

The gun in the Bloody Bones Yard

Port Isaac was a favourite haunt for the Loughton Sub Aqua Club and this is the story of how they raised the Royal Naval Gun that now overlooks the harbour from behind the Golden Lion from the wreck of the *Milly*.

Back in 1989 members of the diving club found the wreck of the Armed Merchant ship *Milly* resting upright in 38 meters of water at co-ordinates 50-40-36N / 004-51-52W , 6 miles SW Port Isaac. Built by William Gray & Co in 1904, gross tons 2964 and formerly named Ludwig Groedele, she had been torpedoed by a German U-Boat on September 6th 1918 and two lives were lost.

Following the underwater photographic survey carried out on the mountings by Bob Bulgin and Dave Hurley the BSAC Loughton Divers Salvage group - Mick Jefford, Nick Stahles, Roy Speakman and Phil Halstead - set to work. They decided to manually unbolt most of the mounting bolts but it was not possible to gain access to the last six or seven so the decision was made to use a shaped charge of 7lbs of high explosive to remove the gun from its position where it was firmly held on the canted gun platform. Having achieved this arduous task, heavy duty underwater air lift bags were shackled on, which provided 7 tons of lift, thereby bringing the complete gun mounting and gun to the surface.

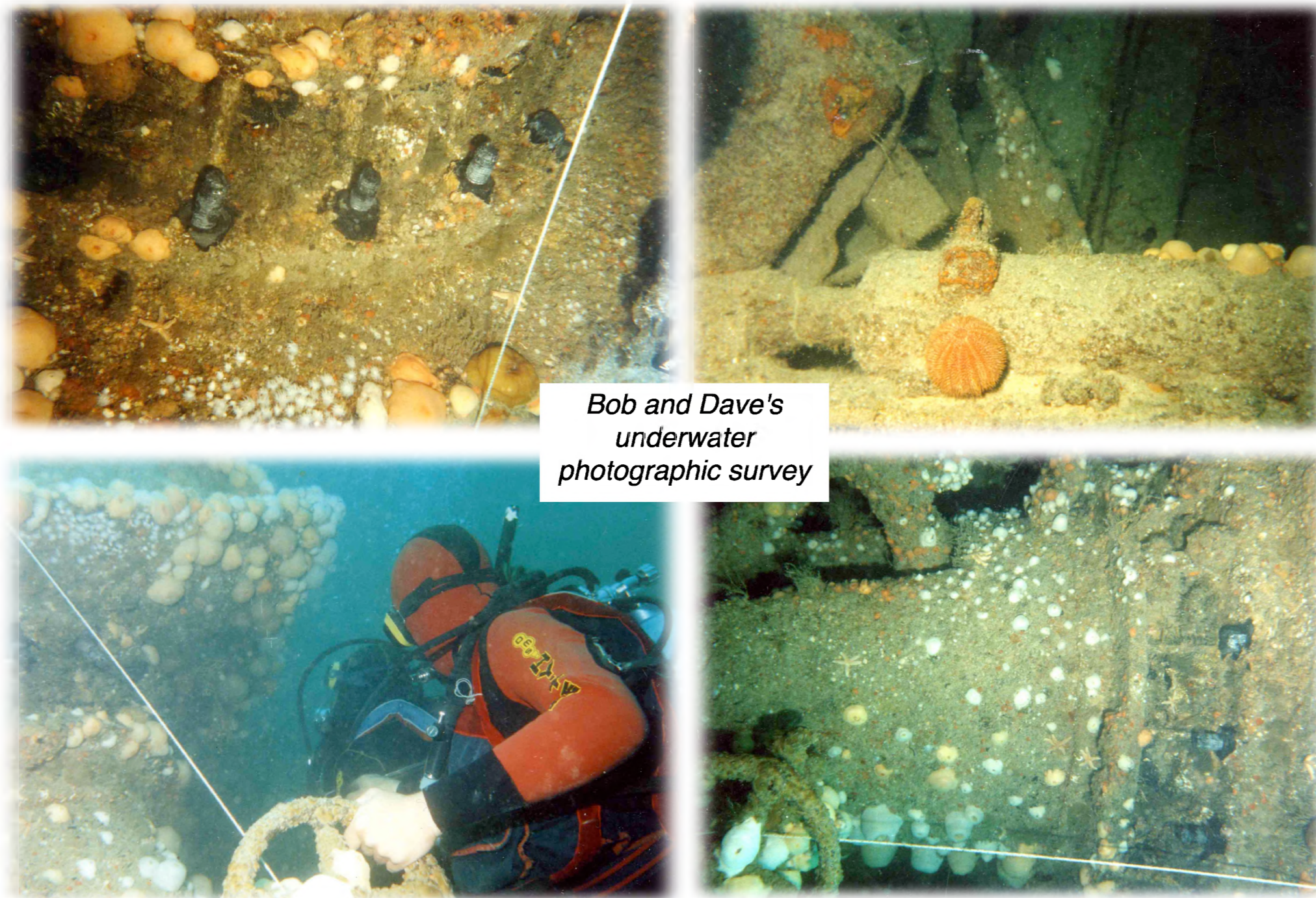
Whilst on the surface and hanging under the lifting bags, one of the strops securing the load parted sending the gun and base back to the seabed some 36 meters below. The barrel and base separated on their plunge back to the sea bed or when they hit the bottom resulting in the divers having to find and lift them separately this time. Ultimately both parts were relocated and raised independently.

In the summer of 1991 the barrel and base were towed into the harbour at high tide by local fishermen and positioned below the balcony of the Golden Lion from where they were craned up into the position they are now in. This was funded and arranged by the Loughton Divers and the Guvn'r of the Lion, Senior RNLI Helmsman, Neville Andrews,

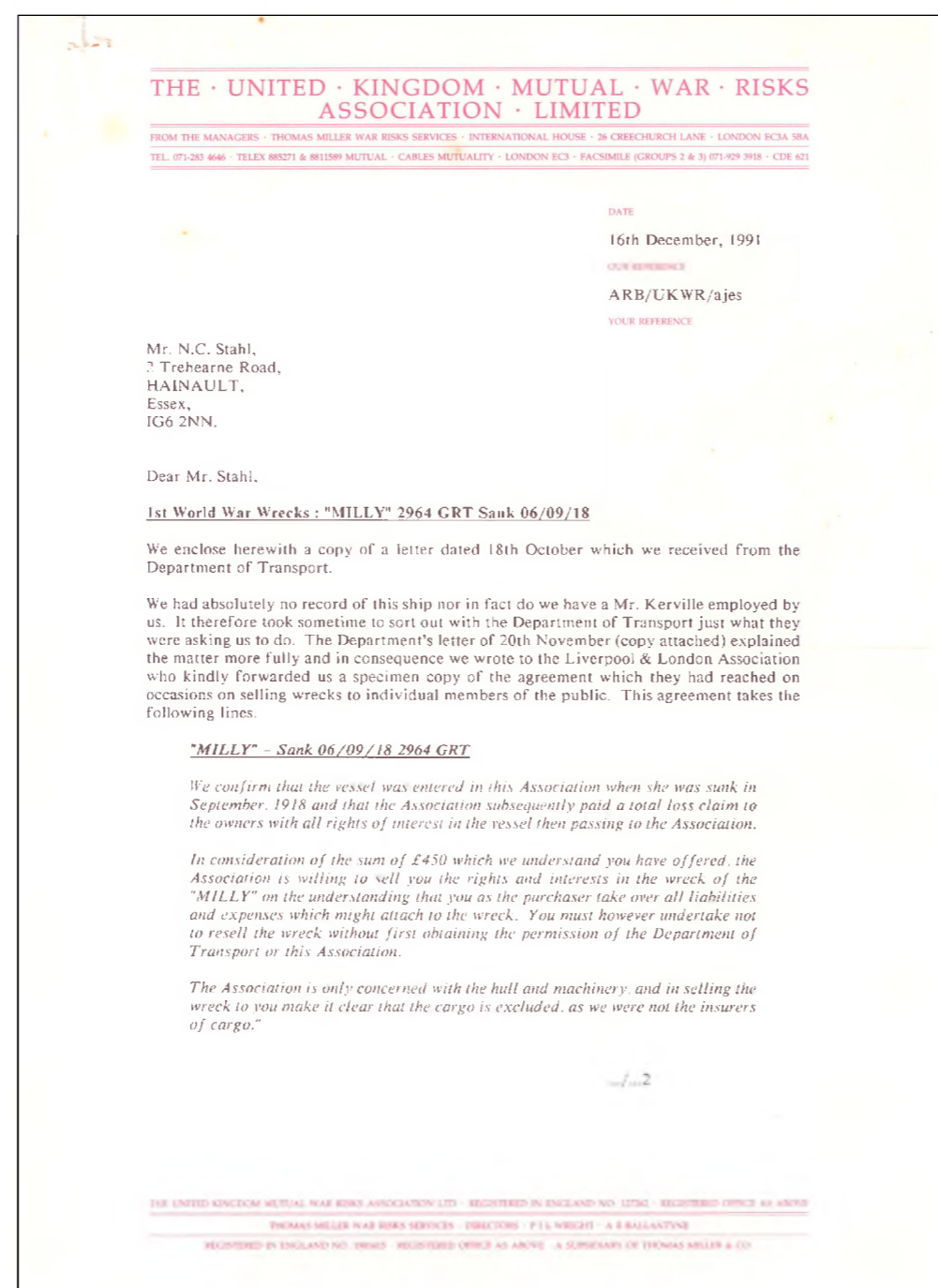
The hull of the wreck is still largely intact with the bridge having collapsed partly into the hull and onto the adjacent seabed - truly a Titanic laying here in local waters and a sombre reminder of the dangers our Merchant Seaman faced, both in the First and Second World War, in bringing essential supplies to our Island Nation.



The gun keeps watch over Port Isaac harbour
The naval gun sight from the *Milly*, mounted and on display in the Golden Lion



Bob and Dave's
underwater
photographic survey



Roy Speakman, Nick Stahl, Mick Jefford and Gary Kembry with a good haul of port holes from the *Milly* in 1989

Bob Bulgin remembers ...

"When I was diving down to the wreck of the *Milly* to carry out the photo shoot, I dived under the Gun platform and came across the remains of a pair of seaman's leather boots. Whether they had belonged to the gunner who would have been on duty and he cast them off when he abandoned the ship as she sunk after being torpedoed, we will never know. But it brought the human side of the sinking of the ship very much to mind. I had these boots for years at Jessamine but they seem to have gone back to Davy Jones Locker!

There was no evidence of a foot in this pair of boots you will be pleased to hear. However, when diving in Sweden we came across a complete German leather Jack Boot which we brought to the surface with other artefacts. On examining it we found it contained all of the foot and lower leg bones of whoever was wearing it when the ship sank, together with a German curly bowled pipe! The German sailor or marine must have had his pipe tucked down the side of his boot when the ship was hit by a torpedo from a British Submarine and I presume he lost his life ... Divers Stories!! "

