



The Henry Euler Memorial Trust presents

THE SHIP THAT VANISHED IN THE ALDERNEY RACE!

Short film, presentation and Q&A
with Richard Keen and his team of divers
from Bailiwick of Guernsey Shipwrecks

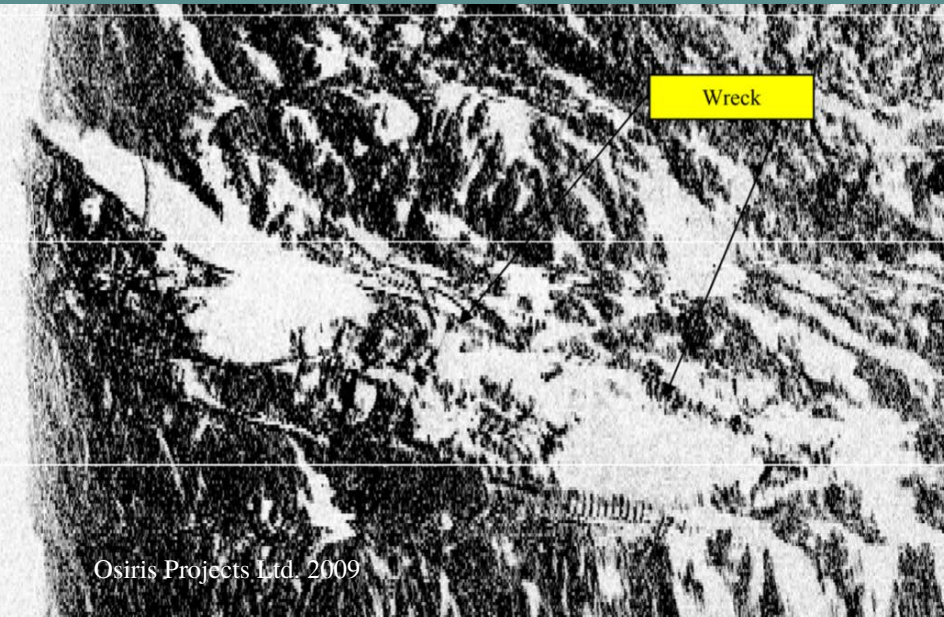
Saturday, 5 November 2022



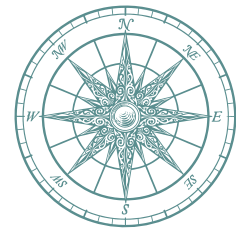
"This has got to be one of the most interesting shipwrecks in the Channel Islands."



For over 140 years, the fate and location of the ship that lay wrecked on the seabed some two miles east of Alderney in the treacherous waters of the Raz Blanchard – the scene of many a maritime loss over the previous centuries - remained a mystery up to, and after, its discovery.



The wreck was first discovered in 2009 by Osiris Projects Ltd. during a detailed multi-beam seabed survey carried out for Alderney Renewable Energy Ltd. in pursuit of the proposed tidal energy project.



In the subsequent UK Hydrographic Office report, the wreck was listed No. 79335, of unknown name, upright with the centre collapsed, and categorised as non-dangerous to shipping.

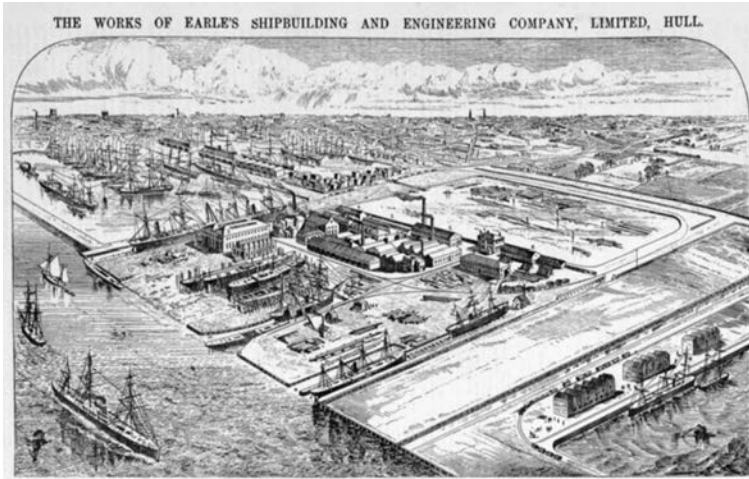
**Its position was pin-pointed at
Latitude 49°41,759'N and Longitude 02°08,882'W in the Alderney Race.**

Then, in the summer of 2022, divers led by Richard Keen, made the first of several descents to a depth of over 40m to examine what they first expected to be a World War II wreck. Imagine their surprise when they finally surveyed the well-preserved remains of an iron-hulled ship, some 86m in length with an extremely interesting cargo.



Initial research in the standard wrecklists failed to identify the name of the vessel, and it was only after more detailed investigation of regional and national archives that Richard and the team finally solved the mystery. It was the SS *Virago* of Hull, lost with all hands and without trace on 3rd June 1882. A subsequent inquiry failed to establish the cause or location of the wreck, although two empty lifeboats bearing the ship's name, found floating with other wreckage several miles north-east of Alderney in the English Channel days after its disappearance appeared to confirm the total, tragic loss of the ship, its captain John Stephens and the crew of 26.

SS VIRAGO



The SS *Virago* was built in 1871 by the largest shipbuilding yard on the Humber called Earle's Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. Ltd. (Yard No.138). It was one of four passenger/cargo vessels built of iron, of just over 1,800 tons with a single-screw, compound steam engine, designed to transit the newly built Suez Canal for the Wilson Line of Hull.

Thomas Wilson, Sons & Co. Ltd., founded in 1841, was an immensely successful British-based shipping line, described by The Times as “the largest privately-owned shipping line in the world” with over 100 steamers grossing 120,000 tons at the turn of the 19th century.

On its ill-fated voyage from Hull, SS *Virago* sailed on 31st May 1882 carrying 1,000 tons of machinery and 700 tons of coal, bound for Constantinople and Odessa.

It was sighted passing Dover at 6am the following day before mysteriously disappearing. At first a collision was suggested, but this proved to be groundless and the subsequent Board of Trade inquiry failed to establish the cause.

Richard has his own idea on why the vessel should have foundered and its loss be unrecorded, which led him to the archives of Lloyds of London kept at the Guildhall Library. In so doing, he has revealed the extent of its fascinating cargo of agricultural equipment bound for Ukraine – static steam engines and other machinery manufactured by Clayton & Shuttleworth of Lincoln.



Now that the wreck has been positively identified, the story of the loss of SS *Virago* can be told in full. Richard and his team intend to pursue their research with their objective being to provide a full crew list. While this may prove to be a challenge, Alderney will now be irrevocably linked to the port of Hull, where Richard will use all means available to track down the descendants of those who lost their lives in the Alderney Race in 1882.

The Trustees of The Henry Euler Memorial Trust will look to support Richard Keen and his team from Bailiwick of Guernsey Shipwrecks in this worthy endeavour, and to chronicle the full story of

The Ship that vanished in the Alderney Race!



The Henry Euler Memorial Trust

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Bailiwick of Guernsey Shipwrecks

Dive Team

Leader - Richard Keen
John Paul Fallaize, Mat Le Maitre,
Paul Maindonal, Martyn Jehan, Phil Warry