# Shipwrecks - Bellambi

**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 15 ships that have been lost on or near Bellambi Reef, Wollongong. If you wish to obtain more information or if you wish to share information from other sources, please contact:

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Shipwreck Databases:      *Maritime Heritage Online* at http://maritime.heritage.nsw.gov.au/, or
                          *Australian National Shipwreck Database* at http://aima.iinet.net.au.
See also the *Shipwreck Atlas of New South Wales,* (ed 3), available from the NSW Heritage Office.

## Location



## 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 Bellambi

*Aldinga* - Struck the outer edge of Bellambi Reef on 20 Jan 1896 on a voyage from South Bulli with coal for Wollongong.  The Master, Allen Boyle and 7 crew all survived. The *Aldinga* was an iron screw steamer, 447 tons, 61.75m in length, built at Greenock, UK in 1860. Registered at Sydney as folio 50 of 1883, Official No. 36976.

*Breadalbane* - Anchors dragged and went ashore 2 miles north of Bellambi on 1 Oct 1864 on a voyage to Bellambi under the command of Capt Saabye. *Breadalbane* was a wooden barquentine, 214 tons gross, 31.9m in length, built at Cape Breton, Baddock, Canada in 1854. Registered at Sydney as folio 33 of 1862, Official No. 4633.

*Duke of Wellington* - Capsized while standing off Bellambi during a storm on 14 June 1863 while in ballast and under the command of Capt Edward Hebner. The wooden brigantine, 88 tons, 21.5m in length, built at a time and place unknown, had once operated as a slave trader in Brazil. Registered in Sydney as folio 73 of 1863, Official No. 32535.

*Excelsior*   - Wrecked 180m offshore at Bellambi on 21 Oct 18 59 when the wind changed and then failed. *Excelsior* was on a voyage from Bellambi to Melbourne with coal under the command of Capt J Lewis. The wooden barquentine, 273 tons, was registered at Topsham, UK.

*Hannah* - Wrecked on Bulli Beach, 1/2 mile north of Bellambi Jetty on 26 April 1870. *Hannah* was on a voyage from the Shoalhaven to Sydney with a cargo of farm produce. The wooden schooner, 43 tons, 18.1m was built at Brisbane Water, NSW in 1864. Registered at Sydney as folio 8 of 1864, Official No. 46459.

*Little Pet* - Struck Bellami Reef 13 June 1885 and became a wreck. The wooden schooner was built at North Sheilds, UK,1851. Registered at Sydney as  folio 44 of 1864, Official No. 32383.

*Llewellyn* - Ran aground at Bellambi Reef on 23 May 1882 while on a voyage from Sydney to Wollongong in ballast. and with 3 passengers. No lives were lost. The wooden screw steamer, 478 tons  gross, 47.24m was built at Woolloomooloo, Sydney  in 1875. Registered in Sydney as folio 24 of 1877, Official No. 71828.

*Munmorah* - Ran aground on the inner reef at Bellambi Point on 18 May 1949 while on a voyage from Sydney to Bellambi in ballast and under the command of Capt K. Knutsen. The Captain and 17 crew all survived. Registered in Sydney and Official No.157618 the steel screw steamer was built at Leith, UK, 1934. The wreck lies 548m, $133^0$ from the Bellambi Jetty.

*Norman* - A navigation error lead to the loss of the *Norman* on Bellambi Reef on 28 Aug 1895. The wooden schooner was on a voyage to Sydney from Wollongong with 81 tons of coal. The crew of 5 survived. The *Norman,* 51 tons, 20.8m, was built at Lake Macquarie, NSW in1880. Registered in Sydney as folio 15 of 1880, Official No. 75056,

*Ocean Queen* - Wrecked on the south side of Bellambi harbour in a strong southerly on a voyage from Sydney to Bellambi in 1860. The wooden brig 120 tons, 23.29m was built in Canada in 1844. Registered in Sydney as folio 21 of 1855, Official No. 32417.

*Prospector* - One person died when the wooden schooner sank in chains during a gale at Bellambi on 17 Nov 1860 while preparing to leave Bellambi with coal. Built at the Macleay River in 1854, 56 tons, 20.24m. Registered in Sydney as folio 130 of 1854, Official No. 32381,

*Reaper* - Beached after being blown south while on a voyage from Richmond River to Sydney with a cargo of cedar on 11 June 1864. the wooden schooner, 39 tons, 15.54m, was built on the Manning River, NSW in 1852. Registered in Sydney as folio 31 of 1853, Official No. 32311.

*Resolute* - This wooden screw steamer ran aground at Bellambi Reef, about 1 mile offshore while in ballast on a voyage from Sydney to Kiama for 'blue metal'. Built at Auckland in 1883, the *Resolute* was registered at Sydney as 113 of 1883, Official No. 83800.

*Saxonia* - A victim of the 'Maitland gale' and a navigation error lead to the loss of this iron screw steamer  on Bellambi Reef on 17 May 1898. The coal for Bulli was lost but the 14 crew survived. the steamer was built at Hull, UK in 1856, 357 tons gross, 49.49m. Registered in Sydney as folio 42 of 1896.

*Victoria Packet* - Anchor chains parted and the 170 ton *vessel* drove ashore near the mouth of Bellambi Creek in September 1859 after a voyage from Melbourne. The 28.96m barquentine, was built in Tasmania in 1850. Registered in Sydney as folio 76 of 1853, Official No. 31646.