Shipwrecks - Jervis Bay area

Sailors clinging to their disintegrating ship, battling overwhelming seas, clutching at floating debris, gasping for momentary breaths in foaming surf - these are the images and experiences of shipwreck.

The NSW coast and waterways are littered with thousands of shipwrecks. Their timbers, iron plating, anchors and cargoes have become fragile records of a heroic maritime history. They are the last remnants of a time when industry, commerce, and families were directly or indirectly reliant on transport by sea.

River boats, trains and road transport linked the inland regions of the State with the ships that plied our coastal and international shipping lanes. Freight and passenger vessels came in various shapes and sizes, their form influenced by their ocean going habits or the shallow river bars of small coastal ports. Technology and cargoes also shaped the construction of the ships while commercial and political decisions determined when and where ships, rail or road were the dominant transport network.

The ships that form our maritime heritage were built locally and at ports around the world - from the small riverside slipways on the NSW coast to the mighty shipyards in England, Scotland, Canada and the USA.

Commercial and public interests did not always result in good record keeping for these vessels, the people who served on them, the passengers who entrusted their welfare to them or the cargoes that they carried. Often they were too mundane, just workhorses that kept the economy together. Many ships passed on with no surviving image to record their appearance. The day to day experiences of the passengers and crew were rarely written down. The remains on the seabed often contain the only surviving clues.

Generally, ships are not totally destroyed when they are wrecked. Parts are preserved, covered in sand, mud and marine growth. A flat expanse of sand can cover a large part of the story of the ship and the people who were associated with it. The only visible clue may be the fluke of an anchor. If this or other visible evidence of the ship is taken away, the site may be lost forever or inadvertently damaged by modern day anchors, dredging or other human activities.

We as a community can help to preserve the information held within shipwreck sites. By becoming aware of their location and place in history we can relive the joys and fears of the people they carried. We can also feel something of the trepidation and anguish of those who waited upon their arrival.

This information sheet, lists some of 30 or more ships that have been lost in or near Jervis Bay. If you wish to obtain more information or if you wish to share information from other sources, please contact:

Maritime Archaeology Unit
NSW Heritage Office
Locked Bag 5020
Parramatta NSW 2124
Phone: 02-9635 6155  Fax: 02-9891 4688
Email: heritage.office@heritage.nsw.gov.au
See also the Shipwreck Atlas of New South Wales, (ed 3), available from the NSW Heritage Office.

Legislation

All shipwrecks over 75 years of age are automatically protected from disturbance under the State NSW Heritage Act 1977 & Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976.

Relics off the NSW coast likely to be associated with historic ships are also protected under the Commonwealth Act. Relics in NSW lakes, rivers and harbours over 50 years of age are protected under the relics provisions of the Heritage Act.

The Heritage Office should be notified as soon as possible if a shipwreck or other underwater relic is located or prior to any activity likely to disturb shipwrecks and relics. Severe penalties apply for non-compliance with the legislation.

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The Shipwrecks of Jervis Bay & Wreck Bay

**Corangamite** - scattered remains in 15m of water on south western side of St George Head. A steel screw steamer, 2420 tons gross, 90.92m length, built at Wallsend on Tyne, UK, 1885. Register of British Shipping, Melb, folio 15 of 1885, Official No. 91491. Wrecked on a voyage from Melbourne to Sydney with passengers and mixed cargo on 6 December 1886.

**Hive** - under 2-3m sand in surf zone on Bherwerre Beach, Wreck Bay. A wooden barquentine, 481 tons gross, 36.63m length, built at Kent, UK in 1820. Register of British Shipping, London, folio 381 of 1833. Ran ashore on a voyage from Sheerness, UK to Sydney with convicts, troops and mixed cargo on 10 December 1835. Survivors assisted by Aboriginal people of Wreck Bay.

**Merimbula** - in 4 to 13m of water at Whale Point, Beecroft Peninsula. Bow lies on top of the point. A steel screw steamer, 1111 tons gross, 63.88m length, built at Troon, Ayrshire, Scotland, 1909. Register of British Shipping, Sydney, folio 3 of 1910, Official No. 125225. Ran aground on a voyage from Sydney to Bermagui on 27 March 1928.

**Mokau** - under sand near entrance to Sussex Inlet, Wreck Bay. Periodically exposed. A wooden screw steamer, 194 tons gross, 35.05m length, built at Balmain, Sydney 1901. Register of British Shipping, Sydney, folio 42 of 1901, Official No. 112543. Driven aground on 26 January 1922.

**Rose of Australia** - scattered remains in shallow reef area on west side of St Georges Head. A wooden brig, 262 tons gross, 30.14m length, built at Gateshead, County of Durham, UK in 1862. Register of British Shipping, Newcastle, NSW, folio 7 of 1864, Official No. 45153. Wrecked when it ran ashore on a voyage from Melbourne to Sydney on 22 January 1874.

**Summer Cloud** - scattered remains, mainly stone ballast in 1-2m at Summercloud Bay, Wreck Bay. A wooden barquentine of 336 tons gross, 39.28m, built at Miramichi, New Brunswick, Canada in 1855. Register of British Shipping, Newcastle, NSW, folio 3 of 1868, Official No. 35486. Wrecked when driven ashore in a storm on 10 October 1870.

**Walter Hood** - wreckage lies in 3-4m of water about 120m from shore north of Red Point, Wreck Bay. A wooden, fully rigged ship, 937 tons gross, 52.48m length, built at Aberdeen, Scotland in 1852. Registered at Aberdeen and Official No. 9953. Wrecked when driven ashore in a gale on a voyage from London to Sydney on 30 April 1870.

**Wandra** - wreckage lies in 26m near Drum and Drumsticks, eastern side of Beecroft Peninsula. A wooden screw steamer, 164 tons gross, 36.72m length, built at Coopernook, NSW in 1907. Register of British Shipping, Sydney, folio 31 of 1907, Official No. 121183. Wrecked when swamped by heavy seas on a voyage from Moruya to Sydney on 15 December 1915.

**Plutus** - in 3m of water parallel to Currajong Beach near the creek and reef that now bear its name. An iron screw steamer, 1259 tons gross, 76.2m length, built at North Shields, UK in 1882. Registered in London and Official No. 85138. Wrecked after it ran aground at night on a voyage from Newcastle to Melbourne on 9 December 1882.

OTHER SHIPWRECKS NOT YET FOUND

**Advance** - schooner, Wreck Bay, ashore 1915

**Aeolus** - ketch, Hole in the Wall 28/10/1867

**Agnes** - ketch, Jervis Bay, off, 1883

**Blackbird** - schooner, Bherwerre Beach, 16/1/1836

**Botany** - dredge, Jervis Bay, off 9/10/1936

**Brisbane** - cutter, Jervis Bay, 08/1832

**Caroline** - brigantine, Point Perpendicular 27/1/1859

**Coast Farmer** - steamer, Jervis Bay, off 20/7/1942

**Coraline** - launch, Point Kialla 3/9/1940

**Dandenong** - steamer, Jervis Bay, off 1876

**Hilda** - schooner 1/8/1908

**John Dory** - steamer 19/2/1941

**Julie Heyn** - barque, Cape St George 5/1865

**Juniper** - Wreck Bay 1/9/1850

**Maid of Riverton** - schooner, Curranbene Creek entrance 24/12/1870

**Martha and Elizabeth** - schooner, Point Perpendicular 26/5/1855

**Mary** - brig, Mary Bay, Wreck Bay 9/2/1874

**Mynora** - steamer (paddle), Steamers Beach 6/4/1864

**Nancy** - sloop, Cape Perpendicular (?) 18/4/1805

**Ruby** - fishing boat, Sir John Young Banks, Beecroft Head 9/12/1895

**Taramung** - steamer, Wreck Bay, in or near, May/June 1891

**Tilba** - steamer, near Summercloud Bay 18/11/1912

**William Coombe** - Drum and Drumsticks Islet, 16/4/1931

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