



Borgny at sea

Borgny

The wreck of *Borgny* lies 33 metres underwater, directly south of the Needles. The wreck is on a shifting gravel seabed, parts of the structure stand up to 6 metres high. *Borgny* was engaged in transporting coal when it sank in February 1918. These were tense times because shipping was under threat from U-Boats and mines during the first World War.

It is believed that a German torpedo sank *Borgny*, although there has been speculation that it might have hit a mine. *Borgny* sank beneath the waves in only ten minutes, but luckily there was no loss of life. The ship sank to the bottom and came to rest on its starboard side with the stern almost upside down. As the metal began to decay parts of the structure have broken away or fallen to the seabed. Today divers can view many of the ships components including the keel, propeller shaft, steam engine and metal hull plates.



Borgny Wrecksite



Wreck site of Borgny
 image courtesy of Max Ellis

Size: 1150 tons
 Length: 228ft (76m)
 Beam: 36ft (12m)
 Vessel type: Steamer
 Journey: Newport (Wales) to Rouen (France)

Sank: 26 February 1918
 Nationality: Norwegian
 Cargo: Coal

Borgny Statistics



Schooling Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)
 around a break in the propeller shaft
 Image courtesy of John Liddard



Conger Eel (*Conger conga*)
 Image courtesy of Paul Naylor

Conger Eels

Shipwrecks are ideal habitats for congers. This is certainly true of *Borgny*, where it is possible to see the heads of these eels peering out of the many nooks and crannies created by the degraded structure of the ship. Congers can grow up to 2m in length and are easily recognisable with their large menacing mouth and distinctive snout. Congers usually only leave their lair at night in order to hunt for food. The jaws of the conger are extremely strong; fortunately are usually docile, unless provoked.



Dead Man's Fingers

Covering parts of the wreck are colonies of white and orange dead man's fingers, these are a type of soft coral. It forms in small rubbery looking mounds that have the appearance of an inflated rubber glove. Dead man's fingers are in fact a colony of minute animals that form a mutual skeleton. To feed, the coral can extend numerous white star shaped tentacles which filter suspended food from the water. Usually the colonies are either male or female, although occasionally hermaphrodite colonies do occur.

Dead Mans Fingers (*Alcyonium digitatum*)
 Image courtesy of Paul Naylor



Sprat (*Sprattus sprattus*)
 Image courtesy of Paul Naylor

Sprat

Along with herrings, pilchards and sardines, the sprat belongs to the shoaling herring family. Shoals of sprat appear as a rapid moving, silvery swirl and are commonly mixed with other members of the herring family. They feed on zooplankton - small animals drifting in the currents of the sea - by sieving the water as they swim.