

THE WRECK OF THE 'SS URLANA'

THE FACTS

STAR RATING : 3 star

SIZE : 6,850 gross tons
BUILT : Barclay Curle & Co. (Glasgow)
DIMENSIONS : 140m x 18m 10m
SANK : September 5th, 1943
CAUSE : Ran aground in bad weather
LOCATION : North of MacLeods Maidens
WRECK DEPTH : 6-15 metres
CONDITIONS: Large ground swell in westerly winds can make this sight unpleasant
TIDES: None
SEABED: Coarse white sand
LAUNCH SITE: Harlosh beach, Struan jetty or Caroy Jetty

VESSELS HISTORY : (download)

WRECK AT PRESENT :(download)

MAGAZINE FEATURE : none specifically but covered in may of the Magazine Reviews about us

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THE HISTORY OF THE VESSEL

The Urlana was a twin decked, single screwed cargo vessel, owned by the British India Steam Navigation Co. En-route from Buenos Aires to the U.K. in the early hours of September the 5th 1943, with a cargo of canned meat and wool, she encountered bad weather.

She soon ran aground on the West coast of Skye at a point approximately one mile to the North of MacLeods Maidens. Within the hour she was pounding heavily onto the rocks and in dire straits.

Another vessel the "Thurland Castle" arrived and rescued 108 survivors, who were then shipped to Loch Ewe. Shortly after the SS Urlana broke apart and shed her cargo into the sea.

These proved a welcome bonus to the local population as supplies were in short supply during these times, although the recovery of the said cargo from the rocks in front of the cliffs would have been no easy task due to the weather and locality of the site.

THE WRECK AT PRESENT

Extensively broken up and scattered over an area of several hundred yards of seabed at a maximum depth of 15 metres, this site offers ample opportunity to find something which has gone unnoticed for the last 50 years.

Plenty of non ferrous material, including ammunition casings and pipe work are scattered around. Even some silver cutlery, and a button with the initials BISN (British India Steam Navigation Co.) have been found.

Situated on a coarse white sandy seabed amongst very tall kelp, sunshine fans this site through the weedy fronds which waft with the waters movement close to the surface. It is an excellent site for rummaging around, and a very colourful dive with abundant plant growth and algae/sponge encrustation on the wreckage remains. Visibility often 20m+ makes this a paradise for photographers. This site can have a heavy swell after a south westerly blow and may take time to lessen, even at seabed level and although not dangerous, it can spoil the enjoyment and visibility of this dive which is normally excellent.

However the site is not merely a wreck site, but also one of scenic beauty and is well worth the effort involved to get there. Launching for this site can be at Caroy Jetty, or across the beach at Harlosh, if a four wheel driven vehicle is available.

There are still a lot of artifacts to be found if you have a good look in all the nooks and crannies. The boilers can be found in the shallower section of the wreck site, and some of the superstructure retains a recognisable form.

Scattered all around the site are rounds of ammunition, battered shell cases and shell heads with brass inserts. The life on the wreck-site is mainly pollock and shoaling fish which swim between the wreckage and the numerous boulders which are scattered around the area.