



PRESS RELEASE

From Desk to Digitisation: Sharing and Safeguarding an Important Archive of British Cannon Research

Funding Secured to Safeguard the Life's Work of Leading Cannon Expert

We're delighted to announce that funding has been secured through the Heritage Science Data Service (HSDS) Small Grants Programme to digitise and safeguard the remarkable archive of British cannon research compiled by Charles Trollope.

The project, titled "*From Desk to Digitisation: Sharing and Safeguarding an Important Archive of British Cannon Research*", is a collaboration between the Ordnance Society and MSDS Marine. It will ensure that over forty years of specialist research is preserved in a digital format and made publicly accessible for the first time.

A Lifetime of Expertise

Charles Trollope is widely recognised as one of the foremost experts in cannon ordnance. Over decades, he has travelled internationally, recording British cannon wherever they survive — carefully noting their dimensions, markings, makers, histories and locations.

His archive includes 25–30 folders of photographs, hand-drawn diagrams, charts, measurements, research notes and correspondence. This material has already proved invaluable: it has helped identify previously unknown shipwreck sites and has even been used in criminal trials to establish provenance.

However, like many privately held specialist archives, this extraordinary body of work is currently uncatalogued, exists only in paper form and there is a real risk that this unique knowledge could be lost.

From Private Papers to Public Access

This project will transform the archive from a personal collection into a professionally digitised, searchable and publicly accessible resource.

Working with volunteers the Ordnance Society and MSDS Marine will:

- Digitise photograph albums, notebooks and sketches
- Scan research files, charts and diagrams
- Create a detailed reference catalogue
- Apply clear naming conventions and controlled vocabularies
- Deposit the completed digital archive with HSDS under a Creative Commons licence

By the end of the project in 2027, researchers, students, heritage professionals and enthusiasts around the world will be able to access this archive online.

Why It Matters

Cannon are more than historic weapons — they are vital clues in understanding maritime trade, naval warfare tactics, cannon operating methods and technological development. On shipwreck sites, ordnance can play a crucial role in identifying vessels and dating wrecks.

Many iron guns are now deteriorating or have already been lost through decay. In some cases, Charles's records may be the only surviving evidence of their form, markings and dimensions.

This project is about safeguarding knowledge before it disappears. It also recognises and honours the life's work of an individual who has dedicated decades to advancing understanding in his field.

A Legacy for the Future

Beyond preserving one archive, the project will produce guidance to help other organisations and individuals facing similar challenges to digitise privately held heritage collections.

By turning “desk research” into accessible digital heritage, we are ensuring that Charles Trollope's expertise will continue to inform research, inspire new discoveries and support the global heritage community for generations to come.

We look forward to sharing updates as this important work progresses. We would like to thank Charles Trollope along with members of the Ordnance Society and those at the Royal Artillery Museum for their support in achieving this funding.