

# WARDANG ISLAND



State  
Heritage Branch  
Department of  
Environment and Planning

---

State Heritage Branch,

Department of Environment and Planning

Editing, design and illustrations by Technical Services Branch,

Department of Environment and Planning

c South Australian Department of Environment and Planning,

Adelaide, 1991

**ISBN 0 7243 8629 7**

Index 13281



**DISTRICT COUNCIL of CENTRAL YORKE PENINSULA**



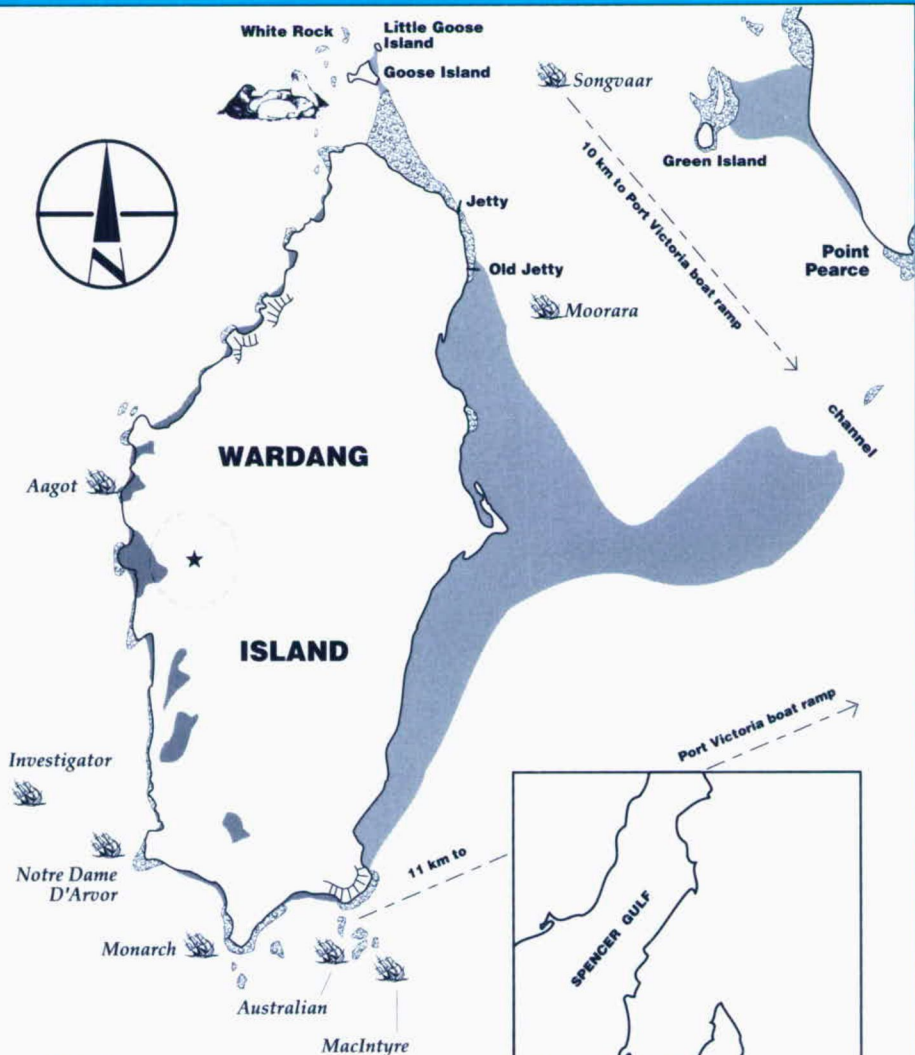
# WARDANG ISLAND



## CONTENTS

	page
Historical Summary	1
<i>Aagot</i>	8
<i>Monarch</i>	10
<i>Songvaar</i>	12
<i>S.S. Australian</i>	14
<i>S.S. Investigator</i>	16
<i>Notre Dame D'Arvor</i>	18
<i>MacIntyre</i>	20
<i>Moorara</i>	22





**LEGEND**



**Wreck**



**Navigational light**



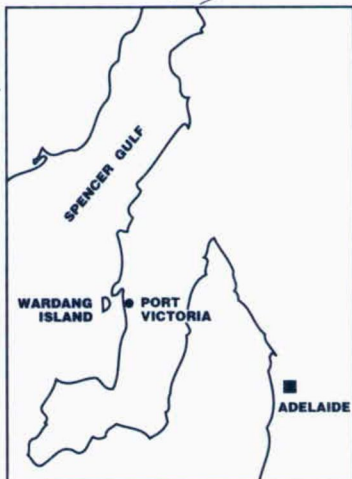
**Rocky outcrop**



**Sand**



**Cliff**



**LOCATION MAP**

**NOT TO SCALE**



# WARDANG ISLAND



## An Historical Summary

Wardang Island, sacred to the local *Narungga* Aboriginal people and known as 'Waralti' forms a natural breakwater against the south-westerlies which buffet the western coast of Yorke Peninsula, and provides a suitable anchorage for vessels of various size using Port Victoria. In 1802, Captain Matthew Flinders explored and charted Australia's southern coastline in the *Investigator*. He identified and named Point Pearce, but failed to recognise that an island (Wardang Island) existed to the south. Later the same year, after meeting Flinders at Encounter Bay, the French navigator Captain Nicolas Baudin retraced part of Flinders' voyage. He sighted Wardang Island and it subsequently appeared in charts of the voyage as 'Ile Dalberg'. The town of Port Victoria, the nearest mainland settlement to Wardang Island, was proclaimed in 1876. Small vessels began to use its sheltered waters and the early settlers, expecting an increase in trade, had a jetty built in 1878.



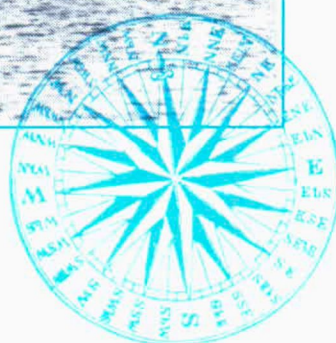


The value of Wardang Island as a breakwater was offset by the hazard it presented to shipping because it was difficult to see. Not until 1909 was a light placed on the island, in response to several wreckings.

For many years afterward mariners complained the light was inaccurately shown on their charts, and vessels continued to be lost.

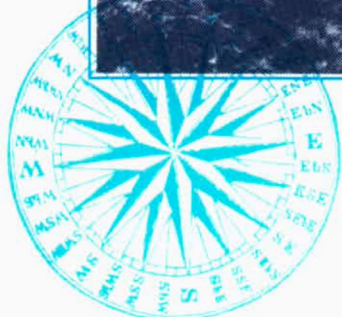
In the late nineteenth century South Australia became a major grain-producing region. By 1884, Port Victoria was regarded as the most important loading point on the western side of Yorke Peninsula, primarily for the wheat grown in the area. In 1914 it was the fourth largest overseas shipping port in South Australia. Schooners and ketches conveyed the bagged wheat from the jetty out to the large overseas sailing vessels waiting at the Wardang Island anchorage. The same small craft and the steam coasters brought wheat to Port Victoria from outlying areas. During the 1930s and 40s Port Victoria became a key terminal in the Grain Races from Australia to England and great ships like the *Parma*, *Passat*, *Moshulu*, *Lawhill*, *Pamir* and *Viking* anchored in its waters.





▲ *MOORARA* Composite schooner 100 tons





▲ *Anchor of S.S. INVESTIGATOR*



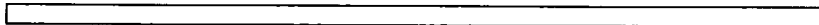


Today there are nine shipwrecks around Wardang Island.

Eight have been marked as part of this trail. They were associated with Port Victoria as an important trading port in the early 1900s. Little remains of the ninth ship, *Maid of Australia*. There was no loss of life in any of these wreckings. Of the eight shipwrecks, the *Monarch*, S.S. *Australian*, S.S. *Investigator*, *MacIntyre* and *Moorara* were small local schooners and coastal steamers used to carry wheat and other cargo to Port Victoria from outlying areas and to ferry wheat from the jetty to the larger vessels. The *Aagot*, *Notre Dame D'Arvor* and *Songvaar* were larger vessels used to carry wheat overseas. The *MacIntyre* and *Moorara* were built at Echuca in Victoria as river barges and they still show the barge style of construction. All the other vessels were built in Europe except the *Monarch*, which was built in Queensland in 1871 and is the oldest of the eight vessels.



Please dive, photograph and explore these shipwrecks if you wish, but do not interfere with them by disturbing or removing anything from them or by anchoring on top of the remains. An anchor can seriously damage a wreck.



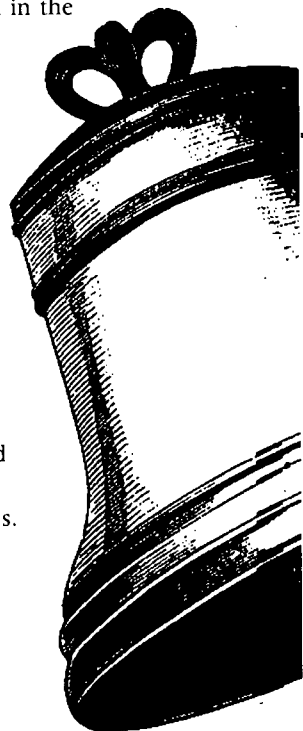
All the remains described are declared Historic Shipwrecks under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981 (SA)* and it is illegal to interfere with them in any way. You can travel to any of the eight shipwrecks most easily from Port Victoria, where you can use the town jetty, or the concrete boat ramps located about 1.5 kilometres south. This stretch of coastline is included in the weather forecast for 'Gulf Waters' and your boat must be prepared adequately for a minimum return voyage of 25 kilometres. There is a volunteer coastguard base at Port Victoria and an excellent small boat chart is available from the Department of Marine and Harbours and some shops.

The wrecks can be found using the enclosed transits and maps which are subject to tidal variations of 1-2 metres.

Next to each wreck is a concrete block with a glass plaque attached. This gives a brief history of the vessel. Please do not attempt to clean the glass plaque with a knife or metal scraper - a wipe with your hand or a plastic scraper is all that is needed to clean the plaque.

All diving should be carried out according to standard safe practices for recreational diving with the 'diver below' flag well visible.

There is a scuba tank filling station in one of the two caravan parks situated in



Port Victoria. You will need permission to land on Wardang Island from the Point Pearce Community Council (telephone 088 367 205). Accommodation is available on the island.

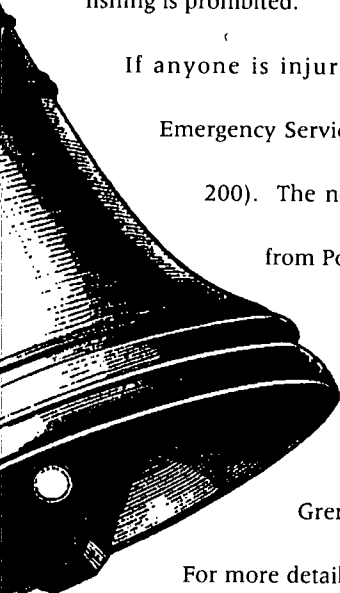
For an additional diving experience, you can see Australian sea lions around the Goose Islands and White Rock area. This area is an aquatic reserve and fishing is prohibited.

If anyone is injured while diving, you should contact the Diver Emergency Service at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (telephone 008 088 200). The nearest regional hospital is at Maitland, 25 kilometres from Port Victoria.

For further information contact the Maritime Archaeologist, State Heritage Branch, Department of Environment and Planning, 55 Grenfell St, Adelaide (telephone 08 216 7777).

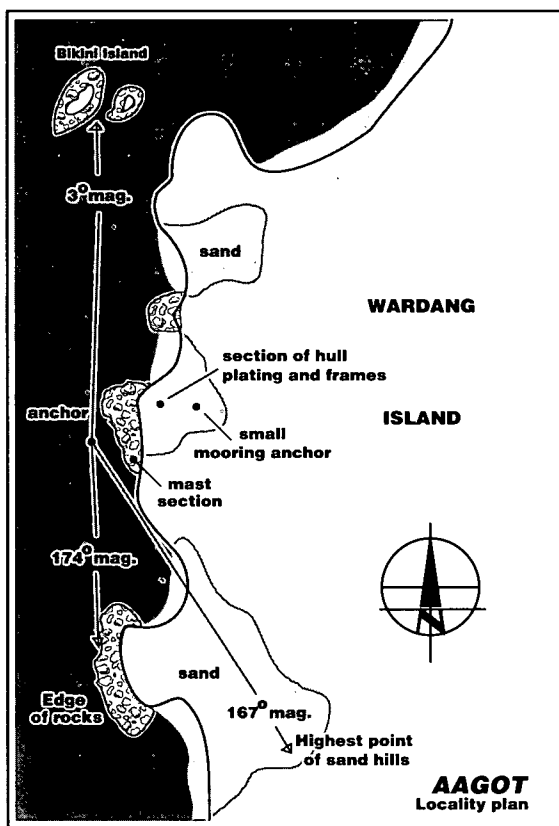
For more details about the general maritime history of Port Victoria, including details of artefacts recovered from some of the shipwrecks, contact the local branch of the National Trust.

Their Museum is located at the beginning of the jetty at Port Victoria. A good general contact at Port Victoria is the kiosk (telephone 088 342 098), located next to the Museum.



## *Aagot* (1882-1907)

The *Aagot* was formerly known as the *Firth of Clyde* and built as a three-masted iron barque at Glasgow in 1882. The vessel measured 228.1 feet (69.5 metres) in length, 36.1 feet (11.0 metres) in breadth, 21.5 feet (6.6 metres) in depth and displaced 1242 gross tons. The vessel was built by Dobie and Co. and owned by H. Jacobsen of Norway.

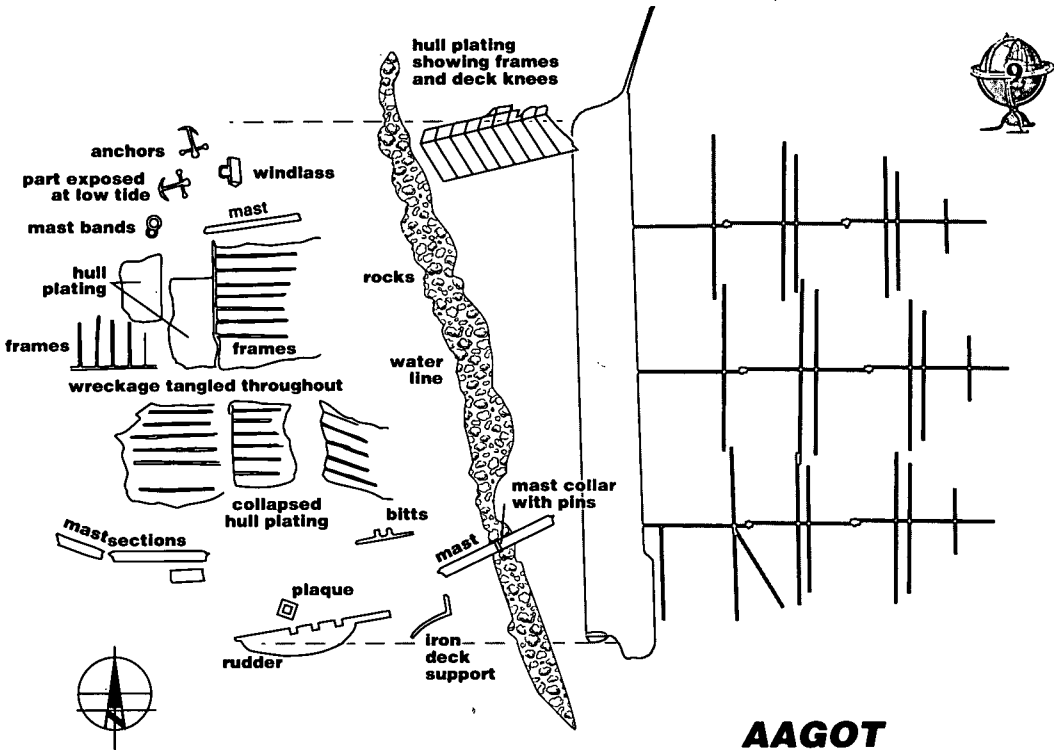


On 11 October 1907 the vessel proceeded to Port Victoria to load a cargo of wheat after calling at Port Adelaide in ballast.

During the early morning of 12 October, the vessel grounded on rocks on the western side of Wardang Island. Captain Nielsen was reported to have

complained bitterly about the lack of any form of light on the island.

The remains of the *Aagot* are scattered amongst rocks underwater (depth about three to four metres) and on the island. At the bow end of the wrecksite, which points to the north, two admiralty pattern anchors lie side by side. A windlass is close by. One anchor has part of its stock exposed above the surface of the water. Iron hull plating, interior frames and mast sections lie broken and scattered to the south and finish approximately at the plaque where the rudder (1.5 metres behind the plaque) is located. You can see a section of the mizzen-mast lying on the rocks next to this. A ten-metre section of the iron hull, deck knees and beams is also on the island, about 80 metres to the north.



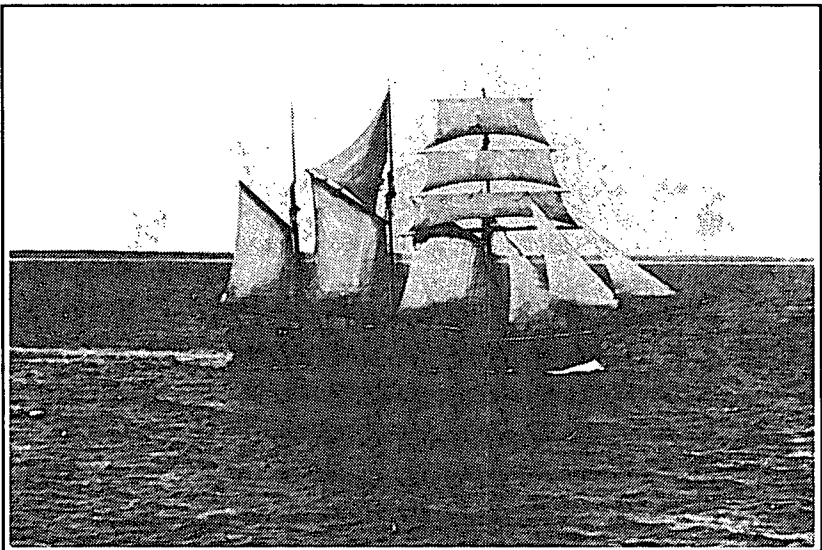


### *Monarch (1871-1909)*

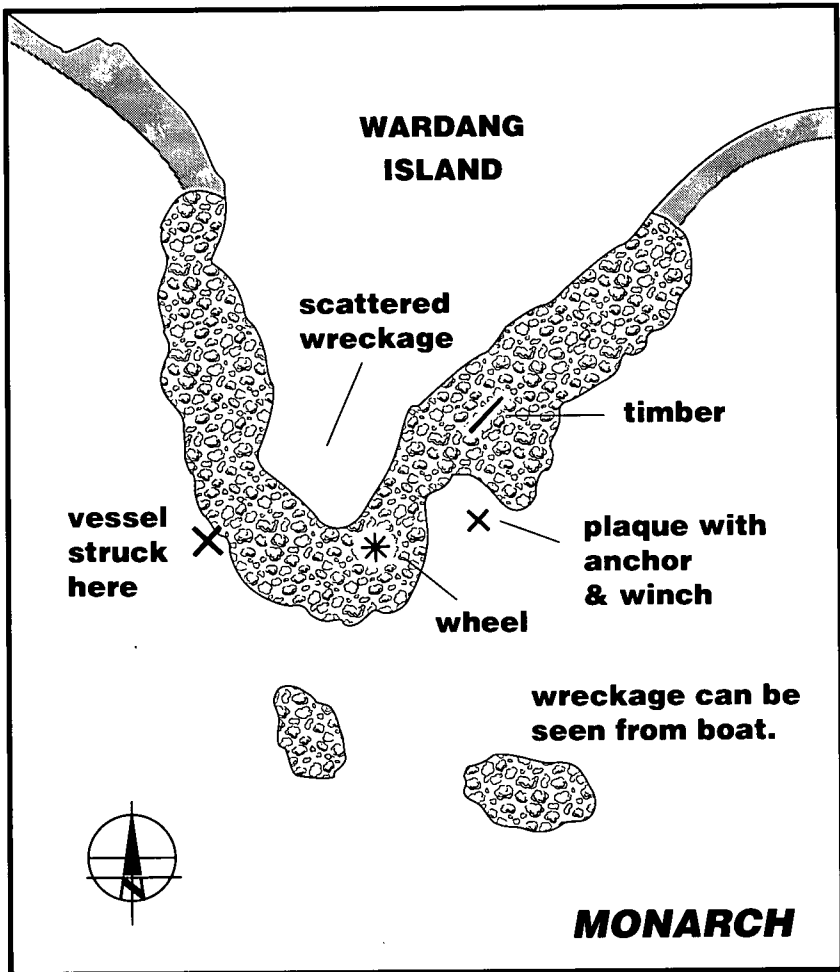
---

The *Monarch* was a three-masted wooden schooner built at Cleveland, Moreton Bay, Queensland, in 1871. It is the oldest of the vessels in this trail. The vessel measured 109 feet (33.2 metres) in length, 23.9 feet (7.3 metres) in breadth, 7.6 feet (2.3 metres) in depth and displaced 132 gross tons. It was built by J. Robinson and owned by Richard Fricker and John Campbell. The *Monarch* left Port Victoria at about 5am on 1 April 1909 bound for Warrens Beach at Cowell with a crew of six and no cargo. While trying to sail around the southern part of Wardang Island and head northwards, the vessel 'missed stays' (a maritime term for failing to tack) and an anchor had to be dropped to try and stop it from being swept onto the rocks. The anchor would not hold and the southerly tide and swell drove it onto the rocks where it soon became a total wreck.

#### ▼ *MONARCH off Port Victoria*



The *Monarch* would have hit the southern-most protrusion of rocks in this area and as there is generally surf rolling in there, the plaque was not placed on this spot but in a more sheltered location next to some wreckage. This wreckage comprises an admiralty pattern anchor and deck winch in two metres of water. Scattered on the rocks and island from north to south-west (within a 100-metre radius) are timber planking remains, another winch, an iron axle and wheel, an iron deck knee and remains of iron fastening bolts.



## *Songvaar (1884-1912)*

---

The *Songvaar* was formerly known as the *Barcore* and built as a three-masted iron ship at Stockton, England, in 1884. The vessel measured 278.6 feet (84.9 metres) in length, 40.8 feet (12.4 metres) in breadth, 24.5 feet (7.5 metres) in depth and displaced 2128 gross tons. It was built by Richardson, Duck and Co. and owned by a Norwegian company, Sven O. Stray and Co.

The *Songvaar* sank on the same day as the *Titanic* but unlike that disaster, the *Songvaar's* story was not tragic in terms of human loss.

Having been loaded with 40 000 bags of wheat at the outer Wardang Island anchorage, the *Songvaar* was preparing to sail to Europe.

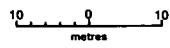
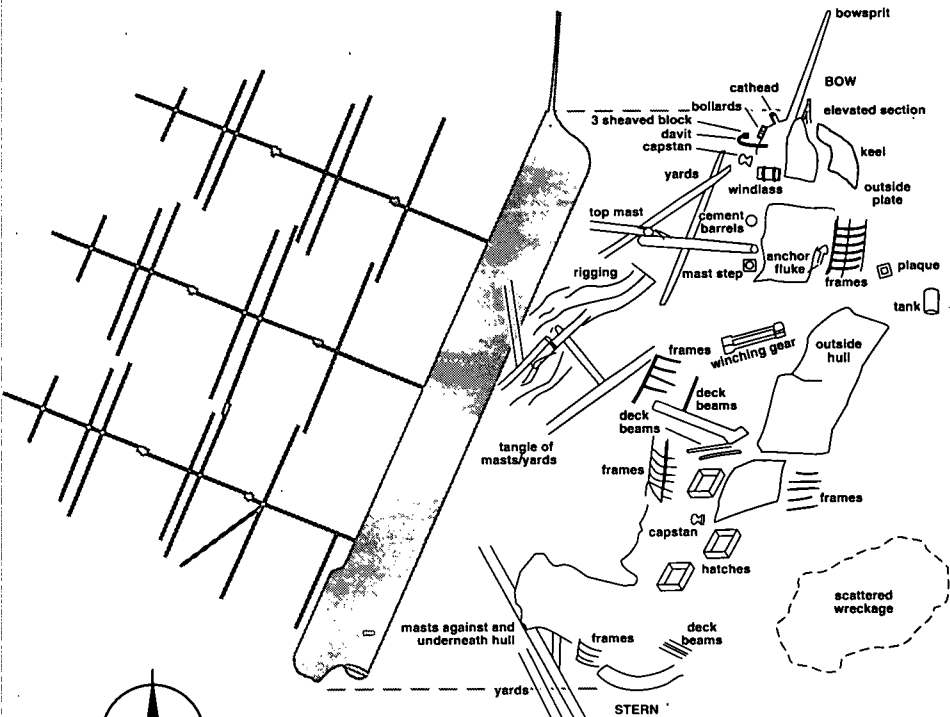
On 14 April 1912, while Captain Isaksen was ashore arranging clearance, it was noticed that the vessel was listing to port. It was taking water rapidly and an inspection of the outside of the hull by a diver found that one of its own anchors had pierced the hull on the starboard side, just behind the fore-mast. All attempts to salvage the vessel proved unsuccessful. For eight years it sat upright until it was damaged by a storm and subsequently demolished with explosives because it was a hazard to shipping.

The remains of the *Songvaar* are the most extensive of all the eight Wardang Island shipwrecks and are located in eight metres of water. At the north-eastern end you can see the stem and keel of the bow section lying over on its port side. The plaque has been placed seven metres east of the infamous anchor that sank the *Songvaar*. The fore- and main-masts together with yards and standing rigging can be seen lying on the western side, while outside iron plating and frames lie on the eastern side.

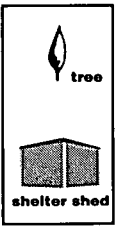
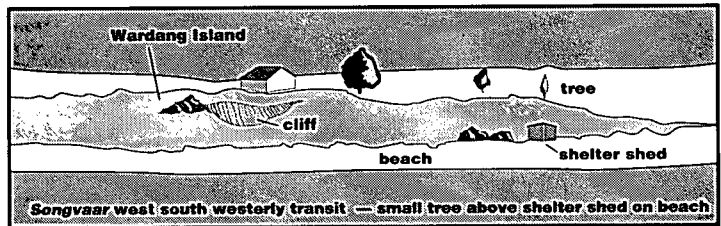
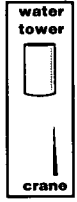
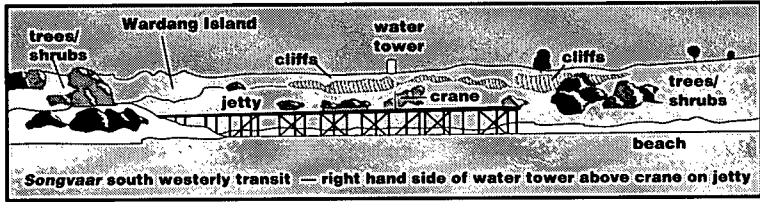
The curved section of the stern is about 67 metres south of the plaque.

---





**SONGVAAR**



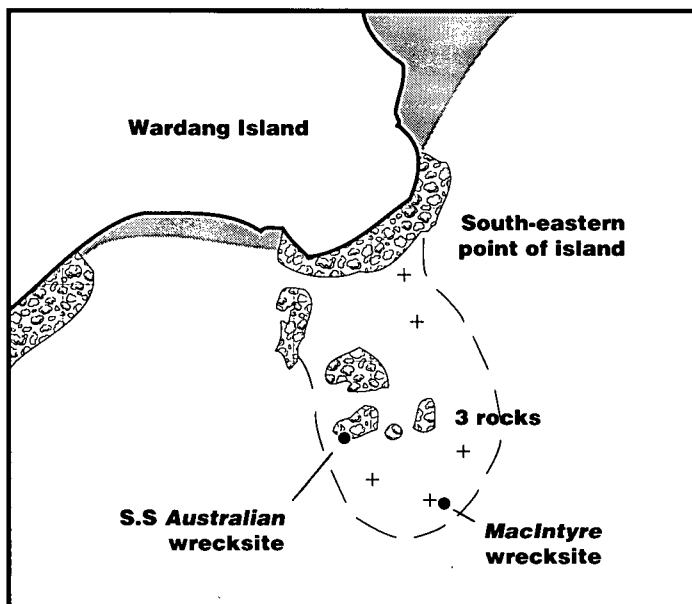
## S.S. *Australian* (1879-1912)

---

The *Australian* was a schooner-rigged iron screw steamer built at Dundee, Scotland in 1879. The vessel measured 160.3 feet (48.9 metres) in length, 22.5 feet (6.9 metres) in breadth, 10.5 feet (3.2 metres) in depth and displaced 352 gross tons. The vessel was built by Gourlay Bros and Co. and owned by the West Coast Shipping Co. Ltd.

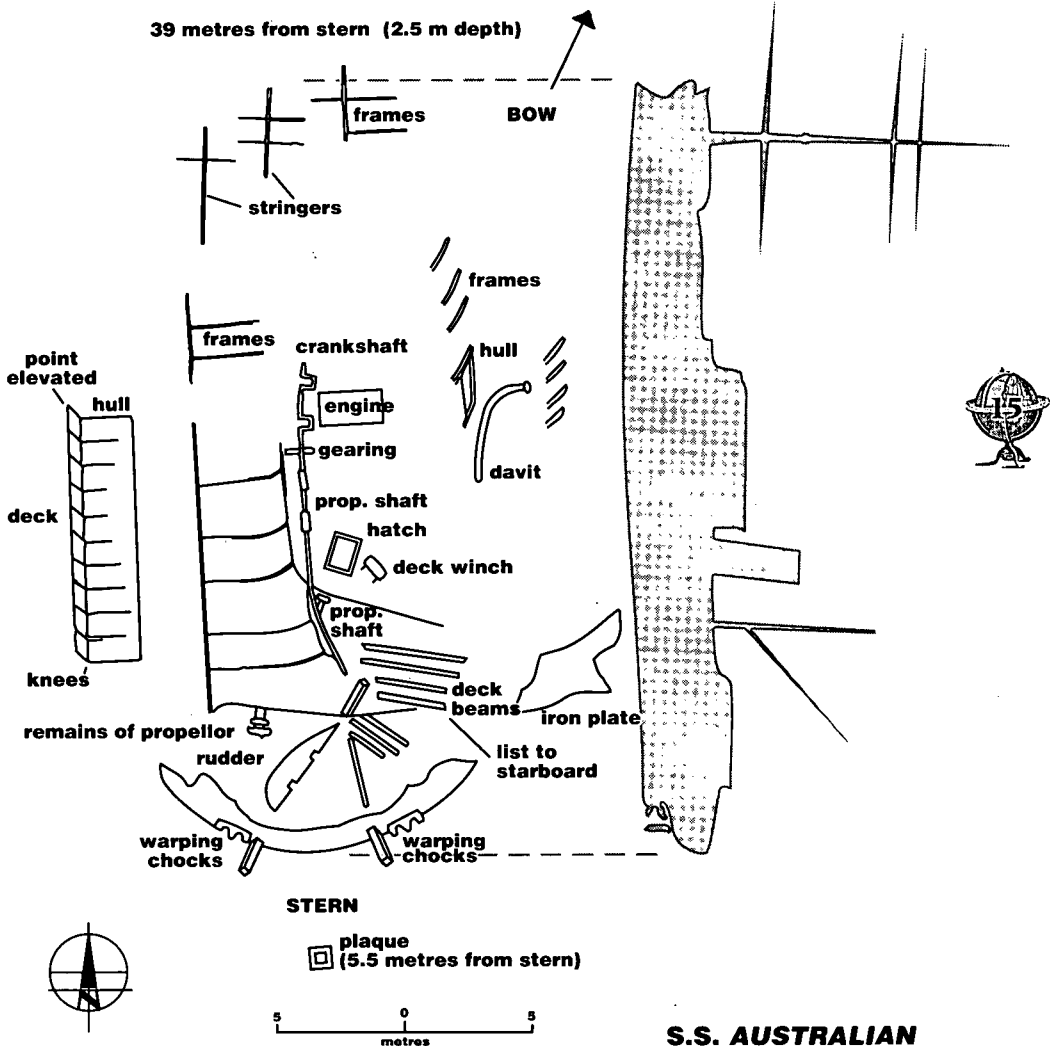
The *Australian* worked as a coaster carrying wheat from South Australian outports. On its final voyage the vessel was carrying 3300 bags of wheat from Elliston, Eyre Peninsula, to Port Victoria. During a blinding sand storm on 8 May 1912, the *Australian* struck the south-eastern corner of Wardang Island. Captain Gustafsen, who was in charge of the vessel, was also involved in the wrecking of the S.S. *Investigator*, six years later.

The bow of the *Australian* has been washed inshore between rocks about 100 metres north – east of the stern.





The stern, lying in nine metres of water, is found listing over to starboard where the rudder and propellor remains can be seen. The propellor shaft runs from here to the crankshaft and engine remains. Fish life is generally abundant, making this a most enjoyable dive.



## S.S. *Investigator* (1882-1918)

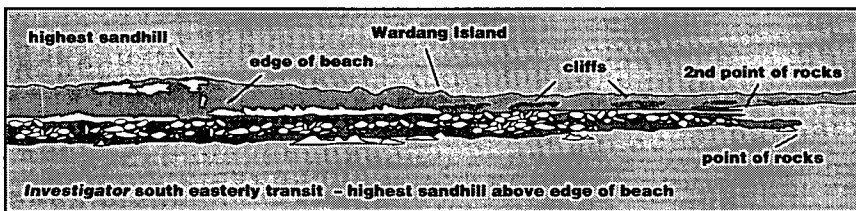
---

The *Investigator* was a three-masted schooner-rigged iron screw steamer built at Glasgow, Scotland, in 1882. The vessel measured 210.3 feet (64.1 metres) in length, 28.3 feet (8.6 metres) in breadth, 12.5 feet (3.8 metres) in depth and displaced 605 gross tons. The vessel was built by D. and W. Henderson and Co. and owned by the Adelaide Steamship Co. Ltd.

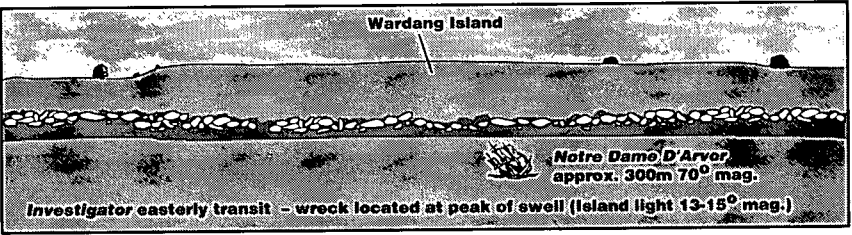
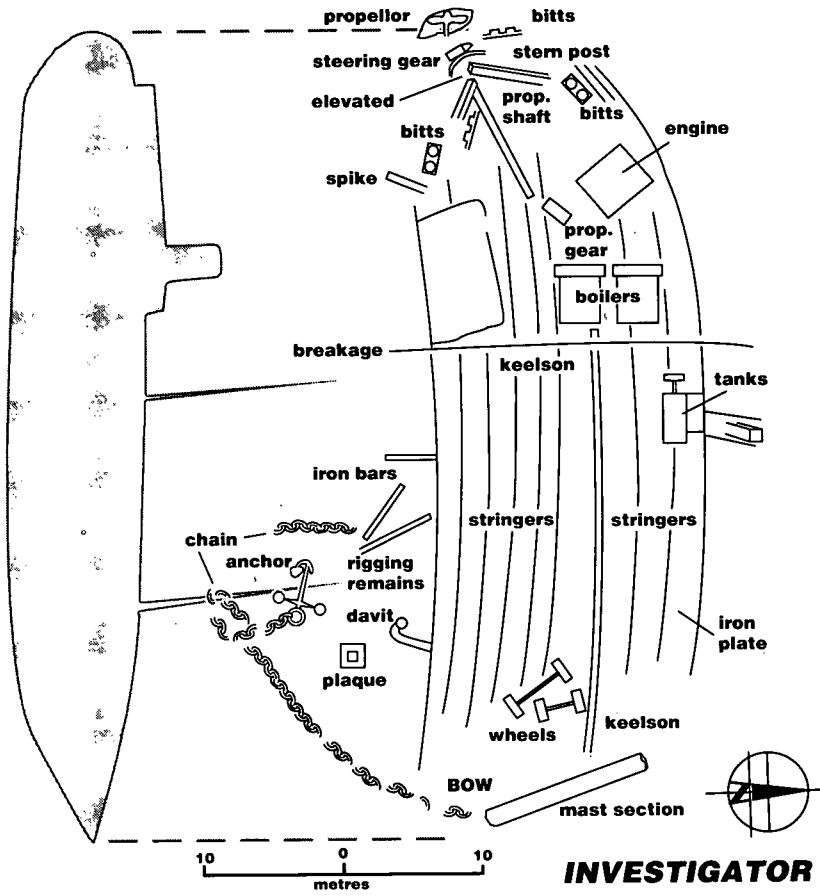
On a voyage from Port Pirie to Port Victoria with a cargo of about 200 tons of superphosphate, the vessel grounded on rocks to the south-west of Wardang Island during the early morning of 24 April 1918.

A Marine Board enquiry cleared the mate of any blame, because of the inaccuracy of the chart, although they suspended his certificate for three months as he did not notify Captain Gustafsen when the vessel was approaching the island light. Although the sea was calm at the time of the wrecking, it later increased, preventing salvage of the vessel.

The remains show a collapsed screw steamer similar to the S.S. *Australian*, with the stern section comprising propeller remains and shaft. The engines and boiler can be recognised most easily. Like the *Australian*, the *Investigator* has been severely damaged by the souvenir hunters of the 1960s, although the propeller has escaped total destruction. The bow section is relatively flattened with the most distinctive features being the internal frames, keelson and stringers leading to an admiralty pattern anchor, chain and a mast section.



The plaque is located two metres east of the anchor in about five metres of water. The direction from here to the stern is about due west.



*Notre Dame D'Arvor (1902-1920)* \_\_\_\_\_

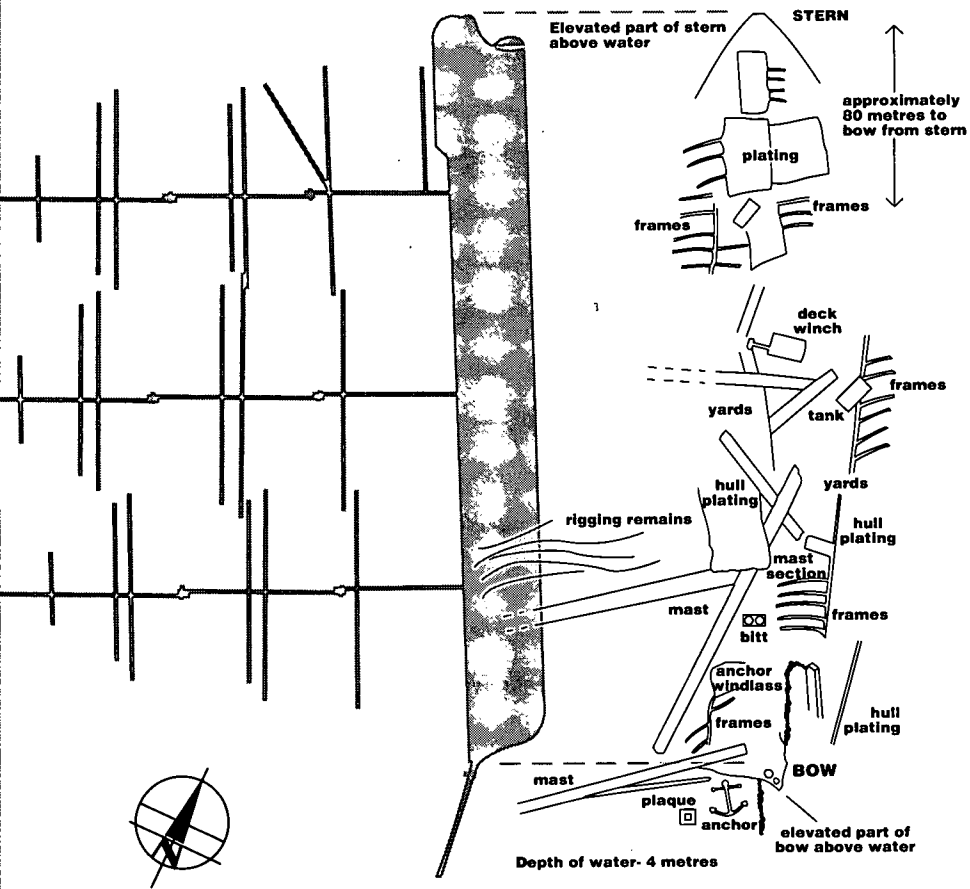
The *Notre Dame D'Arvor* was a three-masted steel barque built at Nantes, France, in 1902. The vessel measured 276.8 feet (84.4 metres) in length, 40.4 feet (12.3 metres) in breadth and 22.5 feet (6.9 metres) in depth and displaced 2646 gross tons. It was built by Atel and Chant de la Loire and was owned by the Societe Generale d'Armement.

After sailing from France in ballast to load wheat at Port Victoria, Captain Menguy was looking for a suitable place to anchor as he approached Wardang Island during the evening of 20 March 1920. The vessel grounded on the rocks on the south-western corner of the island. It was claimed that this was because the Wardang Island light was inaccurately placed on the chart used by Captain Menguy. Attempts to tow the vessel off failed, and an accidental fire on board a few months later totally gutted it. The intact hull, masts and some yards remained upright for ten years before they broke down.

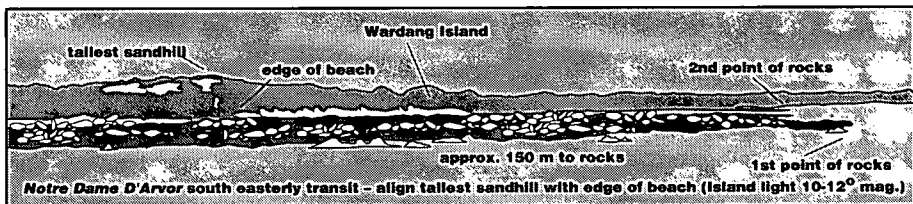
Two small sections of the bow and stern of the vessel protrude less than a metre out of the water at low tide, showing the extent of the wrecksite. The bow points in a southerly direction and this section contains the plaque, three metres from one of the vessel's bower anchors. Lying back toward the stern are the remains of hull plating and frames, with large sections of the masts and yards lying to the west. Much of the remains are covered with weed but the vessel's anchor windlass can be seen at the bow end.

The depth of water is about four metres.





## NOTRE DAME D'ARVOR





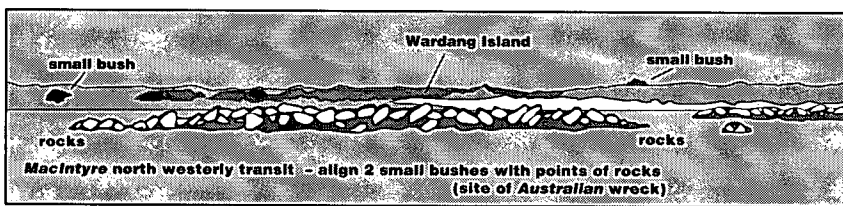
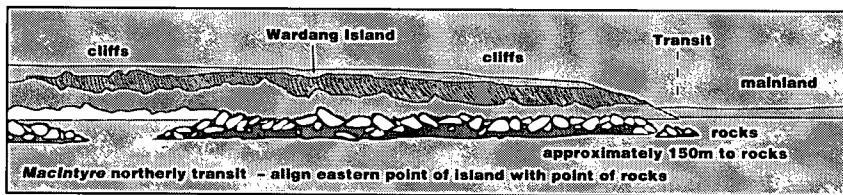
## *MacIntyre* (1877-1927)

The *MacIntyre* was originally built as an iron barge at Echuca in Victoria in 1877 and used on the River Murray until 1902, when it was altered to a three-masted schooner. An auxiliary engine was fitted in 1915. The vessel measured 109.5 feet (33.4 metres) in length, 21.2 feet (6.5 metres) in breadth and 7.5 feet (2.3 metres) in depth and displaced 127 gross tons. It was built by Robert Leys and owned by J. Campbell and R. Fricker and Co. Ltd, and was used to carry mail, passengers and wheat. Shortly before its last voyage it had been laid up at Port Adelaide.

The *MacIntyre* was outward bound from Port Victoria after having topped up its cargo of wheat which had been loaded at Port Rickaby. Under the command of Captain Lingard, the vessel reportedly struck a rock on the south end of Wardang Island at midnight on 1 April 1927.

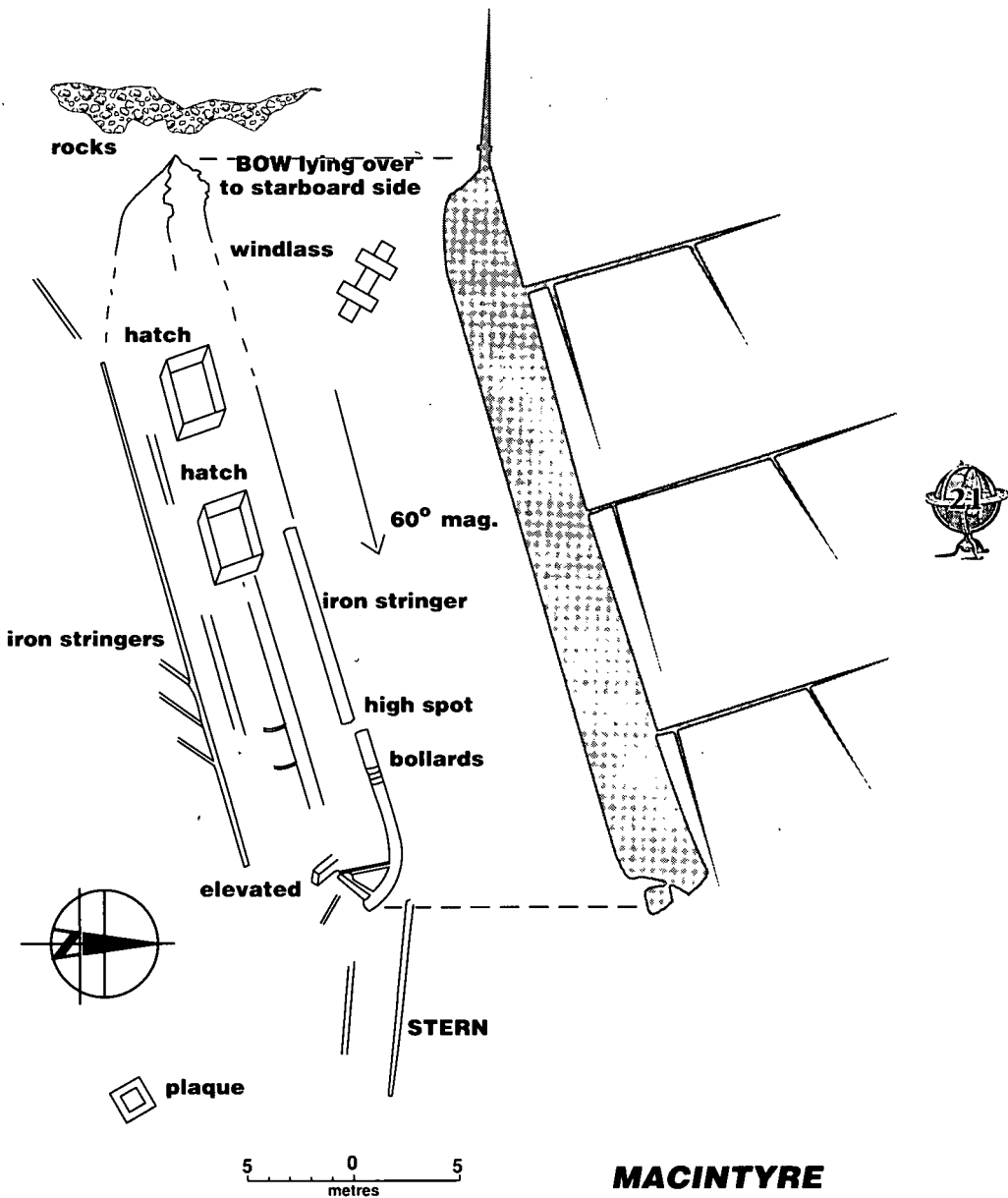
The remains of the *MacIntyre* are not intact like those of the *Moorara*. They are positioned with the bow in five metres of water and the stern in ten metres, with the bow pointing in a south-westerly direction.

The iron bow is lying on its starboard side with the windlass lying in a sandy depression to the north-west.



An iron hatch, frames and stringers are lying flat on the reef and run back 30 metres to the stern which is scattered and broken down.

The plaque is eight metres south-east of the stern end in a sandy depression.



## *Moorara* (1909-1975)

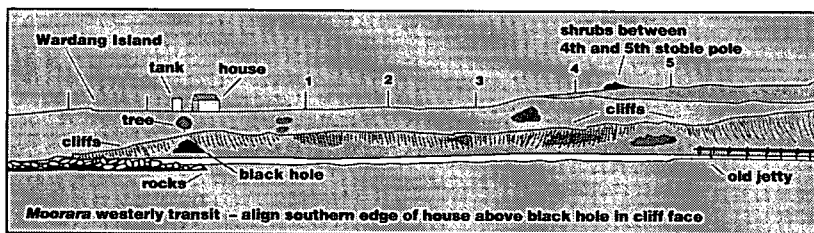
---

The *Moorara* was originally built in 1909 as a composite barge at Echuca in Victoria by A.J. Inches, and used on the River Murray.

In 1930 it was altered to a three-masted fore-and-aft rigged schooner with an auxiliary motor. The vessel measured 111 feet (33.8 metres) in length, 21 feet (6.4 metres) in breadth and 5.3 feet (1.6 metres) in depth and displaced 100 gross tons. At the end of its career the vessel was owned by the Aboriginal Lands Trust.

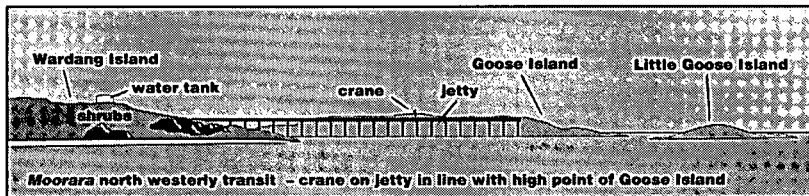
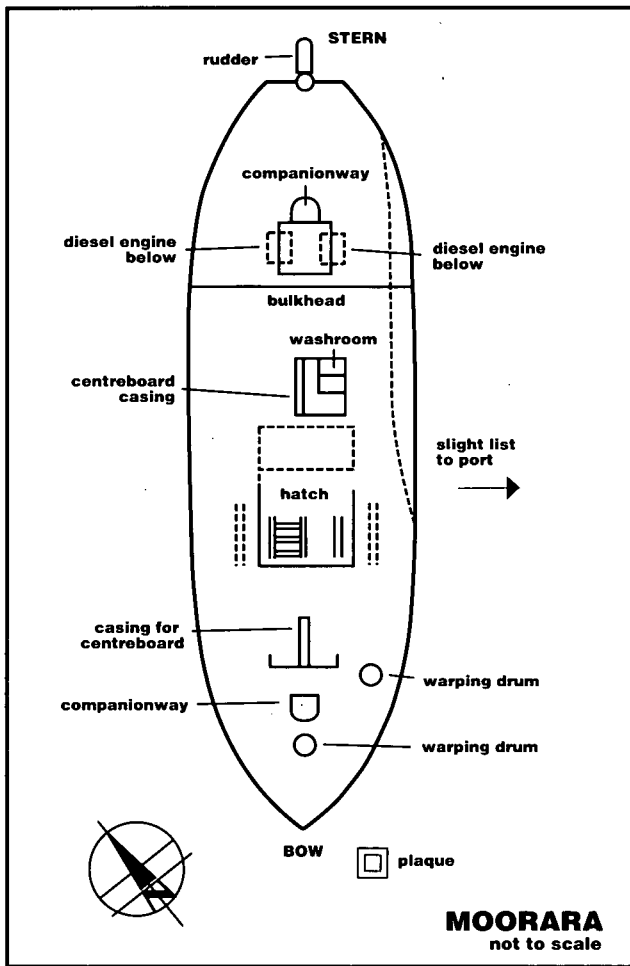
After its conversion into a sailing/auxiliary motor vessel, the *Moorara* was used as a local coaster and as a 'lighter' to ferry wheat from the Port Victoria jetty to the larger vessels waiting at the anchorage. Towards the end of its career the *Moorara* carried water and supplies to Wardang Island. On 25 August 1975 while at anchor off Wardang Island the vessel sank during a 'blow'.

The remains of the *Moorara* consist of the hull still basically intact and sitting upright, but listing slightly to port. The masts and rigging have been salvaged. As they lie in only four metres of water, the deck of the bow and stern are only one to two metres underwater. Major features of the hull are the two centreboard casings, the hatch showing the frames and stringers below, two companionways, a deck house (washroom) and the engine room.



Timber planking on the hull is still intact and the rudder, located at the north-eastern end of the vessel, is typical of those used on river barges.

The plaque is five metres south of the bow.



NOTES

