

# FINAL VOYAGE OF RMS RHONE

A FREAK HURRICANE SPELLED DOOM FOR THIS SHIP BUT TODAY  
IT IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST POPULAR DIVING SITES

BY ART ROGERS

House flag of Royal Mail Steam  
Packet Company.



**R**oyal Mail Ship *Rhone* was a handsome vessel of which captain and crew were justly proud. She boasted a number of innovations including a large bronze propeller — only the second such propeller made of the alloy. *Rhone* also was equipped with a surface condenser that was installed to save and reuse water produced by her boilers and steam engine.

Built for the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (RMSPC), the *Rhone* was 310-feet in length with a 40-foot beam. Weighing 2738-GRT she was powered with a 500-hp compound steam engine and could do 14-knots. The ship was built to handle the growing trade between Britain, the Caribbean, and South America. RMSPC ships carried mail, passengers, cargo, and horses on regularly scheduled routes. In 1851, the company added a new route from Southampton to Rio de Janeiro.

To accommodate increased business, in 1863 RMSPC ordered *Rhone* from the Millwall Iron Works located on the Isle of Dogs in London. A sistership, the *Douro*, was ordered from Caird & Company located in Greenock. The two ships were similar but not identical and *Rhone* was considered to have the finer lines of the two.

Dramatic painting depicting the final voyage of RMS *Rhone* by William Frederick Mitchell.