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# 200-year-old Dutch Ship Wreck Discovered Off Anchuthengu Fort in Kerala

By Tiki Rajwi | ENS | Published: 04th July 2015 12:14 PM Last Updated: 04th July 2015 01:07 PM

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The rusted bow of the sunken Wimmenum. (Photo - Robert Panipilla)

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: A Dutch ship that had sunk off Anchuthengu (Anjengo) in the district in January 1752 has been identified as the Wimmenum, built two years previously at the Dutch East India Company Wharf in Amsterdam.

"The ship is said to have caught fire and exploded after being attacked 'by Angrians of Malabar coast,'" said Robert Panipilla, a researcher of Friends of Marine Life, a local forum, who discovered the ship with the help of fishermen and two divers in January this year. "Angrians is apparently a German word referring to pirates," he said.

The wreck, now rusted and home to a variety of underwater life, stands eight meters

tall and is in an upright position, shows underwater footage obtained by Panipilla. According to information obtained by him from the Dutch archives, the 1150 tonne-Wimmemum was 42.25 metres long, was made of steel and had a crew of 356. The master of the ship was Captain Jean Louis Phillipi and one of the passengers had been a female slave. "Wimmemum is the name of a place in Holland," Panipilla said.



Stern end of the Wimmemum. (Photo - Robert Panipilla)

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He has dedicated a full chapter in his new book 'Kadalarivukalum Neranubhavangalum' on the discovery. "The ship has been located 9.7 kilometres north-west of Anchuthengu at a depth of 43 metres, which is equivalent to the height of a 15-storey building. Fishermen have known about it for generations. But neither the Archaeology Department nor the Harbour Engineering Department had a clue," he said.

Although the ship belonged to the Dutch East India Company, it had nothing to do with the Battle of Colachel of 1741 between Travancore and the Dutch forces led by the Flemish captain Eustachius De Lannoy. The real credit of the discovery goes to the fishermen, said Panipilla. "The two divers, Sreenivasu and Bheema, and I are only links in a chain. The main links are the fishermen who showed us the precise location," he said.

With this discovery, another mystery also stands solved – the origins of the Dutch Bell at the Janardana Swamy Temple in Varkala. The brass bell is from the

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Wimmemum and the inscriptions on it have now been identified as that of Michael Everhardt who had been a soldier aboard the ship, and Pieter van Belson, who crafted the bell!

It was always believed that a Dutch sailor had presented the bell to the temple as thanksgiving after he was saved. No other community has such deep knowledge of marine ecology as the fishermen community and it is imperative that any research by the government uses its expertise, said Panipilla.



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