

Wreck: Dufferin Bell



Framboise Cove – Cape Breton

Wrecked: May 13, 1951

The Event

On May 13, 1951, the freighter Dufferin Bell grounded along the rocky ledges of Framboise Cove on Cape Breton's southeast coast.

In typical Atlantic conditions—fog and reduced visibility—the vessel approached too close to shore and struck rock, driving hard aground on a lee coast.

The Ship

- Park Ship (4,700-ton class)
- Built: 1943, Lauzon, Quebec
- Length: ~441 ft
- Steel-hulled steam freighter
- Speed: ~11 knots

Originally built for wartime service, later converted to coastal trade.
Typical cargo: bulk goods (grain, timber, industrial materials)

Why It Was Lost

A combination of coastal risk factors:

- Reduced visibility (fog)
- Close coastal navigation on a lee shore
- Limited margin for error in approach

Unlike mid-ocean losses, this was a navigation error close to land.

The Wreck Event

- Vessel struck rock with a grinding impact
- Hull driven firmly onto ledges
- Unable to refloat

With each tide and swell, the ship was pushed further onto the rock, sealing her fate.

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The End of the Ship

- Salvage attempts failed
- Hull progressively damaged by swell
- Declared a total loss on site

The vessel broke down over time, scattering wreckage across the cove

Diver Notes

- Shallow wreck: ~20–40 ft
- Scattered debris field
- Key features: boilers, winches, shaftline
- Surge and swell can be significant
- Best dived in calm conditions / slack water

Requires

- Advance planning
- Proper vessel support

Why This Site Matters

- Represents Canada's wartime Park Ship program
- Survived WWII, lost in peacetime coastal trade
- Example of Cape Breton's hazardous coastline
- A largely untouched and remote wreck site

Final Thought

She survived the Battle of the Atlantic.

But in the end, it was not war that claimed her—

it was fog, rock, and a coastline that leaves little room for error.