

Infosheet No. 12 Shipwrecks – Possible sources of information

There is no centralised source of information relating to shipwrecks that occurred before 1741. Information can be sought locally, or secondary sources, such as *A checklist of narratives of shipwrecks and disasters at sea to 1860*, with summaries, notes and comments by Keith Huntress (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979).

Between 1875 and 1904 a list of vessels removed from the British register, whilst the current issue was

going to press, was published in the *Mercantile Navy List* giving brief reasons why. Separate monthly returns, listing vessels added or removed were also printed. The National Archives (see below) has bound volumes of these for the period 1875 to 1890 and the Guildhall Library (see below) has them for 1890 to 1946. These are particularly useful for vessels not actually lost, but hulked, laid up or condemned as unseaworthy.

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*Please note that our library and archive are closed to visitors for planned refurbishment throughout 2020. It is best to email if you have an enquiry.

Early 'posted' editions of the *Lloyd's Register of Ships* often include the fate of a vessel, the entry being stamped 'Collision', 'Foundered', 'Condemned', &c, sometimes the month and year ('3.89') is added. You can search early editions of the [Register of Ships online](#).

Brief ship details and date/place of loss have been recorded in the Quarterly *Casualty Returns* since July 1890. These can now be accessed [online](#).

Wreck Report series

Manuscript source containing Reports of Classed Vessels lost, 1892 - 1940. It includes shipwreck, war losses and demolitions. *Soon to be digitised & available online.

Wreck Books

Another source for the period from 1940 to 1977, are the unpublished wreck books. *Soon to be digitised.

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	Our specialist library also includes some reference books on shipwrecks.
Wrecks Office United Kingdom Hydrographic Office Admiralty Way Taunton Somerset TA1 2DN T +44 (0)1823 484444 F +44 (0)1823 284077 E wrecks@ukho.gov.uk www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-hydrographic-office	Provides an information service for commercial, private, MOD, and other Governmental departmental enquiries. Has information on all post 1913 marine casualties occurring in continental shelf areas except USA and Australian coastal waters. Search fee charged.
The Wreck Site www.wrecksite.eu	The wreck site is the world's largest online wreck database. It includes details of wrecks, positions, images, maritime charts, shipowners and shipbuilders. Subscription service.
Shipwrecks UK Email research@shipwrecks.uk.com www.shipwrecks.uk.com	The entire content of Richard and Bridget Larn's <i>Shipwreck Index of the British Isles</i> published volumes has been fully-integrated into an electronic version which is searchable through an extensive list of parameters and provides an almost instant mapping capability. This content has been extensively extended and improved over many years to produce the current Shipwrecks UK resource. 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. Small fee charged. Responses that can be provided include details not only of the vessel, wreck event and sometimes the physical wreck but also the context in terms of cargo, voyage, ship type, cause of loss, etc, etc. The search capabilities go far

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	beyond what is possible using the printed version and can often lead to rapid results; it can enable enquirers to identify a vessel or event from limited clues.
<p>Lloyd's Marine Collection Guildhall Library Aldermanbury London EC2P 2EJ T +44 (0)20 7332 1868 www.cityoflondon.gov.uk</p>	<p>Information on marine casualties and shipping movements worldwide back to circa 1740. The Collection includes <i>Lloyd's List</i>, which from 1741 provided a daily record of information on shipping casualties received in London. As Lloyd's (that is Lloyd's of London, not Lloyd's Register) intelligence network grew, this source became increasingly comprehensive, not only for British vessels and vessels wrecked in British waters, but for shipping losses worldwide. A variety of indexes are available at the Guildhall Library. Further information on this and other sources of marine records compiled by Lloyd's of London can be found in Declan Barriskill's <i>Guide to the Lloyd's Marine Collection 2nd Edition</i> (London: Guildhall Library, 1994).</p>
<p>The Salvage Association <i>Does anyone have up to date details? If so please get in touch with us at HEC so that we can update this information sheet</i> hec.info@lrfoundation.org.uk</p>	<p>Undertakes tracing of ownership of hull/cargo of ships sunk other than by wartime activity, circa 1880 onwards. Arranges transfer of ownership of wreck, abandoned by original owners, to the insurers.</p>

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<p>Receiver of Wreck Maritime and Coastguard Agency Spring Place 105 Commercial Road Southampton SO15 1EG T +44 (0)23 8032 9474 E row@mcga.gov.uk www.gov.uk/wreck-and-salvage-law</p>	<p>Advice on what to do if you discover a wreck, as well as information on the ownership of wreck and legal requirements.</p> <p>The Receiver of Wreck team processes incoming reports of wreck. This involves researching ownership of wreck material, working with the finder and owner, and working with other interested parties, such as archaeologists and museums.</p> <p>The MCA does not maintain a record of all known shipwrecks around the UK. They do maintain a database which relates to salvaged wreck material. Search fee charged.</p>
<p>Trinity House Trinity Square Tower Hill EC3N 4DH T +44 (0)20 7481 6900 E enquiries@trinityhouse.co.uk www.trinityhouse.co.uk</p>	<p>Records include details of dispersal, position, buoyage, possible cargo and names of wrecks in home (records pre-1940 destroyed by fire).</p>
<p>Department of Transport <i>Does anyone have up to date details? If so please get in touch with us at HEC so that we can update this information sheet</i> hec.info@lrfoundation.org.uk</p>	<p>Ownership of hull and cargo of Allied Merchant Ships lost by war causes during both world wars.</p>
<p>The Imperial War Museum Lambeth Road London SE1 6HZ T +44 (0)20 7416 5320 F +44 (0)20 7416 5374 E mail@iwm.org.uk www.iwm.org.uk</p>	<p>A named index of ships covering both world wars.</p>

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<p>National Maritime Museum Greenwich London SE10 9NF T +44 (0)20 8312 6516 E library@rmg.co.uk www.rmg.co.uk/research-collections</p>	<p>A named index of ships covering both world wars. General maritime history including some wrecks. Register in advance for a free readers ticket.</p> <p>Search the online Catalogue.</p>
<p>Centre Européen de Recherches et d'Etudes Sous-marine (Underwater Research Centre) E info@ceresm.com www.ceresm.com</p>	<p>Information on the search and recovery of shipwrecks including an index of named shipwrecks with histories in French.</p>
<p>Nautical Archaeology Society www.nauticalarchaeologysociety.org</p>	<p><i>International Journal of Nautical Archaeology</i>. Subscription.</p>
<p>United States Coastguard www.dco.uscg.mil</p>	<p>US coastguard maritime casualties from 1974.</p>

Entering "shipwrecks" into an Internet search engine offers up a multitude of sites giving details of shipwrecks sites, ships, artefacts and diving opportunities worldwide.

Suggested reading

Keith Huntress *A checklist of narratives of shipwrecks and disasters at sea to 1860* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1979).

J. G. Lockhart *Peril of the Sea: A Book of Shipwrecks and Escapes* (London: Philip Allan & Co., 1924)

Frank H. Shaw *Famous Shipwrecks* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1930)

Bernard Edwards *The Grey Widow-Maker: The true stories of twenty-four disasters at sea* (London: Futura Publications, 1995)

Charles Hocking *Dictionary of Disasters at Sea during the age of*

steam 1824 to 1962 (London: Lloyd's Register, 1969)

Norman Hooke *Modern Shipping Disasters 1963-1987* (London: Lloyd's of London Press, 1989)

P. Marsden *English Heritage book of ships and shipwrecks* (London: English Heritage, 1997)

Richard and Bridget Larn *Shipwreck Index of the British Isles* (Lloyd's Register and, latterly, Lloyd's Register-Fairplay)

- *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*

I. G. Whittaker *Off Scotland* (1998)

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Charles Bateson and Jack Loney
Australian Shipwrecks 1622-1990 (5 vols., various publishers, 1972-91)
Hugh Edwards *Australian and New Zealand Shipwrecks & Sea Tragedies* (New South Wales: Phillip Mathews, 1978)

C W N Ingram and P O Wheatley
New Zealand Shipwrecks 1795-1960 (3rd ed., Wellington: A. H. and A. W. Reed, 1961)

Bruce D Berman *Encyclopaedia of American shipwrecks* (Boston: Marines Press, 1972)

R F Kennedy *Shipwrecks on and off the coast of Southern Africa: a catalogue and index* (Johannesburg: Johannesburg Public Library, 1955)

Lloyd's of London *Lloyd's War Losses – The First World War: Casualties to Shipping through Enemy Causes 1914-18* (Lloyd's of London Press Ltd., London: 1990)

Lloyd's of London *Lloyd's War Losses – The Second World War: British, Allied and Neutral Merchant Vessels Sunk or Destroyed by War Causes* (Lloyd's of London Press Ltd., London: 1990)

HM Government *British Vessels Lost at Sea 1914-18* (London: HMSO, 1977)

HM Government *British Vessels Lost at Sea 1939-45* (London: HMSO, 1977)

A. J. Tennent *British Merchant Ships sunk by U-Boats in the 1914-1918 War* (Kent: A. J. Tennent, 1990)

William O. S. Gilly *Narratives of Shipwrecks of the Royal Navy* (London: John W. Parker, 1850)

To Sail No More

A five-part series published by Maritime Books, Cornwall, detailing Royal Navy ships scuttled and broken up.

Researchers should check availability, accessibility and opening times with the repositories listed before making a personal visit.

If you have any updates or additions for Information Sheets please get in touch.

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