Infosheet No. 11
The Shipwreck Index of the British Isles and Shipwrecks UK

The Shipwreck Index of the British Isles and Northern Ireland

The first five volumes of the acclaimed *Shipwreck Index of the British Isles* were published by Lloyd's Register between 1995 and 2000. The sixth was published by Lloyd's Register-Fairplay in 2002. Each was compiled by Richard Larn OBE and his wife Bridget, drawing on expertise from many decades of original research and experience in nautical archaeology and maritime history to provide an encyclopedic reference of the following areas:

- Volume 1: The South West
- Volume 2: The South Coast
- Volume 3: The East Coast
- Volume 4: Scotland
- Volume 5: The West Coast & Wales
- Volume 6: Ireland

This series of books combines previously unpublished information on shipping losses in British and Irish waters.

Each volume details some 7,500 shipwrecks, catalogued in date order with alphabetical indexes and is accompanied by a separate, cumulative alphabetical index of the shipwrecks featured in each volume. There are up to 30 fields of information about each vessel, including construction and ownership, details of cargo, crew, passengers, lives lost, voyage and location.

Also contained in each volume are maps, a comprehensive introduction to the history of shipwrecks, a full bibliography of shipping references and reference sources and wreck photographs.

The publication is now out of print, but secondhand copies can sometimes be found, and we have a full reference set in our HEC collections.

Shipwrecks UK

This published work has since been taken forward by Shipwrecks UK, co-founded by the authors and Alan Jones MBE.

The Shipwrecks UK project focused on building and using a powerful electronic research tool to interrogate the entire Index data of now nearly 50,000 wrecks to map and cross-check the data and allow the underlying themes to come to life.

Use of the resource since 2006 has allowed the content to be substantially enhanced and increased: there is now a more consistent coverage of shipwrecks in the seas surrounding Britain and Ireland.

The area covered and some of the themes are illustrated within the [Shipwrecks UK](#) website. The work continues, with the aim of documenting every known shipping loss in the sea areas surrounding the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

The ability to instantly map and drill-down into the data - using ready menu options or more complex bespoke queries - means that themes and answers are available against a vast range of enquiries. In many ways, the resource

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provides a microcosm of our maritime heritage.

The data covers the vessel, the wreck event, and sometimes the physical wreck. As for the Index volumes, each record has a possible maximum of thirty fields of information concerning each entry, which include:

• ship's name
• previous names
• date of loss
• cause of loss (and contributory cause if relevant, such as fog)
• ship type
• up to three cargo references
• number of crew (and number lost)
• number of passengers (and number lost)
• captain or master's name
• port of registry
• flag
• owner
• shipbuilder
• construction
• where built
• year built
• method of propulsion
• horsepower
• boilers
• gross, net or builder's measurement tonnages
• armament
• voyage from and to
• primary location and loss
• secondary location of loss
• latitude and longitude
• bibliography
• up to 200 words of text relevant to the loss

The current means for enquirers to access this information is via an email to Shipwrecks UK or use of the online form within the website.

As the search capabilities go far beyond what is possible using the printed version this can often lead to rapid results for subject experts or other members of the public. Enquirers with limited clues can often be provided with the identify of a vessel or event (and the associated information) where this might otherwise involve them in substantial time and effort.

Shipwrecks UK holds the copyright to all the written and electronic information contained in the Shipwreck Index volumes, and subsequent additions and enhancements, and could collaborate to make this much more widely available.

Unlike the shipwreck index of the UK Hydrographic Office, which is concerned primarily with obstructions that might prove a hazard to shipping, this index resource is an historical record of lost vessels.

This work formed the basis of the Maritime Archaeological Records (MAR) of underwater sites for England, maintained by the Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England. (now part of Historic England) and its Welsh and Scottish equivalents, CADW and CANMORE).

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