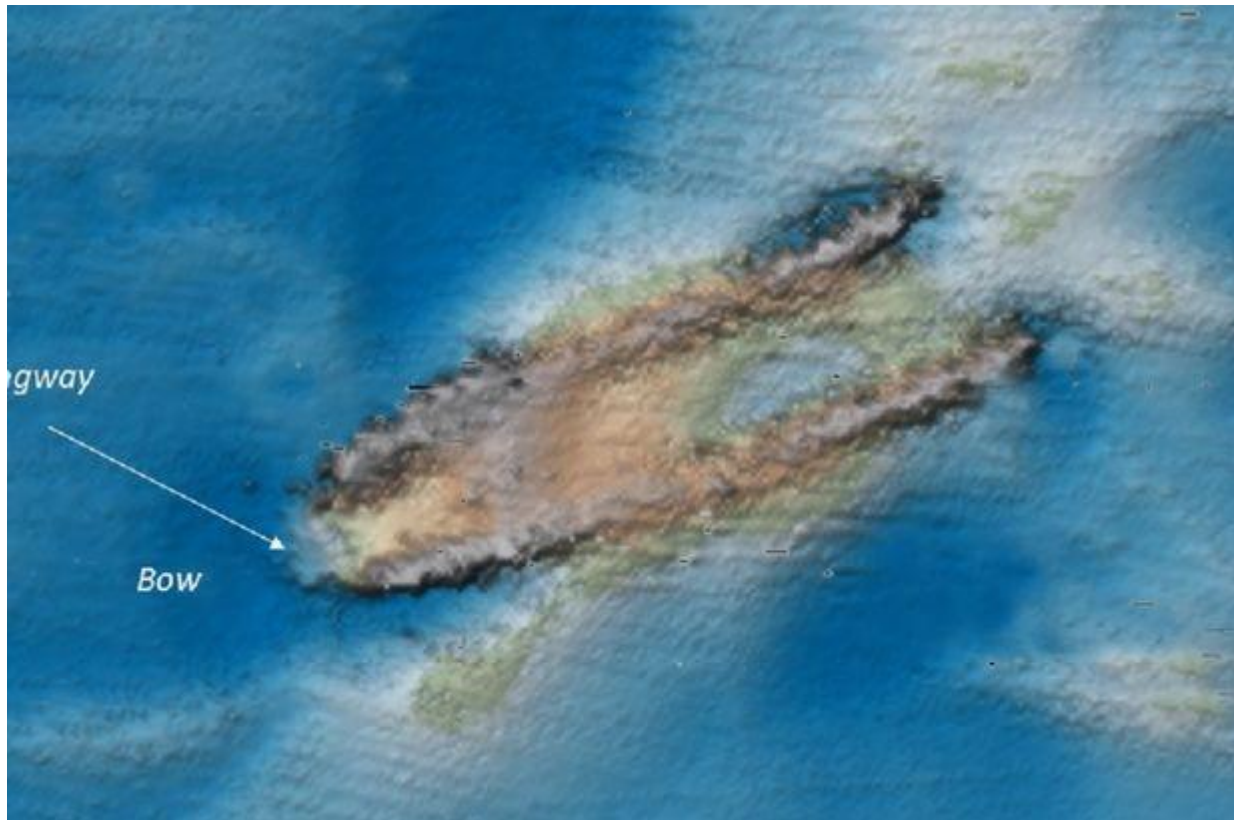


77 year-old mystery solved as sunken landing craft found off North Wales coast

May 6, 2020

It was discovered off Bardsey Island in Gwynedd - 100 miles from where it should have been



Scientists and technicians at Bangor University unexpectedly found a sunken landing craft and solving a 77-year-old mystery.

The team, based at the School of Ocean Sciences, were not specifically searching for the craft which was reported lost off the Isle of Man in February 1943.

LCT 326 was a Mk III 'Landing Craft Tank' designed to land armoured vehicles during amphibious operations. Built in Middlesbrough the craft was launched in April 1942.

The highly specialised vessels were built in large numbers during the war and were extensively used during the D-day operations in 1944.

But LCT 326 disappeared while transiting from Scotland to Devon with the loss of its 14-strong crew.

Admiralty officials listed the cause of the loss at the time to bad weather or collision with a mine off the Isle of Man.

However, the new data collected last year by sonar sited on board the University's research ship, Prince Madog, now places the wreck over 100 miles away off Bardsey Island.

The team, working with nautical archaeologist and historian Dr Innes McCartney from Bournemouth University, were collecting data from a known shipwreck site in that area.

Initial analysis of the sonar data obtained from the site, including the wreck dimensions and general appearance suggested the wreck was an LCT, further archival research identified the remains as most likely being LCT 326.

The wreck has now been identified as being located in a position 25 miles further south from where LCT 326 was last seen.

The vessel appears to have foundered in heavy seas and probably broke in half just forward of the bridge with both halves staying afloat long enough to have become separated by 130m.

Dr McCartney said: "The wreck of LCT 326 is one of over 300 sites in Welsh waters which have been surveyed by the Prince Madog and the aim of this particular piece of research is to identify as many offshore wrecks in Welsh waters as possible and shed light on their respective maritime heritage.

"This aspect of the project has resulted in many new and exciting discoveries relating to both world wars, of which LCT 326 is just one example."

The Normandy landings were the landing operations on Tuesday, 6 June 1944 of the Allied invasion of Normandy in Operation Overlord during World War II. (Image: Mirrorpix)



The sonar data will also play a pivotal role in helping develop the offshore renewable energy sector in Wales via the Bangor University led research project, which is examining the effect that shipwrecks have on the marine environment.

Lead researcher Dr Michael Roberts said: “Establishing the identity of these offshore wrecks and thereby determining how long they have been submerged is crucial in helping us understand how structures interact with marine processes on timescales that are of great interest to the marine renewable energy industry.

“Wrecks such as LCT 326 and their associated physical and ecological ‘footprints’ can often provide us with preliminary insights on the nature and properties of the surrounding seabed without having to undertake more complex, challenging and expensive geoscientific surveys.”

The location of this naval grave will now be reported to the Admiralty, so that the records can be corrected and the resting place of the 14 crew accurately recorded.