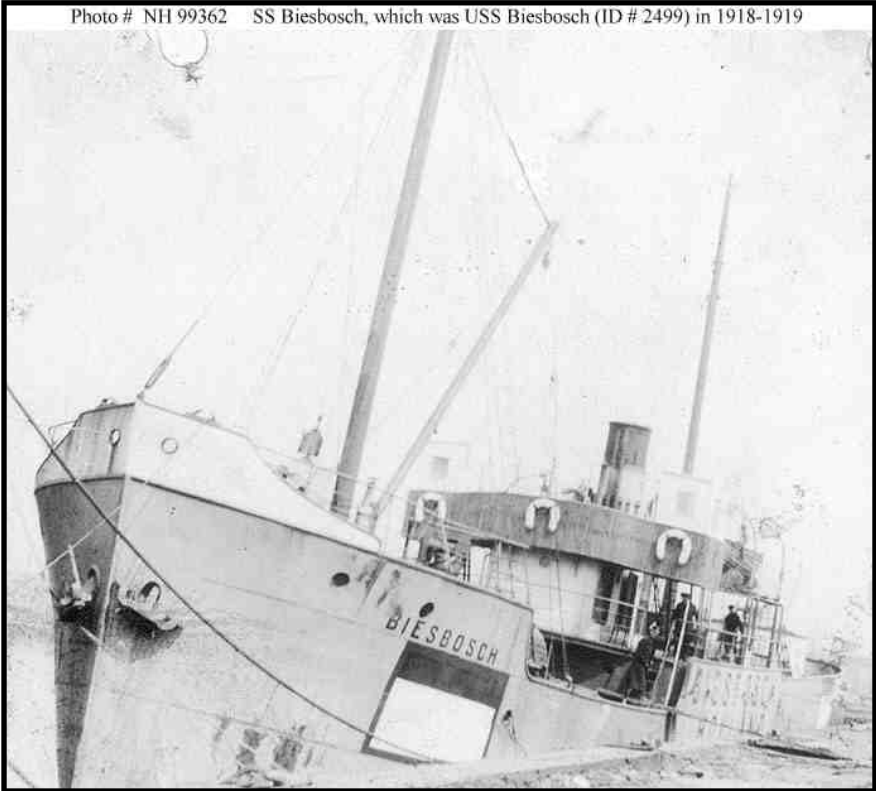


## **SS Biesbosch**

Photo # NH 99362 SS Biesbosch, which was USS Biesbosch (ID # 2499) in 1918-1919



**Read the latest moos and udderstand the tooth of the matter on  
the inside pages**



*A Merry Christmas to All  
from Don*

# AN INTERESTING FIND

By Chris Storey

One of the last dives in the North Sea this season, saw the crew of the good ship Titan, unexpectedly diving the SS Biesbosch, a small Dutch steamer, sunk about 4 miles from Danes Dyke.

The Biesbosch had an interesting career. The ship was confiscated by the US Government in March 1918 and entered service as the USS Biesbosch the week following the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War.

It was then used for several years as a salvage vessel, to raise several notable US Navy ships, from the Mississippi to Cuba, from her base in Key West, Florida, before being returned to it's owners, for the regular run between Holland and Britain.

On 29<sup>th</sup> December 1923, she sprung a leak, and finally sank after the crew lost the battle to try and save her. The crew escaped in the lifeboats, with no loss of life.

When I have dived this wreck before, the visibility has been fairly poor, and the wreck almost level with the seabed. On this occasion however, vis was 8-10m, and much of the sand had been scoured away leaving the

wreck clear, and standing 3-4 m high. This made for an interesting dive round the boilers, triple expansion engine, and remains of the holds, which appeared to be

carrying a load of timber, still in remarkably good condition.

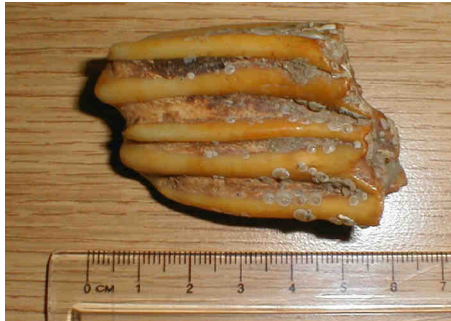
Amongst the wreckage, laying in the sand, something caught my eye. At first it appeared to be a clump of large barnacles, but on closer inspection, it seemed to be a large animal tooth. I picked it up for a closer inspection, putting it in my pocket to look at back on the boat.

As I had found the tooth (which I was now convinced it was) near the galley (from ceramic floor tiles seen near by) I suspected the tooth may have been from



some meat either in transit or being eaten on board. After a check through various veterinary sites on the internet, I had excluded Horses and Pigs, but it also looked too big to be from a cow. I also wondered why they would have a “head” from an animal in the galley.

As I was intrigued (and also bored at work!) I emailed some photographs over to Hull Museums, to see if they could identify what animal it came from.



After sending a detailed account of where I picked up the tooth, it seemed there was a strong possibility that the tooth might be old, very old in fact.

Prior to the last ice age, large animals roamed around Britain, including Bison, to which there was a chance this may have belonged. Gravel beds formed from rivers and glacial melt water, which often contained the remains of animals. I remember studying Geology at school, and our room had several interesting artefacts, donated by local gravel pits. I seem to recall several

bones from hippo’s, wild boar, and half a mammoth tusk! As the sea level rose, many of the gravel beds were submerged, and now form part of the sea bed off our coast.

My photos were sent to Universities in York and Bradford, to their archaeology departments. It was thought that the tooth may

date back as far as Palaeolithic times. Interestingly a bone of similar age had been found on the beach near Bridlington this year, so there was evidence to support Hull

Museums theory.

After several weeks waiting, I finally got an answer.....

.....an upper 3<sup>rd</sup> molar from..... a cow!!!!

The theory is that the animal died and was buried. Over the years, coastal erosion caused the remains to be dumped into the sea. Due to the Biesbosch causing a local disturbance on the sea bed, the tooth was deposited there.

The tooth is obviously old, but not THAT old!

Well, at least we now know that the Dutch don’t eat cow’s heads!



**A good time was enjoyed by all at the Ship Inns's do on the 24th November.**

