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 27 ships that have been lost from Merimbula to Disaster Bay. 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.

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.
The Shipwrecks of the Far South Coast

City of Sydney - in 16m to 22m of water at "City Rocks" half way along Green Cape on the Disaster Bay side. An iron screw steamer, 735 tons gross, 63.33m in length, built at Glasgow, Scotland, 1854. Register of British Shipping, Sydney, folio 40 of 1854, Official No. 32448. Ran ashore in fog on a voyage from Melbourne to Sydney on 6 October 1862.

Cumberland - reputedly found in deep water SE of Green Cape but location to be verified and some debate about whether the site is that of the Cumberland or Recina. A steel screw steamer, 8993 tons gross, 1444m length, built at Glasgow, Scotland, 1915. Registered in London and Official No. 139102. Sank when under tow from Townsville to Eden.


Empire Gladstone - in 10m of water at Haystack Rock near Merimbula. A steel screw steamer, 7090 tons gross, 131m length, built at Sunderland, UK in 1944. Registered in Sunderland and Official No. 180134. Ran ashore on a voyage from Whyalla to Sydney on 5 September 1950.

Henry Bolte - in 25m of water in Twofold Bay. A steel tug, 393 tons gross, 40.72m length, built at Newcastle, 1966. Scuttled as a dive site in 1988.

Lanercost - in 1m to 20m of water about half a nautical mile north of Mowarry Point. A wooden barquentine, 358 tons gross, 37.7m length, built at Sunderland, UK in 1865. Register of British Shipping, Adelaide, folio 16 of 1872, Official Number 54912. Wrecked on a voyage from Newcastle to Adelaide on 24 December 1872.

Lawrence Frost - a few surviving, recycled timbers lie among oyster flats in the inlet near Davidson Whaling Station. Other timbers were used in local buildings. A wooden fully rigged ship, 1523 tons, built at New Brunswick, Canada in 1854 and registered at Liverpool in the UK. Wrecked after springing a leak on a voyage from Melbourne to Sydney on 26 October 1856.

Ly-ee-moon - a highly exposed wreck site in shallow water at the tip of Green Cape. An iron screw steamer, 1202 tons gross, 86.07 length, built at Blackwall in the UK in 1859. Register of British Shipping, Sydney, folio 19 of 1878, Official No. 28737. About 71 lives were lost when the vessel ran aground on a voyage from Melbourne to Sydney on 30 May 1886.

New Guinea - from the shore line to 10m of water on southern side of Green Cape and east of the City of Sydney. An iron screw steamer, 2674 tons gross, 91.44m length, built at Sunderland in the UK in 1884. Register of British Shipping, Melb., folio 6 of 1893, Official No. 89634. Ran aground in fog on a voyage from Melbourne to Sydney on 13 February 1911.


OTHER SHIPWRECKS NOT YET FOUND

Amelia - cutter, Twofold Bay, 4/1828
Ann and Maria - brig, south of Green Cape 5/7/1869
Charles Webb - ketch, near Nine Mile Bch 28/3/1859
Dunkeld - barquentine, off Twofold Bay 27/6/1870
Ellen Simpson - barquentine, nth of Cape Howe 17/5/1866
George - sloop, Twofold Bay, Jan/Feb 1806
Jane Spiers - barquentine, Twofold Bay 14/1/1878
Mary - schooner, Twofold Bay 26/5/1821

Mimmie Dyke - schooner, sth of Twofold Bay 16/7/1866
Mina - brig, east of Green Cape 23/6/1888
Oliver Frost - 'Goodburz Point' 6/10/1856
Olivia - schooner, sth of Twofold Bay 19/11/1827
Tea Tephi - schooner, Twofold Bay 27/8/1894
Teazer - brigantine, off Twofold Bay 11/10/1854
Vision - ketch, Broad Water, nth of Twofold Bay 4/10/1858
William Bowness - barque, Twofold Bay, 22/10/1856