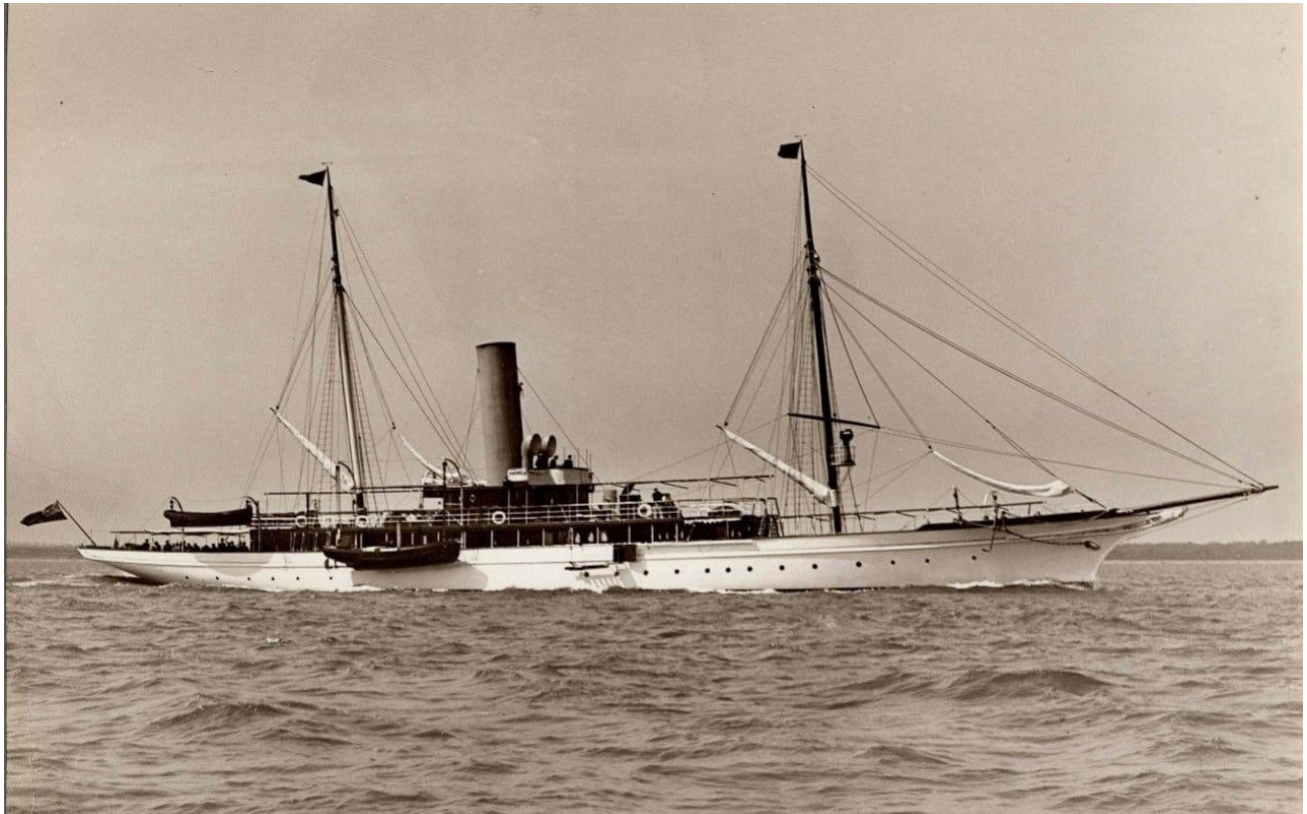


Shipwreck where 200 soldiers died on way home from First World War is recognised as war grave

Aug. 23, 2019



An MOD spokesperson said: "We can confirm that the site of HMY Lolaire will officially be recognised as a site of final resting place on September 2, 2019.

"This means the ships wreckage will be protected under the Protection of Military Remains Act 1986."

Western Isles MSP Alasdair Allan said he was delighted at the news.

"The story of the Lolaire is one of the saddest ever told in the islands," he said.

"There was barely a family on the island that didn't lose a relative in the disaster.

“This was a subject that was essentially too painful to be talked about in the islands for at least sixty years, and even now is still very raw in people’s minds.”

Prince Charles laid a wreath at the Iolaire War Memorial on the Isle of Lewis on January 1 this year to mark 100 years since the disaster.

A shipwreck where more than 200 soldiers died on their way home after the First World War has finally been recognised as a war grave.

Only 82 of the 283 passengers on board HMY Iolaire survived when it smashed into rocks and sank off the Isle of Lewis on January 1, 1919. Around a third of the bodies were never recovered.

Servicemen were travelling back to Lewis, Harris and Berneray after surviving the horrors of battle when tragedy struck in the early hours of the morning near the town of Stornoway.

Western Isles Council has tirelessly campaigned for the shipwreck site to be given war grave designation and their calls have been backed by Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

The council wrote to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) last year, highlighting that it would bring comfort to the soldiers' loved-ones and let them rest in peace.

The designation has now been granted and will come into effect next month.

“This was a subject that was essentially too painful to be talked about in the islands for at least sixty years, and even now is still very raw in people’s minds.”