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**Out of sight but not out of heart: the necessity of Underwater Archaeology and research into maritime heritage in shaping our knowledge and identity**  
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Prof.dr. Martijn Manders

**Out of sight but not out of heart. The necessity of Underwater Archaeology and research into maritime heritage in shaping our knowledge and identity**



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Bij ons leer je de wereld kennen

Out of sight but not out of heart. The necessity of  
Underwater Archaeology and research into maritime  
heritage in shaping our knowledge and identity

Inaugural lecture given by

Prof.dr. Martijn Manders

on the acceptance of his position as professor by special appointment

Underwater archaeology and maritime heritage management

at Leiden University

on Monday April 17, 2023



Universiteit  
Leiden



Inspired by a special edition of the UNESCO Courier on Underwater Archaeology (1987),<sup>1</sup> I went to the town of Alphen aan den Rijn. Walking from the train station towards the Eikenlaan, I got increasingly removed from the world of homes and living and got surrounded by large warehouses, sheds and other industrial buildings. In one of them – at nr. 239 – the *Afdeling Archeologie Onderwater* (AAO, ‘Underwater Archaeology Department’) of the Ministry of Welfare, Health and Culture was housed. A warehouse with a small hallway at the front with a coffee machine and some office spaces above and next to it. At the front of the big hall there was an open workshop for the diving technicians, a large floor to keep archaeological materials wet and a cold store. To complete the image even more: in the left hand corner there was a door with a mechanical closer that went to a small natural area not much larger than 400 square meters – a pool filled with newts and frogs, but also a beloved dumping spot for trash from the surrounding area.

So this was the domain of Underwater Archaeology in the Netherlands. I came there to speak with Thijs Maarleveld – a pioneer in this specialised branch of archaeology.<sup>2</sup> Not long before that, Thijs had put together a group in order to put Underwater Archaeology on the map. He had already started by himself in 1980, assisted by many sports divers and other people interested in Maritime History and Archaeology. But in 1988 he started with a proper team.

Did I dive myself? Yes indeed. I had just finished my first diving course in Marseille and I hoped that this would be enough to join the diving team. Unfortunately, it was not. I would have to be able to dive in Dutch waters, Thijs warned me. These were dark, cold and there were strong currents and hardly any visibility. Archaeology in murky waters.<sup>3</sup> Not really an uplifting story. And still... It only made it more attractive to me. The diving training started off in Utrecht, where an employee of the AAO, Jef van den Akker, took me to the Espadon diving club. In 1990 my time had come and I

was allowed to really participate. The team of Thijs Maarleveld had started with the excavation of the wreck of the Scheurrak SO1 the year before that, a Baltic trader from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, loaded with grain.<sup>4</sup> This excavation would last until 1997. We also went out to the North Sea quite quickly, to the Aanloop Molengat wreck, a 17<sup>th</sup> century vessel loaded with goods from all over Europe and even Africa.<sup>5</sup> A cargo from the Staple market of Amsterdam. More wrecks from the Wadden Sea followed, on the Burgzand to be more precise<sup>6</sup>: Wrecks from the Texel Roadstead, the centre of Dutch trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> century – the heyday of the Dutch economy. Yet a treasure trove of information also turned out to be on the bottoms of the sea and the rivers outside of the Burgzand: the Zeeland Estuary, the Oostvoornsemeer lake,<sup>7</sup> and more recent wrecks like *botters*, *pluten* and *bonzen* (flat-bottomed fishing vessels) in the towns of Kampen, Urk and Spakenburg.<sup>8</sup> There also was a wealth of shipwrecks to be found further away from home. Remains of vessels with a strong connection to our history, such as the Hoorn from 1615 of the *Zuidelijke Compagnie* (‘the Southern Company’) found in Argentina,<sup>9</sup> the VOC ship the *Rooswijk* from 1740 in England,<sup>10</sup> but also the Dutch warships *Hr. Ms. De Ruyter*, *Java* and *Kortenaer*, sunk during the battle of the Java Sea in Indonesia in 1942.<sup>11</sup>

By the way, I do not want to give you the impression with this summary that the underwater heritage only exists of shipwrecks. I got to conduct work visits to sites of Roman bridges in Cuijk<sup>12</sup> and Maastricht,<sup>13</sup> a slipway in Medemblik,<sup>14</sup> old drowned settlements in the Brokopondo reservoir in Suriname, the Pirate City of Port Royal,<sup>15</sup> the Roman jet set seaside resort of *Baiae* near Naples and even a bronze age battlefield on the bottom of the River Tollense<sup>16</sup> in Northeastern Germany. Fantastic sites, each and every one of them: smaller and larger pieces of the puzzle that makes up Dutch and world history. So much hidden under the surface of the water, so much abundance for science and society... and so little people who have seen it.



1. The Ria Deseado, an inlet from the sea in Patagonia, Argentina. This is the place where the 'Hoorn' from the Southern Company wrecked in 1615. (c) Jochem Wijnands

All these fantastic archaeological sites under water... Yet if we were to compile a top ten of the most important underwater sites, yours will probably differ a bit from mine. Without doubt we would also see that lesser known sites would often end up at the bottom of the list. For as they say: out of sight, out of heart. Yet as soon as we would learn more about these wrecks or other archaeological sites, this list would be shaken up again. When we see something, we can appreciate it a bit more. This principle has been described well in the Heritage Cycle

of English Heritage.<sup>17</sup> We are curious by nature and want to understand what we see. In fact, when we see and understand things, we are already creating a narrative. We detail our story, keep filling it out and pass it on to others. In doing so, these stories of the maritime past become our own.

Along the way we create a historical reality that is based on our knowledge, whether this knowledge is correct or not. It was Georg Hegel (1770-1831) who said that this reality itself is

the result of an historical process. What we see is personal and based on what we already know and how we imagine the world to be. Also in the case of Underwater Archaeology we never see the material remains of the past in an unbiased way – we see what these remains *mean* to us. This meaning, the value the material past represents to us, can indeed be influenced by us: by researching, sharing, listening and in this way allowing other narratives access to our interpretation and valuation. We *are* our past, we are what has been transmitted to us from the past. And we pass on this image of what we believe to be to next generations: in stories, books and films.<sup>18</sup> We always perceive that past in a certain context bound by culture and period, fed by the norms of our family, friends and society. This is no different for Underwater Archaeology and Maritime Archaeology.

What we deem important connects to who we are. As we have just seen, this can differ from person to person. For a survey conducted within the *International Programme for Maritime Heritage*, called ‘We and Water’,<sup>19</sup> a request was made through various websites and to a number of school classes to write a short piece on what people personally viewed as their most valuable maritime heritage. A quite generic definition of maritime heritage was given in this survey on purpose: that it concerned heritage connected to the relation between people and water. The diversity of subjects proposed was striking: from shanties – traditional sea songs – to a bridge that someone saw every day, from a ship that someone’s ancestors had sailed on to the Titanic that was lost in the Atlantic Ocean in 1912. What did remain the same was that almost every story had a personal component, making it part of a personal history. Heritage can therefore be something very personal, but it can also connect us.

Heritage is that which we as a society want to research, protect and pass on to future generations. So heritage is a vehicle to communicate to others who we are. We do this as individuals,

but we also want to do this as a society. The trick is to distil our shared heritage from all these personal stories, histories and favourite objects without imposing or enforcing too much. A complicating factor here is that society is constantly changing, which influences what we perceive as valuable heritage. So we are dealing with the spirit of the age. This does not necessarily have to be problematic. Yet is the concept of continuous change workable if we strive to preserve and manage Dutch heritage in a durable manner? This could prove to be a lot more challenging.

When I say that the Netherlands is a maritime nation, many people will agree. But this narrative is not necessarily appealing to everyone. How strong is the connection with water in your family history? How personal is this maritime aspect to you? The selection of what to protect in maritime and underwater heritage on a national level has proven to be difficult, more so because of personal interests, knowledge and ambition. A question such as the one we posed in the ‘We and Water’ project is not put out there to determine if something should be national heritage or not. It could give a nice indication of what people deem valuable. It also fits in the strategy outlined in the European Faro Convention to provide more public access to culture and to make the approaches to it not just expert driven but more accessible.<sup>20</sup> Yet it would probably lead to an unworkable situation if we would want to base our choices on the huge diversity of answers. It is difficult to find a proper balance between diversity and unity, and will always remain so. And also between the silent majority and loud minority in heritage discussion, even though this last problem can also be reversed: that a minority does not feel heard.

In the present archaeological area of work, rules have been established on how we value archaeological heritage. Based on content-related criteria and outward appearance we make a difference between objects with high, medium or low archaeological value. This is a process conducted by archaeologists through an evaluation system in the





2. The Manders diving on the wreck of the Dutch East Indiaman 'Rooswijk' that wrecked on the Goodwin Sands in the UK in 1740. (c) #Rooswijk1740

*Kwaliteitsnorm voor de Nederlandse Archeologie (KNA).*<sup>21</sup>

This is a mixture between standardised measurement and individual subjectivity, for archaeologists are only human after all. Yet it is not an average representation of 'what makes us Dutch'.

What *does* make us Dutch? Who are 'we'? Here we touch upon a different aspect of the influence of identity on the heritage debate. The national 'we' is a different one than the one from for example Urk, Amersfoort, Amsterdam or Leiden. How big is the chance for instance, that the wrecks of Spakenburg – which sunk on purpose after the closing of the Zuiderzee – gets a place in the Dutch National Canon (an overview of highlights from Dutch history)? And how important is that same little wreck for the history of the fishing village of

Bunschoten-Spakenburg itself? This importance might well be a lot higher.

Another important question is who is allowed to, or required to, make the judgement of the value. Is a broad form of popularity contest possible, useful or even necessary? Or are we fine with the ability of the archaeological professionals to make specialist considerations? This is a difficult issue. More so because the appointment as Listed Heritage has consequences for the management of this specific heritage as well. This is often implicitly included in the decision process, for we do nothing from a blank sheet. Reality is a historical process, remember? We also include information in our consideration that allows us to make an estimate whether it is actually



possible to protect the site, at present and in the future. Or whether the owners of the property in which a site is located are on board or easy to convince. And is budget available to protect and monitor the site? Aside from the content-related consideration, there are so much more matters to take into consideration. The intrinsic archaeological value is only a part in the factors determining the choice to research and protect certain heritage and to hand it over to the next generation. Herein specifically lies the difference between archaeology and heritage management and this is also something that often leads to frictions with other interested parties, even among archaeologists. In its essence, archaeology is nothing more than the collection of methods and techniques that we use to be able to research traces and objects in the ground in their specific context. With 'context' we mean the relation between different objects and between an object and its physical surroundings – so the ground, the water and the landscape.

(Archaeological) heritage management entails the responsibility that the researching, protecting and passing on of this heritage can actually take place, now and in the future. This includes a spectrum of measures, actions and means. Assessing the value of heritage and prioritising it are two of these. And here we are dealing with a context again. However, this context also includes the present society in which the objects and sites play a part, or will do so in the future. This context is subject to change. The composition, values, rules and laws of a society change and these changes will always exert an influence on the value of heritage. We do know this – that when the parameters change, that it makes sense that the value also changes – yet we are not always completely aware that these parameters also have a societal value, and not just a scientific and technical one. So the context and value of heritage continue to change, yet once it is on a heritage list, a location or object remains on it, at least for a considerable period of time. Heritage lists are semi-static and usually tend to grow as we have seen over the past century. This subsequently has consequences for the preconditions of heritage management: costs, capacity and possibly even support base.

With an astonishing 63.241 sites the National Heritage List has become rather full and therefore additions are only made sparingly.<sup>22</sup> This is because not adding at present seems one of the very few control mechanisms available to us to somewhat contain the growth. Of all National Heritage Sites, only 1466 are *archaeological* sites. In 5 years time this number only grew with 8 sites. Yet under water, only 9 sites have been established. This means that there are 9 sites on 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of our national territory, formed by water. And in this water, archaeological sites are on the whole preserved much better than on land. All periods of Dutch history are represented by heritage sites, from the earliest prehistoric period until the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The list of *Rijksmonumenten* (National Heritage Sites) under water is so short that I can name them all: the Burgzand area with wrecks, the Aanloop Molengat wreck,<sup>23</sup> the wreck of the Oosterdijk *Zeebad*,<sup>24</sup> the wreck of the Regatta port of Medemblik,<sup>25</sup> the Wreck 1460,<sup>26</sup> the Roman bridge of Cuijk,<sup>27</sup> the Roman bridge of Maastricht<sup>28</sup> and the drowned villages of Valkenisse<sup>29</sup> and Reimerswaal.<sup>30</sup>

This small list of National Heritage Sites under water forms a stark contrast to the at least 60.000 possible heritage sites on the bottoms of Dutch waters that are known up to the present.<sup>31</sup>

When we take these underwater National Heritage Sites into consideration when telling the story of our maritime history, then we simply have too many gaps. The narrative we then leave to coming generations starts with two Roman bridges from the Roman period, then a medieval cog from Medemblik – which cannot be found back by the way – a clinker built ship from around 1460, then a *waterschip* (a fishing vessel) from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the roadstead of Texel with several 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century vessels, a village that was swallowed by the sea in 1682 and another one that befell this fate in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Beautiful sites to which we can connect interesting stories about our past, but the gaps in time and in our knowledge are significant, too large in fact and the list is not representative of the long and rich history we have with water. Of course



3. The Tollense River in North-eastern Germany where in 1300 BCE a battle took place. (c) M. Manders

some people will say that we still have the sites on land and the knowledge we received by digging those. They have a point, yet not (or hardly) including sites under water in the official protection measurements and communications adds to their invisibility and the lack of interest we spoke about before. They are out of sight under a blanket of murky water, and thus out of heart, whereas the official Dutch history in 50 windows – the Canon of the Netherlands – is littered with important events that do have a considerable maritime component

to which we could easily connect sites at the bottom of the sea and rivers. These are the windows of the Roman Limes (border), the Hanseatic League, the VOC and WIC (East and West India Companies), the Beemster polder area, Hugo de Groot, the Atlas Maior by Blaeu, Michiel de Ruyter, slavery, patriots, the *Watersnoodramp* floods, the port of Rotterdam and the former Dutch Caribbean area.<sup>32</sup> We could debate the public knowledge and usage of the Canon, but in essence this is an outlet that could potentially reach a wide audience. A direct

link between archaeologically protected sites and the Canon might not be a bad idea. A direct link between the Canon and the teaching materials in schools would also be a good idea, yet this is a different discussion.

But how do you protect heritage that is invisible? By simply protecting everything, except for... So a blanket protection, included in our Heritage Law.<sup>33</sup> This protection by law is nice, but this must also be enforced, and with so much water, an ever-changing seabed and increasing activities at sea it is an almost impossible undertaking if we would not make any choices. So it seems nice, a 'basically we protect everything' strategy, but with every new discovery we create more problems. The 'except for' should also be elaborated. We therefore must protect with a goal in mind, select and deselect where possible. This goal can also partially serve other interests, like economic, natural and cultural interests and selecting offers more space and opportunities for others connected to the site. From this point of view, it seems obvious that with manifold protection, others, especially local parties, are involved. All of the Wadden Sea and the IJsselmeer and Markermeer lakes are subject to municipal divisions. Yet the areas are too large and the heritage too complex to expect management by the municipalities themselves. So co-operation is necessary. This is demonstrated by the protection of the wrecks on the Burgzand for instance. As mentioned before, this is the centre of the old Roadstead of Texel, where ships lied waiting to be loaded or unloaded, or to leave for Asia and the Baltic for instance. The many wrecks from the heyday the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century shipping that we find here, are severely threatened by erosion of the seabed, biological and chemical processes, and also by human actions. For this reason, the principle of the Malta convention that the one disturbing a site should pay for the research, can't always be translated to underwater archaeology.<sup>34</sup> For who should pay when there is no clear human disruptor? The only option then is the government.<sup>35</sup> Solutions on the municipal level seem to be inadequate for this, especially for a World Heritage area such as the Wadden Sea where so much is to be taken

into consideration. The state should take a bigger role here, but it has to manage a much larger area and thus must make geographical choices where it will be active. But the Wadden Sea is specifically an area where solutions can be found on a regional level. The organisation, money, capacity and possibilities for synergy between various disciplines in heritage management and nature conservancy seem to be present. A partnership exists between the islands in the Wadden Sea, there is an association of Wadden Sea coastal municipalities, a federation of Wadden Sea municipalities, an Agenda Wadden Sea area 2050, an investment framework Wadden Area, the Wadden Fund and aside from that the provinces of Noord-Holland, Friesland and Groningen present themselves as Wadden provinces. There is, however, a problem at present: the focus lies on ecology – the Wadden Sea was declared World Heritage solely because of its exceptional ecological values – and on making the economy more sustainable.<sup>36</sup> This is a missed opportunity, because it is specifically the interaction between humans and nature that has brought about the individuality and the character of the area as it is today. Underwater heritage is mostly out of sight of the administrators, so also out of their hearts. Yet this is omission can still be remedied. We just need to want it: for example by integrating culture in the inscription of the Wadden Sea in the World Heritage List, followed by an implementation of this in all initiatives currently taking place. And then also the development and co-ordination of Underwater Archaeology in management on Wadden Sea region level, if possible.<sup>37</sup> So a focused approach, with a strong government, with local participation and support base – this is music to my ears in any case. And why only in the Wadden Sea? There may also be possibilities elsewhere, in the Zeeland Estuary for instance. With increased capacity that is also spread out more, we can aim for a serious management of underwater heritage. This can't be done if the responsibility only lies with the national government. What is needed: a broad appreciation of the heritage, a baseline measurement serving as the basis for the design of protective





4. Boppers (flat-bottom-ships) in the Zuiderzee. This photo was taken in the early 1900s when this inner sea was still connected to the Wadden Sea. (c) Rene Keijzer

measurements, and of course structural monitoring, where the results should really lead to actions in the mean time. Of course this is a strategy that requires capacity and money. The more we want to protect, the more expensive it gets. It is not surprising then that at some point a reality check is needed to compare importance, practicality and associated costs. But it is also extremely important that a weighing of importance is also conducted at regional and local level. And with the idea in mind that ‘he who pays the piper calls the tunes’, it is a logical assumption that budgets for underwater heritage management should also be made structurally available on a regional level.

As we have seen before, there are many shipwrecks that do not make it to National Heritage for some reason. To name a few: Hr. Ms. Adder, a monitoring vessel that sank off Scheveningen in 1882 and which was, among other things, the cause for the establishment of the Coast Guard;<sup>38</sup> Stavoren 17, a completely clinker built wreck from around 1500 found off the Frisian coast;<sup>39</sup> and the aforementioned *Botters* and other flat-bottomed vessels that were dumped in holes around the Zuiderzee when this was closed off by the *Afsluitdijk* dike in 1932. The closure was the execution of an older plan – Plan Lely – that was effectively set in motion because of the heavy floods in the Zuiderzee area in 1916. The floods caused much misery, but the effects of the closure were disastrous for the inhabitants of the coasts and islands of the Zuiderzee. It caused the end of the fishery in the Zuiderzee. Only a few commercial fishermen are active in the area at present. These wrecks are the physical remains of the forced reorganisation of the Zuiderzee fleet and the end of many traditions and identities, even though the town of Volendam still has its *Palingsound*.<sup>40</sup> The ‘non-ship-heritage’ under water is also not

well taken care of. For instance, archaeological slipways and prehistoric sites under water are not present on our National Heritage list, and up until now only two drowned villages have received heritage status. Research into these sites is not done thoroughly at all. The sites are there, the historical and archaeological value is often high, yet preliminary conditions such as money, capacity and practicality are usually decisive factors in not doing much with these sites. Yet we also cannot forget – again – the effect of the invisibility and relative unfamiliarity.

Little by little, expanding the National Heritage database with underwater heritage is considered. But what good does it do then? And why should any more National Heritage Sites be appointed? We can only provide a clear answer to this question after we have created a clear image of what it is we want from a list like this. What is the function National Heritage Sites, or what should it be? Do they represent important moments in Dutch history and should they ‘carry’ the Canon of the Netherlands together? Should they be locations that bind us in a social and cultural way, and possibly emphasize the diversity of our society? Or does it concern the most *vulnerable* heritage that needs extra protection first? *That* is the conversation we need to have together.

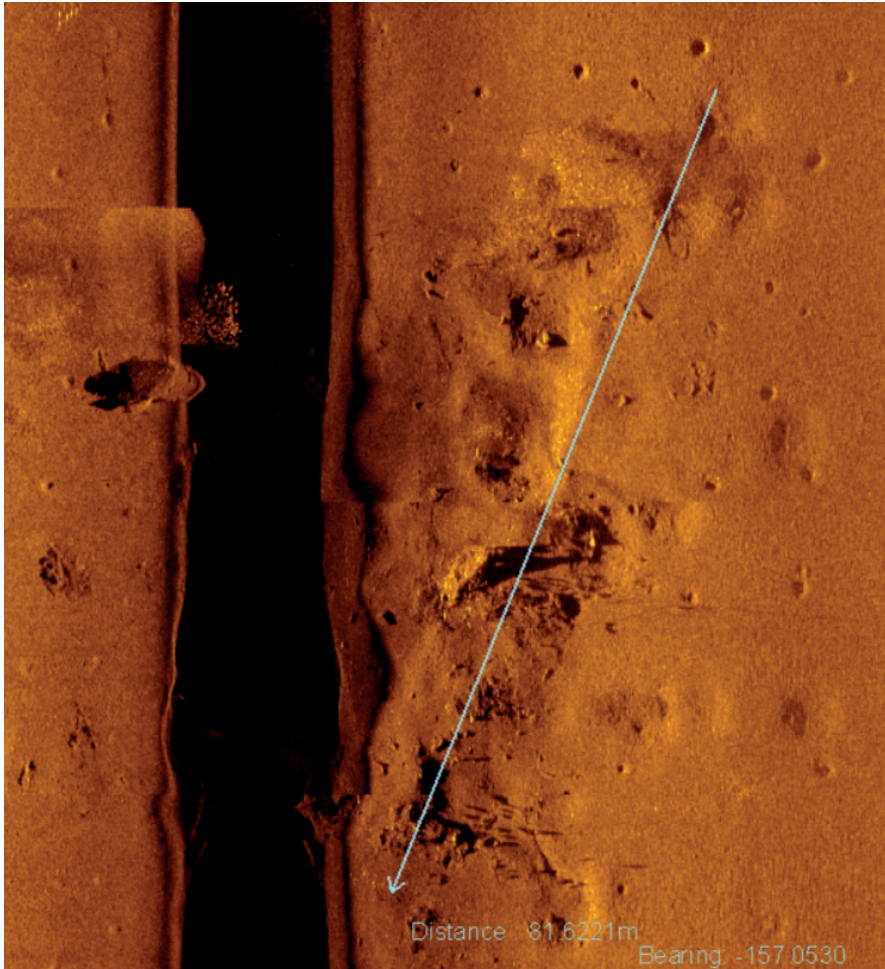
Yet this does not bring us to the finish line. Management of Cultural Heritage is logically taken on from the heritage domain. So the choice whether something is deemed a National Heritage Site is only approached from this angle. Yet a shipwreck – I am taking this as an example – can be an important location that needs to be treated with care for several reasons. Submerged shipwrecks are often also biodiversity hotspots, the feeding grounds that life in the North Sea and Wadden Sea yearns for.<sup>41</sup> Experiments to combine the in situ preservation of the BZN 4 shipwreck with ecological management have already been conducted in co-operation with the national programme *Een Rijke Waddenzee* (‘A Rich Wadden Sea’), yet unfortunately this is not yet taking place systematically, which causes me to hope for a follow-up.<sup>42</sup> Wrecks in the Wadden Sea and North Sea can also be

used for a further spreading of the European flat oyster.<sup>43</sup> So the synergy of cultural and ecological interests can be great, yet this co-operation needs to be handled carefully, taking the interests of both parties at heart. For instance, a robust covering of a shipwreck to recover biodiversity can result in an almost impenetrable fortress of biological life. Not only will the costs to dig on this wreck, should this become necessary in the end, become very high, resistance among biologists (and maybe also a wider audience) to eventually do this will become greater.

The same goes for the synergy between protection because of cultural-historic values compared to commemorative values. A wreck that is protected because it is a war grave, even if it could be such an interesting archaeological object, will probably not be excavated. The values reinforce one another, but the various needed steps in management are not very compatible.

I hope it has become clear by now that researching, protecting and managing underwater heritage is not easy, even difficult to say the least, despite the large popularity in the media. And yet we want to do it. It is a rich source of information, and the threats to it are huge and will not disappear. In fact, climate change makes the balance in our natural surroundings, but also that in our society, waver. The consequences of predicted meteorological changes, among other things, are that currents will change, causing erosion of the seabed in many places; that new invasive species will be introduced, causing an accelerated breakdown of shipwrecks and their contents; but the pH of the seabed and the water can also change, causing many kinds of processes of deterioration and decay to increase. This comes at the expense of heritage that has been well preserved for centuries.

Climate change also causes adaptations in our behaviour. The search for green energy has an effect on the seabed because we increasingly need space for wind farms that nobody wants in their backyard. There are so many plans that combinations are even being considered in which artificial islands are to function as energy hubs. From these hubs, cables need to be



5. A side scan sonar image of the wreckage location of the submarine O16 in Malaysia. Some small parts are still visible, but most if the wreck has been salvaged illegally. (c) RCE & Kon. Marine.

laid in every direction, again on and in the seabed.<sup>44</sup> These cables and mills themselves are obstacles, causing new current patterns and thus erosion of the seabed, causing degradation and loss of the value of heritage. That our society changes and with this the way we view things,

the category of the material, because this also was a simple and clear way to discern between newer and older wrecks. In 2023, a choice like this would not be made any more. Because why would WWII wrecks not be of archaeological and historical value? But even more so, these wrecks are places of

can also be seen in our profession. These are subjects that we should give further attention from the University because they influence research and protection policy. The discussions surrounding slavery and colonialism: we can bring them to the foreground, interpret them, frame them and even make them tangible with heritage found under water. Wrecks, defensive structures, even plantations such as Esthersrust in Suriname, which has already been partially swallowed by the Caribbean Sea.<sup>45</sup> The information gained from archaeological sources complements that from archives and other written and oral transmissions. Another example of a societal change with a demonstrable effect on our work:

In the '80s, wrecks from World War II were not protected yet. Back then, a site needed to be at least 50 years old to officially be called heritage. These wrecks did not meet this requirement back then.<sup>46</sup> Yet another issue was that – in an attempt to be able to focus on wooden shipwrecks – agreements were made with sports divers that no professional attention would be given to iron wrecks – making these a free-for-all. So the separation was made here by



remembrance, maybe even war graves. Yet a lot of damage has already been done in the mean time. This changing historic awareness was put in to words exquisitely by our Secretary of State for Culture, Gunay Uslu, in the Huizinga lecture of 2022: 'Heritage, arts and culture: they shape who we are. Yet we do not always seem to realise this. Only when people are threatened with the loss of a part of their heritage, art, usage or tradition, its importance is seen and felt.' Maybe this is why the valuation of the heritage from the World Wars by heritage professionals has taken so long: we needed to be in danger of losing it all first.<sup>47</sup>

Very illustrative of this changing viewpoint was the national outrage over the illegal salvage of the torpedoed *Cressi*, *Aboukir* and *Hogue* – the three British cruisers from World War I that were lost 22 nautical miles off Scheveningen with a loss of 1400 lives.<sup>48</sup> And the same fate that befell the Dutch warships *De Ruyter*, *Java* and *Kortenaer* – with a loss of almost 1000 lives<sup>49</sup> – and the Dutch submarines *O16* and *KXVII* and possibly also *KXVI* and *O20* with almost full crews near Malaysia.<sup>50</sup> It was a fierce and widely supported reaction, not from heritage professionals, but from society. Try to state that this is not heritage after that! During a meeting in Den Helder after an inspection of the locations by the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) together with the Navy and local authorities, for the first time I could truly feel what these locations mean for the first, second and even third and fourth generations of the descendants of those on board.<sup>51</sup> Being taken seriously and being heard, that was important. And the additional information we gather forms the pieces of the puzzle that many families use to complement the image of their own history. Pixels of existence. This, therefore, needs to happen with care and with room for other initiatives. The physical remains are the last tangible things that the families have of their loved ones.

Our national history was already largely written in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The 19<sup>th</sup> century was characterised by the consolidation of the modern national states, just as much in

the Netherlands as in Belgium, Sweden, the UK, Germany and France. Within the drawn territorial lines, a national community also had to develop. Such a society is formed by a feeling of being at home, a feeling of national pride – including a national history with heroes representing who we want to be. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, these heroes were mainly found in the admirals of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. *De Ruyter*, *Tromp*, *Evertsen*, *Witte de Wit* and *Jol* were literary put on pedestals. And it worked! The heroes from Holland and Zeeland became the heroes of the Dutch nation and the 17<sup>th</sup> century became 'the Golden Age' in retrospect. But 'Your sons and daughters are beyond your command... 'cause times, the are a-changing', *Bod Dylan* already sang back in 1964.<sup>52</sup>

How 'Golden' was this 17<sup>th</sup> century? Was it pure gold, gold leaf or fool's gold? This is a legitimate subject for discussion. Society has changed and so has our view of the past. 'We' are no longer what we were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century or during the period of reconstruction after WWII. How fast the image of these Dutch naval heroes can tilt can be demonstrated by comparing newspaper articles from the past decades.<sup>53</sup> Heroes are no longer just heroes. Especially from our current viewpoint, many things were wrong in that period: repression, colonisation, slavery and wars. These men on these pedestals were also responsible for this. So how do we view this past now? Were the Dutch East Indies the proverbial Emerald Belt or a dark page in our history, or both? Has the Netherlands been built by steadfast men; *Jan Pier*, *Tjores* and *Corneel* from the old shanty, by black captains, preachers and civilians from the 17<sup>th</sup> century; *Bastiaen*, *Abdon*, *Diego*, *Jacobus*,<sup>54</sup> or by women like *Amalia*, *Judith*, *Johanna* and *Anna*? Or have they all contributed?

Pride connects us, but shifting accents in society create changing lenses on the past and with it, this pride and historic benchmarks also change. Underwater Archaeology, combined with heritage management, plays a part in reorienting our historic awareness, the search for new narratives and the integration of new perspectives in the construction what



we call our history. Nothing happened without a reason, everything is placed into a context – and that context is changing. ‘Times, they are a-changing.’

To return to this different context – the context of the physical and social environment in which heritage is embedded locally – the water, the landscape and the local community: For my PhD-research into the possibilities for heritage conservation in the western Wadden Sea, I myself have leaned heavily on the knowledge of geomorphologists and oceanographers, but also on that of marine biologists. For the research into the disappeared wrecks in the Java Sea in Indonesia, the graves in Simons Town in South Africa and the skeletons of the Batavia on Beacon Island in Australia, the osteologists were essential. Did the bones found close to a shipyard in East Java come from the sailors of the De Ruyter, Java or Kortenaer? The answer was ‘no’. Where did the bodies found on a churchyard near Simons Town – close to Cape Town – originate? Were they remains of a burial ground of the Muslim community that was present there for a while in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Or were they remains of people from the black community? Or were they people from northwest Europe, as was assumed originally, sailors from Dutch and English navy and merchant vessels? After careful investigation, this last option turned out to be the case. This research was important as well because it was needed to determine who had the rights to rebury these human remains – a ceremonial practice that is becoming increasingly important when heritage is concerned.<sup>55</sup>

We archaeologists connect disciplines, individuals and communities to one another and – more so – with the past. We are brokers of knowledge, constantly looking at improvements together with others that bring our society closer to the past and further into the future at the same time. With this, it is important to realise that we have been given this special task by society and that we are not completely alone in this. Our job is to connect. This means that we have to translate: translating in language and images what the numbers from

our research mean, what these stories and images can mean for our historical awareness, but when needed also what the consequences of this are for the debates in current society. In this way, we also become more well-rounded heritage professionals.

So societally speaking, Maritime and Underwater Archaeology and the heritage management connected to it can play an important part. Archaeological heritage is literary tangible and this can be just the thing that makes the past experienceable and understandable for a wider audience.

We are looking for interesting and appealing stories, yet the narrative can change whenever our personal and collective histories change. Are we zooming out and looking at the ‘larger’ Netherlands, or are we studying the local past and regional differences? We can do both, and they can also be done together. Both are educational, but they do provide different approaches and valuations. In this way, we can build Dutch history from the histories of local ships, traders and economies, but we can also zoom out and view this local trade as links in larger networks. We then rise above the local and regional and get an insight into national and international trade networks, in which in the end the East and West Indies are connected to the Netherlands, the Baltic and the Mediterranean.

This international trade network also caused Dutch ships to perish in all corners of the globe. This is one of the reasons why the Dutch government set up active management of ‘Dutch historical ship finds and ship sites abroad.’<sup>56</sup> Besides from the fact that 1623 wrecks are still Dutch property, and thus form a direct link between the Netherlands as flag state and the respective coastal nations, these remains also form an important source of knowledge, remembrance, commemoration and debate.<sup>57</sup> There are about 30 Dutch war graves at sea, and dozens of VOC, WIC and admiralty vessels. Much has not even been discovered yet. This inventory is a mixture of historical and archaeological information that you can also see at the MaSS website.<sup>58</sup> An inventory like this is

of great importance, for our history also lies outside of the Netherlands and its visibility makes it loved – even though we obviously also experience many dark sides connected to this history of the Netherlands as a global power.

Over the past decades, Dutch overseas history has often been used to strengthen diplomatic relationships: with Taiwan, with South Korea, Cuba, Australia, Indonesia and Sweden<sup>59</sup> – to name just a few countries. The old relations are proof of longstanding connections in good and bad times. The old can be discussed with one another relatively safely and it forms the gateway to also form a collective image of the future. Reflection on and taking care of old hurts from these very long relations is a part of this. We learn from this. Judging oneself on mistakes from the past is a difficult exercise, working together with other countries does not only provide this mirror, it can also lead to a true correction of the image we have of ourselves.

In June 2023, a training in cultural heritage management under water will take place in Trinidad and Tobago together with UNESCO and within the framework of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage<sup>60</sup> (which the Netherlands hope to ratify soon). This is supported by the Dutch embassy in Port of Spain, together with the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, Leiden University and a large number of Caribbean islands. This training does not take place there by accident. In 2022, 60 years of diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and Trinidad and Tobago were celebrated. Yet the mutual history is much older. This has resulted in heritage on land and under water in Tobago, or Nieuw Walcheren (after a Dutch island in the province of Zeeland) as it was called for a long time. In 1677, a large naval battle took place in Rockley Bay between Dutch and French warships.<sup>61</sup> The result: several sunken vessels, thousands of victims and heritage on the bottom of the bay that is now seriously threatened by the construction of a Cruise Terminal. The training provides exposure, urgency and the building up of capacity in the region. And creating structural

capacity in Maritime and Underwater Archaeology is crucial, not just on the other side of the big oceans and under the wings of UNESCO by the way, but also in the Netherlands itself. But we are off to a good start! For years, volunteers in archaeology have been supported and educated by the government. The beautiful thing is that they are organising it by themselves now.

Research and education aimed at Maritime Archaeology – the relation between people and water – has a long-standing history in Leiden, Amsterdam, Deventer and Groningen. Education in the management of maritime and underwater heritage on the other hand has not gotten much attention yet. I am therefore delighted that we can expand this as well here at the University. Underwater Archaeology and heritage management has now found a home in Leiden with Bachelor, Research Master and PhD programmes. With other words: we are doing pretty good in the Netherlands. As a strong and major player, the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands has a large maritime team and it regularly conducts research into all phases of heritage management, from archaeological research to concrete heritage management. The Agency also provides internships so students can gain practical knowledge. Is heritage management boring? Absolutely not! It is the overarching responsibility of archaeology, it is the translation towards the stakeholders, it is the mirror in which we not only see the past, but also ourselves in the present and future. We pose ourselves the question: how valuable is this heritage? Do we assess this ‘Value’ and ‘what’ we preserve alone or together? For *what* is it that we deem of importance to our society? What, then, are the material remains that belong to our identity?

We may make these choices together as a society, but to do so we need the interpreters and the storytellers. Those who collect, classify, tell, translate. Those who can help local groups with their choices, but who can also scale up internationally and can see the importance of different perspectives. The challenges are substantial: much heritage pitted against many

threats. Out of sight puts out of heart, but I am convinced that with the help of old and new forces, the invisible will become visible soon, and the unloved will become loved – as shown by the excitement in the media every time something surfaces from the dark depths of our waters. With the new forces I am of course mainly speaking of students and ‘young professionals’ who are at the moment making the choice for Underwater Archaeology, but also of the new strategic partners in the field, experts from other disciplines. We may not be able to see the underwater heritage every day, but we do know it is there! The challenges that face us in the management of underwater heritage will partially lie in the future and I am overjoyed and honoured that, with the acceptance of the professorship, I can now help to truly build this future from the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University, in which the inclusion of heritage under water will become very normal in the story of the Netherlands and in which students, but also future employees, see the enormous importance of this profession. With Maritime Archaeology we provide society with a different viewpoint of everyday life. A point of view from which we observe the world from the water. And this makes absolute sense in this country. Underwater cultural heritage is formed by the remains of a long and rich history, from prehistoric until modern times, which are still hidden under the surface of the water. When we want to understand the past, then many answers are to be found on the beds of the rivers, lakes and sea. It is necessary that we increase our focus on this, to create understanding and preservation, locally, nationally and internationally. And this is exactly what we will be doing here at Leiden University together with the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands and many other partners. We, for water binds us all together in the end, in the past, now and in the future.

### **Acknowledgements**

Now all that is left for me is to express my thanks. There are so many people that I am indebted to! Unfortunately,

I can only name a few. First I will address the Executive Board of the University, the members of the board of the Faculty of Archaeology, Dean Jan Kolen, the Managing Directors of the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands and all the others who have contributed to my appointment at this University. I make a solemn pledge to do my utmost to really make a mark here.

My colleagues at the faculty, fellow professors, lecturers and support staff: all of you are great and I am hoping to have many nice, interesting and educational co-operations with you over the coming years.

In the first years of my career, I met pioneers with whom I got to make the journey into the unknown of Underwater Archaeology: Thijs, Peter, Jef, Ron, Arent, Boudewijn, Heleen, Karin, Piet. Many international colleagues also came and went on the field base on the island of Texel. In later years, during the maritime projects and programmes, there were others: Will, Andre, Rob, Andrea, Wendy, Tanja, Leon, Leon, Robert, Thijs, Marie-Catherine, Johan, Willemien, Marieke and Sabine. Life is good and Underwater Archaeology makes it even richer.

My international network is large because I have always invested much time in the connections to the outside world. I have known a part of my colleagues abroad for many years and I consider them to be very good friends. The list is long, but you know that I am addressing you. Everyone has his or her own history, everyone is unique and thus interesting and can teach me something, which many have done. What I learn, I try to transmit to the rest of the world, to my students in the first place. You give me joy, every single time.

And now I will address the many friends and family that I have outside of Archaeology, who live in the real world. You are so dear to me! And many of you have gone through the trouble to attend my inaugural lecture here on a Monday afternoon. Thank you for this.

It is a great shame that my father cannot attend, but I am glad you are still here mum. My sisters Angela and Lisette, look at your headstrong little brother. Professor... It will take some getting used to. It is so valuable that we are still together as a family.

Danielle, Frank and Barbera, without you, I am nothing.  
I have spoken.

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Translation by Thomas Dresscher/Once.. Histories



## PROF.DR. MARTIJN MANDERS



Martijn Manders was born on the 19th of March 1970 in Vleuten-De Meern, the Netherlands. After finishing Atheneum at Eemland College Zuid in Amersfoort in 1988, he studied archaeology at the Leiden University where he graduated in 1996. This was already quite some years after starting his professional career in the field of maritime and underwater archaeology, which was in 1990. He has continuously worked in this field up until this day, but in different roles. From archaeologist in the dive team of respectively the Afdeling Archeologie Onderwater (AAO in Alphen aan den Rijn) the Netherlands institute for maritime and underwater archaeology (NISA) in Lelystad, he moved to Amersfoort to the Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek (ROB), changing his focus more towards maritime and underwater cultural heritage management. The ROB changed names several times, from RACM to the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) as it is called today. Through several European projects, like MoSS, Bacpoles, MACHU, WreckProtect and SASMAP, he has been programme manager of the first Maritime Programme from 2012 until 2016, the International Programme for Maritime Heritage from 2017 until 2021 and at the moment Martijn is still coordinating international maritime heritage at the RCE. His teaching career started around 2010 at Leiden University as well as the University of Applied Sciences Saxion in Deventer. He is Vice President of the International Committee for Underwater Cultural Heritage (ICUCH) of ICOMOS and a trainer and coordinator of underwater archaeology and cultural heritage management courses for UNESCO (foundation Courses).



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