



Ecotourism

Cape Breton







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Louisbourg

Ocean 11



The Fortress: Today







Scuba Diving



Historic Charts



Le Chameau



Le Celebre



The Celebre

The highlight of the underwater treasures of Louisbourg Harbour is the 64-gun French "ship-of-the-line", the *Celebre*, built in 1755 in Brest, France. Like her sister ship the *Prudent*, she arrived in Louisbourg Harbour in the spring of 1758 with orders to defend the great French fortress against British attack. But, like the *Prudent*, her voyage into Louisbourg Harbour was her last, and she too lies silently in the Harbour in only seven metres of water. The *Celebre* was discovered in 1961 and since then has undergone very little change. Each year it is carefully cleaned of kelp, exposing a wreck site over 50 metres long.

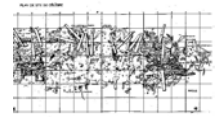
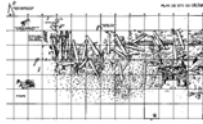
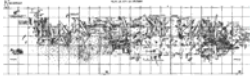
The most amazing feature of the wreck of the *Celebre* is her cannons. Thirty-three formidable guns, some over three metres long and two-and-a-half tons in weight, are still intact, although heavily corroded and fragile. Most of the ship's hull was burned during the British attack, and not much of it is left. But the slump of the ship's main mast, over one metre in diameter, is still locked in place by surrounding timbers, a mast that once towered fifty metres above the upper gun deck of the stately sailing vessel. Other artifacts like cannon balls, a small anchor, brass and wooden pulley sheaves, ceramic shards and bricks from the ship can also be seen at the site.

Protecting sites like those in Louisbourg Harbour has become a priority with the Canadian Parks Service.

Strict rules must be followed when visiting these protected sites.

If you are interested in seeing them, you should contact Parks Canada, or a licensed guide like Scuba Tech of Sydney.

Le Celebre



Le Celebre



Le Prudent

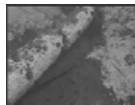
The Prudent

One of these sailing war vessels was the 74-gun French ship *Prudent*. Carrying a crew of 680 men, the *Prudent* was sent from France in 1758 to strengthen the Fortress' defences against British attack. The ship had taken over three years to build and its total displacement, including armament and provisions, was over 3 000 tons. But in spite of cannons stationed over two full decks, a quarter deck and a forecastle, she was not prepared for what awaited her on July 25, 1758, in Louisbourg Harbour.

"Clouds of black smoke pouring from all parts of the ship hung like a pall over the harbour. Her guns exploded, hurling destruction into the city; and the blackened ruins of the *Prudent* soon disfigured the sparkling waves. Flames burst intermittently from the hull until nearly eight o'clock, but at that hour the beautiful battleship was reduced to a mass of charred timber and in her smouldering ruins expired the last hopes of Louisbourg." (C.O. MacDonald's *The Last Siege of Louisbourg*)

Wreck of the Evelyn

Today, in less than five metres of water near the entrance to Louisbourg Harbour, the once dashing and proud *Prudent* lies silently, where it went down that day two hundred and forty years ago. Divers on the site will see large floor timbers spreading out over the ocean bottom and a large mound of concreted cannonballs next to an open cavity, which contains remnants of the burned-out mast of the ill-fated ship. Also found on the site are the fragmented remains of some of the *Prudent*'s cannons, many of which, at the time of the disaster, were so hot they exploded upon contact with the cold Atlantic water.





Next Topic: Overview

