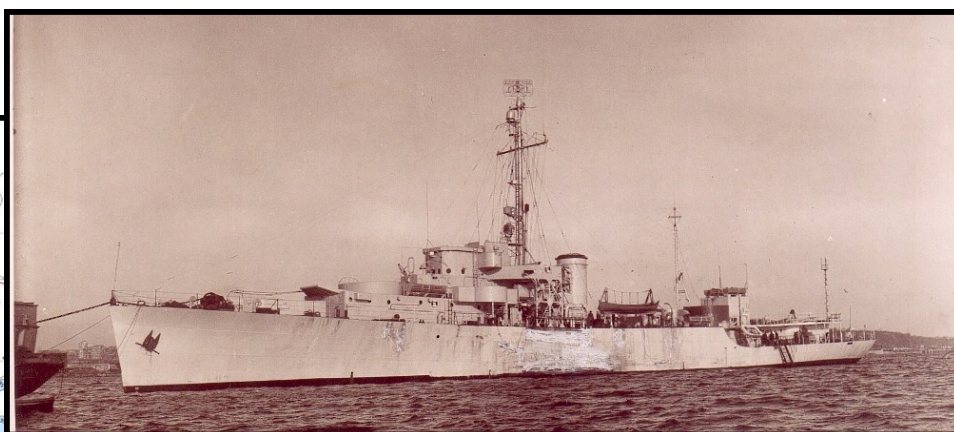
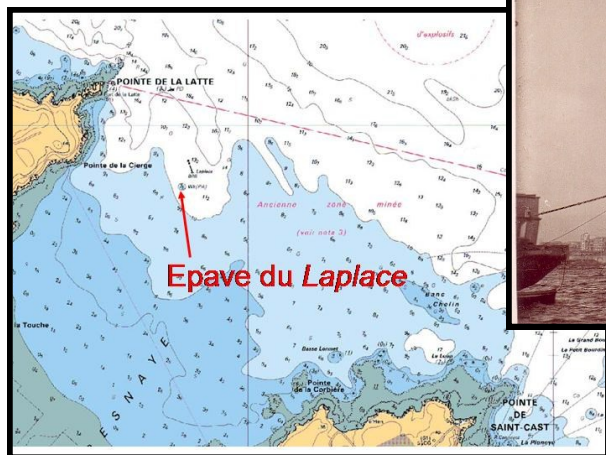


1950

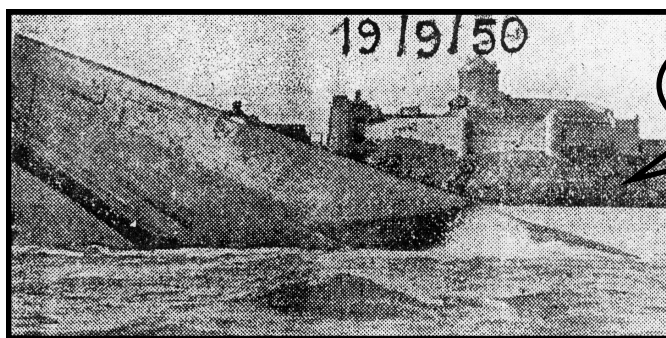
The meteorological frigate *Laplace*

The Laplace performed the duties of a weather station for several weeks at a time, transmitting vital information for trans-Atlantic flights.

In September 1950, she was sent to St. Malo for the inauguration of new lock gates, to replace those destroyed by the Germans in 1944. Arriving on the evening of the 15th, the captain preferred not to enter in darkness, despite a pilot being available. Instead, he decided to anchor for the night in the Baie de la Fresnaye – an area marked on the charts as not having been cleared of mines ! At about a quarter past midnight, the frigate was struck a mortal blow by the magnetic mine that she had triggered . . . Rapidly, those who had escaped the explosion found themselves in the water, struggling for survival amidst the fuel oil spilling from their ship. Many were swept out to sea by the tide.



Baie de la Fresnaye
48°39.78N 002°16.44/46W (EUR50)



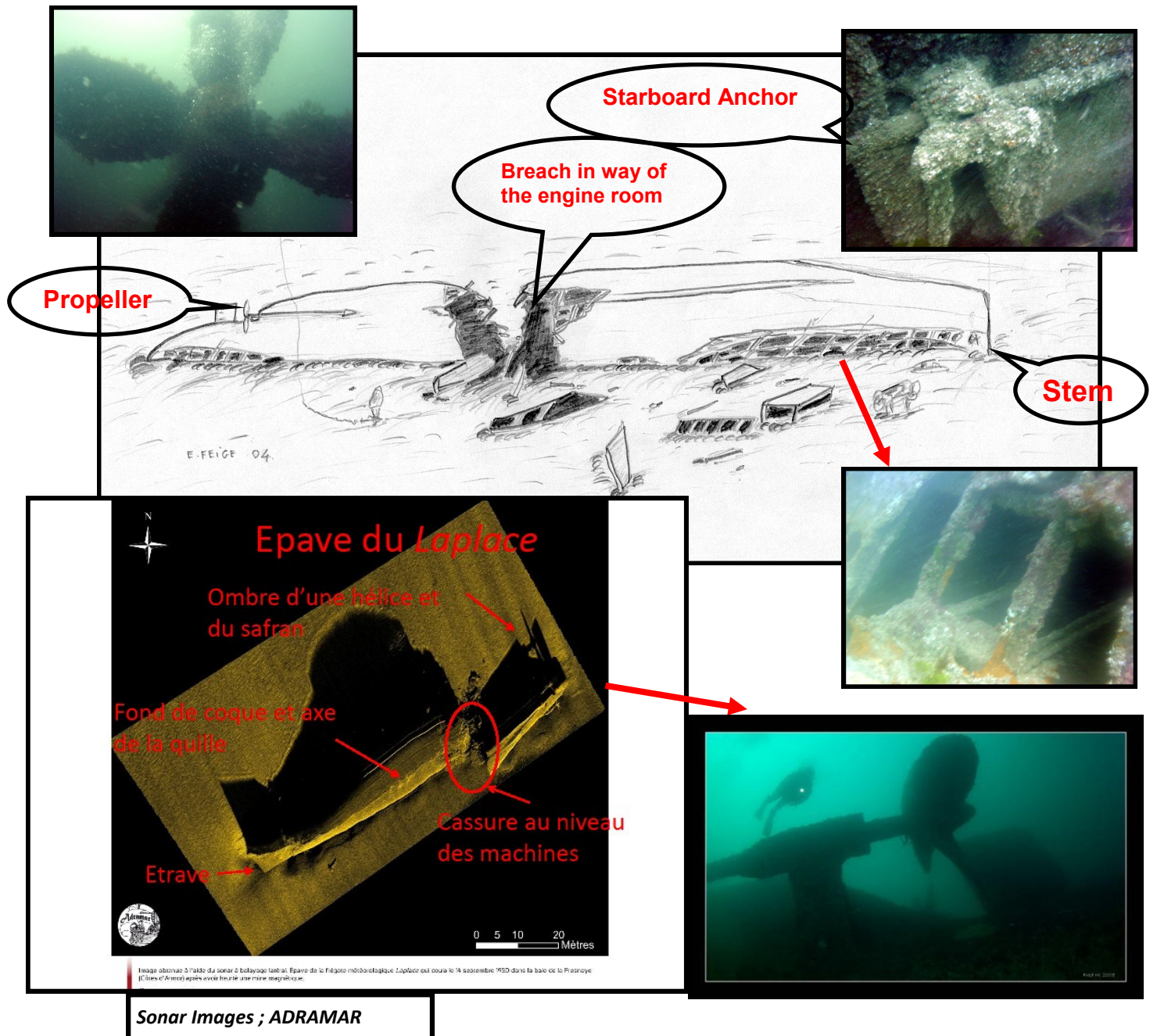
The bow section with the Fort Lalatte in the background



Granite monument on the heights of St Cast

The Laplace (92 x 11.5 metres, 1430 Tons) was built in Ohio, U.S.A. and christened USS Lorraine when she was launched in March 1944 - one of four sisters. They were bought by France in 1947, disarmed and converted to weather ships.

SAINT MALO PLONGÉE EMERAUDE



Sonar Images ; ADRAMAR

The Laplace lies North/South at about 25 metres on high water; inverted, her twin propellers and rudder offer an eerie vision. Although there are openings in the hull, it is strongly recommended not to penetrate them as the structure is unstable and layered in silt. Following the wreck towards the bow, after some 30 metres, there is a break in way of the engine room, where the explosion has almost cut the Laplace in half ! The exposed pipe-work and machinery forbids entry, but can be observed comfortably from outside, with the effects of daylight filtering through the broken shell-plating. It is also interesting, at this point, to move up to see the propeller shafts; then down to look at the shoals of pouts in the engine room through the hull breaches on the opposite side. Continuing forward to the bow section, the fine, straight frigate's stem lies over onto the starboard side, a short distance from which, can be found the anchor deployed by the Laplace that fateful night in 1950.

SAINT MALO PLONGÉE EMERAUDE

Emmanuel Feige, 2012