



Robyn Parker MP

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Heritage

MEDIA RELEASE

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MAROUBRA SHIPWRECK CANNON RECOVERED

Divers have recovered a rare bronze cannon from a well known shipwreck off Maroubra Beach, NSW Heritage Minister Robyn Parker said today.

Ms Parker said marine archaeologists from the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) and NSW Police divers undertook the emergency salvage after heavy seas uncovered the wreck of the full-rigged iron sailing ship *Hereward* which was lost in wild seas off Maroubra in 1898.

Ms Parker said experts recovered a 1.17m long cannon during a two day archaeological operation following concerns it would be illegally removed from the wreck.

“This wreck is a protected historic shipwreck under both the NSW *Heritage Act 1977* and the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976* and survives as a fragile part of our State’s maritime archaeological heritage,” Ms Parker said.

“Unfortunately a small group of divers and snorkelers have been actively removing small artefacts from the site since it became public knowledge that the wreck was extensively exposed.”

The *Hereward* has become a local tourist attraction but disturbing the wreck and attempting to recover artefacts is illegal and the offences carry fines and jail penalties.

Ms Parker praised the success of the operation, particularly the support and technical skill of NSW Water Police divers through the Marine Area Command at Balmain.

“This was a significant display of the strong partnership between OEH and the NSW Police Service. All Water Police serve as Wreck Inspectors under the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*,” Ms Parker said.

“The recreational divers John Black and Paul Wright who promptly notified OEH of the existence of the cannon last week are also to be congratulated. They were passionate about the site’s protection and have been involved in the planning for the recovery operation.”

The cannon is probably a small signal gun used by large sailing ships during the nineteenth century to call for a harbour Pilot or for towage support.

Signal guns could also be used for possible defence against attack by pirates or as ballast in the ships’ hold when obsolete.

The cannon will now undergo professional conservation treatment for permanent display at an appropriate venue near the wreck site. All shipwrecks lost in NSW can be searched through the Office of Environment and Heritage's *Maritime Heritage Online* website, <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/>.

Media: Steve Warnock (0428 968 499)