p.s. **MIMOSA**

**WRECK INSPECTION REPORT**

Department of Planning, Sydney, 1992

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.................................................................................................................1
OBJECTIVES......................................................................................................................1
  General.......................................................................................................................1
  Specific.....................................................................................................................1
METHODOLOGY..............................................................................................................2
  Wreck Site Location..................................................................................................2
  Wreck Inspection.....................................................................................................2
HISTORICAL CONTEXT .................................................................................................2
  Wreck Event .............................................................................................................3
p.s. Mimosa - Construction Details (13).......................................................................4
Notes.............................................................................................................................4
ENVIRONMENTAL DESCRIPTION....................................................................................4
  Location....................................................................................................................4
  Archaeological Remains...........................................................................................5
ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE.....................................................................................1
RECOMMENDATIONS.......................................................................................................2

Table of Figures

Figure 1 - Location Map ...............................................................................................1
Figure 2: Coastline adjacent to wreck site .................................................................5
Figure 3 - Wreck Site Plan: View of Wreck Site from South .......................................5
Figure 4 - Scotch boiler with uptake lying to the south west ......................................5
Figure 5 - Engine model: J. Riley .................................................................................5

Cover: Drawing of ps Mimosa by Dean Claflin

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INTRODUCTION
The Department of Planning enlisted Manly Hydraulics Laboratory (MHL) to assist in undertaking a survey of the p.s. Mimosa historic shipwreck site (gazetted as an historic shipwreck on 22 October, 1984).

MHL was required to assist in establishing the relocation of the wreck site based on earlier notifications and to provide diving support for the underwater survey of the remains. The fieldwork was carried out over two days (4-5 February, 1992).

Those present were:
D. Nutley, Department of Planning, Maritime Archaeologist (Officer in Charge)
T. Smith, Department of Planning, Maritime Archaeologist
C. Browne, MHL (Diving Supervisor)
P. Clark, MHL (Boat Handler and Diver Attendant)

OBJECTIVES

General
- To accumulate data regarding the wreck site in relation to its environment and archaeological characteristics;
- to develop site interpretation and assessment of archaeological potential.

Specific
- To locate the site and record an accurate position of the remains;
- To assess existing sketches of the site provided by sports divers and to identify any changes;
- To document the nature and spread of the exposed remains and to assess environmental impacts on the site.
METHODOLOGY
A history of the p.s. Mimosa was prepared by John Riley, notifer of the site, and included the results of an archaeological inspection of the remains (Riley, J., 1984, Wreck of the p.s. Mimosa, Sydney, pp1-21). Additional historical information was obtained from a report prepared for the department of Planning by consultant archaeologist Adam Wolfe, New South Wales Historic Shipwreck Study, 1990.

Wreck Site Location
Prominent landmarks, known depth of the site and available site transists were used to obtain an approximate position of the remains. This position was buoyed and the wreck visually located by a diver conducting a swim-line search.

The site’s position was accurately established using an EDM and theodolite from land based stations on Day 1 of the survey.

Divers established the limits of the wreck structure which covers an area of approximately 60 x 30m.

Wreck Inspection
An underwater inspection of the remains was conducted by David Nutley, Tim Smith and Colin Browne. The preliminary dive aimed to identify the extent of the remains. The inspection then concentrated on validating existing site plans provided by John Riley, noting the orientation and dimensions of key features. These plans proved to be an accurate representation of the site and therefore detailed recording was not attempted. Measurements were taken of the anchor and key features were recorded on video.

From the location of the wreck, the steamer appeared to have hit a part of the inshore reef, a point considerably closer inshore than the Captain of the Mimosa has claimed. An area marked as Mimosa Rocks on the basis of Captain Keft's report has subsequently been reported to be devoid of reefs.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The p.s. Momosa, an iron paddle steamer, was originally intended for the trade along the eastern coast of Tasmania. When this service ended the steamer transferred to Sydney and the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company, trading primarily along the New South Wales south coast. Major cargoes included general merchandise, agricultural produce and passengers.

The vessel was ordered by the Eastern Coast Steam Navigation Company and arrived in Hobart on 6 December, 1854. Built by Hoby and Company of Renfrew, Scotland, the Mimosa had a length of 140' 6", a breadth of 17' 9" and a depth of 8' 5". Fitted with two diagonal trunk engines generating 60 hp (1), the vessel had a tonnage in 1863 of 155 tons and was rigged as a two masted schooner.

The Eastern Coast Steam Navigation Company was formed in 1854 and was the first company to establish a regular steam ship service on the east coast of Tasmania. The service connected Launceston with Hobart. The Mimosa was placed under the command of John McLachlan. Early trips included the mundane, transporting the Derwent Cricket Club to a match, while more substantial voyages were made to Richmond, Sorell and Pittwater (2).
The Mimosa gained a reputation for being a fast vessel and in 1855 defeated the Culloden in a race from Hobart to Huon (3). However trade was insufficient to maintain a costly steamship service (4) and the company soon collapsed.

John Edye Manning of Sydney bought the steamer on 26 January, 1858 for £2,000. The vessel arrived in Sydney from Hobart on 30 January with Manning on board. Manning immediately put the vessel in the coastal trade, carrying passengers and general cargo to the Clyde river. This was a busy time due to the discovery of gold at Kiandra (5).

A number of ports were regularly visited, including Wollongong, Kiama and Shoalhaven, collecting mixed cargoes of potatoes, butter, maize, poultry, eggs, pigs and calves (6).

On 13 January, 1860, Manning sold the Mimosa to the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company of which he was a Director. The steamer continued to serve the south coast and in 1862 was cut in half and lengthened by 22' 3" (7).

Wreck Event
The Mimosa left Twofold Bay at 3pm on 18 September, 1863 bound for Sydney. The steamer allegedly struck unchartered rocks 17 Km north of Tathra and one mile offshore.

After striking the rocks the Mimosa floated free. However, the vessel did not respond and began to settle by the bow. Captain Keft ordered the boats out and then went forward to call the 38 passengers and crew from below (8). They succeeded in getting into the boats, followed by the Captain and Chief Engineer. The steamer quickly settled and sank as the boats pulled away.

Two of the steerage passengers, Mr and Mrs Ivell, were unaccounted for and were presumed lost with the Mimosa. The boats successfully reached the shore, one headed directly for adjacent Bunga Head, the other landed on a beach some six miles to the north (9).

News of the disaster reached Moruya and the steamer Mynora was dispatched to the site. Another steamer, the Kembla, also arrived, picked up the survivors and proceeded to Sydney. The Mimosa was uninsured and, having lately undergone considerable repairs, was valued at £11,000 (10).

The Directors of the Illawarra Steame Navigation Company entertained hopes of raising the vessel. An experienced diver, Mr McNab, was contracted to explore the wreck using the steamer Mynora as a diving tender. The diver found the Mimosa lying perfectly upright on sand, a quantity of which had entered the hull. McNab surmised that the sand had entered through a large hole in the ship's bottom near the forward companion way ladder. After retrieving the mail bags, he located the decomposing bodies of Mr and Mrs Ivell which were conveyed to the surface for later burial at sea.

Mr Scott, a diver employed by the Government, went down and recovered the Mimosa's wheel, ventilators and bell. McNab located the cash box which was found to be empty when opened at the surface. The divers also retrieved instruments and clothing from the Captain's cabin (11).

Further trips were made to the scene in an attempt to raise the vessel. Adverse weather conditions and the loss of the div tender Mynora at wreck Bay in 1864 probably convinced the salvage team that this would be impossible. The currents were beginning to take a toll on the wreck which has been stripped of the bridge, funnel, masts, engine house and paddle boxes (12).
p.s. Mimosa - Construction Details (13)

Official Number: 31989
Launched: 1854
Where built: Renfrew, Scotland
Builders: Hoby and Co, Renfrew
Owners: Illawarra Stream Navigation Co
Construction: Iron paddle steamer, one deck, rigged as a two masted schooner
Dimensions: 1854: lgth 149' 5"; bdth 17' 9"; dpth 8' 5"
1863: lgth 162' 9"; bdth 17' 9"; dpth 9' 0"
Tonnage: 1854: 163 tons
1863: 153 tons (Wolfe, 1990 - to be confirmed)
Engines: Two diagonal trunk engines generating 60hp

Notes
1. British Register of Ships, Port of Sydney, 8 of 1861
3. Ibid, p56
4. Parsons, R., 1967, Paddle Steamers of Australasia, p149
8. Ibid, p57
9. Ibid, p57
10. Sydney Morning Herald, 23 September, 1863
11. Sydney Morning Herald, 8 October, 1863
12. Sydney Morning Herald, 28 October, 1863
13. British Register of Ships, Port of Sydney, 8 of 1861

ENVIRONMENTAL DESCRIPTION

Location
The site's coordinates were found using an EDM and theodolite. They are:

Latitude 36° 34' 58.6" S (Map Sheet AUS 806)
Longitude 150° 03' 27.2" E

Notes: These coordinates supersede those originally stated for the p.s. Mimosa in the Government Gazette.

The remains are located approximately 150m east of Bunga Head, 7 miles north of Tathra. The site is subject to heavy swell and sea conditions. Wreckage is widely scattered on sand and adjacent reef at a depth of approximately 20m. Southerly storms are capable of moving large pieces of wreckage considerable distances amongst the low reef that runs east-west across the site. Visibility is extremely variable.
Archaeological Remains
The site is dominated by the engine and twin scotch (with common uptake now separated). The engine lies upright on remains of the hull which extends from the engine to the southern most boiler (Figure 3). Both boilers have rolled over onto the flat side of their superheaters. The paddle shaft, paddle shaft frame and remains of the paddle wheels lie to the north and south of the engine.

A windlass, anchor and remains of the bow lie roughly in line with the hull to the east. Two similar pieces of wreckage, though to be portions of the sponsons, lie east and north-west of the engine. Port holes have been observed along either side of the hull remains (Riley, 1984:20).

Figure 3 - Wreck Site Plan: View of Wreck Site from South: After J. Riley, 1984

Figure 4 - Scotch boiler with uptake lying to the south west

Figure 5 - Engine model: J. Riley
ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
Significance has been assessed in accordance with the nature and degree of
significance of the site's primary attributes. These include attributes related to
historical, social, archaeological and interpretive significance.

**Historical** (concerned with range of context)
The site is associated with:
- the early history of the coastal trade of Eastern Tasmania and New South Wales
  The *Mimosa* was an early steamer ordered for the eastern Tasmanian trade, later concentrating on the developing south coast trade of NSW.
The steamer assisted in the rescue of those onboard the barque *Katherine Shearer*, which exploded in the D'Entrcasteaux Channel, Tasmania, in 1855.
- Early marine salvage operations in New South Wales
  The work of salvage divers McNab and Scott in recovering goods and attempting to refloat the *Mimosa* was an early example of marine salvage activities (that of the p.s. *Ceres* wrecked at Norah Head in 1836 being the earliest in New South Wales)

**Technical** (concerned with technical or creative achievement)
The surviving engines represent an early marine trunk type of unusual design.
- The remains of the two diagonal trunk engines have the potential to document the development of marine engineering in the Australian colonies and in Great Britain during the mid nineteenth century.

**Archaeological** (concerned with research potential through investigation of material remains)
The site has the potential for scientific investigation of personal belongings of the passengers and crew.
- despite early salvage activity and local environmental conditions, the isolated nature of the site embues it with the potential for retention of mid-nineteenth century personal, nautical and trade items within the vessel's debris field.

**Interpretive** (concerned with public education values)
The site has the potential to contribute knowledge about:
- the economic development of the Tasmanian and New South Wales coastal regions,
- marine engineering in the Australian colonies and Great Britain during the nineteenth century.

**Degree of Significance**
**Rare** (concerned with the uncommon or exceptional)
The wreck site:
- is one of the earliest paddle steam shipwrecks to have been located on the NSW south coast,
- contains one of the earliest located marine engines in NSW.
Representative (concerned with the typical or characteristic)

- A vessel characteristic of the class of iron paddle wheel steamers developed in Great Britain during the mid nineteenth century and operating in colonial waters.

Statement of Significance

The p.s. Mimosa was a significant colonial steamer built in Scotland in 1854 and operating in the east coast trade of both Tasmania and New South Wales. In Tasmania, the vessel assisted in the rescue of passengers from the barque Katherine Shearer which caught fire and exploded in 1855. Transferred to the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company in 1861, the vessel played an important role in the development of trade on the NSW south coast. The site retains the potential for retention of mid nineteenth century personal, nautical and trade items within the vessel's remains. The Mimosa's engine is an early example of a marine trunk engine.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of the historical research, wreck site inspection and subsequent assessment of significance, it is recommended that:

1. the previously gazetted position for the p.s. Mimosa be amended to:
   - Latitude 36° 34' 58.6" S
   - Longitude 150° 03' 27.2" E

2. interpretive broadsheets be prepared for distribution to dive shops, dive clubs and the Eurobodella Shire Council;

3. a Management Plan be prepared for the site and its associated relics.