

# A step towards solving a maritime mystery

April 23 2012

---



Students from Flinders University believe they have discovered the exact location of a Scottish sailing ship which sank in waters off Kangaroo Island more than 100 years ago.

A group of four archaeology students searched the sea and land on Kangaroo Island's west coast earlier this month in a bid to find the historic Loch Sloy and the burial sites of 11 bodies recovered from the sea when the barque, en-route from Glasgow to Port Adelaide, sank on April 24, 1899.

Records show 30 people, including the captain, six passengers and most crewmen, died when the ship ran into rocky waters while heading

towards the Cape Borda lighthouse.

There were four survivors, one of whom died after reaching land, but the exact location of the shipwreck and the bodies recovered from the waters, except for one, has remained a mystery.

During the week-long field trip – led by Department of Environment and Natural Resources Maritime Archaeologist and Flinders graduate Amer Khan – the team excavated an area between Cape Borda and Cape du Couedic in the hope of finding any remnants from the tragic incident.

Flinders archaeology masters student Lynda Bignell said the researchers believed they had found the exact position of the wreck, using a magnetometer.

“Historically the whereabouts of the ship has been roughly documented but we used a special maritime metal detector at that location and it came up with a high reading, indicating that something is definitely down there,” Ms. Bignell said.

“It’s quite exciting because we originally went out there to look mainly for the graves, the search for the shipwreck was just one part of our extensive research into the incident.

“We’ve been researching the Loch Sloy and the graves since last October, and we staged a preliminary trip in December, so it’s great to see that work is paying off.”

While the expedition primarily hoped to unearth the graves of those who died in the sinking, Ms. Bignell said the team had no luck finding any burial sites.

“The site we thought had a good chance of being a grave actually

wasn't," she said.

"Excavation of the site went down to the bedrock and didn't find anything but it was a good experience for the students involved."

Ms. Bignell said the team hoped to return to Kangaroo Island later this year to find the shipwreck, although no definite plans had been made yet.

She said the ship was an important part of South Australia's maritime history.

"The Loch Sloy is one of four historic shipwrecks on the west coast of Kangaroo Island and between those four ships 82 people lost their lives, making the stretch of coast one of the most treacherous in SA," she said.

"Yet the Loch Sloy was particularly important because public opinion after the incident resulted in the construction of another lighthouse at Cape de Couedic."

Ms. Bignell also thanked the [Kangaroo Island](#) community for their enthusiasm and participation.

Provided by Flinders University

Citation: A step towards solving a maritime mystery (2012, April 23) retrieved 28 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2012-04-maritime-mystery.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.