

WRECK INSPECTION REPORT

(*EDITH*) (1891-1907)

Dept. of Maritime Archaeology
W.A. Maritime Museum
Cliff St. Fremantle
6160

July 1996

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Report, Department of Maritime Archaeology, Western Australian Maritime Museum, No: 113

Technical Data

Site Name: EDITH

Date lost: 17/4/1907

Date of Inspection: 11/9/1995

Personnel: M. McCarthy (OIC)
D. Garratt
R. Shaw

Approximate Location: Condon Landing east of Port Hedland

GPS. 19° 59.0850' S 119° 22.1800'E

Chart No: AUS 325

Lat: 19° 58' 30"

Long: 119° 22'E

File No: 57/95

File Name: Edith

Sailing Directions: Leave Condon Landing at the approach of low water spring tides and take the track west along the shore c. 1.5 km to an obvious break in the mangrove trees which allows easy access to the sea. Leave the track and, after proceeding through the mangroves, walk on a bearing of 033° until the end of a drying reef (Miawuryguna Rocks) bears 085°, the wreckage will become visible, first as ironwork projecting above the seafloor and then scattered timbers and some intact hull structure. The site lies on a flat seafloor with such a small declination and high tidal range (6m) that vast areas of sand are exposed at low water spring tide. The walk to the site from the beach takes a good 30 minutes and care must be taken to leave the site with sufficient time to make the beach with safety.

Compass Bearing:

- A. N. end of Miawuryguna Rocks: 082°
- B. Large tamarisk tree at Condon Landing 154°

Sextant angles for A - D Above: N/A

Visual Transits: N/A

Site Photographs:

Black & White: N/A

Colour: *Edith*

Video: ?

Site Conditions on inspection

Sea and Swell: At LWS, the area was dry.

Surge: When inundated the wreck would be subject to seas and swells

Visibility: When inundated nearly zero visibility is expected

Current: Tidal flows are expected to be the major forces.

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

Chemical Measurements : N/A

Temperature

Salinity

pH

Dissolved O₂

Corrosion Potentials

Biological Data :

Colonising fauna: Small barnacles, soft polyps and some weed.

Site Condition and Integrity :

The wreck appears stable under the sand. There is evidence of worm infestation on exposed timber.

Management considerations :

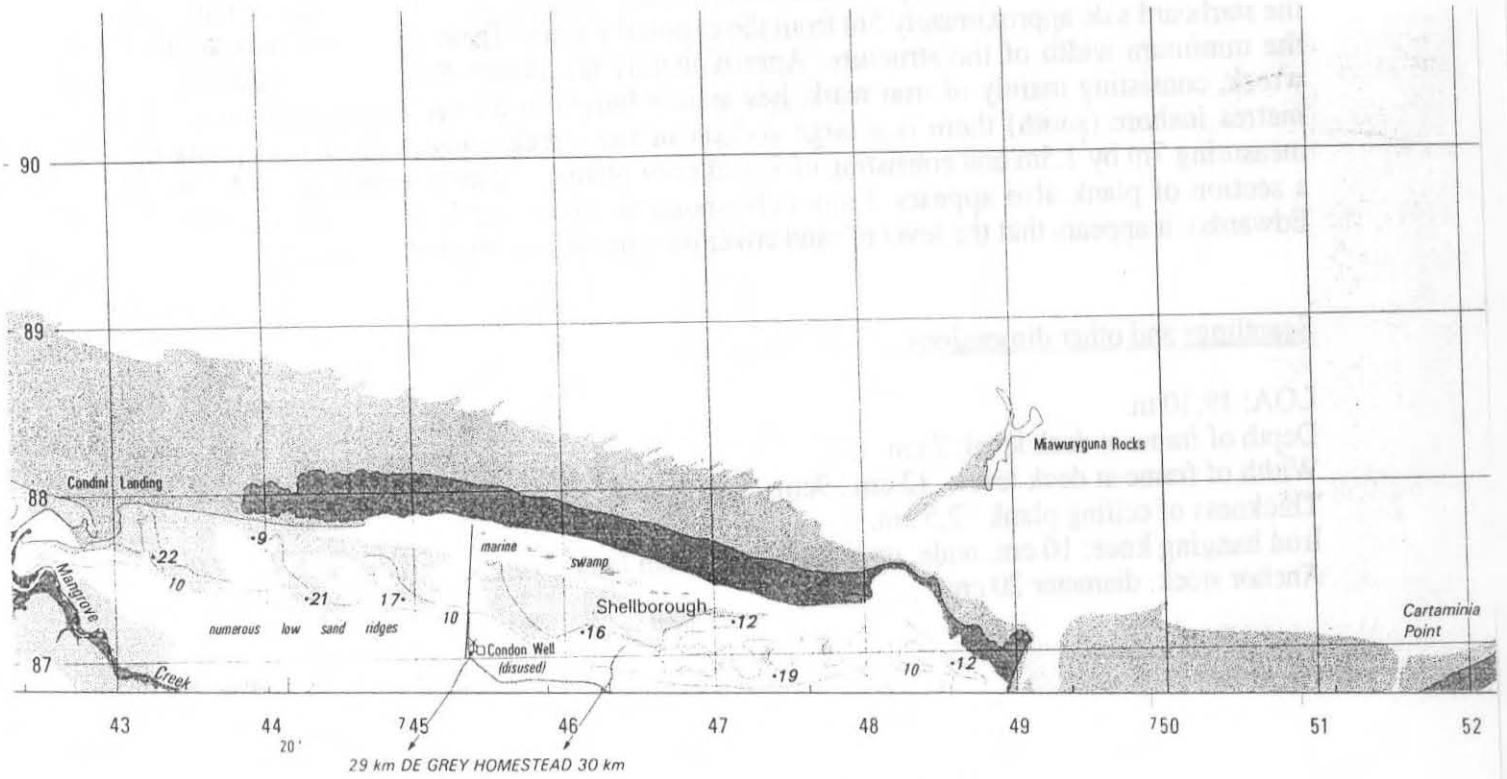
(i) Natural Forces: The site is totally exposed at low-water Spring Tides, exposing the visible timbers and ironwork to the atmosphere. Much of the wreck is buried in sand, to an estimated maximum depth of around one metre, however. Where exposed the wreck is subject to seas and swell when inundated and to human interference when dry. Cyclonic conditions would have a marked effect on the wreck.

(ii) Present and future Human forces: The visible sections of the wreck appear sterile as it would have been heavily salvaged over the years for useful timbers, fittings and contents. One bottle sherd was found.

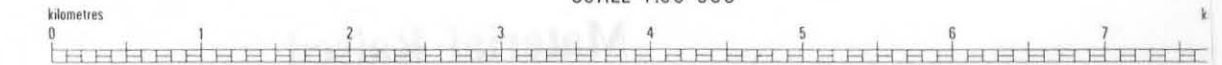
(iii) Projected General site Stability : Unless an attempt is made to excavate in and around the site, it should remain in its present condition for a considerable length of time, bar cyclonic conditions.

Sketch Map showing access to Site or Chart Excerpt: (Shellborough, Western Australia 1: 50 000)

The wreck lies opposite the site of Shellborough (townsite for Condon)



SCALE 1:50 000



FULL LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE VALUES ARE SHOWN AT THE SHEET CORNERS, WITH MINUTE TICKS INSIDE THE NEATLINE, EVERY FIFTH TICK IS LABELLED
BLACK NUMBERED GRID LINES ARE 1000 METRE INTERVALS OF THE UNIVERSAL TRANSVERSE MERCATOR GRID, ZONE 50 (AUSTRALIAN MAP GRID), AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL SPHEROID
BLUE GRID TICKS OUTSIDE THE NEATLINE ARE 1000 METRE INTERVALS OF THE UNIVERSAL TRANSVERSE MERCATOR GRID, ZONE 50 WORLD GEODETIC SYSTEM 1972. THEIR VALUES ARE THE NEAREST
GRID VALUES ARE SHOWN IN FULL ONLY AT THE SOUTH WEST CORNER OF THE MAP

VERTICAL DATUM: AUSTRALIAN HEIGHT DATUM

HORIZONTAL DATUM: AUSTRALIAN GEODETIC DATUM 1966

TRANSVERSE MERCATOR PROJECTION

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 METRES

ELEVATIONS IN METRES

Users should refer corrections, additions and comments for improving this product to
DIRECTOR OF SURVEY, DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE (ARMY OFFICE), RUSSELL OFFICES, CANBERRA 2600, AUSTRALIA.

LEGEND

Built-up area; Divided highway; Metropolitan route marker...		Power transmission line		Watercourse with flood limits; Area subject	
Recreation reserve with oval; Drive-in theatre; Underpass...		Administrative boundary		Swamp; Swamp definite boundary	
Sealed road two or more lanes; National route marker		Mine; Building; Ruin; Church; Windpump; Yard		Perennial lake; Watercourse	
Sealed road one lane; Cutting; Embankment		Fence; Horizontal control point; Spot elevation		Intermittent lake; Watercourse	
Unsealed road two or more lanes; Culvert; Causeway		Contour with value; Supplementary contour		Mainly dry lake; Watercourse	
Unsealed road one lane; Approximate position; (AP)		Depression contour; Sand; Distorted surface		Tank or small dam; Waterhole	
Vehicle track; Road bridge; Gate; Stock grid		Levee; Sand ridge		Saline coastal flat; Intertidal flat; Rock bare	
Foot track; Foot bridge		High cliff; Escarpment		Navigation light; Intertidal ledge or reef	
Multiple track railway; Siding; Station		Vegetation; Dense, medium, scattered		Exposed wreck; Submerged wreck	
Single track railway; Light railway		Rain forest; Pine		Submerged reef; Submerged rock	
Railway tunnel, bridge, underpass		Orchard or vineyard; Line of trees or windbreak		Indefinite watercourse, shoreline; Mangrove	

Description of Site

The wreck which, from the visible remains, appears around 19 metres long, lies on a north-south axis and on its side. It was not possible to conclusively differentiate the bow from the stern, though an anchor stock which lies barely visible within the wreckage 5m from its southern extremity indicates that the bow lies to the south. The most obvious features of the site are a pair of iron diagonal hanging knees towards the southern (bow?) end of the site, a line of exposed frames on the port? side and the ends of a number of fastenings visible on the starboard side approximately 5m from the exposed frames. These give some indication of the minimum width of the structure. Approximately 60 metres due east a section of the wreck, consisting mainly of iron work, lies mainly buried in the sand. Approximately 150 metres inshore (south) there is a large section of the wreck consisting of hull planking measuring 7m by 1.5m and consisting of 7 strakes of planks. 20 metres south east of the site a section of plank also appears. From correspondence received from the finder (Mr Jim Edwards), it appears that the level of sand cover over the wreck regularly changes.

Scantlings and other dimensions

LOA: 19.10 m.

Depth of frame at deck level: 7 cm.

Width of frame at deck level: 12 cm., 9cm., and 10 cm.

Thickness of ceiling plank : 2.5 cm.

Iron hanging knee: 10 cm. wide, upper arm 1m. 10cm long.

Anchor stock: diameter 20 cm.

Material Raised

Three timber samples were recovered from an area to the south end of the site (see site plan). Two frame samples and one ceiling plank sample were taken. These were identified by Dr Ian Godfrey of the Conservation Department at the WA Maritime Museum as a eucalypt species.

Supplementary sketches
by Ray Shaw

A substation 7m x 1500 wide
7 stroke of planks
frames 10 cms x 6 cms @ 30 cms.



Site Identification Comments

Historical Precis of vessel identified and cause of its loss :

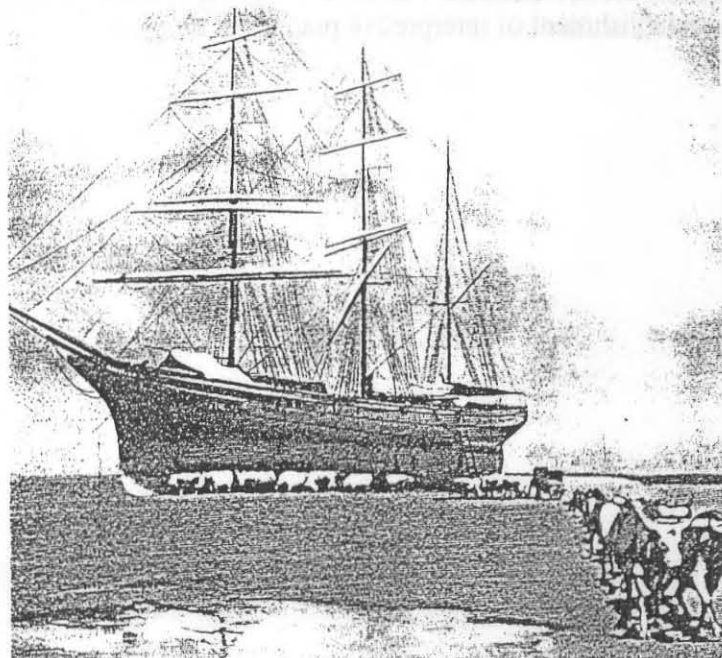
The wreck is that of a small Australian-built wooden-hulled vessel of at least 19 metres long. Of that class, only one the *Edith* is known to have been lost in the vicinity.

Entry, number 9 of 1891 of the Register of British Ships (Fremantle) dated 8 April 1891, describes the *Edith* in question (Official Number 101495), as a 67.14 ton sailing vessel (possibly ketch rigged), 79.2' feet (24m) by 18.5'; by 6.58 feet. It was built at Fremantle in December of 1890, its owners D. Symon, C.H. Hammond and G.Y. Hubble, who are described as traders. On May 15 1903 the vessel was sold to J. Denny, J.L. Denny, N. Nilson and A. Brown as joint owners and it was in their service that the *Edith* was wrecked at Condon on the North-west coast on 17 April 1907. The vessel, which was described (apparently incorrectly) as a barge had one deck, a round stern and was carvel built over a wooden frame.

A letter on file (*Edith* File, 57/95) from a Mr Edward Holthouse of Harvey, indicates that he and his family arrived at Port Hedland in the SS *Burrumbeet* on 21 April 1907. Their personal belonging were subsequently salvaged from the wreck of the *Edith* at the settlement of Condon east of the De Grey River. The material eventually arrived (by bullock wagon) at their destination Muccan Station which was inland on the De Grey River (Holthouse to Sledge, 18/6/1979). This indicates that the family belongings were transhipped from Port Hedland for off loading at Condon on board *Edith* rather than be transported overland. It also appears that Mr Holthouse and the family had travelled overland to Muccan from Port Hedland as he is expected to have mentioned the wrecking had he been onboard.

Condon (the name Shellborough, appearing on the maps was rarely used) was described around that time as a 'small settlement' about 20 miles east of the De Grey consisting of 'two "bush pubs", a store, and a few huts, with a Japanese "house", all built mostly of corrugated iron' (Simner, nd : 372). It was common for smaller vessels such as the *Edith* to call into Condon and offload their cargoes and take on wool whilst the tide was out. This was then transhipped to larger vessels or to more suitable ports. Occasionally larger vessels such as the iron barque *Arabella* shown below did similar. A telegraph office was opened at Condon in 1889 (RN 740, Battye Library). Developed mainly as a centre for shipping wool from the stations inland, it was considered 'not a place of any importance' (Battye, 1915: 167), and was abandoned soon after Port Hedland was established as a viable alternative.

Figure: The iron barque *Arabella* loading at Condon (Simner, nd: 374). The illustration gives some indication of the slope of the sand on which the *Edith* lies.



Wreck- site History

- (i) Contemporary Salvage: It is expected that the *Edith* would have been heavily salvaged by the people living at Condon as it would have proved a very useful source of timber, fittings and other goods.
- (ii) When found in modern times and by whom: Mr C.J. Edwards
- (v) Modern use, if any. The Museum team were taken to the wreck by shell collector/shipbuilders Wally and Fay Back and their son Kim. Few others would bother to venture out onto the flats on which the wreck lies.

Assessment of Site Significance

- (i) Archaeological : The wreck of the *Edith* is the remains of a Western Australian owned and operated wooden ship vessel that was built at Fremantle in 1891. Though it lay in an easily accessible position, allowing it to be heavily salvaged, some artefactual material is expected to lie in the bilge of the wreck and under the hull itself.
- (ii) Technological: The wreck will provide useful to those studying local shipbuilding methods.
- (iii) Educational/recreational: The wreck has the potential to provide a useful focus for school groups and visitors for the subject of the coasting trade and, when combined with the remains at Condon, on the story of European settlement in the area.

Management Proposals

It is proposed that the wreck be monitored when an inspection team is in the area, but that little else be done. The numbers using the camp under the Tamarisk tree (suitable for one or two camp sites) or the recreational visitors for fishing or shelling purposes appear too small to warrant the establishment of interpretive plaques at this stage.

Recommendations

Though there are few visible remains, the wreck is of significance and it should be afforded legal protection ASAP. Lying above low water mark, the site can only be protected under the Maritime Archaeology Act (1973) State Waters, which currently has a post-1900 terminal date. Changes are envisaged which will result in the declaration of all sites 75 years of age or older, however.

It is suggested that the finder be recognised for his efforts in bringing the site to the attention of the WA Maritime Museum.

References

Battye, J. S., 1915, *The History of the North West of Australia*, Jones, Perth.

Simner, G.L., (nd.), "Arabella" a wool ship of the 'Nineties'. In *Journal of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners*, London: 372-4.

Wreck *Edith* file, Department of Maritime Archaeology, WA Maritime Museum, no 57/95.

Register of British ships Fremantle, No 9 of 1891. *Edith*

Wrecks Index, Battye Library, State Library of Western Australia