



# ORP Kujawiak L-72

FINAL REPORT OF THE FLAG Nos. 207 and 212  
Four Expeditions

# ABSTRACT

This report is the result of four expeditions to the island of Malta on the Mediterranean Sea in 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017. During the four expeditions, honored by The Explorers Club Flag, the Shipwreck Expeditions Association team was able to discover the shipwreck of the Polish escort destroyer ORP Kujawiak – L-72. She lies at a depth of 330 feet, five nautical miles northeast of Valletta, the capital of Malta. Not only did the team explore the wreck for the first time, they also collected unique video and photo materials of the entire shipwreck, made a 3D image of the whole deck, and produced a 40-minute documentary movie. The team takes pride in their commemoration of the thirteen fallen Polish servicemen by funding and unveiling a marble plaque with all of their names in a very honorable place – the Upper Barrakka Gardens in Valletta. We also placed a bronze plaque as well as the flag of the Polish Navy on the wreck in order to further commemorate the fallen at their final resting place. During the third expedition, the team was able to find the ship's bell in a very inaccessible place. We recovered the bell and handed it over to the laboratory of Heritage Malta for restoration in 2017. Our passion for this project led us to find the last living survivor of the ship's sinking, Mr. Stefankiewicz who lives in England – he turned 100 years old in 2017. At the request of our Association, the Polish President, Andrzej Duda, honored Mr. Stefankiewicz with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Rebirth of Poland. Also, at the request of our Association, team member and good friend, Dr. Timothy Gambin from the University of Malta, was honored by the Polish Minister of Culture with the Distinguished for Polish Culture Badge. Team member, Polish maritime historian and author of over 70 books, Mariusz Borowiak, wrote two books about the history of ORP Kujawiak and our adventures.

# KEYWORDS

ORP Kujawiak – L-72, shipwreck of Polish escort destroyer, Malta, Mediterranean Sea.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to

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Piotr Kardasz  Krzysztof Korszewski  Chris Kraska  Matthew Montebello   
Robert Piąsta  Chris Rowland  Edd Stockdale  Joseph Sultana   
Michał Szczepaniak  Paul Vincent Toomer  Steven Wilkinson  John Wood 

for their hard work on the wreck site.

# About the Ship

ORP Kujawiak was a British Hunt Type II escort destroyer, built as HMS Oakley, and handed over by the Royal Navy to the Polish Navy on May 30, 1941.



Photo: ORP Kujawiak painted in camouflage with number on the hull. Probably taken in Devonport in 1942.  
(photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)

The escort destroyers were smaller, of lower displacement, and less heavily armed than their larger destroyer counterparts. They were basically intended for carrying out combat tasks during escort service and protection of escorted merchant ships exposed to attacks by enemy submarines and aircraft. These ships were adapted to take more depth charges and launchers which were necessary to fight on Atlantic routes against the silent hunters. The specific and exhausting work of these escorts lies in the care of tankers and freighters, the defenseless targets of this cruel war. Reacting to every signal indicating the presence of an enemy submarine or aircraft, they launched depth charges, repulsed aerial attacks, set smoke screens, and saved survivors from sunken vessels. The constant tension and hardship of cruises, often under stormy and dangerous conditions, required special skills from the crews and their commanders.



Photo: HMS OAKLEY / ORP Kujawiak (above) in Armstrong Whitworth & Co Ltd shipyard mid August 1940.  
(photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)

## About the Ship



Photo: Crew of the ORP Kujawiak on the midship during one of the patrol in 1942. (photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)

## About the Ship

General characteristics of the escort destroyer ORP Kujawiak (tactical number L-72)	
Class and type	Type II Hunt-class destroyer
Displacement:	1,050 tons standard
.....	1,490 tons full load
Length:	85 m (279 ft)
Beam:	9.5 m (31 ft)
Draught:	2.4 m (7 ft 10 in)
Propulsion:	powered by 2 shaft Parsons steam turbines 19,000 hp (14,200 kW)
Speed:	27 knots (50 km/h)
Range:	2,500 nautical miles (4,600 km) at 20 knots (40 km/h)
.....	3,700 nautical miles (6,900 km) at 14 knots (26 km/h)
Complement:	168
Armament:	6 × QF 4 in Mark XVI guns (3 twin turrets)
.....	4 × 40 mm anti-aircraft cannons
.....	2 to 4 20 mm anti-aircraft cannons
.....	6 depth charge throwers

The Polish Navy, as part of its cooperation with the British Royal Navy (as mentioned above), received three ships of the Hunt Type II class. It was decided that, unlike the classic destroyers whose names came from weather phenomena such as "Piorun" or "Błyskawica," the escort destroyers, keeping with the tradition of the pre-war Polish torpedo boats, would be named after inhabitants of various Polish regions. Thus, the three Hunt Type II ships received the names ORP Krakowiak, Kujawiak, and Ślązak.



Photo: Beautiful picture of ORP Krakowiak the sister ship of ORP Kujawiak. (photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)

## About the Ship

ORP Kujawiak left the shipyard on June 18, 1941 with a Polish crew under the command of Captain Ludwik Lichodziejewski. The main task of the ship was to escort allied convoys in the English Channel and the Bristol Channel. Her main enemies were German planes taking off from French bases. In December 1941, ORP Kujawiak took part in the "Operation Anklet" – a raid of British commandos on Moskenesøya, an island under German occupation in the Norwegian Lofoten archipelago. In May 1942, a decision was made to send Kujawiak to the Mediterranean Sea, where she was to take part in escorting one of the Allied convoys carrying supplies to Malta.



Photo: Commander Ludwik Lichodziejewski the only captain of the ORP Kujawiak. (photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)

After the outbreak of World War II, both sides of the conflict realized that between the two far-flung British bases in the Mediterranean, Gibraltar and Alexandria, there was only one place from which the Allied air force and navy could operate; Malta. During the two years of the war from 1940 to 1942, the island became one of the most intensely bombed areas around the world. During the first half of 1942 only one day was recorded without a raid!

Air power of the Axis States regularly tried to destroy what British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the "unsinkable aircraft carrier" from which allied bombers and submarines were constantly attacking the sea supply routes of German and Italian troops in Africa.

## About the Ship

In mid-1942, the situation on the island was particularly dramatic. Under these circumstances, the Allies planned a larger escort operation under the code name "Harpoon". On June 5, 1942, a convoy given the code name WS 19Z (initially consisting of five merchant ships under the cover of two light cruisers, HMS Liverpool and Kenya, and ten destroyers) set out from the Clyde River, Great Britain and arrived at Gibraltar in five days, laden with supplies for Malta. On June 11, the convoy entered the Mediterranean Sea from the Gibraltar Strait, where it was joined by a sixth ship from Gibraltar, carrying aviation gasoline. Further escort ships joined the expanding convoy in Gibraltar. A direct escort of the convoy was Team X (Force X) with HMS Cairo, an anti-aircraft cruiser (Commander Hardy's flagship), nine destroyers: HMS Bedouin, Ithuriel, Marne, Matchless, Partridge, Middleton, Badsworth, Blankney, and the Polish ORP Kujawiak (the last four were escort destroyers), HMS Hebe, Hythe, Rye, Speedy, and six mine-sweeper trawlers. In addition, the convoy was joined by a quick mine-sweeper, HMS Welshman, on whose deck there was additional cargo bound for Malta. The trawlers were to be towed by ships in order to save fuel, but this proved to be problematic. Of the ships, only HMS Cairo, Welshman, Partridge, and four Hunt II escorts had artillery adapted to conduct anti-aircraft fire, and to some extent, two type M destroyers also had such weapons.



Photo: Convoy. (photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)

## About the Ship

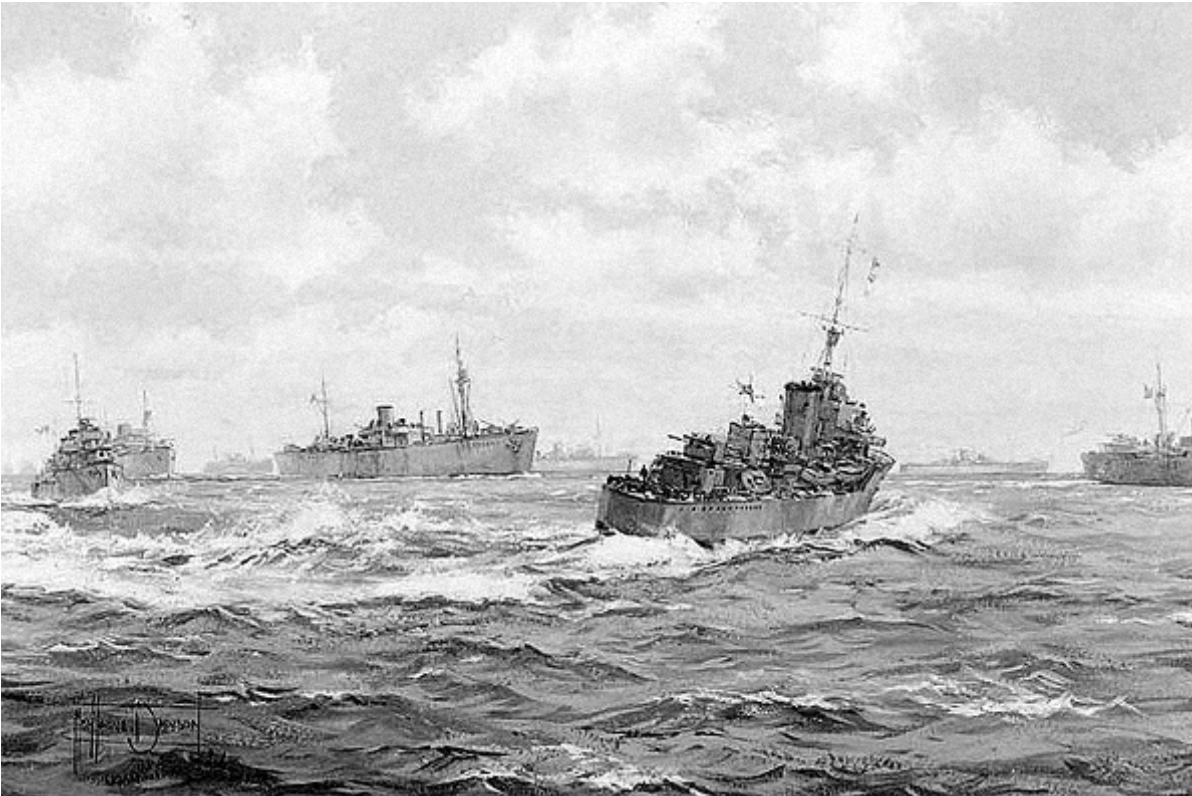


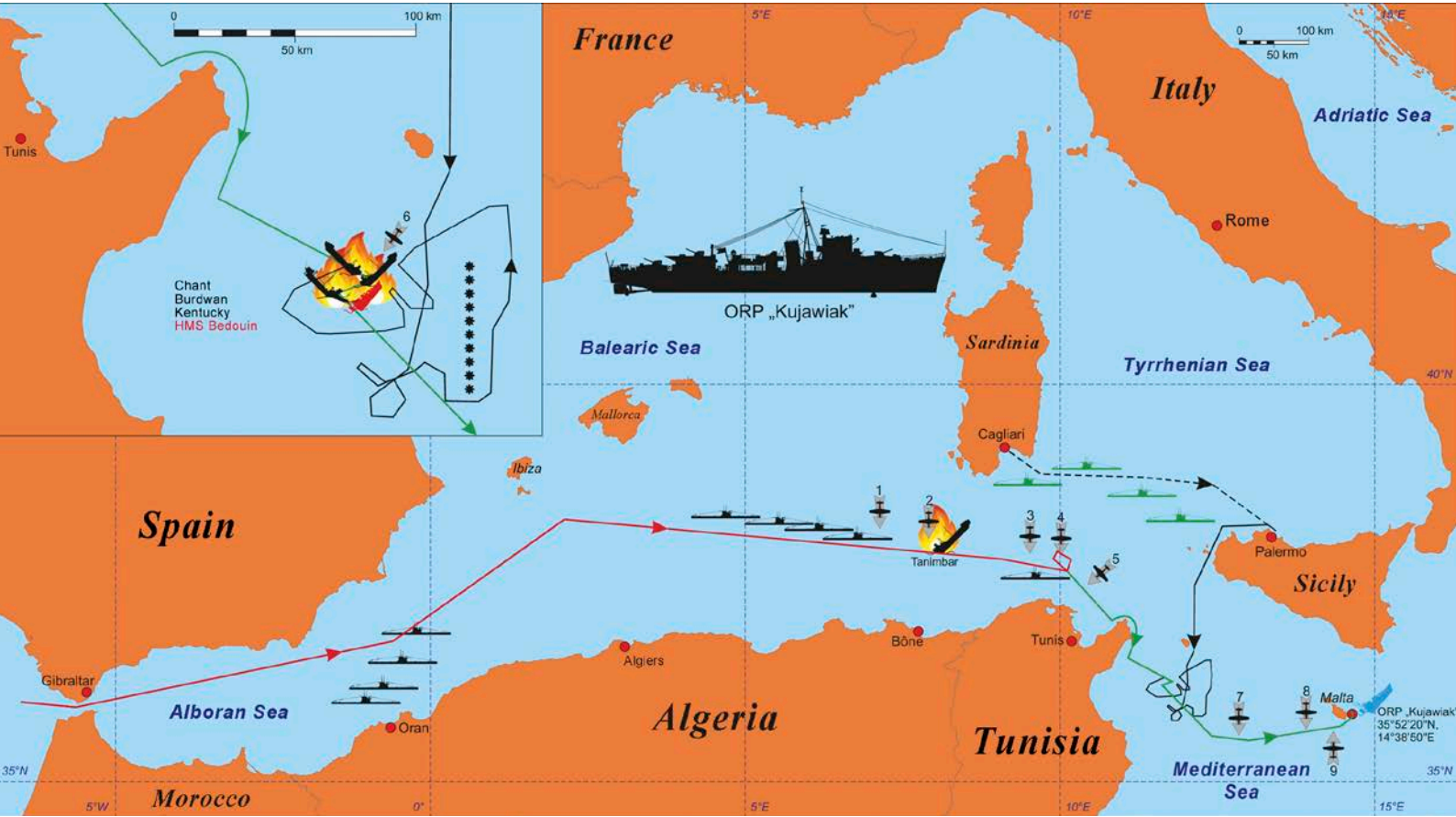
Photo: War ships protecting convoy (painting). (photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)

The second team was comprised of the ships of Force W under the command of Vice Admiral Curteis. Force W was composed of the battleship HMS Malaya, the aircraft carriers HMS Argus and Eagle, the light cruisers HMS Kenya (flagship), Liverpool, and Charybdis, and eight destroyers. These were mainly older types: HMS Onslow, Icarus, Escapade, Antelope, Vidette, Westcott, Wishart, and Wrestler. In addition, four British submarines, P211, P42, P43, and P46 patrolled between Sicily and Sardinia. In the area to the west and south of Malta, thirteen Italian submarines were operating at this time. However, this did not affect the course of the operation.

Shortly after leaving Gibraltar, the WS 19Z convoy was followed by enemy submarines (on June 12, the German aerial reconnaissance detected a large set of ships south of the Balearic Islands) waiting for the right moment to attack. The first attack occurred on June 14 at 02:52. It was carried out by one of the Italian submarines. The first torpedoes were aimed in the convoy's direction and at 9:45, Italian torpedo planes stationed in Sardinia made a massive air raid (the toughest battle for the convoy) just 25 nautical miles southwest of Pantelleria Island. During the fighting, the Allies lost three ships from the convoy as well as one escort. ORP Kujawiak, along with another British destroyer, bravely defended the convoy and repulsed the attacks of air and surface forces of the Axis by shooting down two Italian planes and damaging two German Ju 88 dive bombers.



# About the Ship



**Legend:** —→ Route of the Allied convoy WS 19Z (5 freighters and a tanker). —→ Route of Convoy WS 19Z under cover of "Force X" (Cruiser HMS Cairo, 5 destroyers, 4 destroyer escorts, including ORP Kujawiak, 4 minesweepers, 6 trawlers). - - - - - → Route of the incomplete Italian force of the 7th squadron of Light Cruisers (2 cruisers and 3 destroyers). —→ Route of the full Italian force of the 7th Squadron of Light Cruisers (2 cruisers and 5 destroyers) — positions of Axis submarines  
 \* \* \* Italian mine field. — Attack of Italian and German aircraft: 1-14.06.1942, 09:25 hours/ 2-14.06.1942, 11:15 hours/ 3-14.06.1942, 18:20 hours/ 4-14.06.1942, 20:05 hours/ 5-14.06.1942, 22:05 hours/ 6- 15.06.1942 07:00 hours/ 7- 15.06.1942, 15:20 hours/ 8-15.06.1942, 19:10 hours/ 9-15.06.1942, 19:10 hours/ 10-15.06.1942, 20:30 hours/ — Position (35° 52'20"N, 14° 38'50"E) of sinking of ORP Kujawiak given according to the report of the ship's captain. — Positions of British submarines on the route of the Italian 7th Light Cruiser Squadron.

Drawing by Jarosław Dzierżawski - based on the V. O'HARA map. Translated by Chris Kraska.

On the evening of June 15, a heavily crippled convoy sailed around the southeastern part of Malta and began the procedure of entering the port of La Valletta. Obviously, the most precious (surviving freighters) were the ones behind the minesweepers with the remainder of the convoy following. However, due to the improper planning of the approach procedure and lack of communication, the convoy paid a bitter price in the last phase of the mission. At 00:38 HMS Badsworth struck a mine and HMS Ithuriel, following directly behind, turned to port. Following as the last escort in the line, the Polish destroyer, knowing that it was in a minefield, still proceeded to begin a rescue operation. The brave Kujawiak, flying the white and red flag of the Polish Navy with pride, struck a mine at 00:53 on her port side at the location of the second gun. Despite the swift rescue action and the attempts to patch the huge hole, the ship began to tilt to its portside. When the ship's tilt, rising with every minute, reached a dangerous level, the boiler safety valves were opened and the fuses of the depth charges were secured. The heroic struggle of the crew to maintain the ship ended twenty minutes after one o'clock in the morning. The ship went down and took thirteen Polish servicemen to their eternal watch.

### List of the fallen crew members of the ORP Kujawiak June 16, 1942

1. Petty Officer Andrzej Hołowacz
2. Petty Officer Aleksy Kozakow
3. Master Seaman Stanisław Dąbrowski
4. Master Seaman Mieczysław Arkadiusz Kubik
5. Master Seaman Stanisław Szwarc
6. Master Seaman Michał Zajączkowski
7. Leading Seaman Stanisław Sadowski
8. Able-bodied Seaman Józef Biernacki
9. Able-bodied Seaman Józef Jankowski
10. Able-bodied Seaman Edward Jasionowski
11. Able-bodied Seaman Edward Zych
12. Ordinary Seaman Edward Olsztyn\* - born in Detroit, Michigan
13. Ordinary Seaman Czesław Zysk\* - born in Detroit, Michigan

## About the Ship



Photo: Petty Officer Andrzej Hołowacz.  
(photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)



Photo: Master Seaman Mieczysław Arkadiusz Kubik.  
(photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)

\* They were US citizens born in Detroit, Michigan who came from families with Polish roots and enlisted to the Polish Navy in 1940 through Canada

AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE

REPORT OF THE DEATH OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN \*

\* (DECEASED BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN AN AMERICAN CITIZEN)  
Consult Sections XIII-7 and XIII-8 and Notes of the Foreign Service Regulations

Handwritten notes: 2 W, 300.113

London, England, April 14, 1943  
(Place and date)

Name in full ZYSK, Czeslaw Occupation Seaman Polish Navy

Native or naturalized Native. Born: Detroit, Michigan Last known address August 18, 1913  
in the United States Not known

Date of death June 16, 1942 Age 28  
(Month) (Day) (Hour) (Minute) (Year) (As nearly as can be ascertained)

Place of death Near Malta  
(Number and street) or (Hospital or hotel) (City) (Country)

Cause of death Lost with Polish Destroyer O.R.P. "Kujawiak" which was  
(Include authority for statement) sunk near Malta through enemy action

Disposition of the remains --

Local law as to disinterring remains --

Disposition of the effects Effects lost with ship

Person or official responsible for custody of effects and accounting therefor

Informed by telegram:

NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	DATE SENT
Polish Embassy informed this Embassy that the Polish Foreign Office had instructed the appropriate Polish Consulate in the United States to advise the next of kin, on August 8, 1942.			

NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	DATE SENT
Miss Helena Polgroszek	153 New Britain, Conn.	Fiancee	April 14, 1943

Traveling or residing <sup>abroad</sup> with relatives or friends as follows:

NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP
XXXX		

Other known relatives (not given above):

NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP
XXXX		

This information and data concerning an inventory of the effects, accounts, etc. have been placed under File 330 in the correspondence of this office.

Remarks: The Office of the Naval Attaché, Polish Embassy, London, supplied the above information from its files. There is no record in the files of this office of the citizenship status of deceased.  
(Continue on reverse if necessary.)

[SEAL]

No fee prescribed.

Service No. MCC 1499

J. J. Coyle  
Vice Consul of the United States of America.

(Signature of all copies)

(To be sent in duplicate to the Department of State; or to be forwarded in triplicate when decedent is an American-citizen seaman, a pensioner (state kind), a beneficiary of the Veterans Administration or of the Social Security, or an officer or employee of the United States Government.)

Handwritten vertical text: 300.113 ZYSK, CZESLAW GS AW

Photo: Report of the death of Czeslaw Zysk. (photo: P. Wytykowski)

FA

AMERICAN FOREIGN SERVICE

REPORT OF THE DEATH OF AN AMERICAN CITIZEN \*

\* (DECEASED BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN AN AMERICAN CITIZEN)  
Consult Sections XIII-7 and XIII-8 and Notes of the Foreign Service Regulations

7W  
300.113

London, England, April 14, 1943  
(Place and date)

Name in full OLSZTYN, Edward Occupation Seaman Polish Navy

Native or naturalized Native. Born: Detroit, Michigan Last known address  
in the United States Not known July 7, 1923

Date of death June 16, 1942 Age 19  
(Month) (Day) (Hour) (Minute) (Year) (As nearly as can be ascertained)

Place of death Near Malta  
(Number and street) or (Hospital or hotel) (City) (Country)

Cause of death Lost with Polish Destroyer O.R.P. "Kujawiak" which was  
(Include authority for statement)  
sunk near Malta through enemy action

Disposition of the remains --

Local law as to disinterring remains --

Disposition of the effects Effects lost with ship

Person or official responsible for custody of effects and accounting therefor

Informed by telegram:

NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	DATE SENT
<u>Polish Embassy informed this Embassy that the Polish Foreign Office had instructed the appropriate Polish Consulate in the United States</u>			
<u>Copy of this report sent to: to advise the next of kin, on August 8, 1942.</u>			

NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP	DATE SENT
<u>Mr. Walter Olsztyn</u>	<u>7747 Orchard Street, Dearborn, Michigan</u>	<u>Father</u>	<u>April 14, 1943</u>

Traveling or residing abroad with relatives or friends as follows:

NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP
<u>XXXX</u>		

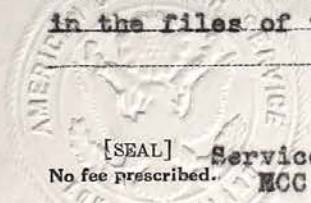
Other known relatives (not given above):

NAME	ADDRESS	RELATIONSHIP
<u>XXXX</u>		

This information and a copy of this report ~~data concerning an inventory of the effects, accounts, etc.~~ have been placed under File 330 in the correspondence of this office.

Remarks: The Office of the Naval Attaché, Polish Embassy, London, supplied the above information from its files. There is no record in the files of this office of the citizenship status of deceased.

(Continue on reverse if necessary.)



[SEAL] Service No. 1498 J. J. Coyle (Signature of all copies)  
No fee prescribed. Vice Consul of the United States of America.

(To be sent in duplicate to the Department of State; or to be forwarded in triplicate when decedent is an American-citizen seaman, a pensioner (state kind), a beneficiary of the Veterans Administration or of the Social Security, or an officer or employee of the United States Government.)

300.113 OLSZTYN, EDWARD

GS AW

Photo: Report of the death of Edward Olsztyn. (photo: P. Wytykowski)

The report prepared by the ship's commander just after the sinking contained the position of the tragic event, but this position is not correct. Many expeditions which attempted to locate the shipwreck without success used this report as a main subject for analysis, but we knew that the analysis of this event should be made differently.

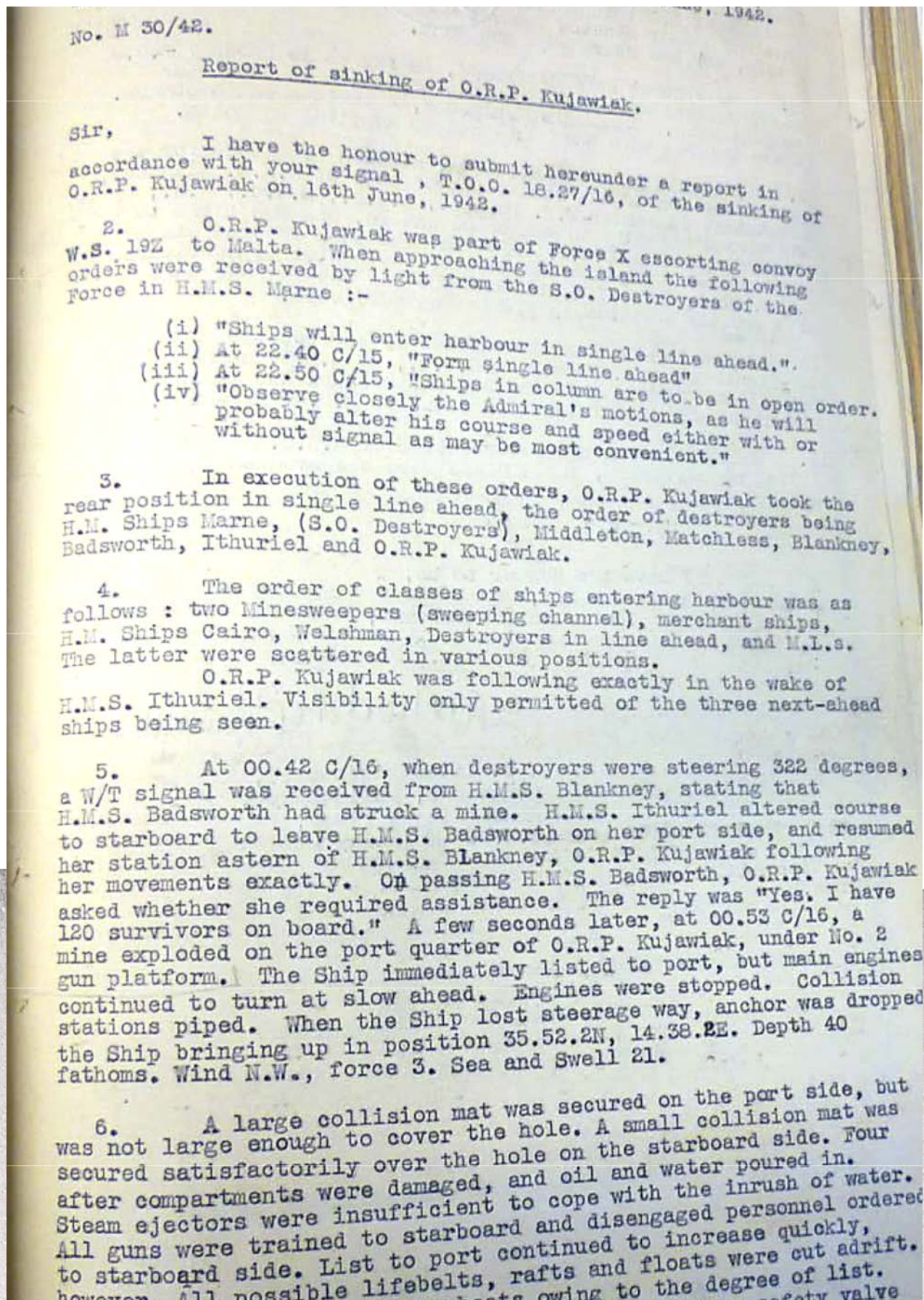


Photo: Report of the sinking of ORP Kujawiak. (photo: P. Wytykowski)

angle of list then ... jumped the  
into the water at 01.18, accompanied by one P.O. and one  
rating who had voluntarily stayed to look after my safety.  
One and a half minutes later the Ship went down by the  
stern, her bow reared up and sank.

8. As records were destroyed, as far as is known 7 P.O.s  
and 7 ratings were killed by the explosion in the after  
compartments. Wounded comprised 7, 2 serious and 5 others.  
These injured have been detained in hospital at Malta.

9. I should like to express my sincere gratitude for the  
gallant action of the Commanding Officer of H.M.S. Blankney,  
Lieutenant Commander P.F. Powlett, D.S.O., D.S.C., R.N.,  
who turned his Ship in dangerous waters, and was first to  
close the sinking O.R.P. Kujawiak. He then lowered his  
motor cutter and picked up the greater number of survivors  
H.M.S. Hebe, M.L.s 134, 135 and 459 and one harbour boat  
also greatly assisted in picking up survivors.

10. I should also like to express my appreciation for  
Sub-Lieutenant S.G. Venner, R.N.V.R., of H.M.S. Blankney,  
who gallantly dived into the sea and rescued one Polish  
sailor who was in difficulties close to H.M.S. Blankney.

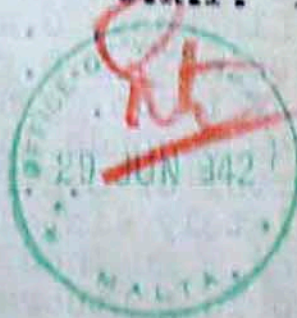
11. While I was in the motor cutter of H.M.S. Blankney  
picking up survivors, three mines were observed on the  
surface.

I have the honour to be,  
Sir,  
Your obedient Servant,

Lichodziej Kudrki

(L. Lichodziejewski),  
Commander, Polish Navy,  
Commanding Officer,  
O.R.P. Kujawiak.

The Vice Admiral,  
MALTA.



# Research

Where did the idea of searching for the wreck come from? After the second Flag expedition to Sierra Leone in winter 2014, Peter Wytykowski participated in an Underwater Archeological Workshop in Toledo, Ohio. There, he met Chris Kraska, the chair of the Maritime Archaeological Survey Team (MAST), whose father, Jan Kraska, was a serviceman on the Polish destroyer, ORP Kujawiak, and was on board the night the ship struck a mine and sunk near the coast of Malta. Chris shared with Peter the story of his father's service in the Polish Navy and the unfortunate events of the sinking – thus, the project began. Just after the meeting, Mariusz Borowiak, Peter Wytykowski, and Roman Zajder organized a trip to the National Archives in Kew, England in order to collect all of the documents related to Operation Harpoon. The above team also contacted and visited the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London, England, the United Kingdom Hydrographic Office in Taunton, England, as well as the Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg, Germany. Thanks to Luca Quaglia, the team was also able to collect materials from the Italian Archives. A long and detailed query led to hundreds of reports, documents, and maps. The analysis of the collected materials lasted for several months and allowed us to determine the area where the tragic event took place. During the analysis the team concentrated on reports from the ships which were directly involved in this event; establishing the positions of HMS Badsworth and HMS Blankney whose crew helped pick up the survivors from the Polish destroyer was vital to determine the correct area where ORP Kujawiak sunk. It was also important to find out which area was covered by the minesweepers that cleaned the path to the port in Valletta.



## About the Ship



Photo: Jan Kraska in Polish Navy uniform. (photo: from the collection of C. Kraska)

H.M.S. BADSWORTH.

HUNT Class Destroyer - Mine Damage.

Length .....	280' 0"	} STANDARD
Breadth .....	31' 6"	
Displacement .....	1050 Tons	
Draught (mean) .....	8' 0"	

On Tuesday, 16th June, 1942, H.M.S. BADSWORTH was entering Malta Harbour with Convoy W.S.152. The destroyer escort was formed in single line ahead behind the convoy, BADSWORTH being fifth ship in the line with H.M.S. ITHURIEL and Polish destroyer KUJAWIAK astern.

Weather conditions were:- Sea, calm; Sky, clear; Visibility, good; Wind, West, force 2.

Speed of ship, 10 knots. Draught, 7' 11" forward, 10' 0" aft.  
Depth of water, 55 fathoms.

The degaussing equipment was correctly adjusted and current was on.

At 0038 in position 107° St. Elmo Light 5.5 miles, course 322°, BADSWORTH struck a mine on the starboard side at about 30 station. The noise of the explosion was loud, a column of clean water was thrown up to a height of about 50 ft., no flash or flame was observed and there was no smell of fumes or gases other than from a moderate concentration of methyl-chloride gas from the electric refrigerator on the forward mess deck. It was not possible to assess either the colour or quantity of smoke.

Orders were given to stop engines and steps taken to establish flooding boundaries and shore up bulkheads. This latter task was rendered difficult owing to the presence of 30 panic-stricken Lascar seamen and 95 other survivors from sunk merchant ships.

The immediate effect of the explosion was to cause a hole in the main hull approximately 12 feet by 15 feet and to flood compartments below the lower deck between 9 - 44 stations. The lower deck was flooded to the waterline, about 3 feet above the deck, between 9 - 51 stations.

The draught after the explosion changed to 15' 0" forward, 7' 1" aft with a list of 2° to port.

The vessel was anchored until daylight when her position was 106° St. Elmo Light 6.3 miles.

Note:- The vessel was not anchored until 90 minutes after the explosion and with light westerly wind and E.S.E. set she drifted out of the swept channel.

BADSWORTH then proceeded in to harbour under her own power, speed 8 knots, through the swept channel with H.M.S. BLAKENEY in company.

Temporary repairs were carried out and the vessel sailed from Malta on 10th August, arrived at Londonderry on 21st August, proceeded to Tyne on 24th August, arriving at 1300 on 25th August, 1942.

Structural Damage.

The main force of the explosion struck the vessel on the starboard side approximately 6 ft. below the waterline at about 32 station and caused a hole in the main hull, 12 ft. x 15 ft., extending from 28 - 37 stations and from 1st longitudinal (5 ft. to starboard of M.L. in "A" strake) to the edge of lower deck (See Fig.1.) The area of buckling and indentation extended from 4 - 40 stations and from keel to upper deck. The flat keel (10 & 13 lbs. D) and starboard ("A" strake, 9 lbs. D) were severely buckled between 28 - 36 stations. Side plating generally, 7 lbs. D except "B" strake, 8 lbs. D.

SECRET.

Enclosure No. 2 to H.M.S. BLANKNEY's No. M 35/42 dated 25th June, 1942.

LOSS OF O.R.P. "KUJAWIAK" and MINING OF H.M.S. "BADSWORTH".

At 0040 when in Malta searched channel in position 096 degrees St. Elmo 3.8 miles, in line ahead, "BADSWORTH" struck a mine in "BLANKNEY's wake, and at 0053 "KUJAWIAK" which had been two places astern of "BADSWORTH", and had hauled out to starboard to pass her, also was mined.

2. At about 0100 it seemed that there was no action being taken to stand by the casualties, so I turned and stood back along the channel. When "BLANKNEY" arrived on the scene, "KUJAWIAK" was in a very bad way, and soon capsized and sank at 0120. Lowered boats, rafts and other life saving appliances.

3. Three M.L.s Nos 134, 135 and 459 were on the scene, also H.M.S. HEBE. Most of the crew of KUJAWIAK were saved: in all it is believed that fourteen were lost.

4. By the time all survivors were out of the water, owing to the fresh northwesterly wind and the fact that all navigational aids ashore were indistinguishable among the searchlights, aircraft homing beacons and smoke screen, I was by no means clear of my position - the only certain fact was that I was off the searched channel. I therefore anchored in 40 fathoms, directed "HEBE" to do the same, and secured two M.L.s alongside, sending the third one in.

"BADSWORTH" had already anchored and reported herself in no danger of sinking.

5. At 0500, succeeded in fixing a position 35.52<sup>1/2</sup>N, 14.40E.

6. At daylight weighed and entered harbour, preceded by "HEBE" and M.L.s Nos. 135 and 459, and followed by "BADSWORTH", the M.L.s sweeping until we were nearly in, when one sweep parted and the other became unmanageable.

Passed two moored mines awash in position 103 degrees St. Elmo light, 5.3 miles.

*P.F. Powlett*

(P.F. Powlett),  
Lieutenant Commander  
in Command.

H.M.S. BLANKNEY,  
25th June, 1942.

SECRET 4.

16) Oropesa sweeps were running correctly when information was received that Convoy was not following Sweepers but appeared to be proceeding up Q.B.B.197, and not using channel as outlined in V.A.M's 2325c/14 as received in "Speedy". On receipt of this information Magnetic sweep was cancelled altogether and all speed made with single Oropesa to head the Convoy at first bend in position "Z" where channels joined. This failed and Convoy got ahead of M/S's and entered harbour.

17) When course was being altered at position "Z" "Hebe" received orders by light from an unknown ship to pick up survivors from a Destroyer. "Hebe" assumed the signal came from "Speedy". At about this time "Speedy's" sweep was blown up, the kite, otter and 180 fathoms of wire being lost. On rounding position "A" a number of ships were observed ahead and, as further sweeping was out of the question, sweeps were ordered in. It was then discovered that "Hebe" was not in company when no replies were received to signals.

18) "Speedy" remained outside in order to pass "Hebe's" berth as the latter had jettisoned all books when attacked by surface craft and had no knowledge of what to do on completion of sweeping.

19) "Hebe" did not turn up and "Speedy" entered harbour at first light. "Hebe" followed about an hour afterwards and struck a mine in position TIGNE Point 084° 1.1 miles, causing fairly extensive damage forward. It is considered that she will be out of action for about four weeks. It was subsequently learned that "Hebe" had anchored for the night after completing work with Destroyers.

Reference Positions "M", "Z" and "A"  
Vide V.A.M's 2325c/14.

"M"	35° 44' N. 14° 43' E.
"Z"	35° 51' 45" N. 14° 37' 57" E.
"A"	35° 54' 51" N. 14° 34' 55" E.

Appendices I, II,  
and III. attached.



*A. S. Brown*  
LIEUTENANT COMMANDER,  
COMMANDING OFFICER.



# The first expedition

2014

## THE HUNT FOR L-72

In September 2014, after we received the proper permits from the Maltese authorities, we were ready for the fieldwork. "The Hunt for L-72" expedition took place from September 15 through September 26, 2014. The Explorers Club flag that this expedition was assigned, Flag #207, was brand new and never used before – we believe it to be our first sign of good luck!





# The expedition day by day

September 15

arrived in Malta in the late evening and embarked on the expedition boat (we rented a 12 meter/ 40 foot yacht from a local marina)



Photo: The Rainbow Hunter - boat of the 2014 expedition "The Hunt for L72" (photo: R. Zajder).

September 16

assembled and prepared all of the expedition equipment



Photo: The expedition side scan sonar StarFish 452F (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: The expedition member Bartek Grynda preparing sonar to the filed work (photo: R. Zajder)

Photo: Bartek is assembling Gralmarine ROV (photo: R. Zajder)

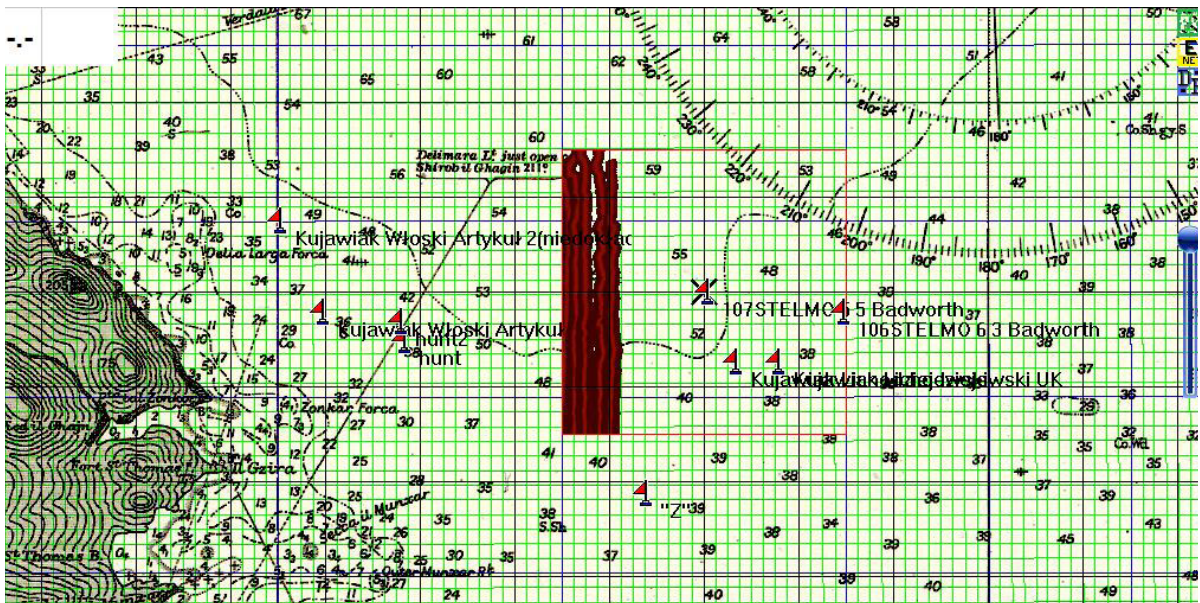


September 17

Meeting at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage office with Mr. Nathaniel Cutajar and Dr. Timmy Gambin during which all necessary information/ instructions were given to the team. In the afternoon, we checked for the proper operation of the expedition equipment on the position of the HMS Southwold shipwreck.

September 18

First day of the search for the shipwreck of ORP Kujawiak. We searched from north to south and the waypoints 1-1A through 5-5A were searched – these waypoints are marked in yellow on the last map of this chapter.



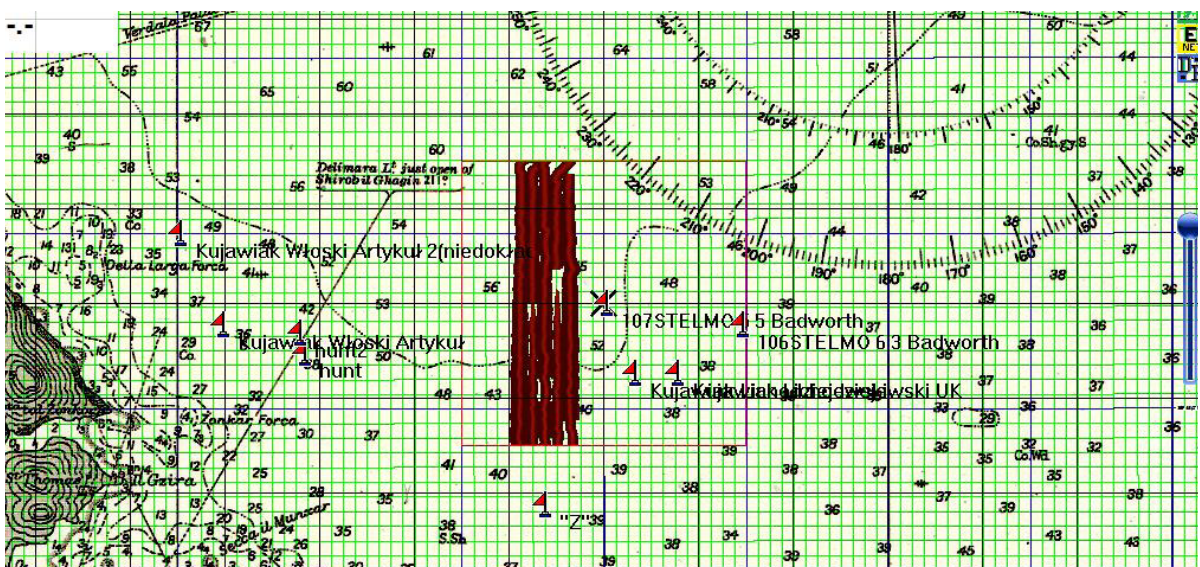
Mapa 2: Map of the first day of the search for the wreck of ORP Kujawiak (made by M. Szczepaniak)

September 19

Day off due to bad weather.

September 20

Waypoints 6-6A through 10-10A were searched (marked in green on the map).

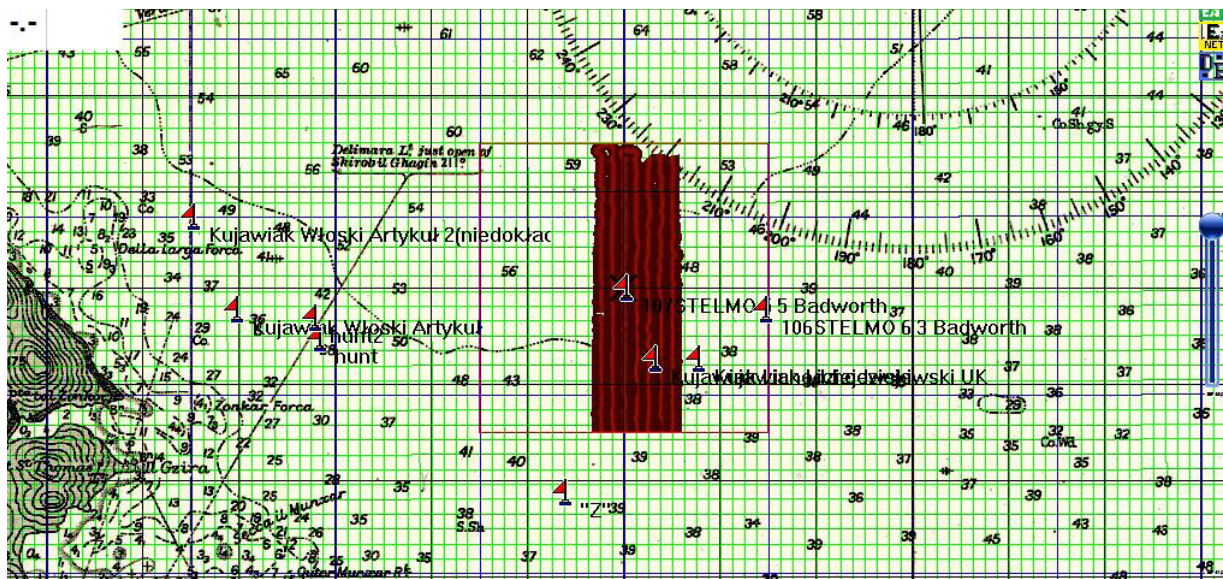


Mapa 3: Map of the second day of the search for the wreck of ORP Kujawiak (made by M. Szczepaniak)



September 21

Waypoints 11-11A through 17-17A were searched (marked in blue on the map)



Mapa 4: Map of the third day of the search for the wreck of ORP Kujawiak (made by M. Szczepaniak)

September 22

Just after the beginning of the search of waypoint 18-18A, an object in the shape and size of a shipwreck (length of 85 meters) showed on the sonar monitor. The unknown object is laying at a depth of 99 meters with its stern pointing north and the bow pointing south. The shape and length of the object is similar to that of a Hunt type destroyer. During the search operation, a StarFish 425F side scan sonar was used. The length of the search line was set to 2 NM and the width between waypoints was set to 150 meters. The boat speed during the sonar scan was 1.5 knots.

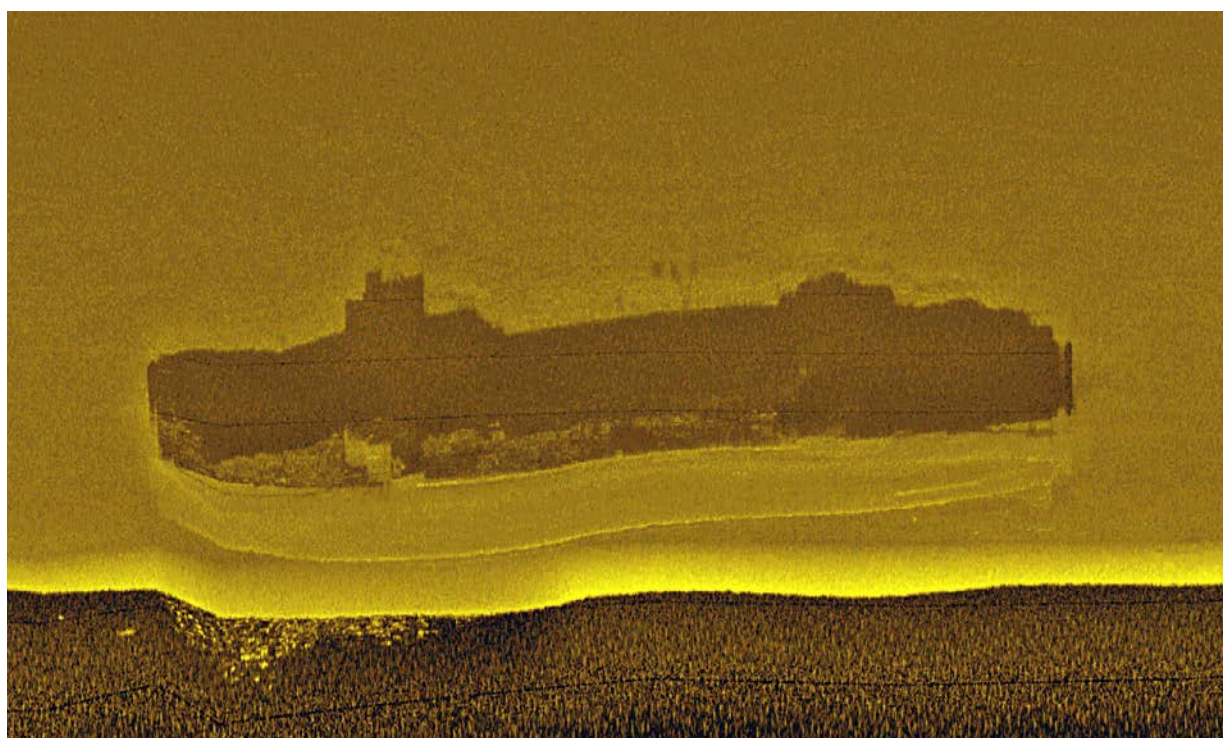


Photo: Sonar image of the wreck (made by T. Gambin)

## September 23

After receiving an additional permit from the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage for the use of an ROV, the underwater vehicle was used to collect visuals of the found object. During this operation, the underwater vehicle depressurized and was only able to collect a short video of the object. Detailed analysis of that video, compared with the blueprints of ORP Kujawiak, proved without a doubt that it was the wreck of the Hunt type destroyer. The ROV was able to record the midship with a characteristic object that resembled a slat bench near the curvature of the gunwale.

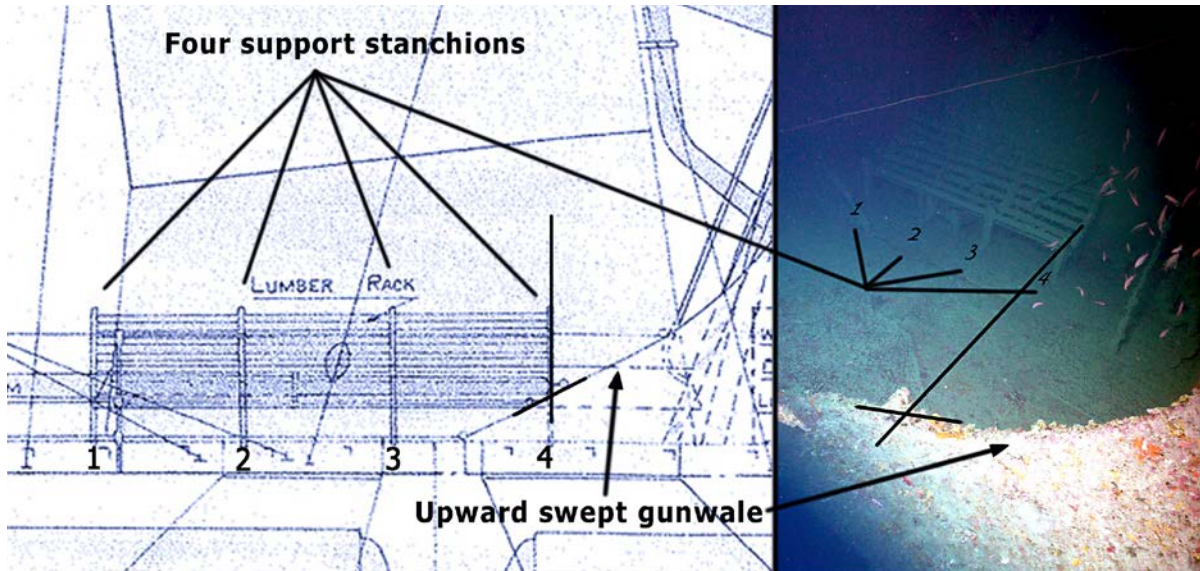


Photo: Side by side comparison of the original blueprint with the picture of lumber rack. (made by C. Kraska)

## September 24

Unfortunately, the ROV was not functioning properly after the depressurizing the day before, so only the video camera was lowered to the shipwreck. During this operation, images of the ship's bridge with a 20mm anti-aircraft gun and characteristic X-shaped platform as well as the characteristic layout of the starboard portholes and supporting braces were obtained.

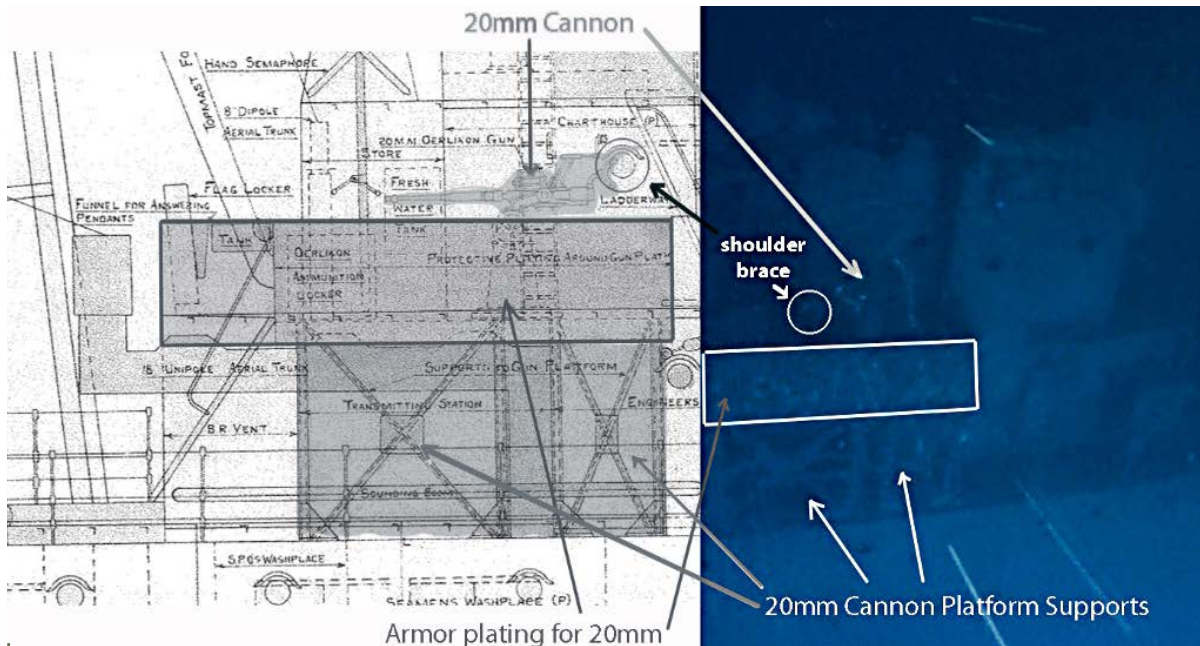


Photo: Side by side comparison of the original blueprint with the picture of the ship structure. (made by C. Kraska)



# The expedition day by day

ORP Kujawiak Video Still Overlay on Ship Blueprints - Note perfect correspondence of port-holes and supporting braces for 20mm Cannon Platform

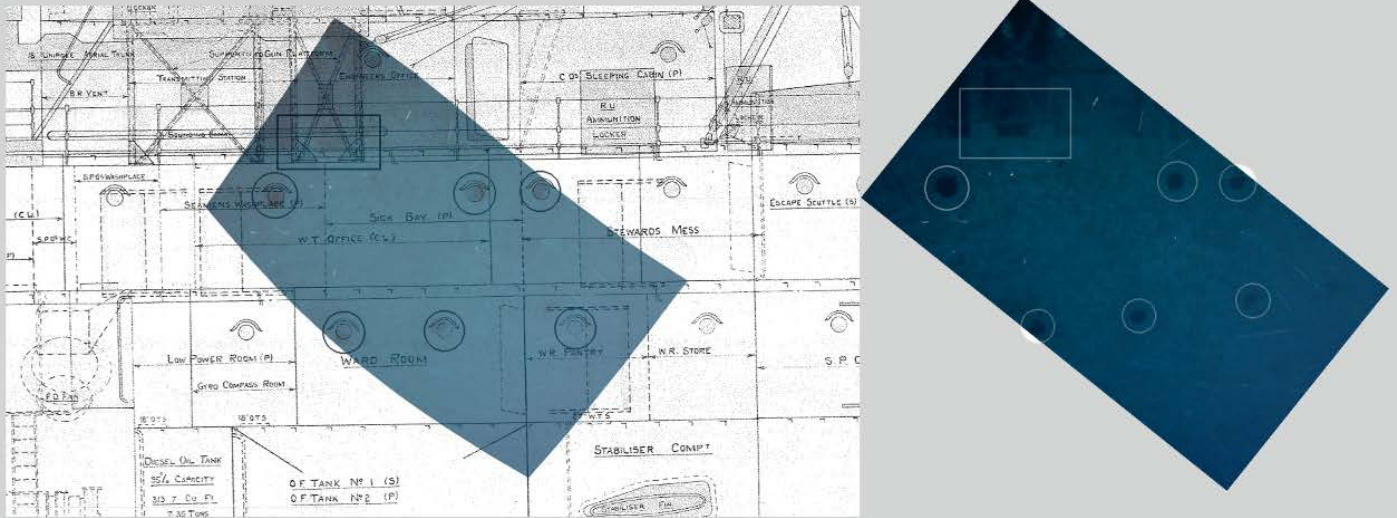


Image corrected for lens distortion

Photo: Side by side comparison of the original blueprint with the picture of the porthole layout. (made by C. Kraska)

September 25

We continued to collect more images of the shipwreck, including images of the bow main twin 102mm guns.

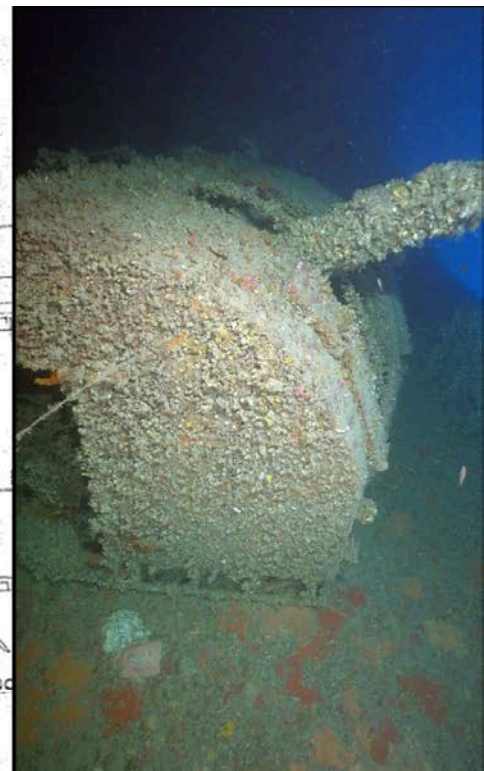
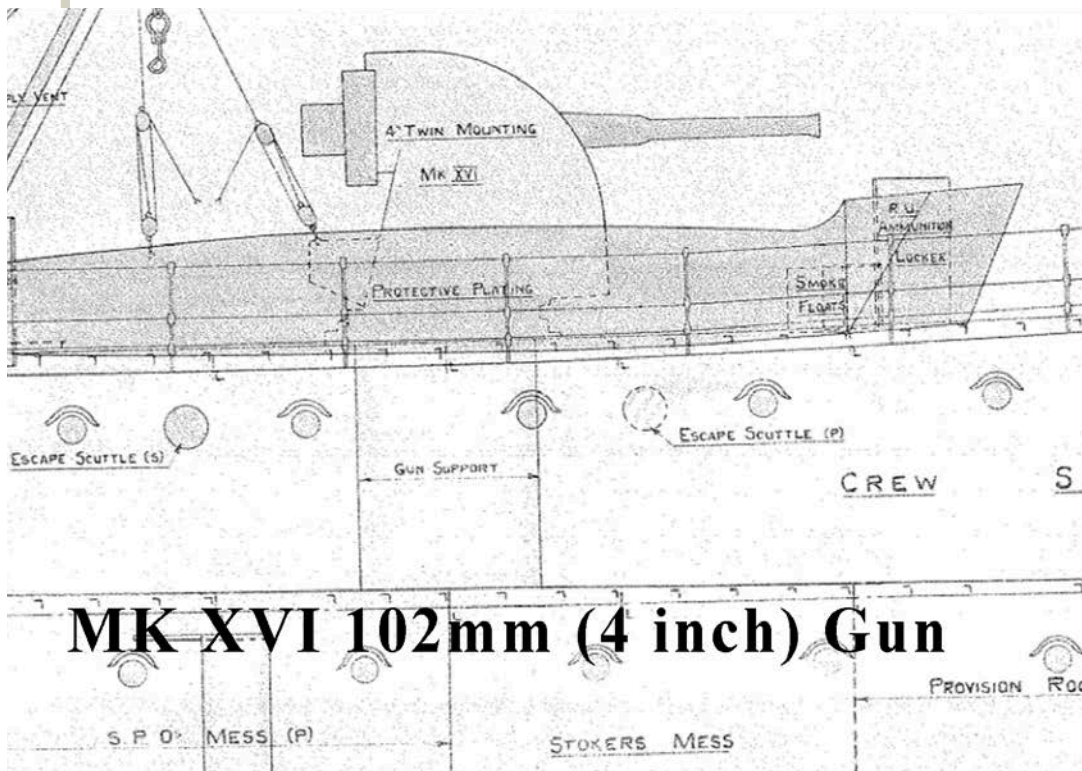


Photo: Side by side comparison of the original blueprint with the picture of the bow main twin 102mm guns. (made by C. Kraska)



# The expedition day by day

September 26

The last day of the expedition – 10:00 am meeting at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage office to report on all of our activity during the expedition and to hand over all of the collected data to Mr. Nathaniel Cutajar and Dr. Timmy Gambin.



Photo: Meeting at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage office. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: Team with the Flag #207 (left to right) Robert Głucho-wski, Timmy Gambin, Peter Wytykowski, Nathaniel Cutajar, Bartek Grynda, Michał Szczepaniak and Roman Zajder. (photo: R. Zajder)

## Conclusion

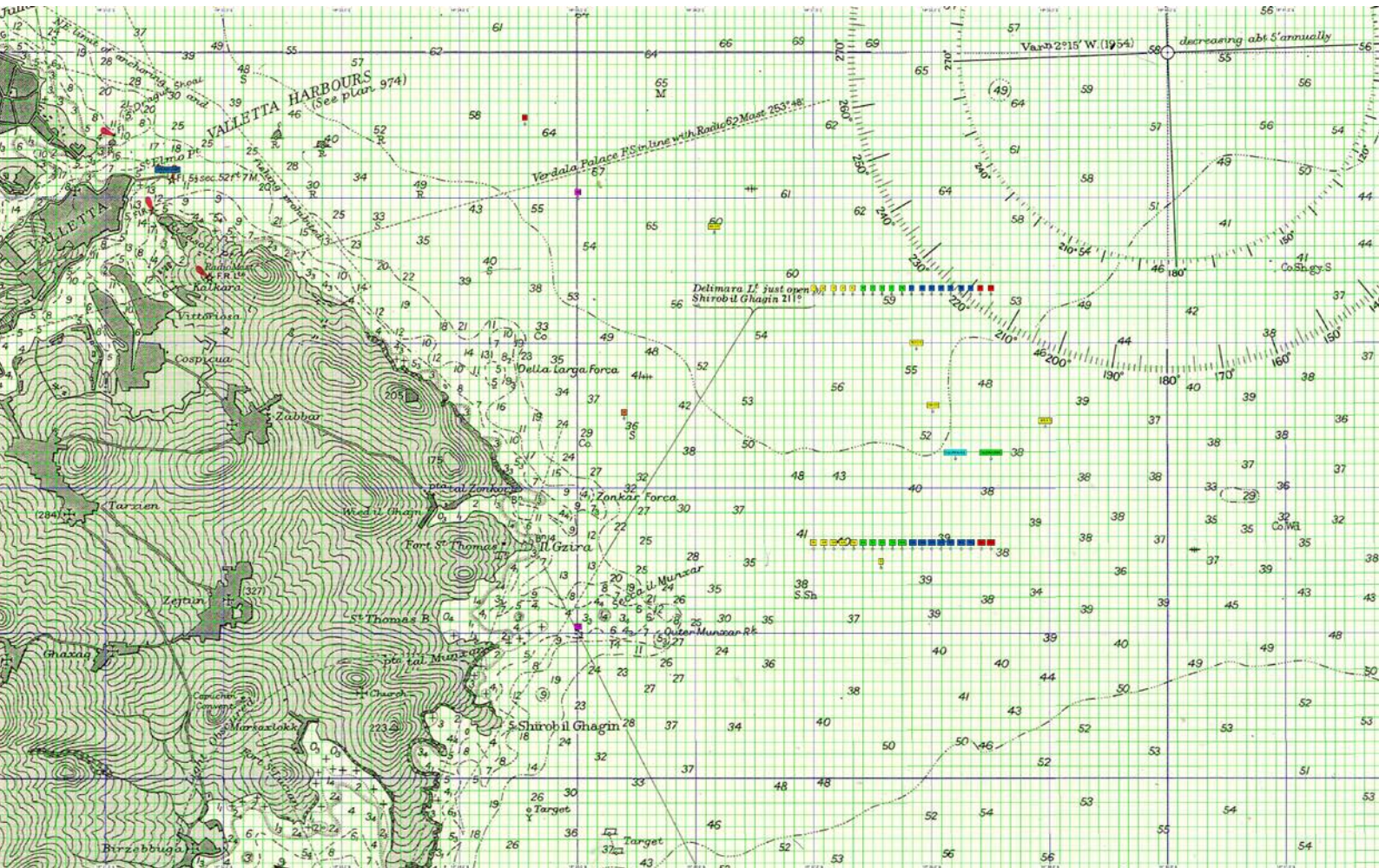
All of the data collected during the expedition indicates that the object found by the StarFish 425F side scan sonar on Monday, September 22, 2014 at 11:15 am is a Hunt II type destroyer. The images collected by the ROV and then by the video camera confirmed without a doubt that a Hunt II type destroyer was found. Detailed analysis of historical materials and reports from the ships that took part in Operation Harpoon proves that the destroyer described above is the Polish warship, ORP Kujawiak. The geographic position given by the Capitan of ORP Kujawiak in his report is 35°52'20"N 14°38'50"E, but it should be 35°53'20"N 14°38'50" – it has only one digit (**bolded**) incorrect. The shipwreck lies one mile north of the position given by the Capitan which further proves that the shipwreck of the Hunt II type destroyer found by the Shipwreck Expeditions Association could only be that of ORP Kujawiak.

Map with colored waypoints. All geographic positions are below.

### GEOGRAPHIC POSITIONS:

- W - 35°52,4800 14°35,3000 - alleged position of Kujawiak's wreck given by Enrico Cernuschi
- 5220N3850E - 35°52,2000 14°38,5000 – sinking position from the Polish version of the Capitan's report
- 5220N3820E - 35°52,2000 14°38,2000 – sinking position from the English version of the Capitan's report
- ST. ELMO LIGHTHOUSE - 35°54,1500 14°31,5200
- Z - 35°51,4500 14°37,5700 – position of the sweeps from the report of HMS Speedy
- A - 35°54,5100 14°34,5500 – position of the sweeps from the report of HMS Speedy
- 107 5 5 - 35°52,5300 14°38,0100 – position where HMS Badsworth stuck a mine
- 106 6 3 - 35°52,4200 14°38,9600 – position of HMS Badsworth at sunrise
- 96 3 8 - 35°53,7600 14°36,1600 – position of HMS Blankney at 0:40
- 103 5 3 - 35°52,9600 14°37,8700 – position where HMS Blankney passed two moored mines in the morning
- B1 - 35°54,0000 14°35,0000 B2 - 35°54,0000 14°42,0000 B3 - 35°51,0000 14°42,0000
- B4 - 35°51,0000 14°35,0000 – positions of the search zone included in the permit application

- 1. - 35°53,3323 14°36,9998 - 1A - 35°51,5791 14°36,9985 – actual search zone during the expedition
- 2. - 35°53,3322 14°37,0834 - 2A - 35°51,5790 14°37,0853
- 3. - 35°53,3322 14°37,1669 - 3A - 35°51,5817 14°37,1722
- 4. - 35°53,3321 14°37,2505 - 4A - 35°51,5817 14°37,2490
- 5. - 35°53,3321 14°37,3307 - 5A - 35°51,5816 14°37,3359
- 6. - 35°53,3321 14°37,4176 - 6A - 35°51,5816 14°37,4194
- 7. - 35°53,3320 14°37,5011 - 7A - 35°51,5816 14°37,5029
- 8. - 35°53,3320 14°37,5847 - 8A - 35°51,5815 14°37,5832
- 9. - 35°53,3320 14°37,6649 - 9A - 35°51,5815 14°37,6700
- 10. - 35°53,3319 14°37,7485 - 10A - 35°51,5815 14°37,7536
- 11. - 35°53,3319 14°37,8320 - 11A - 35°51,5814 14°37,8371
- 12. - 35°53,3318 14°37,9189 - 12A - 35°51,5840 14°37,9172
- 13. - 35°53,3318 14°37,9991 - 13A - 35°51,5840 14°37,9975
- 14. - 35°53,3317 14°38,0827 - 14A - 35°51,5840 14°38,0843
- 15. - 35°53,3317 14°38,1662 - 15A - 35°51,5839 14°38,1645
- 16. - 35°53,3317 14°38,2498 - 16A - 35°51,5839 14°38,2514
- 17. - 35°53,3316 14°38,3333 - 17A - 35°51,5838 14°38,3315
- 18. - 35°53,3315 14°38,4169 - 18A - 35°51,5838 14°38,4184
- 19. - 35°53,3315 14°38,5004 - 19A - 35°51,5810 14°38,5019
- ORP KUJAWIAK WRECK - 35°53,2620 14°38,4820





# The second expedition

2015

## L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

The second expedition to Malta was planned June 3rd through June 17th, 2015. For almost a year, the team worked tirelessly to prepare for the difficult task to execute the first ever exploration of the wreck which lies at a depth of 100 meters (330 feet) and to commemorate the thirteen servicemen who died on the ship. The team also spent time finding any survivors of the sinking and relatives of the ship's crew. The team knew that finding any eye-witnesses of the sinking would be very difficult since this tragic event took place 72 years ago and any survivor must be over 90 years. However, we got very lucky and found one of the servicemen who was onboard during the sinking – leading seaman Kazimierz Stefankiewicz now lives in Nottingham, England. He changed his name to Kenneth Stevens and on August 19, 2017 he turned 100 years old, but he is still in great physical and mental shape.

We were also able to find Patricia Olsztyn, the sister in law of the fallen Edward Olsztyn, who lives in Brighton, Michigan, the families of Petty Officers Andrzej Hołowacz, Robert Piec, Aleksander Fałkowski, as well as the grandson of the ship's Captain, Mike Lichodziejewski, who lives in Chicago, Illinois.



Photo: Kazimierz Stefankiewicz / Kenneth Stevens in his home in Nottingham in 2015. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: Leading Seaman Kazimierz Stefankiewicz in the Polish Navy uniform.  
*(photo: from the collection of K. Stefankiewicz)*



## The second expedition

### L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

On June 2, 2015, the day before the expedition, a Holy Mass took place at the Church of the Mother of God of Jasna Góra in Łódź, Poland led by priest Jarosław Jurga in memory of the fallen sailors. The ceremony service was attended by members of the expedition and the Ambassador of the Republic of Malta in Warsaw, His Excellency Pierre Clive Agius, as well as the color guard of the 37th Regiment of Transport Helicopters.



Photo: The team, Ambassador of the Republic of Malta in Warsaw, His Excellency Pierre Clive Agius, priest Jarosław Jurga and color guard of the 37th Regiment of Transport Helicopters after at the Church of the Mother of God of Jasna Góra in Łódź, Poland. (photo: R. Zajder)

After all of the preparations, the team arrived in Malta on June 3rd with over half a ton of specialized diving equipment and HD video cameras. It took the first few days to assemble all of the equipment and to prepare a detailed plan for the first exploration of the virgin wreck. We cooperated closely with the professional team representing the University of Malta and their team leader, Dr. Timmy Gambin.



Photo: The first meeting at the University of Malta before starting the fieldwork. (photo: R. Zajder)



A very important task for the team was to properly attach the shot line to the wreck, which is vital for deep diving and for safety during decompression which lasted over three hours after spending only thirty minutes on the wreck.

The team was divided into three groups – two groups were assigned to the wreck exploration and the last team was the support of the deep divers. The first exploration brought amazing images of the wreck and the team were able to establish that after 73 years of being underwater the ship is still in incredible condition. The wreck lies on her portside at a 90 degree angle, the hull is intact and the main parts of the ship are easily recognizable. The bow is in perfect condition. When the ship struck the mine, the Captain gave the order to drop the starboard anchor to prevent the ship from tilting on the portside, so the hawsehole is empty and only the anchor chain is visible. The portside anchor is still in the hawsehole.

The front main turret with twin 102 millimeter guns is intact. These guns were able to fire 19 shells a minute at a distance of almost 20 kilometers.

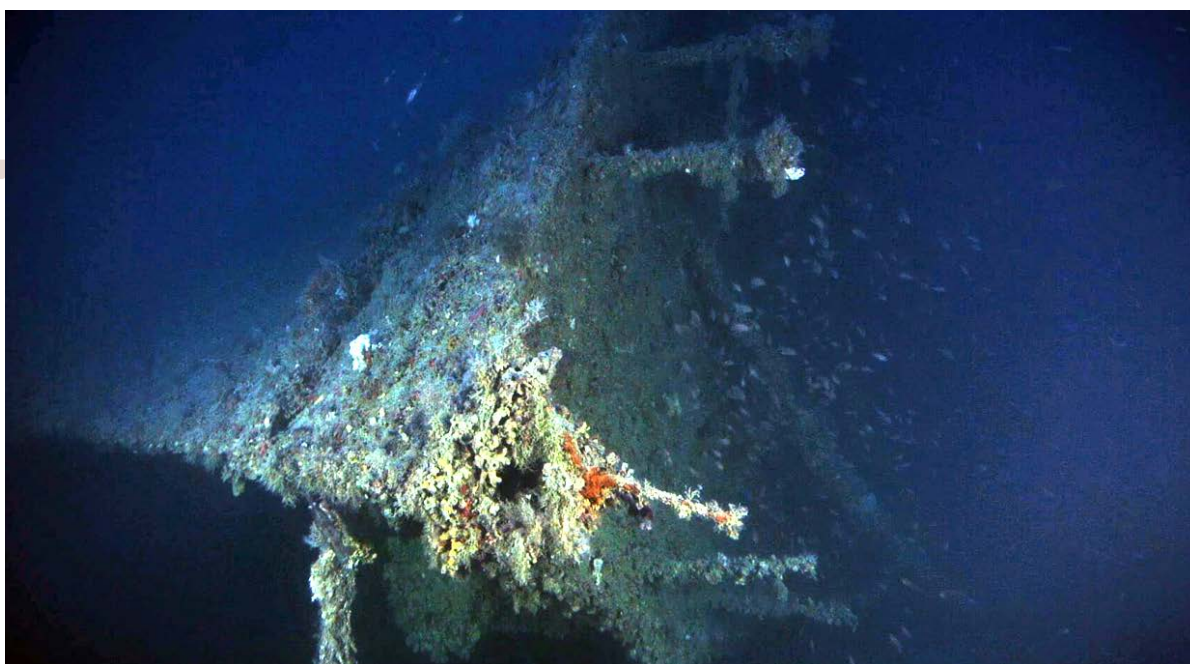


Photo: Mighty bow of ORP Kujawiak with starboard anchor chain visible. (photo: U-boat Malta Ltd.)



Photo: The front main turret with twin 102 millimeter guns. (photo: U-boat Malta Ltd.)

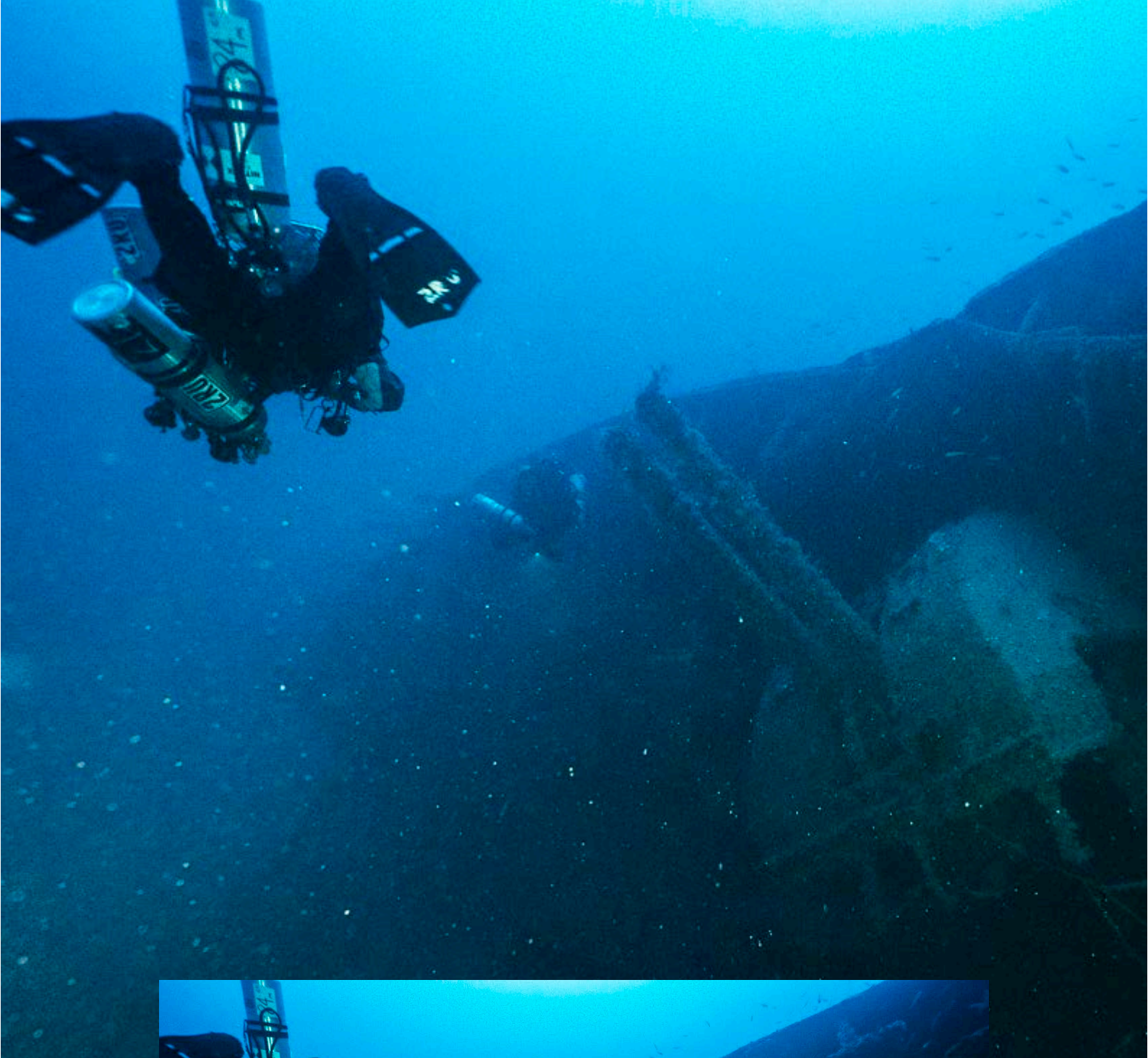


Photo: The front section of the wreck and turret with twin 102 millimeter guns. (photo: J. Wood)



## The second expedition

### L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

The ship's bridge is also in great condition – the winch, the portholes, and the Duty Finder Coil are all very easily recognizable.

The top of the bridge was a command station and this part of the ship is open like the top of a conning tower on submarines – here was a rangefinder, a compass, a pelorus, and a chart table. Stations of the anti-aircraft 20mm Oerlikon cannon are located on both sides of the bridge. During the second expedition, the starboard cannon was in excellent condition, the whole station was intact, and even the ammunition box was in place.

The starboard cannon is barely visible, mostly buried in the sand. After the bridge, at midship, is the funnel, which is not in good condition as most of the sheathing is rusted out. On the left side of the funnel is a sizable wash deck locker, and next to funnel is the lumber rack whose shape resembles a slat bench.

This is the characteristic object that helped us to identify the shipwreck back in 2014. Heading towards the stern you approach the anti-aircraft 40mm quadruple cannon located exactly amidships.



Photo: The forward part of the ship's bridge. (photo: J. Wood)

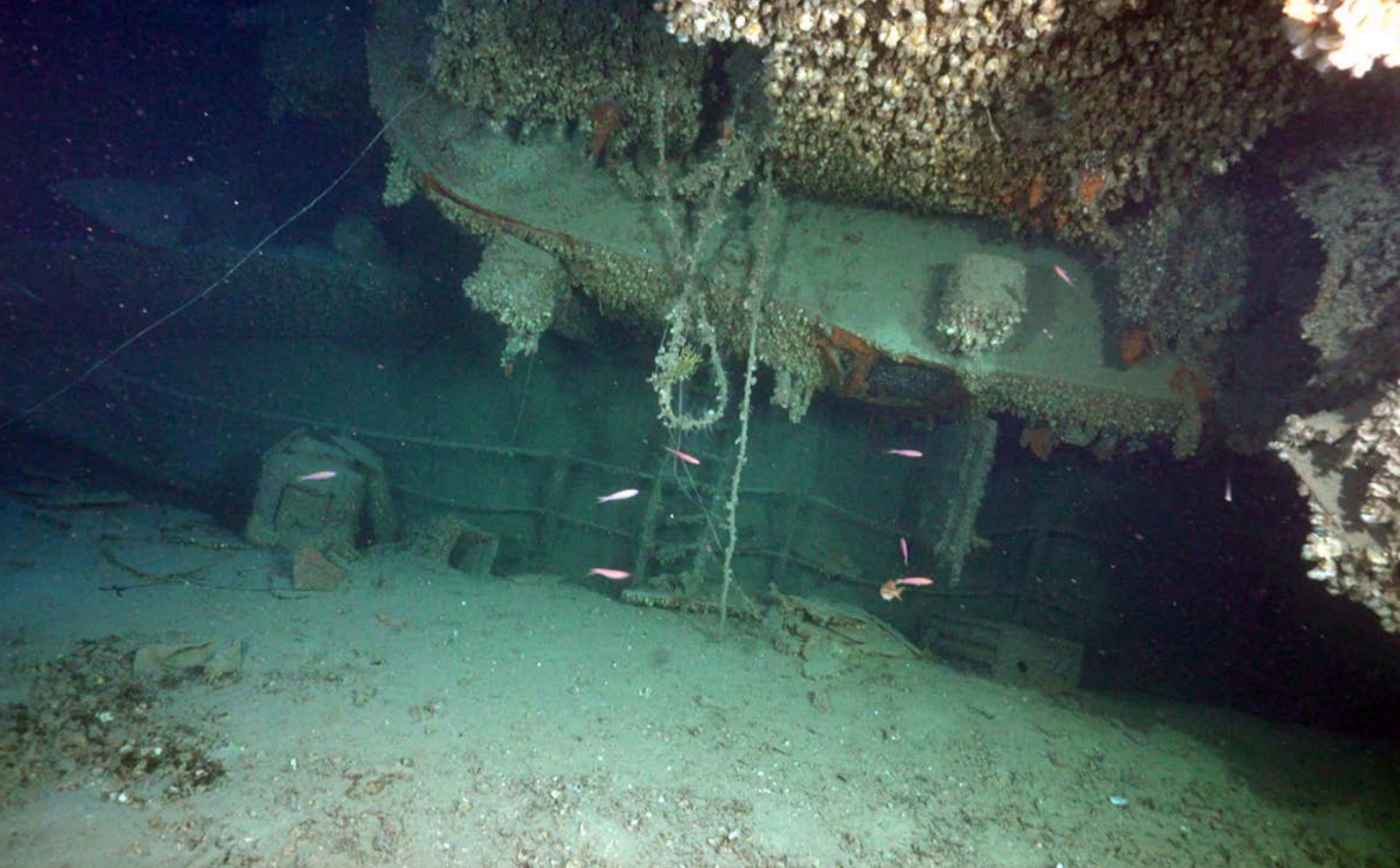
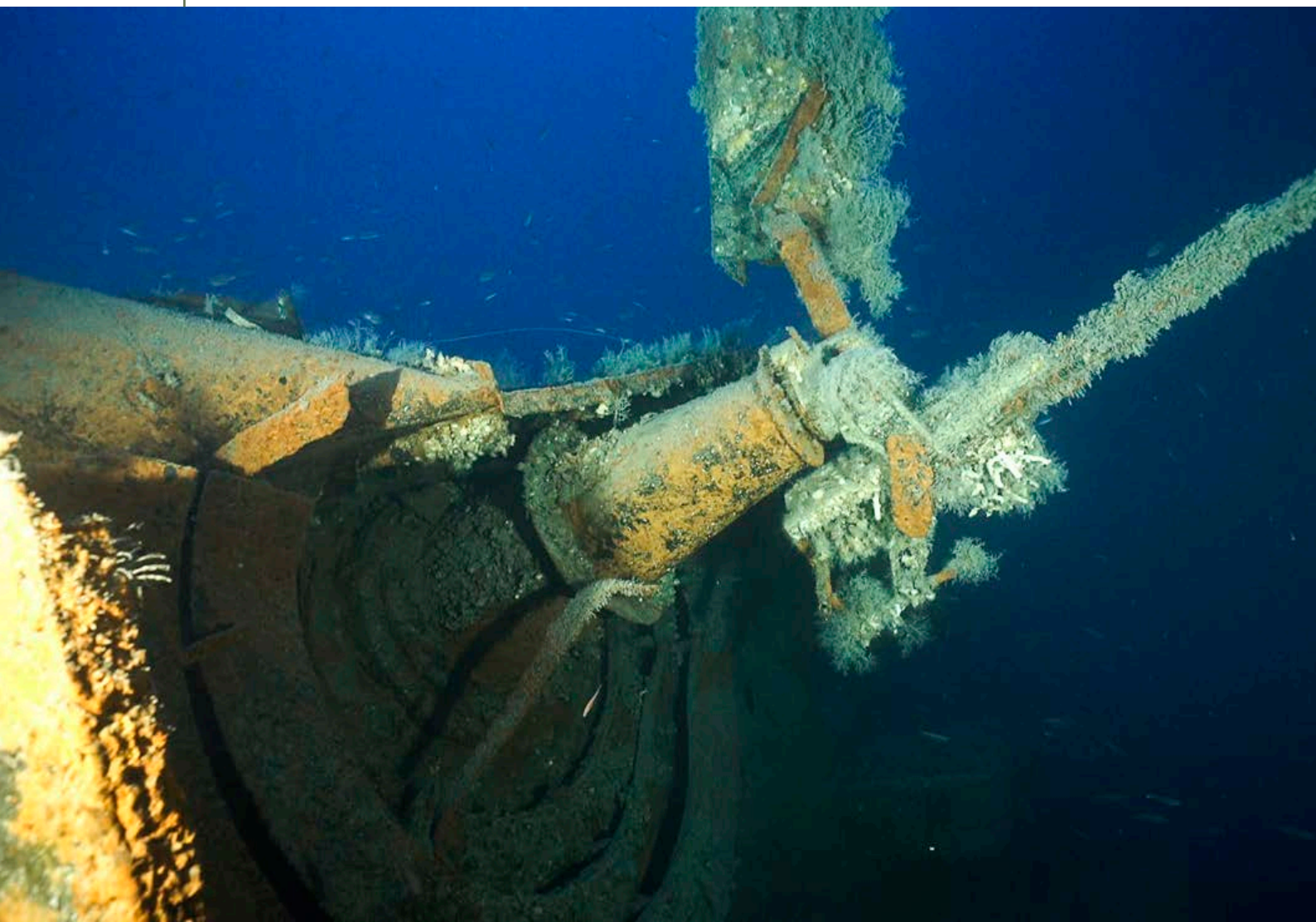


Photo: The portside of the ship's bridge and bent railings. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

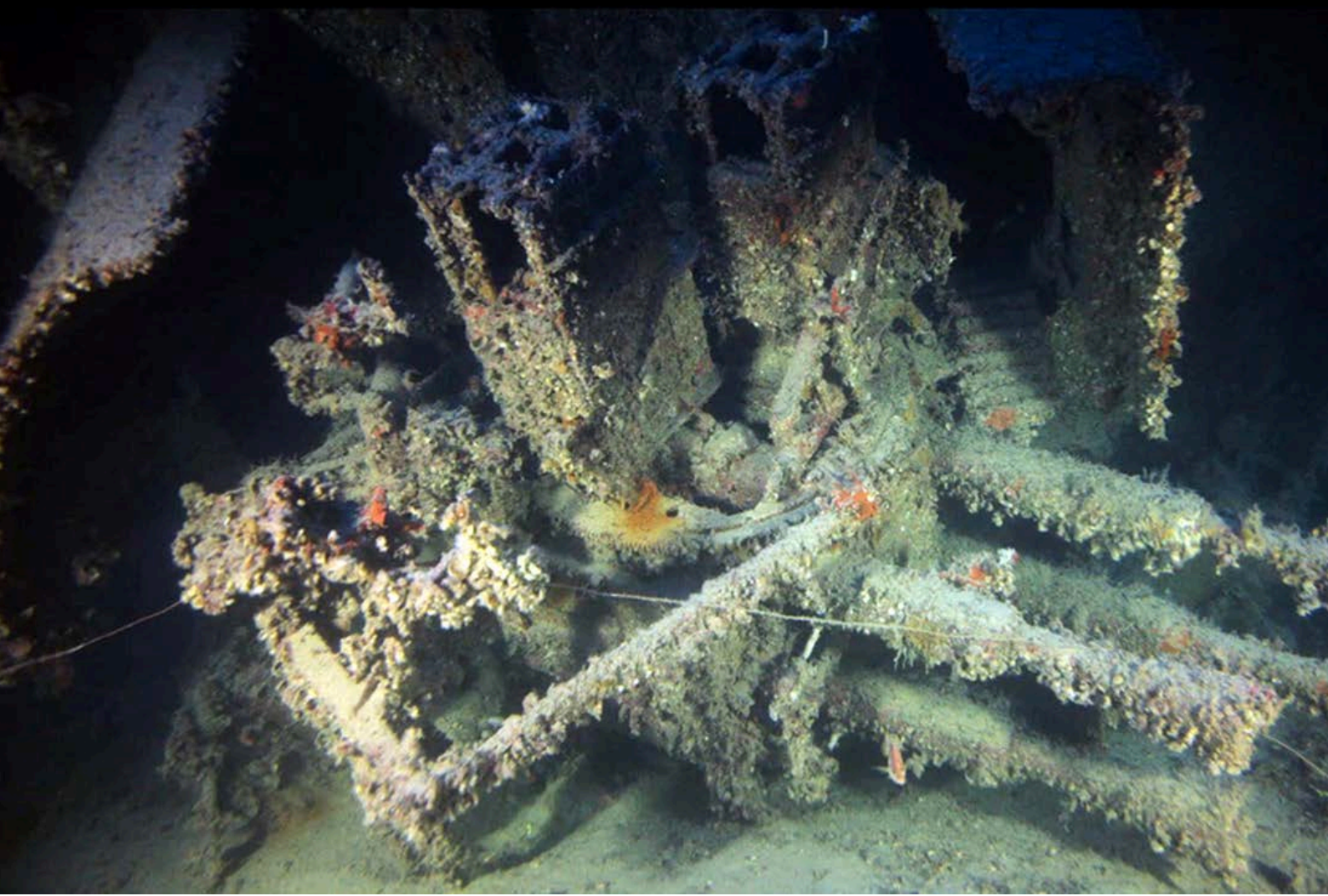
Photo: The starboard anti-aircraft 20mm Oerlikon cannon. (photo: J. Wood)





**Photo:** Amidships at location of ship's funnel.. (photo: U-boat Malta Ltd.)

**Photo:** The anti-aircraft 40mm quadruple cannon located amidships. (photo: K. Hyttinen)





## The second expedition

### L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

This station was ripped from the deck and the cannon lies on the seabed at a 45 degree angle. Because of this the inside compartment of the ship is exposed, which in turn, exposed a lot of the china located on the inside of the ship. Next is the searchlight post with the remains of a compass and a steering wheel. The remains of the searchlight lie on the seabed. Between the searchlight station and the second gun turret are the depth charges in their projectors.

The second gun turret is sheltered by the gun's protective plate. The turret is, unfortunately, without its guns as the guns fell out when the ship hit the seabed and they lie a few meters away from the wreck.



Photo 43: The remains of the searchlight and one of the davits (photo: K. Hyttinen)

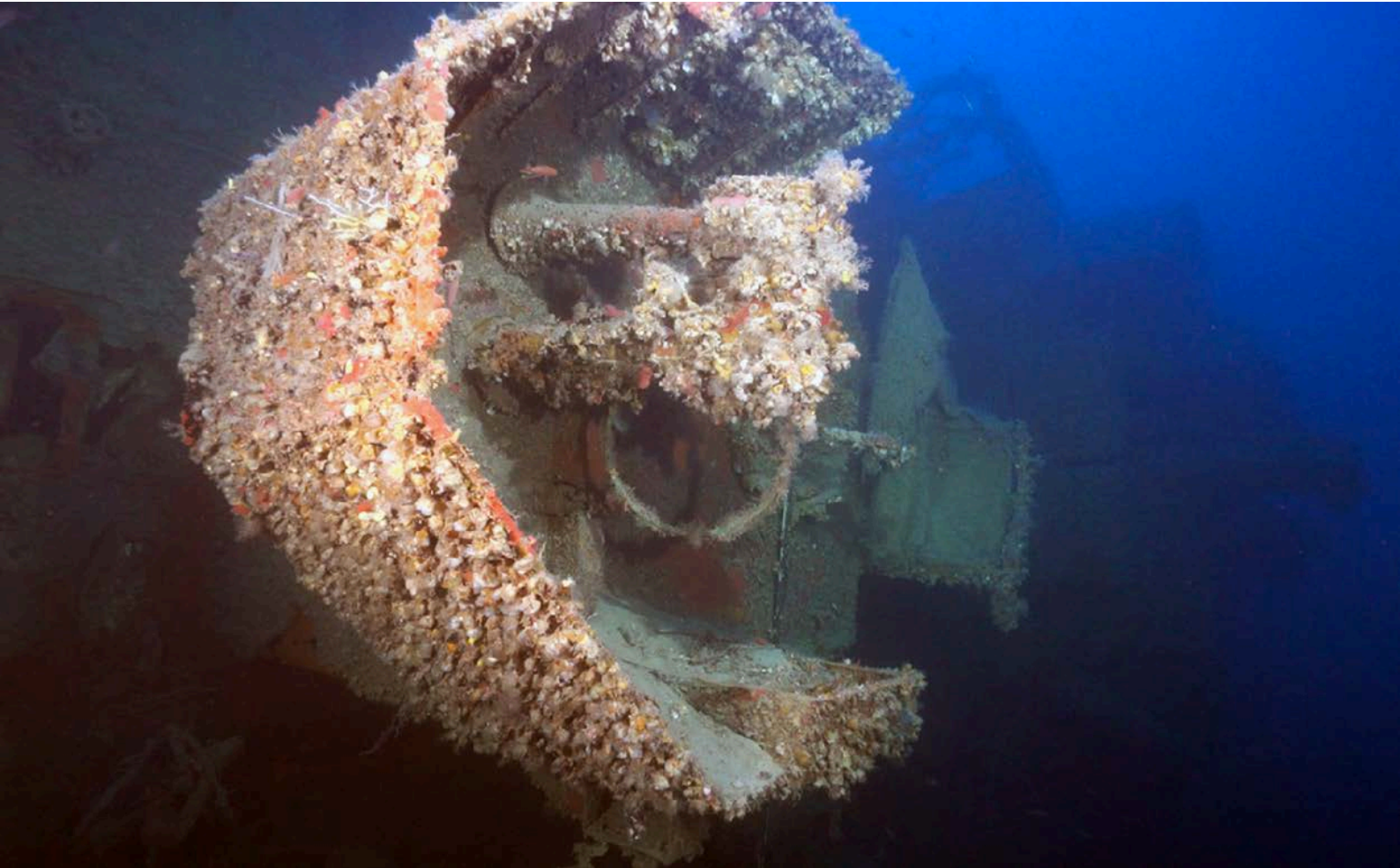


Photo: The top of the searchlight post. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

Photo: The front of the searchlight post. (photo: K. Hyttinen)





Photo: The starboard depth charges in their projectors. (photo: U-boat Malta Ltd.)

Photo: The second gun turret without its guns. (photo: K. Hyttinen)







## The second expedition

### L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

Down below this station are the gun shells that fell out of the ammunition box. Some lie on the gun's protective plate and several others stick out vertically in the sand. After the second gun turret is the third gun turret which is located the deck below and is in the great condition.

When the ship began to sink she went stern first and she hit the seabed with all of her weight concentrated on her stern causing characteristic buckles to be formed from the impact. The rudder and the two propellers are intact.

On top of the guns from this station lies a part of the construction of the second gun platform. The ship's stern is in the worst condition. Here are the twisted rails of the depth charge racks with the depth charges trapped inside, as well as the remains of the depth charge projectors.



Photo: The stern of the ship and the twisted rails of the depth charge racks with the depth charges trapped inside. (photo: K. Hyttinen)



**Photo:** The third gun turret located aft. *(photo: K. Hyttinen)*

**Photo:** The characteristic impact buckles on the stern, the rudder and one of the propellers. *(photo: K. Hyttinen)*





## The second expedition

### L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY



Photo: The team before the dive to place the crucifix and rosary from Patricia Olsztyn on the wreck. (photo: R. Zajder)



## The second expedition

### L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

Exploring the virgin shipwreck was an amazing experience for the team! It was like time travel – knowing that everything was left 73 years ago and it is still intact. During the last dive, Peter Wytykowski and Mark “Sharky” Alexander placed a bronze plaque on the wreck to commemorate the fallen servicemen, as well as the discovery of the wreck a year ago.

Mark Alexander, a US Air Force veteran, saluted the plaque with a slow retreat to honor those who lost their lives. Wytykowski and Alexander also placed a crucifix and rosary that they received from Patricia Olsztyn in memory of her brother in law, Edward Olsztyn, inside of the wreck.



Photo: The bronze commemorative plaque on the wreck. (photo: G. Iaria)

The text of the plaque:

POLISH ESCORT DESTROYER  
ORP KUJAWIAK  
DISCOVERED ON SEPTEMBER 22, 2014  
BY THE POLISH EXPEDITION "THE HUNT FOR L-72"  
GRAVE OF THE THIRTEEN POLISH NAVY SAILORS  
WHO LOST THEIR LIVES ON JUNE 16, 1942  
MAY THEY REST IN PEACE



## The second expedition

### L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

After the discovery of the shipwreck in September 2014, the Shipwreck Expeditions Association informed the Polish President about the team's accomplishment. The Association also appealed to Polish Minister of Culture to protect the shipwreck as a war grave. After almost a year of negotiations with the Maltese government, the Polish government announced that the shipwreck of the Polish escort destroyer ORP Kujawiak and the war grave of the thirteen Polish servicemen are both under protection.

The Shipwreck Expeditions Association had another very important goal to accomplish during the second expedition – the commemoration of the fallen in the most honorable place in Malta. Thanks to our Maltese friends and Dr. Timmy Gambin the most beautiful historic site was chosen – the Upper Barrakka Gardens, located in the capital of Malta, Valletta. The Upper Barrakka Gardens is under UNESCO protection and it took the Association a year to receive the permit to be able to unveil the marble plaque commemorating the thirteen Polish heroes. A friend of the Association and architect, Patrick Calleja, designed the plaque free of charge and the Association paid for its production and installation. On the evening of June 16, 2015 – the exact 73rd anniversary of the sinking – the touching ceremony took place. Gathered together for this special occasion were many officials and representatives of Maltese and Polish government, diplomats, Polish veterans, Maltese citizens, as well as representatives of the Polish community living in Malta. At the beginning of the ceremony Dr. Timmy Gambin welcomed the invited guests and then the speeches commenced: Owen Bonnici, the Maltese Minister of Justice, Culture, and Local Government; Jan Stanisław Ciechanowski, Head of the Office for War Veterans and Victims of Oppression, the Minister from the Polish Ministry of Culture, a representative of the Polish Navy, and the team leader of the L-72 project, Peter Wytykowski. In the name of the team, Peter Wytykowski said: ***“I would like to thank everyone who gathered for this ceremony to commemorate Polish heroes“. On September 22, 2014 after a long quest and lots of research by members of our Shipwreck Expeditions Association, the shipwreck of Polish escort destroyer ORP Kujawiak was discovered. Soon after that, together with our Maltese friends, we decided to do something special to remember the thirteen Polish navy sailors who lost their lives on June 16, 1942 when the Polish warship sunk. Lots of good people were involved in this project, many of whom we have the honor to call our friends.***

***From the bottom of our hearts we would like to thank the Maltese government, Honorary Dr. Owen Bonnici, Minister of Justice, Culture and Local Government for this wonderful ceremony. We would also like to thank the Malta Tourism Authority for the financial support – Thank you!***

***Also, we would like to thank Mr. Patrick Calleja for the beautiful design of this commemorative plaque and his selfless assistance in this whole project – Thank you! We would also like to thank the Ambassador of Malta in Warsaw, Poland, His Excellency Pierre Clive Agius, for his great involvement, help, and support in both of our expeditions to Malta, as well as for his part in this ceremony. Mr. Ambassador, you are a true friend of Poland – Thank you!***

***Our greatest gratitude has to be directed to our friend, Dr. Timmy Gambin. We hope that we deserve to call you our friend. Timmy, we can't even begin to describe how appreciative and grateful we are. Without your continuous commitment and help none of this would have happened – We salute you, my friend!***

***Over the past few days I had the honor to dive to the wreck site; on one of those dives I took this Polish Navy Flag, which is now covering the commemorative plaque, to the wreck to the depth of 100 meters. More importantly, during these deep, peaceful dives in the dark waters surrounded by silence, I had the chance to spiritually connect to thirteen navymen, our heroes, and I have a message for the Maltese people from them, so please let me be the messenger:***



## The second expedition

### L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

***“We lost our lives fighting for your freedom... and it was worth it... Now... we are on our eternal watch in friendly Maltese waters... making sure that your freedom is safe!”***

After the speeches, Minister Bonnici and Minister Ciechanowski unveiled the marble plaque covered by the Polish Navy flag which was received by the team from the Museum of Polish Navy in Gdynia, Poland. A military chaplain then said a prayer and devoted the plaque. Guards of Honor presented their weapons and fired four salvos. At the end of the ceremony, the thirteen names of the fallen Polish heroes were announced and a cannon was fired on each in memory of the fallen. The reception for the invited guests ended the ceremony. During the reception, Dr. Timmy Gambin from the University of Malta was awarded the “Distinguished for Polish Culture” badge by Minister J.S. Ciechanowski at the request of the Association. This badge is awarded to outstanding individuals in the creation, dissemination, and protection of culture.

Before the main ceremony (around noon on June 16th) in the Upper Barrakka Gardens the Maltese Navy patrol boat “P 24” took the representatives of the Polish government, the Polish veterans, and the team to the position of the Kujawiak tragedy. A moment of silence was observed, a prayer was said, and wreaths and bouquets of flowers dropped into the sea commemorated the fallen sailors.

The goal of the second expedition was met with great success. The virgin shipwreck was explored for the first time by deep divers and the thirteen Polish heroes were properly commemorated for posterity.



**Photo:** The team in the Upper Barrakka Gardens (left to right) Michał Szczepaniak, Mark Alexander, Piotr Kardasz, Peter Wytykowski, dr. Timmy Gambin, Mariusz Borowiak, Roman Zajder and Bartek Grynda. (photo: R. Zajder)

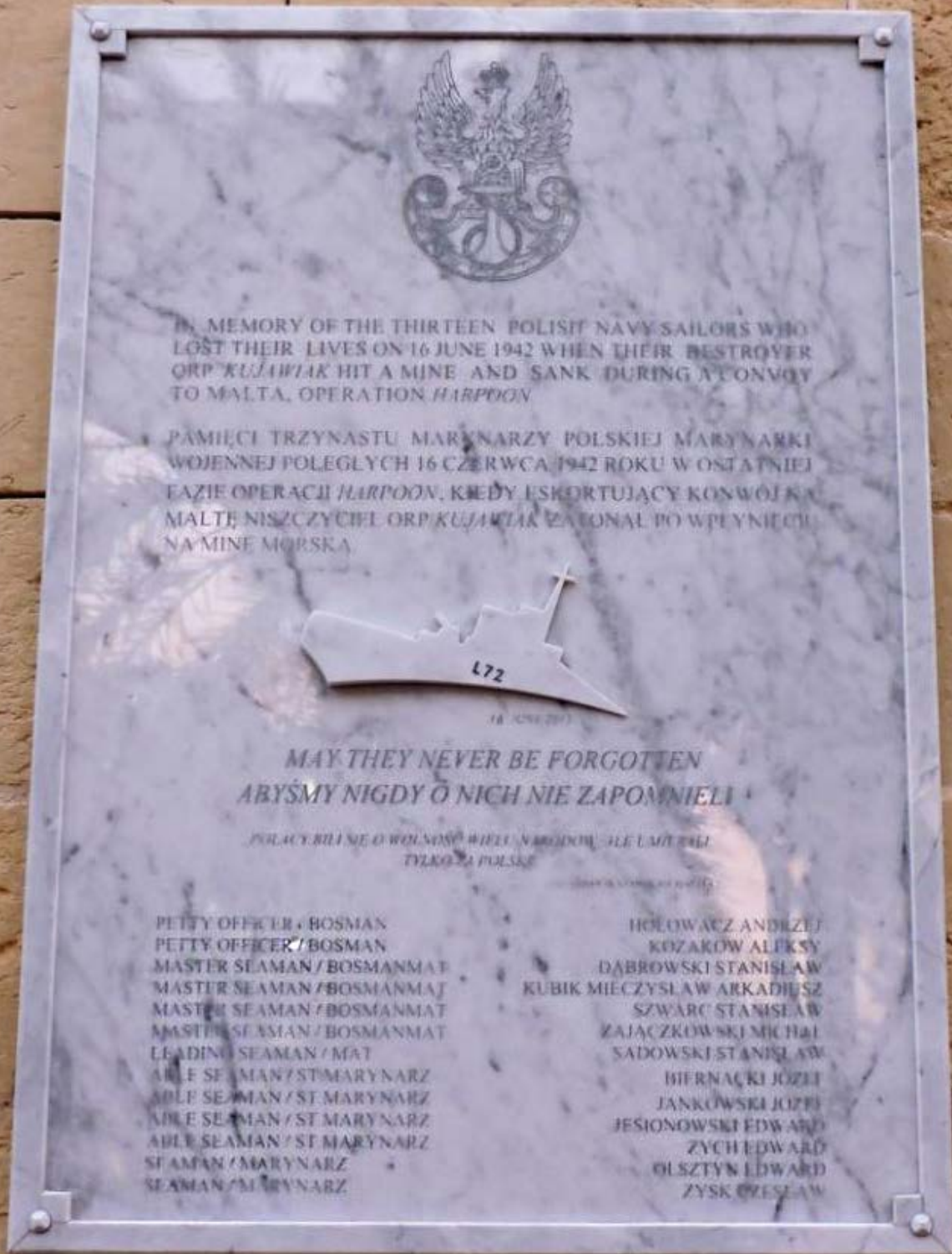


Photo: The marble plaque commemorating 13 fallen Polish servicemen, funded by the Shipwreck Expeditions Association and unveiled in the Upper Barrakka Gardens in Valletta, Malta. (photo: R. Zajder)



## The second expedition L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY



Photo: Before unveiling the commemorative plaque team leader P. Wytykowski addresses attendees. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: Solemn ceremony in the Upper Barracka Gardens. (photo: R. Zajder)





## The second expedition

# L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY



Photo: Guards of Honor presented their weapons and fire four salvos. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: Guards of Honor in the Upper Barrakka Gardens. (photo: R. Zajder)



## The second expedition

# L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY



Photo: Guards of Honor in the Upper Barrakka Gardens. (photo: R. Zajder)



## The second expedition L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY



Photo: Minister Bonnici and Minister Ciechanowski pay respect to the fallen sailors. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: Flowers under the plaque. (photo: R. Zajder)



## The second expedition L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY



Photo: The thirteen cannon salvos in memory of the fallen sailors. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: Glory to the heroes. (photo: R. Zajder)



## The second expedition L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY



Photo: The team before the ceremony at sea. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: Prayer and moment of silence in the place of the Polish destroyer tragedy. (photo: R. Zajder)



## The second expedition

# L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY



Photo: Bouquet of flowers in the friendly Maltese waters. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: A moment of reflection. (photo: R. Zajder)



## The second expedition

# L-72 A FORGOTTEN TRAGEDY

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Photo: Maltese Navy patrol boat "P 24" at the location of the ceremony. (photo: M. Szczepaniak)



# The third expedition 2016

## THE HEART OF L-72

The third expedition to the wreck of the Polish destroyer took place June 5th through June 19th, 2016. This time the goal was to find the ship's bell, but the team knew that this wouldn't be an easy task. Detailed analysis of the video material recorded on the wreck during the second expedition and its comparison with the archive photos of the ship resulted in the bell simply not being where it should be. The bell on the Polish destroyer ORP Krakowiak, which is the same class as ORP Kujawiak, was amidships starboard near the funnel. The very same spot on the wreck of ORP Kujawiak was empty.

After analyzing the video material we knew that the seabed below the spot where the bell should be mounted was empty as well. The team was afraid that the bell could have disconnected from the ship during the sinking and ended up far from the wreck making it impossible to locate.



Photo: The spot on the wreck marked by an X where the bell should be attached. (photo: G. Iaria)





**Photo:** The archival photo of ORP Krakowiak the same class destroyer. The arrow shows the place where the bell was attached.  
*(photo: from the collection of M. Borowiak)*



## The third expedition

# THE HEART OF L72

The third expedition became a bit of a failure! During the two weeks of the expedition, the weather and strong currents only allowed the team to dive to the wreck three times. Three groups of divers searched the pre-determined areas of the wreck in order to locate the bell. Each group spent twenty-five minutes on the wreck which resulted in almost three hours of decompression for each diver. The strong currents made the whole dive operation extremely difficult – when the divers reached the surface they were completely exhausted. During the second dive, team leader – Peter Wytykowski – attached the Polish Navy flag to the wreck. The very same flag was used at the ceremony to cover the marble plaque before its unveiling the year before.



Photo: Peter Wytykowski attaches the Polish Navy flag to the wreck. (photo: G. Iaria)

Right before the third and final dive to the wreck the team had serious problems with equipment failure, so the groups went down without all of their divers. The group comprised of Peter Wytykowski and Mark “Sharky” Alexander was short one diver which gave them less of a chance to find the bell, but one minute before their bottom time was over, Peter Wytykowski checked one more spot... Against all odds the third expedition turned out to be successful – the ship’s bell was found! As it turns out, the bell of ORP Kujawiak was mounted to the ship’s mast which lies broken in parts on the seabed. The exact spot where the bell was connected to the mast was covered by the enormous wash deck locker making the bell completely invisible.

The third expedition was completed and the following year was used by the team to receive the proper permit to recover the bell.

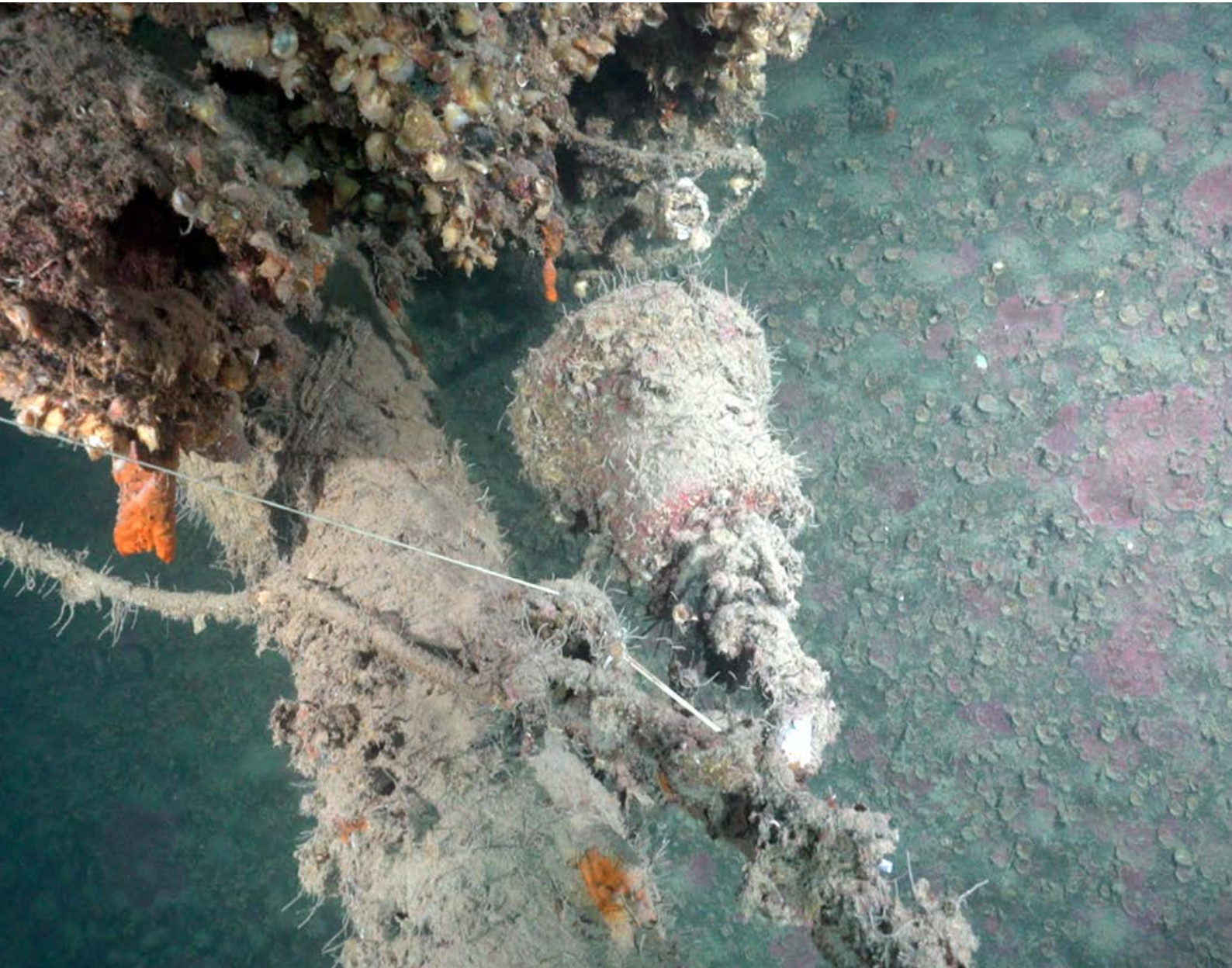


Photo: Ship's bell still attached to the mast. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

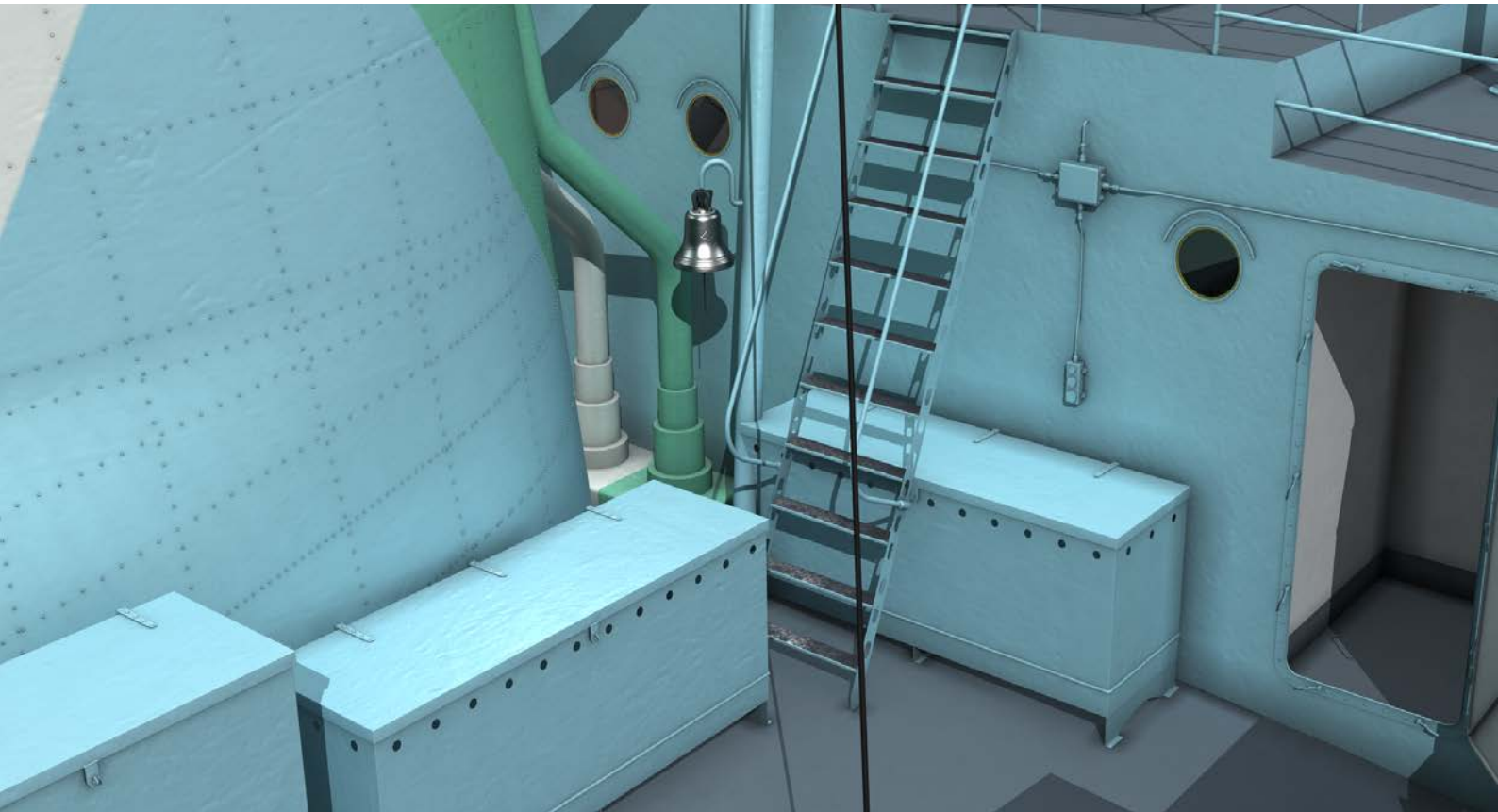


Photo: ORP Kujawiak- 3D visualization of where the bell was originally attached (made by W. Góralski)



# The fourth expedition

2017

## THE RISING HEART OF L-72

After months of dealing with the matter of receiving the necessary permit to recover the bell, just a few weeks before the planned dates of the expedition, the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage Malta granted the Shipwreck Expeditions Association the permit, SCH 388/2017. The expedition took place May 8th through May 22, 2017.

The main goals of the expedition were to film and photograph the wreck in order to create a 3D reconstruction of it, as well as to recover the ship's bell. Because of the multiple tasks, the team was divided into four groups.

The first group was tasked with recording as much high resolution material as possible to be used to reconstruct the wreck in 3D. This task was very difficult and challenging because the divers could only spend twenty five minutes bottom time at a depth of 100 meters, and the object to be recorded was over 80 meters long.

The second group was responsible for recovering the ship's bell. This was another very difficult task because the bell was not only located on the wreck with very limited access, but it was also still very well attached to the ship's mast by a solid steel bracket around 4 centimeters in diameter.

The third group was responsible for exploring and filming the main parts of the wreck in order to compare these recorded materials to the materials recorded during the previous expeditions and to establish if any degradation of the wreck occurred over the last few years.

Finally, the fourth group provided surface support and prepared to receive the bell and bring it aboard the expedition vessel when it was sent to the surface.





# The expedition day by day

May 8	Arrived in Malta.
May 9	Assembled and prepared all of the expedition equipment and check dive.
May 10	The first dive on the wreck – the teams started to perform their assigned tasks.
May 11	Day off due to poor weather conditions.
May 12	Day off due to poor weather conditions.
May 13	The second dive on the wreck; the operation went smoothly as all of the groups performed their tasks without any issues.
May 14	The third dive on the wreck – continued filming the wreck and prepared the bell to be recovered by preparing the tools and attaching and tightening the floatation device to the bell.
May 15	The fourth dive on the wreck – continued filming the wreck and began cutting the bell bracket. Initially, the team used a pneumatic grinder powered by a diving cylinder, however, the pressure of 11 bars on the wreck allowed us to only use this tool for less than two minutes, so the cutting process was continued by hacksaw. During the thirty five minute bottom time, the hard working divers were only able to cut about half of the steel bracket, which gave them almost three and a half hours of decompression causing the entire dive to last over 4 hours.
May 16	Day of rest for the team.
May 17	The fifth dive on the wreck. While one team continued filming the wreck, the team responsible for recovering the bell continued to cut the bracket using the hacksaw. The cutting process took about 20 minutes. After the bell was detached from the bracket, the floatation device was filled with air to carry the bell to the surface. However, the bell was too heavy and divers had to add three additional personal decompression buoys to the floatation device. Around <b>15:30</b> , the bell moved towards the surface. The team of divers on the surface consisting of four people secured the bell with a long rope and pulled it towards the boat very carefully. Around <b>15:45</b> , the bell was hoisted onto the boat and placed into a container filled with sea water and covered with a wet towel. The bottom time for the deep divers was thirty five minutes, which resulted in an over four hour long dive including decompression. The bell was transported to the shore and put in storage at the lab of the University of Malta.

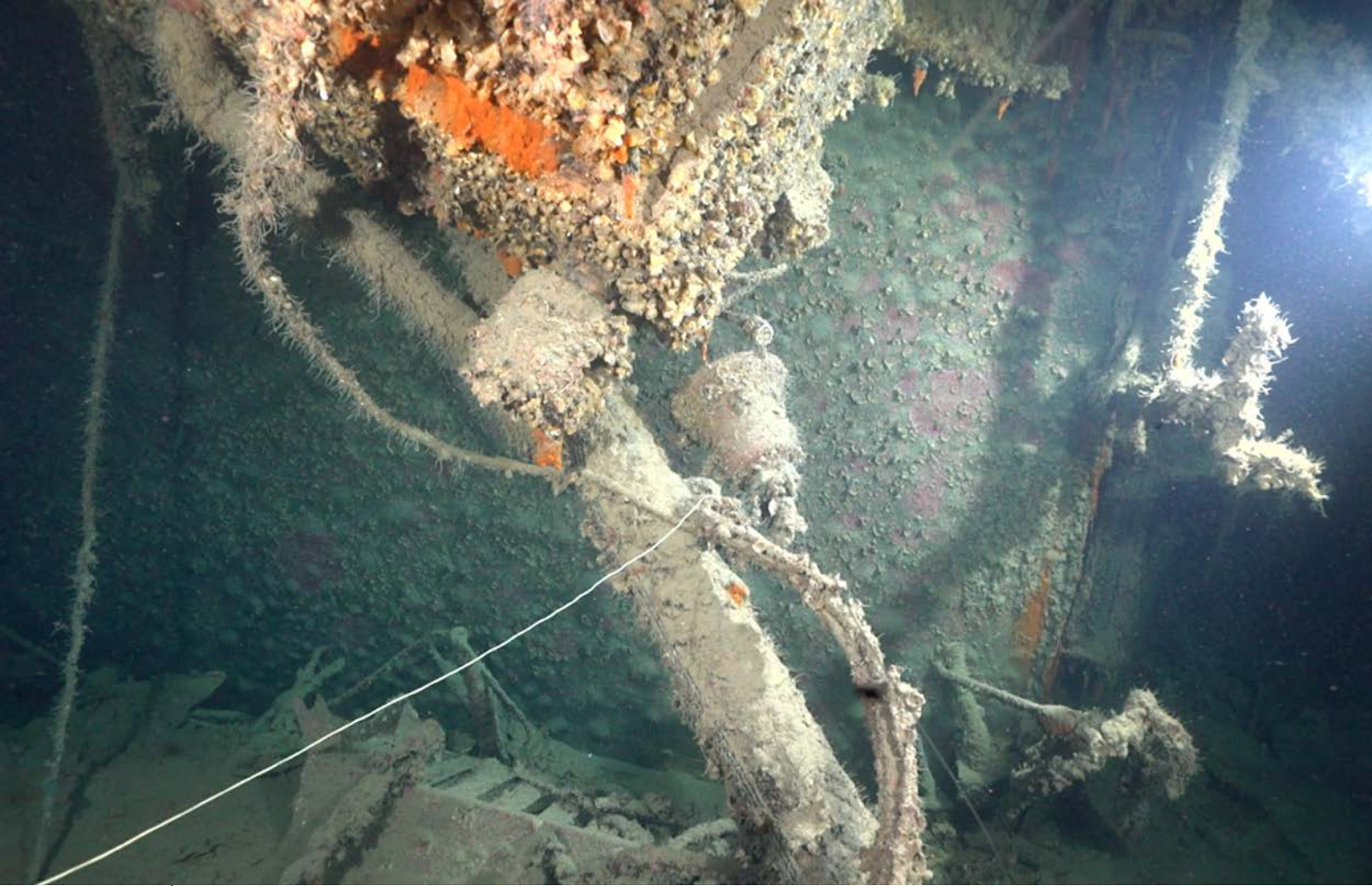


Photo: The bell still attached to the ship's mast, wide angle. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

Photo: Securing the bell and preparing to cut the bracket. (photo: J. Wood)



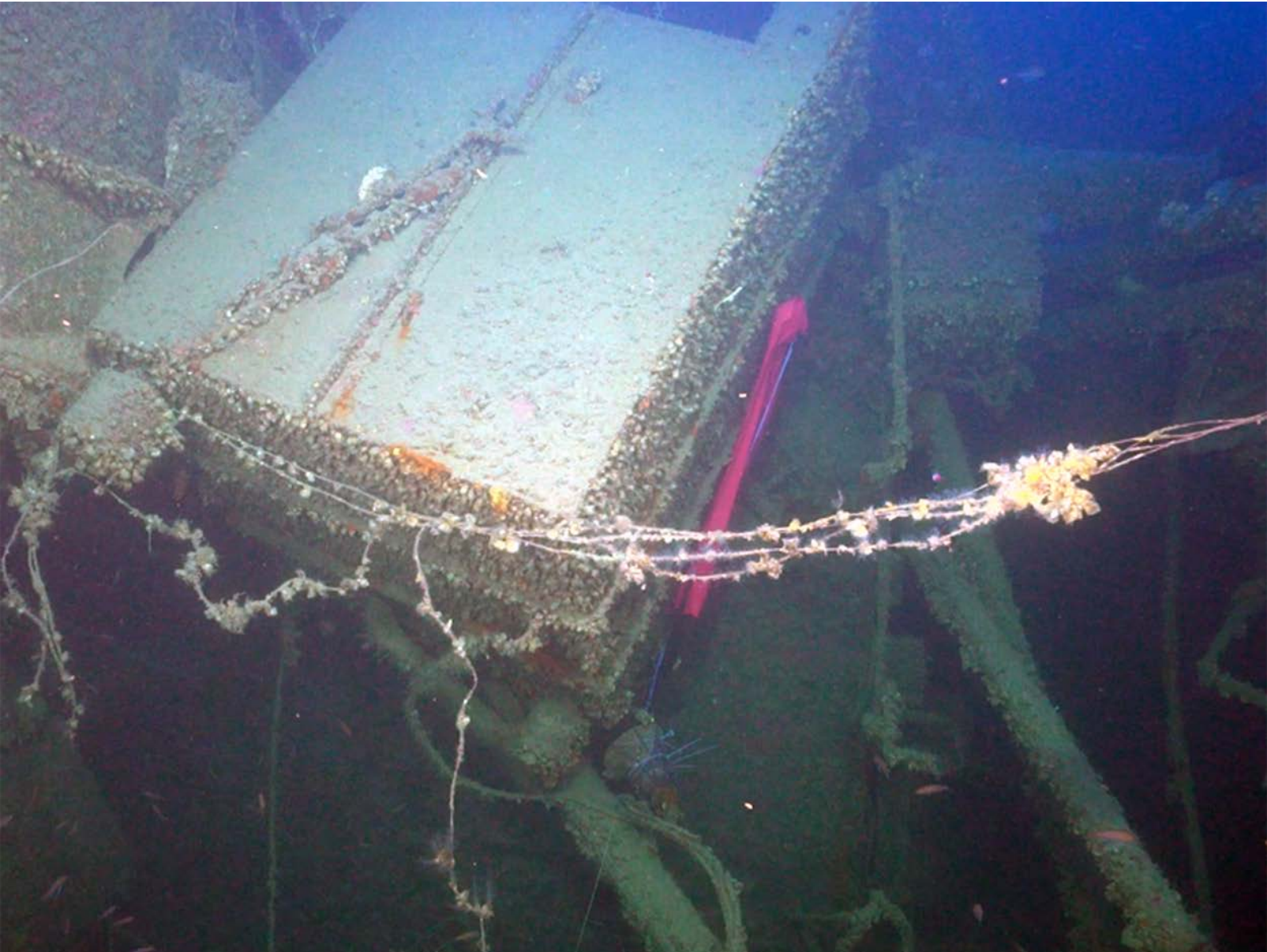


Photo: Lifting bag attached to the bell. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

Photo: Everything ready to remove the bell. (photo: J. Wood)

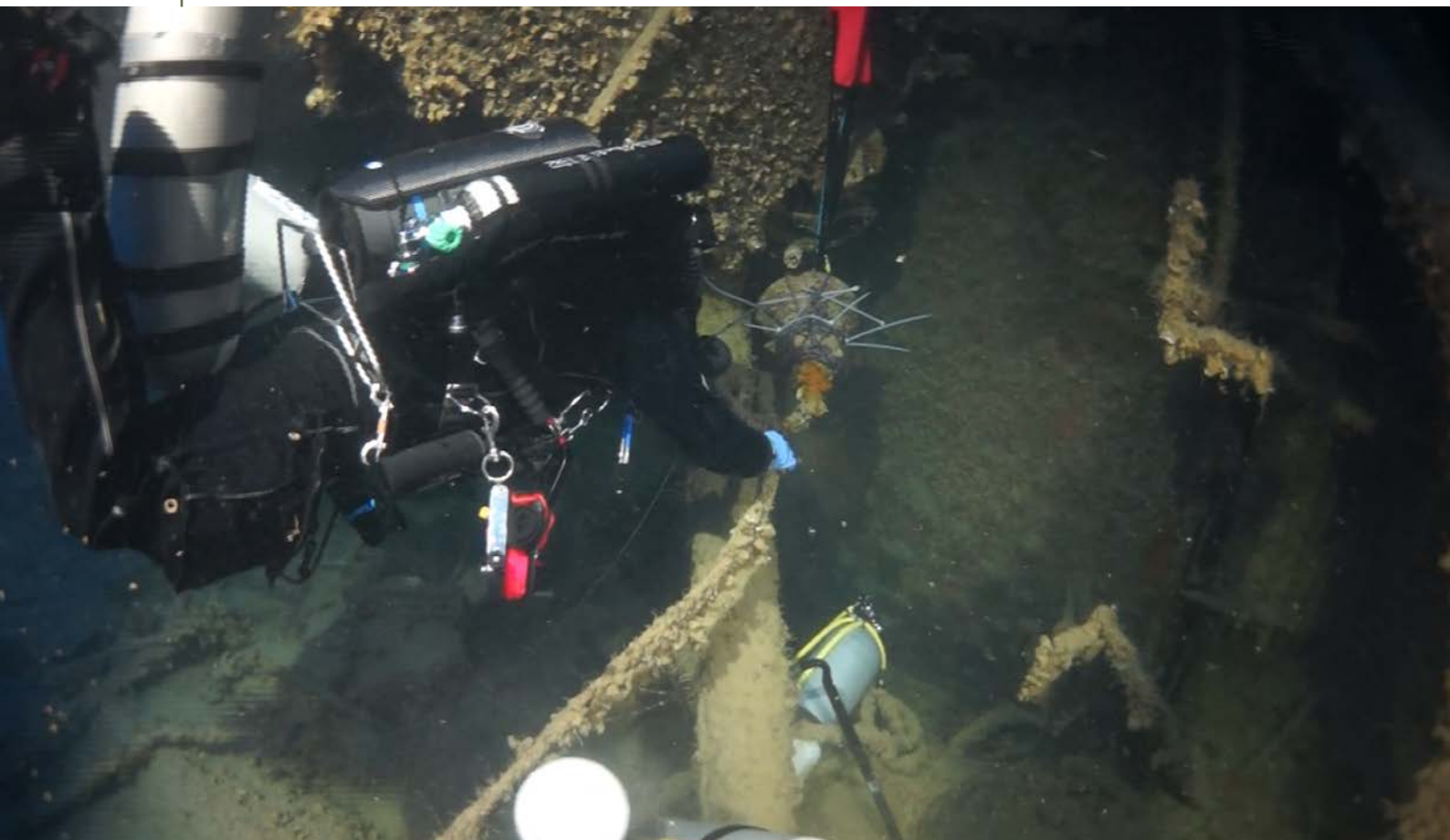
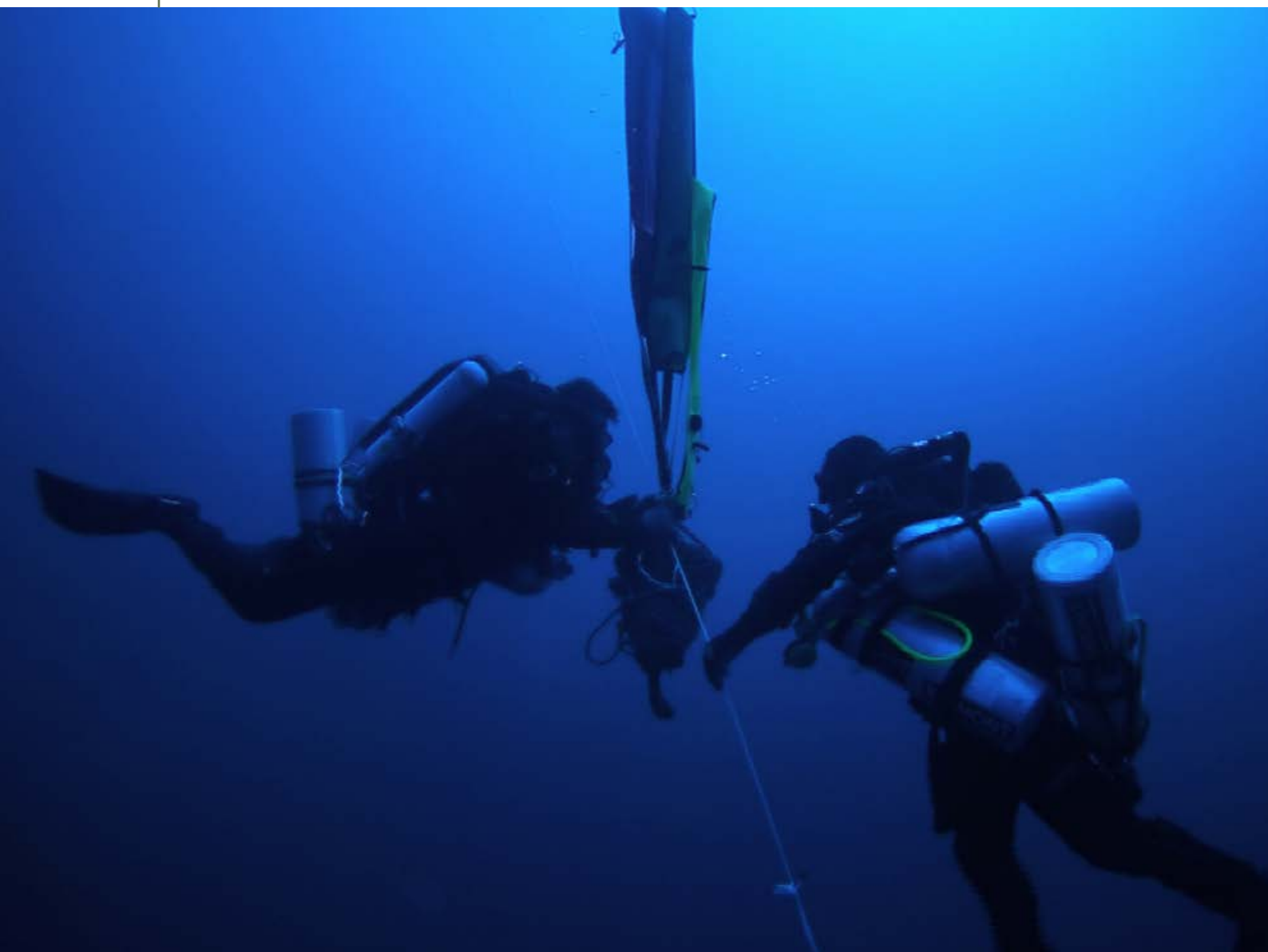






Photo: Process of cutting the bracket took two dives and almost a whole hour. (photo: J. Wood)

Photo: The bell is attached to the shot line and ascending to the surface. (photo: J. Wood)



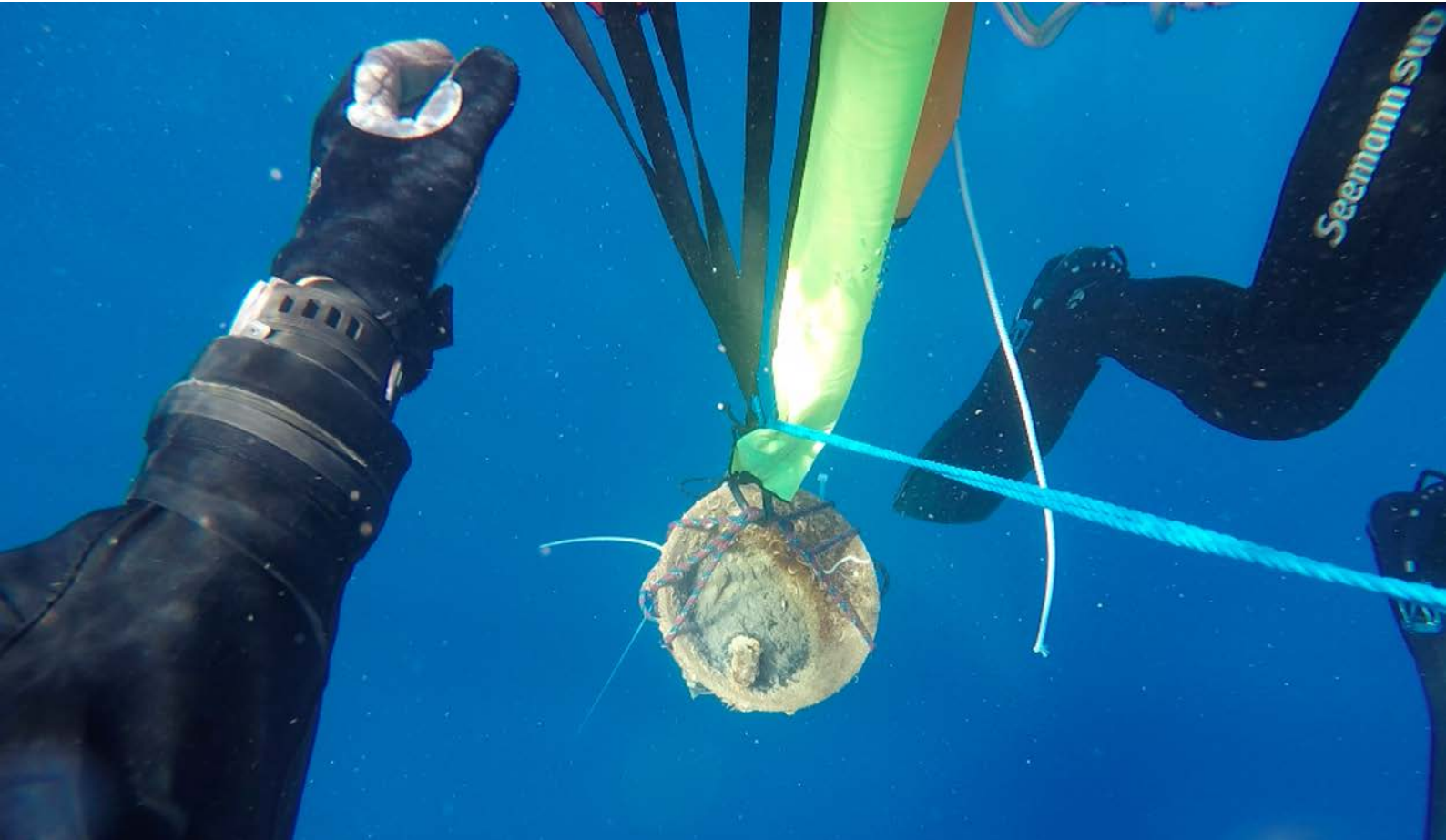


Photo: The bell received by the surface support team. (photo: C. Kraska)

Photo: The bell dragged from the shot line and placed on the dive boat lift. (photo: C. Kraska)

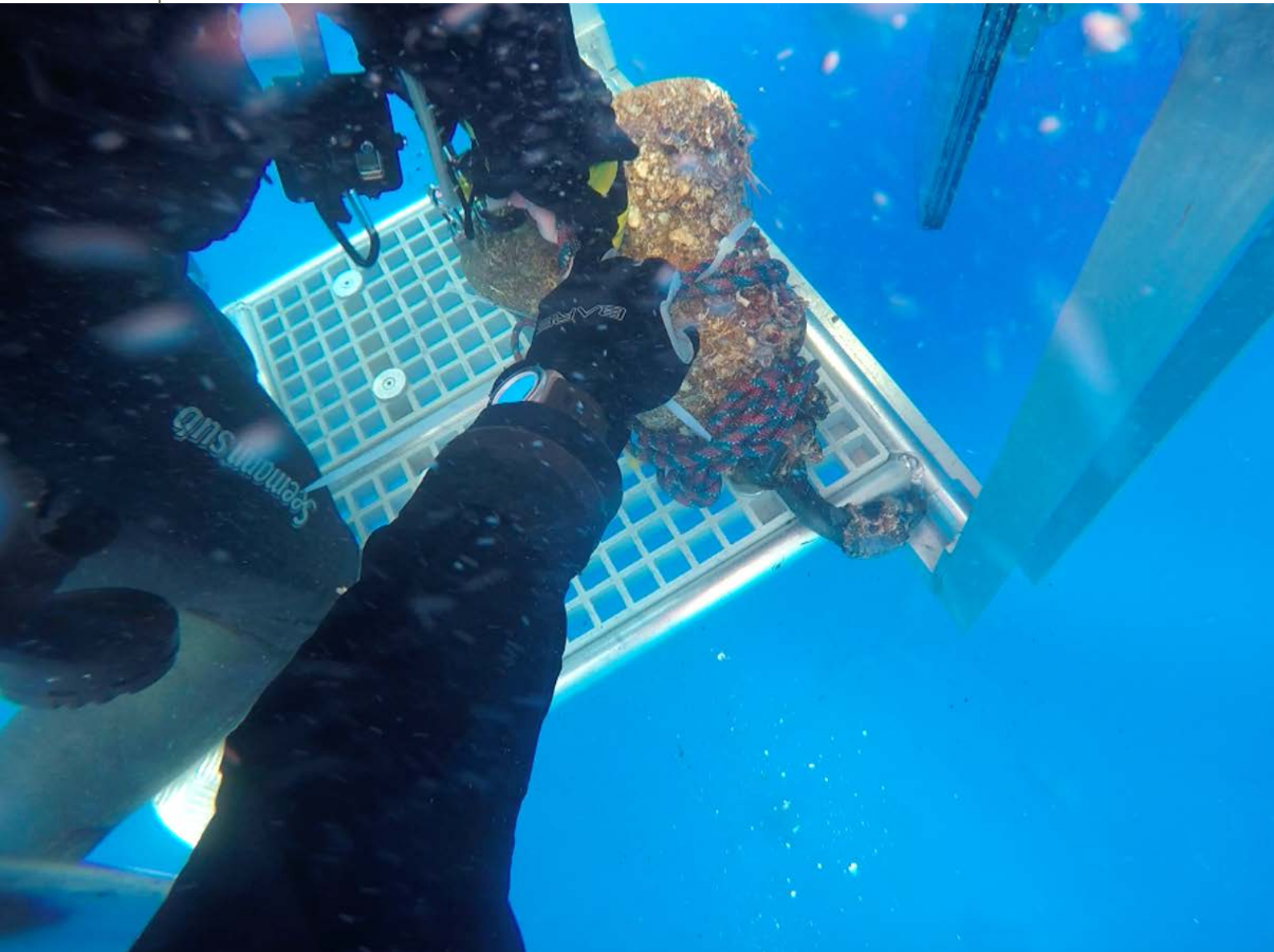




Photo: It's safe now! (photo: C. Kraska)



Photo:

May 17, 2017  
3:33pm  
after 74 years,  
11 months,  
1 day,  
14 hours  
13 minutes  
**THE BELL AGAIN  
ON THE SURFACE.**

May 18

The sixth dive on the wreck. After the divers reached a depth of 90 meters they found that the shot line was disconnected from the wreck and the dive operation had to be aborted.

May 19

The seventh dive on the wreck. The filming of the wreck was concluded; after six full dives on the wreck, the team responsible for the 3D reconstruction was finally able to cover the whole deck from the bow to the stern, as well as the rudder and the propellers. The process of creating a 3D reconstruction of the wreck had begun.

May 20

The team visited the Upper Barrakka Garden and placed a bouquet of flowers under the marble plaque to pay their respects to the thirteen fallen Polish servicemen who lost their lives aboard ORP Kujawiak. The marble plaque was sponsored by the Shipwreck Expeditions Association and solemnly unveiled on June 16, 2015 on the 73rd anniversary of the ship's sinking.



Photo: The last time the team visited the Upper Barrakka Gardens (left to right) Mark Jones, Krzysztof Korszewski, Dave Gration, Peter Wytykowski, Mark Alexander, Chris Kraska, Kari Hittynen and Roman Zajder (photo: R. Zajder)

May 21

Cleaning, disassembling, and packing of all of the diving equipment.

May 22

The end of the expedition and departure from Malta.

# Conclusion

During the two weeks of the fourth expedition the team was able to accomplish all of their tasks and goals. The whole deck was recorded for the 3D reconstruction of the shipwreck and the bell was safely recovered and handed over to Heritage Malta for restoration. Also the expedition was able to establish that the shipwreck is, in fact, being damaged – since the first exploration in 2015, the condition of the wreck has visibly deteriorated.



Photo: Peter Wytykowski and Roman Zajder with the bell. (photo: C. Kraska)



Photo: Chris Kraska with the bell from his father's ship, ORP Kujawiak. (photo: C. Kraska)



Photo: The team with the bell (left to right) Mark Jones, John Wood, Mark Alexander, Roman Zajder, Kari Hittynen, Peter Wytykowski, Steven Wilkinson, Krzysztof Korszewski, Dave Gratton, Timmy Gambin, Sabatino Bianco and Chris Rowland. (photo: C. Kraska)

# Conclusion

1. The starboard anti-aircraft Oerlikon 20 mm gun station has been destroyed by, most likely, an anchor. The sheets of metal around the gun are torn and bent up towards the top. The base of the gun is destroyed and the gun itself changed its angle. Also, the ammunition box located on the right side of the station is no longer there.



Photo: The starboard anti-aircraft 20mm Oerlikon cannon in 2015 before damage. (photo: U-boat Malta Ltd.)



Photo: The same cannon in 2017 after damage. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

2. The ship's heavy anchor chain from the starboard anchor was moved by a large vessel anchor and now lies on the wreck's rudder, propellers, and the prop shafts

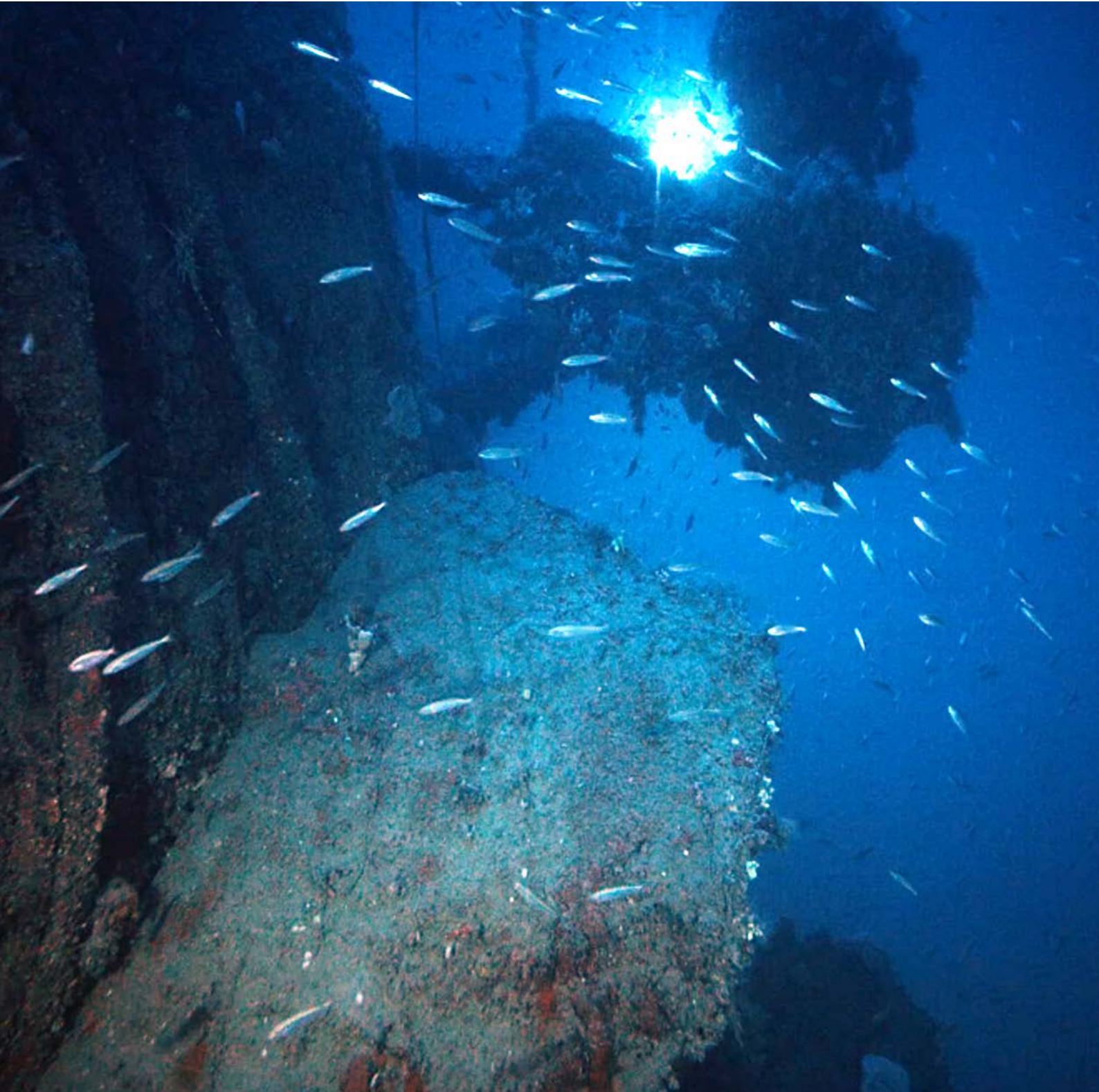


Photo: Ship's rudder in 2015 without the chain. (photo: U-boat Malta Ltd.)



Photo: The rudder in 2017 with the chain. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

Photo: The rudder in 2017 closeup. (photo: K. Hyttinen)







**Photo:** The chain on the ship's propeller support bracket in 2017. *(photo: K. Hyttinen)*

**Photo:** The chain on the ship's propeller shaft in 2017. *(photo: K. Hyttinen)*



# Conclusion

The damage of the Oerlikon gun station suggests that a large vessel pulled its anchor and irrevocably destroyed this part of the wreck. Also, a large vessel anchor caught the chain of Kujawiak's starboard anchor and moved it, which can only mean that commercial vessels are parking above the wreck. All of this damage must have taken place between the second exploration of the wreck in 2015 and the fourth expedition in 2017. There is no doubt that further devastation of the wreck will continue in the future. Most importantly, there are a lot of explosives onboard the wreck and in its vicinity, including many depth charges, 102 mm gun shells, and 20 mm and 40 mm anti-aircraft gun ammunition. Their contact with heavy anchors could be dangerous and devastating



Photo: The portside two depth charges in their projectors. (photo: K. Hyttinen)



Photo: The twisted tracks of the depth charges on the stern with the depth charges trapped inside. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

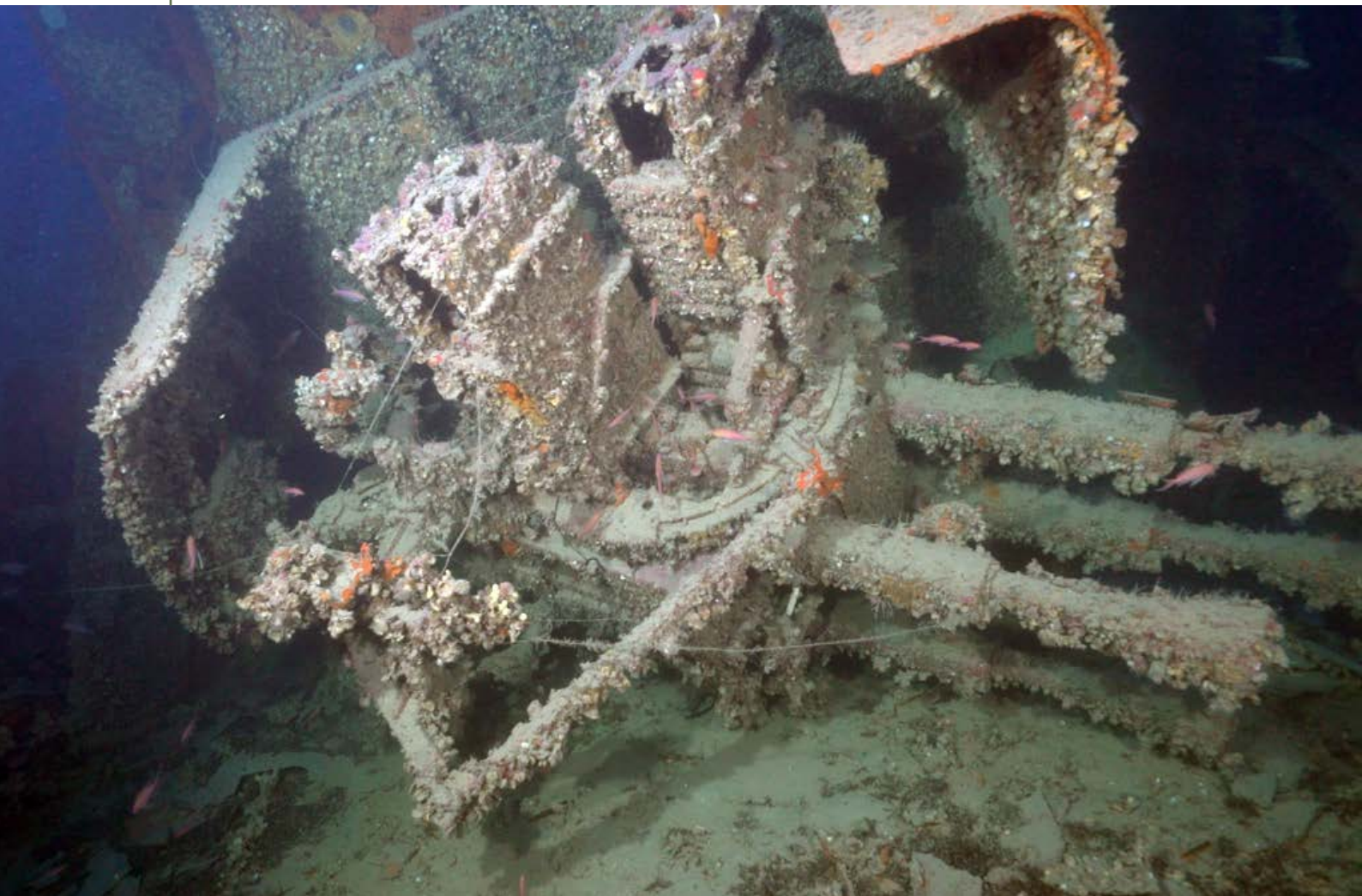
Photo: The starboard two depth charges in their projectors. (photo: K. Hyttinen)





Photo: The 102 mm gun shells that fell out of the ammunition box. (photo: K. Hyttinen)

Photo: 40 mm quad anti-aircraft gun loaded with ammunition. (photo: K. Hyttinen)



This shipwreck is a war grave, so it should not only be treated with the utmost respect, but it should also be placed under special protection. In 2015, both the Polish and Maltese governments agreed to protect this site, and after the last expedition in 2017, the Shipwreck Expeditions Association requested that the Maltese authorities establish a “No Parking Zone” in the vicinity of the wreck.

Kari Hyttinen and Professor Chris Rowland were responsible for the 3D project of the wreck. They completed six dives on the wreck – each dive was over 20 minutes which gave them a total of eighteen hours of decompression. This is the first 3D image of the whole deck of such a long shipwreck that lies so deep where all of the data was recorded by divers, not ROVs

Photo: The 3D image of the whole deck. (photo: K. Hyttinen)



The bell was handed over to Heritage Malta in order to perform proper restoration. All cultural property coming from the sea requires extensive desalination and specialized conservation interventions. Failure to undertake professional conservation leads to the decay of the retrieved cultural heirloom and its accelerated deterioration and loss. The bell, covered with thick concretions, was retained within sea water until it arrived at Heritage Malta's Conservation Laboratories in Bighi, where it was placed in a desalination tank. Heritage Malta's qualified conservators investigated the bell's condition and further researched any possible interventions to be undertaken. Throughout the year the water used in the desalination tank was gradually changed from saline to deionized water, with weekly readings of the conductivity being recorded. Following various cleaning tests to remove the concretions, the conservators opted for an innovative process of using a surface heating method, specifically used for such metal items. The process was successful and most of the external and internal coverings were removed. This process revealed the inscribed name and date: HMS OAKLEY 1941, which was not visible before. This is a very interesting discovery because all British ships that were handed over to the Polish Navy during WWII had their bells changed to that of the Polish names of the ships. There are no documents in the National Archives in Kew and the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London which confirmed the bell with its original name onboard ORP Kujawiak. The iron clapper was found to still be in situ, while the iron suspension bracket bolts fastening this bracket to the bronze bell were loosened without any damage in order to be treated separately. The bell and its iron attachments have been cleaned and the process continues. Analysis of the metal composition of the bell will be undertaken at Heritage Malta's Diagnostic Scientific Laboratories. This will provide further information to conservators regarding the treatments to be undertaken. The bell will be gradually dried after desalination, further mechanical cleaning will be undertaken, and with the eventual stabilization of the different metal components the protective coatings will finally be applied. It will still be monitored to ensure that no further deterioration develops.



Photo: Conservation work at the Heritage Malta laboratory in Bighi. (photo: Heritage Malta)



Photo: The bell before restoration.  
*(photo: Heritage Malta)*



Photo: Inside the bell before restoration.  
*(photo: Heritage Malta)*



**Photo:** The heating method to remove the concretions outside the bell. *(photo: Heritage Malta)*



**Photo:** Removing the concretions from the inside. *(photo: Heritage Malta)*





Photo: The bell's clapper. (photo: Heritage Malta)



Photo: The clapper after restoration. (photo: Heritage Malta)



Photo: The iron suspension bracket with the bolts. (photo: Heritage Malta)



Photo: The bell after restoration. (photo: Heritage Malta)

Heritage Malta is taking the necessary provisions for the bell to travel on loan to Polish museums after the said treatment process is concluded. Upon its return to Malta it will subsequently be displayed at Heritage Malta's Maritime Museum, to be appreciated by the general public and for future generations to remember the history of this forgotten ship.

The Shipwreck Expeditions Association appealed to the Polish President, Andrzej Duda, to honor the last Kujawiak survivor, Mr. Kazimierz Stefankiewicz who, during the war, was decorated with the Valor Cross for his bravery. On August 24, 2017, Mr. President granted Mr. Stefankiewicz the Officer's Cross of the Order of Rebirth of Poland\*. It was just five days after he turned 100 years old.



Photo:

The Officer's Cross of the Order of Rebirth of Poland.  
(photo: internet)



Photo: Mr. Kazimierz Stefankiewicz decorated with the Officer's Cross of the Order of Rebirth of Poland. (photo: I. Kuczyńska)

\*The Polish state established the Order in February 4, 1921. It is conferred on both military and civilians as well as on foreigners for outstanding achievements in the fields of education, science, sport, culture, art, economic, national defense, social work, civil service.

Member of two of the expeditions to the wreck, member of the Association, maritime historian, and author of over seventy historical books, Mariusz Borowiak, wrote two books about the history of the ship and about the Kujawiak project. The books are, unfortunately, only available in the Polish language

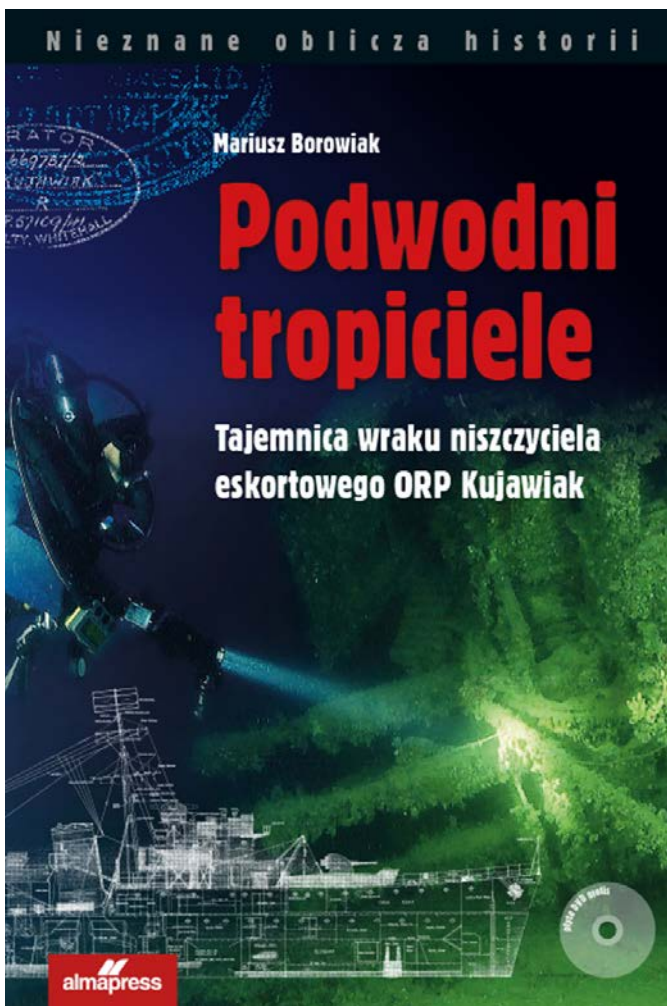


Photo: First book about the history of the ship and the Kujawiak project. "The Underwater Detectives: The secret of the shipwreck of ORP Kujawiak." (photo: M. Borowiak)

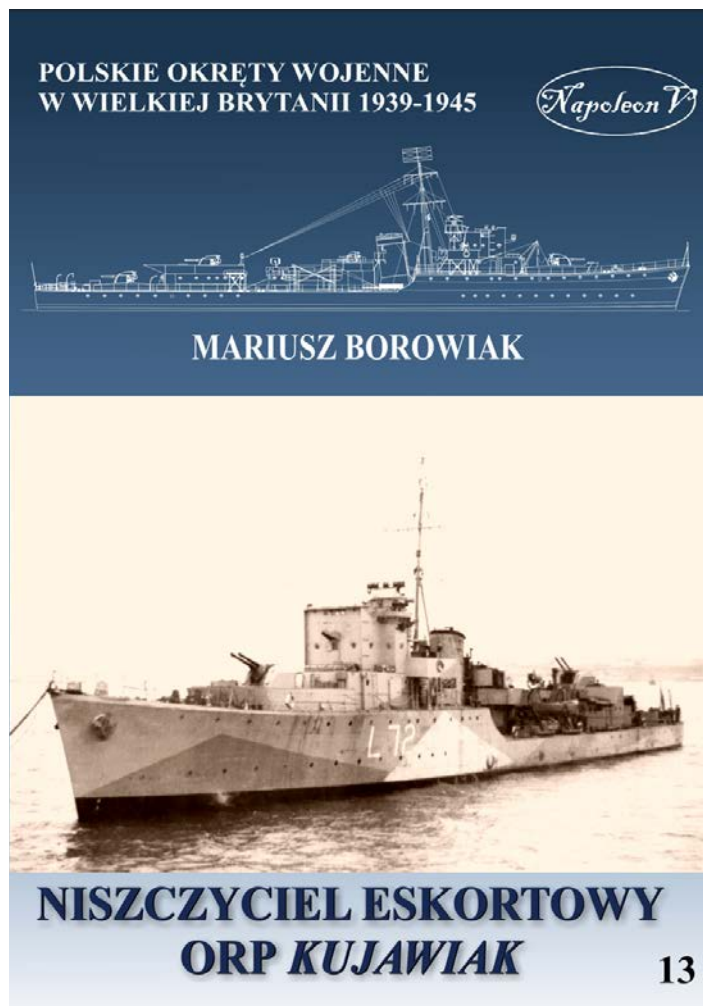


Photo: Second book. "Escort destroyer ORP Kujawiak." (photo: M. Borowiak)

The Kujawiak project is successfully completed and it was done without any sponsors – the whole budget was covered by the members of the expedition. We are very proud of our team and our accomplishments especially having a very limited budget and not very sophisticated research equipment!



**Photo:**

The team in 2015 with the Explorers Club Flag and flag of the Polish Navy (left to right) Joseph Sultana, Michał Szczepaniak, Matthew Montebello, Mariusz Borowiak, Bartek Grynda, Mark Alexander, Peter Wytykowski, Timmy Gambin, Roman Zajder and Piotr Kardasz. (photo: R. Zajder)



**Photo:**

The team in 2016 with the Explorers Club Flag (left to right) Robert Piąsta, Steven Wilkinson, Mark Jones, Peter Wytykowski, Mark Alexander, Edd Stockdale, Roman Zajder and Mariusz Borowiak. (photo: R. Zajder)



**Photo:**

The team placing the flowers under the plaque at the Upper Barracka Gardens in 2016 (left to right) Mark Jones, Robert Piąsta, John Wood, Peter Wytykowski, Arthur Castillo, Steven Wilkinson, Mark Alexander, Edd Stockdale, Mariusz Borowiak, Roman Zajder and Scott DellaPeruta. (photo: R. Zajder)



Photo: ORP Kujawiak - 3D visualization (made by S. Dramiński)



Completed on Friday, October 12, 2018

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