

as a merchant ship), *Kormoran*, was left ablaze and scuttled following a battle with HMAS *Sydney* somewhere off the coast of Shark Bay on November 20, 1941. Captain Detmers of *Kormoran* was planning to mine the entrance to Carnarvon when it was intercepted by HMAS *Sydney*. The ship has not been found. Of *Kormoran*'s 396 crew 78 died, and the remainder were captured and interred in Australian POW camps.

Kormoran lifeboat

One of the lifeboats from *Kormoran* was purchased by the owners of Carrarang Station at Shark Bay and used to transport wool. Its remains can still be seen at Carrarang Landing.



Dirk Hartog and Willem de Vlamingh plates (left to right).

The Shark Bay plates - Dirk Hartog island

The Dutch and the French explorers of Shark Bay left reminders of their visits in the form of pewter plates on which they inscribed details of their voyages.

Dirk Hartog's Plate-1616

Dirk Hartog landed on the island on October 25, 1616. To mark his discovery, he had a pewter plate engraved with the details of his voyage and his crew. The plate was nailed to a post at the northern end of the island, at Cape Inscription. A replica of the plate can be seen in the WA Museum Shipwreck Galleries in Fremantle.

Willem de Vlamingh's Plate-1679

When Willem de Vlamingh arrived in 1679, he removed Hartog's plate and replaced it with his own. Vlamingh's plate had two messages, a copy of Hartog's inscription and details of his own visit to the island. He then nailed it to a pine post in the same place where Hartog's plate had stood. He later presented Hartog's plate to the Dutch authorities at Batavia (now Jakarta). Vlamingh's original plate can be seen in the WA Museum Shipwreck Galleries in Fremantle.

Hamelin's Plate-1801

Captain Hamelin visited the Bay in 1801, and like Hartog and Vlamingh before him, left a memorial of his voyage. Hamelin's junior lieutenant Louis de Freycinet returned to Shark Bay in command of his own ship, *Uranie* and took De Vlamingh's and Hamelin's plates back to France. In 1947, the French Government presented Dirk Hartog's plate to the Australian Government. The whereabouts of Hamelin's plate is unknown. Phillip Parker King, the British explorer, landed on Dirk Hartog Island in 1822 with the intention of retrieving the plates they had been removed and only the posts remained. Parker King inscribed his initials on the posts before departing. The plates he sought were those of Hartog, Vlamingh and Hamelin.

For more information: Shark Bay World Heritage Interpretation Centre: www.sharkbayinterpretationcentre.com.au

WA Museum, Maritime Archaeology Department:

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

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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 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 HISTORIC SHIPWRECKS OF SHARK BAY

Introduction

Shark Bay covers an approximate area of 8000 sq km and has 1500 km of coastline. It is the westernmost point of Australia. Denham. The main settlement of Shark Bay is located some 833 km north of Perth. Long before Europeans ever sailed into Shark Bay, the area had been part of the tribal lands of the Nganda and Malgana people. Shark Bay's waters were abundant



Shark Bay

in fish, shellfish, and larger marine animals such as turtles and dugong. These provided the Aboriginal people with their main source of food. Evidence of aboriginal occupation from as early as 4200 BP has been found in sand dunes at Eagle Bluff. Burial sites and artefacts have been found in Cliff Cave near Denham. Aborigines caught their fish at low tide in fish traps. The rocks they had placed to form a fish trap can be seen in the shallows at Town Bluff. Dirk Hartog, the Dutch explorer, was the first European to land on Australian soil on October 25, 1616. The island was named after him. There was no further European contact for 81 years until Willem de Vlamingh, another Dutchman, visited the area in 1697. In August

1699 William Dampier, an Englishman, spent seven days in the bay and named it 'Shark's Bay'. Most of the islands and bays in Shark Bay have been named after explorers. Denham received its name from Captain Henry Mangles Denham, who charted the waters of the Bay in 1858.

Shark Bay offered a rich harvest to whalers, pearl-ers and guano traders. As early as 1792, American whalers visited Shark Bay, and by 1830 British and French ships had joined the hunt for whales along the coast. These ships sometimes took shelter behind Dirk Hartog Island during storms.

In 1801, Emmanuel Hamelin, the French explorer, recovered large quantities of pearl-oysters and a small pearl. Later, British explorers sent samples to London for evaluation. The Shark Bay oyster was noted for the quantity of pearls produced, rather than the quality of the shell. The pearls were small and varying shades of gold or grey rather than white. Because of the shallow waters of the Bay, the pearl-shells could be simply scooped up in trawl nets. In the early 1870s, Denham was established as the base for the pearling industry in Shark Bay. By the 1930s the pearl-shell stocks were almost depleted and the local population turned to wool growing and fishing as the primary industries. In 1850 guano (dried bird droppings) was discovered on several islands in Shark Bay. This was harvested and sold as fertiliser.

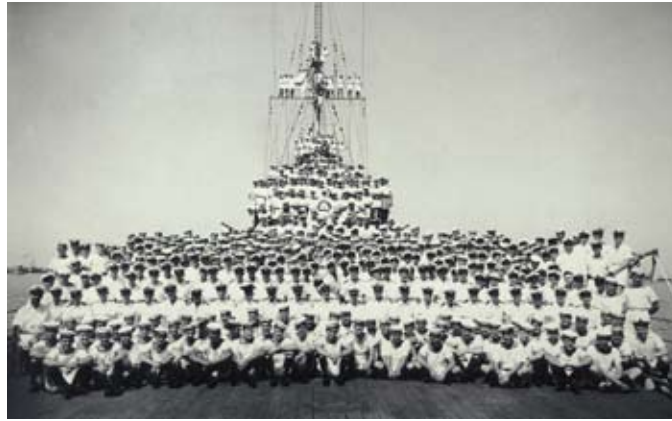
The development of the pastoral industry began in the 1860s when the Government of the day offered vast areas of land to new settlers.

Wrecks of Shark Bay

Zuytdorp 1712

Zuytdorp was wrecked in 1712 on a voyage from the Netherlands to Batavia, East Indies. It was carrying a cargo of coins, cloth and lead. It is believed that the ship was driven against the coast by a strong north westerly gale. It is known that some of the 280 people aboard reached the shore and set up survivors' camps and burnt fires to attract the attention of passing ships.

Many objects from the ship have been found on land near the wreck site, though no survivors were ever found.



Crew aboard HMAS *Sydney*

Perseverant 1841

Perseverant, the French whaler, was a 269-ton ship with two decks. In 1841 it is believed that during a severe gale the vessel was driven ashore on Dirk Hartog island. The crew abandoned ship and set up camp on the island. Five men died of scurvy before the survivors set sail for Java in four of the ship's small boats. In 1851 Captain Ashley, the master of a guano ship, reported seeing fragments of wreckage soon after he came around Cape Inscription but it is not known whether the wreckage was from *Perseverant*.

Prince Charlie 1850

Prince Charlie was a 443-ton barque. It ran aground on Levillain Shoal off Cape Levillain while sailing for England with a cargo of guano. The cargo was off-loaded and the vessel repaired.

Macquarie 1878

The 125-ton British brigantine *Macquarie* was wrecked on Levillain Shoal in November 1878. The ship struck due to poor visibility and the captain was not at fault. No lives were lost.

Gudrun 1901

Gudrun was a Norwegian whaling barque of 977

tons. It was wrecked on Peron Flats when sailing from Bunbury to Falmouth, England with a cargo of timber. The vessel had been deliberately scuttled by the ship's carpenter. The ship's figurehead was found on Peron Flats and can be seen on display in the Shark Bay World Heritage Interpretation Centre.

Two Sons 1902

The 16-ton cutter *Two Sons* sank while sailing from Flint Cliff (Hamelin Pool) to Denham with a cargo of sandalwood. The exact position of the wreck is unknown.

Beagle 1904

The 22-ton cutter was wrecked at Cape Inscription, Dirk Hartog Island.

Secret 1904

Secret was a 19-ton vessel which foundered near Faure Island.

HMAS *Sydney* 1941

Australia's greatest naval loss occurred on November 19, 1941 when HMAS *Sydney* sank with all 645 crew following a fierce battle with the disguised German raider, HSK *Kormoran*. It is believed to be off the coast of Shark Bay.



HMAS *Gunbar*

HSK *Kormoran* 1941

The German auxiliary cruiser (armed raider disguised