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Wreck of old Dutch submarine found near Australia

Off the coast of the Australian city of Fremantle, divers have discovered an old Dutch submarine. It is the Hr. Ms. K XI, which was already found on 1 January.

The submarine was built in 1925 at the Rotterdam shipyard Feijenoord and sunk in 1946 at a well-known ship graveyard off the coast of Rottnest Island near Fremantle, but was found a few kilometres away, at a depth of about 40 metres.

The Western Australian Museum has been working since January 1st to identify the boat by comparing archive data with a 3D model of the wreck that divers had made. The Dutch Cultural Heritage Agency, which funded the work, has now confirmed that it is indeed the Hr. Ms. K XI (pronounced K-elf).

"This is the best result we could have dreamed of. It not only shows us the ties between the Netherlands and Australia in the Second World War, but also how close they still are when it comes to the protection and management of our underwater cultural heritage," says Martijn Manders of the Rijksdienst.

Patrolled the Dutch East Indies

The Royal Navy submarine once patrolled the waters of Indonesia, then the colonial Dutch East Indies, and according to the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands, in 1942 it rescued thirteen survivors of an Australian ship that had been sunk by Japanese warships.

"There weren't even that many people on board, 31 men," says Manders, who helped with the search himself. "It was a K-boat, the K stands for Colonies. When the defense of the Dutch East Indies in the war ultimately failed, the boat moved to Ceylon. There she later came under British command and she was also used as a training ship, but by then she was already an old one."



The Hr. Ms. K XI in the port of Makassar, Dutch East Indies

In September 1946, K XI was taken to the Rottneest ship graveyard off the coast of south-west Australia. In that area, which has a diameter of some 13 kilometres, the locations of 47 ships are known that were sunk there up until the 1990s because they were no longer in use.

Because the majority of ships were sunk before electronic data or accurate positioning technology was available, shipwrecks on the ocean floor are often unidentified, missing, or highly inaccurate.

Long cigar

It is not clear how the wreck of the K XI ended up a few kilometers from that location. "She sank in a place where she actually should not have, which is why she was lost," says Manders.

"It turns out to be on the edge of the ship graveyard and that's a stroke of luck, because most wrecks are at greater depths, but you can reach this one as a sports diver." He really recommends divers in the area to go there: "We actually hope that many people will go and have a look. There is a long cigar that is slowly being overgrown by corals. You can also look inside. It is very large, 31 meters long and about 6 meters wide; a really fantastic place!"

On board the 'old' submarine: diesel engines and rotary telephones



1970s U-boat makes a trip through Rotterdam



 **Abroad**

