

Crab

There are many types of crab species. Crabs often live on shipwrecks as they are a magnet for marine life, and provide them with a plentiful food source. The velvet swimming crab can be found on *War Knight*. These are one of the most ferocious types of crabs in Britain. They can crawl along the bottom or swim through the water. The velvet swimming crab is distinguishable by its bright red eyes and blue leg joints.

Velvet Swimming Crab (*Necora puber*)
Image Courtesy of Paul Naylor



Bass

Bass enjoy swimming in shallow rocky areas. Shipwrecks provide shelter for them, especially from curious divers. They are bright silver with darker backs and are very streamlined, making them fast hunters. *War Knight* provides a good hunting ground for hungry bass, hosting a variety of prey such as shrimp, mackerel and crabs.



Bass (*Dicentrarchus labrax*)
Image Courtesy of Paul Naylor

The remains of *War Knight* lie just outside Freshwater Bay in around 12 metres of water. The remains do not rise far above the shifting gravel seabed, but the outline of the ship is clearly visible.

The wrecking of the *War Knight* is an unfortunate tale. The ship had been part of a convoy with sixteen other ships when an order came from the lead ship to change course. *War Knight* misunderstood the message and turned directly into another ship, *OB Jennings*. Oil poured from *OB Jennings* setting both ships alight. Further disaster struck while the burning ships were being towed. *War Knight* struck a mine from a German U-Boat and sank just outside Freshwater Bay.

As the ship began to break up the cargo of bacon, oil, rubber, lard and flour spilled into the sea. Much of this cargo was washed ashore at Freshwater much to the delight of the residents who were living under strict war rationing. However, this joy was short lived as 38 people were arrested for taking these vital supplies.

Barnacle (*Balanus perforatus*)
Image Courtesy of Paul Naylor



War Knight

At 7951 tons *War Knight* was a very large vessel. The remains were extensively salvaged after the sinking and what was left was battered by storms.

Today on the seabed you can clearly see the outline of this vessel. Some of the most prominent features include a pair of steam turbines and the propeller shaft. Within the surrounding gravel seabed you can also view three large boilers, the intact chain-locker and anchor winch.

Size: 7951 tons
Length: 410ft (approx 136 m)
Beam: 56 ft (approx 18.5 m)
Nationality: British
Vessel type: Merchant steam ship
Cargo: Bacon, oil, rubber, lard and flour
Journey: Philadelphia, USA to UK
Sank: 25 March 1918



War Knight in dry dock



War Knight on Fire



Barnacles

These commonly found crustaceans lead a sedentary lifestyle in shallow water. Their outer shell is formed of flat plates and is very tough. They feed using their limbs, which can grasp food and retract it back into their shell. You can find large populations of barnacles growing close to each other. They are hermaphrodites which means they are both male and female.

John Dory

Primarily found in areas close to the seabed, John dory are common visitors to *War Knight*. They are easily recognisable with a flat, oval body, a large head, long dorsal fin rays and a black spot on each side. Its thin body is useful for hunting prey or avoiding predators as it virtually disappears when viewed head-on.

John Dory (*Zeus faber*)
Image Courtesy of Paul Naylor

