

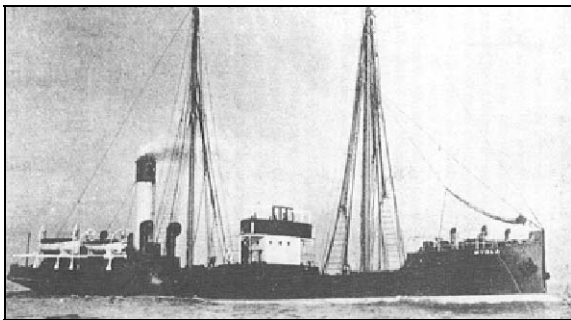
Myola

SHIPWRECK 1919

Information Sheet NSW Heritage Office

Introduction

The *Myola*, a steam collier, was owned by the Howard Smith Company. Built in 1913 at Smith's Dockyards in Middlesbrough, England, the new steamer arrived in Sydney on 7 January 1914. *Myola* spent its life as a "sixty miler" on the Sydney-Newcastle coal run.



View of ss *Myola*.

Disaster!

When departing Newcastle on its final voyage of 1 April 1919, *Myola* was loaded with 675 tons coal destined for the North Shore Gas Company in Sydney. After departing Newcastle at 4.40 p.m., winds estimated at 30 mile-per-hour confronted the steamer from the south east. Captain Higgins had command and despite the gale, the collier made steady progress. *Myola* was being followed by another steamer, the *South Buffi*, which had left Catherine Hill Bay.

The situation onboard *Myola* was to dramatically change. At 10.00 p.m. George Roberts, one of *Myola's* firemen, noticed water coming through the stokehold plates in the boiler room. He immediately notified the second engineer Donald McNicol of the "loose water". In what was to be a fateful error, McNicol took no action. Half an hour later, the fireman again told him of water continuing to enter the hull. Tragically, the

engineer again failed to relay the information to the captain. No pumps were activated.

At 12.30 a.m. on the 2nd April 1919, *Myola* passed Long Reef. After rolling slightly to starboard, *Myola* suddenly settled on its port side. With the steamer in a desperate state, the engines were slowed and two blue distress flares fired. The plight of the steamer was exacerbated when the crew of *South Bulli* mistook the flares for a signal to foreign vessel requesting use of a pilot.

By this stage *Myola's* crew were unable to release their lifeboats due to the list of the vessel. In desperation, they cut the ropes, hoping the boats would right themselves in the water. Within just eight minutes of the first roll, *Myola* sank into the dark of the night.

Some crew managed to climb into a lifeboat and to pick up others nearby. Three more were lucky to cling to another upturned boat and wallowed in the freezing waters for half an hour. The *South Bulli*, so close to the disaster for so long, finally came up and rescued the eleven survivors. It proved difficult to get the men onboard due to the high seas. A life boat was lowered to look for others but they could only be located by shouting. In the dark, the cook, fireman and two able seamen drowned.



The wreck site: a Scotch boiler. Photograph by John Riley. © John Riley.

The pilot vessel *Captain Cook* ventured out to make a final search without success. Two of *Myola's* lifeboats later washed up on Mona Vale Beach. A Marine Board of

Enquiry presumed the cargo had shifted due to excessive water entering the bilges. The source for the leak was never located. Second Engineer McNichol was found in error for not informing the Captain of the problem, although total blame was not assigned.

Wreck Discovery 1994

The wreck of *Myola* was discovered by Sydney divers John Riley and Peter Fields in July 1994. In appreciation for their efforts in promoting the discovery, interpretation and proper management of the *Myola* site, they were awarded *Historic Shipwreck Award* by the then Minister for Planning, The Hon. Robert Webster, in August 1994.

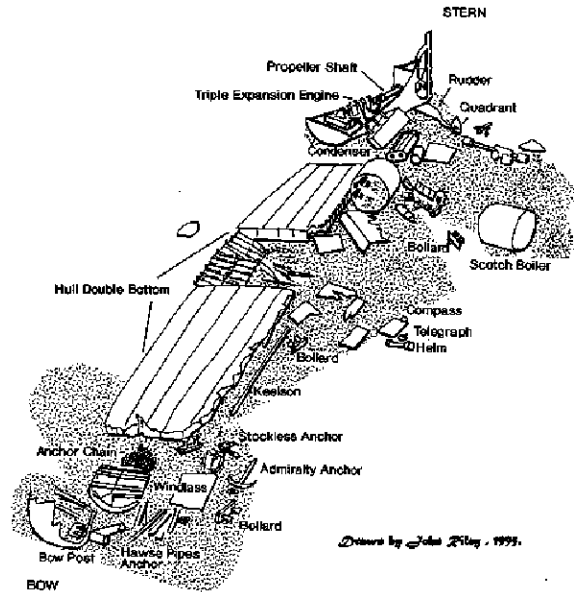


Innovative model of the wreck site by discoverer, John Riley. Photo: Heritage Office.

The site is a protected historic shipwreck under section 4 of the Commonwealth *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*. Severe penalties exist for those found to interfere with the fragile archaeological remains.

Please assist in the preservation of this important cultural site by mooring dive vessels appropriately and by not disturbing the remains in any way.

For more information contact the NSW Heritage Office on ph:(02) 9873 8500; or write to the Underwater Heritage Program, NSW Heritage Office, Locked Bag 5020, Parramatta NSW 2124.



Site plan produced by John Riley. © John Riley.

Disturbance

Unfortunately, while the majority of divers visiting this significant shipwreck have striven to protect the site for its irreplaceable heritage values, a handful of others have severely damaged the remains. This has occurred through removal of loose associated relics such as portholes, small machinery, fittings and crockery. This activity is illegal. It also reduces the archaeological potential of the site, effects conservation activity on the seabed, and seriously reduces the visual appeal and recreational enjoyment of the site for others. Divers are asked to report any disturbance activities immediately to the NSW Water Police Sydney, or the NSW Heritage Office.

Visiting Historic Shipwrecks is a privilege. Respect Our Wrecks.

Sources:

- Riley, John, 1994, *Myola – Sydney's Last Shipwreck*. Fast Books. Glebe.
 - Gleeson, Max, 1993, *The Vanished Fleet of the Sydney Coastline*. Toppan printing.
- Maritime Heritage Online* (NSW Heritage Office web site) <<http://maritime.heritage.nsw.gov.au>> *Shipwreck Atlas of New South Wales*. Edition 3. 1996. Heritage Office, Sydney.

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