

1944

## The German armed trawler *Walther Darré* (V208)

The *Walther Darre*, sunk at Dunkirk in 1942; had been salvaged, repaired and was then based in St. Malo as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Vorpostenflotille, providing escorts for convoys to and from the Channel Islands.

On July 3<sup>rd</sup> 1944, at about 10:30, the *Walther* (V208) sailed from St. Helier, Jersey, in company with three other escorts (V209, V210 and M4622) and the large tug *Minotaure* that was crammed with prisoners being evacuated to St. Malo from Alderney. Their route took them down between Chausey and the Minquiers.

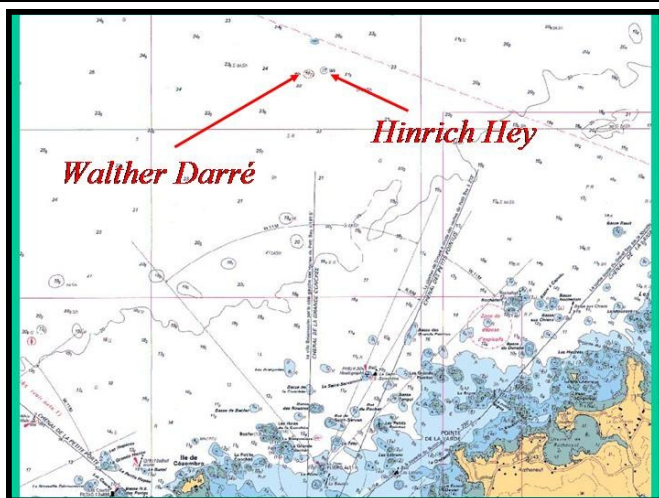
That same night, four M.T.B.s from the Canadian 65<sup>th</sup> Flotilla, based on the south coast of England, were on patrol off of St. Malo . . . About 01:10, they spotted the convoy on radar heading south-west at 12 knots. Moving in to close range, they launched a devastating attack ! Captain Kirkpatrick, the Canadian commander, on M.T.B. 748 sent two torpedoes towards the largest vessel, which he mistakenly identified as a freighter - it was in fact the *Walther Darre* ! Both torpedoes found their mark, which disappeared rapidly beneath the surface, leaving numerous survivors in the water to be picked-up by their comrades. They were not the only victims that night: another escort, the V210, was also sunk close by and the *Minotaure*, heavily damaged, had to be towed in to St. Malo.

### The wreck

Lying on her starboard side, the *Walther* has been cut in two just forward of the boiler. Both sections lie at an angle to each other and care must be taken in poor visibility, when crossing the 4 or 5 metres that separate them, not to become disorientated. The wreck-site extends over some 60 metres, with scattered debris on the starboard side. Previously containing numerous munitions, these have now been removed from the site by clearance divers from Brest. The holds in the forward section are easily accessible, except for the one right in the bows, where there is a tangle of cables and other obstacles.

The fore-deck fell to the sand several years ago under the weight of the 88mm gun, which now lies on the sea-bed alongside various other remains. At the bow the two anchors are still in place, but the anti-mine stem, has disappeared – probably taken by a trawl or dredge – though the fixings are still visible. On spring tides expect a depth of 38 metres; neap tides are preferable with 34 metres and less current.

The *Walther Darre* (45.46m long x 7.69m beam) requisitioned as an armed trawler. Built at the Seebeck yards, Wesermunde, and launched in 1933. She first entered the Kriegsmarine in 1937 as a training vessel.



5 miles north of the pointe de la Varde

SAINT MALO  
PLONGÉE EMERAUDE



Photos : Nicolas Job



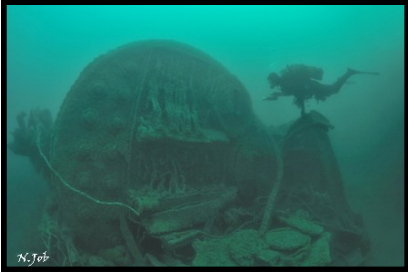
Alleyway

Propeller

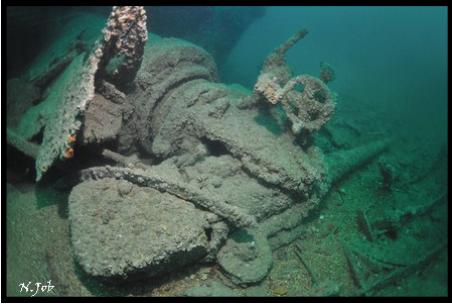
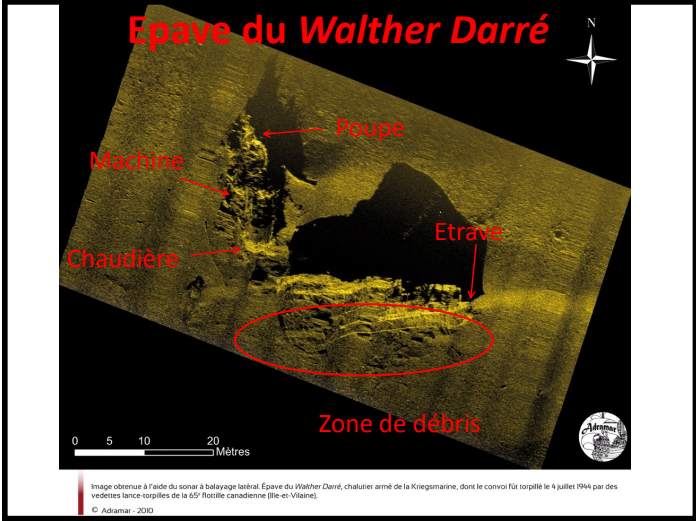
Bow



Boiler



88mm gun



Side scan sonar image (ADRAMAR)



Gemran dishes



Sextant found on the wreck

# SAINT MALO PLONGÉE EMERAUDE

Emmanuel Feige, 2012