

Tug Tales #27

Nov 15, 2014

DeLand's ST 672 is Well Known in South Wales By Dan Friend President DATPG Inc



Until yesterday all we knew of the fate of DeLand's *Warboat* ST 672 was that five men lost their lives on September 15th, 1944, when the tug foundered in the North Atlantic. But the local folks around Porthcawl, South Wales, in the United Kingdom have known of the wreck since WW2...and what's left of it still can be seen today!

Once again our website is the gift that keeps on giving as I received an email from a Mr. Tony Comley who years ago found an anchor near the wreck and wondered if there were a specific type assigned to the ST's when built. I pointed out that as far as I could tell no specific anchor was provided and asked him to explain about the ST 672 wreck. Here's what

he sent back to me: *Good Afternoon Daniel,*

May I thank you for your response. I attach for your information a section of Admiralty Chart No. 1169 which shows the wreck symbol on the east end of the Tusker Rock which indicates the exact position of ST672. I have highlighted with a purple square.



I am an ex-member of the local lifeboat crew and having done some research on lifeboat records I have come up with the following :

On September 15 1944 the US tug 672 ran aground on the Tusker Rock. The Mumbles (Swansea) Lifeboat was launched at 2.50 p.m. and reached the scene at 4.20 p.m. The coxswain could not get the boat closer than 400 yards and stood by as the tide rose. At 6.00 p.m. the tug was lifted from the rock and capsized with the loss of four of her crew of twelve. I cannot find any official evidence as to how the survivors got ashore but spoke recently to a retired Porthcawl Harbour Master and Merchant Seaman who is 92 years of age and he informed me that the survivors came ashore in the tug's life rafts.

I was a boat owner at Porthcawl for some thirty years and have visited the site of ST672 on several occasions. You are right - some salvage work was undertaken in the 1970's, various

*artifacts and non-ferrous metals being removed from the wreck by a team of local divers. A total salvage operation would have been impractical as this area of the Bristol Channel is extremely hazardous and experiences the second highest tides in the world. **The skeleton of 672 still remains.** This factor leads me to believe that ST672 would not be on passage in the Bristol Channel without an anchor. It would be like driving a car in New York city without brakes!! It would be intriguing to know exactly where ST672 sailed from and where her destination was prior to her foundering on the Tusker Rock. I will certainly get a photo of the anchor which I will forward to you. Tony Comley via email 11 14 14*

US Merchant Marine records reflect five men lost their lives that day which may have been adjusted later. Why did the tug capsize? Maybe she was holed and took on water as the tide came in; maybe she was on a ledge at an awkward angle...who knows. But this is fascinating: the anchor that Tony found is on display outside a local club in Porthcawl, and I wonder if any of the other artifacts salvaged ended up in local museums or antique collections? Where is the builder's plaque? The dangerous Tusker Rock area was known for centuries for its danger to shipping; it appears to have been a local industry at one point with folks carrying lights to bring ships to their doom all in the name of plunder.

We will work to get a photo of what's left for our records, but at least we now know where ST 672 ended up!