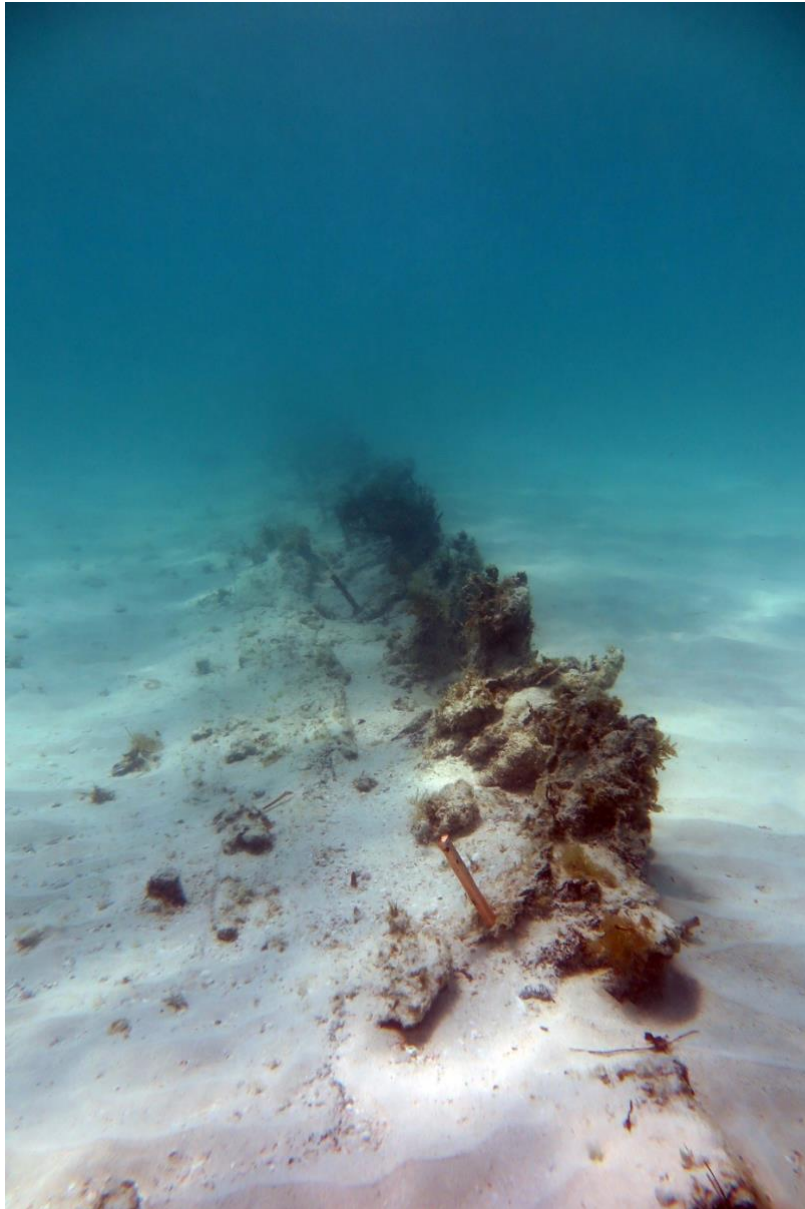


Site Inspection Report

Cervantes (1836 - 1844)



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Heritage**

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Technical Data

Site name: Cervantes
Date found: December, 1969
Date of inspection: 15/11/2023

Date lost: 1844

Personnel:
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Sailing Directions:

On the day of the site inspection, the route travelled began at Jurien Bay Harbour. From Jurien Bay Harbour, travel in a southerly direction for approximately 12 nm along the outside of fringing islands until arriving at the site.

Lat: 30°30'47.844"S

Long: 115°2'60"E

Datum: (WGS84)

Approximate Location:

The site is located one kilometre in a south westerly direction (244°T) from the Thirsty Point lookout, fringing the township of Cervantes (Figure 1), and approximately 900 m north east of Cervantes Islands. The site has protection from southerly wind and swell, being located on the inside of Cervantes Islands and the associated reef system to the north of the island.

Site Photographs:

Images located on the WA Museum server.

- Cervantes 2023 Aurora (Cervantes 15.11.2023-001-033)
- Cervantes 2023 Deb (Cervantes 15.11.2023-001-034-44)

Site Videos (including video transects):

- Cervantes 2023 Aurora (MVI_0089,120 & 123)
- Cervantes 2023 Deb (PB150005 & 12)

Background

Historical Background:

For the full results of the 2012 inspection of *Cervantes* see McAllister, M. 2013, *Cervantes* Site inspection and Management Plan, Report No. 121, Department of Maritime Archaeology, WA Museum.

Historical information can be found at the WA Museum's Shipwreck Database: <https://museum.wa.gov.au/maritime-archaeology-db/wrecks/cervantes>

Modern site history:

For the modern site history of *Cervantes*, see the WA Museum 2013 Site Inspection Report (McAllister 2013).

Museum Inspections:

Given the historical significance of the *Cervantes* shipwreck as an early North American whaleship, following its discovery by L. Walsh in 1969, the WA Museum visited and identified the site in 1970, recorded and excavated it in 1988 and inspected it in 2012 (McAllister 2013). In November 2023, WAM maritime archaeologists visited the site of *Cervantes* with Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) Jurien Bay Marine Parks staff, to investigate the current condition of the wreck. This site inspection was to follow up a report received by the Cervantes Historical Society in 2022, that the wreck had significantly deteriorated. During this 2023 inspection, the extent of the shipwreck still visible above the sea bed was measured and a video transect was recorded.

2023 Inspection

Site Conditions on inspection

Sea and Swell: >1m

Surge: Nil

Visibility: 10m

Current: Nil

Sea-bed coverage e.g. weed, sand: Sand

Description of site:

Cervantes is located on flat, sandy seabed, in a depth of 2-3 m. Visible features above the sand are keel and frame timbers, as well as fastenings protruding from the frame timbers and sandy sea bed. The overall length of exposed wreckage on the site is 16.97m (*Cervantes* registered dimensions were 28 x 7.5 x 3.5m). At 7.55m in from the western end of the baseline, the width of visible wreckage is 3.93 m. Laying on the sand amongst the wreckage is a small, concreted, iron feature and a brick, possibly a tryworks brick. Exposed timbers on the site are covered in a thin layer of marine growth with evidence of biological degradation as a result of naval shipworm (*Teredo navalis*) activity. The site was photographed to compare the integrity of the wreck to previous visits by the museum in 2012 (Figure 2 & Figure 3). Large swells are likely to be responsible for seabed changes and sand movement over the site.

Extent of the *Cervantes* site in 2012



Figure 2. Photographs of the *Cervantes* site taken in 2012 (McAllister, WAM 2013).

Extent of the *Cervantes* site in 2023



Figure 3. Photographs of the *Cervantes* site taken in 2023 (Philpin & Shefi, WAM 2023).

Site Condition and Integrity :

Timbers on the *Cervantes* site do not appear to have deteriorated significantly since it was last visited by the WA Museum in 2012. After comparing the 2012 site photographs with those taken in 2023, it is clear that there has been visible sand movement on the site. Many of the timbers that were exposed during the 2012 inspection are now covered by sand. However, some of the frames that now protrude from the sea bed appeared to have been previously covered by sand and marine growth.

Biological Data :

As the sandy seabed surrounding the wreck site is relatively bare, *Cervantes* provides a small amount of structure for small fishes and colonizing macro algae. Majority of the exposed timbers on the wreck site are covered in macro algae. Based on comparisons between the site in 2012 compared to 2023, the macro algae on the site has visibly reduced in the space of ten years. Female Western King wrasse are found living amongst the growth on the wreck site, just as they were in 2012 (McAllister 2013) (Figure 4).



Figure 4. Female Western King wrasse living amongst the *Cervantes* wreckage (Philpin, WAM 2023).

Assessment of Site Significance

- The *Cervantes* shipwreck has historic and archaeological significance. During the 1988 excavation of the site, pearl shell (*Pinctada maximus*) from the north-west of Western Australia was found, indicating possible early trading contact between American whalers and Aboriginal people (Worsley & Totty 2008:56)
- *Cervantes* is a significant social site as it is the namesake site for the town of Cervantes.
- Given the aesthetics and accessibility of this site, *Cervantes* has recreational significance, as it has the potential to attract snorkelers.

Management considerations

Cervantes is protected under the Commonwealth's *Underwater Cultural Heritage Act* 2018, as a historic shipwreck site.

- (i) Natural Forces – Given the site location, *Cervantes* does have some natural protection being located on the eastern side of Cervantes Island and related reef system (McAllister 2013). However, the shallow depth of the site and associated exposure to sunlight do not work in favor of the longevity of the wreck. The WA Museum occasionally receives reports of shipwreck timbers washing up on Cervantes town beach, likely from *Cervantes* site following exposure and biological degradation of wooden frames and planking, followed by breakage and transport through natural forces such as wave action. There is notable sand movement throughout this area and this can be seen through the highly polished look of the copper alloy fastenings on the site. Based on comparisons of the site between 2012 and 2023, there is no question that as a result of sand movement *Cervantes* is a dynamic site (Figure 5).
- (ii) *Cervantes* is a significant underwater cultural heritage site located within the Jurien Bay Marine Park, managed by the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions.



Figure 5. Sand-polished copper alloy fastenings exposed on the *Cervantes* site (Philpin, WAM 2023).

(iii) Present and future Human – *Cervantes* has strong ties to the local community. As the site is the town of *Cervantes*' namesake, the local community have a sense of ownership over the site and keep a watchful eye over it. Putting aside the sense of community ownership over the wreck, the site is still only a short boat ride from shore, making it accessible to divers. Upon inspecting *Cervantes* in 2023, there was no visible signs of human interference with the site, nor has there been any previously reported.

(iv) Projected General site Stability – The structural integrity of *Cervantes* remains relatively unchanged within the space of ten years, meaning that the site appears stable. However, the continual sand movement within the area will mean that parts of the shipwreck are constantly being buried and re-exposed, increasing chances of degradation. Given the community ties with the shipwreck, it is less likely that this site will be impacted by looters.

Recommendations

Based on the site significance, as well as the management considerations for the site of *Cervantes*, recommendations for the site are as follows:

1. To continue to monitor the *Cervantes* site for any signs of degradation or sand scouring as a result of the ongoing sand movement in the area.
2. In accordance with the management recommendations in McAllister 2013, and on the basis of any observed deterioration or scouring of sand cover, to

consider an expanded, long-term *in situ* preservation program to conduct site reburial activities in order to preserve the remaining timbers.

3. To maintain regular communication with the Cervantes Historical Society and Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) Jurien Bay Marine Parks staff to stay informed on any local activities, or environmental changes that may impact the *Cervantes* wreck site.

References

McAllister, M. 2013. *Site Inspection Report and Management Proposal : Cervantes (1836-1844)*. Report. No. 121. Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Museum.

Worsley, P. and J., with Totty, D. 2008. *A Windswept Coast: WA Maritime Heritage between the Moore Rover and the Zuytdorp Cliffs*. Special Publication No. 12. Australian National Centre of Excellence for Maritime Archaeology, Fremantle.