

Divers Discover 1942 Steamship Shipwreck off New England Coast



In 2014, Jeff Goodreau of Rindge and Ryan King of Brentwood began a project with five others to search for the SS 'William H. Machen', a steamship which carried coal from Virginia to Maine in the USA. This piece of history has now been recovered off the coast of Portsmouth, 75 years after it sank. The divers who found the wreck over the summer said they work closely as a team, sharing in their passion

for diving and unlocking the traces of the past that have been mostly forgotten.

All 34 crew members were rescued when the *Machen* collided with cargo freighter *Maid of Stirling* about 15 miles off the coast of Portsmouth in 1942. The *Stirling* was not seriously damaged in the collision and continued on to port, but the *Machen* the ship ended up almost 100 metres below the surface.



SS William H. Machen (Photo: U.S. Coast Guard)

Bilge gill and china dishes

Through trial and error, along with a lot of patience and research, the team finally found the shipwreck over the summer. Goodreau said he could see a little rope below him as he was sinking, and that rope got bigger, turned into a pipe and then that pipe turned into a bilge gill and that was when he knew they had a shipwreck. The whole crew explored the *Machen* on 7 July, the 75th anniversary of the sinking.

The team performed a total of 30 dives and still only explored part of the 110-metre ship. They actually have not made it all the way out forward yet because the wreck is just that large, Ryan King said. Ultimately, they identified the ship by china dishes with the Pocahontas Steamship Company logo found onboard.

Crew

The team said they hope to learn even more about the crew. King stated they know their story with the wreck, but now they really like to hear their story. What was it like to be out there that day? In the meantime, the divers are still searching for more details about the sinking and stories from *Manchen* crewmembers or their relatives.



Wreck of the SS William H. Machen (Photo: Ryan King)

The divers have shared pictures and artifacts from their discovery, and they have already started new journeys looking for other shipwrecks off the coasts of Massachusetts and Maine.

More information: ryankingunderwaterphoto.com.

Sources: *WMUR.com*, *Seacoastonline.com*.



<https://www.hydro-international.com/content/news/divers-discover-1942-steamship-shipwreck-off-new-england-coast>
