

Bonegi One - Hirokawa Maru



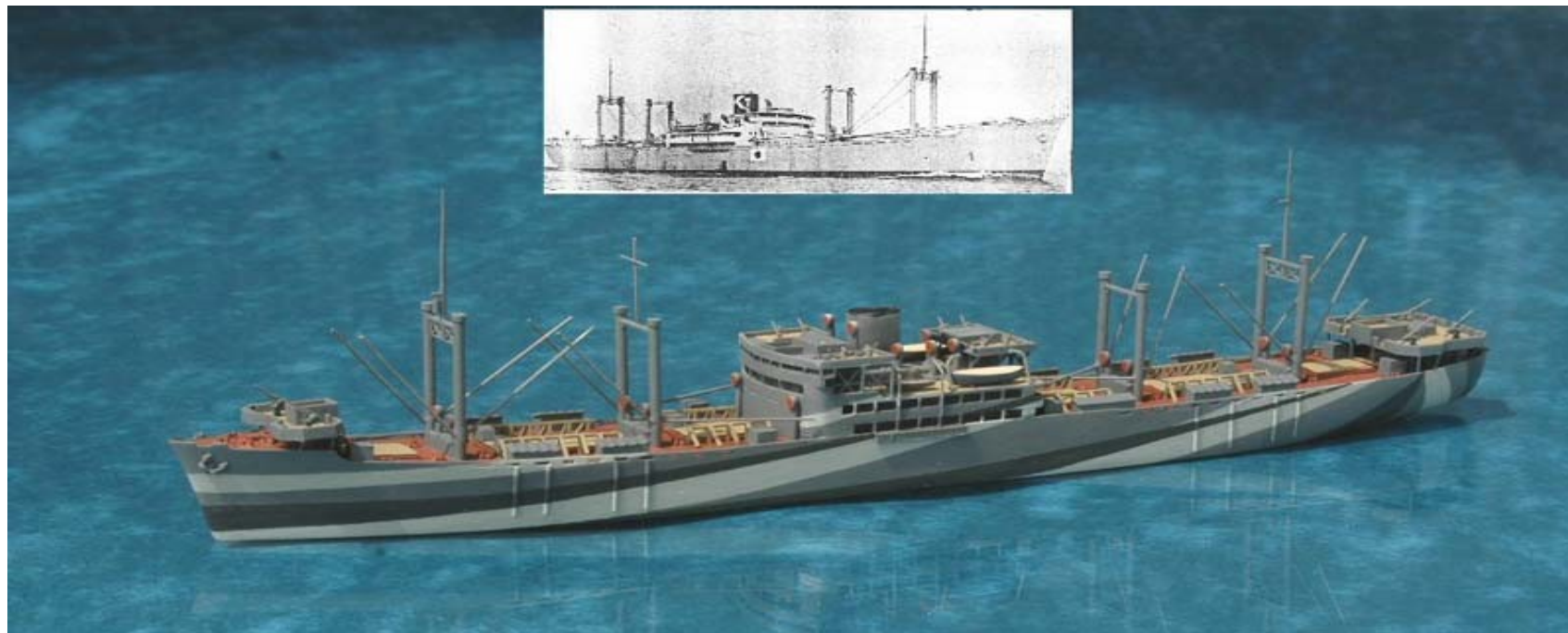
"Hirokawa Maru" (Bonegi I) - A Japanese transport ship of 6860 tons, with an overall length of 508 feet. An excellent dive starting at 3m plunging to 55m.

The Japanese transport Hirokawa Maru was sunk in November 1942 quite close to the beach near Bonegi Creek which is about 8 miles (13 km) west of Honiara. It was built in 1940 and was originally about 480 feet long but the bow is now completely shattered. The ship lies on a steep slope on its port side with the stern section in reasonable condition. The stern lies in 58 metres which is a little deep for recreational diving.

The Hirokawa Maru was built in 1940 by Kawasaki in Kobe for Kawasaki Kisen K.K. and was 6,872 tons. Its length was 479 feet and it was 62 feet wide. The ship had a normal cruising speed of 16 knots with a maximum of 21 knots.

It is assumed that the ship may have been used for her original purpose, but it is also possible that she was only ever intended to be used to support the upcoming Japanese expansion into the Pacific. In any case, the Hirokawa Maru ended up being used as a support vessel for the Guadalcanal theatre of the Pacific war. It is reported that the ship first arrived at Guadalcanal on 4 September 1942.

Some three months after the Americans (Marines, Navy, Air Force), Australians (Navy) and New Zealanders (Navy and Air Force) started their attack on Guadalcanal in an attempt to take back the Solomon Islands, the Hirokawa Maru was waiting near New Georgia in Papua New Guinea as part of a troop convoy. There were 11 transports and cargo ships and 12 escorting destroyers. The ships carried 10,000 troops, weapons and 10,000 tons of supplies. The convoy was sighted by a patrol plane at 0830 on 14 November 1942 about 150 miles from Guadalcanal.



Nowadays, the shallower sections of the ship are pretty well broken up while the deeper parts are almost complete. The bow section is virtually nonexistent, only scattered remains exist. This section is about five metres deep with the main attraction being the fantastic coral and fish life.

The middle and stern section of the Hirokawa Maru is lying on its port side and runs from 10 metres down to over 57 metres. It is far more intact and makes a very interesting dive. The holds are empty and the king-posts and masts are stretched out from the wreck to the sand and make interesting explorations. Your aim in diving this wreck should be to go straight to the deepest point you wish to visit and then slowly return back up the vessel, finally ending up in the shallows.