

1944

## The German armed trawler *Claus Bolten* (V213)

In June 1944, the noose was tightening around German naval units in France and they were constantly harassed right up to the coast by the Allied naval and air forces.

It was in these circumstances, on June 27<sup>th</sup>, that three armed trawlers of the 2<sup>nd</sup> VPF (M4611, V203 and V213) left St. Malo for St. Helier, Jersey. Prior to sailing, at about 22:30, the officers made no secret of the risks they would be running; warning particularly of the sector west of the Minquiers, out of range of the Jersey coastal batteries and known to be patrolled by Allied vessels.

Their fears were justified: at 00:53 the British destroyer, H.M.S. Huron, picked-up three radar echoes at about 5 miles – at 00:59 she opened fire with her three turrets of twin 120mm guns ! The surprise was total and the first salvo hit the small escort V213 killing her captain. The forward magazine exploded and she sank with the loss of 35 crew. The two remaining vessels attempted to close the Jersey coast and the protection of the German shore batteries. However, they found another destroyer, H.M.S. Eskimo, (that had sailed from Plymouth the previous afternoon) blocking their route. Using smoke shells for cover, the Germans tried to escape and Eskimo lost her targets in the confusion. Suddenly, the V203 saw the destroyer appear close by and opened fire with her 88mm and machine guns. The hunter had become the hunted, badly damaged and with one of her main guns out of action, Eskimo returned no effective fire for 10 minutes !

Huron could not assist for fear of hitting Eskimo, but fired on the M4611, which she hit at 01:31 killing 21 of her complement and inflicting damage so serious that she had to be scuttled. The engagement had brought the destroyers dangerously close to the Minquiers reef, so they broke off the fight and withdrew.

On June 31<sup>st</sup>, for his conduct during the action, Captain Martiensen of the V203 was awarded the Iron Cross.



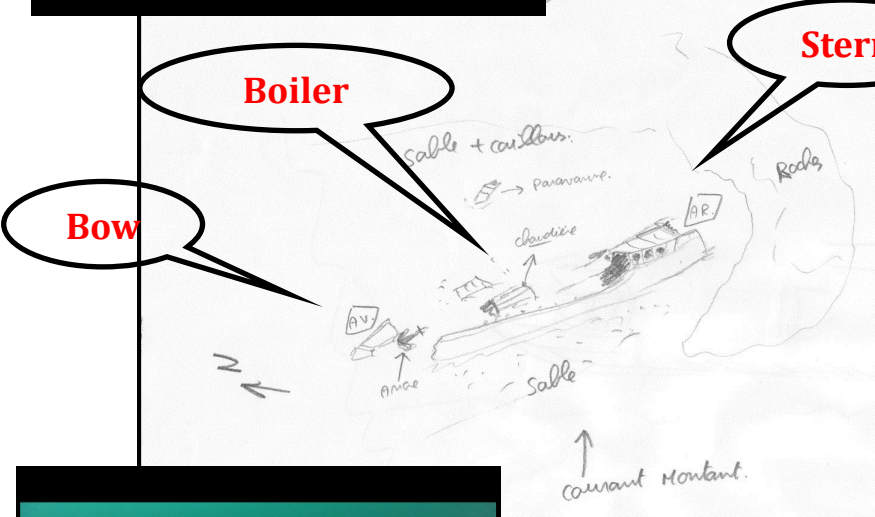
Built in 1926,  
at the German Unterweser  
yards, the steam powered  
Claus Bolten was of 280  
Tons,  
on a length of 45 metres

**The V1106, a vessel  
similar to the Claus  
Bolten**

**SAINT MALO**  
**PLONGÉE EMERAUDE**



Photos Jacques Lelay



Bow

Boiler

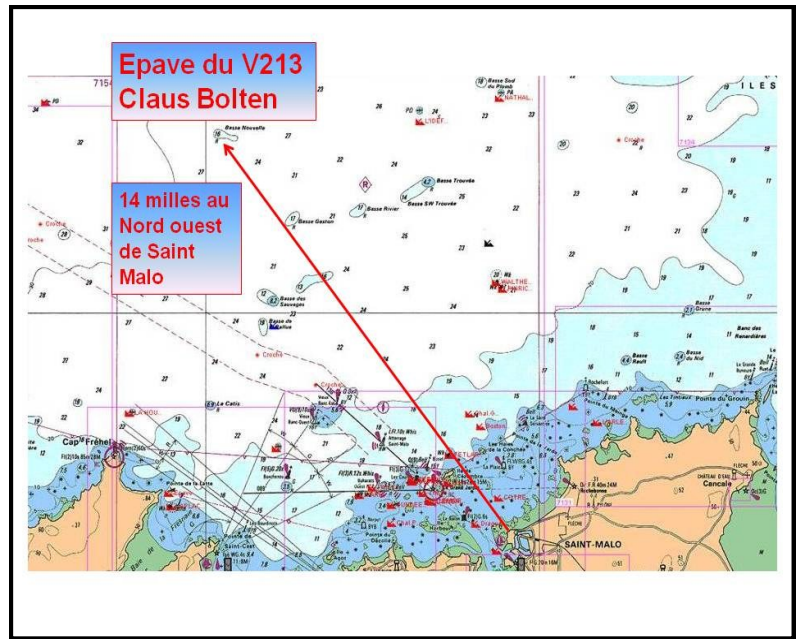
Stern



A machine gun base on the seabed

The port hull

The wreck lies on a bed of sand and shell south of the minquiers, some 8 miles north of Cap Fréhel and 14 from St. Malo, at about 32 to 35 metres at low water. Very broken, with only the stern (at the southern end of the site) relatively intact and lying on its starboard side – the forward section has literally exploded ! Perpendicular to the prevailing currents, there has been a considerable build-up of sand. Care must be taken, as the field of scattered debris includes munitions of various calibres.



# SAINT MALO PLONGÉE EMERAUDE