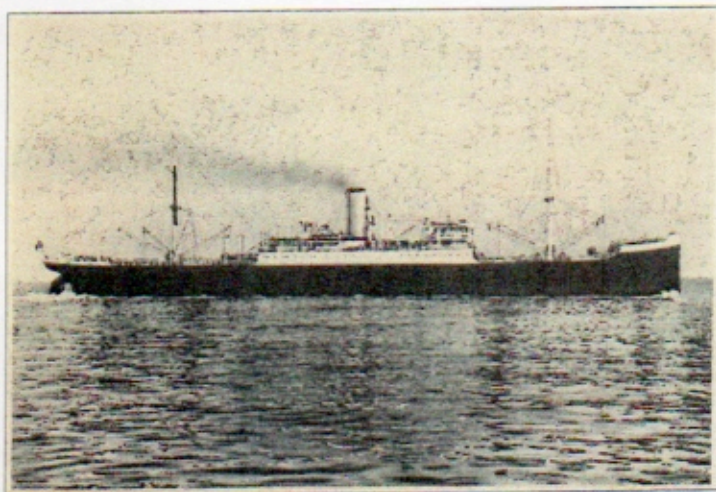


*A wee bit
of maritime
history... 2*



FREE

The Ballyhenry Wreck *SS Empire Tana*



<http://www.naviarmatori.net/ita/foto-248886-1.html>

The *Empire Tana* was built nearly a century ago in 1923 as the *Carso* at the Stabilimento Tecnico Triestino yard in the NE Italian port town of Trieste for Lloyd Triestino.

Length	123.8m (406.2ft)
Breadth	16.48m (54.1ft)
Depth	10.05m (33.0ft)
Gr. tonnage	6148
Propulsion	Screw, 3-cylinder, triple expansion
Horsepower	483
Boilers	3

14 Feb 1941 - The *Carso* was in the port of Kismayo in Italian Somaliland (present-day Somalia) when it was captured by British forces and was scuttled. Ownership was transferred to the Ministry of War Transport and she was included in the list of "Empire" ships i.e. Captured or newly built merchant vessels in the service of the UK government, and was renamed the *Empire Tana*.

9 Feb 1944 – She was one of five ships in fog off Casablanca, Morocco and was badly damaged when she collided with two of them. Following repairs, the survey report of 27 April notes that "all water tight compartments have been made common to facilitate flooding" and that she had been assigned by the Sea Transport Department for "special service", a sign of things to come.

6 June 1944 (D-Day) – The Normandy Landings marked the start of the Battle of Normandy (codename: Operation Overlord) which led on to the successful invasion of German-occupied NW Europe. There were five landing beaches on Normandy's frequently stormy north coast and a number of methods were used in each case to create sheltered water for shallow draft vessels to be used by the invading force, including the use of a line of blockships (codename: Gooseberry) as breakwaters.

The *Empire Tana* was towed across the Channel on 7 June to participate with eight other vessels in Gooseberry no.5 at the most easterly beach, Sword, off Ouistreham, near Caen. Like the others she had been ballasted and was sunk in 5.5m (18ft) of water using explosive charges, leaving part of her hull protruding above the water at high tide. All Gooseberries were completed by 10 June.

1947 – She was refloated and sold to John Lee of Corporation St, Belfast on behalf of the British Iron & Steel Salvage Corporation for breaking up at Lee's site on Ballyhenry Island at the north end of Strangford Narrows. While being towed from Normandy, she broke loose near Land's End but was retrieved. As she was approaching Ballyhenry Island she grounded on John's Rock and broke in two, leaving the aft section there with the bow section grounding on the island's shallows. It was still possible to salvage the middle section.

March 1996 – a depth charge, present since WWII, was found and disposed of by the Royal Navy.



Both sections of the vessel remain where they grounded and can still be seen at low tide.

They are a sanctuary for sea life and a destination for divers who refer to the two as the Inner and Outer Lees.



SS Empire Tana

Bow section



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