

An underwater photograph of the Cambria shipwreck, a large, dark, rusted metal structure lying on the sandy ocean floor. A diver is visible on the left side of the frame, and a white rectangular frame is placed on the seabed in the foreground for scale. The water is clear and blue.

The *Cambria* Rediscovered

The history, first discovery, search,
relocation, inspection and vessel's history

Edited Jeremy Green

with contributions by Ross Anderson, Patrick Baker, Michael Gregg and Michael
McCarthy,

SS *Cambria* – History and Specifications

MICHAEL GREGG, MARITIME HISTORY DEPARTMENT

The auxiliary steamer *Cambria* was designed and built in 1885 by William Mollinson at Brickport, on Cooe Creek, Emu Bay, on the north coast of Tasmania. She was the second vessel to be built by Mollinson to the order of industrious local entrepreneur William Jones, described in the local press as ‘a steam-engine in himself’.

William ‘Billy’ Jones had left his native Wales for Australia as a deckhand on the barque *Prince Consort* in 1861, and subsequently settled into the colonial coasting trade in Tasmania. By 1870 he was sufficiently established to commission Mollinson to build him his first ship, the 76 ft (23.1 m) schooner *Onward* which he sailed as owner/master. Coincidentally, the *Onward*, like the *Cambria*, was later to be registered to a Western Australian owner, in this case G.H. Roe in 1880.

Jones relinquished command of the *Onward* in 1872 to develop interests on land, which rapidly came to include a successful sawmill, a brick works, a butter factory, numerous agricultural interests, a store, a number of hotels and the construction of his own harbour, Brickport, to service them.

As a former mariner and now significant primary producer, Jones was acutely aware of the need for a reliable shipping service to connect the isolated communities of Tasmania’s north coast with Launceston and Hobart, and specifically to deliver his products to market. To this end, *Cambria* was conceived as a steamship, to ensure regularity of service; with shallow draught, to access the many isolated river settlements; a large open deckspace, to handle his bulk cargoes such as timber; and her name reflected the traditional name of his native Wales. Ironically, *Cambria* herself had to be launched without her machinery, which, despite being delivered to Hobart from Glasgow in the SS *Delcomyn*, was delayed by the unreliable shipping and transshipment necessary to get the equipment to Emu Bay—the very issue *Cambria* was built to address.

The local press were ecstatic about her launch on 1 July 1885:

At about 2.30 p.m. to-day Mr W. Jones, of Uplands, Burnie, launched his new screw steamer in the presence of about 300 persons. All being in readiness, Mr Jones broke a bottle of champagne over the stem, and christened the vessel the *Cambria*. The blocks were then knocked away and the new vessel glided gracefully into the water, amidst the cheers of the spectators. The *Cambria*, which is intended specially for Launceston and North West Coast trade, has been exceedingly well built by Mr W. Mollison. She will carry 100 tons in about 6ft. draught of water. Mr Jones is to be congratulated on the success and the enterprise.

The *Cambria* is 93ft. long, and has a very pretty poop deck. She is copper-fastened and very strongly built, and should be a great acquisition to the coastal trade. Her engines were built in Glasgow, and are on the compound principle. They will arrive at Emu Bay from Launceston shortly, and it is expected that the *Cambria* will be ready for sea in about two months.

In October 1885, when, with engines now installed, she steamed into Launceston, the press was even more fulsome:

The S.S. *Cambria*.

Another valuable addition has been made to the already large fleet of steaming vessels on the coast, in the shape of a new steamer which arrived at the Market Wharf yesterday from Emu Bay. The new arrival is the *Cambria*, built to the order of Mr W. Jones, of Upland, Emu Bay. The *Cambria* was built in the early part of last year, specially for the N.W. Coast trade. She is a 'cargo wallah' boat, pure and simple, and has been kept scrupulously clean.

The *Cambria* was launched at Emu Bay a short time since, and the following are her dimensions :-Length, 90ft.; depth, 7ft.3in.; breadth, 18ft. 6in. The hull is straight stemmed, with an elliptic stern. She is constructed of stringy bark, with kauri pine decks, and was built by Mr J. Mollison [sic]. She is bridged over amidships, and from this place the vessel is steered.

The saloon, which is reached from the raised deck astern, is limited as to dimensions, but very snug and comfortable withal, and is equal to the berthing of ten passengers. The engines are compact in appearance, and there is much of simplicity in their structure. They are from Messrs. Ross and Duncan, of Glasgow, and are on the compound surface condensing principle, direct acting, with inverted cylinders. They have a pressure of 90lbs., and the boiler is one of Blakes's patent vertical. The *Cambria*'s speed has not yet been properly tested, but it is presumed that she will travel at the rate of ten knots per hour in fair weather. Her draught is 7ft. 6in. aft, and 6ft. forward when loaded. This light draught will enable the steamer to proceed up rivers where at present most of our coasting fleet cannot venture. The captain's cabin is placed amidships, and is a roomy compartment, where everything requisite is to hand, whilst the men are comfortably housed in the forward part of the vessel. The *Cambria* is fully equipped with all the requisites, mechanical and otherwise, for the quick intake and discharge of cargo. She is rigged as a ketch, and no doubt in fine weather a great demand will be made on her canvas in assisting during the passages from port to port.

The vessel has not yet been measured, but it is estimated that she will carry about 90 tons of cargo, and should be a great acquisition on the coast. Captain R. Reid is in command of the *Cambria*, and is well acquainted with the coast. It will be remembered that he was the late courteous skipper of the ketch *Kermandie*, and when in that vessel made many friends, who wish him every success in his new sphere...

The enthusiasm seems justified as *Cambria* became a regular and profitable part of the coastal scene in north western Tasmania. The only significant alarm came a year later when on Wednesday 6 October 1886 she grounded heavily on the Inglis River bar whilst departing Table Cape, sustaining significant damage to part of her keel, sternpost and rudder. Whilst she was got off quickly, her repairs were delayed waiting for a sufficient tide to float her onto the drying grid at Table Cape. The industrious Jones marshalled his forces, and once dried out, the repairs were completed in just 5 days.

In August 1888, *Cambria*'s ownership was transferred to the newly formed United Steamship Co Ltd of Launceston, an attempt to dominate northern Tasmanian coastal trade. However by 1895, the company was in decline and was ultimately dissolved, with T A Reynolds & Co purchasing the company's assets in 1896 with the intention of focussing on the west coast trade. *Cambria*, surplus to the new company's requirements,

was registered under the ownership of John Williamson of Hobart, transferred to the Hobart register and offered for sale.

Cambria's purchaser was to be Stephen Smith, building contractor and timber merchant and importer, of Geraldton (formerly known as Champion Bay) on the mid-west coast of Western Australia. Smith already had the construction of both the Geraldton Post Office and the Geraldton railway jetty to his credit. He ran a timber yard and mill in Geraldton which supplied the mid-west with building material. He was also a shipowner, having previously owned the schooner *Mana* (built in California in 1864 as *Sea Nymph*) which was used to carry supplies for his enterprises to Geraldton from Fremantle and the timber ports of the south west of Western Australia.

Unfortunately, on 1 September 1895 the *Mana* was blown ashore in a storm at Rockingham. As Smith apparently had neither insurance cover nor the ready cash to finance her refloating, she was unceremoniously sold at auction as she lay to John Bateman Senior, of the well known Bateman family of ship-owners of Fremantle. The price realised was just £225, barely scrap value. John Bateman subsequently refloated her and re-licensed her for trading, but Smith was left without the asset, just the still outstanding mortgage from his initial purchase.

Smith seems to have quickly recovered from this setback, and the *Cambria* must have appeared an ideal replacement for the *Mana*. On the 31 August 1896 the Bill of Sale was signed, and on 10 of September 1896 the *Cambria* arrived at Melbourne under her new ownership to load 600 cases of dynamite for Fremantle.

The long voyage to the west coast via Adelaide, Esperance and Albany passed with little incident apart from a comical occurrence when, on her arrival in Albany, a boarding party from the cruiser HMS *Katoomba* boarded *Cambria* and ceremoniously brought her master before the Captain of the *Katoomba* to explain his illegal floating of the Union Jack flag. Threatened with a £500 fine, the chastened master explained he was accustomed to using it as an unofficial signal for a pilot, and was released with a warning—and the loss of both the offending flag and not a little dignity.

Cambria arrived at Fremantle on 1 October 1896, and after she discharged her dangerous cargo, the *West Australian* newspaper stated on the 9 October:

Mr Stephen Smith announces that the little steamer *Cambria*, which was recently purchased by him, and which arrived in the bay on Monday last, will trade regularly between Geraldton, Dongarra, and Fremantle.

It is not clear whether the announcement was made in expectation, or in hope. Neither were to be fulfilled.

Initially *Cambria* was employed on a roughly 10 day cycle, carrying timber and general cargo north from Fremantle to the ports of the mid-west of Western Australia, and returning southbound with largely agricultural produce for the Fremantle domestic and export markets. The occasional passenger was carried in both directions, and occasional trips were made to more northerly ports including Carnarvon and Maud's Landing.

Perhaps competition from the newly opened Midland Railway line to Perth (the infrastructure for which Smith had, ironically, helped to build), or from the faster and larger steamers on the same route, such as the Australian United Steam Navigation Co's *Croydon*, was greater than anticipated. After just a few months, the pattern deteriorated into one of flurries of activity, perhaps driven by the needs of Smith's other operations,

interspersed with lengthy periods of lay-up or lighterage in Geraldton. In March 1897 she narrowly escaped becoming a quarantine hulk after a suspected outbreak of smallpox on the SS *Sultan*, and for almost 7 months in 1898 she seems to have remained apparently idle at Geraldton.

On 16 September 1898 she raised steam and departed Geraldton for the last time, calling at Fremantle on the 18 before proceeding to Bunbury and the Vasse to load timber for Fremantle. She seems to have successfully demonstrated her suitability for this trade, as on 2 November 1898 the *Cambria* was officially sold to James Cornish Port, a timber merchant of Bunbury. J.C. Port, like his father James Port senior, was a respected figure in the lucrative south-west WA timber industry.

However the respectable J. C. Port may not have known quite what he was buying. In a private letter to Smith dated 15 October 1898, C.G. Crane, Smith's accountant, *defacto* manager and minority partner, revealed that the *Cambria* was in a sinking condition, making 3 inches (75 mm) of water every hour, her master was reluctant to put to sea in a vessel in such a state, and warning that if the authorities knew, they would refuse her clearance. In a telling line Crane warned:

‘...as long as she is on top [of the water], she will be always a worry and expense, and, I fear, not a profit...’

Crane also revealed that the target of his sales pitch was not J.C. Port, but rather a partnership between a ‘Reid and Dixon’, with Port as the financier backing them. ‘Reid’ was probably William Reid of Fremantle, who had interests in a number of somewhat elderly sailing vessels trading on the coast, and perhaps saw the need to switch to steam propulsion to remain competitive. Certainly during the year following the purchase of the *Cambria* he managed to divest himself of his other vessels, selling the schooners *Anthons* to a Singaporean owner and *Theresa* to Broome pearler Alexander Birnie. The identity of ‘Dixon’ is not clear.

Smith and Crane were clearly desperate to offload their sinking vessel. Crane admitted

I have used every device possible to find out what Reid and Dixon propose doing, even to getting Stafford, the Western Australian Bank manager, as drunk as it was possible. ...I pumped him dry... have quite developed a faculty for blarney ...

and further:

... I told him some whopping lies, which I have not the least doubt will be repeated to both Dixon and Reid...

The blarney clearly worked as the sale was eventually concluded. Whether the parties negotiated a bargain price in the light of the vessel's condition is not clear—what is clear is that in December 1898, just six weeks into the new ownership, the *Cambria* was handed into the care of notable Fremantle shipwright A. E. Brown. The ensuing refit was extensive, prolonged and no doubt expensive. It was to be 5 months before the rejuvenated *Cambria* departed Fremantle on 23 April 1899 to resume her service.

Cambria commenced a roughly weekly service, departing Fremantle for Bunbury, then Busselton and other timber ports in the region as distant as Hamelin Bay as required,

before returning to Fremantle via Bunbury with her cargo of timber and agricultural products, and the occasional passenger. Her southbound trip carried the full range of imported and manufactured goods needed by the south-west population.

It was with just such a typical mixed general cargo for the Vasse ports that the *Cambria* departed Fremantle at 4.45 pm on the afternoon of Sunday, 4 March 1900, on what would prove to be her final voyage.

Construction

Cambria was a wooden auxiliary single screw steamship, carvel built of stringy bark (*Eucalyptus* sp.), copper fastened, with a kauri pine (*Agathis* sp.) deck and a single deckhouse. She had a straight stem and a round stern, with one deck and was copper sheathed below the waterline.

Dimensions

Approximately 28.7m (94.0ft) length on deck. Surveyed length (from the inside of the stem to the inside of the sternpost) 26.1m (85.7ft); breadth 5.5m (18.0ft); internal depth in hold 2.2m (7.1ft); loaded draft forward 1.8m (6.0ft); loaded draft aft 2.3m (7.5ft). Gross enclosed tonnage (Volumetric measurement where 1 ton = 100 cubic feet) 88.2 tons; Net tonnage available for cargo (Volumetric measurement where 1 ton = 100 cubic feet) 58.82 tons

Rigging

2 masted, ketch rigged. Main boom probably rigged for use as a derrick for cargo handling.

Machinery

Machinery supplied by Ross & Duncan of Glasgow, comprising a two cylinder surface condensing inverted compound steam engine of 13' (high pressure) and 24' (low pressure) bore and 18' stroke, rated at 25 nominal horse power, with associated auxiliaries.

One source describes the boiler as a Blake's Patent vertical boiler, a variation on the more common Cochrane firetube-type vertical boiler. Both boiler types used a convoluted 'Z'-shaped path for the combustion gases to maximise surface area to water volume ratio for maximum heat transfer, at the cost of a small loss of thermal efficiency due to the incomplete water-jacketing. The result is a free steaming boiler with a small footprint, maximising the space available for cargo within the hull. The characteristic of the Blake's Patent boiler was the radial arrangement of the horizontal firetubes for ease of construction and repair. However initial inspection of the boiler on the *Cambria* wreck site seems to indicate it has the more common parallel arrangement of tubes employed in the Cochrane boiler. As it is unlikely, although not impossible, that the boiler had been replaced in the vessel's relatively short life, it is possible that rather than the boiler being a specific Blake's Patent vertical boiler, it may have been a Cochrane type but fitted with another innovation, the Blake's Patent Water Regulator. This device, by automatically maintaining the ideal level of the limited water capacity of the vertical boiler, increased efficiency and made one-man operation easier. Future inspections of the wreck site may clarify this.

Crew

The *Cambria* was worked by a usual crew of eight, with, as is common in small ships, some overlap of roles. The crew comprised the master, mate and engineer as certificated

officers, a cook (doubling as steward when passengers were carried), two stokers (doubling as deckhands when required), a senior seaman and a deckhand.

General Arrangement

As is often the case with smaller, 'workaday' vessels, searches of archives across Australia have not, at the time of writing, produced an identified photographic image of the vessel. In spite of the lack of available imagery, it is possible to reconstruct an indication of the *Cambria*'s appearance from official records and survey documents, contemporary accounts, and comparison with contemporary practice in similar vessels.

Cambria was in all accounts described as a steamship. Her two masted ketch rig was therefore likely to have been a low aspect, modest rig employed as a steadying rig, and to assist the engine under favourable conditions in the interests of fuel economy.

The choice of a vertical boiler indicates that emphasis was placed in her design on a compact machinery layout to maximise the available cargo space in what was a relatively small hull. This suggests a likely arrangement with the machinery spaces set as far aft as possible, with a single hold occupying the forward length with a large expanse of relatively unencumbered deck. Such an arrangement provides a more efficient use of space and cargo-handling equipment in a small vessel than the alternative arrangement used in larger contemporary vessels, with separated fore and aft holds with the machinery spaces placed centrally.

In common with vessels her size, *Cambria* would have had a single flush deck forward. In the bows would be located the cable locker, and accommodation space for the crew. This foc'sle would have had between 4 and 6 bunks arranged in tiers around a central mess space. It is possible that the galley was located in this area, but it is more likely that it was located aft adjacent to the boiler and saloon.

Aft of the foc'sle, and separated from it by a bulkhead, would have been the main hold, with the main mast keel-stepped at its forward end. Somewhat aft of midships would have been the stokehold bulkhead at the end of the hold, with the boiler behind that, flanked by coal bunkers. It was not normal practice for an installation of this size to have a bulkhead separating the stokehold (boiler room) from the engine room. The boiler could have been oriented with the firedoor on either the forward or aft side. The forward orientation had the advantage of keeping the abrasive coal dust away from the exposed bearing surfaces of the machinery but isolated the stoker from the engine space; a rearwards orientation placed the stoker in the engine space enabling the one-man operation necessary on longer voyages. The latter is the more likely orientation for this reason. Further investigations of the wrecksite should clarify this point.

The main engine would have been positioned aft of this, connected to a thrust block and short propeller shaft, and flanked by auxiliary machinery including boiler feed and condenser pumps, with condensing chambers and feedwater tanks outboard of them.

At deck level, *Cambria* is recorded as having a relatively small deckhouse, and was bridged amidships. The master's accommodation was also described as amidships. As the choice of a vertical boiler indicates a desire to minimise the machinery space in order to maximise the cargo space it is highly unlikely that below deck space was allocated to the master's accommodation. It is possible therefore that the deckhouse was placed immediately forward of the boiler trunking, containing the master's cabin and defacto chartroom, supporting an open bridge or steering position mounted above. Such a deckhouse would likely have extended aft to enclose the great height of the boiler and

would be likely to have included the galley space, in which the cook may also have had his accommodation. In such a case a trunking carrying the engine room skylights and ventilators would have run aft, connecting with the raised poop deck.

It is notable that the vessel's Registration papers describe *Cambria* as having one deck, rather than 'one deck and break' as a raised poop deck arrangement was usually described. However, contemporary reports describe her as having 'a very pretty poop deck' and 'a saloon, which is reached from the raised deck astern'. The fact that her Registration papers describe a 'round' stern rather than the more common 'elliptical' stern further suggests a full bodied stern with the necessary volume for providing accommodation to passengers. It is worth noting that the first WA State Shipping Service vessel, the *Una*, was also described as having just one deck whereas contemporary photographic and documentary evidence show that she was fitted with a raised poop deck.

It is therefore suggested that the *Cambria* was fitted with a raised poop deck probably commencing immediately aft of the engine. The mizzen mast would have been stepped to the forward edge of this. A companion way would have led down to a saloon, probably fitted with a central table surrounded by leather covered seating. She may also have been fitted with tilt down cot berths above the seating, or possibly curtained alcoves fixed above the seating as passenger berths. It is unlikely, in such a compact ship, that there was any space available for separated passenger cabins per se. However it is likely that the mate and engineer were provided with curtained alcoves off this area as their accommodation. Meals would have been served to officers and passengers in this space from the galley located slightly further forward, and crew's meals eaten at the mess table in the foc'sle.

Historical Background to the Loss

JEREMY GREEN

The *Cambria* left Fremantle at 4 pm on 4 March 1900 with eight crew and one passenger bound for southwest ports with a general cargo and machinery. After departing Fremantle the ship ran into a southwest gale with heavy seas, so Captain Colstadt headed for the South Passage of Garden Island to seek shelter in Mangles Bay, Rockingham. However on reaching the South Channel at 8.30pm, a heavy swell lifted the ship to leeward and it struck a reef on the southwest of Garden Island. The ship was put full astern, but the propeller broke and it started taking on water. The pumps could not cope and at 10 pm it filled with water and sank with the masts and funnel showing. The crew spent the night clinging to the rigging. The next day they launched the lifeboat and all of the crew, passenger Mr Reid and ship's cat made it to a sandy beach on Garden Island. They found some old sails and rigged the lifeboat and sailed back to Fremantle arriving at 3 pm.

No. *38* *1900* Electric Telegraph, *Rockingham* Western Australia.

MESSAGE..... TIME RECEIVED.....
 REPEATING..... TIME SENT.....
 REPLY..... BY.....
 FORWARDING CHARGES.....

Place *Rockingham*
 Date *5/3/1900*

The following Message is presented for Transmission, subject to the Regulations and Conditions under which Telegraph Messages are authorised to be transmitted in Western Australia.

To *Inspector Black* *Fremantle*

DEPARTMENT CHIEF
 7 - MAR 00
 PERTH, W.A.

Steamer	wrecked	lying	South	end
of	Garden	Island	supposed	from
or	<i>Cambria</i>	wreckage	and	cargo
coming	ashore	at	Garden	Island
masts	of	vessel	can	be
seen	from	here	steamer	required
to	be	sent	at	once

F. Murphy
 Const.

Signature and address of Sender.....

Figure 1. Telegram from Constable F. Murphy to Inspector Black with the first report of the loss of the *Cambria*.

On 5 March, Constable F. Murphy from Rockingham Police sent the following message to Inspector Black, at Fremantle:

Steamer wrecked lying South end Garden Island supposed *Cambridge* or *Cambria* wreckage and cargo coming ashore at Garden Island masts of vessel can be seen from here Steamer required to be sent at once.

F.W. Hopkins of the Fremantle Police reported on 5 March to Director Water Police at Fremantle the following:

I have to report at 4 pm Carl Coalstad Master of the *Cambria* arrived at Fremantle with his dingy and eight of his men. Coalstad states he passed the Challenger Passage about 6 pm, 4th inst en-route for Bunbury with a General Cargo. After clearing the Challenger Reefs he was met by a South West Gale and the *Cambria* made the heavy weather shipping heavy seas. At 8 pm finding himself abreast of Rockingham he decided to run through the South Passage and anchor inside for the night at about 8.30 pm when entering the passage a heavy swell was setting in and when he sighted the reef his vessel was within a few feet of it: He struck on the ?? reef with her port bilge and at the same time lost her propeller and commenced to fill at about 10 pm. She slipped off the reef into deep water and his crew was compelled to hang in the rigging till daylight. I am informed the vessel & portion of the cargo is insured. I cannot ascertain at present for what amount.

Further correspondence to the Water Police by Water Police Constable Clarke on 5 March states:

At three pm went off in the tug *Durskey* to Garden Island to ascertain what happened to the coasting steamer *Cambria* and at 5pm we arrived at the west point of the above island and found the *Cambria* sunk in about fourteen feet of water nothing showing but the masts and half the funnel having apparently struck on some of the numerous reefs that are around there we pulled all around the wreck in the Harbour Masters boat but could see nothing of the crew or there boat. So we pulled in shore & spoke to some fishermen on the beach & they said they heard the steamers whistle the night before at about 10.30 pm but did not trouble to see what it was until this morning when going to the beach they discerned the *Cambria* sunk and part of her cargo washed up on the beach. They had not seen anything of the crew or their boat. We then left a Customs Officer to look after the cargo which consisted of cases of kerosene, oil, bicycles and various other things and proceed to Rockingham but not getting any information there we returned back to Fremantle arriving at 8.40 pm & found that the crew had arrived in Fremantle at 4 pm in their own boat.

Captain Colstadt's certificate was suspended for six months.
The *West Australian* on 6 March reported:

DISASTER TO A COASTING STEAMER.

THE *Cambria* WRECKED OFF ROCKINGINAM.

NO LIVES LOST.THE VESSEL A TOTAL WRECK.

The violence of the weather off the coast of Fremantle on Sunday night was responsible for another shipwreck in close proximity to the spot where the *Carlisle Castle* foundered with all hands last year. Happily, however, the disaster which

occurred the night before last was not accompanied by any loss of life. The first tidings of the wreck reached Fremantle at about 2.30 p.m. yesterday, when Inspector Back, in charge of the local police station, and Mr. Clayton Mason, Collector of Customs, both received a telegraphic message from Con stable Murphy, .at Rockingham , announcing that a steamer, supposed to be the *Cambria*, had been wrecked off the south end of Garden Island, and that cases and brooms were being washed ashore. Captain Russell, Chief Harbour Master at Fremantle, was immediately acquainted with the news, and as the Government steamer Penguin was away at Rottnest Island, the harbour authorities requisitioned the tugboat *Dunskey* to go out to the scene of the wreck. The *Dunskey* left Fremantle shortly after 3 o'clock, having on board Captain Russell and Captain Irvine, assistant harbourmaster. When intelligence of the disaster was received from Rockingham, a feeling of anxiety was aroused as to the fate of the crew. All fears of this kind were, however, soon dispelled, for before the *Dunskey*. was well out of the roadstead a report got about that the crew of the *Cambria* had reached Fremantle in a dingy belonging to the steamer. This news proved correct, and a pleasant relief was experienced when it was found that no lives had been sacrificed by the wreck. The *Cambria*, which is of about 150 tons register, has been engaged in the coasting trade for the past four years. She left Fremantle for Bunbury and ether south western ports shortly after 4 o'clock on Sunday afternoon. Her crew consisted of Capt. Charles Colstadt, an engineer, two firemen, three seamen, and a cook, and there was one passenger, a lad named Reid, on board. She had a fall cargo. Nothing was saved from the stranded vessel in the way of belongings, and some of the crew were even without boots and hats when they tame ashore. A cat which was on board was, however, saved from an un timely death by young Reid, the passenger, who carefully looked after its welfare after the vessel sank. The *Dunskey* returned to Fremantle at half-past 8 last night, and Captain Douglas reported that the *Cambria* was still firm, and showed no signs of breaking up. A large quantity of cargo was found on the beach at Garden Island. The *Cambria* was built in Tasmania about 15 years ago, and as stated above has been employed in the trade between the coastal ports of Western Australia for the past four years. During the last eighteen months she has been almost exclusively engaged in the Bunbury trade. She is owned by Mr. J. C. Port, of Bunbury. The Fremantle agents for the steamer are Messrs. R. J. Lynn and Co. When seen last night Mr. Lynn stated that, as there was no hope of saving the vessel, she would be handed over by her owner to the underwriters or Receiver of Wrecks. The *Cambria* was valued at £2,000, and she was insured with the China Traders Insurance Company for £1,200.

The *West Australian* reported 10 March

INTERVIEW WITH CAPTAIN COLSTADT.

Captain Colstadt, the master of the *Cambria*, when seen by a representative of the 'West Australian, made the following statement: The *Cambria* left Fremantle for Bunbury with a full cargo about 4.15. p.m. on Sunday. There was a moderate sea, and a fairly strong wind was blowing from S.S.W. when we left Gage Roads. I left the port by way of the Challenger Passage, and when we got away from the lee of the islands the wind freshened, and a heavy head sea came up. The vessel could not make much headway, and I thought it best to put into Rockingham for shelter.

The ship's course was altered, and all went well until the vessel was abreast of the south point of Garden Island. I was keeping the steamer in about the centre of the channel leading into Rockingham, when a heavy swell carried her to leeward and immediately afterwards I felt the ship bump as if she had struck some thing. In a few seconds she gave another bump and remained fast. She did not strike very hard. I at once ordered the engines to be put full speed astern, but before the steamer could get stern way on the propeller broke clean off the shaft, and left us helpless. The time when she struck the reef, which was about a quarter of a mile from Garden Island, was about 8.30 p.m. On sounding the bell I found that she was taking in a little water, so I gave orders for the pumps to be kept going, and at the same time the ship's boat was got ready for lowering. The steamer remained hard on the rocks, and the pumps kept the water down till about 11 p.m., when the inrush proved too much for them, and the water began to rise in the hold and engine-room, putting the fires out. She then swung round off the reef and filled rapidly. An attempt was made to launch the boat, but the ship gave a lurch as it was being lowered over the side, and capsized it. There was no time for the crew to try and right it, as the steamer settled down in a few seconds, and we had barely time to scramble into the rigging before the water rose above the deck. The steamer sank in about 20ft. of water, the masts and funnel standing about half way out of the water. We remained in the rigging all night, and when daylight came we managed to get on to some timber which had been on deck and was floating about. The boat, which was fast to the ship by the painter, was hauled up on a kind of raft formed by the timber, and after baling her out we were able to launch her, and got safely away from the sunken steamer. We made for Garden Island, where we landed with just what we stood up in. On the island we found a bit of a sail, and having rigged it on the boat we decided to try and reach the mainland. We left Garden Island about 9 o'clock in the morning, and after about six hours' pulling and sailing, landed at Fremantle, thankful at having escaped with our lives.

THE CARGO.

The cargo on board the *Cambria* consisted of about 150 tons of general merchandise and machinery. The principal shippers were Messrs. Tolley and Co., J. and W. Bateman, W. Sandover and Co., D. and J. Fowler, Ltd., T. C. Burgess and Co., and Colonial Sugar Refining Company. The chief items in the cargo were 86 tons of groceries, kerosene, wines and beer, and hardware for Bunbury; 55 tons of machinery ex *Suffolk*, for the Imperial Jarrah Timber and Wood paving Company of Bunbury; 30 tons of hardware, bran, pollard and general groceries for Busselton, and a quantity of oregon, rope and tar for Hamelin. The machinery mentioned above is valuable, and was insured for £1,500. The value of the whole of the cargo is estimated at about £4,000, and nearly all of it is believed to be covered by insurance. Policies to the amount of £1,729 were held over portion of it by the Commercial Union Assurance Company, the resident agent at Fremantle for which is Mr. T. Birrell-Gray. It is expected that the greater part of the stuff on board will be salvaged.

The *West Australian* 10 March reported:

THE WRECK OF THE *Cambria*—A Preliminary Court of Inquiry was held at the Chief Harbour Master's office, Fremantle, yesterday to inquire into the

circumstances attending the wreck of the steamer *Cambria* on the 4th inst., whilst on a voyage from Fremantle to Bunbury. The evidence was taken before H.L. Clayton, T. Mason, J.P., Collector of Customs, and James Lilly, J.P. Mr. Baraden appeared to watch the proceedings on behalf of the captain. On the conclusion of the evidence the court, after a short retirement, decided that the following charges should be formulated against Captain Coalstad –

1. For that you, C. S. Coalstad, while in command of the British steamer *Cambria*, on a voyage from Fremantle to Bunbury, were guilty of want of judgment in attempting to enter the South Channel at the south end of Garden Island, on Sunday, March 4, thereby causing your vessel to become a total wreck.

2. For that you, C. S. Coalstad, were guilty of carelessness when attempting to enter the said passage in not taking soundings or having a special look-out kept, considering the dangerous nature of the passage as described in the Admiralty sailing directions.” A formal investigation to inquire into the above charges will be held at the Chief Harbour Master’s Office, Fremantle, on Monday next at 10.30 a.m.

The report of the Inquiry was reported in the *West Australia* on 13 March:

THE WRECK OF THE *Cambria*. SUSPENSION OF CAPT. COALSTAD’S CERTIFICATE.

A formal investigation into the charges preferred against Captain Coalstad in connection with the wreck of the steamer *Cambria* on the 4th inst. was held yesterday at the Chief Harbour Master’s Office, Fremantle. The court of inquiry consisted of Mr. Clayton T. Mason, J.P., Collector of Customs (chairman), Mr. James Lilly, J.P., and Captain B. Laurie, nautical assessor. Mr. A. J. Trotman acted as clerk of the court, and Mr. Baraden appeared to watch the proceedings on behalf of the captain. The charges which Captain Coalstad was called upon to answer were:

1. For that you, C. S. Coalstad, while in command of the British steamer *Cambria*, on a voyage from Fremantle to Banbury, were guilty of want of judgment in attempting to enter the South Channel at the south end of Garden Island on Sunday, March 4, thereby causing your vessel to become a total wreck.

2. For that you, C. S. Coalstad, were guilty of carelessness when attempting to enter the said passage in not taking soundings or having a special look-out kept, considering the dangerous nature of the passage as described in the Admiralty sailing directions.

Captain Coalstad repeated the evidence given by him at the preliminary inquiry and added, in reply to questions put by Mr. Barsden, that he had had considerable experience of the passage leading to Rockingham, and he did not think there was any risk in going through it at night. The course he adopted was, in his opinion, safer than running back to Fremantle. He did not consider it necessary to take soundings or keep a special look-out. All the crew were on deck.

To Mr. Mason: Witness was not steering by the compass when going through the passage. He was guided by his local knowledge and the reefs. He (Captain Coalstad) possessed a one-tenth share in the ship and the profits. He believed the vessel was insured for £1,200.

Evidence was also given by F. G. Edwards, engineer, and N. Neilsen, A.J. on the *Cambria*.

Captain Russell, Chief Harbour Master, stated that if he had been in Captain Coalstad's position, he would have either "hove to" or put back to Fremantle. It was, in his opinion, unsafe to try and go through the South Channel at night. It was a dangerous passage.

For the defence.

Captain W. Reid, master mariner, was called. He stated that he had been trading on the coast for a period of 20 years, and was thoroughly acquainted with the South Channel. To a person acquainted with the reefs, there was no danger in going through the channel at night. He himself had gone through it at night on several occasions. Before he had gained some experience of the passage, he used the lead when entering it, but of late years he had not taken any soundings there. He did not think there was any necessity to keep a special look-out. On a boat like the *Cambria*, when the captain was on the bridge, and all hands were on deck.

To Mr. Mason: He did not consider it prudent to go through the channel without using the compass. The Admiralty Sailing directions in respect of the south channel were of no use to a captain with local knowledge. The Court found that both charges were fully proved, and the master's certificate held by Captain Coalstad was suspended for six calendar months from the date of the wreck. During the period of suspension Capt. Coalstad will be allowed the use of a mate's certificate.

The wreck was sold by auction as reported in the *West Australian* 17 March:

The steamer *Cambria*, which is lying a total wreck off the south end of Garden Island, was sold by public auction on Saturday morning at the Cleopatra Hotel. The vessel was placed under the hammer by Messrs J. Learmonth and Co., and knocked down to Mr. Johnston, representing the Underwriters' Association, for £41.

The *West Australian* reported 14 March:

SALVAGE. SALVAGE.

LEARMONTH and CO. have been favoured with instructions from the Underwriters Association of W.A. to Sell by Public Auction on THURSDAY, 15th MARCH, At 11 O'Clock am.

From the Wreck CAMBRIA, Removed for convenience of sale to the store adjoining the Eueeka Mill, Nairn Street, Fremantle, Including

Quarter-cask Whisky

170 Cases Kerosene

5 Clothes Baskets

68 Brooms

3 Cases Glass

Milk and Tea

Quarter-cask Vinegar

10 Rolls Wire. Netting

2 Bundles Mantelpieces

3 Cases G.C. Iron, 6, 7 and 8's

Spring Cart, Gal. Tabs. Axe Handles
Enamel Pkts., Scythe Handles
An immense quantity of TIMMER, including $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ in. Matchboard, Oregon,
Pine
Doors, etc.
PLEASE WATCH THIS SPACE,
As the auctioneers expect a further large quantity of goods before the day of sale.
EVERYTHING WITHOUT RESERVE

On the 20 March the following was published

SALVAGE. SALVAGE.
THURSDAY, 22nd MARCH, At 11 a.m. SALVAGE Ex *Cambria* WRECK.
LEARMONTH and Co. have received instructions to Sell by Public Auction, on
Thursday, 2nd March, at 11 a.m., a Large
QUANTITY OF CARGO
Salved from the
' WRECK *Cambria*,
At Store next the Ureka Mill, Nairn Street, Fremantle,
Comprising
84 Cases Whisky
1 Qr. cask Whisky
1 Case Champagne
8 Cases Gin
2 Cases Lager Beer
2 Octave Whisky
4 Cases Brandy
4 Cases Rum
10 Cases Merwan's Ales
And
A Large Quantity of Potted Meats, Nails, Milk, Jams, Salmon, Peas. Ironmoungery,
Vinegar, Piping, Sunlight Soap, Preserved Fruits, Buckets, Sardines, etc. etc.
NO RESERVE

The *West Australian* reported 13 August:

WRECKAGE AT ROCKINGHAM.
Regarding a paragraph in Saturday's issue concerning some wreckage found at
Penguin Island, near Rockingham, it is thought that the hatch referred to was the
deck billiards board from the steamer *Cambria*, which was wrecked in March last
at Garden Island. A scuttle answering to the description given had been seen on that
vessel.

The Initial Finding of the *Cambria*

MICHAEL MCCARTHY

SS *Cambria* was first found in the early 1960s, at a time before there was legislation protecting any but the Dutch and British East India ships. The 'find' became known in June 1992 when Mr C.W. Daw of Roleystone reported that in around 1962 or 1963 he had found a boiler at what he described as a 'site in about 15 feet of water c. 400 yards from shore, on a sandy bottom, with small limestone reef forms all about'. Having been involved in shipwrecks and an associate of researchers in the Underwater Explorers' club from the outset Mr Daw believed that his find was the *Cambria*. As a result soon after discussions with Museum staff he filled in a formal report of finding a wreck or relic believed to be historic form. Under the heading 'Physical Description of Wreck' he wrote that, no evidence of a hull was seen in the vicinity and as a result.

...only the boiler 'identified' from which some brass fittings were removed and are now available to the Museum. Boiler was in a very corroded state and was standing upright with smoke stack opening uppermost.

Mr Daw also provided very good engineering drawings of a boiler valve from the site (see Fig. ??) and these were filed along with his report. In June of that year the Maritime Archaeological Association of Western Australia (MAAWA) were requested to try and locate the site with the advice. 'You will note that the finder Clive W. Daw has not seen the wreck for many years past and it may be that it lies buried in the sand'.

The project was adopted as a MAAWA 'study' for the 1988–89 season. Mike Murphy of MAAWA subsequently produced a full report of the ship's history, including details of its salvage (see appendix ??). Of additional importance in the Murphy analysis there is reference to contemporary opinion that 'the hull will not be worth recovery but the machinery and boilers could be utilised'. No reference to either having been recovered was found by Murphy. Murphy also drew up a search regime, which included the Collie Ledge Area of the G. Anderton Report (below). At the time this was also thought to relate to the *Cambria*. Mr Murphy's report, including maps and descriptions, subsequently appeared in 'Maritime Archaeological Association Reports July 1989-June 1990 : 37 and in subsequent editions.

The MAAWA search itself is described at length under the head 'The SS *Cambria*: The Search Commences'. The wreck was not found, however., and the matter then left in abeyance until relocated by the finder or other party.

Other claims/possibilities to have located *Cambria* or relics from it appear on the Warnbro area file

In 1979 students A. Riley and W. Armstrong of Tuart Divers Club from Hill Senior High School's report of a chain plate cleat at John Point on Point Peron. Found in the shallows c. 20 m offshore in a small bay immediately east of John Point (9 MA 1706). Being similar in design, though far smaller to one recovered from the *Eglinton* (WR 444 EL) it was concluded that the cleat was consistent with rigging torn from a wreck in the region. Of these *Cambria* and the two masted schooner Devonshire were considered possibilities. (McCarthy, M., 1979. Wreck Inspection Report, Cockburn Sound Area Wreck File 9/86/1)

In 1981 Graham Anderton, of Living Waters Skindiving Club reported two anchors on Collie Ledge south of Garden Island was shown to be related to a navigation marker or similar. In December 1998 Nick Flynn brought in a long brass rod with threaded ends and stoppers found not far from the John point cleat. While considered possibly from *Cambria* at the time, there was no evidence it was shipwreck related and he was later invited to pick up the object. He did not do so. Like the cleat Mr Flynn's site is close to Point Peron reefs and in locating the *Cambria* boiler well to the north the possibility it was from *Cambria* remains remote.

The Remote Sensing Search

JEREMY GREEN

It was decided to carry out a magnetic survey of the southern tip of Garden Island with the intention of locating the *Cambria*. Since it was known that the vessel was wooden steamer, it was likely that the target would be quite small, with a 25HP compound engine and a cargo of about 86 tons, including machinery. Survey commenced 2 November using *Seaspray* and the new remote sensing console. The boat was launched from the Point Peron Boat Ramp and magnetometer survey was commenced from the southern end of Garden Island. Weather conditions were good, light breeze and a 300 mm swell. Figure 2 shows the track of the survey. Magnetic recording showed a low noise level of about 2 nTesla. Several small anomalies were noted, but were considered to be very small or anomalous. Several targets were confirmed by running over them again. The main difficulty was that it was not possible to run regular lanes, but was necessary to track along the edge of the reefs. It was known that the *Cambria* was coming into South Passage and she struck on her port bilge, so that it was likely the wreck would be on the southern side of the reefs on the south end of the Island. The survey was unsuccessful on the western and south-western part of the island, so the survey was extended to the east. A large target, about 500 nTesla, was detected close to a reef, indicating a substantial ferrous concentration (see Figures 3 & 4). A single side scan sweep was made to delineate the general area. The site was fixed on the survey software and the survey was then terminated (Figure 5).

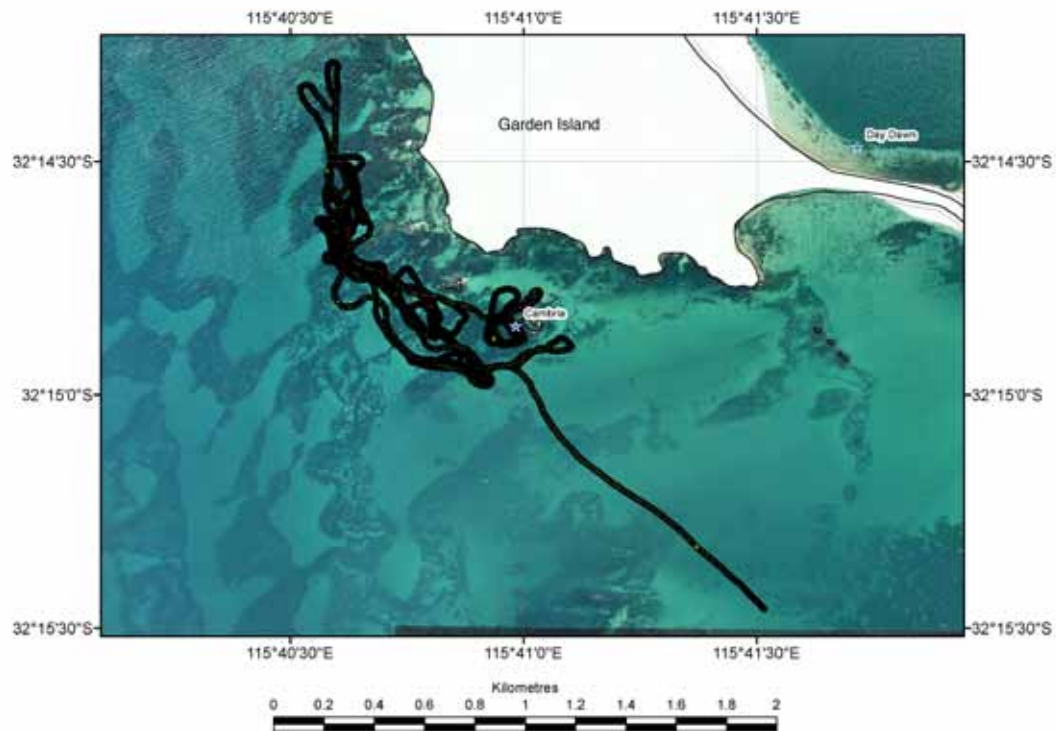


Figure 2. Aerial Photograph showing the southern end of Garden Island and the search track of the survey boat. The wreck site is marked.

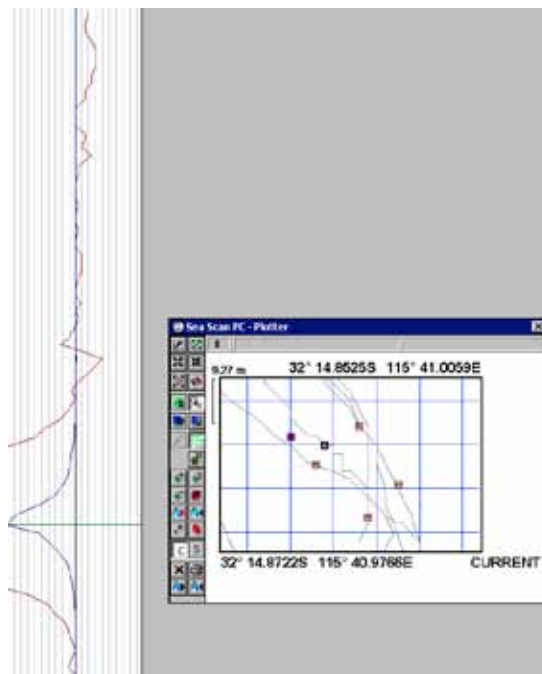


Figure 3. The magnetometer interface on the left with the trace showing the final magnetic signal indicating the centre of the target. The target is about 500 nTesla, the full scale for the blue line. On the right is the track with marked magnetic targets.

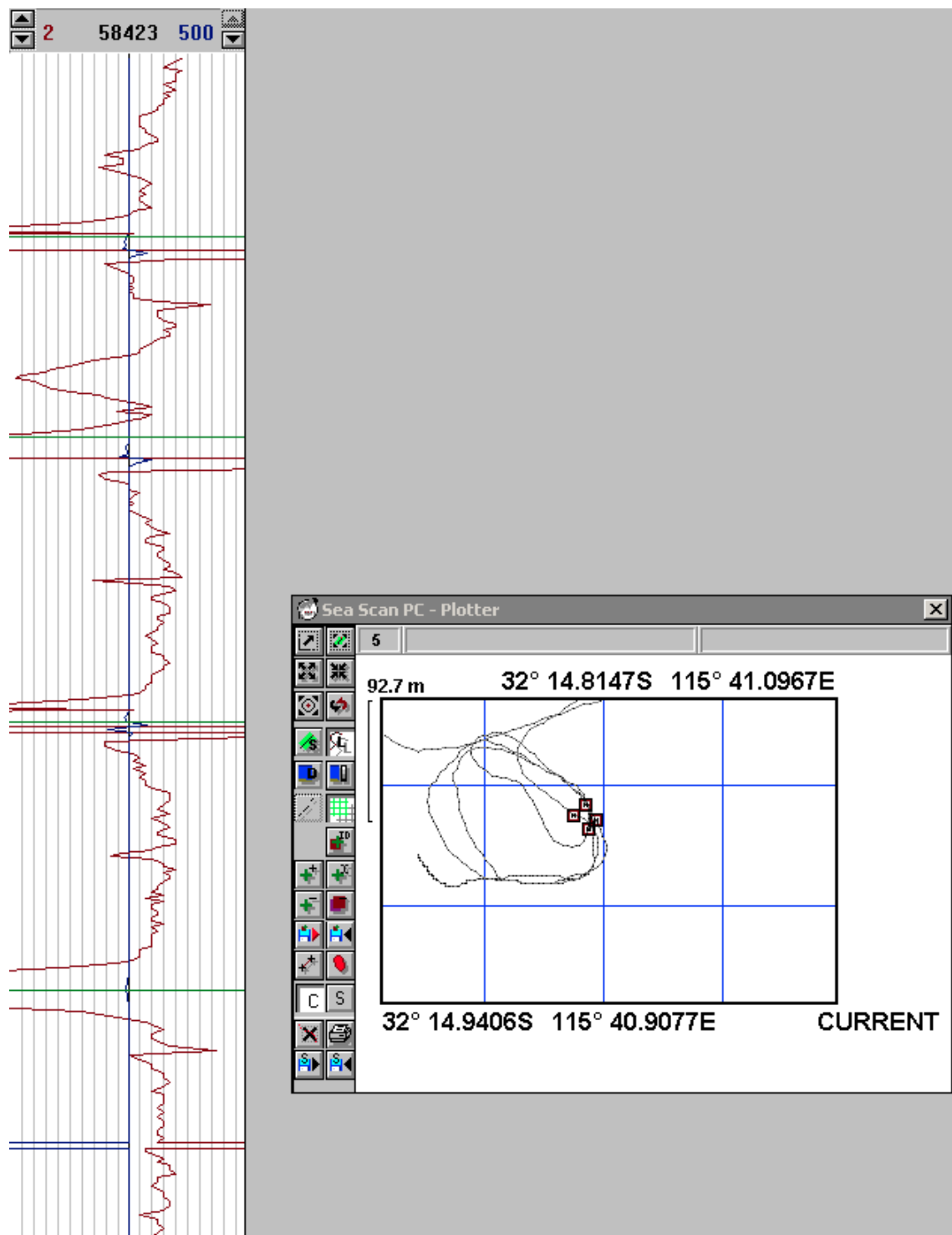


Figure 4. The magnetometer interface showing the final stages of locating the *Cambria* site. The plotter on the right shows the tracks concentrating around the general area and the magnetic trace on the left shows the successive targets.

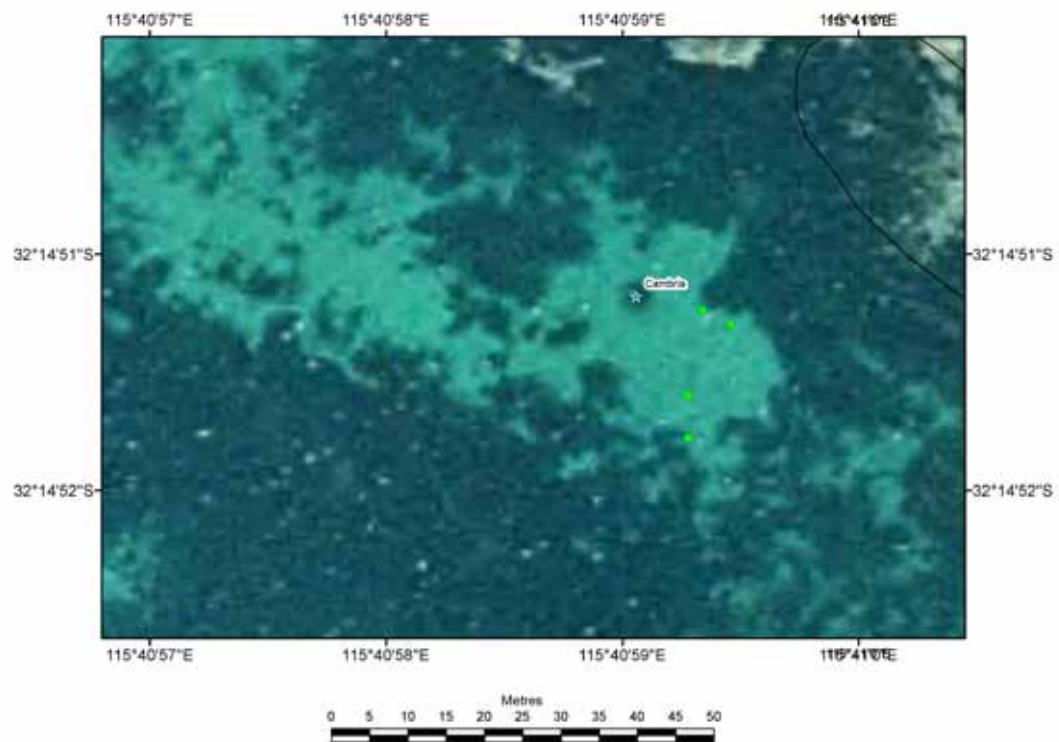


Figure 5. Aerial photograph showing the boiler (the star symbol named *Cambria*) and the general magnetometer targets (green dots).

Wreck inspection

ROSS ANDERSON

Monday 1 November 2010

A magnetometer search was carried out among the offshore reefs along the south-western coast of Garden Island, based on historical accounts of the loss of the *Cambria*. Weather conditions were a 0.5-1 m swell with light south-easterly to north-easterly winds.

The water depth in this area is generally between 3-6 m with limestone rock outcrops and reefs rising to within 0.5 m of the surface, with some reefs exposed and breaking in the small swell. Due to the nature of seabed topography and exposed reefs it was not possible to run the magnetometer survey using lane-spacing.

The survey gradually searched inshore of the outlying reefs, among the inside reefs. Towards the end of the search a target sufficiently large to register as a possible steamship wreck was located in front of one of the inshore reefs.

The target location was recorded using GPS.

Tuesday 9 November

A diving site inspection was made of the area to locate the target and identify if there were any shipwreck remains. The reefs were covered in kelp and weed that camouflaged any cultural features. A regular shaped 'reef' covered in kelp and weed turned out to be made of iron, and evidence of fire tubes and other features confirmed the object's identity to be a vertical boiler. The vertical boiler lies in the middle of a clear patch of sand in 6 m depth surrounded by reef outcrops, and rises 3.05 m from the seabed. Only one other feature that could be related to the shipwreck was identified, that was a 1.7 m section of unidentified iron work located 10 m north-east of the boiler, in sand at the base of a limestone reef. The bases and caves of the other surrounding reefs were searched for shipwreck material however only the afore-mentioned ironwork was found.

Wednesday 10 November

A 2 x 2 m test excavation was conducted to confirm whether there was shipwreck structure trapped beneath the boiler, to confirm whether or not the boiler was part of a shipwreck site and not an isolated find.

The test excavation was located on the western face of the boiler, beneath the fire tubes and furnace. The excavation found timber, a small piece of coal and iron concretions at a depth of 0.2 to 0.8 m below the sand level, confirming the presence of organic material and ship's structure.

Three timber samples were recovered for analysis. The timber for two of the samples obtained was very soft, spongy and substantially damaged by *teredo navalis*. The third sample was worked in the form of a thin plank such as for a box or crate.

The excavation proved that there is material buried in sand in the vicinity of the boiler.

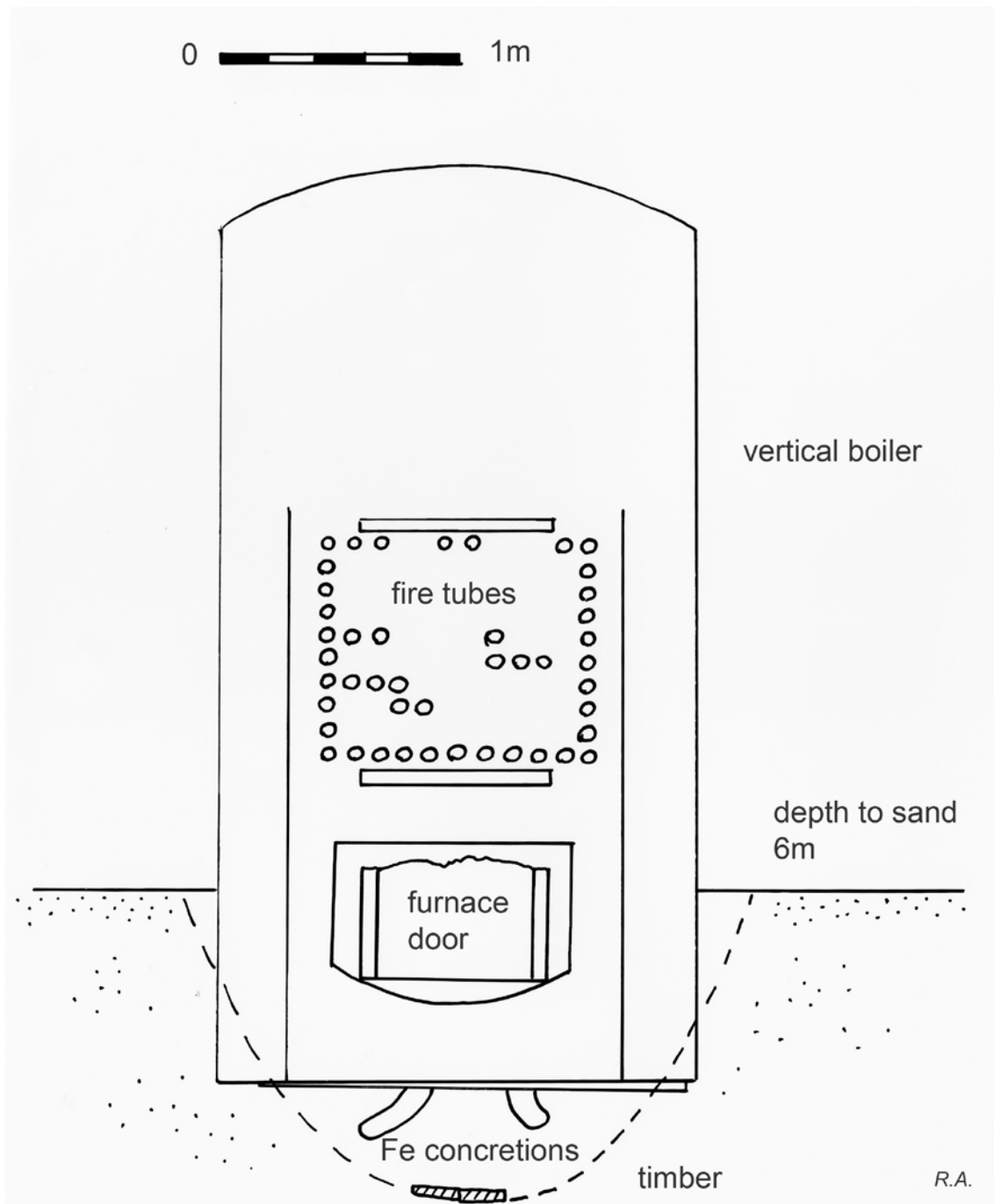


Figure 6. Drawing of the west elevation of the *Cambria* boiler (Ross Anderson).

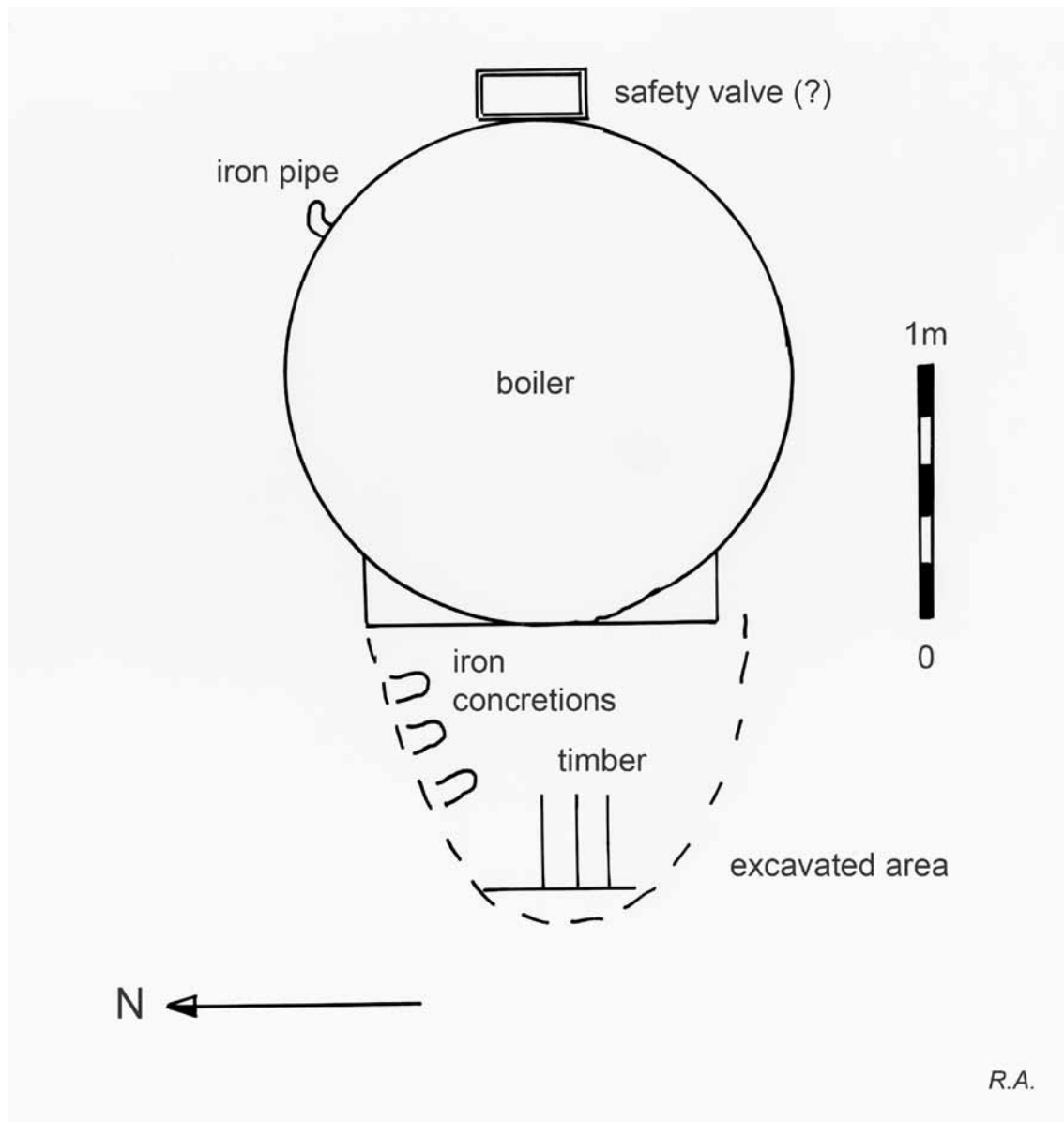


Figure 7. Plan view of the *Cambria* boiler (Ross Anderson).

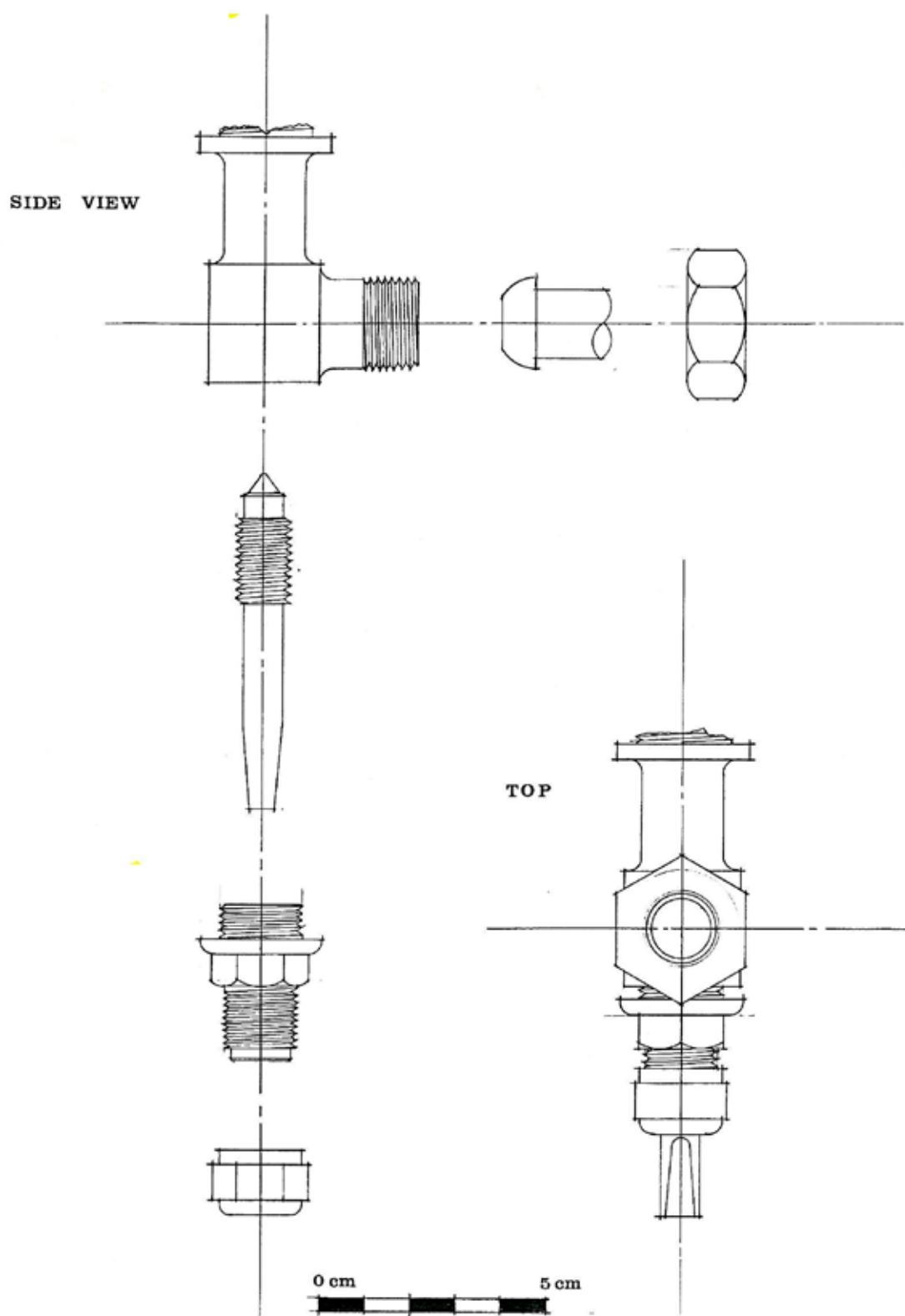


Figure 8. Drawing of fittings found by by Mr C.W. Daw in the early 1960s.

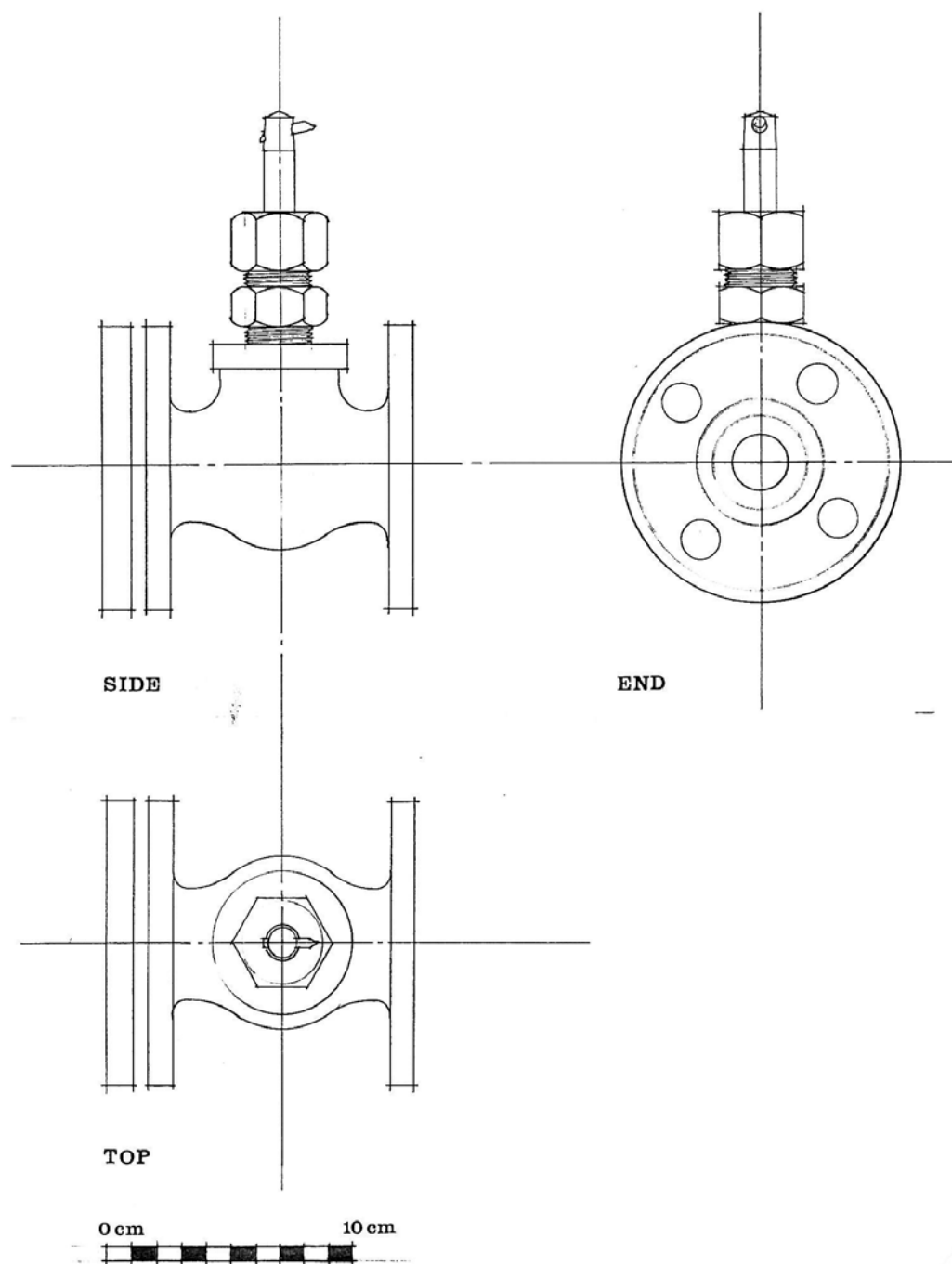


Figure 9. Drawing of a valve found by by Mr C.W. Daw in the early 1960s.

THE SS CAMBRIA

The search commences

By Mike Murphy

A search for any remains of the S.S. CAMBRIA has commenced this summer in the South Channel between the southern end of Garden Island and Point Peron where the small coastal steamer was wrecked in March, 1900.

The first area to be searched was on the northern side of the channel due south from South West Point on Garden Island as this seems to be the western end of the general area fitting the description given by the ship's master, Captain Coalstad, in contemporary reports.

Captain Coalstad reported that he had encountered strong S.S.W. winds outside Gage Roads and these had freshened, with a heavy head sea, when they left the lee of the islands through Challenger Passage. Unable to make headway he turned back towards Rockingham and as he was "abreast of the south point of Garden Island", in the centre of the Channel, a heavy swell carried the ship to leeward and it struck the reef about a quarter of a mile from the island.

The draft was 7ft 6in aft and 5ft 6in forward when the CAMBRIA foundered.

Later, after an attempt was made to restart the engine, the propellor shaft broke and the ship "swung round off the reef".

"The south point of Garden Island" if taken literally, is Collie Head, and there is a substantial area of shallow reef there alongside the channel indicated by existing markers. This is to the east of the initial area where we have started the search.

No sighting

No evidence of a wreck was found in the first area of search, but the underwater terrain is very rugged and there were many lumps and outcrops, including several which had straight edges and other surfaces which could be taken for wreckage from a distance but proved to be reef on closer inspection. One outcrop in sand away from the main reef was almost rectangular in shape, for example, and another protruded from the sand like the bow of a ship.

During the initial search we also examined the area of Collie Ledge, on the southern side of the channel across from Collie Head, where a group of anchors were reported in 1981 by Graham Anderton. We found one anchor (see picture) which was close to a large protruding rock, and we are inclined to agree with the view that this originally held a marker bouy. While this does not relate directly to the *Cambria*, there was some discussion at the Inquiry about the reliability of the marker bouys, and this may indicate that the *Cambria* was in line with, or very near the bouys when it sank.

We did not find the other anchors reported, including one said to have iron remains beneath it, and a further search will be made of that area.

Apart from the SS CAMBRIA, two other wrecks in the area were the Government schooner ELLEN, the sinking of which is reported in CSR file No 1235/90 and the West Australian of 6/1/1890, and 7/1/1890, and the DEVONSHIRE, which is mentioned in a

Maritime Museum file relating to the discovery of the Collie Ledge anchors but about which little other information has been found.

The salvaging operation

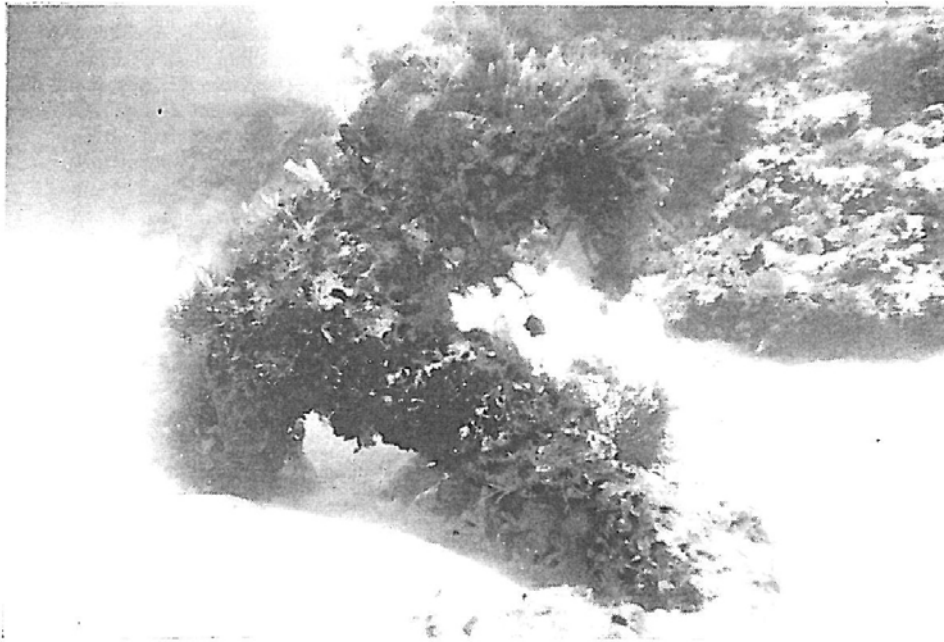
From newspaper reports and advertisements at the time it is clear that most of the cargo of the SS CAMBRIA was systematically salvaged within a few weeks of its sinking on March 4, 1900.

The report of the incident on March 6 in the West Australian listed the cargo as 150 tons of general merchandise and machinery including 85 tons of groceries, kerosene, wines and beer and hardware for Bunbury, 55 tons of machinery ex Suffolk for the Imperial Timber and Woodpaving Company of Bunbury, 30 tons of hardware, bran, pollard and general groceries for Busselton and a quantity of oregon, rope and tar for Hamelin.

On March 7 Captain Webster was appointed to salvage the cargo on behalf of the underwriters and he set off in the tug DUNSKEY, skippered by Captain Douglas, with the lighter STEADY and a team of divers. The Fremantle Harbour Master, Captain Russell, had earlier used the DUNSKEY to take a look at the wreck.

Lighter cargo that had been on deck had floated away and a lot of it reached the beach near Rockingham. It was the sight of brooms and other items floating in that first alerted Constable Murphy of the Rockingham police that there had been a wreck. The Inquirer of March 9 reports that a lot of deck cargo, including kerosene and other goods, was also washed up on Garden Island.

The West Australian of March 9 and the Southern Times of March 10 report Captain Webster returning with 140 pounds worth of salvage including bar and galvanised iron, a spring cart and some timber, and the Herald adds that rough weather had forced the



The anchor found by MAAWA divers on Collie Ledge

STEADY to take shelter in Careening Bay while the salvage was transhipped to the DUNSKY.

The West Australian of March 9 carried the first notice for the auction of the salvaged supplies by Learmonth and Co at the Cleopatra Hotel on March 10, and on March 12 there is a report of the sale of the hull for 41 pounds to a Mr Johnson, representing the Underwriters Association - presumably some legal device connected with the insurance and subsequent disposal of the remains. The ship had been insured with the China Traders Insurance Co and a portion of the cargo with the Commercial Union Office.

Captain Webster apparently went back to the wreck repeatedly. There is another notice of auction on March 13, this time at the Eureka Mill in Nairn Street, Fremantle, on March 15 with the auction list to include 107 cases of kerosene, whiskey, vinegar, 10 rolls of wire netting, clothes baskets, mantlepieces, brooms, galvanised iron, glass, the spring cart, tubs, axe handles, milk, tea, enamel pots and "an immense quantity of timber including 3/8" and 1/2" matchboard, oregon pine, doors etc.

The advertisement says another consignment is expected and it seems it arrived, because the Morning Herald of March 20th lists heavy machinery, wines, spirits and provisions among the items recovered.

This report says the hull will not be worth recovery but machinery and boilers could be utilised. Captain Webster was returning to the wreck again that night.

A notice of auction in the same paper that day lists another 34 cases of whiskey, champagne, McEwen's Ale, potted meats, nails, vinegar, milk, jams, salmon, preserved fruits and sardines.

No wonder the Southern Times of March 13 had reported that merchants at Busselton lost heavily because of the failure of the CAMBRIA to arrive with the supplies they were expecting.

Those latest goods to be salvaged were auctioned on March 22 and within days the highly successful salvage team were back with enough for yet another sale. This time the notice in the West Australia of March 30 includes tobacco, worcestershire sauce, wine, beer and stout. It also announces the intention to sell the hull, engines, machinery and equipment "as she lies", which suggests Captain Webster couldn't salvage them, and if he couldn't who could?

Unfortunately the newspaper record ends there. There is no report on the sale, if any, of what Captain Webster was forced to leave behind, or of any subsequent attempt to salvage the hull and the engines.

Personalities associated with the Cambria

James Cornish Port

The principal owner of the CAMBRIA is listed in newspaper reports as J.C. Port of Bunbury and it is almost certain this is James Cornish Port, who was connected with the timber mill for which the ship was carrying machinery.

According to a report on the Timber Industry in the W.A. Historical Society Reports of 1929, Part V, J.C. Port arrived in W.A. in 1886 and built the National Bank in Perth. He then entered the timber industry and four years later opened a mill at Crooked Brook with a yard at Bunbury. Later he built two mills at Worsley and either bought or built one at Argyle. Eventually he sold out to the "Jarrah Timber and Wood Paving Corporation of London", which appears to be the same as the "Imperial Timber and Wood Paving Corporation" which is named in reports as owner of the machinery the CAMBRIA was carrying. Mr Port was living in Maylands in 1929 and was still working in the timber industry at Pindalup.

In his book "Mills and Men", W.C. Thomas says James Cornish Port was born in 1858 in Geelong, Victoria, where his father had a timber yard. Thomas recalls that the loss of a steamer in the neighbourhood in the early 1880s caused the Adelaide Steamship Company

to place the SS Franklyn on the W.A. run and Port arrived in W.A. on the Franklyn's first voyage from Port Adelaide to Champion Bay.

He gives 1883 as the date of Port's arrival in Perth to start work on the National Bank and locates Crooked Brook on the Ferguson River near Bunbury.

Thomas says Port sold his interests, including timber leases on the Collie River, to the Jarrah Timber and Wood Paving Company in 1888 and that he stayed on as general manager until its amalgamation with other timber concerns in 1902. In 1911 Port was working at Dwellingup and was chairman of the local Chamber of Commerce. From Thomas' account it would appear Port was still alive in 1938 when the book was written.

Captain Charles Coalstad

The master of the CAMBRIA, Captain Charles Coalstad, had a one tenth share in the vessel. His coasting master's ticket, which he had held for only 18 months, was suspended as a result of the wreck but he was allowed to continue as a mate and undoubtedly captained other ships in later years.

He is described in one newspaper report as Norwegian and the name is spelt variously as Coalstad, Cronstad and Coalstadt.

At the Inquiry it was stated that he had been examined by Captain Irvine for his master's certificate and was well acquainted with the channel, having passed through it about once a week for eighteen months. He had often been through it at night, including the night on which the CARLISLE CASTLE sank.

It is presumably the same Captain Coalstad (spelt Coldstad) who in 1934 was sent by the Cossack Lightering and Traders Ltd to inspect the URIBES prior to purchase.

The earliest appearance of a Captain C. Coalstad in the Legislative Council roll is in 1920, his occupation being given as master mariner and his address being "Ras-El-Tin", 22 Hamilton Street, Fremantle. He is listed in the Perth telephone book for 1935 and for May, 1936, but is not listed in the edition of November, 1936, suggesting that he may have died around that time.

A Miss H. Coalstad is listed in the telephone book for 1943, her address being 18 Kershaw Road, Subiaco, and a Mary Ada Coalstad died aged 69 at Subiaco in 1944 and was buried at Karrakatta. It seems likely that Mary Ada Coalstad was Captain Coalstad's wife and Miss H. Coalstad was their daughter.

If this is so it would put Captain Coalstad at the age of about 40 at the time of the wreck, which seems older than would be expected for someone who had only recently obtained his master's certificate. He may have arrived from Norway not long before that, and may have had Norwegian qualifications which were not recognised in W.A.

A Mr Ian Neilson has indicated that he has done research into the CAMBRIA and that Capt. Coalstad's daughter became Mrs Crisp. He interviewed her but she has since died.

Mr Neilson indicated, and other sources have supported the report, that the steering wheel of the SS CAMBRIA hangs on the wall of a Perth yacht club. I have been unable to locate it.

William Mollison

William Mollison was the builder of the CAMBRIA in 1885 and operated on the banks of Cam River near Emu Creek at what is now Burnie in Tasmania.

In "Blue Gum Clippers and Whale Ships of Tasmania", Will Lawson lists many small ships built in the area. Others built by Mollison included the MARY BANNATYNE, of 150 tons, and the schooner EXPERT, built for Captain James Pilson.

The name CAMBRIA could have any connection with Wales and there were several other ships of similar name, including the British barge QUEEN OF CAMBRIA which was visiting Fremantle at the time its near-namesake was wrecked. There is a possible connection in Tasmania with the estate named "Cambria" which is mentioned in "Isle of Mountains" by Charles Barrett. However, this is on Tasmania's east coast, not the north and it is only the fact that the ship was built in Tasmania which suggests any connection.

THE TOTAL WRECK OF THE SS CAMBRIA

By Mike Murphy

As one of its 1988/89 projects MAAWA has adopted a study of the SS Cambria, a small coastal steamer which sank in a storm at the south end of Garden Island in 1900.

Although the site has not yet been located and no field work commenced, basic background research has revealed a fully documented report of the incident in the newspapers of the time.

The Cambria was a wooden, single-screw steamship listed as 3/1896, ON 79276. She was built by William Mollison at Emu Bay, Tasmania, in 1885 and weighed 85.72 tons gross, 58.82 tons net (various reports erroneously describe her as 26 tons and 150 tons).

Her dimensions were 85.7ft x 18ft x 7ft. She had two masts and was of ketch design with a round stern.

The engine was a 25hp compound steam engine made by Ross and Duncan of Glasgow.

The Cambria appears on the Fremantle shipping register, ex-Hobart in 1896 and was owned by S. Smith of Geraldton in November 1898.

On Sunday March 4, 1900, she left Fremantle for Bunbury in moderate seas and a fairly strong SSW wind but met stronger winds and bigger seas head on after passing through Challenger Passage and clearing the shelter of the islands. According to an interview with Captain Charles Coalstad, reported in the West Australian on March 6, he decided to turn back to Rockingham but was caught by a heavy swell and carried to leeward passing the southern point of Garden Island.

The Cambria struck something and he ordered full steam astern, but the propeller broke from the shaft and she drifted onto the reef about a quarter of a mile from the island about 8.30 p.m.

Water flooded in, putting out the fires. An attempt to launch a boat failed, the ship swung round off the reef and Captain Coalstad, an engineer, two firemen, three seamen, a cook and one young passenger named Reid spent the night in the rigging as the water rose above the deck and the ship settled in about 20ft of water.

At 2.30 a.m. the Police and Customs at Fremantle were alerted by telegraph from the Police at Rockingham that a steamer had been wrecked and cases and brooms were being washed ashore.

The tug Dunskey set out for the scene (presumably some hours later) but had not gone far before it was reported that the crew had reached Fremantle.

Still clinging to the rigging at daylight, with only the masts and the funnel above the waves, they had used floating timbers to fashion a raft and got ashore on the island, found some material for a sail and eventually reached Fremantle, the boy named Reid taking a cat to safety with him.

Captain Coalstad was later found guilty of negligence and his master's ticket was suspended for six months.

There was a conflict of evidence between the Harbour Master, Captain Russell, who stated it was unsafe to go through the South Channell at night and master mariner Captain W. Reid who said it was normally safe to anyone who knew the passage well. One of the specific charges against Captain Coalstad was that he had not taken any soundings and Captain Reid commented that although he had "used the lead" in earlier years when he was inexperienced, he had been through the passage at night for many years without taking soundings.

THE CAMBRIA

By Mike Murphy

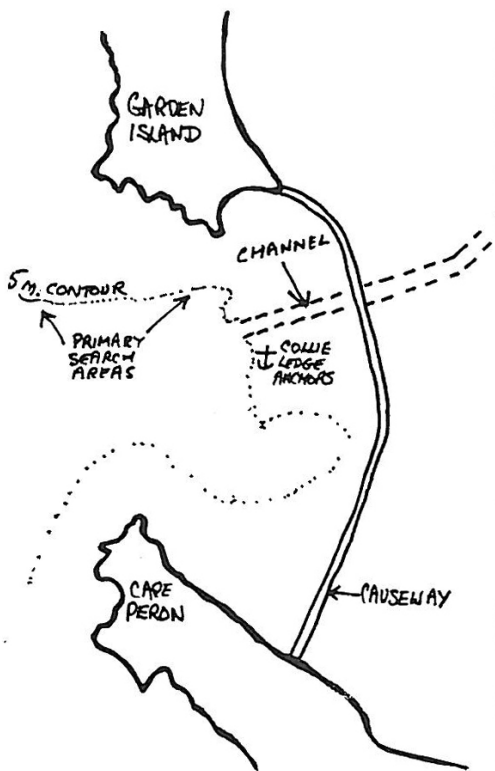
Research in the Battye Library has produced an old map of the Point Peron area and the south end of Garden Island which suggests MAAWA has been searching in the wrong area for wreckage of the CAMBRIA.

Soundings on the map indicate that the passage between the point and the island swung further to the south as vessels entered Cockburn Sound from the west.

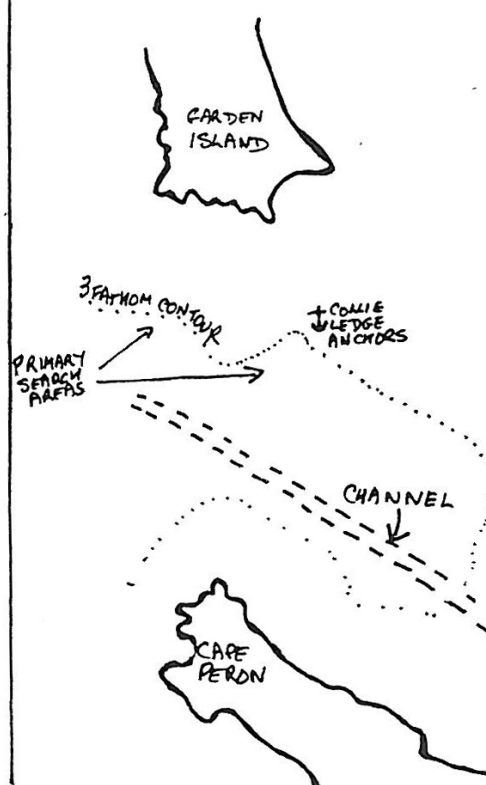
The revised route of the channel explains the presence of the anchors on Collie Ledge located by Graham Anderton in 1981 and relocated by a MAAWA team in 1988.

These anchors can now be seen to be more likely to have held the marker bouys on the north side of the channel.

PRIMARY SEARCH AREAS BASED ON POSITION OF CHANNEL TODAY.



BASED ON OLD MAP SHOWING DEPTHS BEFORE CAUSEWAY WAS CONSTRUCTED



He agreed it was not prudent to go through the passage without a compass but said Admiralty charts for the area were of no use to anyone with local knowledge.

Cargo

No cargo or personnel belongings were saved from the wreck immediately but there are brief reports of a salvage operation some days later and the hull and machinery were eventually sold at auction.

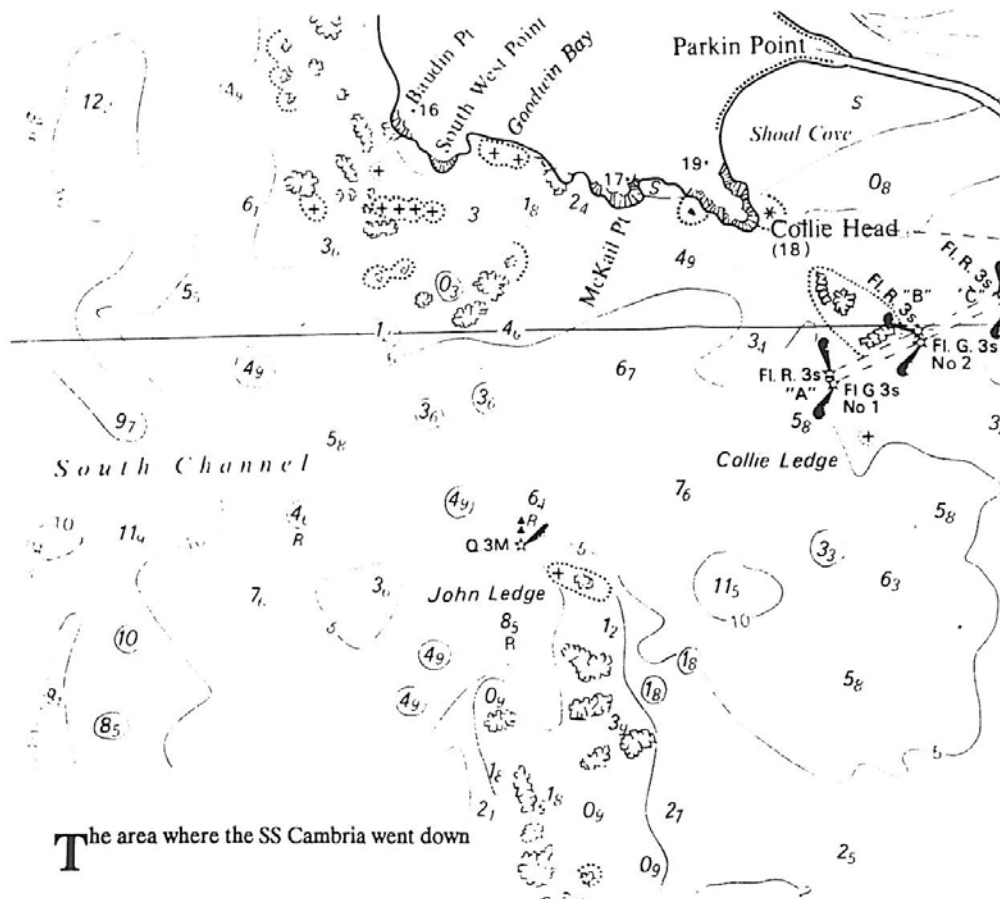
The cargo was described as 150 tons of general merchandise and machinery. It included 86 tons of groceries, kerosene, wines and 55 tons of machinery ex Suffolk for the Imperial Jarrah Timber and Woodpaving Company of Bunbury. There was also 30 tons of hardware, bran, polard, oregon timber, rope and tar.

The newspaper reports dwell on the value of the cargo and predict that most of it will be salvaged. A report on March 7 states that a Cap-

tain Webster with a gang of men and a diver left in the tug Dunskey with a lighter in tow to commence a salvage operation, and another on March 13 announces an auction of "the hull, machinery and all parts...as she now lies in the south channel about 2 3/4 miles from Rockingham."

The name "Coalstad"

As the name "Coalstad" is unusual I searched the Perth and W.A. country telephone directories for any possible descendants of the Captain of the Cambria who might have photographs or other records. I could find no trace of any Coalstad, or Colstad, Coelstad, Collstad, Cohlstad, Calstad, Callstad, Carlstad or other spelling variations which came to mind including all of the above commencing with a K instead of a C.



The area where the SS Cambria went down