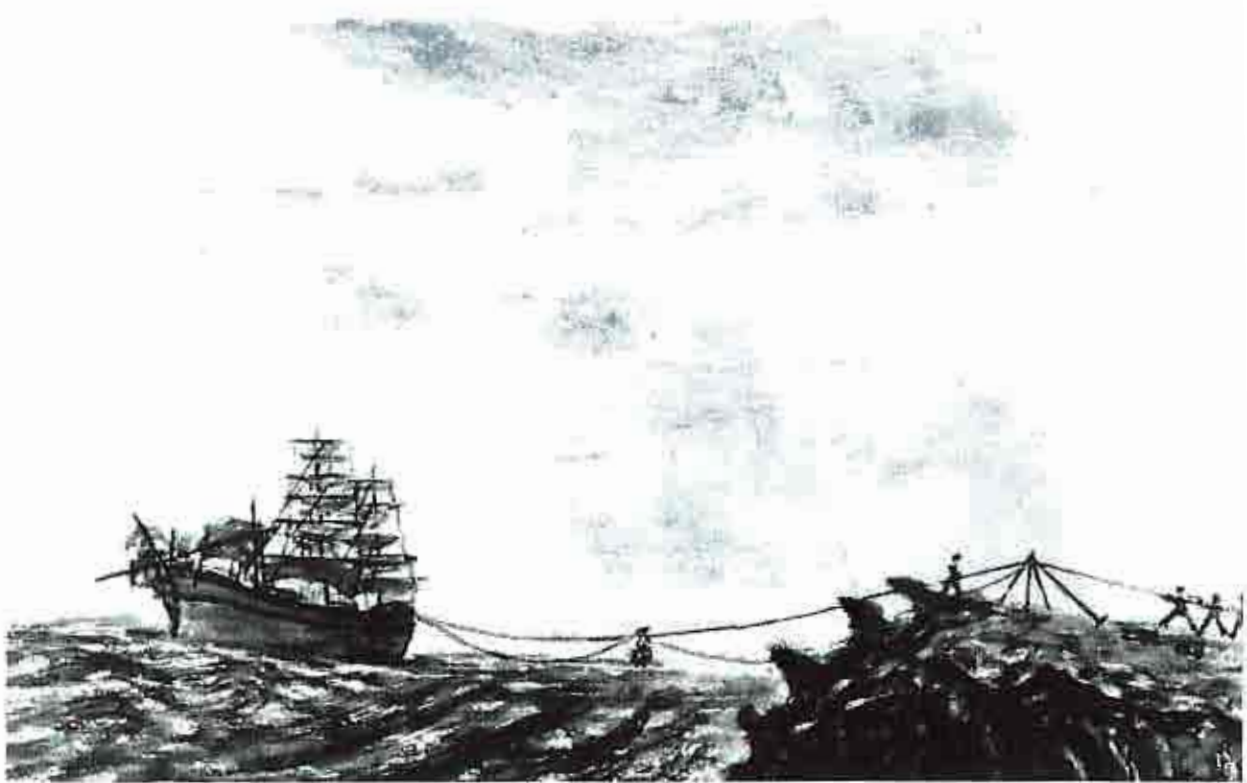


STRANGERS ON THE SHORE

**Shipwreck survivors and their contact with
Aboriginal groups in Western Australia 1628-1956**



City of York painting by Johnny Cudgely, Aboriginal prisoner on Rottnest Island WA.

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Lesley Silvester, November 1998

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Introduction

In the introduction to his book 'Island Nation,' Frank Broeze declares

'...the role of the sea as an integral and vital part of our national experience has remained largely unexplored.'¹

This report and its associated database will help to redress that imbalance. It contains all known European and Asian shipwrecks around Western Australia's coast and islands where survivors have had indigenous social contact. The idea to compile this database was that of Dr. Michael McCarthy, Curator of Maritime Archaeology at the Western Australian Maritime Museum. I joined with him in March 1998 for the purpose of researching material from Western Australia and designing a data base to contain this information.

This research has been presented in four ways:

1. As follows in **this report**.
2. All details entered on to an **electronic data base** using Filemaker Pro 3 software for Macintosh. (See Appendices One and Two)
3. **Hard copy printouts** from the data base, and photocopies of relevant material have been put into three files to go into the library at the Western Australian Maritime Museum. (Tabled at presentation Curtin University 27 October 1998)
4. A **paper** was **presented** at the annual Australian Institute for Maritime Archaeology conference held in Darwin in October 1998 and is in preparation for publication. (see footnote 2)

This is intended to be 'stage one' of an ongoing project to eventually cover the whole of Australia. The research lays down a cornerstone for future study by anthropologists, regional indigenous groups, historians and others who may wish to access the initial work and build upon it. It is an insight into a little known part of Australian history and should also contribute to the process of reconciliation with our indigenous peoples. The research is especially interesting as it deals with a different set of circumstances from those usual in contact situations. Instead of a 'superior' coloniser meeting with a 'savage' inhabitant, the shipwreck survivors are often destitute and lost, bereft of their trappings of power.²

When research began, it was intended to look at incidents of 'first contact', that is, where either Aboriginals, Europeans or Asians were meeting for the first time. However, the research parameters inevitably expanded as it became apparent that there were many 'contact incidents' of varying types. It was felt these could be usefully included in the database to enhance its usefulness as a compact source for further study. As time went by, it was clear that the research could be divided into sections, with some incidents dealt with as groups. The report has therefore been divided into the categories of

- **Contact Art:** This deals with depictions referring to shipwrecks.
- **Possible Contact:** Many shipwreck survivors were forced to walk long distances to reach safety. Some of these distances were such that it seems highly likely that they met with indigenous people. There are also cases where there have been survivors whose fate is unknown. There are various theories about what may have happened to these survivors and these are discussed in this section.
- **Verified Contact:** This covers all known shipwreck survivor contact incidents.

Section One:

Wreck incidents connected with Contact Art

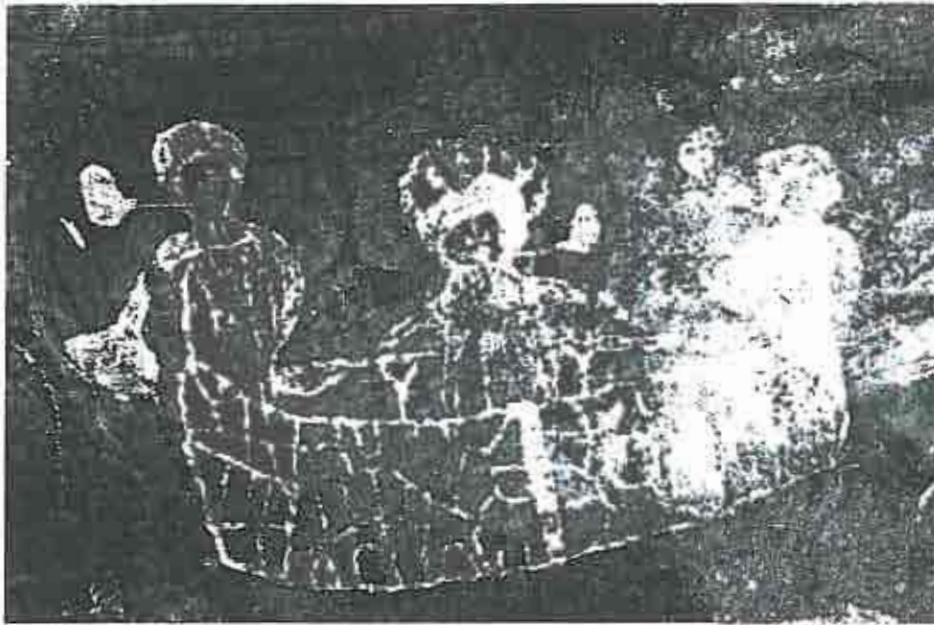
There are a number of paintings and petroglyphs (rock engravings) associated with ships that may point to contact with Aboriginal groups. They do not necessarily point to contact from shipwreck survivors, but do show that Aboriginal groups were aware of early visitors to these shores. Dating of this art is not accurate and therefore cannot be used to determine if and when first contacts may have occurred. There are certain characteristics within the artwork which can be used to argue time frames for particular paintings, for instance whether the depictions are of sailing ships or steam ships or types of Macassan perahu.

The earliest painting to date appears in a gallery of 'Bradshaw paintings' on Mitchell Plateau in the Kimberleys. This is of a boat that is possibly of Asian origin and one of the few depictions of such craft in the Aboriginal art of north-western Australia. There is speculation that these paintings may be 16,000 years old. According to Grahame Walsh, there are other such 'Bradshaw' boats in other galleries.³

The only other place that rock paintings of Macassan perahus have been found is on Groote Eylandt. Otherwise all such depictions have been done as bark paintings in many areas of Arnhem land.⁴

In the north-west of Western Australia are several sites with European style ships. In a cave on Bigge Island, along with some Wandjina style paintings, are at least five such paintings. One shows a boat being rowed, complete with rowlocks, by three persons smoking pipes.⁵ It appears likely that these are depictions of Europeans. It may be that they are shipwreck survivors reaching the shore, or possibly crew from whaling ships looking to renew water supplies.

Another group of ship depictions can be found at Indenoona, a contact site 32 kms southeast of Roebourne and 25 kms from the coast.⁶ These are petroglyphs, the principal method of rock art in the east Pilbara area. Among a number of other engravings are a sailing ship and four steam ships.⁷



Bigge Island rock painting

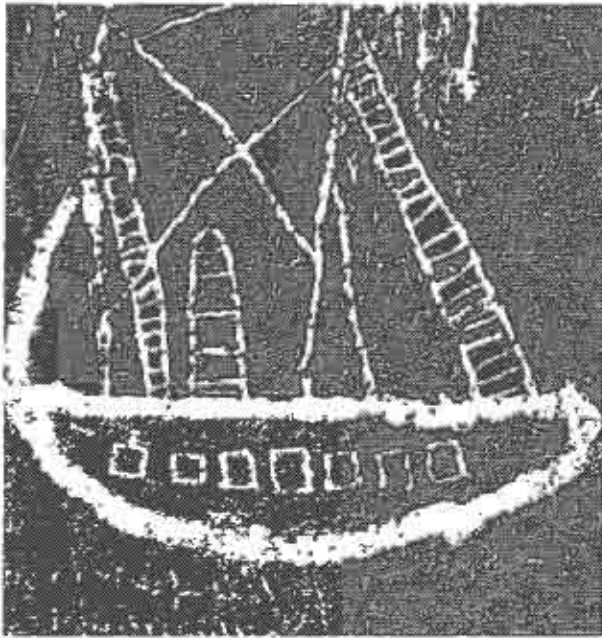
*Source: WA Maritime Museum, Maritime Archaeology Dept
Wreck Inspection Report 1978*

This intriguing assemblage of contact evidence deserves further investigation. There are a number of sites throughout Australia where ships are found depicted in Aboriginal rock art and a synthesis of these sites and what they contain would be a valuable adjunct to all contact studies.

In the Western Australian Contact Shipwreck database there are two wrecks associated with contact art.

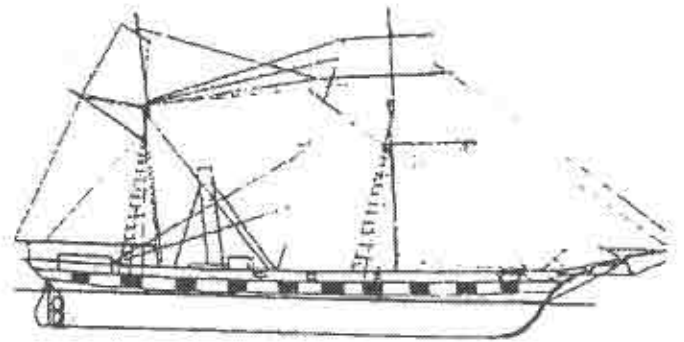
Xantho

The *Xantho* was the first coastal steamer to ply the Western Australian coast. The ship has an interesting history and as one of the first iron ships to be excavated has provided new directions in maritime archaeology and maritime archaeological conservation.



Walga rock painting

*Source: WA Maritime Museum, Maritime Archaeology
Dept. File MA 460 76 15 Wreck Zuytdorp*



Line drawing of SS Xantho

*Source: WA Maritime Museum Maritime Archaeology
Dept. File MA 460 76 15 Wreck Xantho*

The *Xantho* left Port Gregory 16 November 1872, heavily loaded with a cargo that included 100 tonnes of lead ore.⁸ It sprang a leak soon after leaving port and sank at the mouth of the harbour.⁹

This wreck incident has given rise to speculation about a possible contact painting at Walga Rock, near Cue. This painting has not been dated positively but seems to have been in existence from at least the turn of the century, according to newspaper reports.¹⁰ It was initially thought to be a representation of the *Zuytdorp* (1702-1711), which may point to it having been drawn by a *Zuytdorp* survivor, by an Aboriginal who had either seen the *Zuytdorp*, or spoken to survivors, or to other Aborigines who may have had contact with survivors or may have seen the ship. One story of 1968¹¹ says the painting was done by an Aboriginal girl with fair hair. This is just one of several reports that surfaced in the late 1800's that mention Aboriginal tribes with distinctive European colouring and features.¹² This conjecture continued during the late 1960s and early 1970s when

investigation was carried out by the WA Museum to attempt to determine the age and origin of the painting.¹³

However, Dr. Ian Crawford¹⁴ has suggested that the painting could be of the *SS Xantho*. Looking at a drawing of the *Xantho* and comparing it with the rock painting, similarities become apparent, including the funnel and false gun-ports which were a feature on late 19th century vessels. (Illustration p 4) Some writing can be seen below the ship, which has been described as both Arabic,¹⁵ and imitation writing.¹⁶

There are other stories about the origin of this painting. It is said to be painted by Sammy Hassan around 1917. Sammy was a Malay pearl diver who lived with Aborigines and had an Aboriginal wife. He was illiterate and 'drew writing as he remembered it'¹⁷ which may be linked to the description of the writing as being 'imitation'.¹⁸ He is said to have accidentally shot himself in the leg in 1920, just a few miles from Walga. He was found a few days later and taken to hospital, but he died from his injury.

A similar story exists about Sammy in which he has a leg taken by a shark. At the time he was camping on Dirk Hartog Island, at an outcamp known as Sammy's Well.¹⁹ According to the story he dragged himself ashore but died in the camp.

Another suggestion is that the painting was done as a hoax, and is the copy of an illustration of the *Batavia* printed in the *Western Mail* in 1897.²⁰

The painting itself does overlay older paintings and the evidence is in favour of Sammy being the artist. Charles Broadhurst, owner of the *Xantho*, brought over 200 Malays as divers in the 1870's, so Sammy may well have been employed by Broadhurst. He would therefore be familiar with steamships and could have been a crew member of the *Xantho* at some time.

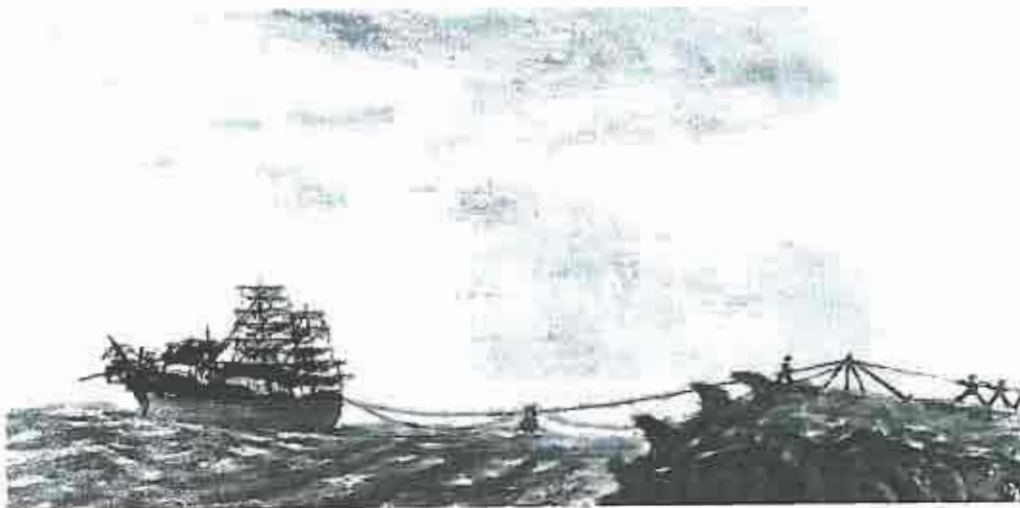
It is not possible to say at this time who painted this ship, or how long it has existed but it is interesting that such a painting should exist 300km from the coast.

City of York

The second wreck associated with contact art is the *City of York*. This ship was wrecked on the west side of Rottnest Island on 12 July 1899. The Captain was unfamiliar with the area and misinterpreted a signal from the lighthouse keeper and ran onto the reef.²¹ Captain Jones and his crew took to the two lifeboats but one overturned. A number of survivors from this boat made their way back to the wreck, but altogether eleven people died, including Captain Jones.²²

An interesting aspect of this wreck is that several paintings of the ship arose from this incident. Two were painted by a European artist, George N. Bourne, and two by an Aboriginal convict who was an inmate of the Rottnest gaol. According to Fletcher the paintings by Bourne are 'typical of the professional ship portraitist'.²³ One shows the *City of York* broadside on in a stormy sea, the other shows it stranded and broken on the reef.

The Aboriginal artist was Johnny Cudgely (he was also known as Jimmy Cudgel) who was given painting lessons by the Governor of Rottnest, Governor Bedford, who also enjoyed painting. Bedford was Governor from 1903-1909. It is not known whether Johnny painted his *City of York* depictions before or after his lessons with the Governor. He was an inmate at the time of the wreck, so one of his paintings is particularly interesting as a possible eyewitness account²⁴ as it shows the wreck as seen from the shore and shows the presence of a rigged line from ship to shore along which the survivors are being rescued.



City of York Painting by J. Cudgely
Source: Western Australian Museum Colln 8602-41

Section Two:

Possible contact incidents

The events in this section fall into the category of possible contact. That is, no contact has been verified, but the circumstances suggest that it is likely that contact could have been made, or legends exist that imply a contact incident.

In some cases, survivors reached shore, and then travelled long distances to reach safety. It is a reasonable assumption that in traversing long distances some of these survivors may have had contact with Aboriginal groups. In other cases survivors are known to have reached shore, but subsequent rescue parties have failed to find any trace of them. Among these are several enigmatic incidents, in particular the two mutineers from the *Batavia* who were marooned, the large number of known survivors from the *Vergulde Draeck* and the possible survivors from the *Zuytdorp*.

Then there are a number of legends concerning Aboriginals with European features and light or reddish hair.²⁵ Suggestions have been made that some Aboriginal languages contain Dutch sounding words²⁶ or Portuguese sounding words.²⁷ Von Brandenstein strongly asserts that some Aboriginal place names in Northern Australia are of Portuguese origin.²⁸ McIntyre has put forward the hypothesis that the Portuguese began charting the Australian coast in the early 16th century.²⁹ Gerritsen has suggested the presence of many Dutch sounding words in Aboriginal languages.³⁰ Many of these theories are concentrated in areas where the survivors of such wrecks as the *Batavia* mutineers, the *Zuytdorp* and the *Vergulde Draeck* are assumed to have been stranded.

Another recent finding is the presence of a genetic disease, *porphyria variegata*, in a part -Aboriginal man from the Shark Bay area.³¹ Dr. Geoffrey Dean spent some time as Senior Physician at the Eastern Cape Hospital in Port Elizabeth, South Africa and has been researching the porphyria diseases for many years. He was able to trace cases of *porphyria variegata* to a Dutch couple who married in South Africa in the 17th century.³² It is known that the *Zuytdorp* had a long voyage from Holland to the Cape, losing many of the ship's complement on the way. It is possible that one of the new recruits taken on board the *Zuytdorp* at the Cape to go to Batavia was the son of this couple.³³ If so, it is possible to extrapolate that he became a *Zuytdorp* survivor and introduced the disease to the

Aboriginal population. It is equally conceivable, however, that the disease may have entered the Aboriginal population from a 'Malay' diver in the pearling industry.³⁴

This section begins with an account of the *Vianen*. It is one of the earliest instances of European contact with Australia and sets the scene for how the country and its people were viewed at that time.

Vianen

In 1628, the *Vianen* went aground and managed to get free by jettisoning some cargo. It was one of the early sightings of the 'Southland' and was unusual because the ship was on its way from and not to, Java. There is an interesting mention of the episode in the advice given to Tasman before his journeys in 1644. It states that the *Vianen* had gone along the coast of the 'Southland' for about 50 miles. It also describes the result of that close contact as

'...none of these discoveries however resulting in the obtaining of any considerable information respecting the situation and condition of this vast land, it only having been found that it has barren and dangerous coasts, green fertile fields and exceedingly savage black barbarian inhabitants.'³⁵

This allusion to the hostility of the black inhabitants could suggest that either the *Vianen* or other VOC ships may have had contact experiences ashore on the 'Southland'.

Macassan Contact: The Napier Broome Bay Cannon

From the late 18th century Macassans were visiting northern Australia. Each year a fleet of perahus arrived on the north-western and Northern Territory coasts to collect trepang. A number of these vessels were known to be wrecked but to date there has been little evidence found of wreckage.³⁶ In 1916 two brass carronades were found on an island in Napier Broome Bay, by personnel from the HMAS *Encounter*. It was initially thought that these cannon were of Portuguese origin, which led to speculation that the Portuguese may have been the first Europeans to discover the Australian continent.³⁷ It was also said that local Aboriginals performed a corroboree about these cannon. This depicted

'...white men with skin like turtles and alligators that came in boats to the island, and fired the cannons.' ³⁸

The reference to 'skin like turtles' was thought to mean that they were wearing armour, and thus were Portuguese or Dutch men. The islanders won the ensuing battle and captured the cannons, which is why they were on the island. The cannons have since been found to be Asian replicas of Portuguese cannon.³⁹ There are many stories of clashes between Macassan and Aboriginal people which makes it likely that the cannon were used by Macassan fishermen as shore defences when they made their camps and smokepits to process their trepang catches. They could also be from a wrecked perahu. It seems unlikely that such valuable articles as the cannon would be left behind, unless they were shipwrecked and unable to carry them anywhere else.

The Aboriginal tribes involved would have been the Miwa⁴⁰ or Gamberre.⁴¹

Unnamed Wreck, Victoria Harbour, Esperance region

This wreck possibly occurred sometime during 17th century.

There are no contemporary accounts of this particular wreck and it has not been found. It is not certain if there was a wreck at all. An Aboriginal legend exists of a ship wrecked many years ago either at Victoria Harbour or at Duke of Orleans Bay, east of Esperance.⁴² A number of ships have been suggested, e.g. *Batoe Bassi*, *Kibra*, *Countess Sulkaat*, but only one, the *Batoe Bassi*, is known to have been wrecked in this area.⁴³ A flurry of interest in the 1930's brought the legend to attention of the public. A local historian, Malcolm Uren, mentioned a rock engraving in connection with a 'high-pooped Dutch ship.' Details were published in the *West Australian*.⁴⁴ This caught the eye of Captain Alfred Douglas, who had seen the engraving. A follow up report in the *Sunday Times* tells his story.⁴⁵ A friend of his, Campbell Taylor, was a sheep farmer in the Esperance area and was friendly with the Aborigines there and they had passed many of their legends on to him. One of these legends was about a shipwreck that had occurred many years before. Captain Douglas subsequently took a schooner out into Victoria Harbour, and along with the crew, (which included a Netherlander) he took Mr Taylor. They anchored during a severe squall and then were unable to lift the anchor and had to slip it.⁴⁶ It was the Captain's opinion that it must have caught

on an old wreck. Campbell Taylor then took the Captain and ship's crew to a rock on the eastern side of the harbour. After removing shellfish encrustation, the party could see '1600' engraved on the rock, and an inscription that the Netherlands crew member said was the name of a Dutch ship.⁴⁷

The original report of Uren's address mentions the letters M-I-S were found on the engraving,⁴⁸ but this was denied by Captain Douglas.⁴⁹

A wreck was located in the area at Inshore Island in 1977 and an article about this wreck in the *Sunday Times* resulted in a letter to the Museum from Mr Angus McKail of Lower Kalgan. He mentioned he had a cutting of the 1937 newspaper article and his father had been a close friend of Campbell Taylor. It was his belief that they could be trusted to have seen what they said they had seen and therefore it was highly likely that the inscription existed.⁵⁰

The rock itself has been examined by the WA Museum and results are inconclusive as to whether the marks are from human or natural origin.⁵¹

The Aboriginal people involved are the Wudjari people of the southwest region.⁵²

Batavia

The *Batavia* wreck occurred on 4 June 1629. The ship struck the Morning Reef in the Wallabi Group of the Abrolhos Islands. It was carrying 316 people along with trade goods, 12 chests of coin, and a large amount of cargo, jewellery and silver.

It took a week for the ship to break up. The survivors managed to get to some of the Wallabi Group Islands and although able to save a good supply of stores were short of water.

Commander Pelsaert and Captain Jacobsz, along with some of the crew, decided to take to look for water along the coast.⁵³ They used the only undamaged ships boat for their search. During this time, they made two sightings of Aboriginal people, although in both instances no actual contact was made.⁵⁴ In one instance six men had swum ashore to look for water.

'...they also saw four men coming up to them, creeping on all fours, but when our men all of a sudden emerged from a depression of the ground, and approached them, they sprang to their feet, and ran off in full career...they were black men, stark naked, without the least covering."⁵⁵

When no water was found, they set off in this boat for the port of Batavia, (now known as Jakarta) and they reached there on July 7. Pelsaert and Jacobsz had not got along for most of the voyage prior to the wreck, with Pelsaert accusing Jacobsz of drunkenness. When they reached Batavia he accused Jacobsz of being responsible for the shipwreck, and Jacobsz was arrested. Pelsaert then went with the yacht *Sardam* back to the wreck to rescue the survivors.

Meanwhile, the survivors had been having a difficult time as some of them had organised and carried out a mutiny. The ringleader was the *Batavia's* undermerchant, Cornelisz. He had taken the cargo valuables and then with his followers had embarked upon a wild bout of rape and murder. Altogether they killed 125 survivors.

When Pelsaert arrived back at the Abrolhos and discovered the situation, he decided to try the mutineers then, with a council formed from the *Sardam's* officers. They dealt a summary justice to Cornelisz and seven others, cutting off their hands and then hanging them. Two of the mutineers were spared this fate, but were marooned on the mainland, in the vicinity of the mouth of the Murchison River. These two were never heard of again, but there has been speculation that they may have survived and met up with and even lived with Aboriginal tribes.

These two men, Wouter Loos and Jan Pelgrom, were given a dinghy, some supplies and various items with which to make friends with the natives. These included 'Nuremberg' toys, knives, beads, bells and mirrors. Instructions were also given as to how they should communicate with the natives, and learn their language and when the best time of the year to hail passing ships would be.

Although ships were given instruction to look out for the men in later years, nothing was ever heard or seen of them again. It does seem that they were well equipped for a stay of some time, and had youth on their side, although it is not known how fit and mentally stable they were after the grim excesses of the previous few months. They were in a good position to have survived for long enough to have come into contact with Aboriginal groups of the region, although

there do not appear to have been any Aboriginal legends that have survived that are connected to this incident.

Aboriginal peoples associated with this area are the Nhanta and Amangu.⁵⁶

Vergulde Draeck

The *Vergulde Draeck* was wrecked on 28 April 1656, near the mouth of the Moore River. Of the 193 on board, only 75 managed to reach the shore in two of the ship's boats and only a small amount of provisions were saved.⁵⁷ Seven men including the understeersman were sent to Batavia in one of the boats, the other had capsized on landing. The captain, Pieter Albertsz stayed with the remaining survivors.

It took the ship's boat 40 days to get to Batavia and almost immediately two vessels were sent to search for the survivors. These were the yacht *Goede Hoop* and the flute *Witte Valke*. They were unsuccessful and in the process the *Goede Hoop* lost a boat and eleven men. In 1658 another two ships, the *Emeloort* and the *Waeckende Boey*, were sent to both chart the coastline and look for survivors.⁵⁸

The fate of the eleven men from the *Goede Hoop* and the 68 survivors from the *Vergulde Draeck* remains an intriguing question. The latter were a large complement of people which could be expected to be able to form an organised group. Unlike the *Batavia*, the Master of the *Vergulde Draeck* stayed with the survivors to keep order and authority. It is likely that such a large group would have had a substantial impact on local inhabitants. The ships sent in search of them reported wreckage, and even fires, but attempts to make contact were unsuccessful. When it is known that there were such a large number of survivors, and that rescue attempts were made, it is strange that so little evidence exists to show they were there. It could be that the group may have moved, maybe with assistance from Aboriginal people to a more suitable area. They may just have perished, but to date there is no evidence of burial sites.

A number of possible land survivor sites have been attributed to the *Vergulde Draeck*.⁵⁹ Late last century an intriguing ring of stones was found and thought to be marking the spot where the *Vergulde Draeck* treasure was buried. This appears not to have been investigated at the time and has not been found since, and is thought it may have been an Aboriginal Bora ground. In 1931 the first tangible

evidence of the wreck turned up with the finding of coins and skeletal remains at Eagles Nest, near the mouth of the Moore River. The wreck was found in 1963 and since then there have been other findings of artefacts in the area associated with the wreck.⁶⁰

The associated Aboriginal people were possibly the Yuat.⁶¹

Boat from *De Goede Hoop*

The jacht *De Goede Hoop* was sent to look for survivors from the wrecked *Vergulde Draeck* in July 1656. The jacht sent a ship's boat ashore when they reached the wreck area. Three men from this boat disappeared in the bush and the other eight were sent to look for them. The boat was found broken up on the beach with no sign of any of the men, and the jacht was forced to leave without them, presuming them dead. Later ships sent to look for survivors from the *Vergulde Draeck* were also instructed to look for these men with negative results.

It may be possible that these lost men had contact with Aboriginals, indeed, even with survivors from the *Vergulde Draeck*. The associated Aboriginal people were possibly the Yuat.⁶²

Boat from *Waeckende Boey*

The *Emeloort* and the *Waeckende Boey* had set sail in 1658 to chart the coast of the Southland and look for survivors of the *Vergulde Draeck*.⁶³ The *Emeloort* reached sight of the Southland at latitude 33° 12'S and then turned north along the coast.⁶⁴ Fires were seen on the land at which signal guns were fired which appeared to be answered by more fires.⁶⁵ A boat was sent ashore twice to investigate, but the fires were extinguished and no survivors seen. The searchers reportedly came across a group of Aboriginals,⁶⁶ so it is probable that they were responsible for the fires seen from the ship. The *Waeckende Boey* meanwhile had reached the Southland at 31° 40'S then heading northward they came across wreckage at a number of sites.⁶⁷ A boat was sent ashore with the uppersteersman and fourteen other crew on the 22 March but failed to return after a night of stormy weather. For a few days the *Waeckende Boey* looked for the lost boat. Fires were seen on the mainland, a signal gun fired from the ship and more fires lit in answer on the mainland, similar to case of the *Emeloort*. However, the

Waeckende Boey failed to investigate further, and returned to Batavia leaving the men stranded.⁶⁸

After the departure of the *Waeckende Boey*, the stranded men set sail for Batavia in their small boat. Apart from the initial privations of being abandoned, and then trying to sail back to Batavia in a small boat, their boat was wrecked in Java and ended up walking through Java to reach Batavia. It is not known whether they may have had contact with Aborigines while stranded and repairing their boat, but it remains a possibility. Only 3 of the 15 men involved survived this ordeal.

The associated Aboriginal people were possibly the Yuat.⁶⁹

Zuytdorp

In 1712 the *Zuytdorp* was on its way from Holland to Batavia in company with a ship called the *Kockenge*. The two ships left the Cape of Good Hope on 22 April 1712,⁷⁰ but became separated and the *Zuytdorp* never arrived at its destination. The *Zuytdorp* was one of two ships carrying newly minted silver guilders to Batavia and these coins were instrumental in proving the identity of the *Zuytdorp* when the wreck was discovered.⁷¹

There is no doubt that there were survivors from the *Zuytdorp*. It is now thought that she struck the cliffs side on and keeled over in such a position that survivors could have scrambled via the rigging onto the shore. The enigma is what happened to these survivors, and it has been an ongoing debate since the wreck was discovered.

Aboriginal reports of wrecks in this area in 1834 tell of white people living in tents. At the time it was thought that these reports were about the *Mercury* (see p 22), but it is possible they could be handed down tales that are evidence of survivors from *Zuytdorp*.⁷²

There is strong evidence that there were survivors. At the top of the cliffs near the wreck, remains of large bonfires were found. Burnt remains included barrel rings, and brass hinges and clasps, indicating such items as wooden chests and barrels were used to create a large fire to attract the attention of any passing ships.⁷³ Artefacts have been found at other sites near wells and up to 30 kms from the

wreck site, indicating that they were either taken there by survivors or Aboriginal people.

At the time of the shipwreck, although the country in the area was rugged, it was winter and there would have been a strong likelihood that there was an abundance of water in the wells and soaks. It is also known that during the years 1705-11 the average rainfall in Australia was higher than average, which would have provided the survivors with a better opportunity to survive.⁷⁴ Combined with the number of legends that have persisted over time about red or fair haired Aboriginals with light skins, and the possibility of linked genetic disease as discussed earlier, it seems reasonable to reflect further on the fate of the Zuytdorp survivors.

If they did have contact with Aboriginal people these would have been the Malkana or the Nhanta.⁷⁵

The Boat from the *Geographe*

In June 1801 a chaloupe or longboat from the *Geographe* was stranded at the Wonnerup Inlet. Post Captain Nicholas Baudin sent a rescue mission the following day which included the master carpenter who intended to effect repairs to the chaloupe.⁷⁶ Baudin was concerned about Aboriginal people. While watching the rescue boat arrive on the coast he thought the people he saw talking with those in the rescue boat were a group of Aboriginal people.⁷⁷

The *Geographe* was accompanied by the *Naturaliste*. A longboat from this ship had tried to salvage equipment left behind with the stranded chaloupe. This caused the disappearance of one of the crew, a seaman called Vasse and it was presumed he drowned.

This tragedy, combined with the wreck of the chaloupe has created a number of legends. Soon after the expedition returned to France, there was a story in French newspapers. It was said that Vasse survived and walked 300 miles and was picked up by an American whaler.⁷⁸ A story from George Fletcher Moore was published in the *Perth Gazette* 5 May 1838. This states that Aboriginals told Moore that Vasse washed up on the beach at Wonnerup and lived with the Aboriginals for some time.⁷⁹ In 1841 rumour suggested that Vasse was 'strangled, speared in the 'right side of the heart', and that his bones were still near Dunsborough.'⁸⁰

Aborigines from the area have a story about a 'lone white man who pined away.'⁸¹ Oldfield also mentions that near the area where Vasse disappeared, Aborigines told him that a white man had lived among them, dying a natural death.⁸²

There are several European legends that have this wreck as their origin. All the stories have as their basis a mention of treasure. One tells of a murder carried out by a couple who thought the man they murdered knew where the buried treasure was.⁸³ Another story suggests there was a massacre of local Aborigines because they purportedly took gold ornaments from the wreck.⁸⁴ Gerritsen has also argued linguistic anomaly in Aboriginal languages of this area at the time of colonisation, once again proposing influence from possible survivors of a Dutch wreck.⁸⁵

The Aboriginal tribe associated with this area is the Wardandi.⁸⁶

Corrieo de Azia

On 25 November 1816, the *Corrieo de Azia*, a Portuguese ship, came to grief after suffering a fire in the binnacle⁸⁷ near Point Cloates. The Captain and crew abandoned ship into the launch, unable to save anything except three barrels of biscuits and three containers of water.⁸⁸ They navigated NNE until they rounded the Point and then looked for a suitable inlet to pull into and prepare the launch to get to their destination. Apparently there was apprehension among the crew about natives, although none were said to have been seen. When the launch was ready to set off again, two men were missing. It was assumed that they were killed either by natives or animals, and they were left behind.⁸⁹

Although there is no direct evidence of contact here, the two missing men pose a question. Evidence from natives elsewhere at other incidents would suggest that they could have been watching the crew, without the crew being aware. The two men could of course, just have wandered off and become lost. Fortuitously, these men were rescued by an American ship, the *Caledonia*, soon after.⁹⁰ This is yet another intriguing episode that deserves more attention, especially if more could be found out concerning the two missing men. It is the only wreck incident concerning a Portuguese ship, although the Portuguese were very active in both exploration and trade in the Indian and Pacific Oceans during the 16th and 17th centuries. It has been suggested that a Portuguese colony sprang up in the Buccaneer Archipelago area of the Kimberley coast in the 1520's.⁹¹ Dr. Carl von

Brandenstein suggests that there are a number of Portuguese words in Aboriginal languages from the Kimberley area and between Port Hedland and Dampier. He suggests that these latter are from shipwrecked Portuguese sailors mingling with Aboriginal tribes.⁹² This theory is problematic and has little support, although Dr. von Brandenstein's theories about language are interesting.

The Aboriginal people that may have had contact with the missing men are the Thalanyji.⁹³

Belinda

The *Belinda* was wrecked near Middle Island in the Recherche Archipelago on 17 May 1824,⁹⁴ whilst on her way to the sealing grounds on the south coast of Western Australia. The ship's crew all survived and began to sail back to Sydney in two of the ship's boats. One of these boats was then swamped after they had travelled about 200 miles, and the crew decided to walk back to Middle Island, with the other boat attending them offshore.⁹⁵

The whole crew were eventually returned to Sydney by the brig *Nereus* which was sealing in the area. This was not until March of 1825, so a question remains whether these survivors came into contact with Aboriginals, either on their long trek back to Middle Island, or even during their time on the island prior to their rescue.

The Aboriginal people associated with this area may be the Wudjari, the Ngatjumay or the Mirning.⁹⁶

Cumberland

The *Cumberland* was wrecked on 4 March 1830 near Cape Hamelin. The crew took to the ship's four boats, and two of these boats arrived at Fremantle on the 7 March.⁹⁷ The other boats went ashore near Cape Naturaliste and began walking to Fremantle. They were rescued at Port Leschenault, but three of their number had died.⁹⁸ It is not known if they had any contact with Aboriginal groups during their trek, but it remains a possibility.

The Aboriginal people may have been the Kaniyang, Wardandi or Pinjarup.⁹⁹

Ocean Queen

The *Ocean Queen* was wrecked on the southern group of the Abrolhos Islands on 13 September 1842.¹⁰⁰ The ship was carrying a chest of specie which was saved by Captain Harrison and his crew. They landed on Pelsaert Island initially and remained at this location for 10 days.¹⁰¹ They attempted to get to Fremantle in the ship's boats but with about 120 kms to go, weather conditions forced them to land. They walked the rest of the way apart from one crew member who was left behind at Moore River suffering exhaustion.¹⁰² A group of Aborigines was sent from Perth to help this man.¹⁰³ They may have been Yuat or Wajuk people.¹⁰⁴ A diverting aspect of this story is that the chest of specie, supposedly buried on the beach at Pelsaert Island, was never found.

Cervantes

The *Cervantes* was an American whaler, wrecked near Jurien Bay 20 June 1844.¹⁰⁵ Captain Gibson and his crew got ashore and attempted to walk to Fremantle. Several made the trek, but one man was left exhausted about 30 miles north of the Moore River. Another six crew had decided to return to the wreck and find a boat.¹⁰⁶ The question is, what happened to these men, did they meet up with Aborigines, or become lost and perish?

If they did meet up with Aborigines they may have been Yuat or Wajuk people.¹⁰⁷

Twilight and Bunyip

These two cutters were both wrecked at the eastern end of Culver Cliffs on 24 May 1877. They had been involved in unloading stores for workers on the construction of the telegraph line from Eucla. All hands survived and the groups walked to Israelite Bay for assistance.¹⁰⁸ This long trek may have resulted in contact with the Ngatjurnay and Miming Aboriginal people.¹⁰⁹ It is known that friendly Aboriginal people assisted the men working on the East-West telegraph line to find waterholes in the area.¹¹⁰

Maid of Lincoln

The *Maid of Lincoln* was a coastal steamer on her way from Dongara to Fremantle and Bunbury. She hit a reef near the Hill River, 13 kms south of Jurien Bay on 11 April 1891.¹¹¹ The crew managed to get to shore in the ship's boat and half of them trudged to Mr Padbury's station. It is possible they had contact with Aboriginals in the area from the Yuat tribes.

Duchess of Kent

The *Duchess of Kent* was wrecked on 28 August 1895 near Cervantes Island.¹¹² The Captain and crew were able to get ashore in the ship's dinghy but were only able to save three wet loaves and a bottle of water as provisions to take with them.¹¹³ They attempted to sail the dinghy along the coast to Fremantle, but were unsuccessful due to the number of reefs edging the coast. Beaching the boat, they then set off on foot to try to reach the rail line and luckily, found some sheep and were able to have roast meat that night. Their good luck continued the next morning when they came across the shepherd who was able to direct them to Mr Bashford's sheep station.¹¹⁴

Section Three:

Verified contact incidents

There are many shipwrecks on the Western Australian coast and islands where the survivors are known to have had contact with Aboriginal people. Some incidents were confrontational, some helpful. Most of the confrontational situations appear to be in the north of the state. The helpful ones range from simple aids in direction to major lifesaving events. In other incidents there is no known actual contact, at least from European sources, but artefacts from the wrecks have been worked by Aboriginals into tools or weapons. Stories of shipwrecked survivors living with natives were rife during the 19th century and Australia was no exception with three of these stories identified for Western Australia at this time.

Unidentified Wreck at Eyre

This unknown ship was discovered by Edward John Eyre at the time he was making his famous transcontinental journey. In his journal he noted the position where he found a number of pieces of a wrecked ship. Some of the oars and spars had been arranged above the high water mark, another on a high ridge away from the shore.¹¹⁵

In 1976 Mr John Carlisle and his wife told the Museum of wreckage found on the beach 55 km east of Eyre. Mr Carlisle had been familiar with the area since 1928 and knew a number of Aboriginals from the area. They told him an Aboriginal legend about the wreck, which he recounted in detailed fashion in an interview conducted in 1976.¹¹⁶ The story indicates that two 'lifetimes' before Eyre and Baxter came through the area, a longboat with five men came onshore from a ship that was in trouble. These men were not in good condition, one died almost as soon as he reached shore, another had died by the next morning and a third about ten days later. The Aboriginals then killed one of the others. They were going to kill the last man, but were afraid to, for he had light blond hair which they had never seen. They spared him and the story says he lived with them for a long time, eventually going with another tribe east of Eucla.¹¹⁷

In 1982, some other intriguing evidence of this legend turned up. A letter to the Museum from Marjorie Elliot of Maryknoll Victoria¹¹⁸ contained a story handed

down about her great grandfather. He had an interesting past, and had stories of being shipwrecked, swimming 5 miles to land and living with Aborigines for some time. After reading the account of the Aboriginal legend in Henderson's *Unfinished Voyages Vol 1*, Mrs Elliot was wondering if this same man may have been her great grandfather.

Investigators from the WA Museum have found artefacts associated with a wreck in the area under question, but at this time it remains unidentified and the question of the survivor a mystery.

Associated Aboriginal groups may have been the Ngatjumay and the Mirning.¹¹⁹

Unnamed Whale Boat, Point D'Entrecasteaux

On 20 April 1831 a group led by Lieutenant William Preston were exploring the South West Coast in a whale boat from HMS *Sulphur*.¹²⁰ The boat began taking water and they ended up stranded and decided to march back to Augusta. They encountered an Aboriginal as they were setting off

'...he appeared astonished when we made him understand that we came from sea through the breakers. I have no doubt they had been watching us land, as there were several fires close to us. After dressing him, giving him a stocking full of sugar, a little bread, and as much cloth as he chose to carry away...and giving him to understand that he was to go and bring the whole tribe... he departed, and we did not see him again.'¹²¹

It is probable that this man was of the Bibbulman people.¹²²

Mercury

The *Mercury* left Calcutta on 3 October 1833 and was never seen again.¹²³ A number of rumours from Aboriginal groups could point to the fact that the *Mercury* was wrecked near Shark Bay. The rumours surfaced in 1834 from Aborigines to the north of Perth, and there were two conflicting stories. The first, from Aborigines named Tanguin and Weemat had been passed down the country by the various Aboriginal tribes, and was said to have originated from the northwest Weelman tribe.¹²⁴ It related that a wreck had occurred about 30

(native) days walk north of the Swan River settlement. There was a lot of money to be found on the beach but no survivors had been seen.

A second story was from another Aboriginal, Moiley Dubbin, and also was supposed to have originated from the Weelman tribe. In this version, there was also much money to be found, but in this instance, survivors were seen living in shelters of canvas and wood. These survivors were said to have traded biscuit for the Weelman's spears and shields.¹²⁵

There had been instances of Aboriginals from the north bringing British coin to Perth, so it was decided to look for survivors. An Aboriginal named Weep was sent to look for them with a letter from the Government. If he returned with an answer from the survivors his son was to be released from prison. On his return, he had not found survivors but stated he had seen plenty of coin on the beach.

It was then decided to send a ship to look for survivors, so the schooner *Monkey* was sent, finding nothing but some broken timbers at the south end of Dirk Hartog Island.¹²⁶ A further expedition by the *Hyacinth* later in 1834 was also unsuccessful.

Henderson suggests that the stories regarding coins and timbers suffered from confusion 'by the communication barriers between European and Aboriginal and between aboriginal tribes.'¹²⁷ The stories reached Perth about six months after the disappearance of the *Mercury*. This timing and the British coins¹²⁸ that had been brought to Perth by Aboriginals does imply that the stories could relate to the *Mercury*. However, this wreck has not been found and the two incidents mentioned in the introduction to this section, combined with this one, could also point to handed down stories from Aboriginal people about older wrecks, such as the *Zuytdorp*.¹²⁹

The Aboriginal people are said to be the 'Weelmen'. According to Horton, tribes between Shark Bay and Perth were the Amangu, Yuat, and Wajuk, and there was a Wielman tribe south east of Perth.¹³⁰ There was also a tribe known as the 'Waylmen' from the Wale well area near the Zuytdorp wreck,¹³¹ so this story may have originated from them.

Mountaineer

The *Mountaineer* was a cutter that had been involved with the sealing trade along the south coast of Australia.¹³² The ship was wrecked at Thistle Cove near Esperance on 24 March 1835 and the three crew and six passengers survived and got to shore in the whale boat. They encountered some Aboriginals there who 'were quite civil and did them no injury.'¹³³ The group then made for Middle Island in the Recherche Archipelago, where the Captain knew there was a group of sealers. After arrival, some of the group went on to Albany, but siblings James and Dorothy Newell remained on the island, James to be a deckhand and Dorothy as the mistress of the infamous John Anderson.¹³⁴ 'Black Jack' as he was known ruled the island as a despot. It was a place that had attracted a number of unsavoury characters, who were known for the kidnapping of Aboriginal women and murder.

James Newell, along with another young man, James Manning, decided to leave the island. After a while, Black Jack agreed but gave them no assistance, virtually marooning them on the mainland 650kms from Albany. They eventually got there, due in large part to help from Aboriginal tribes received when they were at their weakest.¹³⁵ According to their information these Aboriginals were described at the time as from the White Cockatoo, Murray and Hill Men tribes.¹³⁶ The Resident Magistrate in Albany at the time was Richard Spencer. He rewarded the Aboriginals for their kindness by issuing them a small portion of flour each and also gave a 'duck frock' to the two who were the most helpful.¹³⁷

Carib

This is one of the accounts of shipwreck survivors living with Aboriginals. William Jackman published a book in Auburn, USA in 1853, called *The Australian Captive*. In the book he states that he was on board the *Carib*, a whaler, in 1837, which foundered on the coast of the Great Australian Bight.¹³⁸ According to Jackman there were 26 survivors but he became separated from them and then lived for 18 months with what he calls 'the cannibals of Nuyt's land on the coast of the Great Australian Bight.'¹³⁹ The *Carib* supposedly sailed from Hobart on 28 April 1837, but there are no details of this particular ship in the Tasmanian archives or Marine Board.¹⁴⁰ The existence of the *Carib* and its demise is therefore uncertain, as is Jackman's story of living with cannibals. For these reasons any identification of the Aboriginal people that may have been

involved is uncertain. If the story is correct and he was on the coast of the Bight they are likely to have been the Ngatjumay or Mirning people.¹⁴¹ Although the veracity of this story cannot be proven, the incident occurred in the very same area as the 'Unidentified at Eyre' story, so it may have some substance.

Three Whale Boats from the *Russell*

The *Russell* was an American whaler. In 1839 this ship took the explorer George Grey and his party to the North West of Western Australia.¹⁴² Three whale boats carrying the explorers were set on Bernier Island, just north of Shark Bay, and the *Russell* continued on its way.

Within a few days one of the whaleboats was lost along with the stores it contained and the other two boats went searching for water. On reaching the mouth of the Murchison River, both boats came to grief trying to run in the breakers. With all three boats wrecked, the group decided to walk back to Perth.¹⁴³ The distance involved was 650 kms, which was quite a trek, especially as they were short of water. George Grey kept a journal indicating that the party came into contact with Aborigines several times during their journey. In the first instance the Aborigines moved off when they saw Grey.¹⁴⁴ A few days later he had another encounter that almost turned to conflict. A large number of Aborigines had commenced following them, but would not communicate with Grey.

'...we saw a number hastening to occupy a thick scrub through which we had to pass. The men now became so dissatisfied and alarmed, that I found I should be unable much longer to restrain them from firing, if I did not disperse the natives.'¹⁴⁵

Later that day one of the men from Grey's party disappeared and he sent some others to look for him. When they did not get back within a reasonable time he became concerned, as one of his lookouts had seen

'natives on the opposite cliffs, jumping about, and running up and down brandishing their spears, in the manner they do before and after a fight.'¹⁴⁶

Although the missing men soon rejoined the party, for the rest of their journey Grey's group continued to have a 'stand off' relationship with the Aborigines. Neither side made any real contact, conflict seemed to be threatened by both sides

at times, but nothing happened. Eventually, just north of Perth they met with an Aboriginal group whom Grey had befriended before his northern exploration trip.¹⁴⁷ They provided a feast for the party and were able to tell them that Perth was only a day away.

The Aboriginal people could have been the Amangu, Nhanta, Wajuk and Yuat tribes.¹⁴⁸

Governor Endicott

Another incident similar to the *Carib* was that of the *Governor Endicott*, but in this case the wreck was verified. The *Governor Endicott* was driven ashore near Toby's Inlet, Geographe Bay on 8 July 1840.¹⁴⁹ One of the seamen on board, Joseph Gotchell, gives a graphic account of the incident in a book he had published in 1844.¹⁵⁰ According to this, after the shipwreck, he spent some time living with Aboriginal people, but like Jackman's account of living with 'cannibals', Gotchell may also suffer from poetic licence. The Aboriginal tribe he may have encountered is the Wardandi.¹⁵¹

Unnamed Hutt Estuary and Unidentified Greenough River Wrecks

There have been several instances over the years of Aboriginals reporting possible wrecks. These reports usually had travelled from their place of origin, passed on orally and may have suffered in the translation.

In 1843 an Aboriginal from Wanneroo had given information that a ship was wrecked in the area of the Hutt Estuary.¹⁵² The authorities in Fremantle did not appear to take much notice of this, believing it to be a report of a previous wreck story. This particular story was quite detailed, white men had come from the ship and erected a house on the bank of the estuary.¹⁵³

In 1851, this incident came to the authorities from Aboriginals from Champion Bay near the Greenough River. It was a detailed account of a wreck that had happened 16 years or so previously, and so gave rise to the idea that it may be the wreck of the *Mercury*.¹⁵⁴ The story appeared in the *Perth Gazette* of 26 September 1851, and was followed by another on 17 October 1851. The second

story was similar with added details of pieces of wreckage that had been discovered in the Champion Bay area.

Leander

The *Leander* was an ex-whaler that was wrecked on 13 November 1853. In bound to Champion Bay, she ran aground on a then unmarked reef just south of the Irwin River which is now known as the Leander Reef.¹⁵⁵ The ship was near to the shore which enabled all the crew and passengers to save themselves and to set up a kedge anchor and line to save valuables, provisions and other useful items to erect shelters on the beach. They were unable to save the water casks which were all broken.¹⁵⁶

The survivors spent an uncomfortable couple of weeks on the beach. Captain Johnson thought they were only four miles north of the Irwin River settlement and during the first days after the wreck some of the survivors tried to walk to the settlement¹⁵⁷. No settlement was found. At this time there were problems with the 'Malay' crew. They had fallen out with the Captain and decided to attempt to walk to Fremantle. Half returned to the camp, but the rest died.

Eventually one of the passengers, Mr Evans, decided to walk north. He came across an Aboriginal who was able to take him to a station on the Irwin River owned by Lockier Burges.

This Aboriginal was probably from the Amangu tribe.¹⁵⁸

Occator

The *Occator* was wrecked near Carbaddaman Passage, North West Cape on 5 February 1856, while on its way to Muiron Island.

In rough seas the lifeboat was smashed but the Captain and crew managed to launch the longboat.¹⁵⁹ They had also managed to rescue water, provisions and navigational equipment.¹⁶⁰ It was decided to sail up to Muiron Island as that had been their original destination. They hoped to find another ship there as the island was an acknowledged source of guano. When they arrived there was no ship there and they were running short of water. It was decided to return to the wreck to

obtain more water¹⁶¹, and it was then that they ran into some problems. As they sailed down the coast a large party of Aborigines appeared on the shore, following the boat to the wreck. The boat went inshore to pick up a water barrel that had washed in from the wreck, and as it pulled away from the shore, the Aborigines began wading and swimming after the boat armed with spears and stones.¹⁶² During an altercation when a spear and some stones were thrown, Mr Jones shot one of the attackers. This caused them to retreat back to shore.

This is an interesting incident. Apart from the unidentified Eyre wreck, it is the first of the wrecks where the survivors encountered hostility. It seems that the Aborigines were unconcerned at first, until the boat actually pulled into land to take up the water barrel washed on shore.

It is likely that these Aborigines were from the Thalanyji tribe.¹⁶³

Calliance

In 1865 the *Calliance* had an ignominious end, along with the hopes and dreams of the Camden Harbour Pastoral Association settlers it carried. They had embarked in Melbourne to be part of an ambitious and foolhardy attempt to settle the country of the West Kimberley area.¹⁶⁴ On 22 December 1864 the *Calliance* was nearing its destination of Camden Harbour when it struck a reef near Adele Island.¹⁶⁵ The Captain was able to get the ship into the harbour after lightening its load, and the passengers disembarked and their belongings were unloaded. The ship was then moved nearer the shore for attention but on the 5 January 1865 she was blown ashore and began to break up.¹⁶⁶

One of the passengers, Captain Edwards, took the cutter from the *Calliance* and went to Timor, along with the second officer and 3 crew. Here they were able to borrow a boat that could take survivors away from Camden Sound. The two boats were on their way back to Camden Sound, when they were overturned by a squall.¹⁶⁷ Some of the crew managed to right the cutter, but inside the schooner Captain Edwards had drowned in his cabin. They retrieved his body and stopped at New Island to bury the body which by then was decomposing. They could not carry this out as they were driven away by a group of Aborigines, so the body had to be thrown overboard.¹⁶⁸ This hostile contact with Aborigines seems to have been a mark of the settlement. As well as the settlers losing their stock to the inclement conditions of the settlement, Aborigines were taking livestock and

stealing boats as well. It does not seem as if the settlers made any serious attempts to become friendly with the Aboriginals, perhaps because the settlers were too busy trying to make the best of what rapidly became a disaster. The land was not as it was represented and not at all suitable for the purpose of cultivation and grazing sheep. Initial contact with the Aboriginals was friendly and had this been maintained the Aboriginals may have been of some help in assisting survival in the harsh environment. When the settlement was abandoned much was left behind and examination of the site shows that the Aboriginals found good use for ceramics and glass, working them for tools and weapons.¹⁶⁹

The associated Aboriginal tribe is possibly the Worora.¹⁷⁰

Emma

On 3 March 1867, the schooner *Emma* set sail for Fremantle from Port Walcott. She was never seen again.¹⁷¹ Almost ten years later Charles Tuckey, a well known identity in the North West and in the pearling industry told the *Inquirer* newspaper of a story he had heard from an Aboriginal.¹⁷² It was said that following a shipwreck about ten years previously in the vicinity of North West Cape, a number of survivors took to the ship's boats and landed on the shore. Here they were taken captive by a group of Aboriginals who then killed and ate all of them.¹⁷³

There is no proof of this incident. It is included in the database as an example of European legend. It may well be that there were survivors from the *Emma* and they met with Aboriginal groups, but any interaction is unknown at this time. The sighting of a stone cairn was reported around 1930's in the area where the wreck may have been, along with a small cannon on the beach nearby.¹⁷⁴ No one has since found this cairn or the cannon to see if they are connected to the *Emma* or some other lonely survivors. The wreck of the *Emma* was found in 1988.

The associated Aboriginal tribe may have been the Thalanyji.¹⁷⁵

Brothers

The *Brothers* disappeared, after leaving for Roebourne on 19 February 1867.¹⁷⁶ This was very close to the time the *Emma* disappeared, and in the same area. All that is known about this wreck is that a few years after the disappearance, Charles Tuckey was told of three wrecks in the area south of North West Cape. His information came from an Aboriginal from the area. It is included in the data base as the legend referring to the *Emma* could well apply to the *Brothers* as they were lost so close together.

Nautilus

The *Nautilus* was a pearling ship that seems to have disappeared and then reappeared at intervals during the 1860's and 1870's. It was known to have been blown ashore at Nickol Bay by the cyclone of 4 January 1868 and was refloated for the following season, but then disappeared in April 1869.¹⁷⁷ Although then presumed lost, she turned up again at the Fortescue River in 1875.¹⁷⁸ It is possible that these may have been different ships using the same name.

While the *Nautilus* was stuck in the Nickol Bay mangroves in 1868, her master, Mr Jarman had set up camp nearby. Some Aboriginals were involved in an incident, stealing flour from one of the other pearling vessels, the *Pearl*. A police constable with an Aboriginal assistant was sent to arrest the Aboriginals responsible for the theft. They caught one of them, Coolyerberri. A crew member from the *Nautilus* who had also set up camp in the mangroves allowed the constable and his assistant to share his tent. Meanwhile, the other Aboriginals decided to free Coolyerberri and attacked during the night, killing the constable, his Aboriginal assistant Peter, and George Breem. Meanwhile, Jarman, the master of the *Nautilus* was not in his tent at the time of the attack, and was not seen again. It was presumed he had also been killed. Robert Sholl, the Government Resident organised a group of special constables. This was made up of pastoralists and other members of the white community. It is estimated that they tracked down and killed about sixty Aboriginal men women and children and the incident became known as the 'Flying Foam Massacre'.

This was an important incident. Just a few years prior to this event, Europeans settling in the area remarked at how peaceable the Aboriginal population was.¹⁷⁹ This incident may have had a significant effect on subsequent

Aboriginal/European relations in this area. Between 1850 and 1875 there was an increase in the number of confrontational incidents, allied to shipwrecks, and all occurred north of the 26th parallel.

The Aboriginals were probably from the Jaburrara tribe.¹⁸⁰

Minnie

The *Minnie*, another pearling ship, was wrecked in November 1872 on Fortescue Island. There were three men on board and they reached the island but without many supplies. They were George Forthcut, Liberty Joe and an Aboriginal who was not named.¹⁸¹ They remained stranded there for five weeks, and were becoming desperate. Finally, the Aboriginal swam to the mainland and managed to walk to Mardie station which was owned by Mr Mackintosh. He despatched a boat to the island and the other two men were rescued and recovered at the station.

The unnamed Aboriginal was rewarded for his courageous act with a blanket, shirt, pair of trousers and pound of tobacco.¹⁸² His tribal background is unknown.

Bertha

The *Bertha* was wrecked on a reef near Point Cloates on 20 July 1874. The Captain, Joseph Moriah and four crew escaped on a dinghy, but with no provisions. They travelled for six days until arriving at Tubridgi Point.¹⁸³ The five survivors had been without any food or water and were very debilitated. Some local aborigines were able to provide some water and turtle meat for them, probably saving their lives, but it was too late for Charles Love who died that evening.¹⁸⁴ The other four then set off for Port Walcott and met up with Captain Charles Tuckey who took them to safety.

The Aboriginals who helped were from the Thalanyji tribe.¹⁸⁵

Enchantress

The *Enchantress* struck a reef off Champagne Island 15 August 1874.¹⁸⁶ She managed to limp into Brecknock Harbour and became a complete wreck.¹⁸⁷ There were then encounters between the crew and Aborigines to the extent that two crew and eight Aborigines were killed. Newspaper reports of the time mention 'a sanguinary battle with natives, killed and wounded on both sides'¹⁸⁸ and that the ship was a complete wreck.

The Aboriginal people concerned could have been the Worora.¹⁸⁹

Fairy Queen

The *Fairy Queen* was wrecked at North West Cape, Exmouth Gulf on 8 October 1875. The boats were launched and the survivors travelled for two days before reaching the cutter *Swan* at Mary Ann Patch.¹⁹⁰ To make room for the *Fairy Queen* survivors, a number of Aborigines on the *Swan* were taken to another vessel, the *Albert*. These Aborigines were from the Gascoyne region and had been taken aboard to work as divers.¹⁹¹ It seems that some of the Aborigines attacked the seamen on the *Albert*, including some from the *Fairy Queen*. Two of the Aborigines, Nirba and Ballemerda were injured and then tied up by the white crew and put into the hold.¹⁹² They died in captivity soon after - early 'death in custody' victims, and an inquiry into the incident was carried out. It concluded that the deaths were a result of self defence by the white crew.¹⁹³

This incident marks a time when Aborigines were beginning to be taken, often involuntarily from their tribal areas, and justice was summary, as seen previously in the 'Flying Foam Massacre.'

Stefano

The *Stefano* was wrecked on 27 October 1875, just west of Point Cloates. In the heavy sea, the crew had great difficulty with launching the boats which were either swamped or broken and the ship was rapidly destroyed. A number of crew were drowned and eventually eight of them reached the shore, but had few provisions with them.

After setting up a small camp, they thought they would walk south to the Gascoyne River, which they thought was not far off. Before they set off, a group of Aborigines came to their camp. With them they brought a chart which had been washed up onto the beach from the wreck. Although it happened to be a chart of just the area where the wreck had occurred, this did not really help the survivors, and they set off on their trek. A week later, they met with some more Aborigines who gave them water, and by luck, another surviving crew member who had made it to shore further south of the wreck and had also been aided by the Aborigines.¹⁹⁴ They continued their way south, but into inhospitable country¹⁹⁵ and after some weeks returned north to where they knew there was a waterhole and camped there for some time. On 21 December a severe cyclone disrupted the camp and prevented food gathering and by 6 January 1876 only two men were still alive. The account of these miserable weeks includes a report of the two survivors, Baccich and Jurich, having resorted to cannibalism in their desperation to stay alive.¹⁹⁶ To their great fortune, they were found soon after by Aborigines who nursed them back to health over a period of a few months. They eventually took them further north in order to make contact with the northern pearling ships. On 18 April 1876 this was accomplished at Exmouth Gulf when they met with Captain Charles Tuckey and his ship the *Jessie*.¹⁹⁷

The two young men, Baccich and Jurich did not realise at the time that the Aborigines were actually taking them to a place where help would be forthcoming. A number of the Aborigines who helped them had previously been employed by Charles Tuckey.¹⁹⁸ It was decided to reward the Aborigines with

'...some flour, sugar, some inferior tobacco, with some coarse blankets, as supplied to the natives here, and lastly, but most important, some common sailor's sheath knives...'¹⁹⁹

Regardless of the assistance given by the Aboriginal people, this 'reward' was not as good as it might have been. In a letter to the Acting Colonial Secretary at the time concerning the reward, the harbourmaster George Forsyth states

'It is also important that they (the Aborigines) should be made to understand that had they saved the whole ten men, the reward would have been much greater.'²⁰⁰

It seems that an apportion of blame for the deaths of the other survivors of the *Stefano* was laid at the door of the helpers of Baccich and Jurich.

The Aboriginal tribes involved in this contact episode were the Payungu and the Jinirigudi people.²⁰¹

Georgette

The steamer *Georgette* was wrecked on 30 November 1876 off Calgardup Bay. There were 50 passengers on board plus crew and cargo and Captain Godfrey decide to launch the boats.²⁰² The first was swamped by a large wave and a number of the occupants were drowned.

An Aboriginal stockman, Sam Isaacs saw the tragedy unfolding and raised the alarm at the home of the Bussell family. He and Grace Bussell then became heroes as they rode their horses into the surf to help the survivors.²⁰³ Bussell became known as 'A Western Australian Grace Darling' for her part in the rescue.²⁰⁴ She was awarded a medal and inscribed gold watch and Isaacs awarded a bronze medal.²⁰⁵ Apart from his medal, Sam Isaacs received little public recognition compared to Grace Bussell.²⁰⁶



The Georgette rescue
Source: *Illustrated Sydney News* 3 February 1877

Mariano

The *Mariano* ran aground at Jarman Island on 13 December 1878. The crew remained on board awaiting the spring tides in hopes to float her off again, but after a few days were unable to contain a leak and during a cyclone on 22 December two of the ships boats were smashed.²⁰⁷ The crew were then in some

danger and hoisted the upside down ensign to signal for help. Four Europeans and two Aboriginals manned a boat which rowed out to the *Mariano*, taking half the crew back with them and the remaining ship's boat was able to take the remaining crew so all were saved. The officers and crew of the ship sent a letter to the *Herald* in 1879,²⁰⁸ thanking the rescuers and suggesting a bravery recognition. The Europeans were named, but not the Aboriginals.

The Aboriginal tribe to which they belonged may have been the Jaburrara.²⁰⁹

Benan

The *Benan* struck a reef off Point Cloates on 23 December 1888.²¹⁰ The crew managed to get ashore in one of the lifeboats but they only managed to take some water ashore with them. Luckily a barrel of flour washed up on the beach with which they made a supply of damper and then set off to walk south. Before leaving they left a message on the abandoned lifeboat to let any searchers know where they were gone. Their good luck continued when they chanced upon some local Aboriginals who were able to direct them to a nearby station at Yalobia, owned by Brockman.²¹¹

These Aboriginals were possibly associated with the Thalanyji tribe.²¹²

Macey's Wreck

This wreck was discovered on Mardie Station by Mr D Macey, Project Manager of Hadson Energy. It is an unknown wreck and therefore has been given the name Macey's Wreck. The Wreck Inspection Report shows it was heavily salvaged.²¹³ However, a bottle base found indicates use by Aboriginals to make tools and spearheads. Dating suggests the wreck is of no earlier age than 1880. The Aboriginal people associated with this area are the Jaburrara.²¹⁴

Sunbeam

The *Sunbeam* was a steam yacht that had arrived in the North-West to take up a pearling venture in 1892.²¹⁵ On 27 March 1892, while in Admiralty Gulf, the yacht developed a leak which was not able to be repaired. The Captain

endeavoured to run ashore but the ship became stuck fast on a mudbank near Osborne Island. Captain and crew took to the ship's boats and landed at Dicky Bay where a number of pearling schooners were stationed. The Captain then decided to go to Broome in the ship's whaleboat taking nine of the crew, to inform the owners of the loss of the *Sunbeam*. This was against the advice from the other pearlers. On their way to Broome, at one stage they tried to go ashore, but they were chased off by spear waving Aborigines.²¹⁶

This episode is interesting not just because of that contact incident, but the fact that as expected in all such cases, there are two stories about the fate of the ship, one from a European point of view, and the other from the Aboriginal perspective. The European story is that the ship was elderly and the leak arose from corrosion in the hull. The Aborigines have a different tale. In the pearling areas it was not uncommon for men on these ships to borrow or steal Aboriginal women. Prior to the loss of the ship, the *Sunbeam* crew had apparently been allowed some Aboriginal women for an agreed time which the crew ignored. The Aboriginal men were understandably angry about this and proceeded to "sing" the ship, to call upon serpent spirits to sink the ship. Thus the story of the *Sunbeam* entered Aboriginal legend.²¹⁷

The Aboriginal tribe involved could have been either the Gamberre or the Miwa.²¹⁸

Swan

The *Swan* went missing in 1883 when on a journey to the Lacepede Islands and King Sound from Beagle Bay.²¹⁹ Aboard were Isaac Doust and two Aboriginal crew. The surviving crew later told their story. The *Swan* struck a reef at Stewart's Island and after Doust refused to leave his cabin for a few days the crew swam off to the mainland and left him.²²⁰ However, there was another story. Other Aborigines said the *Swan* sank near Sunday Island in King Sound and a dinghy bearing the name *Swan* had been found floating in the sound. The boat had bloodstains on the rowlocks. Local Aborigines said that three Aborigines had landed in the dinghy with guns, and that they had killed Doust.²²¹ The men were arrested but they were eventually discharged due to insufficient evidence.²²² The tribe to which the Aboriginal crewmen belonged is unknown.

Wanderer

This vessel was believed to be wrecked at Rogers Strait and Captain Maguire and his mate then murdered by Aboriginals. Newspaper reports at the time were extremely prejudicial to the Aboriginal community. The *West Australian* of 24 July 1913 states

‘the notoriously treacherous Aboriginals in the neighbourhood of Collier Bay in the Northwest have added yet another fearful atrocity to their grim record.’

The associated Aboriginal tribe was the Worora.²²³

Mary Island Lugger

The name of this ship is unknown. On 20 January 1920 the Benedictine Mission in Kalumburu was told of a tragedy on Mary Island. Apparently six Kulari Aboriginals had killed the white crew and destroyed a lugger.²²⁴

Henry

Various reports of this incident give different dates. What is known is that the *Henry* ran aground near Cape Voltaire sometime between 1920 and 1929. The Captain, Henry Scott and another person named Pascoe walked to Cape Leveque for assistance.²²⁵ Four crew members were left behind and during the time the captain was away, two of them had set off for Kununya Mission. On their way they met up with some Aboriginals with whom they had a disagreement. According to Wadi Karawarra, an eye witness, the white men burnt the Aborigine's humpie and threw their spears on the fire. The elders of the group got angry and beat the two men to death.²²⁶ When the police caught up with the tribe, Wadi and another man called Dinjadna told the police that they had done the killing, to protect the old men from going to prison.²²⁷ In the end they were acquitted of the murders due to their youth or lack of evidence and eventually both became police trackers. The Aboriginal tribe was the Wunambul.²²⁸

Chofuku Maru

On 5 February 1931, the SS *Chofuku Maru* went to the aid of the ship SS *Shunsei Maru* which had ran onto a reef near to the North West Whaling Station at Norwegian Bay. Unfortunately, the *Chofuku Maru* also got into trouble on the reef.²²⁹

Two members of the local Aboriginal tribe, Old Tommy and his wife Mary Ann, took the news of the wreck to the Whaling Station. Captain Maurice MacBolt took some men and a boat to go to pick up the crew. The Japanese crews were not happy about coming ashore because there were a number of Aboriginals with spears, so Captain MacBolt had to go ashore to speak to the Aboriginals and then back to the Japanese to reassure them that the Aboriginals were harmless. The Aboriginals had been using their spears for fishing and turtle hunting, and were very amused that the 'Jerridy-Jerridies' (an Aboriginal term for rice-eaters) should be frightened of them.²³⁰

This Aboriginal tribe could have been the Thalanyji.²³¹ This area was near to where the *Stefano* was wrecked and it is thought that the tribes from this area had become extinct by the time of the *Chofuku Maru* incident. If so, it is not certain to which tribe Old Tommy and his wife belonged.



The Chofuku Maru in trouble

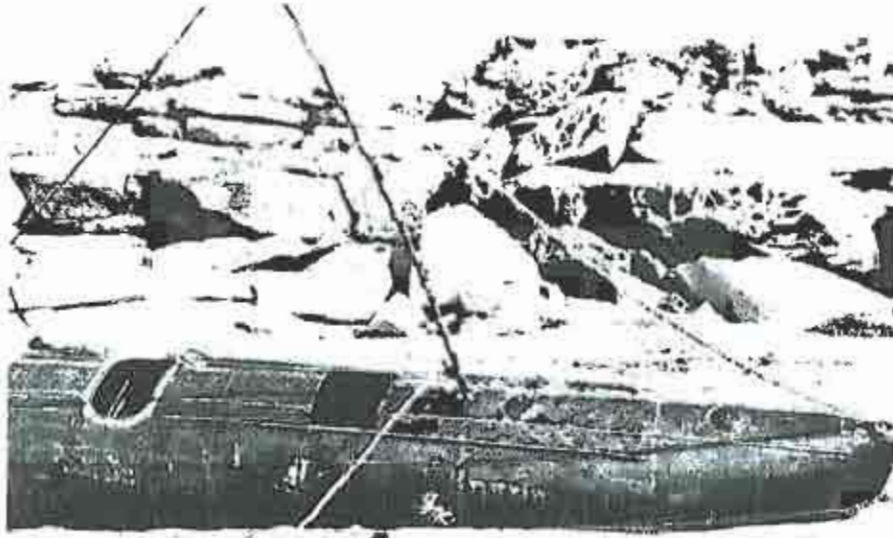
*Source: WA Maritime Museum,
Maritime Archaeology Dept*

File MA 209 80 1 Area Point Cloates Wrecks

Atlantis Seaplane Float

It was 15 May 1932. The seaplane *Atlantis* was on its way to Darwin from Kupang in Timor, when bad weather caused it to become well off course. Running out of fuel, the pilot, Captain Hans Bertram, had to land in a remote part of the northwest coast. He and his mechanic, Adolf Klausmann were then to spend 40 days of privation until they were found by Aborigines in a cave where they had all but given up and prepared to die.

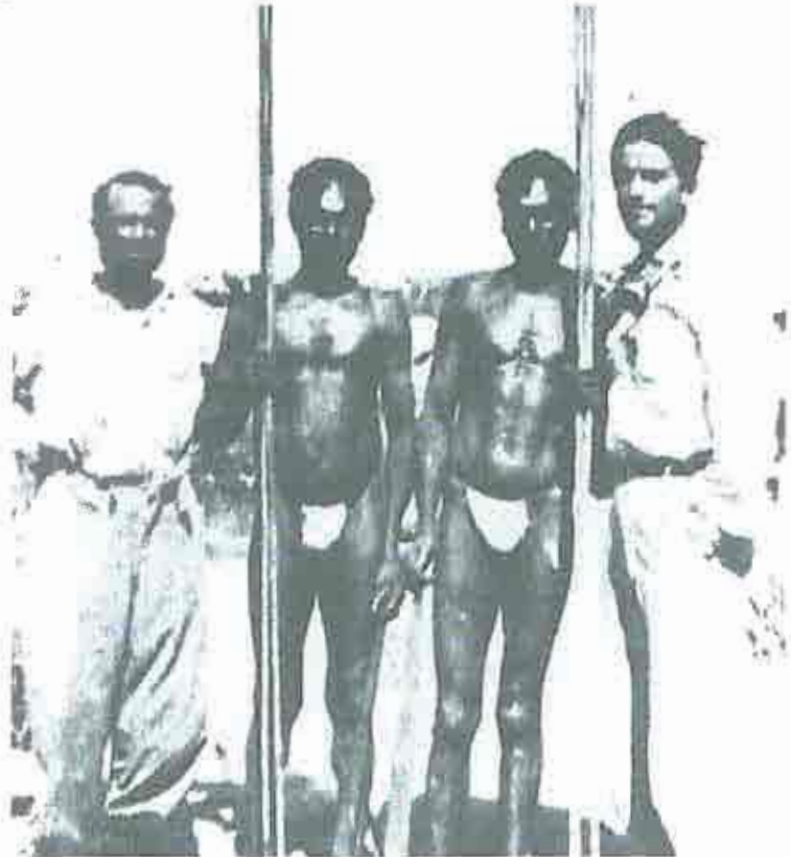
When the two airmen first landed, they began to convert one of the seaplane floats into a type of canoe.²³² Although ingenious and practical, the makeshift craft was not very useful on the open sea. They ended up washed ashore, still with no real idea of where they were and with no food and water.



Atlantis Seaplane Float
Source: Winter, B., *Atlantis is Missing* (see bibliography)

Search parties were looking for the men to no avail, but a cigarette case with Hans Bertram's initials on it was found by an Aboriginal.²³³ A search spreading out from this area found the missing plane, but it was of course empty. Now an even bigger search was put in progress using Aboriginal trackers from missions in the area, and one of these trackers found the men holed up in their cave waiting to die. This Aboriginal is thought to have been Minnijinnimurrie from the Drysdale Mission.²³⁴ He and other Aborigines with him from the mission looked after the two aviators for a week before the first group of police rescuers arrived. The

condition of the two men was very poor and two runners were sent to Forrest Mission with messages to arrange a boat to be sent to pick them up. Overnight Klausmann's condition had deteriorated and it was decided to send more runners to the police in Wyndham via Forrest Mission requesting a strait jacket also be sent. The second pair of Aboriginal runners then performed what was to become a marathon feat. They were told that if they managed to overtake the first runners they would get a new pair of shorts and a shirt.²³⁵ The pair made it to Forrest Mission in two days. It had taken six days for the rescue party to travel that distance.



Klausmann and Bertram with rescuers
Source: Winter, B., Atlantis is Missing (see bibliography)

Although the role that Aboriginals played in finding the aviators and keeping them alive until the rescue party reached the cave is well known, the story of Andumeri and Jalnga's marathon run is not often mentioned.²³⁶ Another aspect of this story is also not often told. While the search parties were under way, there were reports that Aboriginals had killed the two aviators. A number of Aboriginals were taken prisoner by Superintendent Johnson, including Wajana and Yorgin, the suspected murderers. Three different stories arose. An Aboriginal

woman, Mooger, said that Wajana and Yorgin saw the plane land, asked the aviators for tobacco and when they were not given any, speared the men.²³⁷ Then some of the prisoners told Johnson that they had found one man dead in the plane, and tracks of the other man. Finally a third story from other Aboriginals of the Brinjin tribe said that three other Aboriginals had killed the aviators.²³⁸ Regardless of the fact that these stories conflicted, and that no evidence of a dead person had been found in the seaplane, the Aboriginals were kept chained with the search party until they found the men. They were released after finding Bertram and Klausmann and given some food and tobacco as recompense. This incident has ramifications for other stories of Aboriginal hostility. If these Aboriginals 'confessed' to murders which they did not commit, it is possible that this had happened previously, for instance in the case of the *Emma*.

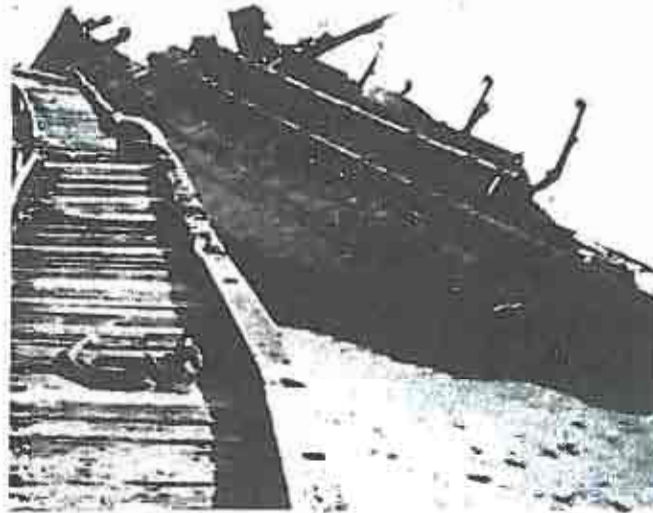
The Aboriginal group associated with the Drysdale Mission was possibly the Miwa²³⁹ and the runners were from the Forrest Mission and possibly associated with the Aboriginal Yüji group.²⁴⁰

Koolama

On the 10 February 1942 the *MV Koolama* left Fremantle on her way to Darwin. It carried the crew, passengers and army personnel and cargo for the northern ports of Geraldton, Carnarvon, Onslow, Cossack, Port Hedland, Broome, Derby and Wyndham. Various other cargo and passengers were also picked up at these destinations. On 20 February 1942, the *Koolama* was on the way to Wyndham from Broome when a Japanese reconnaissance plane began to circle the ship.²⁴¹ The war had caused the *Koolama* to have guns mounted for defence and Captain Eggleston gave the order to fire. The ship was then bombed by the plane but no bombs found their target. A short time later three other Japanese planes arrived and this time the ship was hit several times. There was only one serious casualty but the ship was badly damaged and had lost its steering. It was decided to beach the ship and unload the passengers prior to effecting repairs to enable the ship to attempt to get to either Wyndham or back to Broome. The total complement of crew, army personnel and passengers at this time was 180.

The ship had grounded at Cape Rulhiers, and the nearest settlement to it was the mission at Pago about 80 kms away, which was run by a group of Benedictine monks. The mission heard from Darwin on 20 February that the *Koolama* had been bombed and on 22 February were requested by the Naval Office in Darwin to contact the survivors.²⁴² The mission lugger and a land expedition set off for Cape Rulhiers where the ship was beached, arriving on 24 February. Most of the crew and passengers from the *Koolama* had been evacuated to a nearby cove and among them were some wounded including one serious head wound. When the mission lugger arrived at the cove, immediate arrangements were made to remove the wounded back to the mission on the lugger. It was sailed back with some of the *Koolama* crew and Aborigines for direction and Missionary Father Seraphim stayed with the rest of the party on the beach. It was decided that it would be best for the remaining group to walk overland to the mission. It was a distance of 120kms and Father Seraphim said it was rough but would only take about four days. In the event, the walkers found it gruelling. They set off 26 February led by Aboriginal guides whom they found it difficult to keep up with. They seemed to run out of food too quickly as well, and it seems they did not attempt to live off the land to any extent. When they reached the Drysdale River, it was full and fast flowing, too dangerous to cross for the weak or non swimmers. One of the Aboriginal guides, Gerome Pendagudje accompanied by a young seaman Dudley Anderson, braved the strong current and reached the other side. Gerome then ran the 40 kms to the mission to get ropes and provisions for the stranded group. This

was accomplished the following day and the land groups eventually arrived at the mission on 4 March. During this time, Captain Eggleston had remained on the *Koolama* and with the help of volunteers from the crew and passengers had effected repairs and refloated the ship. He managed by good seamanship to limp the ship to the quay at Wyndham but it sank during an air raid soon after it arrived.



MV Koolama sinking at Wyndham quay
Source: WA Maritime Museum Maritime Archaeology Dept
File MA 10 96 Wreck Koolama MV

The mission lugger returned to pick up Father Seraphim and the few remaining survivors at the beach at Cape Rulhiers. Unfortunately just one of this group became ill and died on the way back to the mission.²⁴³ It is remarkable that no other lives were lost during this incident, even the survivor with the serious head injury recovered well.

Dulverton

The *Dulverton* is a delightful tale with a happy ending. On the 26 May 1956 it became stuck on a sandbank at West Bay. The Captain was authorised to dump the cargo if necessary to save the ship. With the assistance of the Kalumburu Mission barge and its Aboriginal crew and another ship from Darwin, both cargo and ship were saved. The Aboriginal crew 'was so impressed with the dangerous experience that they composed a dance which reproduced the 'salvaging' of the *Dulverton* and featured an impression of the ship.'²⁴⁴

Conclusion

This report lists all known contact shipwrecks to date. As well as this report, a data base has been produced for the Western Australian Maritime Museum. It is intended that this will link with the current Australian shipwreck data base on the Museum's web site. The information contained in the data base is also collated in three hard copy folders which will reside in the library at the museum.

Collating these incidents has resulted in a documented data base, containing information that points to a number of areas for future research. For example, within the 'Contact Art' section there may be other representations old and new that deal with this subject. It would be valuable to document all the known art containing depictions of ships, shipwrecks and early contact events. The intriguing assemblage of contact art found to date deserves further investigation. There are a number of sites throughout Australia where ships are found depicted in Aboriginal rock art and a synthesis of these sites and what they contain would be a valuable adjunct to all contact studies. It would also be useful to collate information on all episodes of Aboriginal/explorer contact.

Within the 'Possible Contact' section are many occasions where it may seem that a long bow is being drawn to include some of the cases. I would argue that it is an absolute necessity to include all incidents where the possibility exists that the survivors could have had contact with Aboriginal people. At present there may not be full information about the incidents, and it is hoped that when this report is made available to interested parties, particularly Aboriginal communities, that it will stimulate memories to recall stories and legends that will complement the European side of the stories. Also, further archival research into each incident may uncover diaries and reminiscences that provide new information. This has already occurred in the case of the 'Unnamed Whaleboat Pt D'Entrecasteaux'. This wreck was in the 'Possible' category until research into the 'Cross Journals'²⁴⁵ uncovered the contact incident.

If the 'foreign origin' theories on language and genetic disease are to be given credence, there is a strong possibility that they arose from contact between Aboriginals and shipwreck survivors. At this time these theories remain unproven. The language theories are controversial and there have been rebuttals of Gerritsen's claims.²⁴⁶ As well as *porphyria variegata*, another introduced genetic disease has been found in the south west of Western Australia. This is

Ellis-van-Creveld syndrome and is another disorder with a high incidence among people with a Dutch ancestry.²⁴⁷ It cannot be confirmed where these diseases may have originated, without DNA testing of deceased family members and due to cultural implications this may not be possible.²⁴⁸

As for the 'Verified Contact' section, it is also hoped that more information may be forthcoming to add to the stories already in the database. As of now, preliminary analysis of the incidents show decided areas where contact was either confrontational or helpful. It shows the majority of confrontational episodes took place north of the 26th parallel. Further study will show how significant this is and whether it is reflected in contact incidents not related to shipwreck survivors. There is also evidence of more confrontational incidents between 1850 and 1875. Appendix Three gives a visual overview of these findings.

The report also gives other insights into Aboriginal-European relations. In the incidents where Aboriginals were helpful, it is apparent that European society did not perceive them as having the same status as white people. In some cases, it was not considered necessary to give the names of Aboriginals concerned in reports of the incidents. Rewards were not monetary, and not commensurate with the event. This is particularly noticeable in the case of the *Stefano*, where it appears that the reward was deliberately not as great as it might have been, because only two lives were saved. After the rescue of the *Georgette* survivors, Sam Isaacs, too, received a lesser award than Grace Darling, even though he put his life at the same risk. The Aboriginals arrested as the 'murderers' of Bertram and Klausmann in the Atlantis Seaplane story were given some food and tobacco. This seems little compensation for being arrested, chained and dragged through the bush for some days. The fact that these Aboriginals lied about murdering the aviators is an interesting social as well as anthropological question. Similar lies were told in the case of the *Henry*, although the two young men involved had more altruistic reasons for their deceit. This creates an air of uncertainty in other instances where Aboriginals have confessed or told of murdering Europeans, as for example, the story of the *Swan*.

The compilation of this report and the accompanying data base provides a unique collection of information. The project has achieved its objective to provide a cornerstone for future study. It creates an opportunity to retrieve another part of Western Australia's history, and to be able to tell that history from two perspectives, the European and the Aboriginal one. It now remains for the rest of Australia to gather their contact information into similar accessible form. This will allow further work into this little known part of Australian history. In this way it can contribute to the process of reconciliation with our indigenous peoples.

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Appendix One:

The Data Base

The wreck incidents have been compiled into an electronic data base. At present the data base consists of 52 wrecks, with dates ranging from 1628-1956. It is hoped that the data base will gradually expand as more information is discovered about each incident on such topics as:

- Survivors accounts
- Board of inquiries accounts
- Newspaper reports
- Descriptions of the material record from archaeological analyses
- Pictorial records of the incident, by both indigenous people and survivors. These will be scanned and added to the database.
- the indigenous tribal group linked to the incident.
- maps of shipwreck areas and contact sites

The data base has been compiled using FileMaker Pro 3 for Macintosh software. It is simple, easy to use and easy to modify if necessary in the future. See illustrations on following pages for example of data entry screen. This consists of basic fields for **name of ship**, **location** of wreck, **date** and **year wrecked** and **nationality**. Other fields were then selected that were applicable to the subject matter of the data base:

Source: this has a 'pop-up menu' to allow selection of whether information received about this incident was European or Aboriginal in origin.

Contact evidence: this has a 'pop-up' menu to select if contact is verified or possible or other (i.e. contact art).

Type of Contact: this has a 'pop-up' menu to select whether contact was confrontational or helpful, indifferent or unknown.

Associated Tribe: this field shows which Aboriginal tribe was or may have been associated with the incident.

Source of Information: this contains a list of all known references to the incident.

Summary of Incident: this simply tells the story of what happened.

A **container** field allows illustrations to be shown.

File Edit Mode Select Format Script Window 11:46 AM

Shipwreck database (new)

Data entry

Info Close Summary report Associated tribe report New Record Delete Record Find Record

Western Australian Maritime Museum
Contact Shipwreck Database

Records: 32
Unsorted

Atlantis Seaplane Float
Name of ship

1932
Wreck year

5/15/1932
Date of discovery

Kimberley
Location

German
Nationality

European
Source

Verified
Contact reference

Helpful
Type of contact

Miwa, Yilji
Associated tribe

Bertram, Hans, 1933, *Flug in die Hölle*, Drei Masten Verlag, Berlin

Burbridge, John, Heroic Dash Saves Aviators, *West Australian*, 15 January 1994, Western Australian Maritime Museum, Department of Maritime Archaeology File

Source of information

Summary of Incident

100 Browse

File Edit Mode Select Format Script Window 11:47 AM

Shipwreck database (new)

Data entry

Info Close Data entry Summary report Associated tribe report New Record Delete Record Find Record

Western Australian Maritime Museum
Contact Shipwreck Database

Records: 52
Unsorted

29

Chofuku Maru
Name of ship

1931
Wreck year

6/2/1931
Date (if known)

Pl Cloates
Location

Norwegian
Nationality

European
Source

Verified
Contact evidence

Helpful
Type of contact

Thalanyji
Associated tribe

MacBolt, Maurice, *The Story of Two Ships: SS Shunsei Maru and SS Chofuku Maru*. Talk given to Augusta Historical Society 16 September 1975, Western Australian Maritime Museum, Department of Maritime Archaeology File MA 440 71 2, Area North West Cape

Source of information

Summary of Incident

100 Browse

File Edit Mode Select Format Script Window 2:13 PM

Shipwreck database (new)

Data entry

Info Close Data entry Summary report Associated tribe report New Record Delete Record Find Record

Western Australian Maritime Museum
Contact Shipwreck Database

Records: 52
Unsorted

45

Napier Broome Bay Cannon
Name of ship

Carronade Island
Location

Possible
Contact evidence

Unknown
Type of contact

Gamberre
Associated tribe

European
Source

Crawford, I., 1969, *Late Prehistoric Changes in Aboriginal Cultures in Kimberley, Western Australia*, Ph.D. Thesis, p 268-78, Western Australian Maritime Museum, Department of Maritime Archaeology File MA 115 73 2, Area Carronade Island

Source of information

Summary of Incident

100 Browse

Source: Western Australian Maritime Museum

Appendix Two:

Examples of data base lists and reports

There are currently three hard copy files. For each incident they contain a print report from the data base together with photocopies of all relevant references where possible. The data base allows various printed reports to be generated. Using the print report format creates a print out of all information on an incident, including a list of all bibliographic references. If desired a list can be generated, for example, a list of all verified contact incidents or all possible contact incidents, all helpful incidents or all confrontational incidents. It can sort and print a list of all incidents involving a particular Aboriginal tribe. These lists may be printed in sorted list format or in full print report format. (See examples on following pages.)

This data base will link up to the Australian Shipwreck data base which is maintained at the Western Australian Maritime Museum, and will also have a link to the Museum's web site.

Name of Ship	Sunbeam		
Year wrecked	1892	Date wrecked	3/27/1892
Location	Osborne Island, Admiralty Gulf		
Nationality			
Contact evidence	Anecdotal		
Source	Aboriginal		
Type of Contact	Confrontational		
Associated tribe	Gamberre, Miwa		
Source of information	Anderson, Cathy, 1995, Heartbreak Coast, <i>Western Fisheries</i> , Jan-Mar, p 42-43, Western Australian Maritime Museum, Department of Maritime Archaeology File MA 168 76, Wreck <i>Sunbeam</i>		



Source: WA Maritime Museum,
File MA 168 76, Wreck
Sunbeam

Henderson, G., & Cairns, L., 1995, *Unfinished Voyages: Western Australian Shipwrecks 1881-1900*, University of Western Australia Press, Nedlands, p 197-199

Sledge, S. & Henderson, G., 1984, *Sunbeam* Solving the Mystery, *Western Way*, Oct-Dec, p 26-32, Western Australian Maritime Museum, Department of Maritime Archaeology File MA168 76, Wreck *Sunbeam*

Letter from M McCarthy to Marine History Information Exchange Group 15 January 1998, Western Australian Maritime Museum, Department of Maritime Archaeology File MA 168 76, Wreck *Sunbeam*

Summary of Incident

The *Sunbeam* was a steam yacht that had arrived in the North-West to take up a pearling venture in 1892. On 27 March 1892, while in Admiralty Gulf, the yacht developed a leak which was not able to be repaired. The Captain endeavoured to run ashore but the ship became stuck fast on a mudbank near Osborne Island. Captain and crew took to the ship's boats and landed at Dicky Bay where a number of pearling schooners were stationed. The Captain then decided to go to Broome in the ship's whaleboat taking nine of the crew, to inform the owners of the loss of the *Sunbeam*. This was against the advice from the other pearlers. On their way to Broome, at one stage they tried to go ashore, but they were chased off by spear waving Aborigines.

This episode is interesting not just because of that contact incident, but the fact that there are two legends about the fate of the ship, one from a European point of view, and the other from the Aboriginal perspective. The European story is that the ship was elderly and the leak arose from corrosion in the hull. The Aborigines have a different tale. In the pearling areas it was not uncommon for men on these ships to borrow or steal Aboriginal women. Prior to the loss of the ship, the *Sunbeam* crew had apparently been allowed some Aboriginal women for an agreed time which the crew ignored. The Aboriginal men were understandably angry about this and proceeded to "sling" the ship, to call upon serpent spirits to sink the ship. Thus the story of the *Sunbeam* entered Aboriginal legend.

The Aboriginal tribe involved could have been either the Gamberre or the Miwa.

**Western Australian Maritime Museum
Contact Shipwreck Database
Associated tribe report**

Ship	When	Where	Tribe	Contact type
<i>Unnamed</i>	1600s	Victoria Harbour near	Wudjari	Unknown
<i>Vianen</i>	1628	near Barrow Island		Unknown
<i>Vergulde Draeck</i>	1656	Ledge Point, north of	Yuat	Unknown
<i>Boat from</i>	1658	Near Moore River mouth	Yuat	Unknown
<i>Boat from de Goede</i>	1656	Near Moore River mouth	Yuat	Unknown
<i>Zuytdorp</i>	1712	near Murchison River	Nhanta	Unknown
<i>Boat from the</i>	1801	? Wonnerup Inlet	Wardandi	Unknown
<i>Unidentified at Eyre</i>	1810-20	East of Scorpion Bight	Ngatjumay, Mirning	Unknown
<i>Mercury</i>	1833	? Shark Bay, ? Greenough	Weelman (?Nhanta or Malkana)	Helpful
<i>Carib</i>	1837	Great Australian Bight	Ngatjumay/ Mirning	Helpful
<i>Three Whale Boats</i>	1839	Gantheaume Bay	Nhanta, Amangu, Yuat, Wajuk	Unknown
<i>Leander</i>	1853	near Irwin	Amangu	Helpful
<i>Occator</i>	1856	N W Cape, Muiron Island	Thalanyji	Confrontational
<i>Brothers</i>	1867	? North West Cape	Thalanyji	Confrontational
<i>Emma</i>	1867	? NW Cape? Dirk Hartog	Thalanyji	Confrontational
<i>Nautilus</i>	1868	Nickol Bay	Jaburrara	Confrontational
<i>Minnie</i>	1872	Fortescue Island		Helpful
<i>Bertha</i>	1874	Point Cloates	Thalanyji	Helpful
<i>Enchantress</i>	1872	Champagne Island	Worora	Confrontational

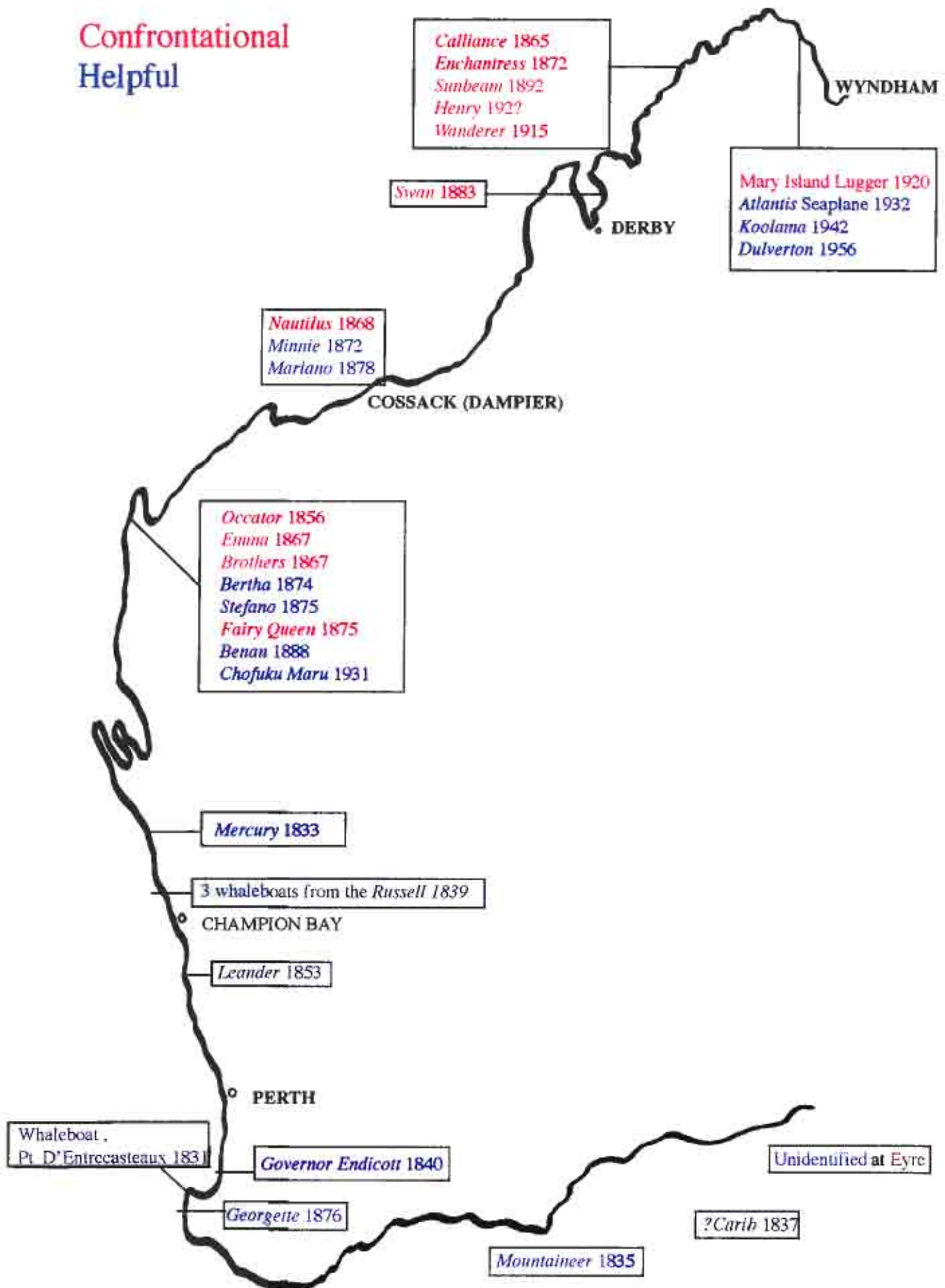
Appendix Three:

Map of Western Australian Wreck Sites showing Dates and Type of Contact

As mentioned in the conclusion of this report, preliminary analysis points to some interesting aspects that warrant further investigation. The indication that confrontational episodes were more likely to occur in the north of the state is illustrated visually on the map on the following page.

Appendix Three: Map of Western Australian Wreck Sites showing dates and type of contact

Confrontational
Helpful



The Australian Contact Shipwrecks Program. A report on the completion of the first stage in Western Australia.

M. McCarthy

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Project ethos

The shipwreck often results in the precipitate abandonment of a vessel's complement on what, to them, can appear as an inhospitable and frightening shore. On arrival on the shore, shipwreck survivors are often bereft of the trappings of power—the essentials which categorise successful exploratory, trading or acquisitive 'landings'.

Such accoutrements serve to enhance the status of the visitors and could appear to the inhabitants first as lofty ships supporting rigging, sails and other structures far beyond the local inhabitant's understanding; then they spawn smaller sailing or rowing boats, (still larger than indigenous watercraft), carrying armed crew, some in ceremonial dress with armaments, military equipment flags, drums, musical instruments and sometimes gifts. In contrast, the shipwrecked survivor most often arrives in a destitute, or even an injured form, without armament, sometimes without clothing, and almost always at a distinct physical and psychological disadvantage.

The shipwreck then can provide a useful insight into the attitude of coastal indigenous peoples to unexpected visitors before the establishment of Macassan or European hegemony in their particular region. After time, 'contact activity' is less of a true indication of indigenous attitudes to visitors—it being skewed by earlier demonstrations of power, by its subsequent enforcement and the recounting of these sometimes brutal events across tribal and regional boundaries. Nevertheless, 'contact' in these cases still provides some potentially useful insights into the behaviour of both the shipwrecked visitor and the peoples on whom they impinge.

The program described

The Australian Contact Shipwrecks Program is designed to list and give brief details of those European and Asian shipwrecks that have occurred on our islands and shores with recognised indigenous social contact. Commenced in June 1997, it owes its genesis to a study of the ramifications of a landing by survivors from the VOC ship *Zuytdorp* (1702-1712) on shores then occupied by the Malgana and Nhanta peoples in Western Australia's mid-west (McCarthy, 1997).

The program is initially intended to be developed as a 'stage one' in a range of 'contact studies' which would provide the cornerstone for more broad-reaching studies by historians, archaeologists, anthropologists, regional

Aboriginal academics and historians, South Sea Islander and Torres Strait Islander groups, schools, terrestrial archaeologists and other scholars.

In this particular 'data gathering' stage, survivors' accounts, archaeological analyses, descriptions of the material record (including paintings by indigenous people), vessels and their crews are to be catalogued and presented, together with publication lists.

A compilation and analysis of the accounts and reminiscences of the indigenous peoples with whom the voyagers made contact is not attempted, nor the extent and effect of that contact on them and their society. These phases are considered the premise of Aboriginal scholars or anthropologists with understandings, skills and abilities relevant to each affected region and are considered 'Stage two'.

There are many antecedents to this idea and there are numerous published and unpublished instances, some of which deal with the events from both a visitor and indigenous perspective (e.g. Crawford, 1969). One fascinating example is the differing accounts of the loss of the iron steamship *Sunbeam* (1892) at the Osborne Islands in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The Europeans involved indicate that it was purely corrosion, while the Aboriginal people indicate that it was a 'pay-back' by the Spirits for social transgressions on the part of the crew (Crawford, Ian, 1996, pers. comm., Nov.).

It is evident that, in this instance also, Aboriginal and European accounts are rarely in agreement, sometimes providing quite differing accounts and useful insights. An example is the contrast between the Roebourne Resident Magistrate's reasons why Europeans were welcomed by the Jaburara, Gnarluma and other peoples at Nickol Bay and the reasons proffered by the Aborigines themselves. One attributes the welcome to the presence of an Aboriginal man named Boongaree on European explorations or the presence of Negroes on American whale ships (McCarthy, 1990: 130-137), while the other indicates that the Burrup Peninsula was a traditional welcoming bridge for all beings coming from the sea (Nannup, 1998, pers. comm.).

There are many potential avenues to be explored and the extension of this study into even further stages, such as an assessment of contact through other means (such as flight) is foreshadowed in the utilisation of the Bertram

seaplane incident in the Kimberley region in the Western Australian Stage One. The 'Aeroplane Dances' known to have been developed after aircraft crashes here and in the Eastern States during WWII and beyond are especially pertinent, being similar in effect to the precipitate landings of ship-borne visitors. Further, while individual assessments of non-shipwreck maritime events are common, such as French and other explorers' comments on their interaction with indigenous peoples, a full compilation and analysis of these events as a continuum stretching into the modern day is awaited.

Program method

Shipwreck contact events were identified and compiled by Silvester following a search of archives at the Western Australian Maritime Museum and at the Batty Library of Western Australian History, Alexander Library, Perth. At present the database consists of 52 wrecks, with dates ranging from 1628–1956. The initial criteria for inclusion in the database was incidents of 'first contact', that is, where Aboriginal people, Europeans or Asian visitors were meeting for the first time. The research parameters inevitably expanded as it became apparent that there were many types of 'contact incident'.

These incidents have been divided into three sections:

- **Verified Contact:** This section covers all known shipwreck survivor contact incidents.
- **Contact Art:** This deals with depictions referring to shipwrecks, including both European and Aboriginal art.
- **Possible Contact:** Many shipwreck survivors were forced to walk long distances to reach safety. Some of these distances were such that it seems highly likely that they met with indigenous people. There are also cases where there have been survivors whose fate is unknown. There are various theories about what may have happened to these survivors. The database is a good resource to access all the information about these events for further research.

The database

The 'hard copy' of the database appears in the form of a Report of the Department of Maritime Archaeology at the Western Australian Maritime Museum (Silvester, 1998). Silvester's bound, three volume set of research notes are available to scholars at the Maritime Museum library as a 'closed reserve'. Mr Michael Murray has assisted in the presentation of the materials in an electronic database form and this appears on the Museum's website at <http://www.mm.wa.gov.au> (Murray & Silvester, 1999). This combined offering is intended to provide both a hard copy and electronic 'blueprint' for the use of other researchers and regional indigenous stakeholders in the Australian Contact Shipwrecks Program now and in the future.

The database has been compiled using FileMaker Pro 3 for Macintosh software. It is simple, easy to use and easy to modify. There are basic fields for name of ship, location of wreck, date and year wrecked and nationality. Other fields were then selected that were applicable to the subject matter of the database, for example, the Source field, that has a 'pop-up menu' to allow selection of whether information received about this incident was European or Aboriginal in origin. The Contact evidence field has a 'pop-up' menu to select if contact is verified or possible or other (i.e. contact art). The Type of Contact field has a 'pop-up' menu to select whether contact was confrontational or helpful, indifferent or unknown. The Associated Tribe field shows which Aboriginal tribe was or may have been associated with the incident. The Source of Information field contains a list of all known references to the incident. The Summary of Incident field simply tells the story of what happened and a container field allows illustrations to be shown.

The database allows various reports to be generated. The print report format gives a print out of all information on that incident. If desired it can also generate lists, for example, a list of all verified contact incidents or all possible contact incidents, all helpful incidents or all confrontational incidents. It can sort and print a list of all incidents involving a particular Aboriginal tribe. These lists may be printed in list form or in full print report format.

Preliminary analysis indicates there are patterns which open up avenues for further investigation, for example:

- Further exploration of the possible Dutch/Aboriginal interaction of the 17th and early 18th centuries.
- Why were there more confrontational incidents between 1850–1875?
- Why were incidents north of the 26th parallel more likely to be confrontational than in the south?

As indicated above, there are other areas, such as a full assessment and integration of 'explorer contact' events and stories yet to be developed. It would also be valuable to document all the known art containing depictions of shipwrecks and early contact events including maritime art on a regional, state and national basis. There are a number of sites throughout Australia where ships are found depicted in Aboriginal rock art and a synthesis of these sites and what they contain would be a valuable adjunct to all contact studies. Examples appear in Mulvaney (1989) and elsewhere.

Conclusion

The Western Australian phase of the Australian National Contact Shipwrecks Database project has achieved its 'Stage one' objective to provide a database as a cornerstone for future studies by others. The database provides an opportunity to retrieve another aspect of Western

Australia's history, this time from three perspectives; the European, Macassan and Aboriginal.

It now remains for the rest of Australia to gather their contact shipwreck information into a similar accessible form. This will allow further work into a little known part of Australian history, and hopefully contribute to the process of reconciliation with our indigenous people by broadening the appreciation and understanding of past events.

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