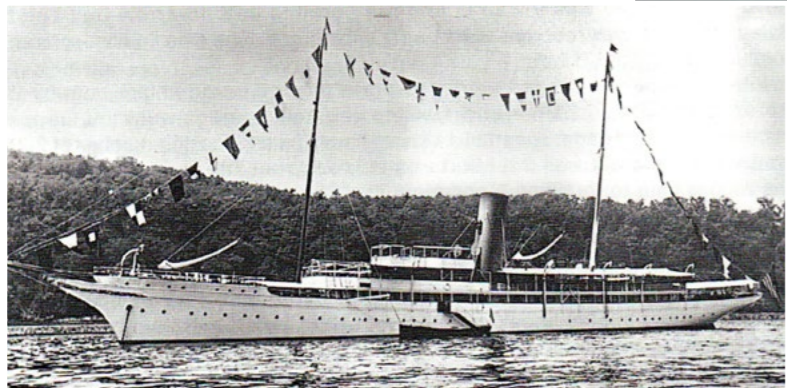




Diver at capstan on wreck of HMS *Warrior II* (right); Historical photo of *Warrior II* (below)

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**During the two world wars, many private vessels were confiscated by the British Royal Navy. These luxury yachts were often employed during dangerous missions, which did not always end well.**



The HMS *Warrior II*, once formerly named "Goizeko Izarra", was built in 1904 in Troon, Scotland, as a luxury steam yacht for a private owner. The ship was 284 feet (84 meters) long, an extraordinary size for this type of ship. It was also equipped with two engines and furnished with expensive materials.

During the First World War, she was confiscated and had to serve her duty as a navy vessel. However, it was during the Second World War that this beautiful ship came to her end. On 11 July 1940, the former yacht was in the English channel roughly 20 miles from Weymouth, when it was attacked by a German plane. The pilot had circled the ship once before



## HMS *Warrior II*

deciding to attack. The *Warrior II* took a direct hit and sank almost immediately. On that day, the *Warrior II* crew sustained one casualty.

### Discovery

A few years ago, the wreck was found by skipper Ian Taylor of the Weymouth dive charter Skin Deep Diving. One of the

divers recovered the ship's bell, leading to the positive identification of the ship. When I visited the wreck myself, I sailed with Skin Deep Diving, in the company of a French group that had adopted me for one week.

As the visibility in another part of the English Channel was bad, we decided to visit wrecks that were more to the north.

According to our skipper, Len Hurdis, the visibility would be better here as the bottom structure was different. The seafloor at the location of the *Warrior II* wreck consisted of gravel and pebbles; hence, the current would not pick up any sand and mess up the visibility.



Diver at rudder mechanism on wreck of *Warrior II*



Diver being lifted out of the water by way of a motorized lift on the 11-meter catamaran *Skindeeper* (right); Divers on the wreck of the *Warrior II* (far right)



At these times, it's crucial to have an experienced skipper to help divers make the most of the money they invested in the week's worth of diving. Hurdis was an expert on all levels and kept his ship under control in all situations. This was a great reassurance to the participants of this wreck dive trip. He was supported by his wife, Maggie, who operated the eleva-

tor that picked up the divers from the water.

That day, we were with 12 technical divers on board, which required a certain discipline to assure that all went smoothly. After the down line was in place, the first teams prepared themselves to enter the water. There were several open circuit divers on board and they would enter the

water first, to ensure they would make their ascent roughly in time with the rebreather divers. It was agreed that the maximum dive time would not exceed two hours.



Diver at keel of the wreck of the HMS *Warrior II*; A film crew prepares video equipment for the dive (right center)



### Diving

My buddy on this dive was a cave diver with a different type of rebreather than what I had on; therefore, we worked out plans and agreements in case of an

emergency. Dive planning was one of the most important items to arrange when exploring a wreck at greater depths. The wreck was at a depth of 54 meters. We decided not to exceed the 35-minute bottom time.

After about ten minutes, it was our turn to jump overboard and slowly drift towards the buoy. Because several teams would come in after us, we had to descend as quickly as possible. At six meters below the surface, we did a thorough bubble check to make sure the rebreathers were closed. Then, we descended to the wreck.

At 45 meters, we started to see parts of it. The anchor of the down line was close to one of the steam boilers. Around this boiler, the copper and brass pipes and valves—whose function were to divide the steam—were still

present. The visibility at the bottom was more than eight meters, so we decided not to deploy a guideline. However, my buddy hung a strobe light on the down line to make it easier to find when it was time to start our ascent.

Then, the real exploration of the wreck began as we swam in the direction of the stern.

### Trip to the swimming pool

The wreck had degraded and fallen apart over the years, hence we needed to watch out for the sharp edges of the hull plates scattered about on the seafloor. One of the plates still stood upright, and square portholes were still clearly visible on the wreck. Several meters away, we saw the same type of portholes sticking out from the sand. These probably served to bring light to the saloon or dining area.



Diver at engines of the wreck of the *Warrior II*

Several years ago, I had seen similar bronze portholes on the wreck of the *SS Tubantia* in the North Sea. So, it appeared these items were much used in that period on passenger ships. Today, it would be unthinkable and too expensive to equip a ship with such rich materials.

Continuing our exploration, we discovered pieces of a floor covered with bright green tiles. Apparently, these were remnants of a swimming pool, making it abundantly clear that money was no object during this ship's construction. Next to the swimming pool,

we found parts of the mosaic tiles of the showers. Further along, towards the stern, I recognized one of the capstans, probably driven by steam. These served to pull in the lines and hawsers during the mooring of the ship.

Directly aft of



the capstans, we found the rudder mechanism with the rudder axle to which the rudder was connected. By now, we had reached the end of the wreck and it was time to make our way back. On the way back, we swam past two large engines where I took my last pictures before we started our ascent.

### Back to the surface

The ascent after a deep dive was an important moment. Before we began, I checked that I had replaced the cover on my dome port so as not to damage this. During the decompression, it was absolutely necessary to focus only on this task and not make any mistakes. Everything went according to plan.

After more than an hour, we surfaced, and it was a happy reunion with our dive ship that patiently awaited our return. Due to the clear visibility and the different spectacular parts on the wreck, this was indeed a memorable dive. ■

REFERENCES: WRECKSITE.EU, WIKIPEDIA.ORG

Having dived over 400 wrecks, Vic Verlinden is an avid, pioneering wreck diver, award-winning underwater photographer and dive guide from Belgium. His work has been published in dive magazines and technical diving publications in the United States, Russia, France, Germany, Belgium, United Kingdom and the Netherlands. He is the organizer of tekDive-Europe technical dive show: [tekdiver-europe.com](http://tekdiver-europe.com)



• Raja Ampat

• Komodo

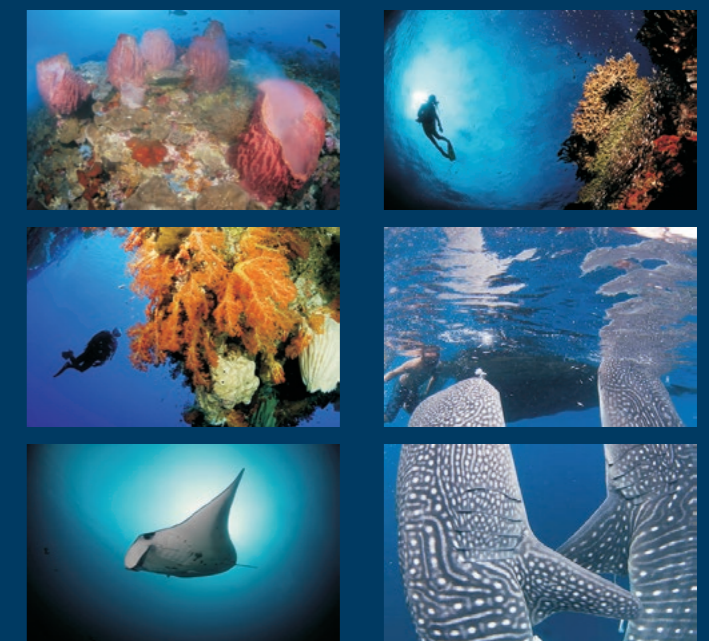


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Divers at porthole on wreck of *Warrior II* (above); Diver exits water after successful dive (right)



## Thousands of ancient gold coins found in the port of Caesarea

The largest treasure of gold coins discovered in Israel was found in recent weeks on the seabed in the ancient harbor in Caesarea National Park. A group of divers from the diving club in the harbour found the lost treasure.



The gold coins are from the Fatimid period

Using a metal detector, the Marine Archaeology Unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority's divers found gold coins in different denominations: a dinar, half dinar and quarter dinar, of various dimensions and weight. Kobi Sharvit, director of the Marine Archaeology Unit of the Israel Antiquities Authority said that "the winter storms expose treasures from the sea".

In addition, he said, "The discovery of such a large hoard of coins that had such tremendous economic power in antiquity raises several possibilities regarding its presence on the seabed. There is probably a shipwreck there of an official treasury boat which was on its way to the central government in Egypt with taxes that had been collected."

### Historical background

The earliest coin exposed in the

treasure is a quarter dinar minted in Palermo, Sicily, in the second half of the ninth century CE. Most of the coins though belong to the Fatimid caliphs Al-Hākim (996–1021 CE) and his son Al-Zāhir (1021–1036), and were minted in Egypt and North Africa. The coin assemblage included no coins from the Eastern Islamic dynasties and it can therefore be stated with certainty this is a Fatimid treasure.

According to Robert Cole, an expert numismatist with the Israel Antiquities Authority, "The coins are in an excellent state of preservation, and despite the fact they were at the bottom of the sea for about a thousand years, they did not require any cleaning or conservation intervention from the metallurgical laboratory. This is because gold is a noble metal and is not affected by air or water." ■

## 'Magical metal' found in 2,600-year-old Sicily shipwreck

A team of marine archaeologists have discovered 39 ingots of a red-tinged alloy metal scattered across the sandy sea floor near a 2,600-year-old shipwreck off the coast of Sicily. The vessel foundered in a storm only 300m short of its destination, the port of Gela in southern Sicily. Researchers believe it was likely headed there from Asia Minor.

### Orichalcum

But are the ingots really made from an alloy named orichalcum, the mystical, 'magical' metal which is said to have propelled Atlantis to the heights of ancient

technology? Regarded as being second only in value to gold, orichalcum was also said to be mined at the mythical island of Atlantis itself. The metal, like the civilisation, slipped beneath the waves—never to be seen again—in a cataclysmic event in antiquity.

### Mystery alloy

Orichalcum may have been one type of bronze or brass, or possibly some other metal alloy. Legend has it the alloy was composed of copper, gold and silver. Today, some scholars suggest that orichalcum is a brass-like alloy, which was made in antiquity the process of

cementation, which was achieved through the reaction of zinc ore, charcoal and copper metal in a crucible.

### Brass indeed

The latest discovery of the orichalcum ingots that had laid for nearly three millennia on the sea floor may finally unravel the mystery of the origin and composition of this enigmatic metal. An analysis of the 39 ingots using x-ray fluorescence found they were made of an alloy primarily consisting of copper and zinc, i.e. a form of brass. ■



The dupondius (Latin two-pounder) was a brass coin used during the Roman Empire. With the coinage reform of Augustus in or about 23 BC, the sesterius and dupondius were produced in a golden colored copper-alloy called orichalcum by the Romans and numismatists, and by us brass, while lower denominations were produced out of reddish copper.

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