

Shipwrecks and Communities: Responses to Shipping Mishaps in Victoria, Australia

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Abstract

Shipwrecks have been conventionally examined archaeologically from various aspects (including ship design, cargoes and trade route identification, and have traditionally been regarded as tragic catastrophic events. Victorian shipwrecks occurred within a near-shore arena, often close to the coasts of small isolated maritime communities. These incidents potentially stimulate a range of reactive behavioural traits and perceptions from nearby residents, which have not been extensively explored, and may offer new understandings of the effects of shipping mishaps on frontier societies. A range of responses to altruistic/opportunistic reactions to maritime disasters is examined in a maritime cultural landscape context, along with new archaeological characterisations and material culture associated with the exploitation of shipping mishaps around Queenscliffe in Victoria, Australia. These observations present interesting new insights into understanding the maritime cultural landscapes of shipping mishaps and their subsequent archaeological signatures from social and cultural perspectives.

Keywords

Shipwrecks, strandings, subsistence salvage, maritime cultural landscapes, social aspects

Introduction

The Australian coastline offers a rich assortment of physical remains of shipwrecks, many of which after over 40 years of archaeological research, have been well documented in terms of technical construction, information on transport and trade links, cargoes carried etc. However, traditional approaches portray shipwrecks as episodic and singular events which signal the transformation point of these vessels from the systemic to the archaeological context, and consequently a terminus of their cultural utility, other than occasional reference to salvage activity as a site formation process (Gavin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999: 5). Nowhere is this more evident than in the often misused concept of a wreck as 'time capsule', suggesting a static terminus to the process (Dean *et al.* 1996: 32, 214; Gould 2000: 12–3; Muckelroy 1978: 56–7). In truth, many coastal 'shipping mishaps' (wrecks and strandings) occurred near to the shore and close to populations, with ongoing interactions with and effects upon sites and the neighbouring communities.

An aim of the authors' research is to demonstrate that the wreck event was just one stage in the transformation of a vessel to a derelict, and eventually into a place in one or several cultural landscapes. The incidence of a shipping mishap might signal the end

of a vessel's operational life, but could also stimulate new behavioural traits from nearby residents through its introduction as a new element into an area (Duncan 2006). In many cases these coastal groups were exposed to multiple low and high intensity shipping mishaps. The remains of these vessels or their cargoes might be utilised continuously long after the wrecking 'event' and play an active and cross-generational role as an ongoing economic resource. Similarly, the mechanisms established to cope with shipping mishaps and their prevention also influenced the formulation of a social and economic relationship both within and beyond the township.

This paper, summarising aspects of a wider and ongoing study (Duncan and Gibbs 2015), considers community perceptions, social and economic and other responses to shipping mishaps, and the possible archaeological signatures of those activities. We explore in our case study the characteristics of several resultant thematic maritime cultural landscapes in and around the township of Queenscliff, in the Borough of Queenscliffe, southern Port Phillip Bay in Victoria, Australia.¹ The study incorporates not only historical and archaeological sources, but also social data derived

¹ Queenscliff refers to the township; Queenscliffe refers to wider borough including Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale.



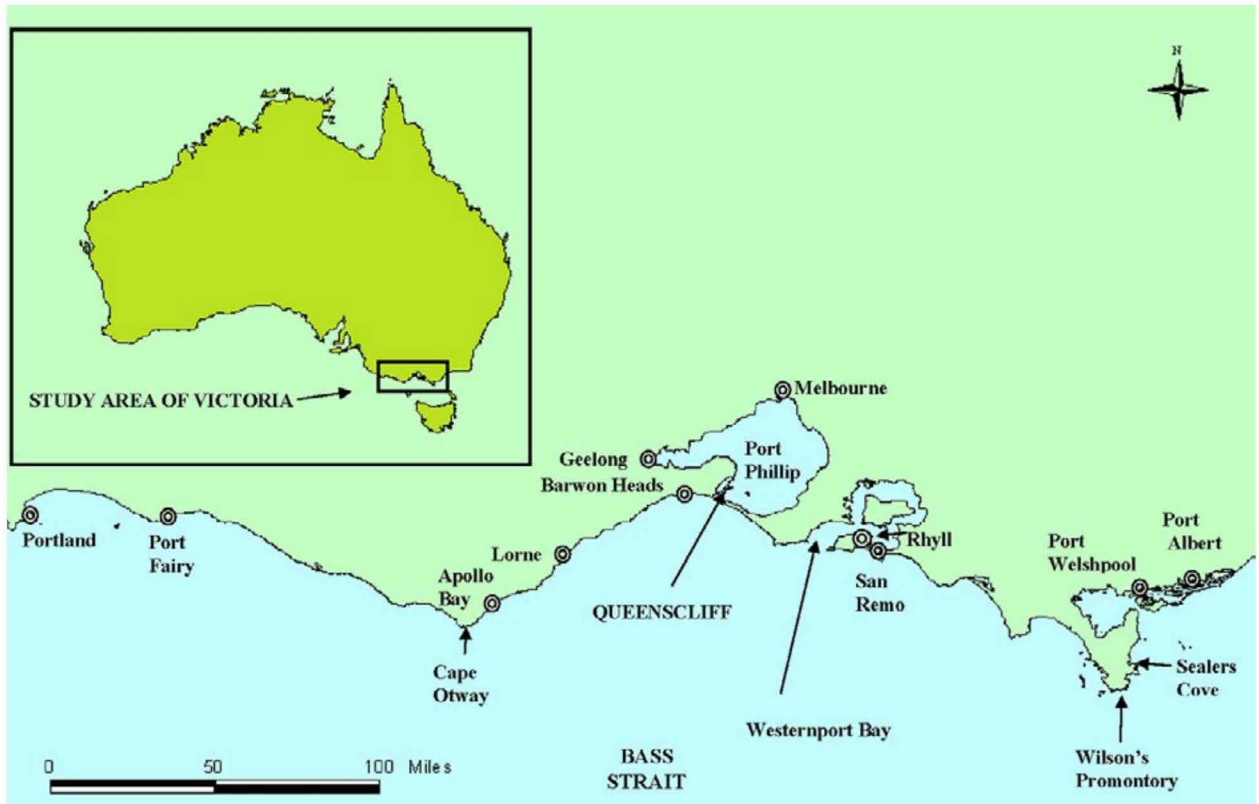


Figure 1. Map of study area.

from regional oral histories and local knowledge of archaeological sites.

Archaeological, Historical and Oral History Evidence

Shipping Mishaps at Port Phillip Heads

The many causes of catastrophic shipwrecking at Port Phillip Heads since 1840, whether from collision, running aground on sandbanks or subsequently destroyed by storms, are already well understood (Anderson 1997; Anderson and Cahir 2003; Arnott n.d.; Foster 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990; Heritage Victoria Shiplist Database; Loney n.d. a, n.d. b, 1971, 1981; Love 2006; Naylor n.d.; Williams and Serle 1963, 1964; Wealthy and Bugg 1995). Thanks to extensive archaeological research, the remains of over 95 known wreck sites have been identified within 10km of the Heads, both inside and outside the Bay (Anderson 1997a, Anderson and Cahir 2003; Bateson 1972: 149; Foster 1987–1990). However, in embracing the wider concept of shipping mishaps we have also turned our attention to the incidence and nature of strandings, where a vessel was inadvertently or deliberately run on to shore or a sandbank (the latter to prevent sinking or further damage) and subsequently refloated or towed away for salvage. It is apparent that deliberate stranding was a well-established historical practice as a means of saving vessels which had been damaged while

entering the Heads and was even a strategy mentioned in contemporary marine insurance manuals (Gow 1917; Hardy Ivamy 1874; Hopkins 1867). Such stranding sites were in effect ‘phantom shipwrecks’ often leaving limited or no structural remains, and have often been overlooked in strictly archaeological studies (Duncan 2000: 56; 2004; 2006: 218; Gibbs 2006: 10; Gibbs and McPhee 2004: 46–7). Research to date has identified well over 160 strandings in the study area from 1839 (e.g. see Bateson 1972: 93; Cole 1860; 1865 [as cited in Taylor in prep.]; Department of Ports and Harbours 1959; Loney 1971: 143; Miller 1860; Williams and Serle 1963; 1964), but this is thought to be only a fraction of incidents that occurred in this area. Historical accounts document numerous instances where large quantities of cargo and ballast were jettisoned or transferred in attempts to lighten and refloat vessels, providing rich opportunities for coastal communities to access these resources (Loney 1971; Love n.d.; 2001; 2006; Ferrier 2001–2004; Williams and Serle 1963; 1964). Only recently have archaeological studies been applied to both the surviving archaeological signatures of these incidents and the recovery processes of materials from them (Duncan 2000; 2004; 2006: 218–221).

A core element of the research on community responses to shipping mishaps has been an exploration of the balance between altruism and opportunism. The

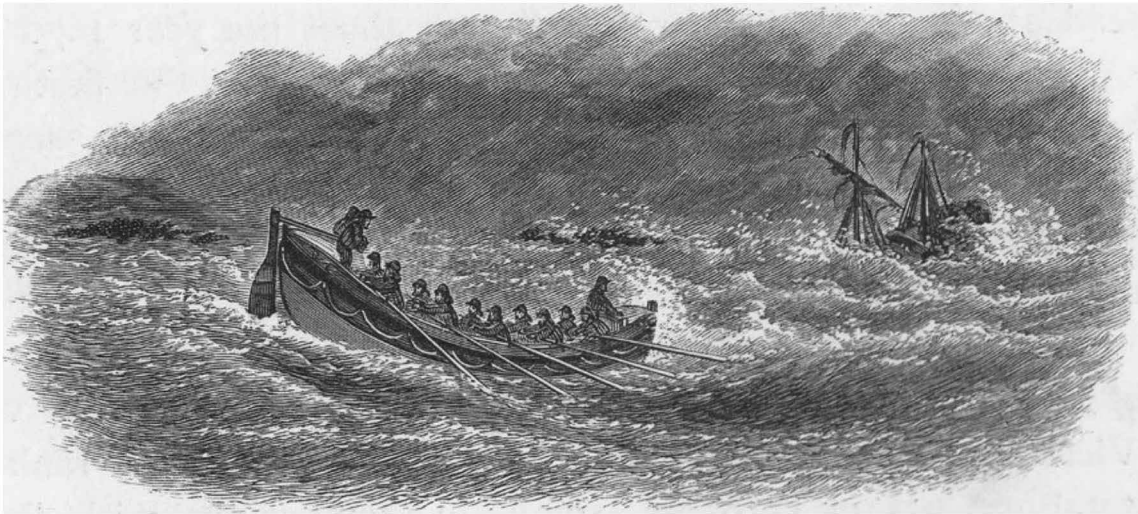


Figure 2. Queenscliff lifeboat attending the wreck of the *Asa Packer* in 1861 (Sutherland 1888: 443).

following sections summarise some features of both aspects, as revealed in the historical and archaeological records.

Altruism: Responses to Shipping Mishap Crises

In most instances, an incident would generate immediate altruistic responses to aid survivors, assist in saving lives and property, and prevent vessels becoming wrecks. Whenever shipping mishaps occurred around the Heads, a series of pre-planned and organised actions were instituted. The Queenscliff Pilots Service, which commenced in 1839, initially undertook the rescues, but by the 1850s a lifeboat service was established to coordinate shipwreck response, utilising a series of purpose-built lifeboats (Duncan 2006; Noble 1979: 8, 9, 42). When a ship was at risk the wreck bell was rung in town, alerting mariners to come to the lifeboat shed (Beazley 2001–2004; Mouchmore 2001–2004; Ferrier 2001–2004). The crew was then handpicked from experienced volunteer local seamen, predominantly fishermen (Boyd and Roddick 1996; Duncan 2006: 224–225; Fanning 1892b; McGrath n.d.). Despite the dangers, competition was often fierce to gain a seat in the lifeboat since the role offered various financial and other rewards, and it was reported that often the doors to the lifeboat shed would be locked to prevent more men getting into the boat once the places were filled (Kerr 1985: 73).

The lifeboat crew often risked their lives in gales to attend to distressed vessels (see Figure 2), often rowing up to 15km in wild gales to the wreck site, where they would anchor, and then drift back to the vessel to conduct rescues (Baillieu 1887; Dickson 1887). Rescues could include using a rocket launching device to pass an attached rope to the wreck, which, when tied to the wreck mast could be used to transfer survivors ashore

via a breaches buoy (Noble 1979; Syme 2001: 27). Military forces and other community members stationed at Queenscliff and Pt Nepean also often assisted with these rescues wherever they could (Duncan 2006: 221–31; Welch 1969: 43). The lifeboat crews were frequently lauded within and beyond the local community for their heroism and were regularly given awards from the government and those related to the rescued (Fanning 1892a; *Queenscliff Sentinel* 4/7/1891; 13/8/1897).

The wider Queenscliffe community also became known for its great philanthropy towards survivors. Local people often provided food, shelter and accommodation at their own expense, for victims had lost everything in the wrecking event (Cuzens 1912: 1; *Geelong Advertiser* 2/5/1853: 2; 3/5/1853: 2; 1/2/1872; Higgenbotham 2004; Kruithof 2002: 89; *Queenscliff Sentinel* 22/10/1892; 26/11/1892). Survivors were regularly assisted by charitable trusts and benefit concerts, and local widows were often supported by the community who even bought houses for them after the husbands had perished (Duncan 2006: 232–33; Mathers 2001; *Queenscliff Sentinel* 10/12/1892; 23/9/1893).

Opportunism—Exploitation Responses to Shipping Crises

The converse to altruist responses was the potential economic benefits of shipping mishaps and especially shipwreck for the community. In truth, and despite their heroism, the lifeboat crew did receive significant financial incentives, being paid the equivalent of a week's wages each time the lifeboat was launched (Duncan 2006: 235; *Queenscliff Sentinel* 4/7/1891; Werry 2003–2004). A place in the lifeboat crew therefore represented a valuable income. The fishermen who later formed the majority of the volunteer lifeboat crew were amongst the poorest members of the community, and they relied heavily on this extra income, which

probably explains the reported rushes to be on the lifeboat prior to launching. Further rewards were also available to the lifeboat crew who were paid monthly to undertake lifeboat practice duties (Boyd and Roddick 1996: 11). Local fishermen commented that there was a real economic dependence on the lifeboat duties as it supplemented their meagre incomes during the lean winter months when fish stocks were limited and the weather deteriorated (Ferrier 2001–2004).

An additional incentive for participation in rescue was the potential to claim salvage. Although later outlawed, the lifeboat crew and some government mariners and officials also regularly claimed personal salvage rights whilst attending to stranded vessels, leading one newspaper to label one government official's vessel as a 'wrecker' for its constant salvage claims (*Geelong Advertiser* 23/5/1851: 2; Duncan 2006: 234). Local mariners also regularly pursued salvage claims after towing stricken vessels, or otherwise pursued payment for lighterage services transferring goods from stricken vessels (see Figure 3), or for ferrying stranded passengers from immigrant ships. The economic importance of salvage to local mariners often resulted in cut-throat practices, such as when a towrope prematurely parted and the ship wrecked (*Craigieburn*) while negotiations were under way over salvage rights with the original towing vessel (Noble 1979: 57). Early pilots also regularly claimed salvage rights over stricken vessels they had been assisting, or where gold specie had been transferred to their boats for safe keeping, and in one case the pilot made enough profit to retire from the profession after only six weeks on the job (Draper 1900: 10; *Queenscliff Sentinel* 30/7/1910).

Many other ancillary opportunities were stimulated within the borough of Queenscliffe as a direct result of shipping mishaps, including boatbuilding and repair services; accommodation, victualling and transport of shipwreck survivors, tourism, the establishment of a local Customs Service, and even local carpenters who derived extra income as undertakers and coffin makers (Duncan 2006: 236; Springall 2001).

Smuggling, looting, and the establishment of customs services

When large shipwrecks occurred close to the coast, walls of debris up to 8ft high and one mile long were reported to have washed ashore (e.g. Duncan and Gibbs 2015: 166). By the mid-19th century, looting from shipwrecks had become a major source of income and goods for many Queenscliff households. Townspeople would often visit the scene of a wreck, with different intentions of either helping out or helping themselves (Ferrier 2001–2004). Numerous historical and oral accounts describe pillaging after survivors had been removed from a wreck, and how stricken vessels were



Figure 3. Tug *Blackboy* salvaging the *George Roper* (Ebsworth 1883a).



Figure 4. Looters at work after the *Craigieburn* shipwreck (Queenscliff Historical Society Collection).

quickly surrounded by bands of looters (*Ballarat Star* 5/1/1872; Shapter 2001), who hauled anything they could carry off into the bush (Figure 4). The day after the *Sussex* wrecked at Barwon Heads, 1500 people were encamped on the shore nearby waiting for the wreck to break up (Duncan 2006: 240–43; *Geelong Advertiser* 6/1/1872).

During the Gold Rush period of the 1850s, vessels often carried imported luxury goods destined for the richer members of the flourishing colony. When these large vessels became wrecked so close to shore, they often proved a huge temptation to the local community. Looting was often so bad that the road to Geelong (the

nearest large town) had to be closed to prevent the salvaged material from leaving the district for regional markets (Loney 1989: 42). Customs Officials and Police were regularly stationed on and nearby to wrecks to protect the vessels from the hordes of looters (Day 1992: 283, 292; *Geelong Advertiser* 18/1/1868: 3; 4/1/1872; see Figure 5). There also emerged new types of behaviour associated with looting activities.

Overindulgence: Many accounts also detail scenes of drunkenness at wreck sites, where if looters could not bring the booty home, they attempted to consume as much of it as possible at the location. When the ship *Sussex* went ashore on 31 December 1871 with a cargo of liquor, extensive local looting was reported, leading one maritime archaeologist to comment that it must have been the best New Years Eve they ever had (Staniforth 2004).

This overindulgent behaviour also took place at flotsam traps, where the mariners would binge on liquor that had been washed ashore out of sight of the authorities, and it was common knowledge locally that men would disappear for weeks at a time, drinking until the barrels were finished (Ferrier 2003). This led to traditions in the township that still exist today, where teenagers engage in 'Barrel Days' (drunken weekends consuming kegs of beer) on remote islands in Port Phillip Bay (Rogers 2003; Wilson 2003).

Burying loot: In attempts to circumvent discovery, looters would often hide contraband material close by the wreck by collapsing eroding sand dunes over the booty for recovery at a later date (*Argus* 10/12/1853; 29/11/1853; 10/12/1853; Dod 1931: 69, 97; Dunn 1949: 40; Irving-Dusting 2002–2006; Loney 1989: 37, 40; P Ferrier 2001–2004; Shapter 2001; Werry 2003–2004). Current eroding sand dunes around the foreshores of Pt Lonsdale attest to the ease with which this practice could be undertaken. Many caching areas around the district were reported where goods were either buried close to the wreck, or where debris was hidden where it washed ashore at flotsam traps. Barrels buried in dunes or elaborate trenches lined with corrugated iron were also used to hide tobacco and other loot (Brownhill 1990: 311; Duncan 2016: 244). Drunkenness leading to forgotten loot burial locations also raises the possibility of secreted hoard sites that may still exist in the area (Ferrier 2001–2004; Werry 2003–2004).

Contraband houses/public places: When the opportunity presented, looted goods were also buried closer to home in backyards, under nearby beaches or were stored in attics, cellars and behind skirting boards in houses to avoid detection by Customs officials (Irving-Dusting 2002–2006; Loney 1989: 43; Ferrier 2001–2004; Werry 2003–2004). This caching behaviour led to secondary professions within the community,



Figure 5. Police and Customs Officer guarding salvage operations at the wreck of *Glaneuse* 1886 (Sleep 1886).

whereby it was locally known that given individuals could supply certain types of materials, and these led to black-market trade networks within and around the town (Beames 2003). Public places were also allegedly favoured as sites to conceal contraband, possibly because direct blame could not be associated with any one person, or because the officials were also involved (Duncan 2006: 246; Kerr 1985: 73). There have been historical reports of buried relics discovered around the periphery of the Queenscliff township (Duncan 2006: 268; Hayden 1966: 15; Lawson 2004a; *Queenscliff Sentinel* 25/9/1909; Thompson n.d.: 8).

Arson: Local residents remained contemptuous of authorities trying to control looting, and there is at least one case where a Police and Customs tent was deliberately set on fire to distract officers from pilfering being undertaken further along the beach (Loney 1989: 18). In another instance it was alleged that arson was used to conceal evidence of looting and to prevent the removal of at least two twentieth century shipwrecks (Duncan 2006: 245). This observation may provide alternative interpretations of fire damage found on shipwrecks.

Despite formal salvage law, it appears that these behaviours reflected a common attitude that shipwrecks and associated debris represented a godsend from the sea, which every citizen had the right to exploit. Nor was looting restricted only to the poorer members of the town, with local merchants and the military also known to be involved (Dod 1931: 97). These attitudes persisted well into the twentieth century. When a steamer (*SS Corsair*) grounded on an uncharted rock at

the Heads in 1949, it was alleged that droves of mariners descended on the abandoned vessel to loot it.

Floating items from the superstructure and cargoes of shipping mishaps were also often spread by the seas, not just immediately after the initial wreck event but sometimes for decades afterwards (*Geelong Advertiser* 20/1/1868: 3, 30/5/1853: 2; *Ballarat Star* 5/1/1872). Mariners and residents developed traditional knowledge of the locations and conditions where this material would be available at flotsam traps, which were often located far away along the coast or inside the Bay. These flotsam traps frequently provided as much material as the wreck site itself; looters would anticipate availability of flotsam based on the prevailing weather conditions (Beasley 2001–2004; L Ferrier 2003; P. Ferrier 2001–2004; Simpkin n.d.; Thompson n.d.). Caching behaviour would also occur at these locations and beachcombing for flotsam and jetsam materials was a popular pastime in the community (Patrick 2004–2012). Seasonal coal availability at jetsam traps long after mishap events was a particularly valued commodity (due the degradation of local firewood sources which led to expensive local supplies). This led to the development of specific material culture in the form of coal rakes, designed for collecting this bounty from the seashore (Duncan 2006: 253; Grant 2001–2012; Patrick 2002–2012; Werry 2003–2004; see Figure 6). All classes of Queenscliffe society used this resource, and many of the poorer members of the community relied heavily of coal jetsam (Naylor 2004; Shapter 2001; Springall 2001). The Queenscliff community also evolved informal rules and etiquettes surrounding the collection of coal, where locals would mark their collected coal in a pile or in some other way to indicate that it had been claimed, and no-one else would then take it (Patrick 2004–2012).

Organised and Official Salvage

Official commercial salvage ventures proved to be a lucrative business for many entrepreneurs at Queenscliff (Fanning 1892c; *Geelong Advertiser* 20/1/1872; *Melbourne Morning Herald* 6/3/1849: 4; *Queenscliff Sentinel* 13/8/1887; 26/11/1892), who often paid substantial sums to purchase salvage rights (*Queenscliff Sentinel* 29/3/1890). Some wrecks realised hefty profits, particularly if they could be salvaged or removed before they broke up (*Geelong Advertiser* 1/2/1872). Organised salvage presented many other economic opportunities for the community as well as the salvors, as local mariners and fishermen were often hired to assist with salvage operations (Dod 1931: 97; Simpkin n.d.: 9). The salvaged shipwreck material was often sold cheaply within the local community (*Queenscliff Sentinel* 4/7/1891).

Salvaging led to the development of its own types of material culture and mechanisms used to transport



Figure 6. Harvesting jettisoned coal using coal rakes in Lonsdale Bight (Queenscliffe Historical Museum Collection).

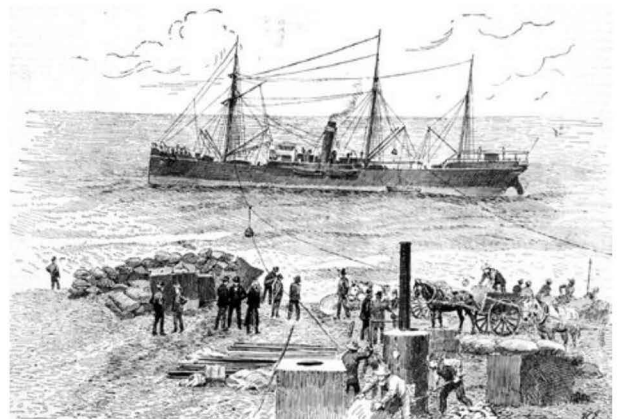


Figure 7. Salving the stranded vessel *Bancoora* (Syme 1891).

merchandise from the wreck. Salvors often established camps in the sand dunes close to the vessels, and used flying foxes made from ships masts, tramways powered by donkey boilers/ship's winch to heave cargo and the ship's equipment ashore and to the nearest road. Other salvage devices included watertight ship's iron tanks and corduroy roads for transporting cargo ashore, along with wooden sleds (Brownhill 1990: 311; Loney 1989: 45; see Figure 7). A number of known wreck sites in the area are associated with large blowouts in the sand dunes immediately adjacent, possibly resulting from the salvage activities. This hypothesis raises the possibility that currently undiscovered historically known shipwreck sites, which occurred onshore and were salvaged, may be pinpointed by searching for eroded areas in local sand dunes (Duncan 2006: 267).

Shipwrecks as other types of places

Shipping mishaps also created a range of other opportunities and situations, which influenced the



Figure 8. Tourists watch salvage operations at the wreck of the *George Roper* in 1883 (Ebsworth 1883b).

social and economic nature of Queenscliffe. The following are examples:

Shipwrecks as marine navigational markers and fishing resources: Many wreck sites became integral components of the fishing community's landscapes, and have been used by fishermen as seamarks, especially where structural components are visible above water (Mouchmore 2003–2004). The boilers of several wrecks in the area were even enshrined in official sailing directions (Ports and Harbours Branch 1959: 189, 191). Wreck sites also often provided new environments that encouraged the aggregation of fish life, particularly snapper, as their newly created topography resembled the rough ground favoured by this species. This observation is well known amongst commercial and recreational fishermen, who have also observed that the presence of seals in an area is often the indicator of large fish schools living on a submerged wreck (Ferrier 2001–2004).

Shipwrecks as tourist attractions: Shipwrecks also drew large crowds, which substantially increased the incomes of many tourism operators in the area (Cecil Anderson, pers. comm. 23/73/2004. Interview at Queenscliff Victoria; *Geelong Advertiser* 4/1/1872; Naylor 2004; *Queenscliff Sentinel* 15/2/1890; 22/2/1908). Indeed, shipwreck sites were often subsequently treated with a carnival atmosphere, which was a stark contrast to the solemnity of the initial emergency (*Geelong Advertiser* 4/1/1872). These forms of dark tourism actively contributed to the local tourist economy and are the subject of further research elsewhere (see Gibbs and Duncan 2014; see Figure 8).

Shipwrecks as picnic, recreational playgrounds and places: After the initial disaster event, shipwrecks usually became integrated into the community as new

places. Some wrecks on the foreshore became the focus for sightseeing on Sunday picnics, and stranded vessels and old hulks often provided new playgrounds for local children (Dod 1931: 66; Dunn 1949: 40; Mills 2002; Mouchmore 2003; R. Beames 2003). Some shipping mishaps also worked their way into local toponymy, being recalled through the naming of places (especially for submerged hazards), and some townships derived their names from the initial meeting places associated with beached wrecks (Rogers 1960: 50).

Discussion

Traditional practice/transported landscapes associated with shipping mishaps

The numerous incidences of shipping mishaps in the study area have produced many observations of the salvation/salvage behaviour. They have similarities in many other nineteenth-century maritime communities worldwide where salvage/plunder from shipwrecks was often seen as an inalienable right, especially where local natural resources were scarce (e.g. Bathurst 2000; 2006; Evans 1957: 232; Goldsmith Carter 1945: 14–5; Larn and Carter 1973; Malster 1974; Rönnby 1998; Souza 1998: 25–7; Stevenson 1912: 17; Thoreau 1865: 4, 5, 29, 34; Treanor, 1904: 57, 102; US Dept of Commerce *et al.* 1999). It is therefore suggested that the exploitation of shipping mishap sites is not a new phenomenon that developed locally, but may actually represent the transportation of a suite of traditional routine seasonal practices that were previously widely undertaken in various ancestral homelands. These activities may be a continuation of a traditional communal lifestyle that may be centuries old that have simply been applied to a new setting.

Furthermore, where local divers demonstrate lengthy ancestral ties to this area, their continued collection of shipwreck material may (in light of this study) be alternatively viewed as a traditional practice (rather than souvenir hunting). It is clear that wrecks have been continually exploited as a resource in Queenscliff for almost 150 years, and only the environmental medium of access has changed from above to below water over time. This perspective offers interesting new interpretations of community values for current heritage management of shipwreck sites and artefacts.

Shipping mishaps as a social phenomenon

Many of the individual maritime trades within the community maintained their distance from one another, and this was influenced by social status and economic differences. However, the occurrence of a shipping disaster often led sections of the community to interact and come together sometimes for a common cause. A whole range of community groups

were involved with the shipwrecks through rescue efforts, organised or illegal salvage, beachcombing and recreational activities, and these overlapped normally accepted class divisions to create new temporary social groups that disbanded after the wrecking event (see Duncan 2006; Duncan and Gibbs 2015).

Perhaps the most pronounced transmutation was the elevation of the fishermen from the lowest social strata (Duncan 2011) to local heroes as lifeboat men, who shared a common cause with the lighthouse service and military. Furthermore, this same social group was commonly vilified as the perpetrators of pillaging wrecked vessels. Shipwrecks, therefore, presented an interesting dichotomy, which transmogrified fishers to temporarily become a class of respected lifeboat men whilst later reinforcing the class-conscious status quo through their popular identification as looters. It is clear that the occurrence of shipwrecks led to multiple overlapping landscapes within the Queenscliff society that cross-cut the normal social and hierarchical boundaries, and therefore further influenced the structuring of the community both cognitively and physically (see Duncan 2006).

Perhaps less well recognised is the suite of sites associated with shipping mishaps that represent critical elements for constructing landscapes that are based around economic resources for a broad section of the Queenscliff community. Shipping mishaps created new places in the landscape as they became identified as new resource areas. The event of a shipping mishap not only altered existing local cultural landscapes through the introduction of a new physical wreck site, but also through the perceived generation of economic zones associated with new foraging places.

These new opportunities for scavenging were clearly recognised as part of the renewable resource, which became available and/or was replenished from subsequent shipwrecks and strandings. It has been shown that the community has developed new technology, both to harvest these new resources and to hide them, which in turn is reflected in the recognition of these new landscape places and their associated innovative material culture. Therefore, in areas where wrecks are a common and semi-predictable event, the use of these secondary sites and the associated harvesting tools may further be considered to be the archaeological signatures of those events.

Subsistence Salvage

This brief glimpse has shown that shipping mishaps brought new economic zones into the community landscape. If we widen the scope of shipwreck research to include these new perspectives of secondary sites, then this allows a detailed understanding of stranding

and/or flotsam/jetsam sites associated with shipping mishaps to also be considered. This enables further analysis of a whole new set of other behaviour that is currently less well recognised, but also defines community, and in some cases distinguishes groups within the community (e.g. fishers and Customs men). Suddenly these wreck sites become resource areas of hunter/gatherer behaviour, with a whole set of actions/archaeological signatures that help define Queenscliff itself. In terms of what happens after the shipwreck event, these behaviours go on continuously, but they require replenishment as new shipping mishaps consistently occur in the same areas.

Although the incidence of these bounties did not offer the reliability on which to base a living, they did supply many people with a financial windfall to tide them through lean times (especially in the winter). This salvage was therefore not only an opportunistic behavioural trait of many Queenscliff inhabitants, but also a consistently routine event which many townsfolk depended upon and planned for. These events have strong analogies to the seasonal availability of fish species, and tourists in the area, where the seasonality of the resource is known, but the volume and reliability of the occurrence varies with the weather and the other external factors.

This dependence on shipping mishaps to supplement the incomes of the lower socio-economic classes might be termed 'subsistence salvage', where, even though the events are sporadic and random, they are also predictable in that it was likely that they would eventually occur again over time.

This highlights the duality of shipping tragedies, where both certainty and uncertainty co-exist, and thus generate a plethora of diverse and often conflicting behaviours. The certainty of the event has generated a suite of responsive organised routines and procedures designed to mitigate and minimise the damage caused by a shipwreck, which are centred on altruistic ideals. Conversely, the uncertainty of *when* the event will occur generates an opportunistic response to it, where frantic, often over-indulgent behaviour is undertaken in a race against time to secure the resource before it is reclaimed by the elements and/or the authorities. Furthermore, the unpredictable event then generates a relatively reliable seasonal resource (through the replenishment of flotsam and jetsam traps).

Conclusion: shipping mishaps and cultural landscape construction

Shipwrecks have modified and re-stratified the landscapes of the Queenscliff region affecting the social structure of the local community not only through the implementation of altruistic ideals (and subsequent



practices), but also through the introduction of profitable economic opportunities that have at once united and yet polarised often disparate sections of the community.

Shipping mishaps have drawn out both the best and worst ideals of the community, which have produced distinct archaeological signatures and material culture beyond the locality of the wrecking incident itself. Shipwrecks and strandings create (and are systemic components of) cultural landscapes through their generation of idealistic virtues of heroism and altruism, profit and opportunism, and memorialisation of events, and through the subsequent creation of permanent, though often (physically) unseen places in the physical world.

It has been further suggested that these practices may have been transported to the Queenscliff area as a result of cultural diffusion initially associated with increased immigration destined for the Victorian Gold Rush, which curiously also provided favourable conditions for their evolution in the new colony through an increase in shipping and hence subsequent shipwreck numbers. As such, the transferal of traditional practices from ancestral homelands overseas to Victoria represents a form of transported landscapes.

The investigation of local oral histories and folklore, documentary and archaeological data sources has revealed that far from being isolated, unrelated and opportunistic events, there was a seasonal reliance on shipwrecks and strandings as integral components of the local/regional/state economic communities. Both historical and potential archaeological remnants of practices associated with looting have been highlighted, and shipping mishaps have been shown to be pervasive elements of all facets of Queenscliff culture and essential components which continue to shape (and reshape) the cognitive and physical cultural landscapes of Port Phillip Bay. Finally, shipwrecks have been illustrated as both an event and a place of resource procurement, which cross-cut the social boundaries normally extant in nineteenth-century Australian culture.

These observations have potential utility for examining shipping mishap events and sites worldwide. In conclusion, this ongoing study has shown that shipwrecks, therefore, do not only represent doomed ships associated with an isolated event, but also in a fundamental way create dynamic new landscapes and places in the regions where they occur. This is a fresh way to look at the coastal zone, where shipping mishaps generate hope and profit for the local population. Therefore, in the mindset of the Queenscliff community, shipping mishaps not necessarily only indicate a dangerous coast, but also contributed to a coast of opportunity.

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