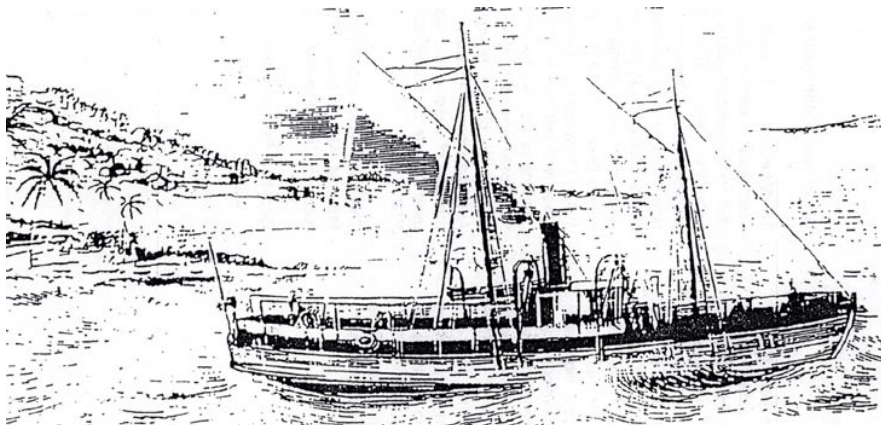


SHIPWRECKS IN DARWIN HARBOUR

Updated: 4th March, 2002



The SS Elogowan in Papua New Guinea seas

Source: Goode (1997)

SS Ellengowan

Built in 1866 in Oslo and originally known as the SS Nokken, the SS Ellengowan is the oldest known shipwreck in Darwin Harbour and is the only Norwegian iron hull steamship in Australia. As such it is a unique part of our nineteenth century maritime history.

It was renamed the SS Ellengowan in 1874 following its purchase by the London Missionary Society. For the remainder of the 1870s it was used for missionary work on the Fly and Baxter Rivers in New Guinea before being purchased by the Palmerston Plantation Co in 1880.

The ship was associated with a number of important ventures in the Northern Territory and with numerous people who made significant contributions to the development of Darwin (formerly Palmerston) and the Northern Territory. For example it in the early 1880s it was used as a supply vessel between Palmerston and a sugar plantation on the Daly River, and later carried mail and government officials to the Roper and McArthur Rivers.

In 1886 the vessel was declared unseaworthy and various companies later

used the ship as a quarantine hulk, taking on board Chinese passengers from Hong Kong.

By April 1888 the SS Ellengowan required frequent pumping to keep her afloat. She sank on 27 April 1888 whilst unoccupied and the owners, believing she was not worth raising, abandoned her.

The shipwreck was discovered in 1991 by local scuba diving enthusiasts and her identity was confirmed by maritime archaeologists from MAGNT in 1994.

The wreck is a popular dive site. To assist in its preservation, divers should anchor nearby, rather than on top of it.

Gazetted: 30th August 1995

World War II Shipwrecks

Six World War II Shipwrecks in Darwin Harbour have been placed on the NT Heritage Register. These wrecks are a direct result of the first Japanese air raid on Darwin and Australia on 19 February 1942. The shipwrecks include the British Motorist, Mauna Loa, USS Meigs, Neptuna, Zealandia and USS Peary.



Northern Territory Government
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment

Heritage Advisory Council

GPO Box 4198
Darwin NT 0801
Phone: (08) 8924 4143 Facsimile: (08) 8924 4053

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.lpe.nt.gov.au/heritage



SHIPWRECKS IN DARWIN HARBOUR

(continued)

The British Motorist was a 145m British tanker preparing to refuel the USS Peary when she was hit by two Japanese bombs, killing two of her crew. The Zealandia, a 6600 ton steel steamer, lost three of her crew when hit by two Japanese bombs that day.

The Neptuna was a 5952 ton coastal trader carrying 200 depth charges and other explosives and was tied up at Stokes Hill Wharf. Forty-five deaths and numerous injuries resulted from a massive explosion after bombs struck and ignited her engine room during the evacuation of the ship.

The USS Meigs, a 140m US transport vessel went down in flames after being struck by incendiary bombs and aerial torpedoes. Two of her crew were killed. Five crew members were killed when the 5436 ton US transport vessel USS Mauna Loa was set ablaze and sunk.

The USS Peary, a 100m US destroyer, was struck by at least five Japanese bombs that reportedly ignited her magazine, resulting in an explosion that killed at least 80 of her crew.

Although parts of these ships were subject to salvage in the late 1950s/early 1960s, the remains of these wrecks serve as memorials to those who lost their lives defending Darwin in the first bombing raid on Australian soil. The wrecks provide an insight into Australia's maritime history and are examples of the type of vessels and equipment used for defence in World War II.

Gazetted: 22nd February 1995



Northern Territory Government
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment

Heritage Advisory Council

GPO Box 4198
Darwin NT 0801
Phone: (08) 8924 4143 Facsimile: (08) 8924 4053

VISIT OUR WEBSITE:
www.lpe.nt.gov.au/heritage

