

More detailed description of the three wrecksites

1. SS Paris Maru

She was a Japanese cargo vessel of 7197 tons, built in 1921.

On 15 January 1934, she hit Roman Rock in Algoa bay. She was towed back to port in a sinking condition and sank outside the harbour mouth, meters outside the shipping lane.

She was a hazard to incoming vessels and was blown up, to flatten her. Even today she is considered a hazard to the Port Authorities.

It is practically impossible to give a detailed description of the site, for two reasons: 1) The visibility is terrible, usually less than two metres.

2) Any normal wreck features are indiscernible due to the fact that she was blown up.

2. SS Strathblane

She was a British screw steamer of 2341 tons built in 1888. On 23 January 1890 she sank near Chelsea Point after striking a rock. She carried general cargo including sleepers, cement, gold mining equipment, wine and cool drink.

Site description.

She lies roughly 300 metres offshore between Suicide reef and Chelsea point as shown in sketch no1. The area to the west of Cape Recife is locally known as the wild side, seeing that this stretch of coast is unprotected from the westerly winter storms, and is hit just as hard by the South Easter.

Needless to say, all the wrecks in this area, close to the shore is practically demolished by the rough seas. The SS Stratblane is no exception. Very little of the wreck is intact. The fact that a part of the cargo was cement, stored in wooden vats, preserved some of the cargo

in the hold. The cement formed a brittle conglomerate and this protected some of the cargo. The two areas depicted on the detailed sketch as Artefacts, house a variety of old glass bottles, horse shoes and some closed crates hidden in the concrete conglomerate.

We are mainly interested in removing the condenser. All Artefacts will go to the museum at Bay World for safekeeping.

The area on the seaward side, marked as shifting sands, is exactly that. Nine out of ten times one will find that the propeller and drive shaft, is covered with sand.

The Engine Block is lying on a piece of flat reef adjacent to two prominent pinnacles to its left side, if one is facing the sea. It is also just about the only recognisable part of the wreck, apart from the two boilers.

To the right hand side of the driveshaft, is coiled lead pipes and just to the inside of the Engine block, some brass valves are stuck in the conglomerate.

The wreck had been salvaged during the eighties by two different groups of divers. They however left the condenser and for some reason there are no artefacts in the museum at Bayworld.

3. SS President Reitz

She was a South African liberty ship of 7176 tons, built in 1943 in Portland. She was wrecked west of Tsitsikamma point on 27 November 1947. She was in ballast at the time. There is therefore nothing of value apart from some non-ferrous metal.

Site description.

This stretch of our coast is extremely inaccessible and seldom visited by divers. It is also one of the roughest parts of our coastline. There are three wrecks in close proximity and they are just about completely broken up by the sea.

The actual site of the president Reitz is straight of the place named: "die Ratte" to the eastern side of farmer Vermaak's land." Die Ratte", translated into English means, the gears. It is exactly that. The original salvors operated from the shore and left their winch gear behind, which is still visible today.

The rough seas on this stretch of coast have strewn the wreckage from about 200 meters offshore where the stern was all the way to the beach.

The only part of the ship that is intact is part of the engine block. From the block, the driveshaft spans a 30m wide sand gully in mid-water given a ghostly effect over the white sand. It ends abruptly against a rocky ledge that runs parallel to the beach. The last section of the driveshaft which still has the four bladed propeller on, has broken off and is resting on top of the same ledge, with the propeller stuck on the seaward side of the ledge.

The only other part of any value is a small brass condenser that is stuck against a shallow reef on the inside of the block.

There are no sign of any artefacts. The ship was empty at the time of wreckage.

There is one last discernable part of the wreck that has not been completely destroyed, and that is the chimney, which lies straight inshore of the block ninety degrees to the land as depicted in sketch four.