

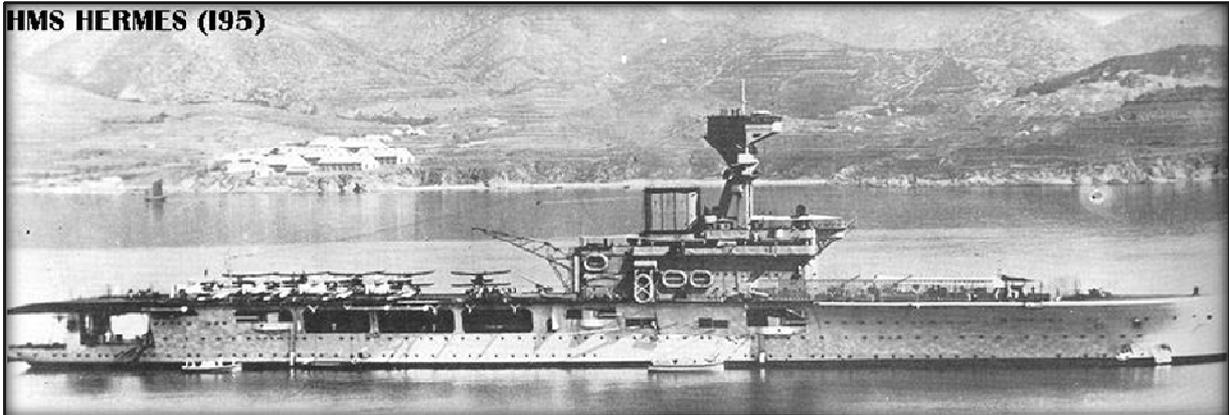
# ***Diving HMS Hermes - Sri Lanka July 2018***

## **Ship's Background**

The **HMS Hermes I** is a fascinating and historic WWII shipwreck located off of **Sri Lanka's** East Coast. She was the first purpose built aircraft carrier the world had seen, laid down in 1918 and commissioned in 1923. She had a distinguished career in the Far East which eventually ended in April 1942 when she was caught by aircraft from the Japanese Carrier Fleet comprising *Soryu*, *Hiryu* and *Akagi*, of Pearl Harbour fame, ships that would meet their own violent ending at the Battle of Midway just two months later.

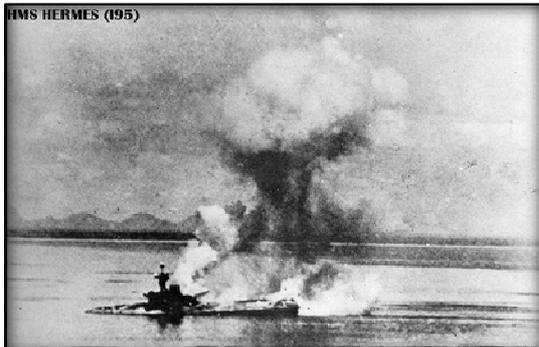


**HMS HERMES (195)**



***Hermes during peace time at Wei Hai Wei , Northern China***

She was sunk along with **HMAS Vampire**, **HMS Hollyhock** and the **RFA Athelstane**.



The attack went down in history as one of the most accurate bombings of a ship ever seen as she was caught without fighter escort by some eighty Japanese aircraft, the majority of which scored hits on the ship. She now lies port side down in 53m of water off shore from Batticaloa. As such, she is genuinely one of a

kind, so few aircraft carriers have ever sunk in such shallow water that this fact alone makes her an incredibly unusual wreck. Add to this that of those carriers that are accessible ( Saratoga, Oriskany, Graf Zeppelin...) none of them were actually sunk in combat situations. Few opportunities as unique and intriguing as the **HMS Hermes** exist anywhere in the world of technical diving. ....

## Schedules and Diving Requirements

Two six day trips will be run this year with diving days from **Sunday 8<sup>th</sup>** through **Friday July 13<sup>th</sup>**, then **July 15<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup>**. A certification of Normoxic Trimix or equivalent would be ideal, and Technical Wreck certainly an asset. A maximum of eight open circuit divers ( if people are diving CCR we can accommodate one or two more ) plus one or two Tech Asia staff members with extensive experience running trips on the Hermes from 2010 through 2016, will be present on the trip to advise as required and ensure smooth logistics and filling.



## Logistics and Arrangements



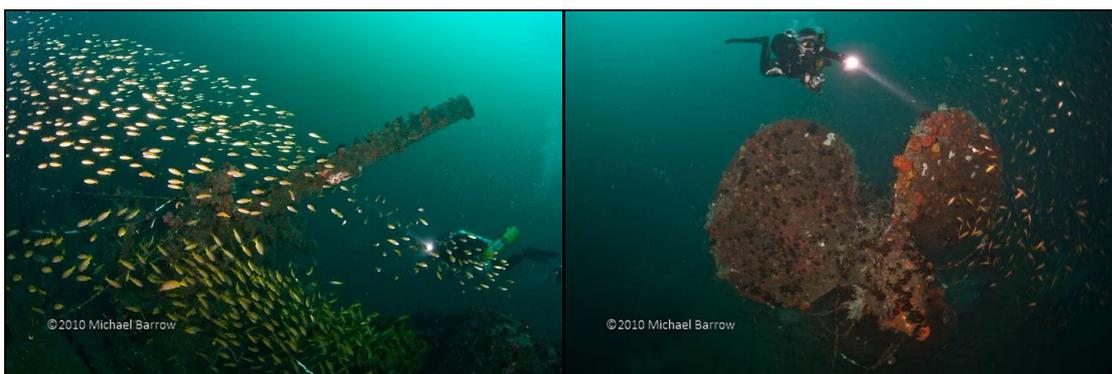
The access point for the wreck is the eastern Sri Lankan town of **Batticaloa**. This is six to seven hours drive across the country from the International arrival point in **Colombo**, and will be made by small a/c coach. Accommodation in Batticaloa will be at the Deep Sea Resort,. On arrival and departure, accommodation if needed, is best arranged in Negombo, close to the airport. Please note that the Batticaloa resorts are basic, simple lodging houses, not International class hotels. Expect the best food to be local style cuisine, again simple and inexpensive.

## Diving and the Wreck Today

Since the time of her sinking the **Hermes** has been infrequently dived. For years, being in an area of civil war, she was inaccessible, visited only by a handful of local divers. We made an independent effort to locate her and dived there ourselves in 2004 with a view to trips at that time, but ceasefires in the area broke down and it took until 2009 for stability to return to the area. In April of 2010, May 2011, and July 2012 we ran five very successful trips to the Hermes, discovering for ourselves a vast and untouched piece of history waiting to be explored. An outstanding photographic record of the first trip can be viewed here :

<http://picasaweb.google.com.ph/118343039486425882607/HMSHermesSriLankaTechnicalWreckDiveApril2010FullAlbum#>

The **Hermes** lies partially overturned to port and is reached at a depth of 44m (145ft) with a seabed some ten meters deeper ( 175-180ft ). She is 181m ( 600ft ) long and displaced 11,000 tonnes. Bow guns and those turrets seen amidships have barrels trained as far skyward as they could and shell casings still strewn around from her final frantic moments. We have a full set of Admiralty ships plans to help with dive planning, some parts of the ship more recognisable than others dependent on the degree of bomb damage sustained when she went down. Beyond the intrigue of the wrecks interior, the lack of fishing effort and diver interaction has lead to large marine life on the site that is the most prolific anyone of us had ever encountered. Diving conditions at the intended time of year are generally very calm with water temperatures upwards of 27c (80 Fahrenheit). Moderate to strong surface currents can run over the wreck South to North and make drift decompressions the norm, but bottom conditions are much more still.



*Guns and propeller on the Hermes by Mike Barrow*

Two dives a day will be made provided divers are prepared to start early. The wreck is about a twenty five minute ride from shore by small outboard, morning dives will ideally be departing at seven am in order to return and refill for afternoon dives.

Note that the diving can be physically demanding due to extremes of temperature, and the small boats that are available (restrictions are still in place in the area on size of outboard engines permitted to be used).

### Other Wrecks

In 2011 we added the Wreck of the **RFA Athelstane** to the itinerary. She was sunk the same morning as the Hermes about 30 miles south. The dive is documented here <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3SGbCt6v7o>. Near the Athelstane is the wreckage of another ship in shallow water, the **HMS Hollyhock**, sunk at the same time. An additional day trip to this area can be added to the trip on request. More local to the Hermes are the picturesque **Boiler Wrecks**, unidentified, side by side, and seen in the photo link above. In 2012, the wreck of the **SS British Segreant**, a tanker sunk in 1942 during the same action, also became an optional extra dive, this time an hours journey North.

### Costs and inclusions

The trip cost of US\$2,195.00 will include

- Six diving days, with boats, tanks, and all oxygen requirements for deco and back gas being included.
- Transfers by road as a group from Colombo to Batticaloa and return.
- Six nights accommodation twin share, including breakfast, in Batticaloa.

The cost does not include Helium, expected to be around \$0.10 cents per liter and subject to any changes in the purchase price of the gas. Divers require full personal equipment for technical diving and may find it useful to bring items such as their own rigging for stage tanks. The locally available equipment is constantly improving, but we will advise as to any extras a diver may need or provide them ourselves as required.

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For more complete information and details please contact Dave at Tech Asia

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