

MEDIN sponsored work – digitising of dive tapes held at RCAHMS.

12 March 2015 Report

MEDIN generously funded the transfer of 163 dive tapes relating to 27 separate wrecks from camcorder and VHS formats to digital formats to secure the long-term preservation of unique dive records. The original tapes range in date from 1990 to 2001. RCAHMS has no mechanism of reading some of the tape formats (other than VHS) and a content list is based upon labels on the tapes and / or supporting documentation received on deposit.

The tapes were in 5 different formats: VHS (10), Audio Cassette (44), mini DV (69), and DAT (26) tapes.

The recording media is unstable and RCAHMS does not have in house expertise to preserve this analogue audio visual material or the equipment to view the tapes so the content is not accessible to the public. It was therefore important to secure the long term future of the contents of the tapes through transfer to digital format.

After a small procurement exercise where three quotes were sought, the contract to undertake the work was awarded to the BBC Post Production Unit. Over 153 hours of dive video have been transferred from 148 tapes to MP4 format over a three week period in February 2015. 15 tapes were not transferred as they were found to contain data rather than video content. The tapes were returned to RCAHMS on 12 March 2015.

A Catalogue entry for each of the digitised tapes will be created and will be published on Canmore once we re-launch the website later this Spring. (we are dependent on completion of the web redevelopment).

The digital recordings will be catalogued at item level through the Collections tables of the RCAHMS Staff database, linked to the relevant site record(s) and published on Canmore. It had been hoped to complete this task in time for submission of the report but the timescale for completing the digitisation of the tapes to claim the grant support proved too tight. The dive footage needs to be watched and possibly edited before online publication. Once catalogued and published online, RCAHMS will be able to publicise both its role as a MEDIN DAC and the collection through online newsletters: Archaeology Scotland and the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists Scottish and Maritime special interest groups.

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