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# War freighter found off Mouth of Shannon

ONE of the most remarkable discoveries to be made off the Mouth of the Shannon has occurred, within the past few days—the wreck of a World War II freighter.

During the war years — termed “the Emergency” — a number of ships sailed from Limerick, only to be sunk on the way to their destinations.

One was the “Kerry Head”, whose anchor now forms part of the seamen’s memorial beside the new bridge; another was the “Irish Pine”, registered in Limerick, a 10,000-tonner which was lost with all hands — both were victims of attack.

It had always been held

by some of the older generation that there was another ship, sunk by U-boat just off the Mouth of the Shannon, whose exact location was unknown but whose crew had all escaped safely.

Within the past few days, the legend has been proven.

A Dingle-based trawler has located the wreckage of a cargo ship sunk by a German U-boat in the early stages of World War II.

The 65-foot “Atlantic Fisher”, skippered by Tom Kennedy, was gill-netting pollock, north-west of the Skellig Rock, when its highly sensitive sonar — a device underneath the trawler for locating fish and, willy-nilly, any other object — made the discovery.

Lying at a depth of 360 feet was the 8,000-ton Greek vessel, “Demetrios” which fell victim to a U-boat in October 1939, while on its way from South Africa to Barrow-in-Furness, in Britain.

Before he sank the “Demetrios”, the U-boat skipper took off all the 28 crew and later put them safely ashore at Baile Mor, Dingle, in a remarkable display of local knowledge, given the narrow confines of the harbour.

The incident led to a deterioration in Anglo-Irish relations, with the British claiming, as they did so often subsequently, that German craft were being permitted to operate freely in neutral Irish waters and land in Irish ports.

The friction had really begun at the outbreak of the war when the Irish Government, invoking Emergency Powers Orders, directed the lighthouses and lightships around the coast of the neutral state not to reduce the power of their lights, as that would be in violation of Irish neutrality. The light-houses were under the control of Irish Lights, a subsidiary of Trinity House in London, and they had been directed from London to dim lights, as they might be used by German U-boats for position-fixing and navigation generally.

In an ironical twist to the story, the U-boat was itself sunk with all hands, three months later, by a British naval vessel, just north of Bergen, off Norway.