# Divers uncover rare copper rudder confirming identity of 1787 shipwreck off Wexford coast



A remarkable discovery off the coast of Wexford, Ireland, has reignited interest in a long-lost ship that sank in 1787 while transporting exquisite treasures. The British merchant vessel, known as The Recovery, vanished en route from London to Dublin, laden with valuable artworks, including rare marbles and bronzes collected by the Earl of Charlemont during his extensive travels across Europe. Alongside this cargo were items owned by John La Touche, a prominent banker reputed to be Ireland's wealthiest man at the time. Despite her rich cargo, The Recovery's fate remained a mystery, lost to history along with her entire crew.

Recently, a team of divers led by maritime expert Edmond O’Byrne uncovered a copper-covered rudder believed to belong to The Recovery, approximately 100 metres from where her hull is suspected to lie. O’Byrne, who has dedicated decades to locating the ship, recounted how the side-scan sonar initially suggested a possible torpedo. Upon closer inspection, the team confirmed the object was a 20-foot-long rudder, an impressive find that identified the ship conclusively due to its distinctive copper sheathing—a technology employed by British warships in the 18th century to protect against marine organisms.

The significance of this discovery extends beyond mere identification; it provides a tangible connection to the 18th-century maritime trade and the tragic loss of cultural heritage. Experts are now engaging with maritime museums across Europe to assess the importance of this relic. O’Byrne commented on the implication of the find, suggesting that the precious cargo of stone and marble statues may still reside within the hull, buried beneath the sands.

In addition to the rudder, divers have discovered other artefacts associated with The Recovery, including a piece of timber nailed with copper sheathing and various construction remnants indicative of shipbuilding practices of the time. Among the items recovered are an oak rib and an anchor, alongside personal effects such as a copper teapot and inkwells, elements that tell a deeper story of the ship's cultural context.

O’Byrne’s efforts have not gone unnoticed; he will soon speak at the Wexford Historical Society, presenting a lecture titled "Rare Ship/Rare Cargo 1787: A National Loss to Deplore." This discussion will delve into the ship’s historical significance and the ongoing search for her lost treasures and the stories they hold.

The Recovery's journey—from its inception as a transport vessel obtaining fine artworks to its unfortunate demise—illustrates the fragility of maritime ventures in the face of nature’s forces. As ongoing explorations continue to unearth more about the ship and its cargo, this newfound engagement with Ireland's maritime past reaffirms the importance of preserving and understanding the cultural artifacts of yesteryear.

In an era where the narrative of local heritage often competes against modernity, discoveries like that of The Recovery serve to remind us of the layers of history beneath the waves, waiting patiently to be unveiled.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060456/mystery-long-lost-british-treasure), [[4]](https://www.unexplained.ie/article/983-rare-shipwreck-discovery-off-wexford-coast-sheds-light-on-18th-century-maritime-tragedy/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060456/mystery-long-lost-british-treasure), [[2]](https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/discovery-of-rare-copper-rudder-linked-to-ship-laden-with-italian-treasure-that-sank-off-wexford-coast/a2014873788.html), [[6]](https://divernet.com/world-dives/divers-find-another-rare-rudder-marking-buried-treasure-wreck/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.independent.ie/videos/divers-discover-rare-copper-covered-rudder-of-ship-carrying-italian-artwork-for-dublins-custom-house-when-it-sank-off-the-wexford-coast-in-1787/a704439538.html), [[5]](https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/wexford-district/wexford-historical-society-talk-on-ships-hidden-treasure/42332142.html)
* Paragraph 4 – [[2]](https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/discovery-of-rare-copper-rudder-linked-to-ship-laden-with-italian-treasure-that-sank-off-wexford-coast/a2014873788.html), [[6]](https://divernet.com/world-dives/divers-find-another-rare-rudder-marking-buried-treasure-wreck/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[4]](https://www.unexplained.ie/article/983-rare-shipwreck-discovery-off-wexford-coast-sheds-light-on-18th-century-maritime-tragedy/), [[5]](https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/wexford-district/wexford-historical-society-talk-on-ships-hidden-treasure/42332142.html)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/2060456/mystery-long-lost-british-treasure> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/discovery-of-rare-copper-rudder-linked-to-ship-laden-with-italian-treasure-that-sank-off-wexford-coast/a2014873788.html> - Divers off Carnsore Point in County Wexford have discovered a rare copper-covered rudder, believed to be from the Recovery, a ship that sank in 1787 while transporting Italian artworks to Dublin. The rudder was located on the seabed, about 100 metres from where the hull of the ship is thought to lie. The Recovery was en route from London to Dublin when it was swept off course in a storm, resulting in the loss of six crew members. Diver and marine expert Edmond O’Byrne, who has inspected the rudder, suggests that the cargo of stone and marble Italian statues may still lie within or close to the hull beneath the sand. Efforts are being made to contact experts in maritime museums in Europe to confirm the rarity of this find. ([independent.ie](https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/discovery-of-rare-copper-rudder-linked-to-ship-laden-with-italian-treasure-that-sank-off-wexford-coast/a2014873788.html?utm_source=openai))
3. <https://www.independent.ie/videos/divers-discover-rare-copper-covered-rudder-of-ship-carrying-italian-artwork-for-dublins-custom-house-when-it-sank-off-the-wexford-coast-in-1787/a704439538.html> - A video report detailing the discovery of a rare copper-covered rudder by divers off Carnsore Point in County Wexford. The rudder is believed to be from the Recovery, a ship that sank in 1787 while carrying Italian artworks to Dublin's Custom House. Diver Edmond O’Byrne inspects the rudder, and the video highlights the significance of this find in maritime archaeology. ([independent.ie](https://www.independent.ie/videos/divers-discover-rare-copper-covered-rudder-of-ship-carrying-italian-artwork-for-dublins-custom-house-when-it-sank-off-the-wexford-coast-in-1787/a704439538.html?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.unexplained.ie/article/983-rare-shipwreck-discovery-off-wexford-coast-sheds-light-on-18th-century-maritime-tragedy/> - A rare copper-sheathed rudder, believed to be from the 18th-century shipwreck Recovery, has been discovered off the coast of Wexford, near Carnsore Point. The Recovery sank in 1787 while transporting valuable Italian artworks and other cultural treasures to Dublin. Diver Edmond O’Byrne located the rudder following multi-beam surveys conducted by the State research vessel RV Keary. The find has drawn attention from experts in international maritime museums, who are being consulted to assess the rarity of the discovery. ([unexplained.ie](https://www.unexplained.ie/article/983-rare-shipwreck-discovery-off-wexford-coast-sheds-light-on-18th-century-maritime-tragedy/?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/wexford-district/wexford-historical-society-talk-on-ships-hidden-treasure/42332142.html> - Local diver and marine expert Edmond O'Byrne will present a lecture titled 'Rare Ship/Rare Cargo 1787: A National Loss to Deplore' at Wexford Historical Society’s next meeting. The talk will cover the discovery, loss, and remains of the cargo ship Recovery, which sank about 300 metres off the south Wexford coast in 1787. The ship was carrying a valuable cargo of stone and marble-carved Italian statues bound for Dublin's Custom House. ([independent.ie](https://www.independent.ie/regionals/wexford/wexford-district/wexford-historical-society-talk-on-ships-hidden-treasure/42332142.html?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://divernet.com/world-dives/divers-find-another-rare-rudder-marking-buried-treasure-wreck/> - Divers have discovered another rare rudder, believed to be from the Recovery, a British merchant ship that sank off the coast of Wexford in 1787. The ship was carrying artworks, including marble and other stone statues bought in Italy by the Earl of Charlemont during a nine-year European grand tour. The cargo was intended for the Custom House in Dublin. Diver Edmond O’Byrne, who has spent 40 years searching for the Recovery, led the dive team. ([divernet.com](https://divernet.com/world-dives/divers-find-another-rare-rudder-marking-buried-treasure-wreck/?utm_source=openai))