

discharging its cargo, it was caught in a north west gale and driven ashore just to the north of the Power House. It went up broadside to the beach and broke in two, but most of the railway lines still on board were salvaged. In 1936 the aft section was still showing above the water level and about 30 metres out from the shoreline, but after the building of the groyne for the power house, the sand accumulated, and by late in 1938 the wreck was almost totally buried on dry land where it remains to this day.



Carbet Castle

### Solglyt 1901

A Norwegian barge of 875 tons under Capt. A. Rasmussen, *Solglyt* was fully loaded and in the process of being hauled from the jetty to a heavy mooring, prior to departure, when it was caught by a violent north to north east squall. Two anchors were let go but these were slowly dragged until its stern was bumping on the bank off the mouth of the estuary (Stingray Surf). About 2 am on July 12, 1901 it sank at its anchors. Wind direction and the fully loaded draft of the vessel suggests its location would have been near the wreck of *Midas*. In 1973 when the cut into the old estuary was being dredged the remnants of at least two vessels were uncovered. One of these had scroll work suggesting it to be *Solglyt*. If this is indeed *Solglyt* it is not in the original wreck site, as three years after the building of the breakwater a vessel of this draft could not have been driven up to this point. Furthermore a young witness of the wreck stated it was on Stingray Surf. It appears likely that as a hazard to

navigation the vessel was blown up and part thereof was dragged inshore.

### Laughing Wave 1903

A brig of 161 tons, *Laughing Wave* was built in Fremantle in 1868 and therefore had a long career before being caught by heavy weather while alongside the jetty in Koombana Bay. It apparently smashed its planking against the jetty in a violent swell and sank.

### Shipping Incidents in Koombana Bay.

In addition to the vessels that left their hulls buried in the sands of Koombana Bay, there were many incidents of grounding or damage. Among those listed here a number were connected with the jetty that was not protected with a breakwater until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and even then for some years the breakwater was too short.

### L'Avenir 1923

Built in 1908, this Belgian four-masted barque of 2,738 tons was designed to carry 60 and later 80 cadets, as well as cargo. It became a famous and very successful sail-training ship, as well as one of the last big square riggers. While in Koombana Bay it is not surprising that it bumped the bottom when its anchors dragged, as it had a loaded draft of 8.04 metres. It was later lost with all hands during the grain race from Australia in 1938. Some wreckage was identified on the coast of Tierra del Fuego.

For further information on historic shipwrecks contact the WA Museum Shipwreck Galleries or the WA Heritage Council:

<http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/collections/maritime/march/march.asp>  
<http://tourism.heritage.wa.gov.au>

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#### Diving notes

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

# THE WRECKS IN KOOMBANA BAY

## Introduction

It is thought that the first ship to enter the bay was the Dutch ship *Elburg* in 1658. The first confirmed discovery was by French Captain, Nicolas Baudin, aboard his ship *Geographe* on March 11, 1803. Officer Bonnefoi de Montbazin was sent to explore the area in a longboat resulting in the first plan of the bay and the lower estuary. The settlement of Bunbury occurred 35 years later in 1838.



Solglyt

Koombana Bay is open to the north and north west and consequently sailing ships caught in the Bay by gales from this direction could not get out to the comparative safety of open water. Consequently this small bay now holds the remnants of 13 ships blown ashore in north-westerly gales. The building of the breakwater at the turn of the century and subsequently, several rock groynes around the bay, has substantially increased the rate at which the bay is being filled with sand. Thus all the following wrecks are buried and not visible, the older wrecks now lying a considerable distance from the present shoreline. The few still under water are also buried as the whole bay is accumulating sand. Koombana Bay wrecks are listed in chronological order

### *Samuel Wright* 1840

A ship of 372 tons under Capt. Francis Coffin left Salem, Massachusetts in May 1839 on a whaling cruise. In July 1840 the ship was caught by a gale while anchored in Koombana Bay. Despite having three anchors down it was driven ashore with masts still standing. Several years later a mast was used as a trigonometry point for a survey of the area. From this survey the exact location of the wreck has been found to be under the car-park on the south side of the present north shore road and near Point McLeod. On the southern edge of the car park there a stone wreck trail memorial and a marker in the bitumen a few yards from it marks the position of *Samuel Wright*.

### *North America* 1840

A ship of 285 tons under Capt. Grinnell from Warren, Rhode Island, *North America* was on a whaling cruise in June 1842, was caught in Koombana Bay by a violent gale on April 11, 1843. It went ashore close to its namesake previously wrecked in 1840. Captain Scott of Fremantle bought the ship at auction, while the Rev. Wollaston bought flour, pork and the ship's bell for his church. Captain Scott repaired the ship, and by using large anchors, had the vessel back in the water by June; but five days later another gale drove it on shore again; this time on its side and close to *Samuel Wright* where it remained. Therefore *North America* is now buried under the carpark.



*North America* artefacts

### *Elizabeth* 1840

A schooner of 100 tons and built of teak in Calcutta in 1831, *Elizabeth* was owned by L & W. Bateman of Fremantle. It

was sent to Bunbury under charter to Capt. Scott to salvage equipment, stores etc., from the wrecked *North America* and to load whale oil. In November 1843 *Elizabeth* was caught in Koombana Bay by a heavy gale and driven ashore. It listed towards the sea and the heavy surf made short work of the deck; the mainmast went over the side and lying on beam-ends, the whole of the bottom on the port side was broken up and washed away.

### *Perseverence* 1845

A coastal trading cutter owned by Capt. Daniel Scott of Fremantle, *Perseverence* operated regularly for a number of years between Fremantle, Bunbury and Vasse (Busselton) and met her share of rough conditions. On one voyage she arrived in Koombana Bay on September 21, 1843, but because of the rough conditions her cargo, including a cask of bells for the Reverend Wollaston's church could not be unloaded until the end of the month. On February 28, 1845 she was caught in the Bay by a severe gale, parted her cable and wrecked on shore. The location is not known.

### *Midas* 1872

*Midas*, a 555-ton barque, arrived in Koombana Bay on February 3 to load piles and other timber for New Zealand. The piles, 21 metres in length, were too long to go through the hatch and a port had to be cut in the hull at the bows through which the piles were loaded. Loading was completed on March 9, 1872, but the next day a fierce gale from the east north east, caused it to drag two anchors some 500 metres until it struck the stern on the bank off the estuary entrance (Stingray Surf). By 4 pm on March 10 it had bilged and settled on the bottom. The ship and cargo were sold by auction for 120 pounds each. Two locals, McGibbs and Wenn, removed the new deck and used the timber to build a barge, later used to load ships. For many years the wreck of *Midas* was visible (underwater) some 350 metres east south east of the first bend of the jetty, but it is now buried.

### *Annie M. Young* 1876

A brig of 303 tons, built at Yarmouth, Nova Scotia in 1863, *Annie M. Young* arrived in Koombana Bay on October 6, 1876 to load piles for New Zealand, having previously loaded 50 loads of timber at the Vasse, Captain Teddie was ready for sea by October 31, but had to wait for a suitable wind and was thus caught in a north west gale during the night of November 2. Soon after midnight its chain cable

parted and although two anchors were let go it was dragged stern-first on to the shore somewhere near where the power house is now located. A man named Sam Ward used a bullock team to extract piles and timber but nevertheless many locals obtained a good supply of timber and firewood over the ensuing months.

### *Citizen Of London* 1880

This schooner of 53 tons was built at the Vasse by George Payne of Capel. While loading sandalwood alongside the jetty in Koombana Bay on August 20 a very heavy swell caused it to surge against the jetty, smashing three planks. Unable to stop a serious leak, Capt. Arthur Payne let go from the jetty and raising sail ran the ship ashore somewhere near the entrance to the estuary. Next day the cargo and equipment were taken ashore and the vessel dragged about a further 6 metres up the beach for repairs. By May 1882 it was apparently repaired, but never got off the beach and was eventually broken up. It is not known whether any part of the vessel still lies buried in the sand.

### *Cingalee* 1887

This barque of 336 tons was earlier wrecked at the Lacapede Islands while loading guano. Bought by W.E. Marmion and partners of Fremantle the vessel was refloated and arrived in Fremantle for repairs on March 23, 1878. Nine years later *Cingalee* was driven ashore in Koombana Bay by a north west gale. The hull was eventually blown up and the timber was used for a variety of purposes. The ship's bell came into the possession of Mrs Wallace of Turkey Point who subsequently loaned it on trust to Bunbury High School as the school bell. It was stolen from the school in 1979! The location of any remnants of this barque is unknown.

### *Star Of The South* 1888

Built in Bunbury in 1877 by J.S. Gibbs, this cutter, originally 10.9 metres long, was lengthened in 1883 to 14.21 metres with a tonnage of 12.35 tons. Loaded with guano from Shark Bay, it broke its mooring in Koombana Bay in early July 1888 and was driven on to the bar at the entrance to the estuary where it was wrecked.

### *Carbet Castle* 1897

An iron ship of 1657 tons, built in Britain in 1875, *Carbet Castle* left Wales on January 14, 1897 laden with railway lines for the WA Government. On May 14, 1897, while