

The Antoinette

The **Antoinette** was a 1,118 ton barque, built in Yarmouth, Nova Scotia in 1874 and was used for the transportation of goods. On New Years Day 1895, the **Antoinette** set off from Newport laden with coal, destined for Brazil. On January 2nd she foundered near Lundy Island, losing parts of her masts. She was towed towards a safe port, but broke free and drifted. The Port Isaac Lifeboat, **Richard and Sarah II** was called to assist. The crew and over 60 local people gathered in the

harbour, braving gale force winds and mountainous seas, to launch their Lifeboat. Eventually she joined up with Padstow's Lifeboat **Arab** and a Padstow based steam tug that had the **Antoinette** in tow. As the storm lashed fleet entered the most dangerous stage of the rescue operation, **Antoinette** yawed out of control, struck the Doom Bar off Padstow and broke her tow. Both Lifeboats went alongside the stranded ship as she started to break up in the heaviest of seas; the Port Isaac Lifeboat rescued ten of the crew and the **Arab** four, landing them at Padstow at 3pm. The **Richard and Sarah II** immediately left Padstow to return to her home station some 12 miles to the East. She braved the Doom Bar again and the continuing heavy weather to make safe harbour by 7.30pm. The crew had been on service, facing the most arduous of conditions, for eleven hours - MEN OF IRON.

The largest ship to be wrecked on the Doom Bar, the wreckage of the **Antoinette** was causing a hazard to shipping, so a local miner named Pope was called in. He filled the wreck with gelignite and, after clearing the area, detonated it. The resulting explosion was so violent that reports claim every window in the nearby harbour of Padstow was blown in and the smoke could be seen three miles away.

Over 100 years later, a wreck re-surfaced on the Doom Bar. Although there is some debate as to which ship had appeared, owing to the sheer number of ships that have wrecked on the Doom Bar, the consensus is that it was the remainder of the **Antoinette**. The wreck is currently being dismantled, with the assistance of the Royal Navy Bomb Disposal Unit.



Shifting sands in the Camel Estuary have exposed this wreck that's posing a threat to boats. 10021a03301wreck

Mystery wreck hands harbour a big headache

MYSTERY surrounds the identity of a wreck off Padstow which resurfaced briefly during a high tide.

Some people believe it could be the remains of the **Antoinette**, the largest ship ever to go down on the Doom Bar.

Others say it may be the fishing ketch **Triumph** which sunk in 1912. But local resident Peter Ward, who captured what is left of the wreck on his digital camera, is convinced it is the **Antoinette**.

Either way, Padstow harbour commissioners are to take action as the remains of the ship are a danger to navigation.

If it is the **Antoinette**, then it has a vivid history, not least when it was originally blown up to clear the channel.

Padstonians at the time certainly knew about the explosion - it blew out every window

By **OSCAR MORSE**
e-mail: omorse@c-dm.co.uk
01208 74528

in the port. The square rigger sunk off Pentire Point in 1895, but that was only part of the story, as Mr Ward explained.

"The Padstow and Port Isaac lifeboats saved 14 crew that night, plus two local pilots and two from South Wales.

"She was the biggest wreck that ever went down on the bar, weighing 1,118 tonnes.

"A local miner called Pope was later called in, and he brought a very large quantity of gelignite with him.

"When he blew the ship up, you could see the sand and smoke as far as Wadebridge, and every house window in Padstow was blown out.

"I doubt if it's been seen for 100 years until it surfaced again

the other day." The **Antoinette** had sailed from Canada to Newport before loading 830 tonnes of coal bound for Brazil.

She got into difficulty off Lundy during a severe Christmas gale, losing her main sail.

The ship struggled on with pilots towing her, but the tow broke off near Pentire Point and she was lost.

Mr Ward added: "Some people in Padstow can remember their grandparents telling them the story of the **Antoinette**, but it took a very big tide for her to be seen again."

Padstow harbour master Rob Atkinson said something now had to be done to make the wreck safe for other boats.

"Either some of what remains of the wreck will have to be removed or a buoy needs to go there," he said.