



The Lusitania Disaster

卢西塔尼亚号沉船

Text & Photo | Vic Verlinden

After the Titanic, the wreck of the Lusitania is probably the most evocative of all shipwrecks in the world. It was a remarkable challenge, with a lot of planning, before I was able to see this wreck with my own eyes.

继泰坦尼克号之后，世界上最让人神往的沉船恐怕要属卢西塔尼亚号。经过一番精心策划，穿越重重障碍，我终于亲眼见到这艘沉船的庐山真面目。

Despite warnings from the German Embassy and in the American press that the Lusitania should not start her crossing, the ship was brought under steam on May 1st, 1915. On board were 1,257 passengers and 702 crew. The command was in the hands of Captain W.J. Turner. Passengers did not worry because it was assumed the Germans would not dare torpedo a ship with American civilians on board. First class passengers enjoyed the luxurious interior of the beautiful ship; one of those was Sir Hugh Lane, the director of the National Gallery of Ireland who had taken many valuable paintings on board including works by Monet and Rubens.

After a trouble-free passage, the ship approached the coast of Ireland; it was reported that there was a German submarine nearby. Captain Turner doubled the lookout as three ships had been torpedoed in the area a week previously and he did not want to take any risks. Warnings of a U-boat came on May 5 and 6 then again on May 7. At 2.15pm the Lusitania was about 10 miles (16,093.4 metres) south of Old Head of Kinsale when the ship was hit by a torpedo between the first chimney and the bow. A second powerful explosion followed, causing a lot of damage in the engine room. The ship made a heavy heel, making it difficult to lower the lifeboats. At 2.26pm, after barely 15 minutes, the ship sank and 761 people drowned including 94 children and 124 American nationals.

The American government was furious but the Germans said the ship had ammunition on board making the torpedo attack legitimate. The torpedo was fired by the U20 under commander Capt-Lt. Schwieger. In his report, he mentioned a single torpedo. The torpedoing did the German cause no good and instigated America joining the war effort. Later, there were discussions in the press about a second explosion. This was attributed by the Germans to the transport of a load of ammunition during the Lusitania's crossing.

1915年5月1日，卢西塔尼亚号在德国大使馆和美国媒体“不要起航”的警告声中驶离港口。当时船上载有1257名乘客和702名船员，手握指挥权的是W.J. Turner船长。乘客们并不担心这趟旅程，因为船上有美国公民，德国人必定不敢用鱼雷炸船。这艘豪华游轮的头等舱内饰极尽奢华，头等舱的其中一位乘客是爱尔兰国家美术馆馆长 Hugh Lane 爵士，他带了许多珍贵的画作上船，包括莫奈和鲁本斯的作品。

一路平安无事，游轮渐渐靠近爱尔兰海岸。据报道，附近有一艘德国潜艇，而且一周前刚有三艘船在该地区被鱼雷击中，所以 Turner 船长格外小心，不想出任何差错。5月5日和6日，游轮收到小心德国U型潜艇的警告，5月7日又收到警告。7日下午2点15分，在老金赛尔角（Old Head of Kinsale）以南约10英里（16,093.4公尺）的地方，一枚鱼雷落在了卢西塔尼亚号第一个烟囱和船头之间。随后发生了第二次强烈爆炸，轮机室遭到极大破坏。船身严重侧倾，很难放下救生艇。仅仅15分钟后，下午2时26分，该船就彻底沉没，761人溺亡，其中包括94名儿童和124名美国公民。

美国政府非常愤怒，但德国人辩称船上有弹药，因而鱼雷攻击是合法的。鱼雷是 Schwieger 中尉指挥的U20号潜艇发射的，因他在报告中提到了一枚鱼雷。但此次鱼雷攻击对德国没有任何好处，只加速了美国参战的进程。后来，媒体讨论了第二次爆炸的问题，德国人认为这就是卢西塔尼亚号运输弹药的佐证。



First-class dining Saloon

The First Plans for an Expedition

I had been looking for an opportunity to dive on the Lusitania for a few years. In 2017, I saw a message about an expedition organized by Peter McCamley, who hoped to realize a project that would spread over several years. The aim was, among other things, to make 3-D images of the wreck. Peter agreed that I could go to Ireland to help on the boat, but I would not be able to dive because I was not on the permit application, which needed the approval from the Irish Government and American, Greg Bemis who was the owner at the time. Regardless, I wanted to get involved but my plans were thwarted when my car broke down during the journey to Ireland and I realised I would never reach the departure on time. My planned trip for 2017 was over.

Another Attempt in 2018

Some months later, Peter McCamley put together a new team and this time I was on the dive list. I prepared my trip well, physically, mentally and with top equipment. This time the crossing went without any problems and I was able to board our expedition ship. The weather was very good with a soft breeze and sunshine. It was on September 24th, 2018, that I made my first dive. The first team in the water were making more 3-D film footage of the bow of the wreck. I was in the second team, but while we were still descending, the first team indicated we had to ascend as the anchor was not on the wreck. This was a severe setback and for the next few days there was no possibility of diving due to bad weather. Five days later, we tried again. The descent line was shifted and I was soon heading to the wreck. I had been working for years to realize this dream and I was finally going to see the Lusitania.

The visibility on the bottom was no more than 5 metres and I immediately saw a lot of fishing nets. I decided not to swim too far away from the line. The treble hook was not far from the bridge at the front of the wreck. It was difficult to orient myself but I did see one of the iron curved levers for the lifeboats and also a row of round portholes still in the wall of the wreck. I decided to follow them until I suddenly came to one of the large entrance doors that served to welcome the passengers on board. Along the way I also saw large round bronze windows, not surprising as a large passenger ship like the Lusitania had hundreds on board. I decided to swim back in the direction of the treble hook and on the way I saw that the wreck had suffered heavily from the currents and salty water. However, it was high time to start my ascent; 20 minutes bottom time had passed quickly and a long deco time awaited me. The next day we dived back on the wreck but the reconnaissance was limited as I didn't want to take any risks.





最初的探险计划

几年来，我一直在寻找卢西塔尼亚号沉船潜水的机会。2017 年，我看到一条信息说 Peter McCamley 在组织卢西塔尼亚号探险活动。他期望透过一个跨越数年的项目，制作出沉船的三维图像。Peter 同意我去爱尔兰上船帮忙，但我不能潜水，因为没有申请许可，而申请许可需要得到爱尔兰政府和当时的船主——美国人 Greg Bemis 的批准。即便如此，我还是想参与其中，但在去爱尔兰的途中，我的车坏了，这就意味着我绝无可能按时到达出发地，计划受挫，我原本计划的 2017 年旅行就这样结束了。

2018 年的再次尝试

几个月后，Peter McCamley 组建了新的团队，这次我进了潜水名单。我为这次旅行做了充分的身体和心理准备，还配了一流的装备。这次途中没有任何问题，我终于登上了探险船。天气非常好，微风轻拂、阳光灿烂。2018 年 9 月 24 日，我进行了第一次潜水。水下的第一分队正在为沉船船头拍摄详尽的三维视频脚本，我属于第二分队，但轮到我们的下潜时，第一分队却提醒我们尽快上升，因为船锚不在沉船上。我顿感挫折，接下来的几天里，由于天气不好，完全无法下潜。五天后，我们再次尝试。换了导潜绳，我迅速向沉船游去。几年过去，我终于要见到卢西塔尼亚号了。

水底的能见度不超过 5 米，但我立刻看到了很多渔网，我决定不离绳太远。锚钩离沉船前面的船桥楼不远，我很难确定方向，但我确实看到了救生艇的一根铁制弧形保险杠，也看到了沉船壁上的一排圆形舷窗。我决定沿着它们探索，后来突然来到欢迎乘客登船的一扇大门前。一路上，我还看到了巨大的圆形铜窗，这在像卢西塔尼亚号之类载客数百人的大型客轮上并不稀奇。然后我决定游回锚钩所在的位置，途中还注意到水流和海水对沉船造成的严重侵蚀。不过我必须上去了：20 分钟的水底时间很快过去，接下来是漫长的减压过程。第二天，我们又潜回沉船上，但由于我不想冒险，所以考察的时间有限。

The Long Awaited Expedition in 2019!

In the summer of 2019, I returned to Ireland to dive on the Lusitania once more. Karl Van Der Auwera, my diving buddy of many years, joined me. At the beginning of the trip, the weather was not good so we could not dive, but after 5 days the weather improved and we decided to attempt it. The treble hook was at the bridge again and, as we descended, we saw that the visibility was much better than the year before. Karl unrolled a reel so we could easily find the line and explore the wreck in peace. Immediately near the treble hook we saw several rectangular bronze windows. These had served in the cabins of the first class passengers. We also saw one of the water reservoirs that had stood on the deck and two showers plus a piece of mosaic flooring from the bathrooms. Swimming towards the bow, we saw pieces of wreckage littered with portholes of all shapes then, on the bow, we recognized the anchor chain and the winch to raise the anchors. There were two bollards with cords still twisted around them and pieces of the wooden floor on the foredeck were still intact.

Visibility at this point was at least 8 metres, which is exceptionally good on the wreck. Over the next days we did more dives and thousands of pictures were taken by different teams. After four consecutive days diving to a depth of 90 metres, I had to take a rest. However, it was a priceless experience to be able to participate in this wonderful adventure and in 2021 we will try to return to explore even more of the wreck. In the future, our intention is to bring objects from the wreck to the surface in an archaeologically responsible way so they can be exhibited in a new museum to be built in Kinsale. **EZ**

2019 年，期待已久的探险！

2019 年夏天，我再次回到爱尔兰，在卢西塔尼亚号上潜水。我多年的潜伴 Karl Van Der Auwera 也一起加入。旅行之初天气不好，所以我们无法下潜，但五天后天气好转，我们决定尝试一下。锚钩仍搭在栏杆上，我们下潜后发现能见度比前年好很多。Karl 带了线轴，这样我们比较方便找到下潜绳，可以安然地探索沉船。紧挨着锚钩的地方，我们看到了几扇长方形铜窗，它们是昔日头等舱舱房的遗存。我们还看到了一只立在甲板上的水池和两个淋浴头，还有一块浴室的马赛克地板。游向船头时，我们看到了一片片残骸，到处都是各种形状的舷窗，然后在船头，我们认出了锚链和起锚的绞盘。两根系船柱上面还缠绕着绳索，前甲板上的木质地板碎片还完好无损。

此时的能见度至少在 8 米以上，这在沉船上算相当不错的条件。在接下来的日子里，我们下潜了更多次，各分队拍摄了上千张照片。连续四天潜到 90 米的深度后，我不得不暂停休息。然而，能够参加这次奇妙的冒险已然是一次无价的经历。2021 年，我们会试着探索沉船更多的奇妙之处。未来，我们打算以一种对文物保护负责的方式，将沉船上的物品带出水面，在金赛尔即将落成的新博物馆中进行展出。|



