



Manx National Heritage
Eiraght Ashoonagh Vannin

FEBRUARY 2010

PRESS RELEASE

THE SINKING OF *ROMEO* – A WARTIME TRAGEDY IN MANX WATERS

A new display at the House of Manannan will tell the story of the sinking of a former passenger liner by a U-boat in Manx waters during the First World War. Entitled "A Wartime Tragedy in Manx Waters", the exhibits will be the first opportunity to see artefacts recovered from the wreck site of the steamship *Romeo* in 2008. Visitors will also be able to read the full story of the sinking of this particular ship and why it happened.

Curator of Social History for Manx National Heritage, Matthew Richardson said; *"During the first six months of 1918, almost twenty ships were lost in the Irish Sea due to U-boat activity. Four of these losses were within Manx waters and the Romeo was the fourth ship to be lost within the space of only six days. Illustrated with finds from the wreck of the Romeo, the exhibition at the House of Manannan will tell the story of the ship, her sinking and the U-boat that fired the torpedo."*

Any artefacts recovered from wrecks in Manx waters must be reported to the Isle of Man's Receiver of Wreck and it was as a consequence of such reports that the finds on display have been either donated to or are on loan to the Manx national collections.

Isle of Man Receiver of Wreck, Captain Michael Brew said; *"Thanks to clear legislation, any items brought to the surface from a wreck in Manx waters must be fully reported. A visiting group of divers from the UK in July 2008 undertook a number of dives on the wreck of the Romeo. Forty items were raised to the surface from the site and after the standard procedure of reporting and discussion with Manx National Heritage, eleven of these items were donated by the divers to the national collections, with five others being loaned for the duration of the exhibition."*

As the artefacts had been on the seabed for nearly one hundred years, conservation measures had to be gradual and carefully controlled so as not to risk damage by the dramatic change in environments. Now, over a year on, the items are stable and ready for display; and stand as a poignant reminder of the losses suffered during the wars in the Irish Sea.

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The exhibition will open to the public from Saturday 27th February 10am – 5pm and run for twelve months in the foyer at the House of Manannan. Admission to this part of the visitor centre is free.

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Image Captions:



'The steamer Romeo, sunk off the Isle of Man in 1918 (image courtesy of Hull Museums)'

For further information, please contact:

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