

a cargo of oil and copper ore at Port Gregory. On 17 July, 1856 it was being towed out of the Port when a heavy swell swept it onto a shoal. All hands were saved but the vessel was stranded. *Sara* has not been found.

Zephyr 1864

Zephyr was a China tea-trade clipper purchased by British shipowner Robert Habgood in April 1864 for the Western Australian wool trade. On the first voyage for its new owner, the 411-tonne barque sailed to Fremantle with general cargo before transporting machinery for the Geraldine lead mine to Port Gregory. The ship was then to return to Britain with a cargo of lead, copper ore and wool. On 28 September, 1864, the vessel drifted onto a sand bank while at anchor in Port Gregory. Attempts to pull it free failed and it was presumed it would be wrecked. Tragedy struck as attempts were made to lighten the stricken ship. Three men drowned when their boat capsized while unloading cargo. *Zephyr* was refloated on 12 October during a high tide and continued in the wool trade for many years.

SS Xantho 1872

SS Xantho was built in 1848 in Dumbarton, Scotland as a schooner-rigged paddle steamer. Later, it was re-engined and the paddles were removed and replaced with a propeller. In 1871 Charles E. Broadhurst, a wealthy Western Australian pastoralist and entrepreneur, bought it. The vessel sailed from England, arriving in Fremantle on 15 May, 1872.



Xantho crankshaft

It proved to be totally unsuitable and was lost soon after passing through Port Gregory on the return leg of a voyage between Fremantle and Batavia. It arrived at Port Gregory with a cargo of whale oil and wool to take on board an additional cargo of 100 tonnes of lead ore. On 16 November she put to sea from Port

Gregory in an overloaded condition. About 10km from shore the vessel began to leak badly and fearing she would sink, was steered back towards Port Gregory. Broadhurst, after being advised to unload the lead said 'I would rather save the lead than the ship'. However *Xantho* sank just before reaching the safety of the harbour and became a total wreck. *SS Xantho* has been partially excavated by the WA Museum and its unique engine is on display in the Shipwreck Galleries in Fremantle. *Xantho* is a popular dive site when the conditions are calm. A boat is required to visit the site.

HMAS Sydney and *HSK Kormoran* 1941



On the night of 19 November, 1941, 635 sailors, six RAAF personnel and four civilian canteen staff were lost when *HMAS Sydney* sank to the ocean floor after a battle with the German raider *HSK Kormoran*. *Kormoran* also suffered heavy damage forcing the captain to abandon ship. The survivors of the 398 crew took to the life boats.

Some came ashore north of Carnarvon, where they were found and taken to Fremantle. Neither of the vessels have been found. Some residents of the Northampton region reported hearing the sound of gunfire and seeing flashes in the sky about the time of the battle and debris thought to have come from *HMAS Sydney* and/or *Kormoran* was found washed up on the beach a few days later.

Above: a medal from *HMAS Sydney*

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 boat. Divers need to be fit and qualified. A diver's 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 CASTAWAY COAST

Introduction

Since the 17th century nearly two thousand vessels have been wrecked on the Western Australian coast. Hidden reefs and violent storms have taken their toll. The Castaway Coast is the area between Port Gregory to Steep Point at the southern entrance to Shark Bay. It includes the Kalbarri region and the Zuytdorp Cliffs. This inhospitable stretch of coastline has been responsible for the wrecking of many ships. The main towns in the region are Port Gregory and Kalbarri. Port Gregory was a thriving whaling settlement from 1856 to 1870, and one of the most isolated whaling stations along the Western Australian coast. A few kilometres away at Lynton was a convict hiring station that operated between 1853 and 1861. This station supplied convicts to work on the nearby Geraldine lead mine.

The following is an account of various incidents that have occurred in this region (in chronological order) that give justification to the name Castaway Coast.



Batavia at the Western Australian Museum

Batavia 1629

The Dutch United East India Company (VOC) ship *Batavia* sailed from Amsterdam in October 1628 on her maiden voyage to the East Indies. She was the flagship of a fleet under the command of the Francisco Pelsaert. *Batavia* carried a valuable cargo of trade goods such as cloth, lead, cochineal, jewellery, 12 chests of silver coins and other items. On board were 316 passengers and crew. During the voyage from the Cape of Good Hope across the Indian Ocean,

a VOC official, Jeronimus Cornelisz conspired with the skipper of *Batavia*, Adriaen Jacobsz and other officers to seize the ship and steal its cargo. Their plan was to separate *Batavia* from the rest of the fleet and seize the ship as soon as the coast of Australia was sighted, but on the night of 4 June, 1629, *Batavia* was wrecked on Morning Reef in the Wallabi Group of the Abrolhos Islands. More than 250 of the passengers and crew made their way to safety on the nearby island. However, some were left on the ship whilst 40 others drowned attempting to swim to safety. After searching the nearby islands in vain for food and water supplies, Commander Pelsaert, the skipper Jacobsz, and 47 others sailed to Batavia to summon help.

Meanwhile Jeronimus Cornelisz took command of the castaways in Pelsaert's absence, inciting a mutiny and brutally murdering 125 of the survivors. He and his conspirators then planned to wait for Pelsaert to return, seize his vessel and sail away with all of the money and jewellery salvaged from the wreck.

On Pelsaert's return he was warned of the mutiny by a group of soldiers who had been searching the other islands for water and had escaped the massacre. Cornelisz and his fellow mutineers were captured and punished. Some were immediately tried and executed on the island. Others were sent back to Batavia to be tried for their crimes. Two boys, Wouter Loos and Jan Pelgrom were sentenced to be marooned on the mainland. They were given orders to mix with the local population before being put ashore. This was most likely near the mouth of the Murchison River, however some argued in favour of the Hutt River. Abandoned, with nothing more than some meagre provisions and trade goods, they were to become the first castaways and possibly the first Europeans to set foot on mainland Australia. The fate of the boys is unknown.

Batavia is a popular wreck for divers and has been excavated by the WA Museum. Artefacts from this wreck are on display at Geraldton and Fremantle.

Zuytdorp 1712

Zuytdorp, owned by the VOC, was wrecked in 1712 off the west coast of Australia (an area now known as Zuytdorp Cliffs), whilst on its third voyage from the Netherlands to Batavia (now known as Jakarta). Even before reaching the Cape of Good Hope, 11 of a crew of 286 had died from scurvy and eight men had deserted the ill-fated ship. After leaving the Cape on 22 April, 1712, *Zuytdorp* was not seen again until April 1927 when wreckage was discovered at the foot of the cliffs about 60km north of the mouth of the Murchison River. Investigations on the wreck site could uncover more clues to help solve the mystery. However, due to the position of the wreck being within a few metres of reef and surrounded by cliffs, it is extremely difficult for divers to investigate the site. Some of the artefacts that have been recovered include coins, an English 8-pounder cannon, a pulley block, fragments of pipes, exquisite glassware, ceramics, a pewter dish, combs, and the largest anchor

recovered to date by the WA Museum. The fate of the ship's passengers and crew are unknown, however coins and other items from the wreck have been found near Shark Bay. The possibility that survivors from *Zuytdorp* settled on the mainland and interacted with Aboriginals in this region has also been assessed, with material from the wreck being found at Aboriginal campsites to the south, north and inland. A tobacco box found at one well, for example, is now on display at the WA Museum.



An artist's depiction of *Zuytdorp*

Grey's whaleboats 1839

In February 1839 George Grey embarked on an expedition to explore the coastal regions in north west WA. Grey and his party sailed from Fremantle to Bernier Island in Shark Bay aboard the American whale ship *Russell*. There they unloaded three small whale boats and provisions for the journey. Disaster struck even before the expedition got under way. After loading the whale boats with provisions one of them, *Paul Pry*, was swamped and broke up while attempting to launch it from the beach. After almost being swamped during a severe storm, the remaining two boats sailed south along the Zuytdorp Cliffs in search of water. On 31 March Grey's party sailed into Gantheaume Bay at the mouth of the Murchison River. While attempting to reach shore through heavy surf, both boats were damaged beyond repair. The men were forced to abandon them and most stores and walk over 640 km to Perth. In the following year the schooner *Champion* visited Gantheaume Bay and sighted the remains of Grey's whale boats.

Mary Queen of Scots 1855

Mary Queen of Scots was a 260-tonne barque built in Sunderland, England. The ship was on a voyage from Fremantle to Singapore

via Port Gregory, where it was to take on board 40 tonnes of lead ore. On 7 February, 1855 the vessel anchored inside the reef at Port Gregory. A strong south westerly breeze was blowing, putting great strain on her anchor and causing *Mary Queen of Scots* to drift. Another anchor was dropped but it could not prevent it from striking against the treacherous reef, and breaking her back. Part of the cargo was retrieved on 12 February but the following day the vessel began to break up and finally sank. It is believed that Capt. Sanford, who ran the convict depot at Lynton near Port Gregory, used timber from the wreck for his house. The wreck has not been found.



Batavia

Iris 1855

Iris was 315-tonne whale ship built in New Bedford, USA. It was engaged in the whale fishery in the Pacific Ocean in the 1820s and 1830s and then in the Indian Ocean in the 1840s and 1850s. In August 1854 *Iris* was sent on another Indian Ocean voyage. After 10 months at sea the ship was leaking badly and in need of repairs, which forced it to enter Port Gregory on 29 June, 1855. Unfortunately, 11 days later it was blown ashore. The captain and his 30 crew members tried unsuccessfully to unload and refloat it. In August, after no progress, a board of survey condemned the vessel as a wreck. After weeks spent camped on the shore, its castaway crew finally sailed from Fremantle aboard the schooner *Perseverance* to claim assistance from the American Consul. In October the hull, cargo and fittings were sold at auction. It was later repaired in Fremantle, renamed *Frances* and sailed until 1882.

Sara 1856

Sara was a 55-tonne schooner built on the Swan River in 1855 by William Owston. She was to return to Adelaide after loading