Archaeologists find a supersized medieval shipwreck in Denmark

“It speaks of remarkable comfort and organization on board,” said Uldum. “Now sailors could have hot meals similar to those on land, instead of the dried and cold food that previously dominated life at sea.” Plenty of dried meat and cold biscuits still awaited sailors for the next several centuries, of course, but when weather and time permitted, at least the crew of Svaelget 2 could gather around a hot meal. The galley would have been a relatively new part of shipboard life for sailors in the early 1400s—and it quickly became a vital one.

Cargo? Go where?

One thing usually marks the site of a shipwreck, even when everything else has disintegrated into the ocean: ballast stones. When merchant ships were empty, they carried stones in their holds to help keep the ship stable; otherwise, the empty ship would be top-heavy and prone to tipping over, which is usually not ideal. (Modern merchant vessels use water, in special tanks, for ballast.) But Uldum and his colleagues didn’t find ballast stones on Svaelget 2, which means the cog was probably fully laden with cargo when it sank.

But the cargo is also conspicuously absent. Cogs were built to carry bulk goods—things like bricks, grain and other staple foods, fabric, salt, and timber. Those goods would have been stowed in an open hold amidships, secured by ropes and chains (some of which remain on the wreck). But barrels, boards, and bolts of fabric all float. As the ship sank and water washed

into the hold, it would have carried away the cargo.

Some of it may have washed up on the shores or even more distant beaches, becoming a windfall for local residents. The rest probably sank to the bottom of the sea, far from the ship and its destination.

https://arstechnica.com/science/2026/01/archaeologists-find-a-supersized-medieval-shipwreck-in-denmark/