

Wreck: Afghan Prince



Forchu Shoal / Guyon Island – Cape Breton

Wrecked: July 30, 1918

The Event

On July 30, 1918, the British cargo steamer *Afghan Prince* ran aground on Forchu Shoal near Guyon Island off the coast of Cape Breton.

In dense fog and reduced visibility, the vessel approached too close to shore along an exposed coastline where reefs extend outward with little warning.

Unlike many wrecks, the grounding did not immediately destroy the ship. She remained stranded on the reef for months while salvage efforts attempted to recover her.

The Ship

- Steel screw steamship (~4,900 tons)
- Built: 1903, Sunderland, England (Short Bros Ltd)
- Owner: Prince Line Ltd
- Propulsion: Triple-expansion steam engine, single screw
- Deep-sea cargo vessel

Typical cargo: general goods, including steel and large quantities of alcohol

Why It Was Lost

A combination of coastal and operational factors:

- Dense fog and reduced visibility
- Navigation along an unfamiliar coastline
- Maintaining speed in restricted visibility
- Wartime pressure to reach convoy assembly

Unlike sudden losses at sea, this was a navigational grounding compounded by conditions and circumstance.

The Wreck Event

- Vessel grounded on reef in heavy fog
- Remained intact and stranded for weeks
- Salvage operations initiated immediately
- Cargo removal and pumping operations ongoing

The ship did not sink—she settled onto the reef and remained there, exposed to tide and swell.

Wreck: Afghan Prince



The End of the Ship

- Approximately five weeks of active salvage
- Repeated attempts to refloat unsuccessful
- Structural damage increased over time
- Destroyed during heavy November gales

After months of exposure, the hull failed under sustained storm conditions. The vessel broke apart on the reef and was declared a total loss.

Diver Notes

- Exact site condition uncertain (likely scattered remains)
- Exposed Atlantic location
- Depth and structure reduced over time
- Area subject to surge, swell, and changing conditions

Requires

- Careful planning
- Accurate positioning
- Offshore-capable vessel

Why This Site Matters

- Rare example of a ship lost over an extended period
- Well-documented through salvage, inquiry, and insurance records
- Illustrates wartime convoy pressure on navigation
- Located within a coastline known for multiple wrecks (including *Dufferin Bell* and *Langeeridge*)

Final Thought

She did not vanish when she struck the reef.

She remained—
worked, stripped, and slowly weakened.

For months, she held in place.

Until the November gales came.

And what the reef began—
the sea finished.