

the stubs of timber that once were its support.

### North Mole Wreck

Wreck of a barge. Typical of a type once common in the area and used in dredging of the harbour with steam grabs. It should lie under the new harbour extension but owing to its popularity as a novice dive site, the F.P.A. funded its moving with heavy crane barge. An easy and accessible dive.

### Omeo 1900

Newcastle built in 1853. An iron barque rigged steamer of 789 tons. It carried telegraph poles for the construction of the Darwin to Port Augusta line. Later it became a hulk after being blown ashore at Hamelin Bay. With 500 loads of timber aboard it again blew ashore at Coogee Beach, where its remains lie in about 2 metres of water.

### Ulidia 1893

An iron barque of 1,378 tons, lost whilst bringing rails from Barrow for the Albany to Fremantle line and was one of many similar vessels so engaged. During a severe storm it dropped its anchors in the hope of riding it out. Sadly they dragged and it struck the Stragglers and sank.

### Wyola



### Wyola 1912

The 306-ton steam tug *Wyola* worked in the Port of Fremantle. It was built in South Shields, UK in 1912 and run ashore at Robb Jetty for dismantling and scrapping in 1970. The stern frame can still be seen protruding from the beach while the bottom of the hull lies buried in the sand. A timber barge buried in the sand just to the north and sometimes visible is said to have been used in the scrapping of *Wyola*.

### Robb Jetty

C.Y. O'Connor Beach has the visible remains of some significant maritime sites. Robb Jetty was used for the unloading of cattle from the state's north-west to the abattoirs situated here that operated between 1890s–1970s, and along with the heritage listed abattoir chimney are a reminder of South Fremantle's history and industries in the area. Submerged piles extend about 300 metres out to sea. The site is an interesting shallow dive with structure and colourful marine growth.

For further information on historic shipwrecks contact the WA Museum Shipwreck Galleries or the WA Heritage Council:  
<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/collections/maritime/march/march.asp>  
<http://tourism.heritage.wa.gov.au>

The WA Museum in Fremantle is promoting wreck diving in the Fremantle area. Text by Jane Taylor, Penrhos College. Updated by Jessica Berry, Tracey Miller and Jessica Reynolds, WAM 2008.



#### Diving Notes

Wrecks are often hazardous. Access to the wrecks requires a boat. Divers need to be fit and qualified. A diver's flag must be displayed. Never dive alone or leave a boat unattended. Persons diving on these wrecks do so at their own risk. These wrecks are part of Western Australia's heritage. They are protected under legislation. Please enjoy them but do not disturb them.

# VISIT THE FREMANTLE WRECK TRAIL

## Introduction

Englishman, Captain Charles Fremantle, founded the city in his name in 1829. From this time many ships were wrecked along this coastline and around Fremantle itself. One of the very first, *Marquis of Anglesea*, was even briefly the governor's original residence in Fremantle! *Marquis of Anglesea* is long since buried under the south mole but many other early voyagers to the colony found the place a bit exposed.

Robb Jetty



The limestone reef across the mouth of the Swan River stopped settlers and traders in large vessels from using its shelter. They needed a mooring place and so the site of the modern fishing harbour became the rather open anchorage for the small fleets of visiting ships. This situation did improve with the building of the Long Jetty out from bathers beach in 1873, but it was C.Y. O'Connor, engineer, who provided the river mouth harbour in 1897. Until this some of the larger ships preferred to use Albany with its fine natural harbour but many did not, and so encountered landfall on a difficult coastline that could unleash punishing forces.

Islands, reefs, uncharted rocks, and poor navigational aids all played their part in the fate of many colonial period ships within sight of their destination. So many voyages from often far away lands ended disastrously. At the time of these losses the papers of the day carried news with sad regularity and campaigns began for improvements. This ultimately led to the new harbour.

It may well be that this was all driven by the commercial needs of a new colony that could ill afford the loss of important cargoes, rather than philanthropy and care for lost souls. Whatever the motive, the new facilities did transform Fremantle and make it a safer place to visit and develop the colony's economy. After all, the loss of a valuable cargo to a young settlement hit merchants and consumers alike. Many of the lost products were unavailable locally. Farmers needed tools, miners explosives and railways machinery. Everyone was to lose, except of course the modern sports diver.

As time passed on the seabed, the bones of the sailors were joined by the bones of the ships. Natural forces steadily broke the once fine vessels apart, but there was another effect. Just as the sea destroyed the ships in their last moments, stripping them of their dignity and turning them into underwater scrap heaps, it was eventually to preserve and hide their final remains.

They were certainly largely out of sight and out of mind, until of course the invention of the aqualung and the advent of scuba diving at about the time of World War II. The wrecks lay relatively still and their secrets were often locked inside them, waiting to be discovered by the new breed of explorers and pioneers, underwater ones.

The catalogue of shipping loss around Fremantle now provides hours of fascination and entertainment for sports divers. Many have been diving these wrecks for some time, and the sport is booming with many novice divers training each year in one of WA's many scuba schools. Now the staff of the in the Department

of Maritime Archaeology at the WA Museum have compiled a Wreck Trail for the area and have installed seabed information plinths to add to the enjoyment of these wrecks. Wreck Trails are becoming more and more popular around the world.

The WA Museum in Fremantle has a wealth of experience in the field. In investigating our coastline's shipwrecks, examining them with experts in excavation, conservation and other disciplines, they have been able to display some of the finest wreck artefacts in the world. Starting with the earliest WA wrecks of the Dutch United East India ships such as *Batavia* and *Zuytdorp*, to the later colonial ones such as those around Fremantle. Their work has made these things available to us all by preserving and displaying our heritage.



*Omeo*

Wrecks are an important part of our heritage. They are historic sites that future generations will want to enjoy, just as much as Fremantle's historic buildings. Within this scheme divers are encouraged to dive on interesting sites that are comparatively hard to damage. They are at the same time encouraged to consider their importance to us all. The wrecks should be dived for pleasure but with care for their structures and any artifacts within them.

## Fremantle Wreck Trail shipwrecks include

### *Carlisle Castle* 1899

It was built in Blackwall, London in 1868 to a famous design similar to the large naval frigates of the time. Rerigged as a barque to reduce the crew, it was wrecked on the northern edge of Coventry reef, July 11, 1899 whilst carrying railway irons and general cargo. The entire crew, over 20, were lost.

### *D9* 1962

Built in Fremantle during the depression years of the 1930s as the bucket dredge *Parmella*. It was sold and renamed as the *D9* after conversion to a suction dredge for work on the Kwinana channels. Now it lies in Cockburn Sound as a comparatively complete wreck, owing to its more recent sinking.

### *Elizabeth* 1839

Three-masted wooden barque of 192 tons that sought shelter from a gale off the Gage Roads, September 21, 1839. The wind took it however and it lost its sails and spars. Driven through a narrow reef opening off Cottesloe, it beached, and became a total wreck. No lives were lost.

### *Gemma* 1893

A wooden brig of 318 tons, German built in 1868 as the *H. Beenke*. Bringing coal in 1886 from Fleetwood England, it stayed for use as a hulk. Later in the year it ran aground requiring it to be re-floated and repaired. Its use as a hulk continued until August 15, 1893, when it was towed to Jervoise Bay and beached.

### Long Jetty 1921

This site is not a shipwreck. Nevertheless, it represents a fascinating dive amongst the remains of the jetty that was the first serious attempt at providing good harbour facilities. Its first section was built in 1873 and after years as a popular promenade it was demolished in 1921. The jetsam of many a visiting ship lies amongst