

The Goodwin Sands Education Project

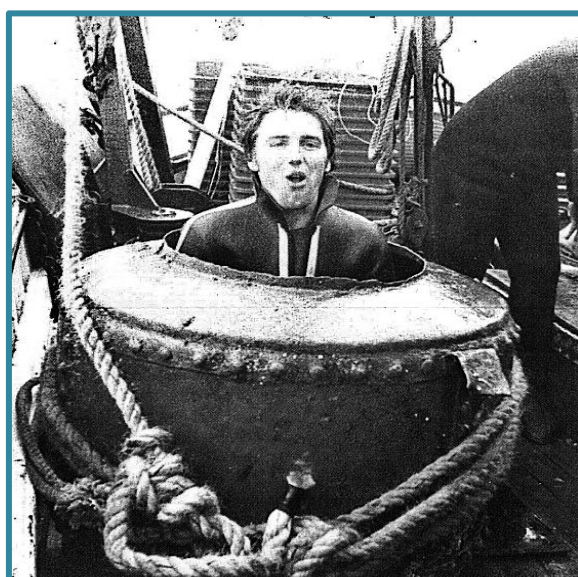
Shipwrecks and Treasure

Doug and Dan were two friends whose favourite hobby was diving the Goodwin Sands looking for shipwrecks and treasure. There are over 2,000 recorded wrecks on the Sands although most of them have disappeared into the sandy seabed. Dan had an older brother called Bob who also enjoyed diving and taught Dan everything he knew - well, nearly everything as everyone must keep some things secret.



One day Bob went out diving to investigate an area where fishermen had told him their nets were getting caught on something on the seabed. When Bob got down to the sea floor he couldn't believe his eyes - there lying right in front of him was the perfectly conserved wreck of a very old wooden warship. He could tell it was a warship by the gun ports in the sides, which he could swim through and the high poop deck at the aft (back) that he could walk on. Imagine being able to do that on a ship that has lain at the bottom of the sea for over 300 years!

Bob went straight home to tell Doug and Dan about his amazing find. Shipwrecks are incredible time capsules of our maritime and social history so the divers wanted to bring up as much stuff as they could for research and conservation. They managed to retrieve the ship's bell, a bronze Dutch cannon, a vast copper cooking pot, a leather hat and shoe sole, pewter mugs and plates, navigational instruments, pistols, onion (wine) bottles and even a candlestick with a finger still attached to it with wax!



The biggest object they brought up was a huge cast iron cannon and its gun-carriage. It took six men and a strong pulley to heave these up to the surface. They then had to be left in fresh water so they didn't dry out and fall to pieces after being in the sea for so long.

By some clever detective work the ship was eventually identified from the numbers stamped on the bronze cannon as being the *Stirling Castle*. She was one of four Royal Navy warships that sank on the Goodwin Sands during the Great Storm of 1703. Only about 70 of the 140 men on board that night survived after boats from Deal came out to rescue them, one of whom was Thomas 'Tatters' Atkins.

After finding the *Stirling Castle*, Doug and Dan were eager to look for more shipwrecks and they soon struck lucky! They found the wrecks of two more warships that sank during the Great Storm - the *Northumberland* which they identified from her big bell and what they think is the *Restoration*. Dan is often diving the *Northumberland* as he believes there are lots of interesting things still to be learned from the wreck.



Admiral Gardner and *Britannia* were two ships belonging to the East India Company that sank on the Goodwins on the same night during a storm in January 1809. Amongst their cargoes were coins (or tokens) to be used as currency in India. The *Admiral Gardner* carried bronze tokens and the *Britannia* carried silver ones.

In 1976 bronze tokens were discovered in sand dredged up from the Goodwins for building materials in Dover harbour and the wreck of the *Admiral Gardner* was discovered soon afterwards. Over one million tokens were retrieved from her and some of these and the barrels they were packed in can be seen at the Charlestown Shipwreck & Treasure Museum in Cornwall. The *Britannia* has never been found so her silver treasure could still be lying somewhere on the Goodwin Sands!



Activity: Are these statements true or false?

1. Most of the 2,000 shipwrecks have disappeared into the Goodwin Sands.....
2. When Bob first found the wreck, he could tell it was an old warship because of the gun ports he could see on the deck.....
3. The three divers couldn't pull the cannon and gun-carriage to the surface by themselves.....
4. They knew the name of the ship they had found because it was written on the side of the cannon.....
5. In total, the divers found four shipwrecks from The Great Storm of 1703.....
6. The bronze tokens found on the *Admiral Gardner* were kept in wooden chests
7. Divers are interested in finding the *Britannia* as she carries a huge cargo of silver coins.....
8. The divers believe that these shipwrecks will provide clues about what life was like for sailors at that time.....

Challenge: Highlight the evidence which proves each of these statements true or false.

