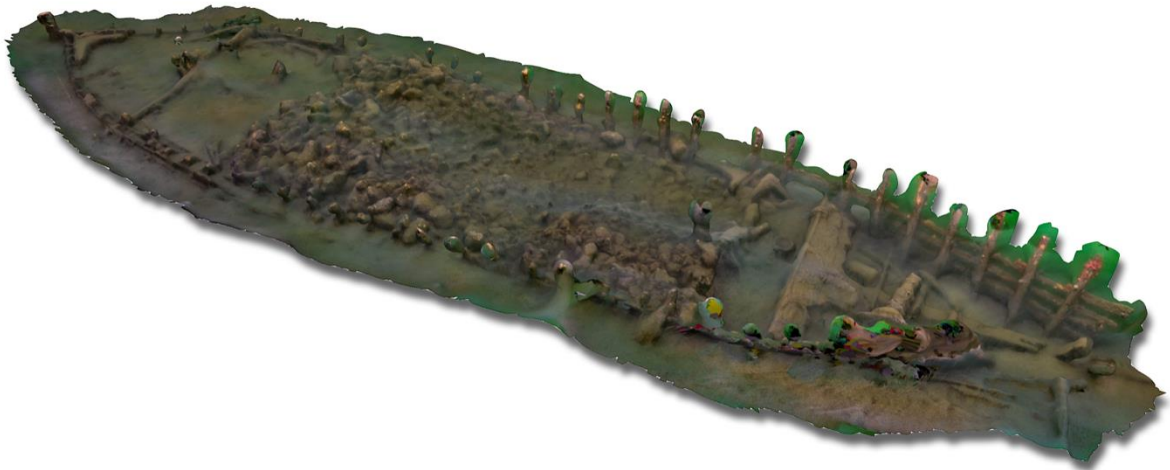


Site Inspection Report

**Dyoondalup/ Point Walter Stone Barge
Dearden's flat (1882)**

Derbal Yerrigan/ Swan River



Ross Anderson, Patrick Morrison, David Jackson and Aurora Philpin

**Report No. 340 — Western Australian Museum, Department of Maritime
Heritage**

February 2024



Cover image: 3D model of Point Walter stone barge (Patrick Morrison and David Jackson 2023)

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Maritime Archaeology Association members Patrick Morrison, Jessica Green, Ian McCann and David Jackson for their discovery and reporting of the site, for their assistance with the historical research and site inspection, and permission to reproduce the 3D model of the site in this report.

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Site inspection details

Site Name: Point Walter stone barge

Date Lost: ca. 1882

Reported by: Patrick Morrison, Jessica Green, Ian McCann (Maritime Archaeology Association of Western Australia (MAAWA)).

Date and time of Inspection: Wednesday 13 December 2023, 10.00am-1.30pm

Personnel:

Ross Anderson (WAM)

Jim Stedman (WAM)

Deb Shefi (WAM)

Aurora Philpin (WAM)

Patrick Morrison (MAAWA)

Ian McCann (MAAWA)

David Jackson (MAAWA)

Location: Swan River, offshore from the suburb of Dalkeith and east of Point Walter.

GPS Position Lat: 32°00'32.2"S

Long: 115°47'43.1"E

Datum: (WGS84)

Sailing Directions:

The site is located approximately 500m north-east from the Point Walter Reserve boat ramp.

Site Location:

As the site is situated over 8 km from the mouth of the Swan River, it is located in an area protected from wind and sea state, in 14 m depth just south of the main river channel. Adjacent landmarks include Point Resolution 480 m north of the site, the Point Walter sandbar approximately 1 km to the west, joining to the Point Walter Reserve on the southern bank. The site location and adjacent landmarks are shown below (*Figure 1*).

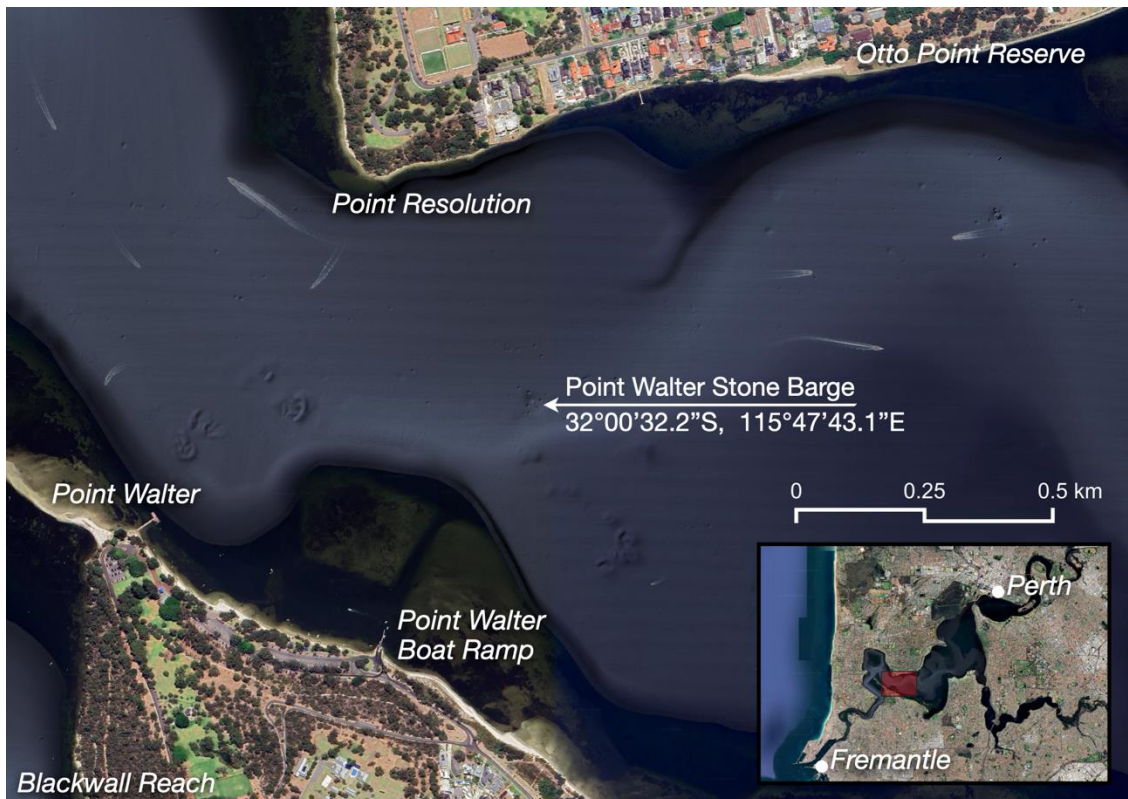


Figure 1. The location of the Point Walter Stone Barge site, approximately 480m north-east from the Point Walter Reserve boat ramp, and 500 m southeast of Point Resolution (Basemap: Google Earth 2023, DOT Multibeam 2010).

Site Photographs:

Images located on WA Museum server.

- Swan River Stone Barge 2023 Aurora (Swan River Stone Barge 13.12.2023-001-007).
- Swan River Stone Barge 2023 Ross (Swan River Stone Barge 13.12.2023-008-016).

Site Videos:

Videos located on WA Museum server.

- Swan River Stone Barge 2023 Aurora (Swan River Stone Barge Video 13.12.2023-001-007).

Site Conditions on Inspection:

Sea and Swell: Nil
 Surge: Nil
 Visibility: >1m
 Current: Nil
 River-bed Coverage: Silt

Description of Site

The site was reported to the WA Museum on 2 September 2023 by Patrick Morrison, Jessica Green and Ian McCann from the Maritime Archaeology Association of Western Australia (MAAWA), with the discovery also reported in the media: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-09-02/shipwreck-found-perth-swan-river-maritime-archaeologists/102798982> (accessed 9/2/24). Its discovery is part of MAAWA's ongoing Swan River work, using open multibeam data to identify underwater cultural heritage sites (Morrison et al. 2023). Having confirmed it to be a shipwreck, MAAWA members Patrick Morrison and David Jackson conducted an underwater photogrammetry survey to create a 3D model of the site, which has greatly assisted in its analysis and identification (URL for Sketchfab model <https://skfb.ly/oNzuX>).

The site is located at a depth of 14 m on a flat seabed, in the deepest part of the main river channel at the eastern end of the narrow strait between Point Resolution on the north side, and Point Walter on the south side. Further east the waterway opens up into the wide expanse of Doontanboro/ Melville Water. The seabed consists of fine, easily disturbed silt. Diving on the site is difficult with typical bad visibility due to the silty bottom and suspended sediment, with visibility on this inspection ranging between nil to 1 m. Department of Transport multibeam echo sounder (MBES) data shows a number of impact and scour holes surrounding the wreck, likely caused by vessel anchoring (

Figure 2). However, no lost/ trapped anchors or chain were observed on the wreck on this inspection.

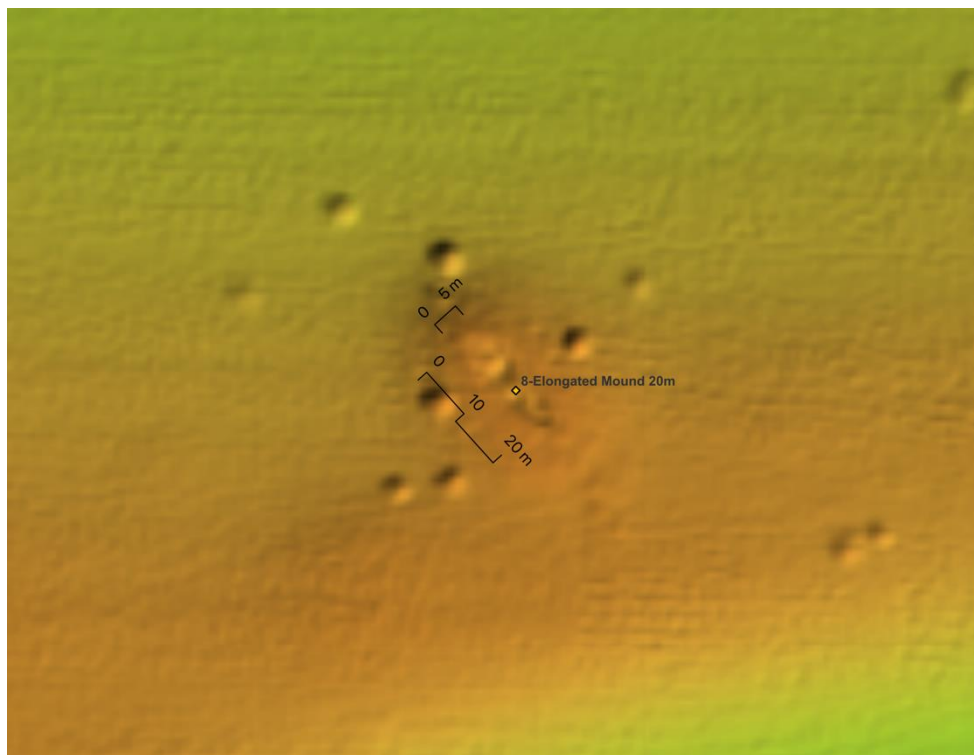


Figure 2. Point Walter stone barge wreck site environment as shown via the Department of Transport multibeam data. The wreck is in 14 m deep channel. It shows a raised oval mound surrounded by a scoured depression, and scattered scour/impact holes (Patrick Morrison 2024).

The wreck is of all-timber construction and quite intact, including a well-defined hull shape with standing frames and remnants of planking at the bow end, a bow and stern section, wooden stern, stem and deck beam support knees, and ship fittings including a windlass. The hull contains a large area of 9.8m by 4.4 m of the vessel's cargo of limestone. A remnant of a possible mast is visible on

the 3D model (although this was not confirmed during the inspection dive due to poor visibility conditions) indicating it could have been a sailed or towed barge.

A baseline was laid along the longitudinal axis of the site to allow measurement and recording of major features using baseline-offset survey method with tape measures. The total length of the site is 22.1 m from bow to stern, and it lies oriented with the stern on a bearing of 310° magnetic. The barge appears to have sunk in the silt to its natural waterline level, with the lower wooden hull completely intact and well-preserved below the waterline. The stern area exhibits remains of inner and outer hull planking. Most of the frames and outer planking still standing in the bow area are degraded, while most of the upperworks of the rest of hull have either naturally collapsed, or been impacted by anchor damage. Two timber deck lodging knees are visible along the port side, 4 m from the bow, and there are two distinct wooden bulkheads located 4.3 m in from the stern and 4.5 m in from the bow respectively. Some modern rubbish has become trapped in the wreck 2 m from the bow, in the same area as the windlass and an intact ceramic 5 gallon ceramic demijohn lying on its side (see further details below), located at 3 m along the baseline. Further along the baseline at 4.2 m is a further modern material, consisting of a hard mesh-like metal or plastic material, and a plastic bucket. **Error! Reference source not found.**

After the initial group of objects located close to the bow, 5 m from the beginning of the baseline the cargo of limestone rock/ rubble takes up a large portion of the mid-section of the vessel. The even, rectangular shape to the distribution of limestone likely reflects the size of the large deck hatches typical of river barges to allow the loading of bulk cargoes, with less concern for seaworthiness—a probable factor in the vessel being swamped in rough conditions by water filling the hull through the open hatch. Further up towards the bow section, 15.9 m along the baseline is a second bucket (metal), before reaching the bow.

The stern area has some remaining intact hull structure including frames and planking, stern knee, and rudder post inclined to starboard at an angle of about 20° to the stern post (Figure 3).

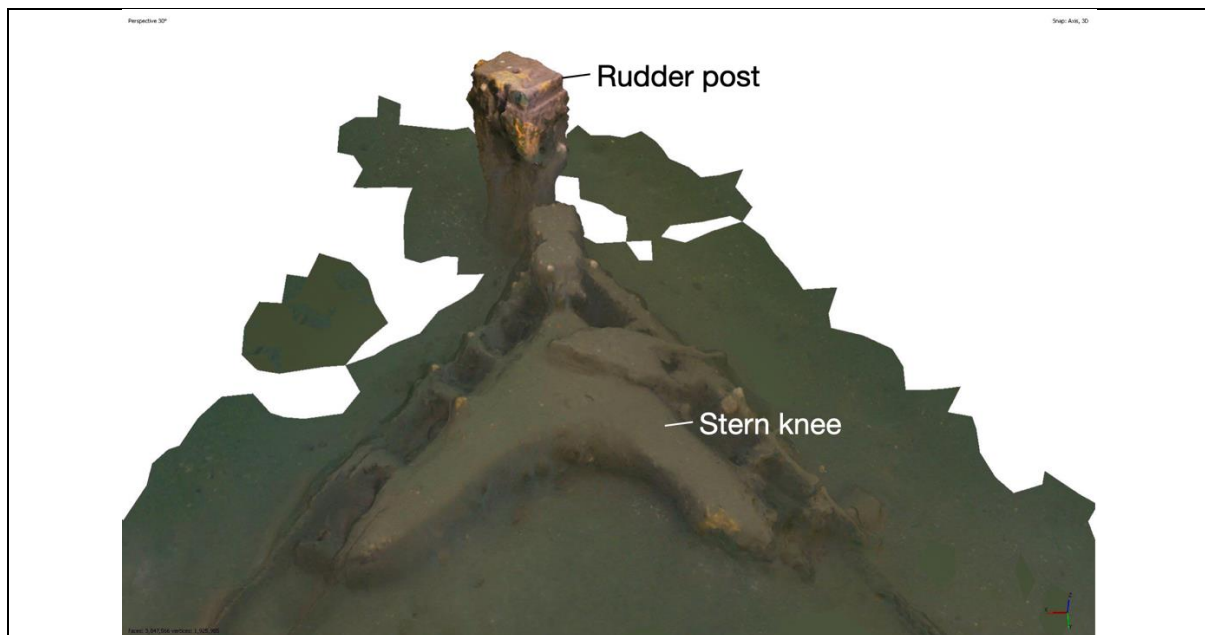


Figure 3. Detail of 3D model of stern area showing stern knee and rudder post (Patrick Morrison and David Jackson 2023).

The bow area has has remains of hull frames with planking attached, although the stempost has broken and collapsed outward of the hull structure. It may have been damaged by the wrecking impact, or more likely impacted by subsequent fishing and anchoring activities over the site. The bow area also contains the remains of a windlass with pawls evident. A hard, concreted mass of pebbles that spans across the breadth of the hull appears most likely to have been permanent, cemented

ballast against a timber bulkhead. The keelson is also exposed in this area. One portable artefact was observed namely the ceramic demijohn. (Figure 4, Figure 5).

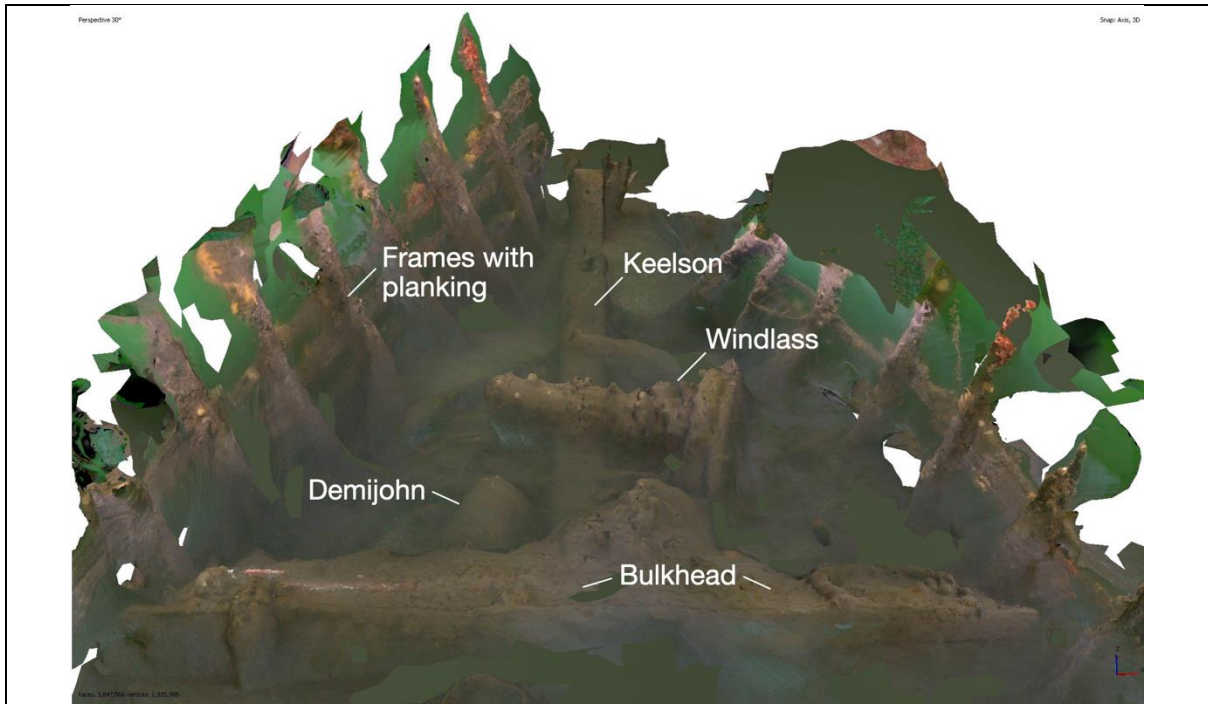


Figure 4. Detail of 3D model of bow area of wreck showing intact standing frames with attached planking, windlass, demijohn, keelson and cemented pebble ballast forming a bulkhead (Patrick Morrison and David Jackson 2023).



Figure 5. Detail of 3D model of windlass in bow area. Note pawls visible in centre of cylindrical part (Patrick Morrison and David Jackson 2023).

Dimensions taken by tape measurement were as follows:

Length between stem and stern post	22.1m
Breadth - Forward bulkhead	3.30m

Breadth - Rear bulkhead	3.70m
Stern post	18 x 24 cm
Stem	20 x 20 cm
Hull frame at bow	10 x 12 cm

No anchors or chain were located on the wreck, indicating it has likely been subjected to some secondary salvage.

Material Raised

A timber sample (registration number PWB6772) was taken from the stern post for timber identification analysis.

A large ceramic demijohn (registration number PWB6771) was raised to assist with dating the site, and for safekeeping. The demijohn was located lying on its side in the bow area of the wreck (Figure 6). It did not have any form of lid or closure attached, or evident nearby. On being raised and cleaned an owner's mark on the lip became visible 'J. & W. Bateman/ Wine and Spirit Merchants, Fremantle/ 5 [gallons]' (Figure 7, Figure 8). No manufacturer's mark is visible on the body of the demijohn, although one may possibly exist and be obscured by attached marine shells. The demijohn was most likely reused by the crew to contain drinking water. Following the recovery of the demijohn from the wreck site, it was taken to the WA Museum's Department of Materials Conservation Laboratory at the WA Shipwrecks Museum for conservation treatment (Figure 9).

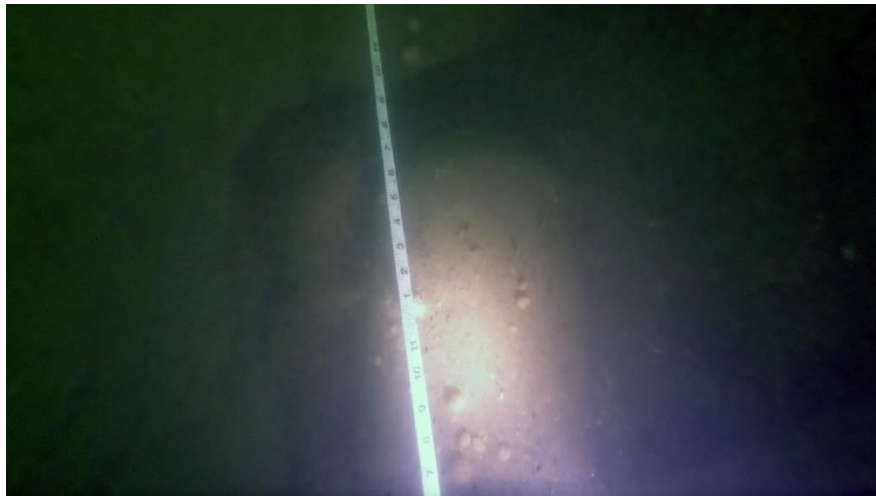


Figure 6. Demijohn in-situ on the stone barge wreck site (Aurora Philpin, WA Museum 2023).



Figure 7. Demijohn following recovery from the wreck site (Ian McCann 2023).



Figure 8. Detail of 'J. & W. Bateman/ Wine and Spirit Merchants/ 5 [gallon]' brand marking on lip of demijohn (Ross Anderson, WA Museum 2023)



Figure 9. Conservator Jon Carpenter and volunteer Michael Mayers cleaning and inspecting the demijohn. Note the line of the staining along the side showing the level where it had been lying in the silt. (Ross Anderson, WA Museum 2024)

Historical information and relevant vessels lost in the area

Neither the wreck nor historical references to the Point Walter stone barge had been recorded by MAAWA river wrecks researcher Colin Scrimshaw, nor by the WA Museum, and is therefore a significant new discovery. There are difficulties in conducting historical research into the wrecks of everyday working vessels such as river barges:

River craft ... are small, exposed work platforms, crewed by men of a more practical nature. Few records of river boats survive, because of the practical interests of those crews and the types of activities they were involved in. These boats were not often registered (there was no need), so port registers cannot always be relied upon to provide details. If their whereabouts were restricted to the various sections of the river then they would not appear in registers of port arrivals and departures—another useful source of information about ocean-going vessels. Even if such a vessel sank it was unlikely to attract the attention of a newspaper.
(Henderson in Scrimshaw ca.1980: iii)

Thanks to the increased searchability of digitised newspapers made possible by the National Library of Australia's TROVE website, historical research has subsequently located three reports of barges or flats wrecked while transporting stone in the Derbal Yerrigan/ Swan River, in 1882, 1900 and 1904 respectively. One wreck is specifically identified within the immediate area of Dyoondalup/ Point Walter "opposite Point Resolution", one is located more broadly within Doontanboro/ Melville Water, while the third merely identifies the wreck as having occurred "on the river". Two newspaper reports refer to the 1882 wreck as follows:

A flat belonging to Mr. A. Dearden, engaged in boating stone, has sank opposite Point Resolution in about thirty feet of water, in consequence of the boisterous weather. The flat was heavily laden, and was being towed by the steamer *Advance*.
(*The Daily News*, 25 August 1882).

We understand that there have been several deaths lately amongst the native prisoners at Rottnest, chiefly owing to the inclemency of the weather.... The small screw steam boat, *Lady Ord*, en route from Perth to Fremantle, had to return to Perth through the stress of weather on Wednesday last. On Wednesday last, the wind was of such force that it blew down a portion of a brick cottage, at Anderson's Lake, the property of Mr. H. P. Loftie. On the same date Mr. F. Dearden's flat sank in about thirty feet of water off Point Resolution, with a load of stone, while being towed to Perth, by the steamer *Advance*. Two men narrowly escaped being drowned.
(*The Herald*, 26 August 1882, p.1)

Two later reports of barges sunk while carrying stone date from 1900 and 1904:

Sunday's Storm.-The gale which blew up on Sunday night and lasted throughout yesterday did considerable damage on the river. A loaded lighter, belonging to the Swan River Shipping Company, a barge carrying about seven tons of stone, and a number of pleasure boats were sunk, while Dr. Burkett's yacht had two planks stove, and went to the bottom of the river.
(*The West Australian*, 18 Sep 1900 p.4.)

Mishap on the River.-A mishap occurred to a barge on the Swan River during the rough weather at the end of last week. The barge was carrying 60yds. of stone from the Fremantle quarries to the Fremantle Road, near Canning Bridge, and when in Melville Water it was swamped, and sank in many feet of water. The occupants escaped in a dinghy which was being towed by the barge.
(*The West Australian*, 22 June 1904, p.6)



Figure 10. Swan River barge or flat shown in the oil painting 'Brick loading on the Swan River'. Note rudder, size of deck hatch coaming, crane derrick and mast, and windlass at bow. (Artist: Valentin Delawarr, Art Gallery of WA, 1975/0P17)



Figure 11. Rocky Bay stone quarries in 1893 (State Library of WA, B2163282_1g)

The "Fremantle quarries" refers to limestone quarries cut into the cliffs forming the riverbank in Rocky Bay and Freshwater Bay, which were conveniently sited to allow the direct loading of stone into flat-bottomed barges (also known as 'flats') suitable for navigating shallow waters of the Derbal Yerrigan/Swan River and transporting the stone throughout the Perth metropolitan area (Figure 10, Figure 11).

The Fremantle riverbank quarries operated from at least 1852 until the 1960s. From 1897, limestone quarried from Rocky Bay was used to construct the massive North and South Moles forming the entrance to Fremantle Inner Harbour. Extensive stone quarrying of Rocky Bay for over 100 years changed the Derbal Yerrigan/ Swan River landscape, resulting in the removal of six of the seven hills originally lining the riverbank, and severely impacting the seventh hill, leaving a terraced limestone cliff in their place (Cooper 2012: 30; *Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 27/2/1852 p.4) (Figure 11).

Mr Dearden, mentioned in the 1882 reference, held contracts over many years for supplying stone to government, to be used in building construction and roadbuilding activities. For example, in 1882 at the time of Dearden's wreck, a Mr A. (Alfred) Dearden was contracted by the Public Works Department to supply "850 cubic yards of limestone (cap lime) for roadbuilding purposes, at Perth Railway Station, at 7d. 3s. per yard" (*Inquirer and Commercial News*, 22/3/1882 p.3). An earlier Mr John Dearden mentioned in 1852 (see below) may have been Alfred Dearden's father or other relative, indicating a family-based quarrying and transport business.

A newspaper article from 1852 on the tragic deaths of two quarry workers describes in some detail the process of quarrying and loading stone at Freshwater Bay, including mention of a Mr John Dearden with a government contract to provide stone, and another potential wreck of a stone barge in Freshwater Bay:

Fatal Accident—Two Lives Lost.

A lamentable accident, attended with the loss of two lives, occurred on Wednesday morning last. It appears that Mr Dearden has a contract to supply the Government with stone, which he quarries in Freshwater Bay. He left Perth in his flat about 7 a.m. on Wednesday morning, and arrived at the Bluff Point, on the western side of Freshwater Bay, about 8 a.m. where the stone was on the shore ready for shipment. They moored the flat, breakfasted, and then proceeded to load. While stowing the stone, Dearden's assistant cried out that the rock was falling, and both of them rushed forward, when the rock fell and sunk the boat. Dearden swam on shore, and the other man also attempted to do the same, but was unable. A Pensioner named Campbell saw the accident from the shore, and boldly jumped into the water to save the drowning man. He brought him up twice and then both sank before the Government flat, which was close at hand, could come to the rescue, poor Campbell's body was speedily found and taken to Perth, and conveyed to the Colonial Hospital. An inquest was held on the same evening at the Colonial Hospital, before T. N. Yule, Esq., and a respectable jury, of which the following is the result :—

John Dearden, deposed he had a contract for supplying the Government with stone; he left the jetty, at Perth, on Wednesday morning last, between five and six o'clock, to bring up a load in his boat (of about 8 tons), William Sydenham, a ticket-of-leave holder, was in his employ and working the boat with him, about 7 a.m. they arrived at the Bluff Point the western extremity of Freshwater Bay, they there anchored the boat head and stern close to the shore, and then proceeded to take their breakfast. About 8 o'clock, while they were loading the boat being then both in her, Sydenham called out "the rock is coming," they immediately flew under the forecastle, Dearden remembers nothing more till he found himself up to the neck in water, the boat was then sinking, he caught hold of some of the rigging and clambered up to the top of the mast, from which he was washed off, and eventually swam on shore. In some degree he lost consciousness, he was blind, he fancied he heard some person say "one struggle more and you are all right," he was drawn out of the water by someone he cannot say who, he afterwards saw the men belonging to the Government flat taking Campbell into the flat; he called to Dogget's boat which was coming for stone, and they took the body to Perth, he did not know but heard that Campbell was on the shore and lost his life in endeavouring to save Sydenham.

(*Perth Gazette and Independent Journal of Politics and News*, 27 February 1852 p.4)

Identifying the site

Cargo and vessel type

The wreck is a typical wooden Swan River flat/ barge, of around 20 m length. The limestone cargo indicates the barge was most likely transporting stone from the Fremantle quarries to the Perth metropolitan area for building construction, or roadbuilding purposes.

Location

The locations closest to Point Walter provided in any of the historical references are the 1882 references to Mr A. (or F.) Dearden's flat sinking "opposite Point Resolution" or "off Point Resolution"—Point Resolution is located immediately opposite Point Walter (Figure 1).

A flat belonging to Mr. A. Dearden, engaged in boating stone, has sank opposite Point Resolution in about thirty feet of water, in consequence of the boisterous weather. The flat was heavily laden, and was being towed by the steamer *Advance*.
(*The Daily News*, Thurs 25 August 1882).

On the same date Mr. F. Dearden's flat sank in about thirty feet of water off Point Resolution, with a load of stone, while being towed to Perth, by the steamer *Advance*. Two men narrowly escaped being drowned.
(*The Herald*, 26 August 1882, p.1)

The next most specific location provided is the 1904 reference to a barge that "when in Melville Water it was swamped, and sank in many feet of water." 'Melville Water' is usually taken to mean the expansive stretch of water further east, but could also be considered to include the area at the western end where the wreck lies, as the river narrows between Point Walter and Point Resolution.

Scrimshaw (c.1980: 13) noted a wreck marked as a hazard to navigation further east in Melville Water on an 1896 Admiralty chart of the Swan River, in a depth between 8 - 20 feet (2.4 - 6.1 m), which may, or may not be this 1904 wreck. In 2018 the WA Museum and MAAWA carried out a magnetometer survey at this site that recorded a magnetic anomaly on a sandbank between 3 and 5m depth, indicating a possible buried wreck in this area.

Depth

Both 1882 newspaper references give a rough approximation of the flat having sunk "in about 30 feet" (10m) depth, which in turn approximately correlates to the 14m depth of the site. The 1904 reference is vaguer, stating simply the barge sank in Melville Water in "many feet of water".

Ceramic demijohn dating

Regarding the 'J. and W. Bateman' marking on the demijohn, J. & W. Bateman refers to the Bateman family, of whom there are four generations of similarly named men:

1. John Bateman (1799-1855)
2. John Wesley Bateman (1824-1909) and brother Walter Bateman
3. John Wesley Bateman (1852-1907)
4. John Wesley Bateman (1879-1947)

In 1857 John Bateman (1824-1909) and his brother Walter established the shipping and mercantile firm of J. and W. Bateman, to become one of Western Australia's leading importers and exporters. The business continued after John Bateman's death until 1919, when a new business J. and W. Bateman Ltd was opened by his grandson John Bateman (1879-1947). This family business with the name of J. & W. Bateman Pty Ltd survived until it was dissolved in 1995 (streetsoffree.com.au/the-batemans, accessed 4/2/24).

As the marking on the demijohn states 'J. & W. Bateman' and not 'J. and W. Bateman Ltd' or 'Pty Ltd' it could date from anywhere between 1857 and 1919.

Interestingly, John Bateman (1852-1907) is described as employing over 40 ticket of leave men between 1863 and 1882, mostly as whalers and sawyers in the 1860s, and a quarryman in 1882 (<https://freetopia.org/people/batemanjohnwesley.html>, accessed 4/2/24). Though there is a wide possible date range for the J. & W. Bateman business name, the presence of a J. & W. Bateman

demijohn on the site correlating with J. & W. Bateman employing a quarryman in 1882, and the reference to a stone barge wreck occurring also in 1882 has some, at least coincidental, significance. The date of 1882 also correlates with the aforementioned reference to Mr Dearden holding a contract with the Public Works Department to transport stone for roadbuilding at Perth Railway Station.

Conclusion

Considering all of the above specific location, depth and artefact dating factors, the wreck correlates most closely with the historical reference to Mr Dearden's flat wrecked in 1882 opposite Point Resolution.

Statement of Significance

Historical

The Point Walter stone barge/ Dearden's flat (1882) is the earliest known shipwreck so far located in the Derbal Yerrigan/ Swan River, and is earliest of at least three barges recorded to have sunk while carrying cargoes of stone in 1882, 1900 and 1904 respectively.

For over 120 years since European colonisation the townships of Fremantle, Perth, Canning and Guildford depended on the Derbal Yerrigan/ Swan River for transport and the shipping of goods. The Point Walter stone barge/ Dearden's flat (1882) demonstrates the importance of barges and the Derbal Yerrigan/ Swan River for transport of bulk cargoes, prior to the establishment of motorised vehicles taking over as the primary means of transporting goods in the Perth metropolitan area from around the 1920s.

The Point Walter stone barge/ Dearden's flat (1882) is significant as representative of the past trades in bulk stone, timber and other cargo that contributed to Perth's development. The wreck and its cargo provide a tangible insight into how large quantities of stone required for the development of roads and buildings in metropolitan Perth were transported aboard barges.

Archaeological

Having sunk in relatively deep water in an intact condition, the Point Walter stone barge/ Dearden's flat (1882) has high archaeological significance for its state of intactness, and ability to demonstrate the layout and means of transporting stone aboard a typical Swan River barge, or flat. Most other barge wrecks located in the Derbal Yerrigan/ Swan River have been abandoned and stripped, and no longer contain evidence of their cargoes or everyday work practices. Being relatively intact, the wreck has archaeological potential for further research into ship construction, specific fittings, cargo and storage areas on the vessel. These aspects have potential to reveal further information on the operation of river barges and the barge trade generally, and living and working conditions aboard for the crew.

Legal Protection

The State *Maritime Archaeology Act* (1973) protects the remains of ships wrecked prior to 1900 in state waters, including Derbal Yerrigan/ Swan River. Section 4 of the *Maritime Archaeology Act* states that:

4. Maritime archaeological sites

(1) For the purposes of this Act —

(a) any area in which the remains of a ship, which in the opinion of the Director may have been a historic ship, are known to be located;

(b) any area in which any relic is known to be located, or where in the opinion of the Director unrecovered relics associated with a ship which may have been a historic ship are likely to be located; and

(c) any structure, campsite, fortification or other location of historic interest that, in the opinion of the Director, is associated with, and was occupied or used by, persons presumed to have been in a historic ship, shall be a maritime archaeological site.

https://www.legislation.wa.gov.au/legislation/statutes.nsf/main_mrtitle_566_homepage.html

The Director/ Chief Executive Officer of the WA Museum has formed an opinion that the Point Walter stone barge is the remains of an historic ship, namely Dearden's flat wrecked in 1882 opposite Point Resolution while heavily laden with stone, and is therefore protected as a maritime archaeological site under Section 4.1.(a) of the *Maritime Archaeology Act 1973*, .

Although the site is protected, there is no restriction on people visiting or diving on the site, or fishing around it, provided that they do not anchor on the site causing damage. Or damage or disturb the site Anchors and chain caught in fragile wooden wreckage will very quickly destroy the remaining intact, but fragile structure. Section 8 of the *Maritime Archaeology Act 1973* describes the offences and penalties for damaging sites, and the removal of objects from sites.

Recommendations

1. That this wreck site is added to the WA Museum's Shipwreck database;
2. That the State Heritage Office, Swan River Trust, Department of Biodiversity and Conservation and City of Melville are provided with a copy of this report, to promote awareness of this significant maritime heritage site by other management authorities with jurisdiction or interest in this area;
3. That the WA Museum and MAAWA continue to work collaboratively to document this site, and monitor it for any evidence of increased human impacts due to its location becoming more widely known.

References

Cooper, D., 2012, A study of the riverine and underwater archaeological landscapes of Rocky Bay, North Fremantle, Western Australia, Master's thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, Report—Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Museum, No. 32.

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