



Dive Site: The City Of Waterford
Location: 50 40.544N 00 06.676W (Brighton)
Description: 1344 ton Cargo Vessel
Length: 270feet
Depth: 30 metres
Visibility: 10 metres (30 feet)
Rating: ****

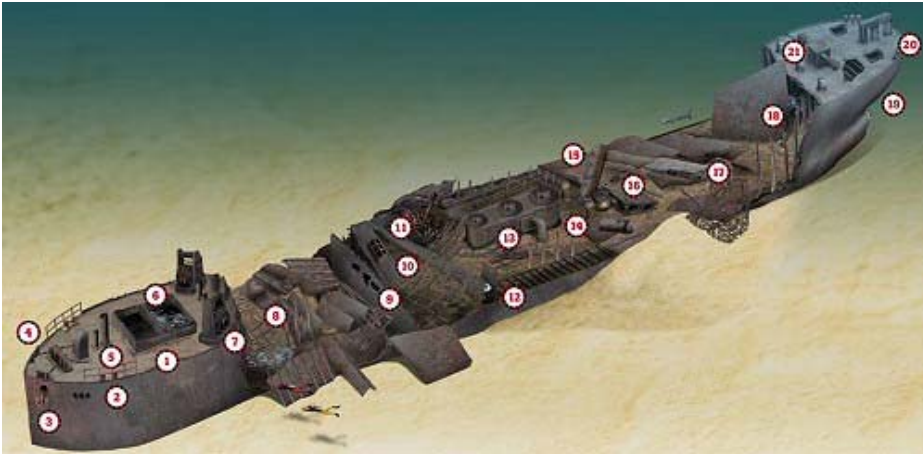
Built by Caledon Shipbuilding & Engineering Co. Ltd., Dundee Scotland, for the Clyde Shipping Co. Ltd. and used in the passenger service between Liverpool and Waterford.

She was 1.344 tons and measured 270x37 ft. She had accommodation for 40 passengers and was renamed City of Waterford, when she was sold to Palgrave Murphy, shipowners of Dublin in 1946.

On April 14th 1949, after 3 years of service between Dublin and the Continent (Belgium, Holland and Germany), she was sunk in collision in thick fog some 8 miles off Brighton, with the much larger GReek steamer Marpessa,.



The Tour



The tour of this 1334-ton steamship begins on the port side just aft of the bow (1), simply because that's where the shot will be dropped and it's as good a place to begin as any.

Heading forwards along the port side, the bow area itself is marked by intact railings (2), behind which a pair of small bollards stand on the deck. The bow is flush, with no raised forecastle. Below the railings, a row of small portholes looks into the forepeak.

Rounding the bow, both anchors are tightly in place in their hawse pipes (3). It's worth taking time to study their size and shape, because later on our tour we will be comparing them to another anchor. At high water slack, the seabed here is in 36m, but there is little reason to go that deep at this point of the dive.

Back on the deck at 31m, both anchor chains rise through the hawse pipes, go over a small anchor

winch (4), then drop through holes in the deck to the chain-box below.

Access below decks is protected by a curved cuddy, the hatch facing aft.

Behind the cuddy are the base of a ventilator and a mast-foot (5), followed by, just as you would normally expect the forecastle to drop away to the main deck, the coaming of the forward hold (6). The City of Waterford had a flush deck all the way forward, with no forecastle at the bow.

Behind the hold, we come to another unusual feature. Rather than a central mast with derricks and winches between the holds, a pair of cranes is fitted, one on either side of the deck (7). I couldn't make these out on the photograph in Tim's boat file, so they must have been fitted after the photograph was taken.

The crane's jibs have collapsed, but the rotating bases with the winding gear remain intact and there is plenty of scope for spending some time figuring out how all the machinery works together.

Aft of the cranes, the second hold has collapsed almost all the way to the seabed (8), with just a few ribs standing upright. The holds are not that big and the back of the hold is soon marked by an upright bulkhead running across the wreck (9).

Behind this bulkhead is the stoke-hold containing the City of Waterford's two boilers. Then, above the forward end of the boilers, would have been the wheelhouse. This has long since disintegrated, though a section of deck with the ventilator hatches remains running across the wreck (10).

Perhaps it's a sign of the scale of destruction that has taken place, as such hatches usually run along the ship, not across it. Or perhaps it is another unusual aspect of the City of Waterford's design.

The port boiler is completely buried by debris, while across the wreck the starboard boiler is broken open by a large Admiralty-pattern anchor that has smashed through it to reveal the boiler tubes (11).

Tim reports that the steel superstructure used to be intact 10 or so years ago, and this is why I suggested paying so much attention to the ship's anchors earlier. This anchor is definitely from an era before that of the wreck.

One possibility is that it was caught in a trawl somewhere and dumped there by a fishing boat. If a trawler had pulled up an anchor in its nets, the safest place to dump it would have been on a known foul area such as a wreck.

Considering the devastation of the superstructure, another surprise to the port side of the boilers is a favourite wreck feature, the toilet, complete with the sides of its cubicle (12).

Next comes the engine, a smoothly enclosed triple-expansion unit (13), its top standing intact from the general debris along either side at a depth of about 32m.

Continuing aft from the engine, a level deck plate holds the bases of two ventilators, one to either side of the centre line (14).

The single aft hold was served by a more traditional derrick system for handling cargo. A collapsed mast (15) is followed by an upside-down winch that has tipped a little to port (16).

The wreck remains broken almost to the seabed across the hold, with sand banked up against the port side. A large section of trawl net is caught against the port side of the wreck at the back of the hold (17).

At the stern, the wreckage suddenly regains its structure (18), the stern rising intact and upright from the seabed. Following the outside of the hull round, the propeller has been salvaged to leave just the shaft projecting and the rudder also missing (19). The seabed is at 36m, as at the bow, though you don't need to go that deep to see the shaft.

Above the stern, the steering mechanism is intact (20). On either side, small hatches in the deck are open, then the deck is broken open to show the ribs below on the port side. All provide good holes to look through, though they are a little tight for casual penetration.

To the front of the stern deck, a large winch spans almost the width of the wreck (21). It's a convenient point to tie in and launch a DSMB to end the dive