

PHILIP ROBERTSON (HISTORIC SCOTLAND) – ARGYLL AND BUTE

July 26, 2013 Historic Environment Scotland Day of Archaeology 2013, Maritime Archaeology #myarchaeology, archaeologist, Archaeology, Duart Castle, Historic Scotland, maritime archaeologist, maritime archaeology, Maritime history, RCAHMS, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, Scotland, Shipwreck, Underwater archaeology

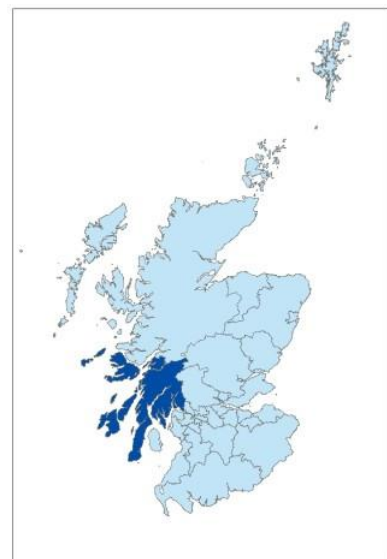


*Philip
Robertson,
Historic
Scotland*

I'm Philip Robertson. I work in the Scheduling, Marine and Battlefields team within Historic Scotland, and am responsible for operational management of the Scheduling programme, and leadership of Historic Scotland's work in protecting and managing marine archaeological heritage, in particular through designation of Historic Marine Protected Areas.

As befits the interests of a maritime archaeologist, I have chosen a shipwreck! The wreck of what we believe was a small oared warship belonging to the Marquis of Argyll, *the Swan*, was lost at the S entrance to the Sound of Mull during an attack on Duart Castle by Cromwellian forces in September 1653.

The *Swan* was discovered by a Royal Navy diver around 1979, who brought it to the attention of the University of St Andrews. The site is a particular favourite of mine as I took part in the investigations of the wreck which took place between 1991 and 2003, led by Dr Colin Martin. The excavations revealed the well-preserved structure of a wooden vessel, including the collapsed stern, comprising the bottom part of the rudder, sternpost



*Argyll and Bute 'Contains
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and associated components detached from the keel; the lower hull, comprising frames, inner and outer planking, and mast-step; and the less well-preserved remains of the collapsed bow.

The team also discovered a wide range of artefacts, including carved decorative features from the ship, rigging, small arms and one small cannon with carriage, silver coinage, ceramics, navigational equipment, galley remains, personal effects, the bones of one human being, as well as plant, animal and fish remains.



*Wooden carved cherub in situ at the wreck off Duart Point, by the Archaeological Diving Unit (ADU)
Copyright RCAHMS (SC1127028)*

Today, divers are welcome to visit this site and see guns and anchors on the seabed, but the remaining sections of the hull are protected under sandbags and sediment that are helping to stabilise the environment around the wreck. As the site is legally protected, visitors must not disturb the wreck or remove artefacts without permission.

Educational tours are organised through the nearby Lochaline Dive Centre, but if you're not a diver, you can still enjoy a visit to Duart Castle

where you will find an exhibition about the wreck. There is also an interpretation panel on the promontory next to the site.

What interests me most about the *Swan* is that it shows that Scotland's underwater heritage can be just as rich and significant as our heritage on land. With the aid of scuba equipment and the traditional skills of the archaeologist, underwater archaeology can contribute just as much to our knowledge of the past as the very best archaeological investigations on land.

The online record for the *Swan* held at RCAHMS, was recently upgraded as part of a partnership between RCAHMS and Historic Scotland, aimed to enhance and promote information on the marine historic environment. More information about [Project Adair can be found on the RCAHMS website](#) including the full project reports.



General Plan of the Duart Point wreck site at the close of the 2003 excavations, By Drs Colin and Paula Martin. Copyright RCAHMS (DP151172)

This is what I've chosen for Day of Archaeology, but why not tell us your favourite archaeological sites in Scotland on Twitter using [#MyArchaeology](#).