



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.

Heritage & Education Centre Lloyd's Register Foundation

71 Fenchurch Street
London
EC3M 4BS

☎ +44 (0)20 7423 2475
✉ hec.info@lrfoundation.org.uk
🌐 [Website](http://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk)

*Please note that our library and archive are closed to visitors for planned refurbishment until 2024. 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 and late editions of the [Register of Ships online](http://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk).

Brief ship details and date/place of loss have been recorded in the *Quarterly Casualty Returns* since July 1890. These can be accessed [online](http://hec.lrfoundation.org.uk).

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Another source for the period from 1940 to 1977, are the unpublished wreck books.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.

Our specialist library also includes some reference books on shipwrecks.

Wrecks Office

United Kingdom Hydrographic Office
Admiralty Way
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 2DN

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.

☎ +44 (0)1823 484444
✉ wrecks@ukho.gov.uk
🌐 [Website](#)

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

✉ research@shipwrecks.uk.com
🌐 [Website](#)

The entire content of Richard and Bridget Larn's *Shipwreck Index of the British Isles* 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 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.

Lloyd's Marine Collection

Guildhall Library
Aldermanbury
London
EC2P 2EJ

📞 +44 (0)20 7332 1868
🌐 [Website](#)

Information on marine casualties and shipping movements worldwide back to circa 1740. The Collection includes *Lloyd's List*, 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 *Guide to the Lloyd's Marine Collection 2nd Edition* (London: Guildhall Library, 1994).

The Salvage Association

70 Newcomen Street
London
SE1 1YT

📞 020 7234 9120

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.

Receiver of Wreck

Maritime and Coastguard Agency
Spring Place
105 Commercial Road
Southampton
SO15 1EG

📞 +44 (0)23 8032 9474
✉️ row@mcga.gov.uk
🌐 [Website](#)

Advice on what to do if you discover a wreck, as well as information on the ownership of wreck and legal requirements.

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.

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.



Trinity House

Trinity Square
Tower Hill
EC3N 4DH

Records include details of dispersal, position, buoyage, possible cargo and names of wrecks in home (records pre-1940 destroyed by fire).

☎ +44 (0)20 7481 6900
✉ enquiries@trinityhouse.co.uk
🌐 [Website](#)

Department of Transport

Great Minister House
33 Horseferry Road
London SW1P 4DR

Ownership of hull and cargo of Allied Merchant Ships lost by war causes during both world wars.

☎ 03003303000

The Imperial War Museum

Lambeth Road
London
SE1 6HZ

A named index of ships covering both world wars.

☎ +44 (0)20 7416 5320
✉ mail@iwm.org.uk
🌐 [Website](#)

National Maritime Museum

Greenwich
London
SE10 9NF

A named index of ships covering both world wars. General maritime history including some wrecks. Register in advance for a free [readers ticket](#).

☎ +44 (0)20 8312 6516
✉ library@rmg.co.uk
🌐 [Website](#)

Search the online [Catalogue](#).

Centre Européen de Recherches et d'Etudes Sous-marine (Underwater Research Centre)

Information on the search and recovery of shipwrecks including an index of named shipwrecks with histories in French.

✉ info@ceresm.com
🌐 [Website](#)

Nautical Archaeology Society

 [Website](#)

International Journal of Nautical Archaeology.
Subscription.

United States Coastguard

 [Website](#)

US coastguard maritime casualties from 1974.

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 WidowMaker: The true stories of twentyfour 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)

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)

M 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.

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