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 14 of the ships that have been lost near the Solitary Islands. 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.

This sheet is available free from http://maritime.heritage.nsw.gov.au and may be reproduced with appropriate attribution.
The Shipwrecks of Solitary Islands

**Aurora** - a wooden schooner, 580 tons. 50.3m in length, built as a whaler at Dundee, Scotland in 1876. Registered at Sydney, folio 44 of 1881, Official No. 79509. Involved with Ernest Shackleton’s Antarctic explorations. Wrecked in the vicinity of the Solitary Islands in June 1917, while carrying coal from Newcastle, NSW to Iquique, South America. Neither the master nor crew of 20 were seen again. The wreck site has not been found.

**Beaver** - a wooden schooner, 77 tons and 20.3m in length, built on the Clarence River in 1849. Registered in Sydney as folio 31 of 1849. The vessel went ashore, without loss of life, somewhere in the Solitary Islands when wrecked on 23 September 1851 while sailing from Sydney to Moreton Bay. No trace of the vessel has been reported to date.

**Belmore** - a schooner, 66 tons, 30.99m, built at the Macleay River, NSW in 1876. Registered at Sydney, folio 58 of 1891, Official No. 64349. Beached in a heavy sea at Coffs Harbour in March 1893, during a voyage from Sydney to Bellinger River. The wreck site has not been found.

**Buster** - a wooden barquentine, 310 tons, 39.4m in length, built at Nova Scotia, Parraboro, Canada in 1884. Later registered at Sydney as folio 66 of 1888 Official No. 85626. Wrecked at Woolgoolga on 17 Feb 1893 while waiting for a cargo of timber for Dunedin, New Zealand. A strong gale parted the ship's hawser and the *Buster* was thrown ashore. None of the 10 crew was injured. The vessel is exposed from time to time after storm activity.

**Carry Well** - a wooden schooner, 74 tons, 25.3m in length, built at Melbourne in 1850. Registered in Sydney as folio 20 of 1865, Official No. 31689. Wrecked ashore at Coffs Harbour on 12 July 1866 with a cargo of timber from Coffs Harbour.

**Keilawarra** - an iron screw steamer, 784 tons gross, 486 tons net and 61m in length, built at Kinghorn, UK, 1878. Registered at Sydney, folio 50 of 1879, Official No. 79507. On 8 Dec 1886 a collision with another steamer, the *Helen Nicoll*, resulted in the loss of at least 35 lives (reports vary from 35 to 48) when the *Keilawarra* foundered off North Solitary Island. The *Keilawarra* was carrying passengers and cargo from Sydney to Brisbane. The wreck site has been found.

**Lady of Lorn** - a wooden ketch, built at Lake Macquarie in 1877. Registered in Sydney as folio 54 of 1884, Official No. 74830. On 19 July 1889, the vessel was driven ashore in a gale at Moonee Beach while on a voyage from Nambucca to Sydney with a cargo of sawn hardwood.

**Narara** - a wooden schooner, built at Brisbane Water, NSW in 1842 by Robert Papworth, 24 tons and 13.3m in length. Registered in Sydney as folio 59 of 1845. It was lost off Solitary Island during a gale in May 1849. The crew survived but the ship's remains have not been found.

**Orara** - a wooden screw steamer, 66 tons, 21.54m, built by Rock Davis at Blackwall, Brisbane Water in 1894. Registered in Sydney as folio 40 of 1894, Official No. 101129. Wrecked at Woolgoolga on a voyage from Clarence River to Sydney on 30 Dec 1895 and not seen since.

**Saucy Jack** - a wooden brigantine, 156 tons, 32.18m in length, built at Manning River, NSW in 1874. Wrecked on a beach 1 mile south of Coffs Harbour on a voyage from Sydney to Queensland on 24 June 1893.

**Port Phillip** - a wooden schooner, 40 tons and 16.9m in length, built at Melbourne, Vic in 1841. Registered at Sydney as folio 2 of 1843. The vessel was beached on Korff's Beach, (now Coffs Harbour), Solitary Islands during a gale on 26 August 1848. The crew of 5 survived and procured nourishment from Aborigines they met during a 12-day overland walk. The vessel was on a voyage from 'Bellingham' River to Sydney. The wreck site has not been found.

**Restless** - a brig, 258 tons and 35.8m in length, built in the State of Maine, USA, in 1862. Registered in Sydney as folio 15 of 1866 and wrecked ~20mls off North Solitary Island on 24 August 1872. The vessel was on a voyage from Solomon Islands to Brisbane but forced off course in a heavy gale and sprang a leak. The remains have yet to be found. The crew, Solomon Islanders, all survived.

**Wanderer** - a wooden fishing yawl, 15 tons, 16.97m in length. Wrecked on the 'SW wall' Coffs Harbour, 4 April 1929 with the loss of one life. The wreck site has not been found.

**Wyong** - a screw steamer tug, 37 tons gross, 25 net and 22.61m in length, built at Balmain in 1884 and rebuilt at Berrys Bay in 1897. Registered in Sydney as folio 24 of 1897, Official No. 89330. The vessel was wrecked at South Solitary Island on 12 November 1901 after losing its propeller and becoming unmanageable.

ISBN 1 876415 29 0

HO00/01 © Crown copyright 2000