

Wreck: Kenkerry



Black Point Rock – Portuguese Cove – Nova Scotia

Wrecked: January 18, 1935

The Event

On the night of January 18, 1935, the British cargo steamer *Kenkerry* approached Halifax in a blinding snowstorm. Visibility was reduced to near zero. Navigation relied on dead reckoning and limited soundings. As the vessel closed the coast, the margin for error disappeared.

Without warning, she struck rock. Less than a hundred yards from shore. Driven onto Black Point in heavy seas, the ship became fixed in place, held by wind and surf that offered no opportunity to recover.

The Ship

- Built: 1927, Tyne Iron Shipbuilding Co., Willington Quay (UK)
- Length: ~355 ft
- Steel cargo steamer
- ~3,930 tons
- Coal-fired boilers
- Former name: *Kenton*
- Trade: Transatlantic tramp steamer
- Voyage: Havana → Halifax (to load grain for UK return)

Why It Was Lost

The loss was not a single failure—but a convergence:

- Blizzard conditions eliminated visual navigation
- No radar or electronic positioning available
- Dead reckoning drifted vessel off intended course
- Approaching a lee shore with limited margin
- Coal-fired engines unable to respond rapidly
- Loss of steam pressure prevented backing clear
- Vessel fixed on rock and driven further ashore by sea

The ship was believed to be offshore.

In reality, she was within sight of land.

The Wreck Event

- Initial grounding at low speed, Engines reversed—steam pressure lost
- Flooding in stokehold eliminated propulsion, Vessel held fast on rock ledge
- Continuous wave impact caused structural failure, Stern section broke away first
- Hull split beneath repeated stress

By morning, the ship was already breaking apart.

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The End of the Ship

The *Kenkerry* did not remain intact after grounding.

- Stern torn away during night
- Remaining hull collapsed under wave action
- Structure broken and scattered across rock and seabed
- Declared total loss shortly after

The wreck remained visible from shore in the days that followed.

Diver Notes

- Wreck lies close to shore but in exposed Atlantic conditions
- Likely scattered structure and debris field
- Area subject to surge, swell, and poor visibility
- Cold-water environment year-round
- Shore access limited; offshore approach recommended

Requires

- Careful planning
- Accurate positioning
- Cold-water diving capability
- Strong surface support
- Offshore-capable vessel

Why This Site Matters

- One of Nova Scotia's most dramatic near-shore rescues
- Rare case of mass survival using breeches buoy
- Demonstrates limits of navigation in winter conditions
- Strong connection between ship and local coastal community
- Example of leadership—captain remaining until last

Final Thought

This was not a deep-water wreck.

Not a distant loss.

This was a ship that reached the coast—and could not reach the land.

A hundred yards.

A line.

And a storm that decided the rest.