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NEWSRACK

Shipwreck Montana damaged in storm

Sarah Lagan

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The wreck of the Montana before the recent damage caused by Hurricane Humberto (Photograph by Sergey Goncharov)

An iconic shipwreck was badly damaged as a result of Hurricane Humberto.

The *Montana*, a paddle steamer and civil war blockade runner, which was wrecked off Bermuda's North Shore in 1863, forms an important part of Bermuda's maritime cultural heritage.

Chris Gauntlett, the chairman of the Historic Wrecks Authority, who has visited the site to witness the impact of last Wednesday's storm, told *The Royal Gazette*: "It looks like a bomb hit it — it is very, very different."

The extent of the damage is being assessed by the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, which will publish an extensive report on it.

Mr Gauntlett said that the *Montana's* history included being hit by the *Constellation*, the wreckage to the northwest of Bermuda, which inspired the book and movie *The Deep*.

The chairman said: "It is a big old story."

Mr Gauntlett, the owner and operator for Blue Water Divers and Watersports, added: "You can see a lot just by swimming over it. It is iconic. It is one of Bermuda's



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most famous spots.”

Falko Kuester, an engineering and virtual reality professor at University of California San Diego, has been working with the Government to create the Bermuda 100 Project, a digital atlas of underwater sites surrounding Bermuda.

Dr Kuester said: “The damage to marine heritage, which is now emerging, is gut-wrenching. We are very sad to hear that among the impacted marine heritage sites is the beautiful *Montana*.”

He said the *Montana* had been an “incredibly important site” in the development and application of new tools, techniques and technologies in documenting and preserving underwater heritage.

Dr Kuester added: “Now we will work with our partners in the Bermuda Government to help them fully assess the damage, creating a new data set so that the recovery of coral and this unique heritage can move forward.”

Philippe Rouja, the government custodian of historic wrecks, who will be working on the project, said: “The *Montana* has had extensive and incredibly detailed high-resolution imagery data sets produced of the site prior to Hurricane Humberto.”

• For more information on the Bermuda 100 Project, visit bermuda100.org

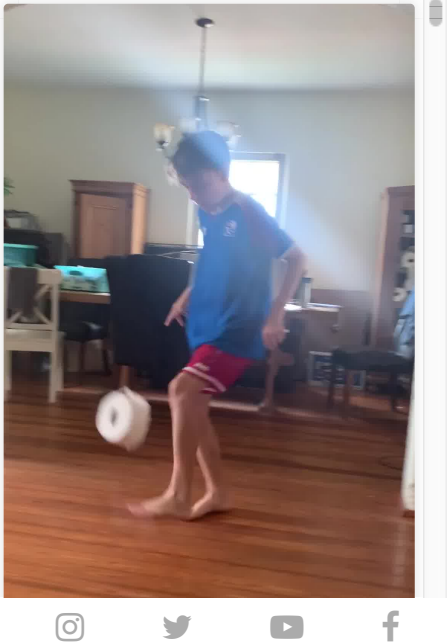
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