

Reef. Despite desperate attempts to drive it ashore, it went down on an even keel, the holds full of water. The crew was saved and some of the cargo salvaged. Lack of telephone communication between the lookout at the lighthouse and the pilot at the settlement was blamed. The varied cargo included books, spirits, machinery, furniture, assorted hardware, farm equipment and over 80 cases of cartridges. The loss was a severe blow to the West Australian Shipping Association, a local company competing with the London Shipping Brokers by chartering vessels like *Mira Flores*. GPS position: 32°00' S 115°28' E.

City Of York 1899

This Glasgow-built iron 1 194-ton barque was lost with her master and 11 crew on 12 July, 1899 while bound from San Francisco with a cargo of timber and 5 000 doors. At 6.45 am, the assistant lighthouse-keeper challenged the barque with a flare-up from the lighthouse in the centre of the island. Capt. Jones knew that a flare-up in the international code was used only on a pilot boat when in safe water, as a signal for the ship to approach. He replied with customary blue lights and steered his ship towards what he thought to be the pilot boat. It struck a reef and appeared in danger of sinking. Although lifeboats were manned, the rope of the first boat snapped and it drifted away. The remaining 20 crew boarded the last craft. After several hours they considered it safe to reboard the ship, which, though on the reef, was still intact. The lifeboat capsized, drowning 12 men. The vessel lies in the bay now bearing its name, a tangle of iron plates, ribs and beams. GPS position: 31°59.649' S 115°29.3394' E.

Kiryō Maru I 1984

On August 6, 1984, the Japanese tuna boat *Kiryō Maru I* was on its way to Fremantle when it went aground 50 metres offshore at Cathedral Rocks. One seaman swam ashore with a line and the other 17 men followed safely. After a careful analysis by an environmental study group, it was decided to leave the wreck *in situ* because any efforts to remove it may have resulted in irreversible damage to the fragile reef. GPS position 32°01' S 115°27' E.

For further information on Rottneest Island shipwrecks and GPS positions visit: <http://www.museum.wa.gov.au/collections/maritime/march/shipwrecks/Metro/Intro.html>

The Rottneest Trail is a combined WA Museum and Rottneest Authority Venture. Assisted by Elder Prince Marine Services. Updated by Jessica Berry, Tracey Miller and Jessica Reynolds, WAM 2008.



Rottneest Island map showing wreck trail



Diving notes

All wrecks except *Uribes* and *Shark* require transport by boat and all divers should be fit and properly trained in the theory and use of their equipment. Snorkels can be used on all sites though scuba equipment is useful on the deeper sites. 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 ROTTNEEST WRECKS HERITAGE TRAIL

The coast and outlying reefs of Rottneest Island have claimed at least 12 vessels since 1842 when the schooner *Transit* was lost. Underwater and land plaques are now positioned giving details of the wrecks of Rottneest Island, and visitors are invited to view the sites by using the trails explained in this pamphlet: Land Trail (by foot or bike), snorkel dives, semi-submersible tour, boat trail and dives.



Macedon wreck

The Trails

Walks

Starting at the Museum, the land trail leads to Anitra, the Thomson Bay plaque, overlooking the area where *Macedon*, *Denton Holme*, *Janet*, *Transit* and *Gem* were lost and viewing the anchors from *Mira Flores* and *City of York*. From there one can walk through the settlement to the panoramic views of the Bathurst Point Lighthouse and the Leeman Monument, or take a stroll in the opposite direction along Thomson Bay to *Uribes*.

Snorkel dives

Two wrecks, *Uribes* and the barge *Shark* lie metres from shore and are suitable for snorkel diving. Diving is only recommended on these sites in calm conditions. A shirt or wetsuit top is recommended to avoid cuts, stings or sunburn.

Garden gloves are useful protection.

Semi-submersible/glass-bottomed boat tour

The semi-submersible/glass-bottomed boat leaves takes visitors to the aquatic life and reefs of Thomson Bay visiting the iron vessels *Macedon*, *Denton Holme* and occasionally the wooden cutter *Gem*. The visit is highly recommended to divers and non-divers alike.

Boat trail and dives

The WA Museum and Public Works Department (PWD) marked the wreck sites on PWD Chart WA 54153 Rottnest Island 1:25000. Experienced boat skippers can visit the areas where the Rottnest Island wrecks were lost and on calm, clear days, see some of these (notably *Lady Elizabeth* and *Macedon*) from the surface. Navigation is often difficult due to wreckage and reefs lying close to the surface and care must be taken in anchoring to avoid snagging the wreck. The wrecks and reefs of Rottnest are dangerous in bad weather and inexperienced boat skippers and divers should not attempt to visit the wrecks. Snorkels and dives can also be made in good conditions, though qualifications and experience are a must. The major wrecks are marked with underwater information plaques and the wrecks themselves vary from scattered, almost non-existent sites, e.g. *Transit* and *Raven* to large hull sections, e.g. *Macedon*, *Denton Holme*, *Lady Elizabeth*, *City of York* and *Mira Flores*.

The Vessels

Transit 1842

This 124-ton wooden, two-masted schooner, was wrecked on 18 May, 1842, rounding Rottnest, on a voyage from Port Leschenault to Fremantle. The master gave directions to steer in to Gage Roads Anchorage and went below. Soon after, it struck Duck Rock and sank. The cabin rapidly filled with water and the captain saved only his chronometer and desk containing 120 gold sovereigns. It broke up and little remains. GPS position: 31°30' S; 31°30' E.

Gem 1876

This British-built 52-ton cutter went down with all hands, four passengers and six crew, whilst approaching Rottnest on May 18, 1876. It had come from Port Irwin with bags of wheat and was in sight of the Fremantle light-keeper when it disappeared, leaving only top-masts and cross trees above water. Rescue crafts were sent immediately but found no trace of the people on board. Divers reported that the hull was sound and an attempt had been made to cut the

ship's boat free. They were unable to conduct a thorough inspection due to tangled rope, rigging and numerous sharks. Most of the bodies were thought to be within the vessel. Many theories were suggested ranging from kidnap to the swelling of the cargo of wheat. It is still a mystery. The wreck lies on sand with some ribs and timbers still showing. GPS position: 21°37' S 113°59' E.

Macedon 1883

This British-built iron screw steamer of 562 tons was wrecked on 21 March, 1883, with 50 passengers, about 40 horses, mail, specie, general cargo and a survey party containing Alexander and John Forrest and Walter James, a future Premier. The captain took in tow a party of officials with business on Rottnest, and in displaying such hospitality, took his vessel too close to the reefs. After releasing the tow and turning north, the vessel struck. Attempts were made to get it off but the hull was holed. It sank with no loss of life. The captain's certificate was suspended for three months. This wreck, along with the nearby *Denton Holme*, lies in 3–6 metres of water. GPS position: 31°59' S 115°33' E.

Janet 1887

This 211-ton, three-masted schooner, was built of jarrah and was at the time, the largest vessel built at Fremantle. It was wrecked on 11 December, 1887 whilst in-bound from Colombo with grain, Ceylon-made furniture, and other goods. It was wrecked close to SS *Macedon*, lost four years previously. Distress signals were seen by the pilot station and the crew was saved, even though the vessel's decks were awash with heavy seas. The wreckage lies scattered in 4–5 metres of water, 150 metres from *Macedon*. Little apart from two anchors and other small artefacts are visible. GPS position 31°30' S 112°00' E.



Rottnest heritage trail plinth

Lady Elizabeth 1878

This composite vessel was wrecked on 30 June, 1878 bound for Shanghai from Fremantle with a cargo of sandalwood. For four days it battled heavy gales and Capt. Scott finally decided to return to the safety of Fremantle. The intensity of the squalls was such that one man was lost overboard and visibility was reduced to a few metres. Somehow, it was driven in behind Dyer Island and was wrecked. It is a good scuba dive with lots of wreck structure including hull and masts. GPS position: 32°01' S 115°32' E.

Raven 1891

This British-built three-masted wooden barque of 343 tons was wrecked with no loss of life on 11 March, 1891 whilst on a voyage from Fremantle to Bunbury in ballast. The inquiry held on 13 March, 1891 disclosed that it left port under a drunken skipper and while attempting the South Passage, struck the reefs surrounding Dyer Island. The crew returned to Fremantle in the boats and *Raven* soon broke up. The wreckage lies partly buried in sand and week in 6 metres of water and is difficult to distinguish from the surrounding reef. GPS position 32°01' S 115°33' E.

Shark 1939

This hopper barge was wrecked in 1939. According to one source she broke free from moorings at Fremantle and drifted on to Henrietta Rocks where she was wrecked. Its remains are visible above water where it lies offshore in 4metres, immediately below Lookout Hill. It is an accessible wreck snorkel dive in calm seas. GPS position 32°00' S 115°32' E.

Uribes

This 117.59-tonne auxiliary schooner was wrecked in June or July 1942 laden with military stores and two motor vehicles. The motors cut out near Phillip Rock. With anchors dragging *Uribes* drifted and was wrecked near the base of the natural jetty. It quickly sank and filled with sand. Built in 1868 at Stockon-on-Tees, *Uribes* was quite an old ship when wrecked. The remains lie in 3–4 metres of water close to the shore, machinery and parts of the hull are well preserved. It is a safe dive for snorklers, unless the wind and waves are blowing on shore.

Mira Flores 1886

This German-owned, British-built iron barque of 500 tons was wrecked on 30 November, 1886. It was sighted by the lookout at 5.30 am and shortly after, struck Horseshoe