Beyond Legislation: A Case for the Protection of One of Malta's Historic Shipwrecks.

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A long essay submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honours in Tourism Studies

INSTITUTE FOR TOURISM, TRAVEL AND CULTURE

May 2014
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Abstract

Built at La Ciotat shipyards for Messageries Maritimes, the luxury liner *Le Polynésien* began service between France and Australia in 1981. Torpedoed on 10th August 1918 a few kilometres off the Maltese coast, the 152 metre shipwreck today forms part of the island’s underwater historic heritage. Lying at a depth of over sixty metres, it is a unique attraction to visiting technical divers contributing to this niche tourist market. Unfortunately, to date, there is no evidence of a strategic plan intended to protect or manage this historic shipwreck. Motivated by current international trends to make historic shipwrecks accessible to divers while ensuring proper protection and management of sites, this work explores measures that may possibly be employed so that *Le Polynésien* receives the attention it deserves. The work reports on the experience of ten technical divers with a collective experience of more than 133 dives on this wreck who participated in focused interviews. These divers felt that this historic shipwreck should be protected by establishing a ‘No Stopping Area’ around the wreck and installing permanent moorings. The interviewees also complained of the lack of interest by entities responsible for the wreck and the gap that exists between these entities and divers. This division does not reflect today’s trend where *bona fide* divers are considered as important stakeholders in the management of historic sites. The interviewees also felt that, as is the case for terrestrial historic heritage, efforts must be made to ensure that this heritage can also be enjoyed and appreciated by the non-diving community.

HISTORIC SHIPWRECK, PROTECTION ZONE, PERMANENT MOORINGS, EDUCATION OF DIVING AND NON-DIVING COMMUNITY
Author’s Declaration

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
FACULTY/INSTITUTE/CENTRE: Institute for Tourism, Travel and Culture

DECLARATION

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Title of Long Essay/Dissertation/Thesis:

Beyond Legislation: A Case for the Protection of One of Malta's Historic Shipwrecks.

I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Long Essay/Dissertation/Thesis and that it is my original work.

No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of learning.

________________________________________  ________________________________
Signature of Student                                    Name of Student

________________________________________
Date
Dedication and Acknowledgements

I, would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Mr. Simon Caruana B.Ed.(Hons)(Melit.), M.A.(Sheff.), L.I.M.I.S, for his guidance, dedication and immediate and prompt response whenever I needed support. His vast diving experience has also been particularly helpful in guiding me in this work.

I would also like to express my gratitude to Atlam Sub Aqua Club for its support particularly in helping me make the necessary contacts. Without Atlam’s help, it would have been more difficult to identify most of the participants for the interviews.

I dedicate this work to my family for the constant encouragement and support I received.
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Chapter 1: Introduction
1.1 Introduction

The Maltese archipelago has a total area of about 316 square kilometres with a population of just over 400,000 (Malta, National Statistics Office, 2011). With their strategic position in the central Mediterranean, the islands have an interesting maritime history. The arrival of the Knights of St John in 1530 shifted the country’s seat of government power and economy from the old citadel capital Mdina founded on high ground as inland as possible to the harbour area (Wettinger, 1974). Eventually, a new capital city Valletta was built on a promontory in the island’s main harbour and, as a result, the harbour area grew in importance.

The British colonized Malta from 1800 to 1974. Boissevain (1977) writes that while Malta served as a naval base, the British did not encourage the growth of private industry believing this would lead to skilled workers leaving the dockyards. Serious efforts to develop the island’s economy only began in the 1950’s when the British were reducing their naval posts in the Mediterranean.

Between 1964 and 1980, Malta had three development plans for economic growth, 1960-1969; 1969-1974 and 1973-1980 (Boissevain, 1977). Tourism figured strongly in each of these development plans and has continued to do so in every budget presented by local governments ever since. Brigulio and Brigulio (1996) give an idea of the growth of the tourism industry in Malta once the sector became central to the island’s economy showing a
growth from around twenty thousand tourists to over one million annually in less than three decades. The history of tourism growth in these years evidences the characteristics of mass tourism typical of other places particularly where the main attraction is sea and sun. Only recently are notions of sustainable tourism and a focus on niche tourism being taken with a degree of seriousness.

The *Tourism Policy for the Maltese Islands 2012-2016* (Ministry of Tourism and Culture 2011) document recognises diving as one of these niche markets. The *Master Plan to support a sustainable diving industry in Malta* (adi, 2011, p.3) shows that the contribution of tourism to the Gross Domestic Product is ‘estimated to be 25% and accounts for about 28% of full time equivalent employment’ and that the diving segment has ‘increased substantially due to the popularity of the Maltese waters with both local recreational divers as well as leisure and fanatic divers (those whose sole purpose of the holiday is diving) from overseas’. Table 1.1 adapted from the same document gives an idea of the positive trends in fanatic dive trips to Malta.

### Table 1.1 - Trends in fanatic dive trips to Malta

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2006</th>
<th>2007</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2009</th>
<th>2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scuba Diving</td>
<td>1990</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>2901</td>
<td>3468</td>
<td>5171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Tourists</td>
<td>1,124,232</td>
<td>1,243,506</td>
<td>1,290,856</td>
<td>1,182,490</td>
<td>1,332,086</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(adapted from adi, 2011, p.3)
In spite of the evident upward trends evidenced in the table above, a gap analysis of the industry (adi, 2011) shows that the management of dive sites is a central issue that needs to be addressed immediately.

1.2 Research Focus

This work is specifically concerned with the current state and management of one underwater historic shipwreck site that forms part of Malta’s cultural heritage. More specifically, it focuses on what is generally considered by local and fanatic foreign technical divers as Malta’s prime historic shipwreck - *Le Polynesien* (appendix i). There are a number of reasons for choosing this historic shipwreck for this study. These include the following:

i. In the past two decades a number of vessels have been scuttled as diving attractions. These are never sunk at depths beyond forty metres which is the maximum depth for recreational diving. Unlike these, ‘authentic’ wrecks are those vessels or aeroplanes that sank because of accident or war action capturing a moment in history. *Le Polynesien* is an important authentic historic shipwreck, and possibly the one with the most artefacts still on site.

ii. Because of its rich Maritime history, Malta has a number of authentic wrecks that are highly regarded among the international diving community. Currently these important historic shipwrecks are protected by legislation (Malta, *Cultural Heritage Act 2003*; UNESCO, *Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural
They are also ‘protected’ because they lie at depths not immediately accessible to recreational divers. **Le Polynésien** lies at depths between 55 and 70 metres and is, therefore, beyond recreational diving possibilities. Looking at practices used to protect and monitor important historic shipwrecks elsewhere, it is evident that legislation and depth are not enough to protect historic shipwrecks. For this reason, much more needs to be done to manage this historic shipwreck.

iii. Authentic wrecks have been damaged, are being damaged and will continue to be damaged if no concrete measures are taken. *The State of the Heritage Report 2003* is clear about this.

A large number of wreck sites and ancient anchorage have been entirely wiped out in this way, without any official record having ever been taken. Furthermore, the ability of sport divers to access even deeper waters is resulting in progressive degradation of deep water sites which were up to now protected by their very remoteness.

(The Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, 2003, p.20)

Malta’s more important historic shipwreck sites, including *Le Polynésien*, are not even covered by Notice to Mariners No 5 of 2008 (appendix ii) designating zones around these important wrecks as ‘No Stopping Areas’.

### 1.3 Aims and Objectives

This study is specifically concerned with the historic shipwreck *Le Polynésien* as one of Malta best authentic wrecks and ‘the fundamental challenge...of how to allow divers access
to shipwrecks whilst ensuring these sites are not harmed’ (Edney, 2011, p.1). This study will attempt to address these questions:

i. What is the current situation?

ii. What realistic measures may be considered to improve the protection, monitoring and management of this historic shipwreck site?

Chapter 2 looks at literature concerned with practices used abroad to protect historic shipwrecks. It also looks at research focusing on wreck diver motivations and their collaboration with authorities responsible for historic shipwrecks. The literature review also looks at some ideas of how to educate better divers and non divers about historic shipwrecks.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology of the study and offers an explanation of some of the decisions in this small-scale study. The chapter justifies the choice of purposeful sampling and the face-to-face focused interview as the data collection instrument.

Chapter 4 presents an analysis of the findings and a discussion grounded in the literature reviewed earlier.

The final chapter presents a conclusion of the main points of the study and proposes recommendations for further investigation.
Chapter 2: Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

The Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976 by the Australian parliament is generally considered as a ‘groundbreaking piece of legislation which established that historic shipwrecks and their associated relics are of value to all Australians and not to be treated as commercial salvage either by government or private individuals’ (Australia, 2009, p. 6). In 2001, UNESCO adopted the Convention for the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage that reflected principles similar to those in the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976. Both Acts speak of how historic wrecks and possible relics should be managed.

The basic principle is one of ‘look, don’t touch’. For example, dive tourism companies and members of dive clubs may dive on historic ship sites but boat owners have been discouraged from mooring on or near historic shipwrecks.

(Department of the Environment, Water Heritage and the Arts, 2009, p.12)

The above quote shows that divers should not be excluded from visiting historic shipwrecks. Just as nobody would dream of blocking an interested public from experiencing Stonehenge, the Colosseum and other unique historic sites of world importance, divers should not be prevented from experiencing historic shipwrecks. In fact, besides those officially responsible for the protection of underwater heritage, ‘other people not active in the systems of protection also come into contact with these locations. These are, above all divers... [who] ...also need to be included in the system...’ (Bekic, L. et al. 2011, p. 12). What definitely cannot be allowed (as was for many years) is that, just because historic shipwrecks are not on land where everybody can see them, they are uncared for and subject to bad practices.
This section reviews literature on practical measures being taken internationally to protect and monitor historic shipwrecks while still allowing access to wreck divers. As may be expected, particularly with the advances in technology, the possibilities and boundaries of monitoring underwater heritage sites are constantly becoming sophisticated. For example, today’s most advanced capabilities include monitoring systems such as the DSIT AquaShield Diver Detection Sonar (www.dsit.co.il) that can handle one thousand divers/targets at the same time and detect divers up to one kilometre away. While accepting that such sophistication is available, this section looks at some protection and monitoring ideas that are realistically possibly in the case of the historic shipwreck *Le Polynesien*.

### 2.2 Protection Zones

In the last decades, there has been a change in the relationship between the authorities responsible for underwater heritage, historic shipwrecks and divers. A couple of decades ago, the position of the authorities was that they should not provide information about the position of historic shipwrecks. The idea was that withholding information would minimise theft and damage by divers. The document *Public Access to Historic Shipwrecks – Guidelines 2010* (p. 6) by the Victoria Heritage Council recognises that ‘while this approach has been valid and effective in the past, attitudes towards the environment generally, including historic shipwrecks, have changed.’ Today, there is so much information about shipwrecks that their position is not a secret anymore. In fact, ‘Heritage Victoria provides shipwreck positions for most sites.’
Rather than keeping information about the location of historic wrecks from the public, the situation today is to actually indicate the position of historic shipwrecks marking areas of protection around them. The most common example of protection of known underwater historic sites is the establishing of protection zones which may differ in shape, size and the level of protection. Most protection zones are square or rectangular in shape. In such cases, four GPS positions mark the corners of the protection zone. Circular protection zones are marked by a single GPS position – usually indicating the centre of the wreck - and the radius in metres around that single GPS position. The size of protection zones varies. There are examples where the protection zone is just ‘25m each side of the centreline of the wreck and 5m beyond the bow and stern’ (Victoria Department of Planning and Community Development, 2013, p.2). In a technical report for CEFAS (The Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science - UK), Rogers (1997) writes that the majority of protection sites in British waters are less than 30 hectares. The 2009 Australian review of the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976 not only suggests a larger protected zone not exceeding 200 hectares but acknowledges that even this might not provide protection for the entire associated debris field. The relevant information about zone limits and designated wreck sites is normally available on paper and electronic nautical/Admiralty charts.

Zones may offer different levels of protection. Historic Scotland ‘assesses historic wrecks for designation according to their historic, artistic or archaeological importance’ (Historic Shipwrecks: a guide for visitors, investigators and managers, 2009, p.6) following ‘a field assessment, consultations with relevant parties and recommendations from a UK-wide
Advisory Committee on Historic Wreck Sites’. Heritage Victoria claims that the assessment of a historic shipwreck site requiring a protected zone needs to consider ‘significance, threats (human and environmental), fragility, public interest and ease of access/monitoring’ (Public Access to Historic Shipwrecks Guidelines, 2010, p.7). The criteria for protection within a zone is determined by the competent authorities, but the aim is never to keep the general public away from historic shipwreck sites but to manage the sites better. Indeed only a very small percentage of historic shipwrecks are off-limits.

2.3 Permanent Mooring Systems

Our descent line is anchored with a 10-pound weight, at the surface a plastic reel doubles as a float. A Zodiac and our larger dive boat float nearby. We can’t pull on the line or hang from it; it’s a guide only. Ordinarily we’d grapple into the wreck with a heavy line and then tie off the dive boat to it, much safer, more secure, but it’s not an option today. Damage to the wreck could be high. That’s unacceptable considering our objective, the Hamilton and the Scourge, wrecks that are unquestionably historical treasures. So we’re using the lightweight gear, and assume the risk.

(Stitt, 2013, p. 38)

These words are part of the description of one ninety-metre descent by Scott Stitt and a group of technical divers on the heritage wrecks of the Hamilton and the Scourge in Lake Ontario. The description shows that, for safety reasons, technical divers doing deep wrecks need to follow some line from the surface to the wreck. This is normally a heavy line attached to the wreck. The text also suggests that using a lightweight anchor/weight means assuming a greater risk. This important issue of diver safety and damage to shipwrecks is mentioned in the New South Wales guideline note Anchoring on Shipwrecks (Department

In most cases, dive boats take a decision in favour of diver safety and anchor on historic shipwrecks so that divers avoid free descents and ascents. The damage caused by anchors or makeshift weights is obviously irreparable and has been well recorded on a number of specific wrecks. Amer (1993) inspecting the 150-year-old Zanoni explains how parts of the starboard side have been broken, cooper sheeting pulled away from the timber by boat anchors and makeshift cement moorings crushed part of the decking. Similarly, professional underwater photo-journalist Middleton (2011), records damage caused by anchors when diving the Thistlegorm (considered as one of the world’s foremost diving attractions) in the Red Sea:

The greatest damage of all, however, is caused by the Diving Boats themselves. Anything up to 20 Boats might be moored over the Thistlegorm at any one time…With the larger boats weighing several tons, it is easy to see how the combined force of such a small fleet – all pulling together as they take a single wave, is able to exert pressures that no ships superstructure was ever designed to withstand. When I returned to the Thistlegorm one year later the Bridge section was even shorter with a large portion now residing on the seabed.

(Middleton, 2011)
The answer to providing safety for divers without boats anchoring on a wreck is a permanent mooring system. In its simplest form, this consists of a permanent bottom anchor, a floating buoy and a rope or chain between these two. The idea is that dive boats can tie to the surface buoy without having to drop anchor and divers can descend and ascend following the rope/chain. Below, are examples of two permanent mooring systems. One is the basic dead weight mooring system; the other is the three-pin mooring system.

**Figure 2.1 - Permanent Mooring Possibilities**

![Diagram of mooring systems](www.the-lake-life.com/about-moorings/)  
![Diagram of mooring systems](www.boatmoorings.com/hm.php)

There are, of course, other mooring possibilities; however, these tend to be the two most common permanent mooring systems used on historic shipwreck sites. The most important thing about any mooring system is that mooring experts guarantee the system does the job it is meant to do, as there have been examples of poorly planned mooring projects on historic shipwrecks. The failure of a permanent mooring system on a historic shipwreck can result in a big problem. For example, the reason why in 2011 Middleton writes that
dive boats visiting the *Thistlegrom* were anchoring on the wreck because a 2009 permanent mooring system had failed. The dead weight blocks used were too light for the kind of dive boats tying to them. The big dive boats pulling on the mooring moved these and the mooring systems became useless.

The importance of a permanent mooring system for the protection of historic shipwrecks and diver safety can be seen on the website of The Lake Champlain’s Underwater Historic Trust to divers. The instructions to divers read:

i. descend down the mooring system to the concrete mooring pad.
ii. follow the guideline to the wreck.
iii. return to the same mooring system if the wreck has multiple mooring systems.
iv. always descend and ascend on the mooring system.

(www.lcmm.org/shipwrecks_history/uhp/uhp.htm)

### 2.4 Wreck Divers Today – a different breed

Early research in diver characteristics, behaviours and expenditure (Holecek and Lothrop, 1980) shows that shipwreck divers invest more time and money in the sport. They also achieve higher levels of diving certifications. Unfortunately, the research also shows that three decades ago nearly one third of shipwreck divers said that artefact hunting was their main reason for diving wrecks. Thirty years ago, getting a trophy from a wreck was not considered as something wrong.
Edney (2011) studying the characteristics, motivations and attitudes of wreck divers from a number of case studies in Australia and Chuuk Lagoon, concludes that her findings show that today’s wreck divers also have a high level of education, above average income and a higher level of dive experience and certification. Her research, however shows one big difference to that of Holecek and Lothrop (1980). Collecting artefacts is not the wreck divers’ main intention today. The top four motivations now are: seeing historically significant shipwrecks, artefacts and marine life as well as enjoying the peace and quiet. Fortunately, unlike thirty years ago, the participants in Edney’s (2011) research relegated collecting artefacts to the bottom of the list.

Most divers visit shipwrecks to see historically significant sites, artefacts and marine life, and to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of the underwater environment. Few divers visit wrecks to collect artefacts and fittings. These findings are in contrast to Holecek and Lothrop’s (1980:17-19) study which found treasure and trophy hunting important to wreck divers. This may reflect changes in diver and community attitudes towards shipwrecks over the past 30 years. In the past, the collection of artefacts was often the focus of wreck diving and considered an acceptable activity by many divers.

(Edney, 2011, p. 9)

This change is important and has probably been one of the reasons why, over the years there has been more cooperation between wreck divers and authorities responsible for underwater heritage. Cederlund (2000) examining the link between marine archaeology and scuba diving in Sweden agrees that there is a big reason for cooperation. His ongoing research *Marine Archaeology in Science and Society: A study of the Swedish development* suggests that out of around 90,000 dives performed annually at the end of the 1990s in
Sweden, more than a third may be aimed at visiting or studying underwater archaeological remains.

The interest in wreck diving has also been registered by the Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI). PADI now offers specialty Wreck Diver and Technical Trimix Diver courses for those who want to dive deeper beyond recreational diving. The growing interest in wreck diving amongst the diving community is evident as these courses ranked third in popularity out of more than fifty different levels of certification offered by the association in 2013 (PADI, 2014).

Today’s wreck divers are different to those of three decades ago. These courses show the willingness of those interested in wreck diving to be educated. More research needs to be done to understand better the profiles and motivations of historic shipwreck divers, however it is important that underwater heritage management efforts recognise that wreck divers have changed. Those interested in this diving speciality are not the enemy and should be included in any strategic plans aimed at protecting and monitoring historic shipwrecks.

### 2.5 Wreck Diver Involvement

Underwater heritage should be as cared for as terrestrial heritage. Unfortunately, this is often not the case and many seem to think that underwater investigations cannot be carried to the same level as those on land (Oxley, 2005). Certainly the underwater environment
offers challenges that require specialised skills, techniques and equipment. Roberts and Trow (2002) explain the important role wreck divers can have in this. They write:

Maritime archaeology in England is predominated by work carried out by the voluntary sector. This high level of amateur (in the sense of non-vocational) involvement should be regarded as an asset to the discipline, as there is demonstrably a greater requirement for survey and recording than can possibly be accomplished by professional archaeologists…English Heritage agrees with those who said that amateurs (who may be professional divers or divers of long standing) can bring a greater level of diving ability to marine fieldwork…

(Roberts and Trow, 2002, p. 8)

Recognising this important role of wreck divers in the massive task of managing historic underwater wreck sites, English Heritage issues four types of licence to individuals or groups wishing to visit or carry out archaeological activities on protected sites. These are:

i. a Visitor licence
ii. a Survey licence
iii. a Surface Recovery licence
iv. an Excavation licence

The Surface Recovery and Excavation licences will not be discussed because they involve advanced archaeological projects requiring the presence of a nominated archaeologist. This is because these projects may include the removal of materials and items. The Visitor licence means exactly what the title suggests – a licence where the primary motive is ‘look but do not touch’.

The Survey licence is interesting. It allows for ‘non-intrusive site investigations...work [that] should not normally damage or disturb archaeological sites’ (English Heritage, 2010,
p. 8). Activities allowed under this licence would include activities such as photography, measuring, doing drawings and site plans, recording seabed characteristics and biological recordings. The idea is that none of the activities allowed under this licence can damage the site and if a mistake is made the task can be repeated. What is more important is that the licensee is expected to forward the data to English Heritage for reporting, archiving and sharing. This is a good way of gathering information about a historic shipwreck which can be shared with others.

A Survey licence recognises today’s good intentions of most historic shipwreck divers; provides the opportunity for divers to engage better in the ongoing management of historic sites and contributes to the collection of data about historic shipwrecks that is often not otherwise available.

### 2.6 Educational Material

The point has already been made that there has been a change in motivations and attitudes of divers visiting wrecks. This change has contributed to a greater collaboration between wreck divers and official entities responsible for historic shipwrecks. When divers and authorities work together, there has been a better gathering and sharing of information about historic shipwrecks. This information has been used to help divers in planning their dives. This section looks at some modern resources aimed at educating all those interested in underwater historic shipwrecks. It also shows, how advances in technology can create
resources that one expects to have in a world where smart gadgets have become so important.

‘The rate of iOS and Android device adoption has surpassed that of any consumer technology in history’ writes Peter Farago (2012) in a post on the Flurry Analytics Blog. He adds that it is important to realise that smart devices are today being adopted ten times faster than the PC revolution of the 1980s. This reality has created an ever-increasing demand for smart applications, compatibility of devices and being connected. What Farago says is not dive-industry specific but it is very relevant as ‘new divers, current divers and dive professionals expect more with advances in these technologies’ (PADI, 2014, p.98).

Historic shipwreck diving is one speciality of diving that has also benefitted from advances in technology. Waterproof 3D dive maps, 3D active applications for iPhone and iPad and virtual 3D dive maps that may actually be downloaded onto dive computers are some of the materials available today. While particularly intended for those visiting shipwrecks, these materials are not exclusive to shipwreck divers. In fact, 3D imaging (or 5D cinema experience) is one of the best ways non-divers may actually experience underwater heritage. Below are examples of these materials offered by Art-to-Media (www.arttomedia.com/site/home.aspx).
Figure 2.2 - 3D Images of Shipwreck Sites

Top 3D Waterproof Cards
Middle 3D iPhone Application
Bottom 3D Dive Computer Display

http://www.arttomatica.com/site/home.aspx
McCarthy (1981) argues that historic shipwrecks are educational assets. Efforts to create historic shipwreck and maritime heritage trails are not new. However, the quality of the materials available today, improves visitor experience. High-tech 3D virtual experiences have, for some time now, been limited to terrestrial sites. These are now available for historic shipwrecks. 3D experiences offer a very attractive presentation; can be constantly updated and permit user interaction. The educational validity of such materials for the diving and non-diving community has been clearly explained by Alison James (Mcintryre, 2013), marine archaeologist with English Heritage, following the introduction of waterproof guidebooks. The Independent quotes her as saying ‘I see it as exactly the same as visiting one of our land-based properties or monuments.’

2.7 Conclusion

This section has shown that the position of most authorities responsible for underwater heritage today is that historic shipwrecks should be accessible to wreck divers. It has been argued that legislating alone is not enough. Other measures must be in place to ensure the protection and management of this irreplaceable heritage. This section has focused on some of the measures already used internationally.

The measures discussed include establishing a protection zone around the wreck. The section has emphasised the great damage anchoring on historic shipwrecks causes and the importance of permanent moorings to immediately stop the damage. Permanent moorings protect historic shipwrecks and also help divers descend and ascend safely. The section has
also examined the importance of understanding today’s positive shipwreck diver profile, attitudes and motivations and suggested thinking about more cooperation. Shipwreck divers may be involved in projects to gather information about historic shipwrecks. Finally, the section looked at some modern materials where the application of modern technology is used to improve the appreciation of historic shipwrecks. These materials have the quality of image, ease of access, connectivity and expandability expected by consumers today. While primarily aimed at shipwreck divers, the examples given serve a wider educational purpose even for non-divers.
Chapter 3: Methodology
3.1 Introduction

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) emphasise that, in research, the methodology of collecting knowledge needs to be scientific. Kaplan (1973) feels that it is the methodology that reveals the possibilities and limitations of the research. Walker (1985) even suggests that ‘the methods we choose are there to be tested, just as much as the substantive hypothesis’. Against a background underlining the importance of methodology in research, this section of the work offers an explanation of the methodology that determined a number of decisions in this small-scale study.

This work is interested in a realistic long-term balance between caring for an aspect of Malta’s underwater history and heritage and, at the same time, satisfying the demands of the local and visitor diving community. The issue of striking a good balance between protecting shipwrecks and permitting access to divers is internationally recognised as an issue that needs to be addressed with urgency. The focus of this study on the historic Le Polynesien wreck at a depth beyond recreation diving, has determined aspects of the methodology. These are some of the first decisions that were taken.

i. It was decided that participants had to be qualified technical divers.

ii. It was decided to focus on local technical divers, as they know the reality of the situation.

iii. It was decided to choose participants who dive the wreck for their own pleasure and are not linked in any other way (government or nongovernmental organization) to the wreck.
3.2 Sample Design – Purposive Sampling

Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992, p.169) claim that in most research projects, the discussions are not based on ‘data collected from all the observations, all the respondents, or all the events that are defined by the research problem’. The often impossible task of obtaining data from all the population introduces the notion of sampling as a subset of the whole population. Cohen and Manion (1989) distinguish between two main sampling strategies. These are probability sampling and non-probability sampling.

Probability sampling refers to a sample process in which each element in the whole population is probably represented in the selected sample. This permits the research to make assumptions about the whole population. In contrast, non-probability sampling is not primarily concerned with including each element in the population to make assumptions about the whole. Non-probability sampling tends to be used in contexts where no amount of effort can define precisely the whole population and/or for reasons of convenience and economy. For example, if data is to be collected through an interviewing process (Patton & Patton, 1990), it would be impossible to interview the whole population. In this case, non-probability sampling makes more sense (Wellington, 1996).

In their explanation of sampling techniques, Teddlie and Yu (2007) place purposive sampling as a subset of non-probability sampling. Purposive sampling (or purposeful sampling) involves the selection of certain cases or units to serve a specific need or purpose rather than the random selection of elements (Kuzel, 1992; LeCompte, Millroy and Preissle,
1992; Miles and Huberman, 1994; Flick, 1998). In this case, the selection depends on the specific purposes of the research question. The participants are chosen because they can provide the more reliable data. Typically, in such cases, the sample is usually small (Teddle and Yu, 2007). In this study, it was decided to use non-probability purposive sampling.

3.3 Advantages of the Purposive Sampling Method

This work is concerned with the balance of protecting an authentic historic shipwreck that is part of Malta’s heritage and the accessibility of this wreck to the increasing demands by the diving community. It was impossible to learn exactly how many divers have visited *Le Polynesien* and consequently decide on a probability sample. It was felt that in the circumstance, non-probability purposive sampling offered a number of advantages because it:

i. was possible to choose respondents who were knowledgeable.

ii. allowed the following of new leads when a respondent proposed someone else who could contribute to the research.

iii. obtained data that was very informative for the study.

iv. was flexible and convenient.
3.4 Disadvantages of Purposive Sampling

The main criticism of non-representative sampling is that one cannot make generalisation from the data. This is true but this study did not intend to make generalisations about all technical divers visiting *Le Polynesien*. It simply intended to show what a group of experienced technical divers think should be done to protect and manage the *Le Polynesien* historic site better.

3.5 Instrument Used

The focused interview was favoured over other methods to collect data in this study. An important consideration in the literature on interviewing is the degree of structure in an interview. In the most rigid format an interview (the schedule-structured interview) may effectively be nothing more than a spoken (face-to-face) version of a questionnaire (Burgess, 1984). In contrast the unstructured (non-standard) interview features no set list of questions allowing interviews to speak freely. The focused interview falls in the middle. Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias (1992, p.225) write that:

> Although the encounter between the interviewer and respondents is structured and the major aspects of the study are explained, respondents are given considerable liberty at expressing their definition of a situation that is presented to them.

(Frankfort-Nachmias and Nachmias, 1992, p.225)

Data in this study was obtained through ten focused interviews (appendix iii). Initially two pilot interviews were carried out to calibrate the interview questions better. Following the
two pilot interviews there were a couple of questions that had a longish introduction and needed to be shortened. There was also a sequence of two questions that needed to be reordered. These adjustments were made.

3.6 The Interviews

The following is a typical sequence for the interviews in this study.

i. Contact was made with the would-be interviewees through face-to-face contact, telephone, email, third parties etc.

ii. Before the interview, the purpose of the research was explained to the interviewees.

iii. The interviewees signed the consent form (appendix iv) giving their approval for the interview to be recorded. Anonymity was guaranteed to them.

iv. Each interview was simultaneously recorded on a laptop and a smart-phone. The recording of the interview was played back and the interviewees confirmed they did not want to alter their responses.

v. Interviewees were asked whether they wanted a copy of the recording. Possibly because the relationship with the interviewees was excellent throughout; none asked for a copy of the recording.

Each meeting lasted not more than thirty minutes. This included the explanation of the purpose of the study, the actual interview and a few minutes of discussion that tended to follow at the end of each interview. These discussions were appreciated but were not recorded.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis
4.1 Introduction

The data in this section is based on the experience of the ten interviewees, all certified technical divers, who agreed to participate in a face-to-face recorded interview focusing on the historic shipwreck *Le Polynésien*. This section represents the statements made by the respondents, their perceptions and opinions. The presentation of the findings begins with information concerning the respondents’ diving experience on this wreck and then explores some issues and practices that, today, are central to discussions dealing with the protection and management of historic shipwreck sites.

4.2 The Respondents’ Experience

Research about the diving community shows an interest in understanding better divers’ intentions, motivations and experience (Holecek and Lothrop, 1980; Edney, 2011; Davis, 1997). The primary aim of this study is not diver profile, however, it was felt relevant to explore, even if briefly, the ‘relationship’ between these ten divers and *Le Polynésien* as background to their responses.

The ten divers (2 female and 8 male) are certified to dive the wreck. They have always dived the wreck for pleasure and do not form part of any entity professionally or officially (Government Department, NGO, Heritage Malta, etc.) responsible for this historic shipwreck. They have a varied degree of experience diving *Le Polynésien*. One respondent has only been on the wreck once but two others have dived the site between 40 and 50
times. One respondent did not give a specific number and simply claimed that he has lost count because he has been diving the wreck for over thirty years. A very rough estimate would suggest that this group of respondents has a minimum average of 14 dives each on *Le Polynesiens*. Five of the participants have actually acted as dive leaders on a number of occasions; one is a technical diving instructor; one is a certified mixed gas-blender and another acted as boatman on various trips. Eight of the respondents have carried out some form of research on the wreck and five said they have taken photographs/videos of the shipwreck. This information suggests a strong experience of diving this wreck. The table below attempts to present a snapshot of the respondents’ profile.

**Table 4.1 - Respondents’ ‘Profile’**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Number of dives on <em>Le Polynesiens</em></th>
<th>Acted as dive leader</th>
<th>Acted as boatman</th>
<th>Did research</th>
<th>Took photographs and/or video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47-49</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>stopped counting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40-45</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3 Attraction and Protection

Asked to assess the attractiveness of the historic shipwreck *Le Polynesien* on a scale from 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest, five of the participants gave the dive site a 10. Two gave it a 9; another two gave it an 8 and one gave it a 7. This means the *Le Polynesien* shipwreck feels like a 9 out of 10 dive to a group of wreck divers who have collectively logged more than 133 dives on it. This is a significant assessment and gives an idea of the value of this historic shipwreck.

One has to admit that this positive opinion of the shipwreck was expected. What is more important; however, are their reasons for awarding it such a high score. Eight of the ten divers immediately mentioned either the ship’s history or its ‘awesomeness’ as their first reaction when asked to justify their assessment. Some things the interviewees said in relation to *Le Polynesien’s* history are that it dates back to World War 1, that unlike most other historic wrecks in Maltese waters it is not a warship but a liner and the fact that it has a lot of artefacts on it. Ideas related to the shipwreck’s awesomeness included the fact that it sits upright on the seabed and the fact that it is over 150 metres long with a lot to see. These reasons tend to reflect findings by Edney (2012) who reports that the top motivations of wreck divers are the historical significance of the wreck, wreck penetration, seeing artefacts and marine life.
In contrast to the positivism expressed by the respondents about the attractiveness of *Le Polynesiens* their opinion that the authorities show absolutely no interest in this historic shipwreck. In fact, asked to rank the protection given to the wreck between 0 and 10 with 10 being the highest, eight of the respondents felt it is 0. Considering all the participants in this interview were Maltese who know the realities of the local situation, this negative perception is significant. It is worrying that a group of divers with such a vast experience on this historic shipwreck comment, ‘No real interest otherwise something would be done for such an important wreck.’ (5); ‘No surveillance or monitoring.’ (3); ‘No interest at all to my knowledge.’ (10). These expressions show a reality that should not be. The opinion of these divers is that Malta’s underwater heritage is not really protected, monitored or promoted for the enjoyment and education of both the diving and non-diving community.

### 4.4 Protection Zone and Permanent Moorings

*Protection Zone*

Notice to Mariners No 5 of 2008 by the Veterinary and Fisheries Affairs Division (appendix ii) established seven conservation zones around wrecks. These are ‘No Stopping Areas’ where anchoring is only allowed to divers’ vessels only after pre-notification to Valletta VTS. Furthermore, spear fishing and the use of fishing gear such as nets and traps is prohibited. Surface fishing including trolling is permissible. The establishing of these seven protection zones was a move in the right direction; however, the wrecks in five of these seven sites are scuttled wrecks and have little or no historic value. These were
purposely sunk at depths not beyond 40 metres to create more underwater attractions for recreational divers and to act as artificial reefs. Unfortunately, the true authentic historic underwater shipwrecks, such as *Le Polynesien*, do not have protection zones around them.

Asked whether they feel there should be a protection zone around *Le Polynesien*, all ten interviewees agreed there should. Some of the reasons they gave included the ongoing damage that is being done to the wreck; the fact that one cannot possibly have a historic wreck of this importance without protection and the argument that, if there are protection zones around the lesser important scuttled wrecks, one must have a protection zone around *Le Polynesien*. The fact that there is no protection zone and fishing with nets is happening on and around the wreck was identified as a problem in the *Master Plan to support a sustainable diving industry in Malta* (adi, 2011). In fact, this action plan considers a review of Notice to Mariners No 5 of 2008 and the inclusion of further zones at the top of the list.

So long as the area around *Le Polynesien* remains unprotected, fishing with nets will continue because, to date, it is legally possible to do so. Nets stuck to shipwrecks cause damage, continue to fish, are dangerous to divers and require a serious effort to remove. Currently a team of divers is trying to raise a drift net stuck on a wreck in St Paul’s Bay which is actually a protected area.

‘Driftnets (*pariti*) pose a great risk to divers and enact a cycle of death for different fish species. This is not the first time we have come across one, as their use is widespread, even in protected areas.’ Prof. Montebello said.

(Times of Malta, 8 May 2014)
Permanent Mooring

Asked to identify which dive related practice contributes mostly to damaging this historic shipwreck, all the interviewees mentioned the attaching of a shot rope to the wreck. Most agreed that, given the depth and currents, diving *Le Polynesien* without following a shot rope is very risky. They also admitted that, on most of their dives a shot rope was, in fact, attached to the wreck to help divers descend and ascend. Generally this anchored/weighted shot rope is pulled up at the end of the dive but sometimes it gets stuck on the wreck. When this happens the rope is wrenched with the consequence of either damaging the wreck or the rope breaks leaving the anchor/make-shift weight and a length of rope on the wreck. Evidence of this practice can be seen on the wreck as it is festooned with what remains of shot ropes. One does not even need to dive *Le Polynesien* to see this damage as most available online videos of dives on this historic shipwreck show this. The images below are, in fact, two screen shots from videos available online. They show the amount of ropes left behind on this historic shipwreck. Viewing the two videos from where these screen shots were taken would show much better the amount of ropes on *Le Polynesien*.

Figure 4.1 - A Festooned *Le Polynesien*

www.youtube.com/watch?v=qcD0A2iIz5k  www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4lqtdMUhjk
Asked whether they agree there should be permanent mooring facilities for dive boats on the site of this historic shipwreck, nine of the interviewees strongly agreed. Seven actually suggested that, given this is the longest shipwreck in Maltese waters, there should actually be more than one permanent mooring (two participants actually said even three moorings). They tended to agree that if there were to be two permanent moorings, these should be placed at the bow and the stern. The image below is not *Le Polynésien* but a stock image used to indicate the positions marked in yellow of the permanent mooring points as suggested by the interviewees.

**Figure 4.2 - Suggested Permanent Mooring Points**

![Image showing the suggested mooring points](Adapted from www.valerievanheest.com/Graphic%20Art.htm)

**4.5 Collaboration**

Internationally, those involved professionally or officially with the protection of underwater heritage recognise the changing attitudes and motivations of divers. The diving community
needs to be included in strategic plans aimed at protecting, maintaining and monitoring underwater heritage. Asked about the degree of collaboration that exists between the diving community and authorities responsible for underwater heritage; each of these respondents answered in the negative. Their negative opinion can best be captured by paraphrasing each of the interviewees’ answers.

Table 4.2 - Interviewees’ Opinion re Collaboration with Authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>No collaboration. Clubs are not approached for any advice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Minimal collaboration. The emphasis is on terrestrial heritage. Little awareness of underwater heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>No collaboration. We expect Heritage Malta to tell us what their plan is for this part of our heritage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>No collaboration. Heritage Malta never asked divers for any information. No initiative from authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The feeling is the authorities hardly know about it. They should meet clubs to see what needs to be done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I am not aware of any collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No collaboration. Red tape rather than action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>No collaboration. Non-existent. Heritage Malta and the authorities need to show their intention to protect the wreck and contact those with experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>No collaboration. Divers are seen as the enemy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>No collaboration. The authorities seem to see the divers as enemies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These comments come from experienced divers with a lot of dives on *Le Polynesien* and it is sad to hear these negative comments. These remarks show the opinion of only ten divers, however, it is possible that their opinion reflects the truth. This situation is very different from what other countries are doing. Abejez, Izquierdo and Tresserras (2011) argue that after a tradition of secrecy as the main protection of underwater heritage, it is time to admit that no country has the resources to monitor all its underwater archaeological sites. The people can however do it, if they are made to feel part of that heritage and proud of it. Maarleveld, Guerin and Egger (2013) editors for UNESCO *Manual for Activities directed at Underwater Cultural Heritage* argue that:

> Providing leisure diving operators with a measure of responsibility and custodianship is an attractive option to solve the issue of supervision and control.

(UNESCO, 2013, p.55)

### 4.6 Awareness and Education

Following the publication of a number of uncropped photographs of leather boots and clothing from *RMS Titanic* to coincide with the disaster’s centenary, James Delgado, director of maritime heritage at the National Oceanic and Atmosphere Administration is quoted by The World Post (2012) to have said that ‘*These are not shoes that fell out neatly from somebody's bag right next to each other...The way they are laid out makes a compelling case that it is where someone has come to rest.*’ These words stress two
important things about authentic historic shipwrecks. They are, most probably, on the seabed because of war, bad weather, poor navigation or bad luck, time capsules capturing a particular moment in history. Authentic historic shipwrecks also have a strong human story linked to them.

Not all historic shipwrecks have the fascination of *RMS Titanic* but all historic shipwrecks have their importance and education of divers and the non-diving public is central to the appreciation of this aspect of underwater heritage. As a final point, the ten interviewees were asked a number of questions related to the education of divers and non-divers about *Le Polynésien*. They were asked whether they feel there is enough education and what they believe may be done to improve the situation. The questions were open-ended and the range of responses given by the interviewees is interesting.

The interviewees’ response to an earlier question was that the authorities do not show any particular interest in *Le Polynésien*. It is therefore not a surprise that they also felt that there is not enough education about this historic shipwreck. The various suggestions made by the interviewees when asked how one may further educate about this particular wreck, may possibly be grouped into three levels. These are:

i. the commitment by the authorities;

ii. the involvement of stakeholders and

iii. specific examples of how to ‘advance knowledge about maritime heritage and making information widely available’ (Heritage Scotland, 2012).
These three levels are, in fact, common to strategic plans for the management and promotion of historic marine heritage. Table 4.3 shows these three levels and some of the ideas expressed by the interviewees for each level.

**Table 4.3 - Interviewees’ Ideas Concerning Education and Le Polynesien**

### Level One - Commitment by the authorities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level Two – Involvement of stakeholders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Level Three – Making information widely available

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1, 2, 3, 9, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 6, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9, 10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The suggestions mentioned by the interviewees indicate a good understanding of what needs to be done to educate both the diving and non-diving communities about the importance of such an interesting historic shipwreck. One needs to add that, throughout the interviews, the participants showed an honest desire to see a serious effort to educate others about *Le Polynésien* and to showcase this historic shipwreck.

### 4.7 Conclusion

This section has presented the responses of ten technical divers who collectively have a vast experience in diving the historic shipwreck *Le Polynésien*. The ten participants do not belong to any government or recognised nongovernment organization or have any professional or official link to the shipwreck. They simply dive this wreck for enjoyment. This group of interviewees with a total of more than 133 technical dives between them have clearly expressed their conviction that there should be both a protection zone around *Le Polynésien* and permanent moorings. They also expressed their disappointment that the authorities have never really shown an interest in this special historic shipwreck. They also feel they can contribute to any initiatives aimed at protecting and monitoring this shipwreck. They would also like to have more opportunities to share their experience of *Le Polynésien* with the non-diving community.
Chapter 5: Conclusion
5.1 Introduction

The word Mediterranean is derived from the Latin ‘Medius Terrae’ meaning in the middle of the land. With its strategic position in the centre of the Mediterranean, the history of the Maltese archipelago shows a rich past. Some claim that the megalithic temples on the islands may possibly be the oldest free standing structures in the world. This historic heritage has always been central to the islands’ identity. Today, Malta’s heritage is also an important contributor to its tourism industry. Sadly, as in many other places, the underwater historic heritage of the Maltese archipelago does not receive the same degree of protection, attention, monitoring, publicity and overall general importance as does its terrestrial historic heritage.

The curiosity, interest and motivation that lead to this work followed two work placement experiences as part of an undergraduate course in tourism studies. The first at the Malta Maritime Museum showed that a visit to the museum would not inform one well enough of the wealth of historic shipwrecks around the Maltese islands. The museum lacks a section on this aspect of Malta’s historic heritage. Except for a very limited number of artefacts, there is no proper display or experience for the visitor to learn about historic shipwrecks such as the HMS Southwold, HMS Hellepon, Le Polynesien, Schnellboot S31 and others. The second experience was a placement at a local dive centre. Here, local and foreign technical divers visiting Malta’s historic shipwrecks, in particular Le Polynesien returned from their dives excited and speaking positively of their experience.
5.2 Recommendations

While agreeing there is legislation in place to protect historic shipwrecks in Maltese waters, the reality is that this is definitely not enough. Various countries and/or states have realised this and are taking a number of practical initiatives to protect historic shipwreck sites beyond legislation. This limited work makes a case beyond legislation for the historic shipwreck *Le Polynesien*. It explored through focused interviews with ten highly experienced technical divers the current situation regarding this particular historic shipwreck site and the possible practical measures that may be taken to better the situation. These are the three major recommendations that may be made based on these interviews.

i. Notice to Mariners No 5 of 2008 (Veterinary and Fisheries Affairs Division, 2008) lists seven ‘No Stopping Areas’ as protection zones around wreck sites. Two of these seven areas protect historic aircraft remains. The other five do not protect historic shipwrecks but vessels that have been purposely sunk at depths shallower than 40 metres for recreational diving. The more important authentic historic shipwrecks including *Le Polynesien* are not included in Notice to Mariners No 5 of 2008 (Malta Maritime Authority, 2008). Three years ago the *Master Plan to support a sustainable diving industry in Malta* (adi, 2011) listed as a priority the need to revise Notice to Mariners No 5 of 2008 to include other protection zones. To date this has not been done. The interviewees in this study unanimously agreed that there should be a protection zone around *Le Polynesien*. The longer this takes to happen, the more damage this historic shipwreck will suffer.
ii. Research on damage to historic shipwrecks shows that the major problem caused by diving activity to underwater heritage is the dropping of anchor on these sites. This is particularly true in cases where the wreck is at depths where divers cannot descend and ascend without some guide rope, which is usually hooked/anchored to the wreck. *Le Polynesien* evidences festoons of ropes and anchors/make-shift weights that were never retrieved. The answer to this is the installation of permanent moorings to immediately stop this practice without adding risks to divers.

iii. The firm belief that emerges from this study is that local authorities do not have any plan in place to specifically protect and monitor *Le Polynesien*, one of Malta’s most important historic shipwrecks. The *National Strategy for the Cultural Heritage* (Ministry for Tourism, Culture and Environment, 2012) draft for consultation document has a number of interesting strategic objectives but it is doubtful to what extent, if any at all, these will be applied to *Le Polynesien*. The recommendation is that the vast experience of technical divers on this wreck be used to develop short, medium and long term plans for sustainable diving on this unique and rare example of Malta’s heritage. These plans should consider at least three main objectives. These are the protection and preservation of *Le Polynesien* itself; the inclusion and education of the diving community and the advancement and sharing of knowledge to the non-diving community.
5.3 Further Research

In spite of its limitations, this work has attempted to make a case for the protection and appreciation of *Le Polynesien* an important historic shipwreck in Maltese waters. This study has shown that there is lack of protection for this wreck site; the absence of any link between the authorities and the technical diving community on this wreck; the continuation of the damaging practice of dropping anchor on the wreck during dives; the desire by the diving community to share its expertise on this wreck and the need to share information to the non-diving community. Much more can and should be done. Below are a few suggestions for further research.

i. Perform a study to see whether the authorities have the time, the manpower, the academic expertise and the technical diving knowhow to possibly be in a position to do something about the current undesirable situation.

ii. Carry out on site research of the ship itself and/or the various artefacts (crockery, silverware, earthenware, glassware, wine bottles, etc.) on it.

iii. Investigate the willingness of technical divers and/or dive centres to collaborate in ongoing organised projects concerning *Le Polynesien* including assuming guardianship.
iv. Explore the use of modern technology such as 3D imaging and 5D cinema to educate better both the diving and non-diving community about this historic shipwreck.

These are just some ideas for further research on the historic shipwreck *Le Polynesien*. The site is very interesting and unfortunately nothing has ever really been done. In the meantime the damage continues and the lack of information remains. It is important that the beauty of *Le Polynesien* is recognised by the authorities and a serious attempt is made to protect and manage the wreck site. It is a historic shipwreck that fanatic wreck divers visit Malta to see. It is part of the Malta’s heritage and should be cared for so that both the diving and non-diving communities can learn about, appreciate and enjoy.
References


Davis, D. (1997) *The development and nature of recreational scuba diving in Australia: A study in economics, environmental management and tourism.* University of Queensland, St Lucia, Queensland.


Appendices

Appendix i

**Le Polynesien**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>nationality:</th>
<th>French</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>purpose:</td>
<td>transport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>type:</td>
<td>ocean liner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subtype/class:</td>
<td>Risbec class ocean liner (fr.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>propulsion:</td>
<td>sail and steam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>date built:</td>
<td>1890</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>weight (tons):</td>
<td>6659 grt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dimensions:</td>
<td>152.5 x 15.1 x 10.4 m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>material:</td>
<td>steel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engine:</td>
<td>triple expansion engine, 12 Belleville boilers, 1 four-bladed propeller, 3-masted barque rigged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>power:</td>
<td>7500 h.p.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>speed:</td>
<td>17.5 knots</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Le Polynesien* was launched on the 18th April 1890 by Marie Francois Sadi Carnot, President of the Republic of France.

*Le Polynesien* was built for "La Compagnie des Messageries Maritimes" at La Ciotat in France. The ship was quickly recognisable by its length, low profile on the water, and by its double funnels painted black.

In 1891, *Le Polynesien* began her service operating between France and Australia. In 1914 it started work for the French Ministry as a troop ship.

On 10th August 1918, *Le Polynesien* was part of a convoy approaching Malta. At 10.30am she was hit by a torpedo from the U Boot UC22 and sank seven miles outside the entrance of the Valletta Grand Harbour.

The vessel sank in five minutes and today lies almost intact at a depth of about 60 metres.
Sources

http://www.messageries-maritimes.org/polynes.htm
http://www.divesubway.com/polynesien.html
http://www.marinefoundation.org/wreckspolynesien.htm
Appendix ii

MALTA MARITIME AUTHORITY

Notice to Mariners No 5 of 2008

CONSERVATION AREAS AROUND WRECKS

The Veterinary Regulation and Fisheries Conservation and Control within the Veterinary and Fisheries Affairs Division (VAFD) has set a number of conservation areas around wrecks.

In view of the above, mariners are to note that conservation areas have been established within the points as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>WRECK</th>
<th>POINT</th>
<th>LATITUDE(N)</th>
<th>LONGITUDE(E)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wied iz-Zurrieq</td>
<td>Umel Faroud</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>35°49.200'</td>
<td>14°26.917'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>35°49.150'</td>
<td>14°27.200'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>35°49.067'</td>
<td>14°27.067'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>35°49.083'</td>
<td>14°26.833'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Xatt l-Ahmar</td>
<td>MV Xlendi</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>36°01.067'</td>
<td>14°16.967'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>36°01.083'</td>
<td>14°17.367'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Comino land</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>36°00.867'</td>
<td>14°17.367'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Karwela</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>36°00.867'</td>
<td>14°16.983'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marsacala</td>
<td>TugSt. Michael</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>35°52.100'</td>
<td>14°34.550'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>35°51.900'</td>
<td>14°34.650'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>35°51.817'</td>
<td>14°34.417'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>35°52.017'</td>
<td>14°34.300'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Qawra point</td>
<td>Imperial Eagle</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>35°57.983'</td>
<td>14°26.033'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>35°57.833'</td>
<td>14°26.233'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>35°57.683'</td>
<td>14°26.033'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>35°57.833'</td>
<td>14°25.850'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Cirkewwa</td>
<td>Rozi</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>35°59.224'</td>
<td>14°19.645'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>35°59.148'</td>
<td>14°19.555'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>35°59.299'</td>
<td>14°19.365'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>35°59.491'</td>
<td>14°19.588'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>E</td>
<td>35°59.387'</td>
<td>14°19.716'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Xrobb l-Ghain</td>
<td>Blenheim bomber</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>35°50.267'</td>
<td>14°34.467'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>35°50.117'</td>
<td>14°34.667'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>35°49.950'</td>
<td>14°34.467'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>35°50.117'</td>
<td>14°34.283'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Off Exiles point</td>
<td>Bristol Beaufighter</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>35°55.617'</td>
<td>14°30.183'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B</td>
<td>35°55.467'</td>
<td>14°30.367'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>C</td>
<td>35°55.300'</td>
<td>14°30.183'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>D</td>
<td>35°55.467'</td>
<td>14°29.983'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
These areas are considered as “NO STOPPING AREAS”. Anchoring is allowed to divers’ vessels ONLY after pre-notification to the Valletta VTS. Masters of diving support vessels are to ensure that the appropriate signals in accordance with the International Convention for the Prevention of Collisions at Sea and the International Code of Signals, are shown at all times. Furthermore, spear fishing and the use of fishing gear such as set bottom lines, trammel nets, gill nets and entangling nets, encircling nets, demersal pots and traps are prohibited in these area.

Charts Affected: BA177,194,211A,211B,2537,2538

Positions are referred to WGS84DATUM
Appendix iii

The Interview

The following text indicates the point where the recording will commence (following the introduction which explains to the respondent the interview focus).

This is interview number ____ .

Point 1
I will be asking you a few questions concerning your link/relationship with the wreck of the 
Le Polynesien.

a) Did you ever dive the wreck? How many times?

b) Did ever lead dives on the wreck? How many times?

c) Did you ever serve as boatman for others diving the wreck? How many times?

d) Did you ever take video, photographs of the wreck?

e) Did you ever do any research/checked for information about the wreck?

Point 2

a) On a scale from 1 – 10 (with 10 being the highest), how would you grade this 
wreck dive?

b) Can you explain your score?

Point 3

According to Notice to Mariners No 5 there are seven conservation zones around wrecks in 
Maltese waters (with only two protecting ‘authentic’ wrecks).

a) Do you think Le Polynesien should have a protection zone around it?

Point 4

a. Given Le Polynesien is probably the wreck with the biggest number of artefacts, do you think there should be a ‘higher level’ of protection such as:

• Permission to dive the wreck?
• Keeping record of the number of divers that visit the wreck?

b. Do you think there would be problems if such measures are employed?
Point 5
a) Given there is evidence that over the years some artefacts have been removed from the wreck, do you think there should be an amnesty that allows those that have artefacts to still keep these but register them?
b) Do you think it would be a good idea, would it work, face problems? Why?

Point 6
a) Which dive practice would you say is currently damaging the wreck most?
b) Would I be correct in saying that on the majority of dives a shot rope is anchored to the wreck structure for divers to follow?
c) Can you describe some of the effects of this practice?

Point 7
a) Do you agree there should be a ‘permanent mooring’ for dive boats to tie to and divers to follow?
b) Given the size of the wreck (154 metres), should there be one or two permanent moorings?

Point 8
The international understanding today is that official authorities and divers need to work together to conserve/monitor wrecks. An idea practised aboard is that of ‘custodianship’ where a dive-centre, trust, association etc. serves as a point of reference for any data on a wreck. This data is then periodically forwarded to the official authorities.

a) Do you think we could introduce such an idea in Malta?
b) What advantages or problems would you envisage?

Point 9
a) Do you think there is enough information and education on this wreck?
b) What might be done to inform/educate further – your ideas?
• Local divers
• Foreign divers
• The public in general

c) What would be the benefits of a better informed/educated diving community?

Thank you for your time.
Dear Participant,

My name is Neil Gerardi. I am currently in my last year reading for a degree in Tourism Studies. My long essay focuses on the *Le Polynesien* shipwreck. More specifically, it is concerned with possible measures beyond the current legislation that may contribute to protecting and monitoring this interesting wreck.

The participants in this study have not been chosen randomly but rather because of their potential link to this shipwreck. It would, therefore, be much appreciated if you agree to participate and share your ideas.

Neil Gerardi

Consent Form

I………………………………………agree to participate in Neil Gerardi’s research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with Neil Gerardi to be recorded.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the long essay.

Signed…………………………………….