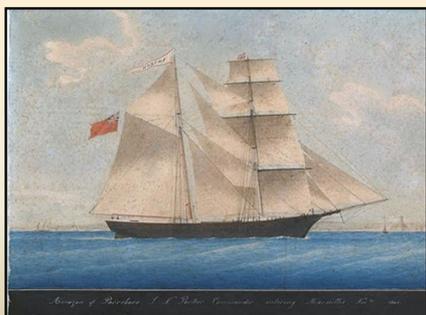


Briefing Notes - Unsolved Sea Mysteries

Presented by Russell Twomey

The Mary Celeste - 1872



Capt. Benjamin Briggs and family sailed aboard Mary Celeste from New York 7th November 1872 bound for Genoa with a cargo of 1701 barrels of pure alcohol.

On the 4th December, Capt Moorehouse, a friend of Briggs, in command of the De Gratia sighted the Mary Celeste ahead of him, and reaching alongside was puzzled to find nobody onboard. Sending his officer, Oliver Deveaux over, the Mary Celeste was found to be abandoned with no obvious sign of why. Nautical instruments were found to be missing, as was the ship's boat, but personal possessions and stores were untouched.

Taking the Mary Celeste in hand, both ships arrived at Gibraltar where two separate inquests could not reach a verdict regarding the mystery. Possibilities included hurried abandonment due to a risk of either fire from the cargo or sinking due to water pumps from the bilge inoperable, mutiny by the crew, piracy from nearby islands, or even a fraudulent insurance incident that went wrong.

Mary Celeste was subsequently sold, but changed owners many times as she seemed to always operate at a loss. Finally, after 13 years, her last owner C G Parker fraudulently over-insured the ships cargo and deliberately ran her up on a reef outside Port-au-Prince, Haiti and burned her to the waterline to cover his crime. Insurers discovered his crime, but a jury could not reach a verdict, however Parker died in Haiti 3 months after the trial. The remains of the Mary Celeste were discovered by the author, Clive Cussler in 2002.

SS Waratah July 1909



Owned by Lund's Blue Anchor Line, the SS Waratah was on her return maiden voyage back to the United Kingdom from Australia when she disappeared without a trace after clearing Durban on the 26th July 1909. Her next port of call was Cape Town due on 29th July. Prior to departure in Durban, both an engineer who was a crew member, and a passenger bound for England suddenly left the vessel, claiming a premonition that the vessel was doomed.

The following day there were three separate sightings by passing vessels as Waratah battled through stormy seas on her way south, and all three ship's logs reported no sign of distress onboard her, although the last recorded sighting did mention that Waratah seemed to suddenly disappear from view after a

flash of light in the driving rain and stormy conditions.

Upon being reported as overdue in Cape Town, three British naval vessels searched the coast for Waratah, but were forced to return to Durban after heavy damage in the mountainous seas. The Blue Anchor Line then chartered the SS Sabine to rescue the ship they believed was just disabled, but after 3 months there was no sign of her, or any wreckage in the 14,000 square miles of ocean covered. The families of those onboard, still convinced that a new ship could not possibly be lost so quickly, then hired another ship, the SS Wakefield to continue the search, but without success.

Over the decades since, many searches have been conducted to find clues as to what happened to the Waratah, the last an extensive search by an American millionaire Emyln Brown finally concluded in 2004 without success. Her loss is still a mystery, given that, against all probabilities, no wreckage has ever been found.

The Flying Dutchman - 1680



Legend has it that the Dutch merchant ship, The Flying Dutchman went down off The Cape of Good Hope in a violent storm in 1680 with her cargo of rich spices bound for the markets of Europe at a time when spices were worth more per ounce than gold.

Her captain, Hendrick van Derken had a reputation for being a cruel and Godless master, and drove the ship on against the pleas of the crew rather than seek refuge until the storm abated.

For three centuries after the sinking, hundreds of vessels have reported sighting an old and bedraggled vessel with rotting sails emerge in front of them and just as quickly disappear.

What is more frightening is that in the vast majority of cases, the crewman who first sighted the apparition died suddenly not long after. In one notable case, this was supported by a detailed account written by none other than the future King George V of England whilst serving onboard the HMS Inconstant. Other credible sightings have been reported by German submarine captains patrolling the Cape, and a group of 60 bathers on a beach at Cape Agulhas in 1939. Strangely, the one common theme is that descriptions of the sightings are all eerily similar.

The Bermuda Triangle



The name “The Bermuda Triangle” was first coined by Vincent Gaddis, a journalist in 1964, but the mysteries arising from the 500,000 square miles of ocean within its perimeter have been written about ever since Christopher Columbus sailed through the area in October 1493 on his first voyage to discover the islands of the Caribbean. His journal records a strange glow beneath the surface of the sea, strange lights on the horizon, and his compass rendered useless.

Over hundreds of years vessels have been reported missing, to the extent that the US Navy commissioned a survey of the area in 1893, under the command of a Captain Sigsbee who reported many dozens of wrecks floating on the surface.

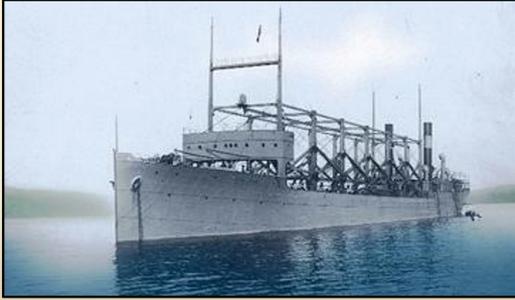
To add further intrigue, the Sargasso Sea lays within a large part of the Triangle. This phenomena consists of a massive area of a grape-like weed floating on the surface to which eels head from European rivers to breed, their fingerlings then heading back across the North Atlantic to return to the very same rivers of their ancestors.

Many theories have been advanced to explain the disappearance of both vessels and aircraft. Among those are the possibility that the Earth’s magnetic fields play havoc with navigation instruments, that sudden vortexes strong enough to engulf a ship emerge from the ocean floor as a result of methane gas releases, that air bombs from unusual cloud formations push vessels under the ocean’s surface, and even that powerful crystal energy from the Lost City of Atlantis, or indeed alien activity may be responsible.

One of the most famous accounts of strange activity concerns the loss of Flight 19 in December 1945. A training flight of five US Navy Avenger aircraft from a naval base north of Miami mysteriously disappeared and wreckage has never been found. Even more intriguing, another naval aircraft, a large Martin Mariner PBM sent to find the missing aircraft also disappeared with her 13 crew members.

In 1972, a Scottish scientist Ivan Sanderson made a study of those areas of the world with accounts of unexplained events and discovered a correlation between the area of the Bermuda Triangle and the Devil’s Triangle directly on the opposite side of the globe. Accounts of similar strange disappearances have been recorded for millennia within this Asian region.

USS Cyclops - 1918



US National Archives

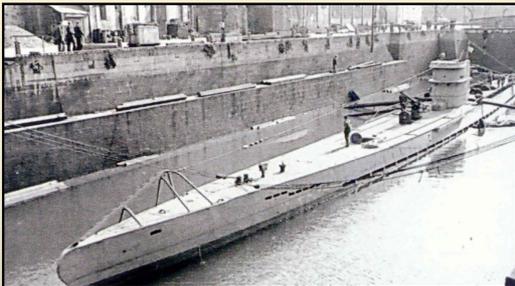
One of two naval coal carriers servicing allied warships during WW1, the USS Cyclops disappeared without a trace on a return voyage from Rio de Janeiro to Baltimore in February 1918. Prior to sailing, both the German-born US Consul to Brazil, and an armed escort of US Army MP's with five convicted soldiers facing capital punishment unexpectedly boarded, demanding passage back to America.

USS Cyclops, under the command of a very unpopular Captain George Worely, made an unexpected stop at Barbados and under very strange circumstances quarantined the ship and her crew from any outside visitors, then proceeded to call on the US Naval attaché to demand what was later described as a highly unusual list of stores, much of which could not be

supplied. From there, the USS Cyclops disappeared forever.

Investigations after the war revealed that Captain Worley was really Johann Wichmann, born in Hamburg Germany, but had changed his name after deserting a ship in San Francisco some years prior to WW1. Whilst suspicion fell on him that he may have colluded with German authorities to hand over the ship, evidence showed that the vessel never fell into enemy hands. Many believe that the ship and her 304 men onboard, became yet another victim of the Bermuda Triangle.

The Unlucky UB-65 - 1918



The German submarine, UB 65 was considered a very unlucky boat from the very outset of her construction during which several men were killed in unfortunate circumstances. Two died when a girder fell on them, 3 were asphyxiated whilst installing her batteries in a confined space, and one died during her initial sea trials.

Her second officer was also killed when a live detonator blew up in his hands and it was this incident that led to the crew of the UB 65 becoming afraid to serve in her. It was recorded that the ghost of the second officer would appear around the boat at odd times, looking over the shoulder of sailors watching gauges, walking thru compartment walls, and even standing over sailors whilst asleep in their bunks. Her crew refused to

continue to serve in her.

These events led to the German Navy re-assigning the crew to other vessels and having a Lutheran priest undertake an exorcism before appointing a new crew, and a captain who did not believe in ghostly apparitions, however he too later reported seeing the ghost of the second officer on deck after the boat surfaced to regenerate her batteries.

On 14th July 1914, the captain of the American submarine L-2 sighted the UB65 on the surface, but whilst lining up a torpedo, was amazed to see the German explode in half and disappear beneath the waves. With no logical explanation, did the ghost of the 2nd officer take a hand in ending his eternal vigil over the UB-65?