

## UNIVERSITY HELPS HERITAGE TRUST IDENTIFY SHIPWRECK

Divers from the University of St Andrews could be on the verge of solving one of the biggest mysteries in Scottish history as they embark on an expedition to the bottom of the River Forth. The team, which comprises of experts from the Archaeological Diving Unit, the School of Geography and Geosciences and the Burntisland Heritage Trust, hope to help finally prove whether or not a shipwreck discovered at the bottom of the Forth is the doomed baggage vessel of King Charles I, the *Blessing of Burntisland*.

Earlier this year, the wreck site was confirmed by the locally-based search team to be of a similar size and shape to the royal ferry that sank in 1633, laden with a priceless cargo of silver and jewels. [Dr Richard Bates](#) from the [School of Geography and Geosciences](#) believes that the expedition could clear up speculation over the shipwreck's identity. Dr Bates said, "The team will be using state-of-the-art sonar imaging techniques using equipment supplied by a number of manufacturers including Submetrix, Scantron, Coda and Earth Science Systems Limited, to examine the site. "As well as taking photographs and creating accurate charts, the wreck debris will be examined and the condition of the site recorded to assess its environmental stability. "By doing so, we hope to help prove or refute claims that the ship is the *Blessing of Burntisland*".

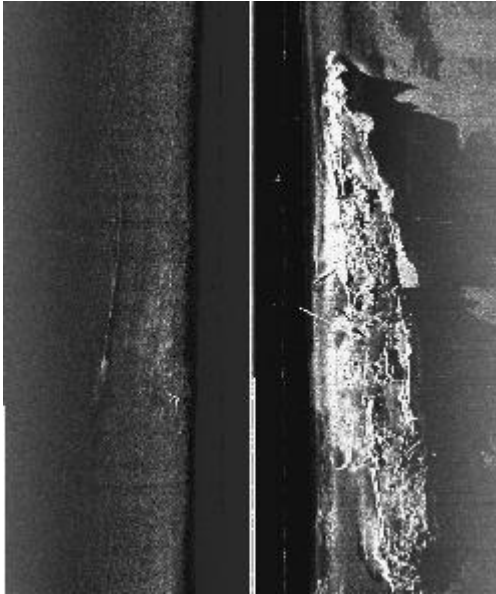
Mark Lawrence of the Archaeological Diving Unit added, "Standard archaeological dating techniques will be applied to the timber elements of the wreck so we can be sure that it falls in the correct time frame for the *Blessing of Burntisland*". The baggage ferry sank in a storm with the loss of 35 men shortly after being laden with the King's precious household items. King Charles I, who was on a coronation tour of Scotland, watched the ferry sink from the deck of his flagship, the *Dreadnought*. It is thought that the vessel may have been overloaded. The wreck has already been designated under the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973 because of its possible historical associations.

Relatively little is known about Charles I, one of Europe's most flamboyant monarchs, in the period immediately before the Civil War. The ADU, under contract to the Government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport, is responsible for examining wrecks protected under the Act on behalf of the Government. The Burntisland Heritage Trust has been established to ensure that the wreck is managed in a responsible way, and is now considering applying for lottery funding to further investigations of the wreck. Project Manager Ian Archibald said, "We are delighted with this support from the ADU. The project is now moving into a very exciting phase. When we collate all the data from this and earlier surveys, we will be able to submit a comprehensive report on the wreck site to Historic Scotland. "If the wreck is identified as the baggage ferry, the potential of the find will have huge positive impact for Burntisland and the community".

Progress of the project can be followed via the world wide web site, <http://www.kingcharles-wrex.xo.uk>. Alternatively, further information can be obtained from Alex Kilgour of the Burntisland Heritage Trust on telephone (01592) 655993.

### Other Wrecks in the Forth

A number of other wreck sites were surveyed during the search for the *Blessing of Burntisland* and include the *H.M.S. Campania*, an early paddle ship and a Grumman Avenger plane. The *H.M.S. Campania* was sunk in 1918 in collision with the *Revenge* in the Forth Estuary. The wreckage sits approximately 12.6m above seabed.



The 18000 ton Cunard Liner *H.M.S. Campania* was built in 1893 and was converted into an aircraft carrier during the first world war. At the end of the war she was moored off Burntisland with a number of other Royal Navy ships. During a storm on 5th of November, 1918 her anchor chain snapped and she drifted into several other ships including the *Royal Oak*, *Glorious* and *Revenge*. All her crew were saved. This is the largest ship sunk in the Forth.