

Long-lost Sanday Shipwreck saved for the future

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A huge freshwater tank will protect the wreck from decay and enable research into the origins of this remarkable ship.

Orkney Islands Council has received £79,658 from the National Heritage Memorial Fund to build a specialist tank to house the Sanday Shipwreck.

The tank will allow the wreck to be stored, fully submerged in fresh water on site, protecting it from deterioration for two to three years while further research is carried out into its identity and significance.

Image



The Sanday Shipwreck.

A missing piece of maritime history

The shipwreck captured the UK's imagination when it rose from the sands of Sanday, Orkney following winter storms in early 2024. While the history of the

ship is still to be uncovered, it is thought to be an internationally significant 17th century design, possibly of Dutch origin.

Speed was of the essence to secure the shipwreck's future. Nick Hewitt, naval historian and Culture Team Manager at Orkney Islands Council, said: "I don't think there is any doubt in anyone's mind that this is a remarkable wreck in uniquely good condition, possibly from what was one of the naval superpowers of the time.

"We're very grateful to the National Heritage Memorial Fund for their support, and for answering our call for help so quickly, so that we could act with speed to secure the wreck from further damage and enable the research it demands."

Image



Moving the timbers was a delicate task.

An exciting discovery

The wreck's timbers have now been transferred to the custom-designed tank, which was fabricated by Aberdeen-based Waterfront Stainless Steel at their Orkney workshop and features a roll-top lid to enable access for researchers and interested visitors by appointment.

Specialist archaeologists from Wessex Archaeology, who advised the community on early conservation and recording of the wreck, were on hand to supervise the painstaking operation of lifting the wreck into its temporary home.

Dr Simon Thurley CBE, Chair of the National Heritage Memorial Fund, said: “The Sanday shipwreck is an exciting discovery, but many questions remain about where, and when, it originates. We are pleased to award this funding to Orkney Islands Council to protect and preserve the shipwreck, ensuring its survival and the chance for future research to determine its place in our maritime history.”

Saving the UK’s heritage

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