

Strombus

Whale factory

Owner: A/S Sevilla (controlled by Chr. Salvesen & Co., Gr. Britain).

Manager: Onésimus Andersen, Tønsberg

Tonnage: 6549 gt, 3917 net

Signal Letters: LCPN

Built by Armstrong Whitworth & Co., Newcastle in 1900 as Strombus for Anglo Saxon Petroleum Co., London. Sold in 1921 to Cia Ballenera del Peru, Peru, same name. Later sold to Hvalf. A/S Africa, Tønsberg, converted to whale factory 1926 (1928?). Sold to A/S Sevilla in 1936.

Captain: Hjalmar Nilsen

Voyage Record From March-1940 to May-1940:

| | Departure | From | To | Arrival | Convoy |
|------|-----------|---------------------|-------------|---------|-------------|
| 1940 | March 31* | South Georgia | Freetown | May 15 | Independent |
| | May 17 | Freetown | – | – | SL 32 |
| | May 19 | Detached from SL 32 | New Orleans | – | Independent |

Notes:

Strombus is listed in Convoy SL 32, departing Freetown on May 17-1940, arriving Liverpool June 3. From the [archive document](#), we learn that she did not go to the U.K. at that time, but arrived New Orleans on June 9; according to A. Hague she had been detached from the convoy on May 19 to continue independently. She had a cargo of whale oil, and sailed in station 32. *Chr. Knudsen* and *Spero* are also listed - ref. link provided in the table above. From New Orleans, she headed to Galveston on June 22, then on to Bermuda, where she arrived July 7. With destination Manchester, she's listed as scheduled for the Bermuda portion of [Convoy HX 57](#) on July 10, but did not sail - follow the link for more convoy information, several Norwegian ships are named. Going back to the archive document, we see that she had left Bermuda on July 8 and arrived Liverpool on the 27th, later proceeding to Stanlow and Manchester, arriving the latter on Aug. 2.

The last entry on the document shows her arriving Swansea on Aug. 14.

Final Fate - 1940:

She was off Swansea correcting her compasses, about to depart for South Georgia, when a mine detonated aft on her starboard side on Oct. 26-1940, 51 33 48N 03 56 48W. She had a pilot on board at the time, and I get the impression her degaussing was turned on. The Germans had started to use a new type of mine in British waters around this time, the acoustic mine, which detonated on the sound impulse from the propellers of passing ships, but not sure if this was the type to blame in this case. The steam pipes started to leak in various places and water was reported in the engine room, so course was altered towards shore in order to beach the ship. The tug *Victor* came to her assistance about 10 minutes later and took her in tow towards a bank near Mumbles Head, but she went aground.

Most of her crew members were taken ashore by *HMT Silja*; 2nd Engineer **Monsen** was injured and taken to a hospital. The pilot and 15 crew remained on board and shortly after midnight on the 27th, 2 tugs unsuccessfully attempted to tow her further in. At this time she was listing heavily to starboard. Those who had remained on board were then taken off by *Victor* and landed in Swansea at dawn, except the captain and the 1st mate, who reboarded *Strombus* and remained on board through the day.

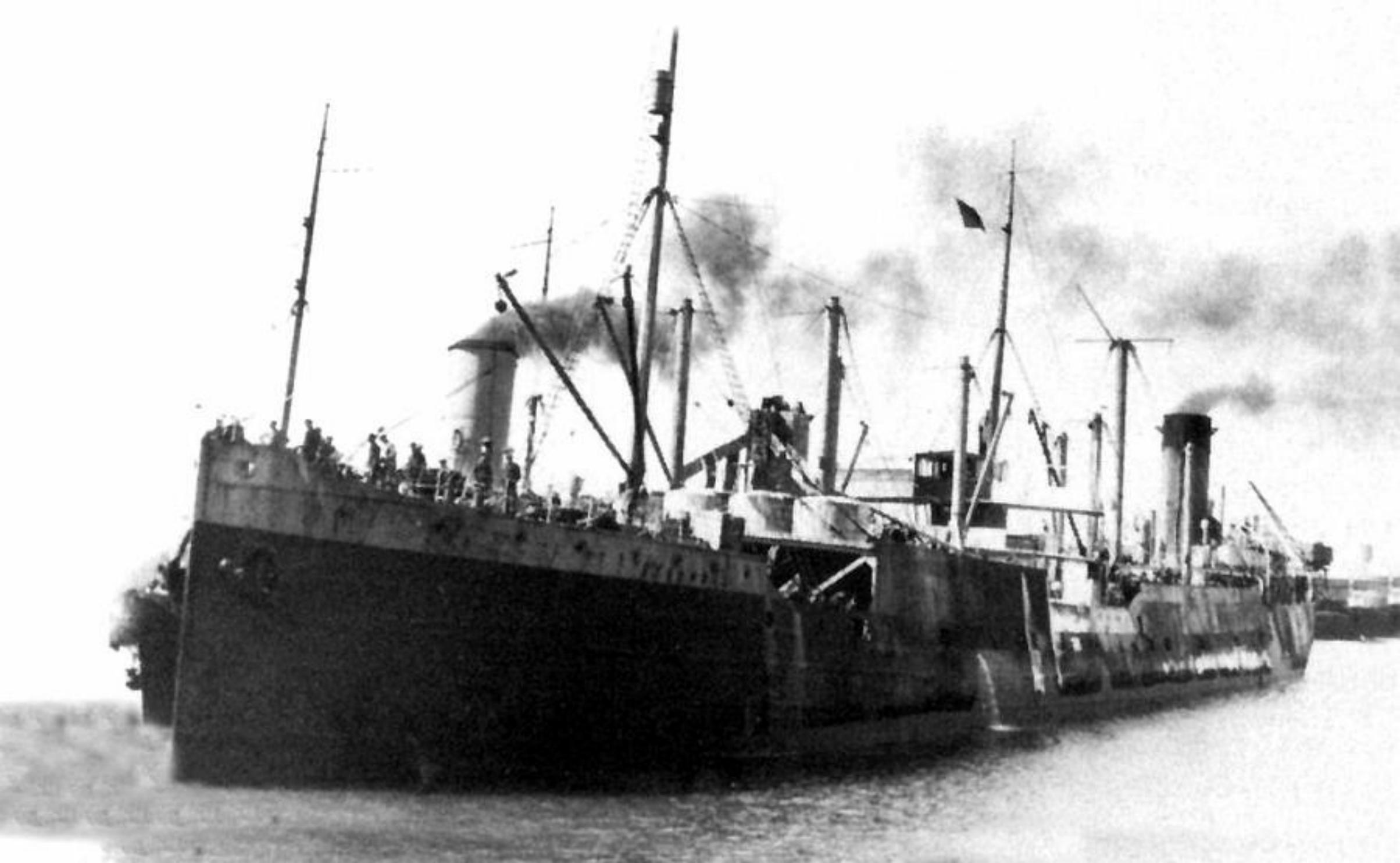
During a storm on Oct. 30 *Strombus* broke in two. The forepart drifted off, capsized and sank, while the afterpart was beached in 51 34 33N 03 58 21W.

All 48 (34?) had survived.

An inquiry was held in Leith on Febr. 12-1941 with the captain and the 1st mate attending.

She was refloated in 1942, broken up at Briton Ferry.

A visitor to my website has told me that "Men of the Mumbles Head" says that Mumbles Lifeboat went out after she had struck the mine, but was told casualties would remain aboard until the tugs arrived. He adds that "Shipwreck Index of the British Isles" says she carried patent fuel (a form of compressed coal dust), and that the remains of the wreck were dispersed in 1977.





wasac dive site report

The Strombus

Swansea members, first dived the wreck on the day Charles and DI married. Later the "Innisfallen" Cork Ferry hit something in the bay. We escorted an east-coast diver who located the ship's bell in sand near the wreck, it now hangs in the SYSAC clubhouse on permanent loan from Trinity House. Swandea members also assisted in the dispersal of the wreck with blasting gelatin and cortex fuses. The wreck has now become more broken but still provides an interesting dive with excellent marine life.



Ship's history

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