For each of the five upstanding guns (G1- G5) a set of photographs was taken from 'standard' viewpoints: from the south, east, north, west and from above.



Gun 3

A view from the south showing G3 (with diver above) and G2 in the background.



EAST



SOUTH



WEST



NORTH



ABOVE

Gun 3

This set of photographs illustrates the five 'standard' views taken for each of the five upstanding guns on the *Colossus* 'stern' site. The full set of photographs will be published in the forthcoming *Colossus* 'omnibus' report.

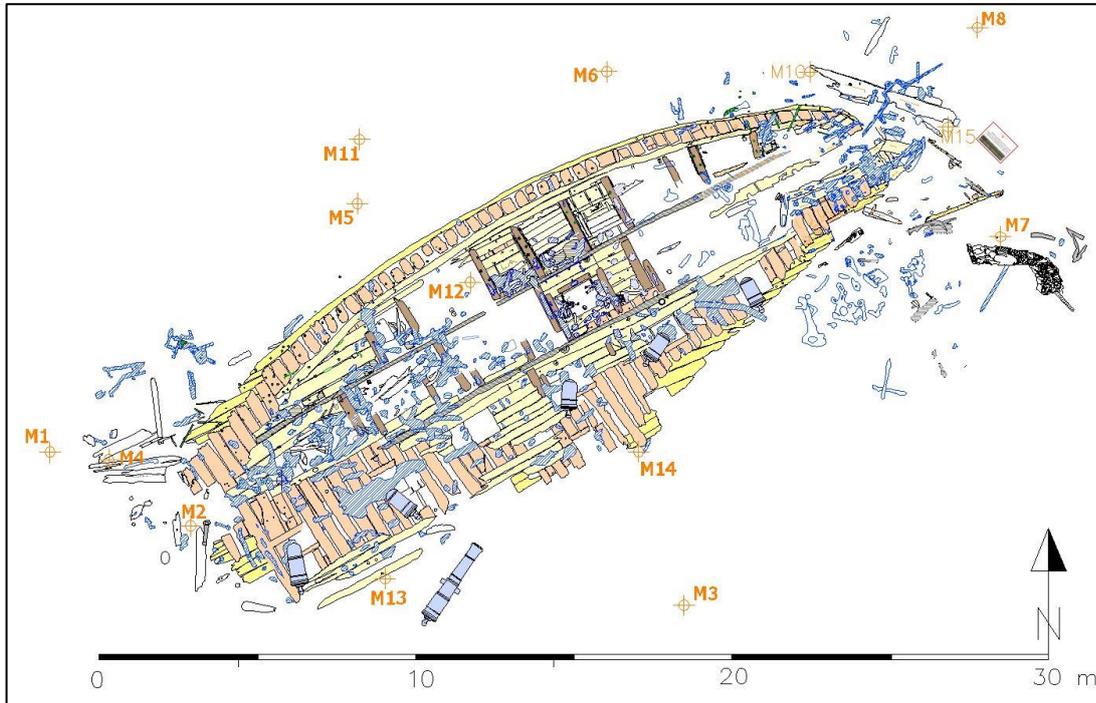
The rudder gudgeon

The iron rudder gudgeon which lies above the timber of the inner stern post. Note the dive station marker behind the diver.



Sediment level monitoring

The sediment levels on the wreck have been monitored since 2003. Measurements were taken on 13th September from all the monitoring points except M7, which is now missing.



The location of the 14 sediment level monitoring points (M1 to M8 and M10 to M15)

Mean Sediment Level Change

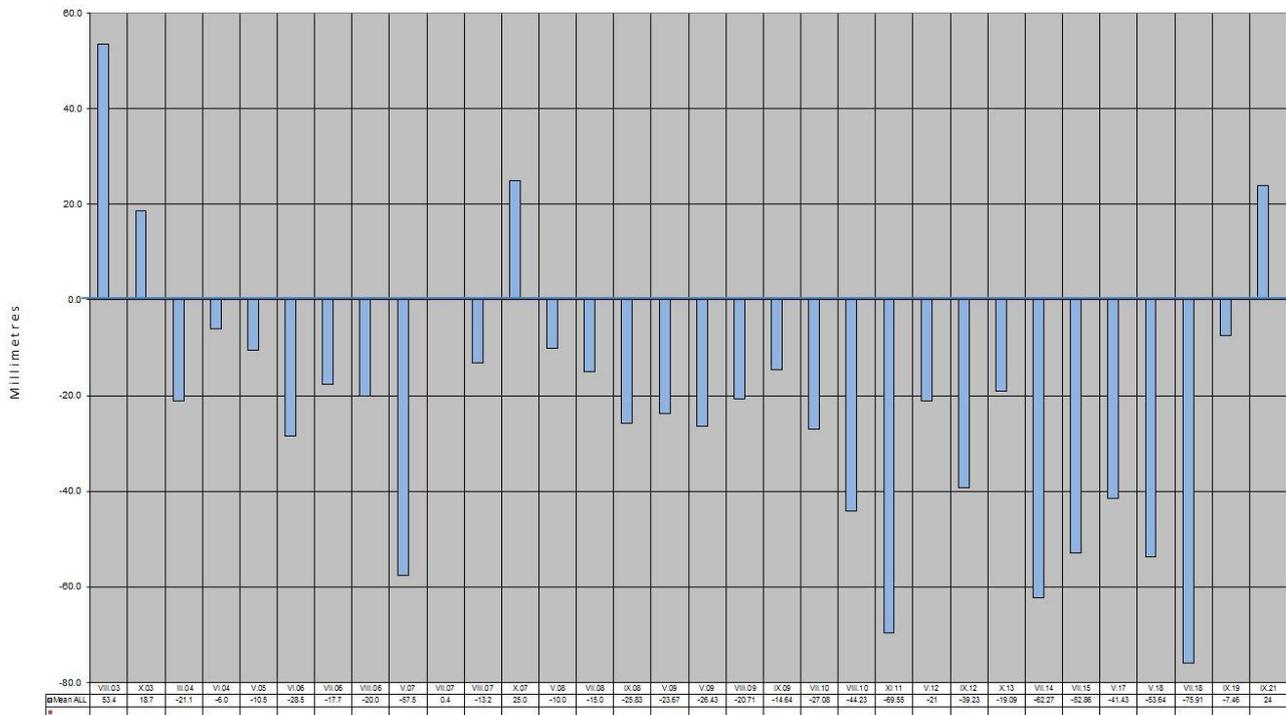


Chart showing the mean rise or fall of sediment measured at all sediment monitoring points

It is clear from the chart above that the sediment levels around the site have risen significantly over the course of the last three readings 2018,2019 and 2021; a similar rise is evident for the readings taken in 2007, after which the levels fell steadily again. However, even with the higher levels it is possible to see just how much higher the levels were historically – as illustrated by the photograph below.



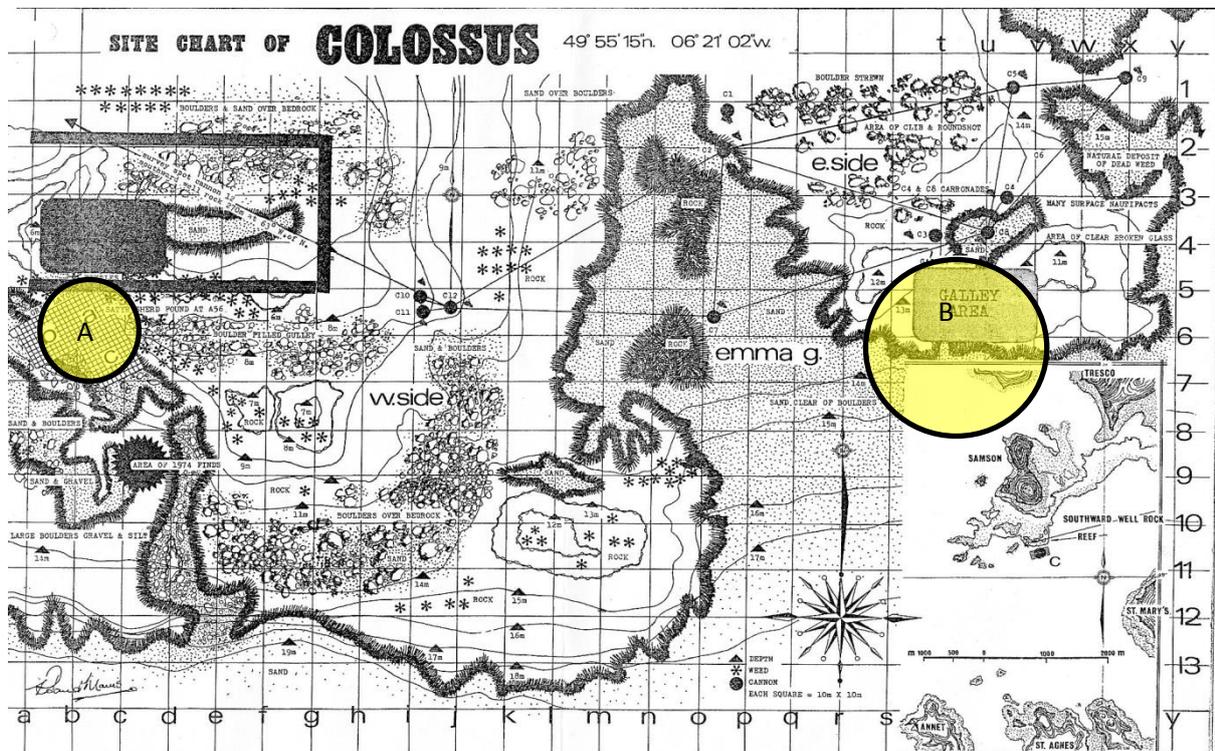
Gun 2

A illustration of the falling seabed sediment levels. Note the layer of iron concretion which has formed below the gun - arrowed. This probably occurred shortly after the wreck and indicates the historic seabed level, considerably higher than the seabed level now.

If monitoring of the sediment levels is to continue, some refurbishment/replacement of the monitoring points will be required in the near future.

Investigation of the area previously excavated by Roland Morris

A recent review of the archives relating to the work carried out by Roland Morris on the site 1975-1981 has resulted in some doubts concerning the perceptions of where Morris was actually working. To this end, a number of exploratory searches were undertaken.



The first of these was in the area where Morris first located the Hamilton pottery, the yellow circle marked 'A' on Morris' chart above. The area was covered in thick kelp, but the water depth encountered was consistent with the depths shown on the Morris chart. No artefacts were observed.

The second search was conducted in the area Morris thought was the ship's galley marked 'B' on the chart above. He based this galley interpretation on pieces of smoke-blackened marble found by his divers. These are probably associated with material allegedly removed from Villa San Marco near Naples by Hamilton and placed on board *Colossus*. We did not locate any marble but the seabed topography and water depth accorded well with those recorded on the Morris plan – especially the edge of the reef shown on the Morris plan in the southern half of search area 'B'.

One final search, of an area located about 100m to the north of search area B, was undertaken. This area proved to contain iron concretions, pottery, lead sheeting, glass and iron shot and is probably worthy of further investigation. Some samples of pottery were recovered from this area, and will be sent for expert appraisal once desalination is complete. This pottery has been declared to the receiver of wreck (ref 193/21).



The recovered pottery fragments currently undergoing desalination

Kevin Camidge 7.X.2021