

Name: **S.S. Bilbeis [1934]**

Flag : **Egypt**



Position

Latitude: N 32,0377520°

Longitude: E 34,7394661°

Position by: www.aquatica.co.il

Updated by: Flaviu Varga

Update: 14.11.2009

History

In 1907 Sir James Laing built the vessel S.S. Arzila for Royal Mail S.P. Co.

In 1919 the vessel was bought by Pacific Steam Navigation Co. and later in 1922 was sold to Khedivial Mail SS Co. and her name was changed to S.S. Bilbeis. In 1934 the vessel was wrecked southern of Jaffa Harbour

Update: 14.11.2009

Last Update by: Flaviu Varga

Entered by: Flaviu Varga

Bibliography

www.miramarshipindex.org.nz

Pictures



Postcard with the picture of S.S. Arzila

General Data:

Name: S.S. Bilbeis

Pervious Names: Arzila-1907

Nationality: Egypt

Type of wreck: General Cargo Ship

Weight (tons): 2732 grt

Dimension (m): 86.9 X 12.6

Cause lost: stormy weather

Date lost: 5.03.1034

Date dunking: 18.09.1907

Date of launching: 12.1907

Builder: Sir James Laing

Built for: Royal Mail S.P. Co

Owner: Royal Mail S.P. Co

IMO: 1124097

Built at: Deptford Yard

Engine :1T-13

Speed: 9 knots

Depth (m): 6

Laying: North-South

Update: 14.11.2009

Last Update by: Flaviu Varga

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SS Bilbeis- the story of heroine of a rescue of life in Jaffa

The British S.S. Bilbeis, carrying a crew of fifty-six and eight passengers, stranded off Jaffa at about 5:45 a.m. on the fifth of March in 1934, when there was a moderate breeze accompanied by a moderate swell, and a dust haze over the coast. Shortly after the stranding, the wind increased considerably and the sea rose rapidly. It seemed likely that the conditions would get worse. In view of the threatening weather the Master arranged for the passengers and the stewardess to be taken ashore by a Government launch. By 10:30 a.m., a strong westerly gale was blowing and the Master decided to land some of his crew by means of the ship's lifeboats. The first boat, under the charge of the Second Officer, successfully negotiated the surf, and her occupants, aided by local boatmen, landed safely. An attempt was made to send back some of the crew who had landed so that they might help to disembark the remainder of the crew, but the attempt failed; the boat was swamped, overturned, and smashed up by the heavy surf against the rocks, fortunately without loss of life. At about 11:40 a.m. a second boat was launched from the Bilbeis under charge of the Third Officer, but this boat was not as successful as the first, and one member of her crew, while endeavoring to get ashore, was carried away by the seas. Ahmad Bajawi, a local boatman, courageously swam out to the rescue, but he himself got into difficulties. Muhammad Dababish, a lighter man, then gallantly swam out to the rescue of the two men who were in danger, and after great difficulty succeeded in bringing them to shore with the aid of a life-buoy flung to him.

Ahmed Bajawi and Muhammad Dababish were awarded with the Board of Trade Medal for Saving Life at Sea (SGM) for rescues the sailors from drowning.

KHEDIVAL MAIL LINE

THE KHEDIVAL MAIL LINE AGENCY, JAFFA, REGRETFULLY ADVISE CONSIGNEES THAT THE S.S. "BILBEIS" WENT ASHORE NEAR JAFFA ON MONDAY MORNING MARCH 5, 1934, AND THAT THE USUAL LLOYDS SALVAGE AGREEMENT HAS NOW BEEN SIGNED.

History

Jaffa harbor is situated in the canopy of Jaffa, and it is recognized to be one of the ancient harbors in the world.



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Lines of the vessels that passed in the harbor

Schmuel Abidor writes in his book that in middle of the 10th century pass through the Jaffa harbor 6 lines of vessels. After building the lighthouse and were installed telegraph lines passed through the harbor 5 cargo vessels in a period of one week constantly.

The vessel lines were:

- Massageries Maritimesw- French line from Marsei to harbor of Egypt, Jaffa, Beirut every 10 days
- Lloyd from Austria line- Austrian line from Triast, harbors of Egypt, Jaffa Sidon, Alexandron and Marseille every 12, 15 day.
- The Russian line, line from Odesa, Koshta, Aizmir, Beirut, Haifa, Jaffa and harbors of Egypt, every 11 day.
- Khedival Mail Line, line from Egypt but in origin British from Alexandria to Port Said, Haifa, Beirut
- Maritima Italiana and Servizi Maritimi from Venice and Ganua to Alexandria and Jaffa harbor.

A descent of importance as harbor

In 1933 was inaugurated a harbor at Haifa, Jaffa harbor closed and a new harbor was built in Tel Aviv, that was inaugurated in 1936.

From November 1965 with opening of harbor Ashdod was ceased an activity of harbors of Jaffa and Tel Aviv as harbors of the holds to loading and unloading of goods and the main use was fishing.

Sinking of big vessel is important event and most likely that record in the press. Accordingly to the fishermen stories some vessels were stuck near the Jaffa harbor between the years 1930 and 1940. In the same period of the central newspaper in Israel was The Palestine Post. Today the newspaper changed his name to Jerusalem Post.

By scanning the newspapers I succeeded to find an announcement on British vessel beached on southern part of harbor Jaffa in the area in which dove and found the remains of the vessel. A vessel by name S.S. *Bilbeis* was wrecked on that area on the date 5.03.1934.

The Vessel *Bilbeis* was insurance by Lloyd's agent company in Israel. The family that managed the insurance agents was Amzalek family that contributed great to the building of "Israel State".

The Palestine Post 16.10.1934

"BILBEIS"

Tenders are invited for sale of "Bilbeis" wreck lying off Jaffa, also separate Tender for remaining cargo. Intending buyers must tender for both cargo and wreck. Tenders are subject to acceptance or otherwise of Salvage Association, London.

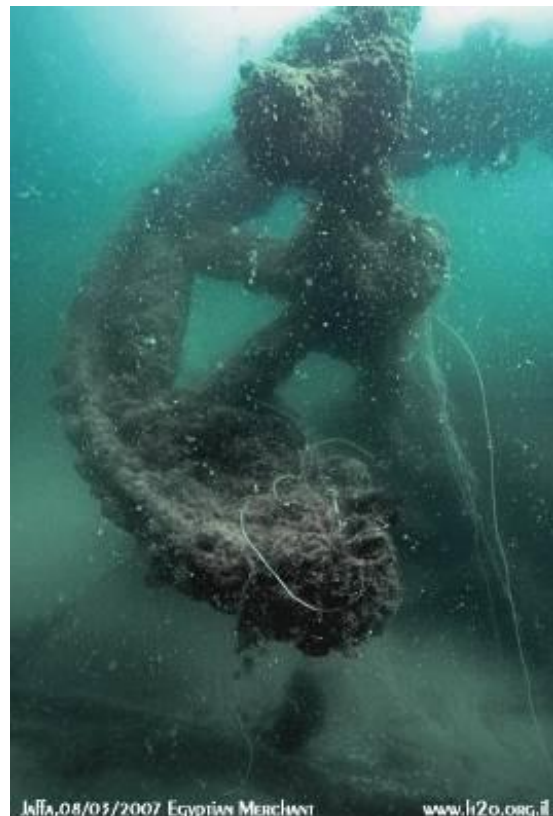
Particulars of tender can be obtained on application, and offers must reach us not later than the 31st. of this month.

J. B. AMZALAK & SONS.

LLOYD'S AGENTS.
P.O.B. 6, Jaffa.

The wrecked vessel

On 8.03.2008 divers of the group of H2O (www.h2o.org.il) imbued of inspiration to examine the remains of a shipwreck in the south part of Jaffa harbor. The information was received from dive club www.aquatica.co.il.





The pictures from the wreck site were photographed by Dan Askenazi and Robert Davidovich

The position of the wreck

The body of the vessel is lying on shallow water in the depth of 6-7 meters. The distance from the shore is of about 250 meters from the coastline and 2 kilometers south to Jaffa harbor. The remains of the vessel rest on a sandy bottom and the bow rises three meters over the ground.

Body of the vessel

The body of the vessel was made from steel. The length is approximately 80-100 meter long (evaluated, not measured) and the connection between the plates made by rivets.

We can see the fore mast that is detached from the deck and the superstructure on the right side of the vessel. There are some rectangular holes with a hole in the upper side that I suppose are the doors and the window (the hatch).

Propulsion system

The S.S. *Bilbeis* had a propulsion system that included three steam boilers, a single engine and a propeller. The boilers were Scotch-type boilers, which were in frequent use at the start of the 20th century. All three stand intact near the vessel's midsection and point toward the bow; they are about four meters long and of roughly the same height. Each boiler has three holes through which it was fed coal.

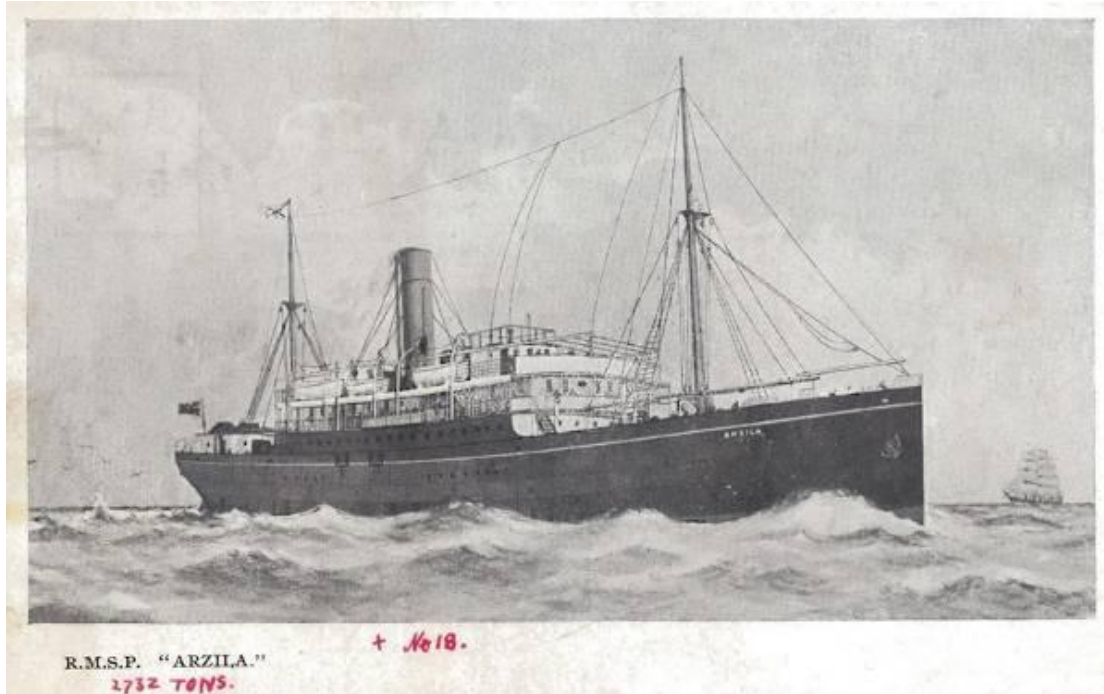
The vessel's engine is gone, most likely salvaged after she sank. It is likely that she used a triple-expansion engine, popular at the time, which has three pistons running in a series. The pistons are of varying size and work at diminishing pressures so as to make maximum efficiency of the pressure generated by the steam produced by her boilers. Though the engine is now gone, its base is still visible and between it and the bow are four foundations, which held the drive shaft's bearings. Parts of the bearings themselves are still located atop the first two. The stern tube, which allowed the drive shaft to exit the hull and connect to the prop, can be seen at the aft section of the vessel. The prop itself was not found.

Steering System

The S.S. *Bilbeis* steering assembly is well preserved and is still connected to its intact shaft and hinges. It is 3.5 meters high and 1.5 meters wide. At the rudder shaft's upper part, the quadrant gear strikingly appears in the water column; its shape composed of three spokes supporting two cog wheels that serve to turn the vessel's rudder. A similar mechanism was found on the *Titanic*, as well as on some other vessels.

Data

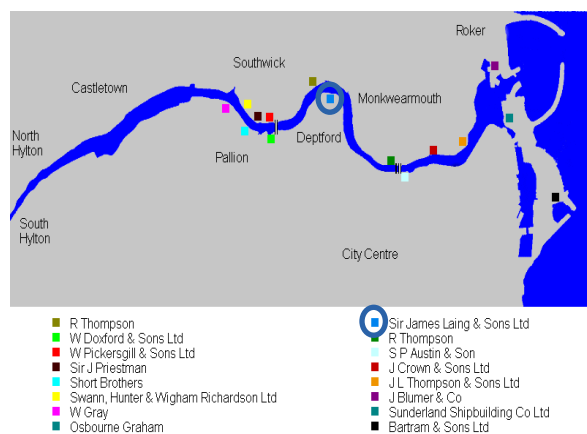
The vessel was a general cargo vessel, carrying of cargo from different types and about 72 travellers. The vessel was 2722 ton gross, her length between perpendiculars was 86.87 meters, width 12.60 meters and the maximal speed was 12 knots.



The unique postcard of S.S. Arzila (the first name of S.S. Bilbeis)



The glass drawing of the vessel was made by John H. Isherwood



The vessel was built in the yard of Sir James Laing situated in the northeastern part of England on the river Wear near the first iron bridge that were under construction on that time (1907)

The source of the name Arzila is coming after city of in the northwestern part Morocco.

On the same year 1907 Sir James Laing built another twin vessel by name Agadir. After a year the vessel was bought by Royal Mail Co. and given the name Arzila. Most likely the services of the vessel were in the west India.

Vessel	Built	Years in Service	Tons
Arzila	1907	1908 purchased from Mersey SS Co., 1922 sold to <u>Khedivial Mail</u> , renamed <i>Bilbeis</i> .	2,722

In the year 1919 the vessel was bought by Pacific Steam Navigation Co. and later in the year 1922 was sold to Khedivial Mail SS Co. and a new name was given to the vessel the S.S. *Bilbeis* after a city of ancient Egyptian, and did sailing in the Mediterranean Sea.

Vessel	Built	Years in Service	Tons
<i>Bilbeis</i>	1907	ex- Arzila, 1922 purchased from <u>Royal Mail S.P. Co.</u> , London renamed <i>Bilbeis</i> , 5th Mar.1934 wrecked south of Jaffa.	2,722

Track of cruise

Areas in the World	State Aria	To	From	Date
Europe	Spain-Morocco-London-Gibraltar	London	Las Palmas	11.02.1908
		London	Morocco	7.02.1909
		London	Madeira	5.04.1909
		London	Morocco	3.05.1909
		London	Morocco	22.08.1909
		London	Morocco	17.10.1909
		London	Morocco	4.04.1910
		London	Morocco	24.07.1910
		London	Morocco	21.08.1910
		London	Morocco	19.09.1910
		London	Morocco	16.10.1910
		London	Morocco	13.11.1910
		London	Morocco	8.01.1911
		London	London	23.07.1911
London	Morocco	21.08.1911		

Europe	Spain-Morocco-London-Gibraltar	London	London	18.09.1911
		London	Mogador	10.12.1911
		London	Yokohama	7.01.1912
		London	Yokohama	6.02.1912
		London	Morocco	25.11.1912
		London	Gibraltar	2.02.1913
		London	Morocco	9.07.1912
		London	Tangier	8.12.1913
		London	Morocco	15.02.1914
		London	London	3.07.1915
		London	London	11.08.1915
Africa	Nigeria	Bristol	Lagos	25.08.1916
Europe	Spain-Morocco-London-Gibraltar	London	Morocco	17.08.1917
Australia	New South Wales	London	Bathurst	21.03.1918
Europe	Spain-Morocco-London-Gibraltar	London	Barcelona	29.01.1919
		London	Barcelona	29.05.1919
		London	Spain	12.07.1919
West Indies	East of the Caribbean Sea	London	West Indies	27.08.1919
		London	West Indies	8.03.1920
		London	West Indies	7.07.1920

After the year 1922 the vessel was in run by Royal Mail S.P. Co. an Egyptian company, and no data can be found.

From description of event drowned that happened in 5.03.1934 appears that due to storm the vessel was beached in the southern area to Jaffa harbor. For different evidence Miramar Vessel Index the vessel was described "wrecked at Kuzakhama, 2nm s Jaffa 5.3.34".

According to the info I found, and the info from the glass picture of her twin sister Agadir and the postcard, I can to discern some details and characteristics:

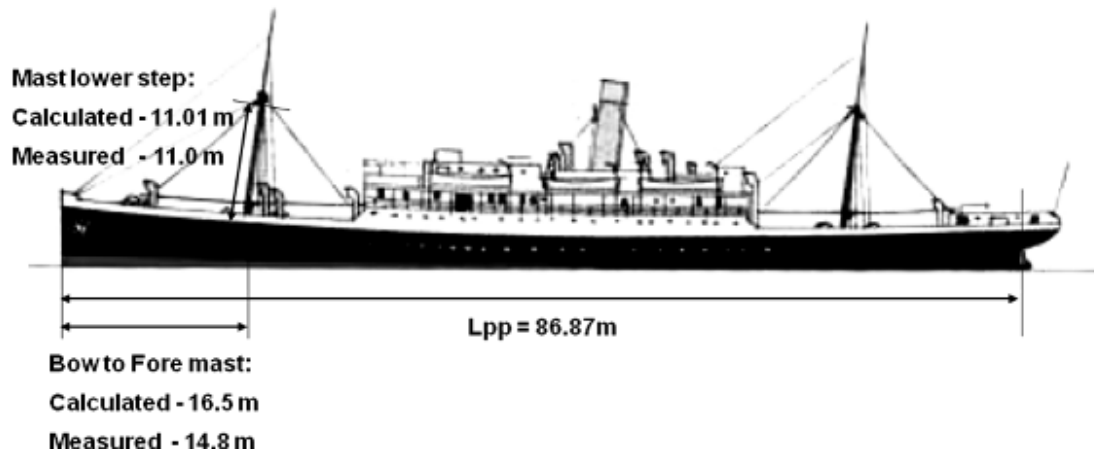
- The vessel was run by steam
- The upper structure has 2-3 floors and it is located in the center of the vessel and covers about a third from the length and includes a bridge and small room cells to the travelers and to crew.
- Two masts one in the front and the other in the rear part of the vessel. The masts are combined from two parts with triangular balconies by the point of the connection between them.
- One chimney in center the vessel.
- Two rows of windows (Portholes) in the side and in the center the vessel.
- Flat deck and rounded on the bow.
- Rear structure in the stern.
- The bow is straight and perpendicular with short and a little bit raised forecastle.

From comparison are measurable remains we can tell:

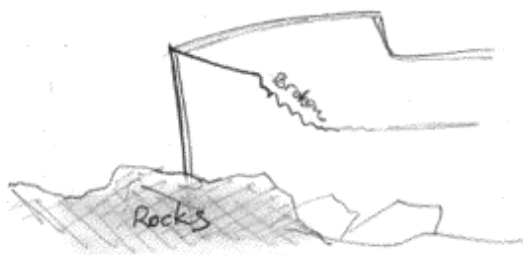
- The position of the site is approximately to the position of the wreck.
- The length of the vessel is 70-90 meters
- The structure of the vessel is connected by rivets, a method of early vessel building.
- The upper structure is in the center of the wreck.
- The bow has identical edge in the pictures and to the sketch of the vessel.
- The vessel was driven by steam.
- The boilers are Scotch types that were in common on British vessels.
- The steering wheel that leans on number of axes that join the ribs of reinforcement (you can see the same steering wheel on the Titanic that was made on the same period of time).
- The fore mast is constructed from two parts with a triangle balcony on the binding point.
- The distance between the mast and the bow was measured 14.8 meters in the comparison of 16.5 meters measured from the sketch; I consider the fact that the mast fell and is not connected anymore to the deck).
- The first part of the mast (from the deck to the balcony) compatible accurately like in the sketch (11.01 meters is calculated from the sketch and 11.1 meters measured).



Dimensions



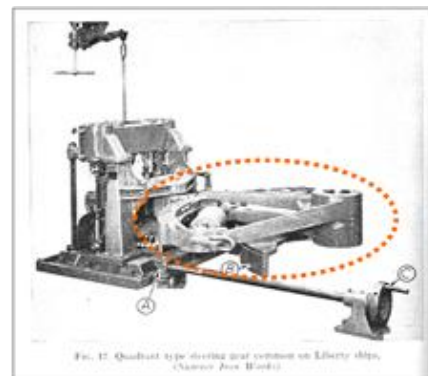
Bow and forecastle



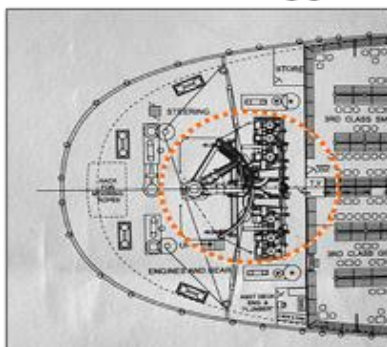
Fore mast



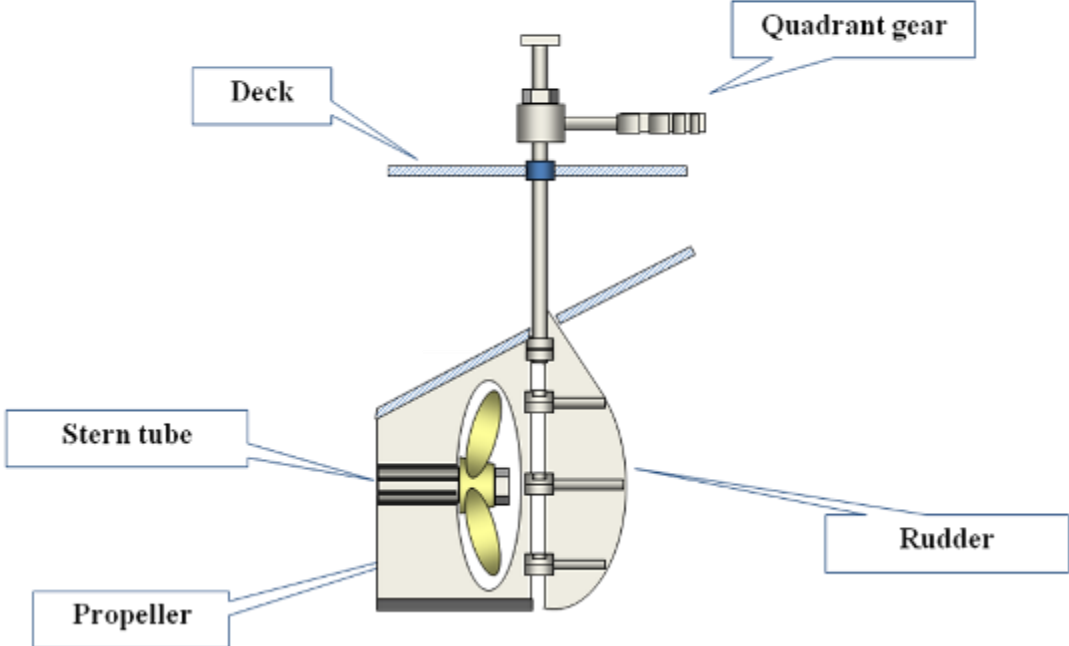
Steering gear



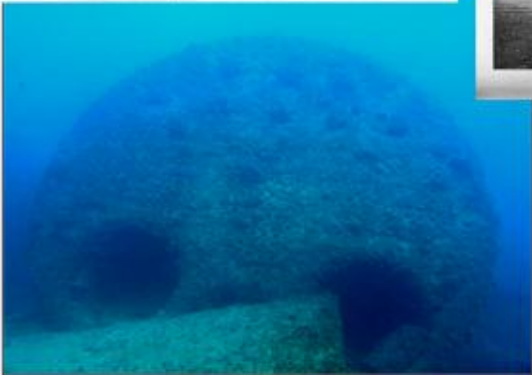
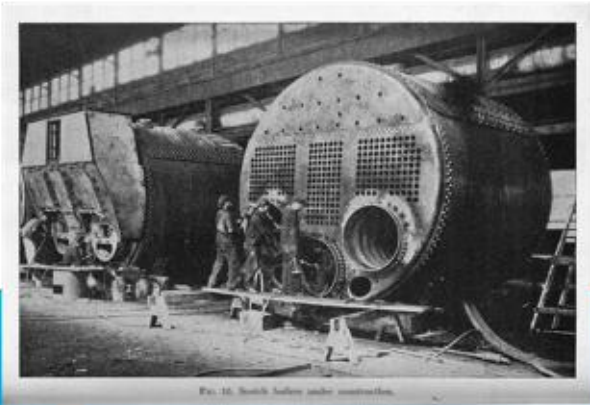
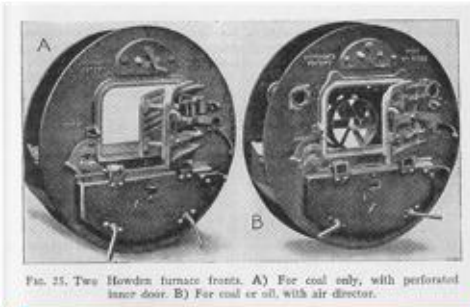
The Titanic steering gear



Rudder & Steering gear - reconstruction



Scotch boilers



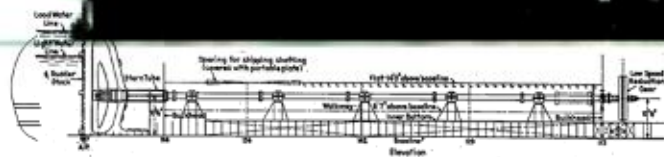
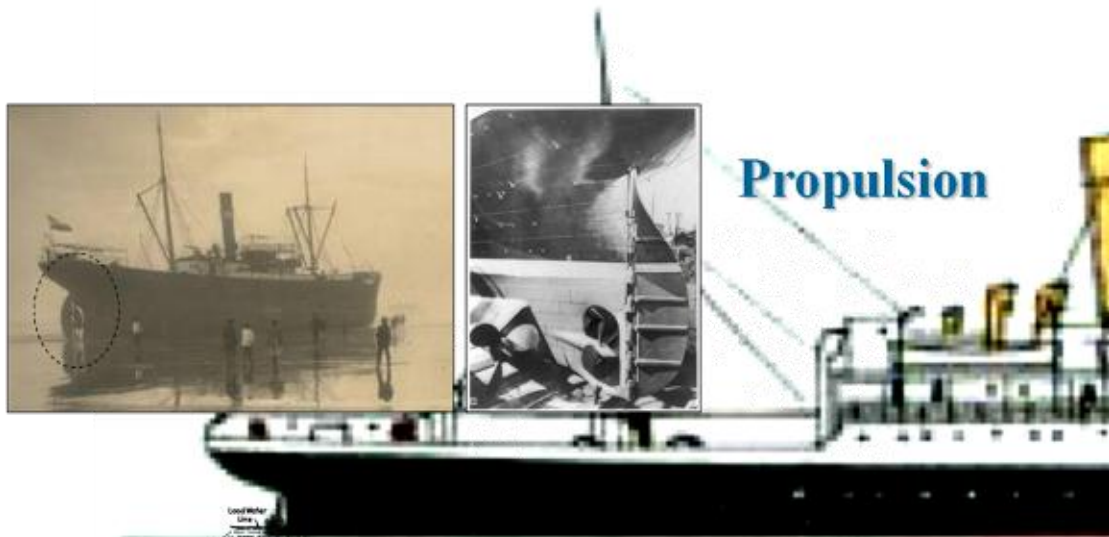
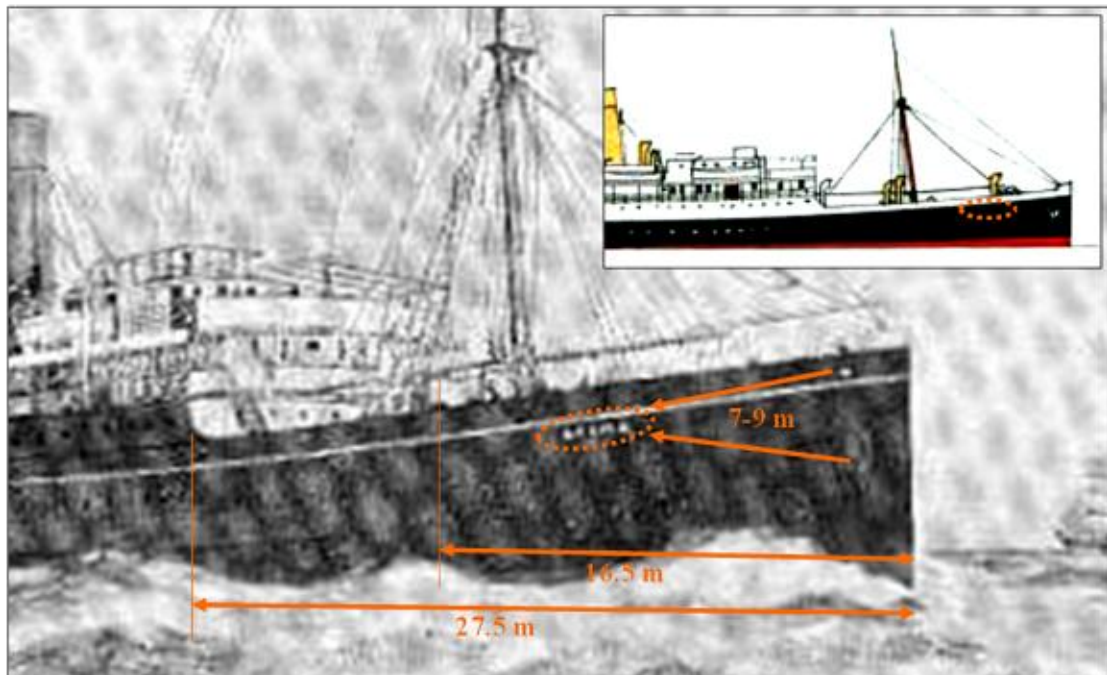


FIG. 8.—ARRANGEMENT OF SHAFTING OF SHIP X.



SS Arzila / Bilbeis



Conclusions and recommendations

The results of the comparison between the wreck and the data of the vessel S.S. *Bilbeis* point on great similarity in dimensions, in structure characteristic and in particular in the structure of typical bow that were built at Sir James Laing shipyard. From the data and the measurements appears that the wreck is the SS *Bilbeis* built at Sunderland by Sir James Laing.

Special Thanks

H2O Diving Team (www.h2o.org.il)

Dan Askenazi and Robert Davidovich for the pictures

Enosh Aruet of Aquatica (www.aquatica.co.il) for sharing her location.

Investigated and written by Flaviu Varga and Eyal Israeli

Update 8.12.2010

More data for those who are interested

The history of the Sir James Laing of Sunderland



In the year 1792 Philip Laing and his wife Sophia Lundry Laing, independent farmer and owner of one vessel, arrived at Sunderland from Pittenweem to st. Andrews, Fifeshire.

In the year 1793, Philip Laing and his brother John (has the North Sands Yard and were with his son David in the business) started to build vessels in Sunderland. Philip and John lived next to shipyard. The brothers opened a shipyard to renovate vessels in the year 1804. John Laing left the business in May 1818 and his brother Philip Laing continued the business alone.

The University of Newcastle's presents a picture of field of Laing in Deptford between the years 1825-1835.

In 1843 Philip's son, James (married twice and has 16 children's), continued to run his father yard from the age of 20. James was a big personality and was the head of River Wear Commission (32 years)



and head director of Suez Canal Company.

His son Hugh continued with the vessel building, but specialized on big tanker vessels.

The name of the shipyard was changed in the year 1898 to Sir James Laing and Sons Ltd. as we know the name today.

In the year 1901 James died and the business deteriorated until 1907. In the same year (1907) Sir James Marr joined the company and succeeded to rehabilitate the financial problems of the company. In the time of First World War (WW1) built about 18 vessels that together arrived at 109,924 ton gross and their activity was intensified during WW2.

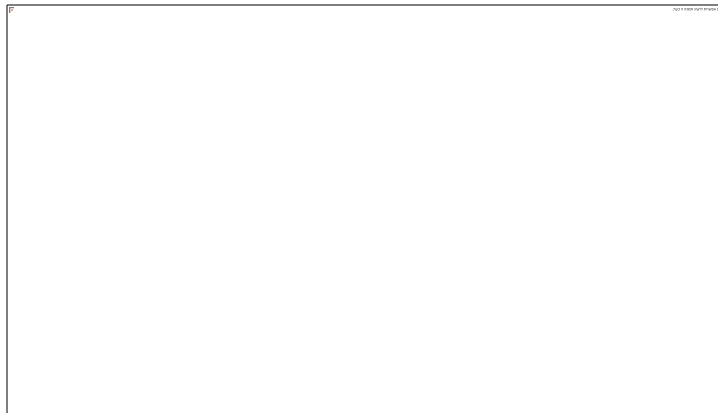
In the year 1954 the company merge with Thompson's and Sunderland Forge and the name of the new shipyard was Sunderland Shipbuilding Dry Docks & Engineering Company.

In the year 1961 joined those Doxfords and the name of the shipyard changed again to Doxford and Sunderland Shipbuilding and Engineering Group

In the year 1971 Court Line took command again and the new name was Sunderland Shipbuilders Ltd.

In the year 1977 the company was concealed by means of the government and became part of North East Shipbuilders Ltd.

The last vessel that was built exited from the harbor and that from the Mitla in the year 1985.



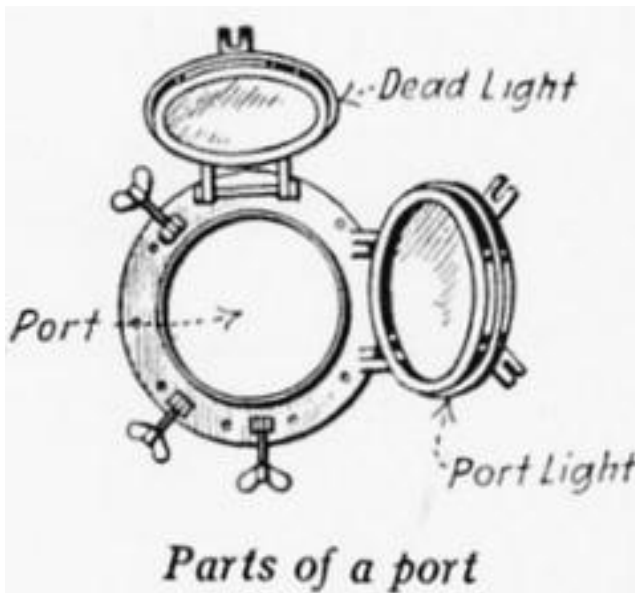
The vessel Colima is the twin sister of Mitla



Additional pictures



The cover (the Hatch) built from steel is corrosive in water.



The Porthole built from bronze.



The Porthole handles made from bronze.

The Porthole is not produced by the company that built the vessel (I found no inscription on the Porthole). The Portholes were bought in the free market.

Letters

