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**Duncan, Brad G. (2006) *The maritime archaeology and maritime cultural landscapes of Queenscliffe: a nineteenth century Australian coastal community*. PhD thesis, James Cook University.**

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...the experienced hunter is the knowledgeable hunter. He can tell you things from subtle indications that you or I, unskilled in the hunters art, might not even notice. Called upon to replicate this knowledge, he may do so in a form that reappears... as a corpus of myths and stories...But we should resist the temptation to assume that since stories are stories they are, in some sense, unreal or untrue, for this is to suppose that the only real reality, or true truth, is one in which we, as living, experiencing beings, can have no part at all. Telling a story is not like weaving a tapestry to cover up the world, it is rather a way of guiding the attention of listeners or readers into it. A person who can “tell” is one who is perceptually attuned to picking up information in the environment that others, less skilled in the tasks of perception, might miss, and the teller, in rendering his knowledge explicit, conducts the attention of his audience along the same paths as his own. (Ingold 1993: 153)

## Chapter Six: Fishing Community Landscapes

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### 1) Introduction

Fishers in many global cultures have demonstrated an awareness of seasonal climatic trends and resource availability that have led to deeper understandings of, and close relationships to the sea and its creatures. These insights have often led to the development of distinctive landscapes that are entrenched in knowledge networks tied to the sea and land through folklore, oral histories and toponymy, and which were physically linked to a variety of terrestrial and maritime sites. Western fishing landscapes were therefore structured differently to those of many other social groups, as they regularly relied more on inherited familial knowledge to interpret the landscape, a notion which has many parallels in indigenous maritime societies. Restricted access to this knowledge further limited any potential understanding of the meaning of these landscapes to the fishers themselves, which was then used to reinforce their identity and support their territorial boundaries with other cultural groups, and also affected the social fabric of those fisher cultures themselves.

As discussed previously, Ingold (1993:153) has highlighted the role played by narratives in landscape studies, and advocated that informal knowledge networks via stories and myths offer potential insights into historical cultural behavioural traits and natural environmental observations that may (or may not) be subsequently expressed in material remains observed in the archaeological record. In particular, he demonstrated that hunting knowledge was often only retained through tales and folklore, and that experienced hunters were perceptually attuned to picking up information in the environment that other less skilled hunters might miss. With this in mind, the following observations were recorded of another hunter/gatherer group, the Queenscliff fishers, from both the

past and present. In order to understand the culture and depth of structure of the fishing industry, numerous fishers were interviewed within the community, who evidenced overlap between the fishing and other maritime sub-groups, providing valuable insights into the community as a whole. It will become evident throughout this chapter that oral histories are a central data source for accessing and understanding fishing landscapes, as much of this information is never written down or recorded historically.

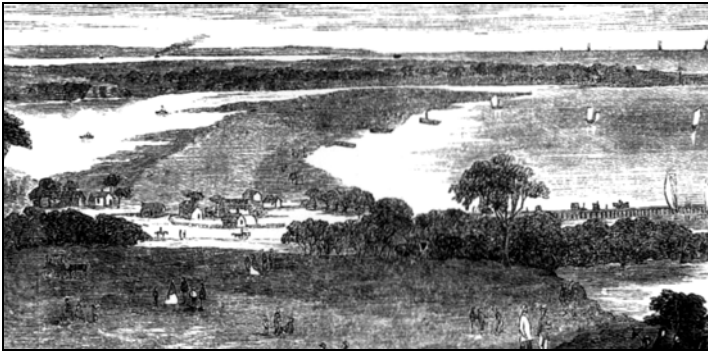
In this chapter I will investigate the maritime worlds particular to the fishing community of Queenscliff to demonstrate the diversity and range of cultural landscapes that form part of the fishing culture, and the depth to which the concept can be explored. Aspects of fishing customs will be examined to demonstrate the types of activities undertaken, how actual fishing practices operated, and consider the differentiation of spaces and places used by fishers to explore the notion of multivalent fishing landscapes. This will be contrasted with traditional knowledge and belief systems to investigate the scope of sources available for understanding fishing practice, and how they might ethno-archaeologically inform of their subsequent and/or potential archaeological signatures. The close relationship of fishers to the environment will be explored in further detail to demonstrate the level of hereditary knowledge that is embedded within these local landscapes in the form of folklore that is used to predict seasonal resource availability.

It will be demonstrated that members of the fishing community relied heavily on other means to supplement their fishing incomes, and these economic sources will be briefly examined to show the range and unexpected diversity of resources that were essential components of fishers' landscapes. Recreational pursuits and relaxation areas were also shaped by fishing culture, and are therefore important landscape indicators. The examination of these aspects will further demonstrate the interconnectedness and continuity of the land and sea within the fishing world. The fishing community will be explored from a gender perspective to demonstrate how the same geographic landscape was experienced differently by members of the opposite sex.

## **2) Historical Overview of the Queenscliffe Fishing Industry**

The earliest known non-Indigenous fishing activities conducted at Shortland's Bluff were undertaken by a professional wrecker, William Bailey, who fished around Pt Lonsdale using an open boat salvaged off the beach (Simpkin n.d.:8). The early fishing industry at Queenscliff and St Leonards (along the creek) was dominated by Chinese fishermen who were already operating in this

area when European fishermen first appeared on the scene in the early 1860s (Anon. 1853 [updated 1864] [plan]; Fanning 1893; Kerr 1985:69; Wynd 1988:115), and the community increased markedly after a bumper season in 1862 (Simpkin n.d.:9). Under conditions of their fishing licences, fishermen were entitled to camp on Crown Land which they leased for £1 per year [HM; LID]. Within a few years a small community had evolved at the southern extremity of the Queenscliff Bar peninsula (known as Chinaman's Point), and the area was further developed with the arrival of their numerous European counterparts (Figure 6.1). Dried and later fresh fish were an essential commodity for the early colony, especially to provide the increased demand at the goldfields. The Queenscliff Chinese fishermen operated a fish smoker to produce dried fish and squid for the inland mining communities, and remained in the industry until at least 1875 (GA 20/2/1875; Cuzens 1912:5).



**Figure 6. 1: Fishermen's Flat 1866, showing huts, boats careening on the Chinaman's Pt Spit beach, and Queenscliff Pier on right (Image: Albert Cooke, 25/4/1866, SLV Collection).**



**Figure 6. 2: Fishers cottages on the Fishermen's Flat 1907 (Image a02774, SLV Collection).**

European Queenscliff fishermen originally inhabited the swampy region at the northern end of the town near the current railway station in the early 1860s (which was previously home to the local

Indigenous community). Later allotments were leased in the area now known as the Fishermen's Flat by 1863 which thereafter became the hub of the Queenscliff fishing community (Cox 1863 [plan]; Dod 1931:80; Gee, 1971:5 Beavis and Raison 1984:iii - see Figure 6.2).

### **3) Fishing Environments and Types of Fishing**

Fishermen exploited the large schools of pelagic fish that seasonally frequented the area (QS 10/12/1892). They formed the principle economic catches for Port Phillip fishermen (and many other coastal towns around the state), and are inextricably entwined with the history of Queenscliff and the fishing community. Intimate understandings of the habits of these species was an essential component of every local fisherman's world, and to investigate how the fishing community landscape operated, it is essential to first understand how fishermen encoded information about these fish within their traditional knowledge and belief systems.

Three main types of fishing were common in the Queenscliff area including barracouta (known locally as couta), snapper and crayfish, which involved the use of fishing lines, nets and pots, respectively. Other fish species were also exploited, and these will also be addressed in lesser detail (see Appendix E-1 for details of economic fish species). Fishermen usually specialised in one form, but not necessarily to the exclusion of the others, and sometimes were engaged in all three. These fish species were migratory and territorial, and to harvest them required a detailed knowledge of their seasonal availability, feeding localities and habits. Catching fish required a familiarity of all these factors; you could not just go out fishing, you had to be prepared to catch a certain type of fish: "Old man Zanoni would say 'let's go fishing! What would you like to catch?' "[PF]. These various fisheries led to differential fishing landscapes within the community based on species exploitation, and are therefore worthy of further consideration.

#### ***A) Net Fishing***

Net fishing was usually undertaken in shallow areas across sand or mud banks, often close to the shoreline (e.g. Lonsdale and Queenscliff Bights, Swan Spit, Swan Bay and around Swan Island, Duck Island and Mud Islands). Many types of fish species were taken using this method, including eel, ling, garfish, mullet, salmon, snapper and whiting. Boats used in this profession usually required a tapered stern to set and haul the net, whereas line fishermen usually preferred a transom stern to allow more fishers to access the school, although as fishermen were sometimes engaged in

both netting and line fishing, square (transom) stern vessels were sometimes used. Early boats were quite small, being only about 9ft long (Simpkin n.d.:9).

Net fishermen worked certain areas dependent on fish availability and weather:

Net fishermen worked from Swan Island to the St Leonards foreshore for garfish. It was shallow ground. There were only a couple of net fishermen working there. They used to fish there up to Anzac Day from about September in spring. The westerlies and south west gales stopped fishing after then. [JB]

Netting was hard work, and required fishermen to row to the catch area and set the net, then haul in the catch and row back again:

We used to fish all the way up the West Channel from the Swan Spit to the West Channel Light. We also fished the South Channel all the way from the Rip down as far as the South Channel Light. We netted over there [Mud Islands] in an 18 ft couta boat. We would row over there in the afternoon and worked over there in the night, and then we would come home in the daylight. [CS]

Net fishing entailed rowing a buoyed (top) and weighted (bottom) net around a school of fish, which was then closed. Fish were taken from the net as it was hauled aboard, and as the boats were often small to access shallow waters (around 18 ft long [CS]), the net was piled onto the back of the boat as it was emptied (Figure 6.3). Net fishers would often ground bait (lay down bait to attract fish) an area in the days preceding netting to attract fish (which was effective for up to a week afterwards [AH]), and would often corral excess fish catches close to shore:

They once got over 100 salmon in one hit, and they towed the fish into the area east of Dutchies Island and staked it out while they waited for the price of fish to go up. They dragged the nets along with the boats. Jack Gaines and Colin Shapter were walking in front of the net checking the bottom for snags. That was about 1950s. They drove in big stakes to make a corral and kept the fish there until the market price increased. [AH]

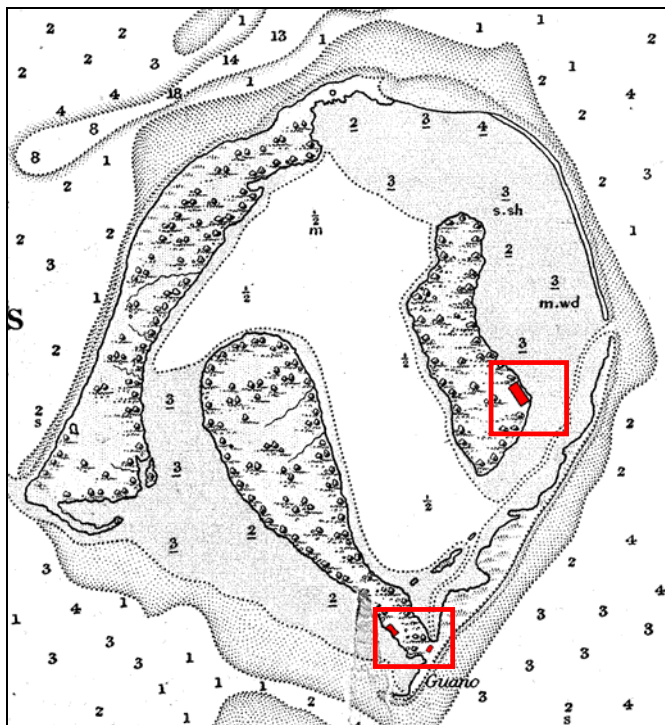


Figure 6. 3: Net fishermen at St Leonards c. 1906 (In Wynd 1988 - Photo: J. Rigby, St Leonards).



The process was slightly different in Swan Bay, where long nets were deployed along a large area, and the fish would be caught when they swam into the net [CS]. Migratory snapper were also caught in the channels by some fishermen.

The extensive sand banks surrounding the Mud Islands presented an ideal net fishery. Up to five fishing families predominantly engaged in netting lived at the islands from at least 1884 to 1920s, and included the Culliver, Fitzsimmons, Lee, McLeod and Stevens families, some of whom based their operations there for many years. They launched their boats off the beach, and their driftwood shacks were located at the northwest and south east corners of the islands (see Ross 1859-60, [updated 1868] - Figure 6.4), with a small pier erected on the eastern island which was later used by guano miners. Although an oyster lease was granted along the northern edge of the islands in 1879 (Ross 1859-60 [updated 1880]; Anonymous, c.1884 [plans]), it is unclear if this resource was ever exploited commercially, and it is possible that the fishers here leased this resource for its potential use as bait or to supply a commercial market (see discussion below).



**Figure 6. 4: Location of structures/occupation areas at Mud Islands in 1868 (After Ross 1859-60, [updated 1868]).**

Although Swan Bay was exploited by net fishermen, catches in this region had been heavily regulated since the fishery was recognised as an early spawning hatchery (QS 24/9/ 1892,

24/10/1892, 7/4/1894). By 1896, all forms of trammels and nets were declared illegal in Swan Bay to conserve the hatchery, which was being overexploited by non-local fishermen (QS 6/6/1896, 4/7/1896). This proved unpopular with local fishers, who depended upon the fishery when bad weather prevented fishing elsewhere in the Bay (QS 11/7/1896, 1/8/1896), and resulted in occasional illegal fishing in the area:

There was a lot of poaching in Swan Bay, mainly for garfish using a seine net. They would put in a net with a stick and rope, and it took three hours to do a shot. Each shot had one mile of line, and you could do three shots in one night. You would put out 70-80 fathoms of nets, and put a peg into the mud. You would get black flathead, flounder and ling, and get about 30 shillings a box. [CS]

Net fishing required a large capital investment, so care was often taken to protect the nets. Many net boats were anchored in Swan Bay (close to the fishery), or in Stingaree Bay (Swan Island), and this often presented problems due to the abundance of rats that inhabited the area:

We had a net boat in Stingaree Bight. There were rats everywhere there, and we had to keep a rabbit trap on the step boat to catch the rats, to stop them eating the nets. [CS]

## ***B) Line Fishing***

Two types of migratory fish, couta and snapper, were targeted as the main economic species at Queenscliff. Although couta formed the principle economic catch, snapper also presented a relatively predictable income. Some line fishermen specialized in catching one fish type, but usually exploited both at various times dependent on weather and availability.

### **I) Barracouta (Couta)**

Couta were caught at daybreak when the fish began biting [HM]. These aggressive pelagic fish fed on krill, baitfish and whitebait and would strike at anything that moved, including fishers fingers [CS]. Over time, fishers developed a traditional knowledge of this species, along with their seasonal availability, feeding habits and fishing areas to exploit at any given type of year:

...the couta were running in the third week of September, regular as clockwork. It was the second week in San Remo. Big patches of them would be left behind, which we would catch. The couta were inshore along the 20 fathom bank and under as far as Cape Schank and west to Apollo Bay. [HM]

Fishermen observed that couta fed around dawn, but sank down to deeper water as daylight increased [HM]. This collective knowledge was translated into a suite of material culture, and traditional practices that dictated the fishermen's daily lives.



In the early days of the industry, abundant couta schools were available inside the Bay. Fishermen used a characteristic type of vessel known locally as a “couta boat” (around 18-21 ft), which had evolved from double ended net boats of Melbourne, and incorporated a wide transom to allow up to three fishers to troll at a time. However, when couta stocks reduced in The Bay over time, fishers began exploiting fish stocks in the more boisterous oceanic waters of Bass Strait. These later couta boat designs were modified to incorporate increased length (average 26 ft), beam and draught, and were often fitted with a centreplate for stability and to be able to negotiate bar entrances (Kerr 1985; [CS; HM]).

Vessels of the later period faced the tidal restrictions associated with negotiating the treacherous waters of The Rip. A popular phrase amongst couta fishermen was “out with the ebb and in with the flood” which described the reliance of the tides to transit through the Rip. Couta fishermen would leave in the dark to get to the couta grounds by dawn:

We used to go over [to Swan Island] to get the boats after bad weather in the dark to catch the fish. The couta bite at the beginning of daylight and sometimes bite through. [HM]

Finding couta was time consuming, and fishermen sometimes ranged up to 40 miles out to sea looking for fish when the season was poor (QS 30/6/1894). [CS] recalled: “We used to go down as far as Black Rock looking for couta. One day we rowed all the way back from Barwon Heads [approx 20 km away] with a boat full of couta”. Fishermen were heavily reliant on one another to find couta schools: “You need a lot of boats out when looking for the couta. It’s a big ocean, too big for just one boat to find them” [BM]. Fishermen also depended on pilots or other mariners to pinpoint schooling couta shoals that had been observed by passing shipping [JP]. Other types of alternative fish finding techniques are outlined further below.

Fishermen used several trolling lures towed behind the boat until a school struck [LF]. The original lures consisted of a wire trace with a hook stuck through a piece of white leather hide or sheepskin which resembled a small baitfish when towed through the water (Raison 1987:4; [HM; PF]). The boat was then turned and sailed through the school until the catch rate decreased, and then the vessel was tacked back to again intercept the school, which were sometime several miles long (QS 10/12/1892). When engines were later introduced to couta boats, the tiller was simply turned in a lock to bring the vessel in a large circular sweep through the fish shoals. As the fish sank deeper as daylight increased, weighted hooks were used to catch the first fish, which was then drawn to the surface and tethered to attract the rest of the school [HM; PF]:

...fishermen rigged for trolling would hit a patch of fish, drop their lead lines and sail in a circle round the patch, and throw out whitebait and burley to attract the fish and get them biting. [HM]

When a fish struck the lure, it was hauled in and swung under the arm to remove the hook before dropping it into a fish box [CS], and a leather insert was placed in that armpit of the weatherproof jackets worn by the fishers to prevent abrasion. Later developments saw a board fitted forward of the transom, called a hooking board [LID; PF], along with barbless hooks attached to a timber peg called a toggle, where the fish was flicked over the board to release the hook ([HM; LF] in Kerr 2003b).

Many Queenscliff based fishermen on average rowed or sailed up to five miles offshore, and up to 20 miles along the coast to Black Rock in the west and Cape Schank in the east [CS; HM; LF]. Although stocks of these fish were still occasionally found inside The Bay in the twentieth century (which was a location preferred by the fishermen as the fish were easier to find and fishing was then not dictated by the tides), they were not regularly available there [HM; LF]. Coota were usually gutted on the trip back to port, to avoid attracting sharks to the anchorages [CS; HM; PF]. Sheep shears blades which had been converted to knives were used for this process, as they retained their sharpness enabling the entire catch at one time without the need for re-honing [HM; LID; PF].

## II) Snapper

Snapper and whiting were often exploited by fishermen when coota were not in season [HM]. Snapper are migratory bottom feeding fish that were usually caught with a handline close to the edge of deep water channels. Schools would enter The Bay at particular seasons and small shoals of fish would trail away from the main school to inhabit reefs located along the way [HM; LID]:

Snapper graze like sheep. You've gotta go find them. They come in patterns along the coast... from the west in spring along the Victorian coast as a patch. As the patch goes past, some will fill a reef, and the main school keeps going on to fill the Bay [Port Phillip]. When the season is over, the patch move down the bay again and meet up with their mates on the way down. Your catch also depended on what the feed's like on the ground. If there's good feed ... then they're hard to catch. If there's no feed then they're easy to catch. [BM]

These sites were all fished on the ebb tide when the bottom was stirred up. Most were located over rocky or "spongy" (soft sponge/corals) ground [HM; JB; PF], and a detailed local knowledge of underwater topography was necessary to find them. These concentrations of fish stocks were known locally as "patches", which were named after either (aspects of) the fishermen who found

them, their geographical location, or after historical events that took place there [HM; JB]. For instance, on one occasion the boat of a fisherman who was possessive of “his” patch (and who would try to hide caught fish to conceal its location [PF]) was boarded by another fisher and a fight ensued. This patch was named after the shear blade knives that were used “like swordsmen having a go at one another” [JB]. Other colloquial names which identified snapper fishing locations around Port Phillip Bay are shown in Table 6.1.

<b>Name</b>	<b>Where</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Toponymy</b>
<b>Boarding House Patch</b>	South of current creek mouth, 300-400 yards offshore	[JB; HM]	Named after lead mark taken from a boarding house (Queenscliff tower flagpole and flagpole on Baths)
<b>Ferriers Ground</b>	Just south of Pilots Pier and out a bit, near where the pilot boats moored	[JB; HM]	Patch discovered by Frank Ferrier
<b>Goat Patch</b>	Unspecified	[JB]	Discovered by Thwaites, who kept goats - patch named after him
<b>North Roughup</b>	End of the West Channel off the lighthouse near the bottom of the West Channel	[JB]	Named to describe the rough water/ bottom type
<b>South Roughup</b>	Near the West and South Channels join up off the lighthouse	[JB]	Named to describe the rough water/bottom type
<b>Shear Blade Patch</b>	Near West Channel at Queenscliff	[JB]	Sibber Shapter had claimed unofficial ownership of this area, and used to think it was his own. There used to be fights over the area, where fishermen threw sinkers and rotten bait at each other. On one occasion, one fisherman boarded another's boat, and a fight ensued. The site was named after the shears that fishermen used to gut the fish with, which were used like swords during the fight
<b>West Channel Patch</b>	West Channel (unspecified)	[JB; HM; PF]	Named after its location in the West Channel

**Table 6.1: Snapper Patches Fishing Grounds in Port Phillip**

Most significantly, each patch was defined by a set of informal shoreward transit marks which were lined up to guide vessels to the area. [JB] recounted:

The marks for the Boarding House Patch were the tower on the Queenscliff Hotel over the baths tower. They both had flagpoles on them which they used to line up. Another mark was the Swan Island beacon and a tree at the Golf Links. All the patches were located using marks onshore. They might use the lighthouse over the Norfolk pine for one mark, and the end of Swan Island open to St Leonards for the other. Each patch had its own marks to get there, but most of the marks are gone now, as there are too many other trees in the way to see them, or they have been cut down. You might find them on old charts, but you can't see them from the sea [JB]

Similar observations were made for nearby Westernport Bay, where pine trees (which were purposely planted) and other transit markers formerly used to locate fishing locations were being removed, leading to the loss of knowledge of many of the old fishing locations [BM]. The use of informal shore-based lead marks demonstrates that many terrestrial landmarks had social and economic value for the fishing community, a fact that is not normally considered when assessing community heritage values.

Snapper rigs varied dependent on the seabed composition. If the seafloor was comparatively clean and free of obstructions, then a running sinker was used, and if not, then multiple hooks were often rigged to a fixed sinker (Wedlick 1965:26 - see Figure 6.5). Snapper sinkers varied in weight dependent on the water depth and strength of the tidal stream (often weighing several pounds), and were sometimes similar in shape to hydrographic surveying lead line weights [LID; PF]. Mussels were often crushed and thrown overboard (either directly into the water or in a tethered sugar bag) as groundbait to attract the fish to under the boat ([HM]; Wedlick 1965:33).

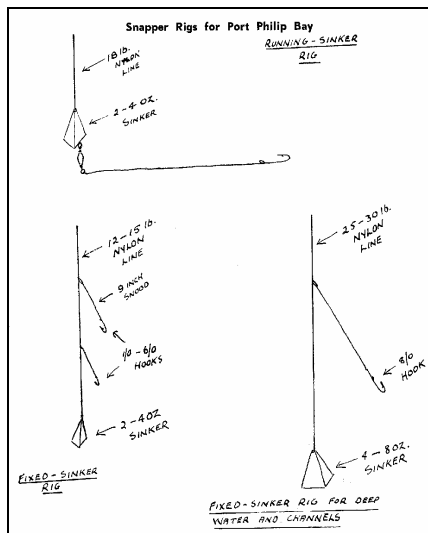


Figure 6. 5: Examples of Snapper Fishing Rigs used in Port Phillip Bay (In Wedlick 1965:26).

Despite the incident described above, when several fishers were specifically questioned about the existence of territorial areas or patches that were owned by individual fishermen, all indicated that this practice did not exist in this area. However, all the respondents indicated that there was an informal (though obligatory) fishing etiquette that ensured everyone was given an equal opportunity of catching snapper. Once the first fisherman had arrived on the scene where fish were biting, any later arrivals were expected to line up their boats across the channel so that no one fisherman was any closer to the channel/fish shoal than anyone else:

The boats would form up in a line when snappering. No boat was allowed to slack back on the line. People would “‘Hoy out’ if you slacked back. The boats would line up and you would throw horse from the lead to the hooks. You would throw back as far as you could to get to the school. [HM]

Fishermen would often throw rotten bait and sometimes sinkers at each other if they thought another had breached informal fishing etiquette [PF], and the following incident (from the 1960s) exemplified the fishing community’s attitude towards anyone who violated this code [CS; HM]:

Anchoring in a line took skill, as you had to know where to anchor in order to drift back into line in the right place. Once, a [amateur] fisherman anchored further down the channel than the others already there, and drifted back over their lines [effectively blocking their access and potentially limiting their catch]. Bluey [Welsh] got a grapnel and threw it in front of their boat, and hauled in the anchor line...and cut the rope connecting the anchor and told him ‘Now get into line’. [LID]

Similar fishing etiquette was observed by Goldsmith Carter (1945:35) in Britain, where it was considered bad form to cast ones net close in front of another fisherman’s net, and often led to fights and lack of prestige for the perpetrator.

Snapper were also taken using longlines in the twentieth century:

There were seasons for snapper, but poaching went on. We used a 1000 hooks up past Mornington, long lines were used there, and you would unwind the line from linseed tins, with 50 hooks to a line. This was called the long line. The tin was under the 50 hooks and when thrown overboard it unwinds on the way down. [HM]

### ***C) Crayfish***

Crayfish (known internationally as the “Southern Rock Lobster”) were widely exploited around the rocky ledges of The Rip, Lonsdale Bight, Pt Nepean, the oceanic shoreline as far as San Remo and Apollo Bay, and sometimes in rocky patches in the channels [CS; HM; PF]. Crayfish were caught using the traditional method of cane pots which were set on the edges of underwater ledges, and crayfish availability varied seasonally, dependent on their breeding habits (see Wright 1990 for further discussion of crayfish habits). Crayfishing operations in Lonsdale Bight were described by [CS]:

In the Rip you would get crayfish...We made big cray pots. One day we shot three pots in the Rip. We pulled 180 crays in those three pots, and there was more hanging onto the outside of the pot. We would get crayfish from the area between Lonsdale Reef and Pt Nepean at Corsair Rock, and as far over as Victory Shoal. We would fish along the edge of the drop-off and the reefs. We would also get crayfish outside starting from Nepean Rock all the way down to Cape Schank... We would go a couple of hundred metres to half a mile offshore. [CS]

Cray pots were often baited with sheep's heads or dead fish, but birds such as gannets, pelicans and mutton birds were regularly used during the nineteenth century, and possibly later [PF]. Crayfishing became very popular in the area after WWII, and several larger boats operated out to the Bass Strait Islands from Queenscliff. After overfishing of krill stocks by foreign fishing vessels led to the decline of couta stocks, several fishermen converted their couta boats in the 1950s to include pot winches so they could exploit both crayfish and couta ([CS; HM]; Kerr n.d.:1985). Fishermen kept live crayfish in underwater holding pen crates called coffs (see Figures 6.6 and 6.7) which were located close to the piers or at their moorings until they were ready to be transported to market [LID].



**Figure 6. 6: Crayfish coff, Fishermen's Pier (Photo PH020, QHM Collection).**



**Figure 6. 7: Lowering a crayfish coff with the Fishermen's Pier Crane (Photo PH092, QHM Collection).**

#### ***D) Other Economic Catches***

Many other fish species were exploited outside (and during) the snapper and barracouta seasons, including eels, flathead, garfish, ling, shark, rock cod, squid and whiting [HM; JB; PF]. Different techniques were involved in catching each type of fish, dependent on the area it inhabited, where it swam in the water column (i.e. top or mid water, or on the seabed), and these techniques resulted in many different variations of fishing material culture. Some fish such as yellowtail were deepwater fish, which required heavy sliding sinkers on the line which would not get caught on the reef [CS; HM]. Other surface dwelling fish such as salmon required lightweight sinkers (if any at all), whereas the shape of lightweight sinkers used to catch flathead and whiting (which inhabited sandy bottoms) were irregularly shaped as they were not in danger of being snagged on the seafloor [PF].

The fishing community demonstrated detailed knowledge of every economic fish species available in The Bay. The range of fish targeted is shown in Appendix E-2, along with the approximate season,

location and method of exploitation, but should not be considered exhaustive. It is notable that there is both overlap and discordance between the fishing areas outlined by each individual, which further demonstrates that fishers each exploited slightly different landscapes within the same study region (see below).

### ***E) Bait***

Bait for fishing was an important resource, and the type varied dependent on the sort of fishing undertaken and availability of resources. Appendix E-3 outlines in detail the types of bait exploited for different fish species procurement and where they were obtained from. In the 1930s, the blasting of the Rip associated with channel deepening was sporadically an important source of bait for crayfishing, when the dead fish floated to the surface after explosions [HM; PF]. Bait often included the by-products of fish processing, fish caught in fishtraps, shellfish taken from piles or shallow inlets, or illegal sources such as undersized crayfish, or seabirds. Similar practices were also undertaken in nineteenth century America at Cape Cod, where gulls were caught for bait using small house traps (Thoreau 1865:34; Yentisch 1988b:141).

## **4) Migratory Fishing Landscapes/ Extent of Fishing Pursuits**

The migratory nature of some fish species was also reflected in the practices of the Queenscliff fishermen. In particular the movements of barracouta and snapper led several Queenscliff fishing families to relocate along the coast between San Remo, Queenscliff, Apollo Bay and Lorne at various times during the year [JB]. As such, many Queenscliff residents were also often considered members of other communities along the coast which were linked through seaward routes (Ferrier 1991:6):

The Queenscliff fishermen have a strong affiliation with Port Phillip Bay and Apollo Bay and Lorne. The fishermen here were transient nomadic fishermen, they moved chasing fish. Successive fishermen followed their brothers and fathers from one place to another. They followed the couta as they moved down the coast. There is a strong connection between fishing communities, and often the same people lived in different communities. [PF]

Queenscliff fishermen first exploited the Lorne fishery from May 1934, and some fishermen even fished as far afield as Lakes Entrance (Gippsland) or Port Fairy, but these were usually during breaks in the routine fishing seasons at Port Phillip Bay (Kerr 1985:71-2). The seasonal nature of couta fishing was outlined by one fisherman:



After March, we would go to Lorne... in the winter months, June July and August following the couta. I went to Lorne for 3-4 months in winter to follow the couta, then went back to Queenscliff in summer, until the fall of the year when the fish would ease off again... The Apollo Bay boats would also come to Lorne following the couta [HM]

Many Queenscliff fishermen had smaller couta boats (18 and 21ft) to use at Lorne for winter fishing from 1934-42 (Ferrier 1991:6). These boats were lighter than those used at Queenscliff, as the lack of a suitable harbour at Lorne meant boats had to be pulled out of the water and placed on the pier in bad weather [HM]. Differences between fishing practices at the two locations were also evident in the types of moorings used:

We would pull up our moorings and take them to Lorne with us, and back again when we returned. At Lorne we had 2 mooring anchors and would also tie up to the pier. In Queenscliff we had one central anchor that we would free swing on, and you had your own area to anchor in between the piers and on the north side. [HM]

Similarly, as fishermen began exploiting other fish resources, boats began to move further afield. As early as the 1880s, Queenscliff crayfishers exploited the resources of the Bass Strait Islands using larger vessels with inbuilt holding wells. These larger vessels were often ketches, capable of holding live crayfish in a well, with smaller tender boats that were used to pull the crayfish pots themselves (Kerr 1985:76-8; [LID]).

## **5) Tangible Traditional Knowledge**

Queenscliff fishermen appear to have developed a suite of practical fishing skills and knowledge that extends beyond observations of fish habitats and seasonal availability. The Queenscliff fishing community have demonstrated tangible and intangible observations of the environment that are akin to the traditional knowledge and practices demonstrated by Indigenous Pacific Island fishing and navigator communities mentioned previously in Chapter Three. Some of these observations will be outlined in further detail below.

### ***A) Daily Indicators of Resource Availability***

It is common knowledge amongst fishermen worldwide that the presence of large numbers of pelagic fish caused smaller bait fish to shoal near the surface, thus attracting gannets, gulls and shags to feast on the school. Through the observation of flocks of diving gannets, it was possible to identify the location of predatory shoal fish, such as snapper, barracouta, salmon and tuna, and local fishermen found that it was possible to track and catch large schools of fish [BM; CS; HM; LF; LID; PF]. An environmental cycle determined the location of economic species within The Bay:

“The bird life moves around The Bay with the tides...Birds in the channel signal that whitebait are schooling, and that snapper are chasing them” [PF]. Various types of birds heralded different types of fish species, (and are outlined in further detail in Table 6.2).

<b>Birds as Indicators of Economic Fish Species</b>					
<b>Fish Catch Type</b>	<b>Bird Type</b>	<b>Fish/Bird Prey</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Notes</b>	
Barracouta (couta)	gannets	baitfish, krill, pilchards whitebait	Bay/ Ocean		[BM; HM; LF]
Mullet	unspecified		Pt King Birdwatchers Huts		[PF]; NHS 1966
Salmon	gannets/terns	squid/krill	Corsair Rock	terns called salmon divers	[BM; HM]
Snapper	gannets/terns	whitebait	Channels	netboat fish more active in dirty water, so fish on ebb tide	[PF]
Trout	gannets/terns	whitebait			[BM; CS]
Tuna	mutton birds/ terns				Wilson 1992:37
Seal	seagulls			“If you see seagulls when fishing, you don’t fish over there as a seal is throwing fish out of the water, which is attracting the birds”	[BM; LF]
Seal	snapper/ yellowtail			“Fishermen often can tell where a wreck is by the presence of a seal, as they live on the fish that live on the wreck”	[GrW; PT]
<b>Shadows/ Dark Patches as Fish Indicators</b>					
Mullet			Pt King Birdwatchers Huts		[PF]; NHS, 1966
Yellowtail		Pilchards	Convent Beach, Lonsdale Bight	“You could see differences in colour as they (the fish schools) moved across the sand. They showed up as a dark patch 200- 300 yards off the beach”	[CS]
<b>Kelp for Reef Identification</b>					
Crayfish				“We used to shoot pots by the kelp lying on the surface. You could detect the ledge underwater by the kelp lying on the surface in slack water”	[HM]

**Table 6.2: Daily Indicators of Fish Availability.**

This practice was common among ancient and modern Polynesian Fishermen (Gladwin 1970:30; Iversen et al. 1990:26). Goldsmith-Carter (1945:37) recorded similar behaviour in south east Britain, where flocks of “Herring gulls” were used to herald the location of the fish schools, an observation that was reinforced by [BE]:

My father and uncle fished for herring in Britain. They would sit in the wheelhouse for days at sea and never said a word. They were looking for birds that indicated where the fish were.”

This last observation may suggest that many of these practices may have been transported from analogous fishing cultures overseas to this area.

Other fish species (yellowtail and mullet) were also identified by the presence of dark shadows/patches on a sand bottom ([CS; PF]; NHS 1966), and crayfish habitats were identified by kelp on the surface which heralded the reefs underneath [HM]).

Normally rare documentary evidence of these practices was located in historical literature for an area adjacent to the study area. Bird and fish watching huts once existed on the cliff top near Pt King (between Sorrento and Portsea), and provided shelter for fishermen while they kept a lookout for diving birds and fish schools [PF]. These “Huers Huts” located 104 ft directly above the fishers beach camp were used by lookouts to spy for diving birds, grey shoals of fish entering the bay (along with associated dangers such as sharks or whales) whereupon an alarm was raised to those waiting in the camp below to begin work. The family eventually also built their own jetty and holding pens for storing live fish before they were transported to market, but these were demolished in the early 1960s. Further details of this venture were outlined in NHS 1966 (31-4, 46-7). No similar structures were identified at Queenscliff.

## ***B) Knowledge of Migratory Fish Species***

### **I) Seasonal Indicators of Migratory Fish Species**

During the winter months, adverse weather conditions and the absence of migratory fish species forced many fishers (who did not relocate to follow the fish migration) to repair their boats and seek other work. These were periods of great poverty in the fishing community, where families often were forced to live on credit from local grocers and traders [JM]. The beginning of the catch season was a time greatly anticipated by the fishing community, as it broke the enforced fasts and hardships experienced during the lean winter months.

Fishermen relied on several seasonal indicators of the return of their principle source of economic livelihood, which were associated with the periodic flowering of at least three different plant species [CS; GW; HM; JB; PF; WN], or the insects attracted to them [CSp; SJ]. These indicators were summarised by [JM] observation:

...When the flathead flower, that was the capeweed, the dandelions, and the ti-tree flower bloomed it was the fishing season again for flathead and snapper. The fishermen payed off their debts and life became affluent again.

These observations are which are outlined in further detail in Appendix E-4. These signs were vital components of the fishers' landscapes that contributed to both the economic and cognitive well-being of the community. Furthermore, as many of the Queenscliff fishermen often relocated to follow the wandering fish schools, these indicators also were also important signals for determining the migratory fishermen's habitats. The veracity of these observations was observed by the author, where the seasonal blooming of ti tree flowers and the appearance of blowflies coincided with local newspaper fishing reports of the beginning of the snapper season (Kitchen 2003:39).

The examples of seasonal fishing indicators were accepted amongst most of the fishermen and other local residents. Interestingly however, a pilot [CSp] indicated that bogong moths were also an indicator of the snapper season arrival. This may illustrate the differing cultural landscapes of the varying maritime industries in Queenscliff, and could reflect external observations that were made by the pilots, who often lived/worked up to 50 km away in Williamstown. Furthermore, detailed knowledge of other marine species included the cyclic arrival of *Nautilus* shells every seven years in Swan Bay [DB; GW].

The seasonality of fishing, and types of species availability is an essential component that has shaped the Port Phillip landscape, and is an observation that is consistent with many other fishing landscapes, where seasonal indicators similar to those above have been observed (e.g. Goldsmith Carter 1945:19, 35; Johannes 1992).

## **II) Geographical Knowledge of Fish Species Habitats**

Different fishermen targeted different fish species, and it became clear during the study that not all fishers accessed all types of marine life. Additionally, many fishermen used different markers and indicators to relocate and access their chosen species. Although most respondents interviewed were happy to share their knowledge of general fishing localities and marks, some indicated that there

were secret spots and/or favoured locations that were held by only a few members of the community and were closely guarded as familial heritage [LID]:

George Jurgens knew all the crayfish spots in the Bay...It was local knowledge passed down from father to son. He told Harry Mouchmore about some of these when he retired. Harry said he had been fishing the bay most of his life and never known about these spots. It's a pity, most of those spots went to the grave with him. [GW]

The differentiation of access locations and species exploitation demonstrates that within the fishing community there were multiple individual fishing landscapes, even within the same species fishery. This is reminiscent of other indigenous maritime communities, where traditional knowledge of fishing sites and practices are closely guarded secrets. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the comparison of two fishing landscapes described by two fishermen - Harry Mouchmore and Colin Shapter of similar ages and fishing vintage (Figures 6.8 – 6.11). Both exploited cousta, but Shapter showed a greater specialisation towards net fishing, but as can be seen, their respective use of the same maritime arena is starkly different. Mouchmore's fishing landscape was also more dependent on seasonal movement of cousta, which led him to exploit areas further to the east and west than those indicated by Shapter.

### III) Recognition of Ecological Change

Numerous fishermen demonstrated recognition of long term ecological changes in The Bay and surrounding waters, and most recognised the web of symbiotic ties between many marine resources, and the subsequent effects of over-exploitation of one marine species on another. Consistent observations regarding the effects of krill and/or squid harvesting in Antarctica were made by several fishermen [LID]:

The cousta feed on Brit (krill), and often you would cut a cousta open and its belly would be full of it. The Russians and Japanese were taking tonnes of anticarticus, and that affected the fishing in Lorne and Queenscliff. It really affected the amount of fish we were taking. It led to the cousta leaving the coast. [HM]

A summary of other observations is presented in Table 6.3. Similar observations were made by [BM] regarding cousta fishing from Queenscliff and Westernport Bay:

There were once thousands of acres of cousta in Bass Strait. They come home from the Antarctic. We would shoot cousta nets and catch enormous amounts in a day. We were not to blame for their disappearance. That was because of the Aluminium oxide plant and the 17 sewerage outfalls around this area [Westernport Bay]. It kills the spawn and whitebait. There used to be acres and acres all over the bay. The gannets and terns were all over there diving for the fish. They used to mass over the shallows, and there would acres of bird shit on the seagrass, the birds used to provide the fertilizer for the seagrass.

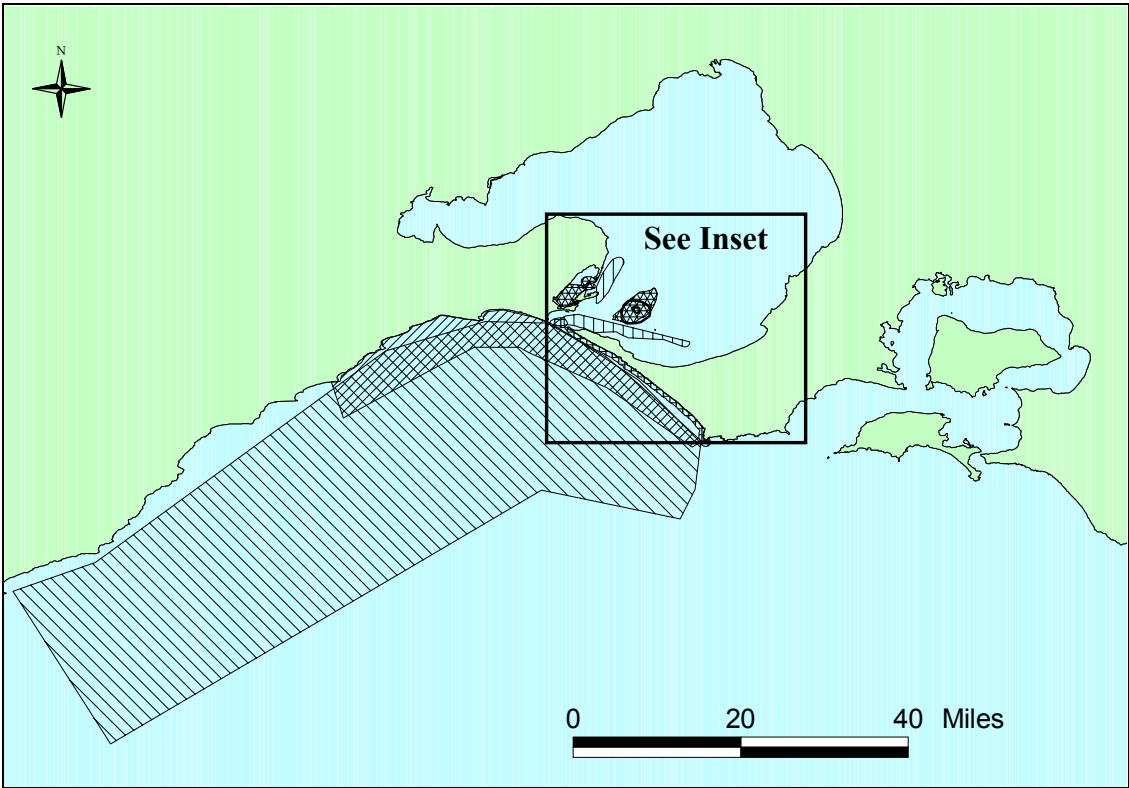


Figure 6. 8: Regional fishing areas exploited by Colin Shapter.

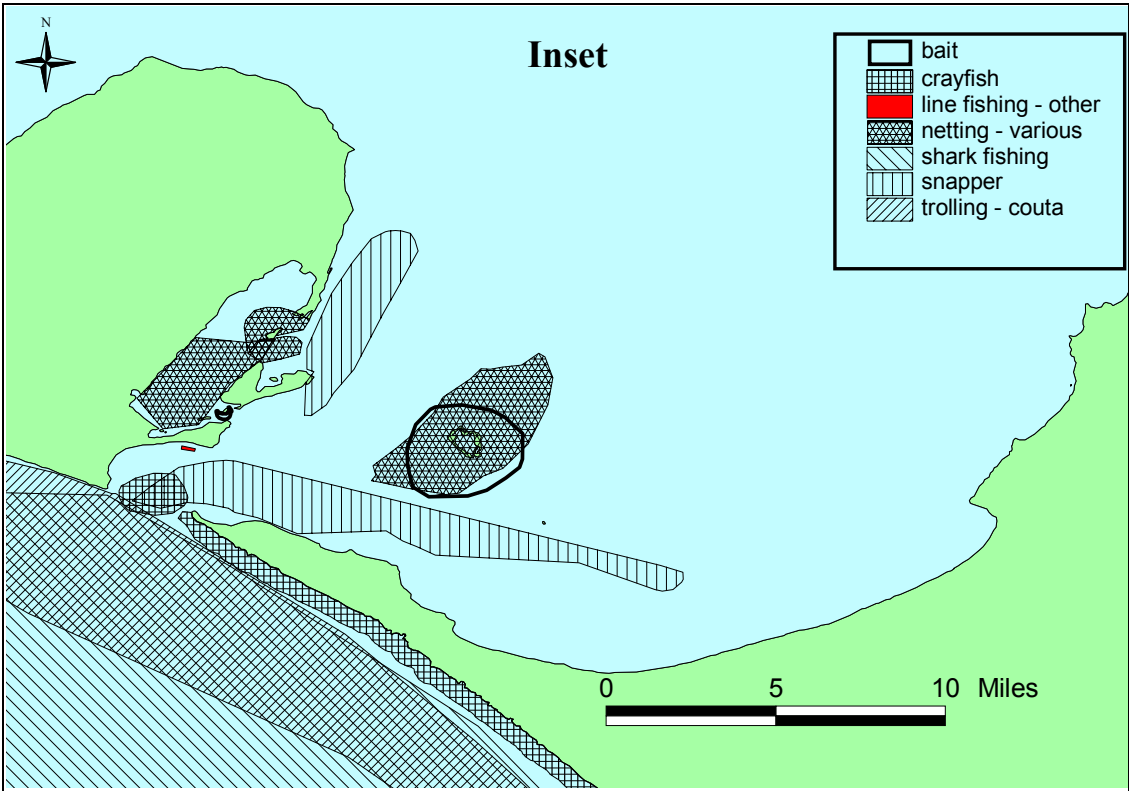


Figure 6. 9: Local fishing areas exploited by Colin Shapter.

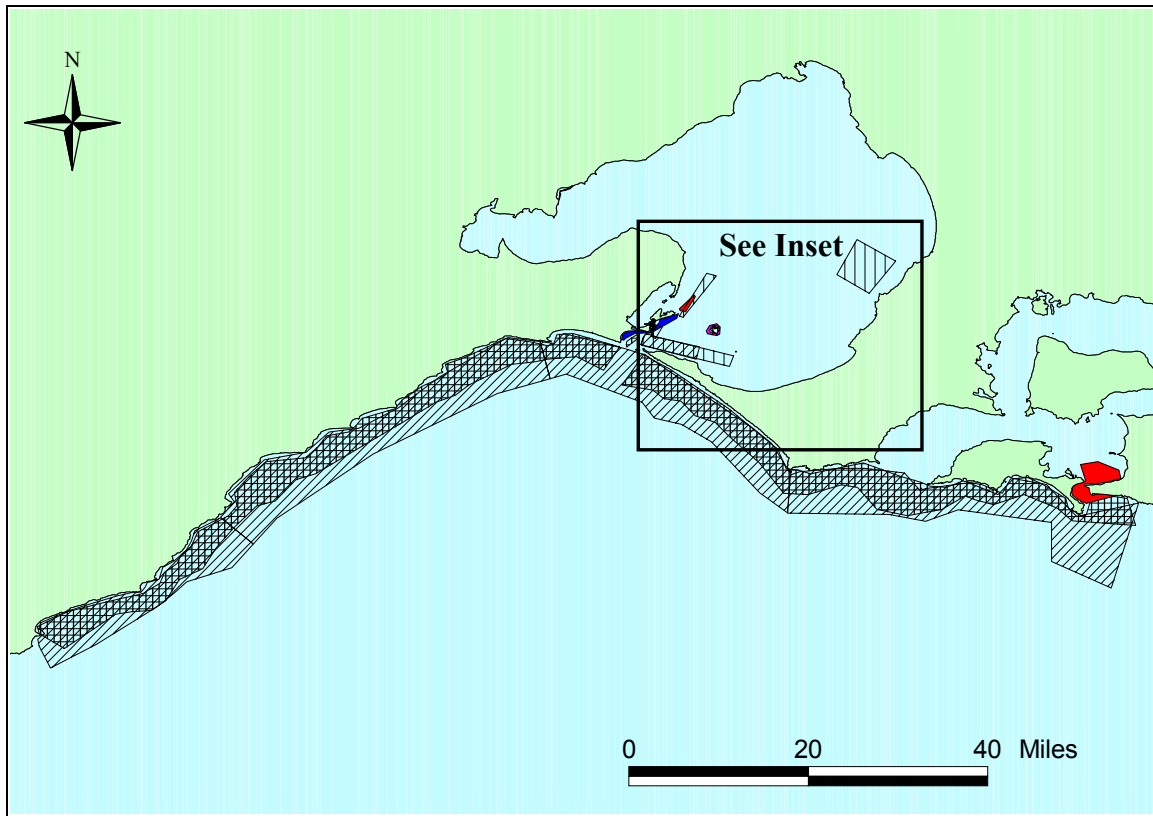


Figure 6. 10: Regional fishing areas exploited by Harry Mouchmore.

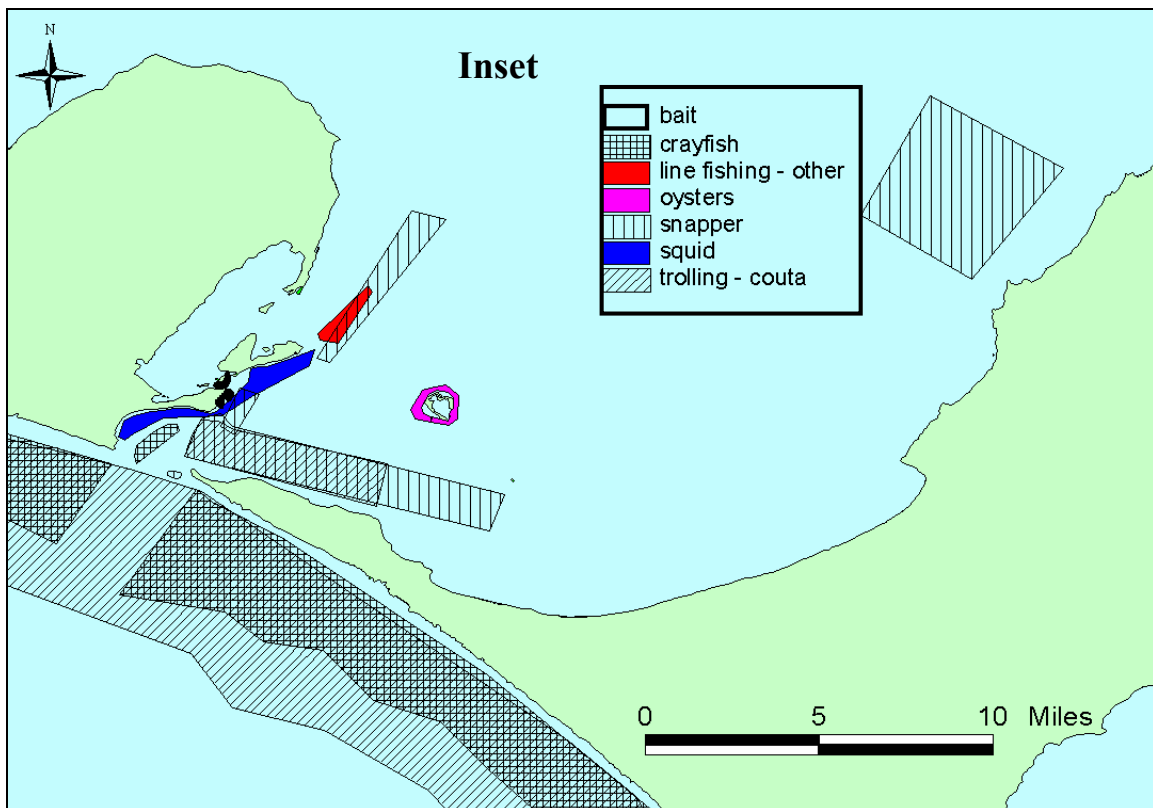


Figure 6. 11: Local fishing areas exploited by Harry Mouchmore.



Now the seagrass has disappeared too, and there is nowhere for the fish to hatch. There are no couta here this season, and only a few in Queenscliff. [BM]

Although these observations signify a measure of territoriality expressed at the perceived invasion of local fishing waters by foreigners, they also suggest a degree of hereditary knowledge and understanding of the region's ecological balance, along with some level of perceived custodianship of those local resources. Verification of these observations was beyond the scope of this study, but may be of potential interest for future research.

<b>Fish species exploited</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Fish species affected</b>	<b>Result</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>krill</b>	overfished in Antarctica	couta	decreased numbers	[HM]
<b>cockles - Swan Bay</b>	overfished	cockles	disappeared	[LID]
<b>gummy sharks - PP Bay</b>	overfished	octopus and spider crabs	Infestation of	[CS]
<b>salmon</b>	longlining - overfished	salmon	decreased numbers	[CS]
<b>squid</b>	overfished	salmon	decreased numbers	Ferrier 1991

**Table 6.3: Fishermen's observations of the effects of overfishing of economic fish species.**

### ***C) Other Ancillary Resources***

Many other resources were used by fishermen for their industry, or for subsistence and daily survival.

Some of these resources were used to either maintain or build essential fishing equipment. Several fishermen reported that local ti-tree (*Melaleuca*) was used for the construction of crayfish pots [CS; HM], and also to construct fishtraps, which were used to catch fish for bait [PF]. This material was collected from the foreshore area at Rye on the north coast of the Mornington Peninsula, and could later also be bought from the same area [HM]. Similar practices were undertaken by fishermen at Rhyll (Westernport Bay), Port Welshpool and Sealers Cove (Wilson's Promontory) (Kerr n.d.:29-30).

Cotton nets and ropes used by local fishermen had to be tanned to protect them from rotting from exposure to salt water and jellyfish. The fishermen tanned the nets and ropes in backyard concrete or cut down corrugated iron water tanks using a saturated saltwater solution of tannin from local wattle tree bark (sourced from Swan Bay/Island, and the Bellarine Peninsula, [CS; LID]). Wattle

bark solutions were also used by coua fishermen to tan the baited fishing lines and small burley nets inside heated 44 gallon drums [HM].

A marine seagrass known locally as eel or swan grass (*Zostera muelleri*), was used extensively throughout the township for the lining of houses (especially in the fishing community) and other public buildings where it was stuffed into the recesses between the walls and ceilings [LID; PF]. The string-like grass was sourced in great quantities from Swan Bay, especially during the winter months, and had excellent insulation properties for both sound and heat, and resistance to burning and rot [GW; LID]. These qualities also made the seagrass suitable for insulation inside locally made (Jonette) briquette hot water heaters [LID]. Swan grass was also harvested in commercial quantities along the eastern coast of Westernport Bay until at least the 1970s for housing insulation in Melbourne [BM]. Similar practices using marine resources (e.g. reeds, shells) and other agricultural produce discard (e.g. oat and corn husks, walnut shells, straw) for insulation were known in Suffolk and East Anglia in England until at least the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Evans 1966: 43-4).



Figure 6. 12: Charles Zanoni, fisherman and craypot maker (Photo PH284, QHM Collection)

#### ***D) Alternative Food/Other Resources***

Wild rabbits formed a major component of the fishers' diet, and many recounted the importance of rabbitting as part of their childhood [CS; LID]. Rabbits were introduced by fishers as a food source to the Mud Islands, and had reached plague proportions in the area by 1912, causing denudation of vegetation in many areas (QS 11/5/1912; Yugovic 1998:90, 96-7). Many fishers stated that their families might have starved if rabbits had not been available to supplement their

diet [CS; LID]. This situation was common in many other Victorian coastal towns, especially during the depression and WWII (Hunt 1999:9, 29).

Local game were also heavily exploited by both the fishing and local communities, particularly from around Swan Bay, Swan Island and Lonsdale Lakes. Ducks, quails, and swans were shot using specialised duck punts (Figure 6.13), and eels were taken from the creeks to supplement fishers diets [CS].

Common Name	Scientific Name	Use
<b>Black Boy/Grass Tree</b>	<i>Xanthorea australis</i>	Sap used to stain furniture. Collected by Jack Clay after fires and mixed with shellac and turpentine to stain timber. Also used by local Indigenous people to waterproof their water containers.
<b>Bearded Glasswort</b>	<i>Sarcocornia quinqueflora</i>	Burnt for potash for glass manufacturing.
<b>Bower Spinach/ Warrgul Greens</b>	<i>Tetragonia implexicoma</i>	Eaten fried or boiled as a substitute green vegetable during depression - and tasty too!
<b>African Boxthorn</b>	<i>Lycium fero cissimum</i>	Used by Military as a natural alternative to barbed wire.
<b>Chinaman's Bread</b>	<i>Malva australiana</i>	Segmented fruit bearing plant – eaten.
<b>Coastal Beard Heath</b>	<i>Leucopogon parviflorus</i>	Berries used by Indigenous People and children - white berries size of pea available in Jan and Feb. Tastes like a nashy pear.
<b>Eel Grass/ Swan Grass - angiosperm</b>	<i>Zostera muelleri</i>	1. Insulation in buildings and heaters. 2. Mulch to grow asparagus.
<b>Flat leafed Sedge - Reed/ NobbyClub Rush</b>	<i>Lamanda</i>	Used to make baskets.
<b>Kelp</b>		1. Manure for gardens. 2. Indigenous people rolled kelp into rolls to sustain them during inland hunting trips - provided basic sustenance. 3: Used to make tennis balls for children.
<b>Kelp/ Seaweed</b>		1: Potash/ Iodine/ Bromine - industry suggested, unclear if exploited. 2: Local use as an antiseptic for cuts.
<b>Old Mans Beard</b>	<i>Clematis aristata</i>	Indigenous people used the fluff from this bush to line the cradles for babies.
<b>Ruby Salt Bush</b>	<i>Enchylaena tomatosa</i>	Used by Indigenous people as a red dye.
<b>Sour Sobs</b>	<i>Oxalis pres-carpae</i>	Used by children to clean coins.
<b>Ti-tree - Melaleuca</b>	<i>Leptospermum &amp; Levagantum</i>	Craypot/ fishtrap manufacture.
<b>Wattle (Acacia)</b>	<i>Papanacia vilbata melan</i>	Bark used for tanning fishing nets and lines.

**Table 6.4: Exploited indigenous and wild exotic plant species.**

Numerous indigenous plant species from around Swan Bay were exploited by the fishing community and other sectors of the community, especially during the depression in the 1930s when

many families could not afford vegetables [DS; WN]. A summary of alternative uses of indigenous plant species is outlined in Table 6.4.

The location and traditional knowledge of the use of these sources represents important components of the fishing cultural landscapes. An expanded synopsis of these resources and oral histories is included in Appendix E-5.



**Figure 6. 13: Duck punts on nearby Reedy Lake, Moolap c. 1920s. Similar craft were used on Swan Ponds (In Wynd 1988 – Photo: Mrs T. McAllister).**

## **6) Supplementation of Fishing Income**

Due to the variability of the industry and often large families, many fishermen often supplemented their income with other ancillary occupations and activities when times were hard. This was especially the case during winter, when the couta fishing ceased and fishers lived on the proceeds of the previous season [JB]. Many people commented that the fishermen's meager budgets meant that they were better equipped for hardship than other sectors of the community:

...the depression only brought slight changes in lifestyle for the fishermen, but they could get by. They used to fish and sail to survive. It hit the city people more. They had less candles and other things, but they used the barter system. Tourists were welcomed as a local source of income. They bought fish direct from the wharf. There were no transport costs to Geelong, and no taxman involved. [PF]

All members of fisher families often undertook alternative work, or exploited other resources to supplement their income. Many fishing families rented their houses to tourists in the summer, and the family would occupy a smaller cottage at the rear, accommodate their children in tents or sleep-outs, or spend their holidays with other family around the Peninsula (Ferrier, 1989:17 [DS; WN]). A fisherman [CS] recalled: "The guesthouses would take people in the summertime. People would

let their houses in summertime, and live in a batch in the back of the houses”. The money gained from the rent would be used to pay the rates for the next year [LID; WN].

Fishermen, particularly in the latter half of the nineteenth century, were often engaged as boatmen and offered unofficial ferry services across The Bay. However, the Customs Department discouraged this practice after several accidents, and by 1892, a licence was required to operate a boat for passengers outside the Port of Melbourne (QS 10/12/1892). The practice continued though, and in 1894, three fishermen were charged for rowing passengers to Portsea and Rye without a licence (QS 10/3/1894).

Fishermen exploited whatever financial opportunities that was available to supplement their income. These included: work in the lifeboat service; discounts for sails displaying advertising [CS; PF]; rabbiting for skins and carcasses (Ferrier 1989:20); glass recycling; boatbuilding [PF]; and raising chickens [WN]. Fisher families were often innovative in their approaches to earning extra income. One fisherman’s young son established a fish hawking business, when he discovered he did not like fishing. He delivered fish to Pt Lonsdale, but the boy’s initiative was not appreciated by other fishermen, as until then they had conducted informal fish sales direct to customers at the pier and a hawkers licence was required to sell outside those areas [LID].

## **7) Intangible Traditional Knowledge**

### ***A) Weather Forecasting and Topography***

Port Phillip Bay is known for its extremely wild and changeable weather patterns. There are many instance of fishing boat losses, along with their crew. Accurately predicting the weather was therefore an essential aspect of survival for bay users, especially the fishermen who frequented the dangerous inshore areas in pursuit of catches. Most fishermen used conventional weather prediction techniques, such as the barometers which were installed on both the piers [CS], but prior to this time mariners had to predict the weather themselves based on their own experience or inherited knowledge. Many fishermen demonstrated a broad recognition of local weather patterns that could only have been derived from many years of seasonal and tidal observations, and probably originated from many generations of inherited ancestral observations of the Bay’s environment.

Fishers used different observations to determine possible weather and ocean conditions. These included subtle colour changes in the water; body temperature changes (touch); bird movements inland, or prolonged roosting of birds on nests; subtle changes in wind direction, movements of boats at anchor and cloud shapes/ movement; stock movements to avoid wind; onset of headaches or arthritis; frogs croaking; cobwebs in rigging; and increased visibility of distant features (to herald bad weather). Some of these weather predictions have since been observed by the author, and have been noted to be uncannily accurate. Further details of these traditional weather observations are contained in Appendix E-6. Similar practices have been made elsewhere around Australia and worldwide in European and Pacific Island communities (Goldsmith Carter 1945:11, 14, 25; Evans 1966:164; Gladwin 1970; Wurtele 1971; Lewis 1976, 1994; Kerr 1987: 85, 166, 170; n.d.:21).

### ***B) Folklore, Superstition, Luck and Religion***

The Queenscliff fishing community demonstrated a rich oral history that was full of ancestral tales, historical accounts and meanings associated with places and events. Additionally, several informants alluded to a number of superstitious beliefs and folklore traditions that were embedded within the fabric of the fishing community. Access to these stories was difficult, and some stories were clearly only known to selected community members. It was not always clear if these were just recounted stories, or if they were practiced ideologies in some sectors.

Several fishers unexpectedly related a number of superstitions which were predominantly related to avoiding bad luck. It was bad luck to bring wild bird eggs [CS] or peacock feathers [CS; JB] into houses, even though bird nesting to collect eggs was a popular activity amongst fishers' children (Dod1931:93; [HM]). The age old tradition of placing coins under masts to pay the ferryman of the dead (Delgado 1997:64; Jeans 2004:306) was also practiced in Queenscliff [HM; JB; PF] and Lorne (Hunt 1999:92) until tabernacle (hinged) masts were introduced [HM]. Many superstitions appear to have been introduced with the arrivals of immigrants, such as where one Scotsman who would refuse to go out on a trawler if a seagull landed on the mast due to the ominous overtones [JB]. Another belief common in fishing communities worldwide was observed in 1863, when three Chinese fishers died after their countrymen would not go to their assistance as they were superstitious about rendering assistance to drowning men (Simpkin n.d.:10). Some of these observations have potential archaeological ramifications, particularly the practical demonstrations of votive offerings (under masts), and might also explain the surprising lack of native birds' eggs in fisher dwellings which might normally be interpreted as a lack of exploitation of those resources.

Some fishermen stated that there was an unwritten lore regarding boating activities on a Friday: “you wouldn’t launch your boat on a Friday, it was bad luck. You wouldn’t launch on a Friday even if you had won lotto” [CS]. A former boatwright with the Pilots’ Service confirmed the existence of this practice [JB]:

No, they wouldn’t do it. That came from England, the superstition. It was all the fishermen. They wouldn’t do it, wouldn’t launch on Fridays. If a boat had just been finished being built, and it was ready by the Friday, they would launch it on the Thursday, or delay it to the Saturday or Monday. No, they wouldn’t go fishing on a Friday either. It was bad luck to go fishing on the Friday. One bloke had his boat up on the slip and he went to launch it on a Friday, and he broke his mast when someone forgot to open the door properly, and the mast broke on the way down. There were also no markets on a Saturday, so you couldn’t sell your fish if you went out then. They fished from Monday to Thursday, and Thursday’s fish was sold at Friday’s market. They worked on the boats on their days off, went to Geelong to go shopping and mowed the lawns. Things like that. The small boats that worked inside the Rip sometimes caught snapper on the Friday. They kept fishing as they had local markets at Geelong and Queenscliff, and would sell them on the pier. [JB]

Although other fishermen (e.g. [HM]) had no knowledge of this practice, this suggested that this was a personal belief limited to individual families. As noted, some fishing vessels that worked inside The Bay sometimes did work on a Friday [JB]. Mullen (1969: 211, 219) has suggested that the incidence of superstition amongst fishermen was directly related to the amount of risk they were exposed to, and has observed similar behaviour in Texas, where inshore fishing vessels may risk breaking the taboo as they were less exposed to the dangers experienced by offshore fishermen. This worldwide phenomenon was related to the crucifixion of Christ on a Friday (Kemp 1992:847; Jeans 2004:308). Mullen (1971:407) recorded that this belief amongst American fishers originated in England, which may also be the case in this study area.

Similarly, fishing on Sunday, the traditional Christian day of rest, was originally discouraged amongst local fishermen in the early years of the township. In 1893, when some non-Christian fishermen began working on that day contrary to popular religious beliefs, Queenscliff fishers complained to the Customs Minister that the day was being desecrated (QS 3/6/1893); by July that year, all the fishermen in the town had agreed not to fish on that day. However, this effectively meant that there were now three days that the fishermen did not take a catch, as any fish caught on Saturday usually spoiled before getting to market on the Tuesday (QS 1/7/1893).

These beliefs and practices were to have marked effects both locally and regionally, especially on the Melbourne Fish Market, where fresh fish were available from Tuesday to Friday, but meant that



the fish market was closed on Mondays as no fresh produce was available [BM]. This practice appears to have changed in later years with the advent of freezing:

...before the co-op was established, there was nothing to do [but fish]. Most fishermen fished on Sundays to get a catch for the market the next day. If you didn't fish on Sundays you missed a day supplying the market. After the co-op was built, you could fish any day as they could freeze it, and you weren't dependent on supplying fish fresh on market days only. [GW]

The constraints of religious observance on fishermen during similar historical periods were also observed in the UK (Hunter (1994:262; Parker 1995:94) and the USA (Procter 1873:92; Collins 1882:126–7; Mullen 1969:218). Some informants maintained that many traditions and beliefs originated from the UK [JB], particularly those regarding Friday boating prohibitions (England) and seagulls on masts (Scotland).

The first Blessing of the Fleet ceremony to be undertaken in Australia was conducted by a Presbyterian Reverend (W. F. Hart) at Queenscliff in 1935 [LF]. This ritual was undertaken to place a blessing on the fishing fleet to ensure their safety from inclement weather over the coming year, and a ceremonial cross was thrown into the water as a symbol of Christ's blessing on the water. The service represented a ritual cleansing of evil from the sea, and/or a votive offering to the sea god (in this case Christ) to offset bad weather, which may have earlier origins in pagan rituals. Blessing of the Fleet ceremonies became popular social events, which often overshadow the spiritual component of the ceremony (Broeze 1998:191), a sentiment echoed by [GW] who noted that: "it was more for show" [than religious purposes].

Despite the observations above, religion did not appear to have played a major role amongst the majority of fishermen, particularly in mid twentieth century [LF]:

Fishermen weren't religious, not a bit. The only time they had seen a church was at weddings and funerals [and christenings]...I once heard a minister say that Queenscliff was the most unreligious town he had been in. [GW]

Other beliefs were centred around more practical concerns. Fishermen in Port Phillip Bay have always feared and respected sharks which followed snapper and mullet schools into The Bay. Sharks were problematic as they usually stripped fish from the line before the catch could be hauled in, and were known to attack boats if the fisher attempted to haul aboard a hooked fish that they were chasing ([HM; PF] QS 4/11/1899). In most cases fishers surrendered the fish to the shark, but some took catastrophic risks:

[A fisherman] was fishing on the snapper beds once and was losing a lot of double enders as there was a snapper shark there, and he was losing a lot of fish. He decided to go for it and get both fish in before the shark took it. As he reeled the fish over the side of the boat, the shark leapt out over the back of the boat, and [he] fell over backwards into the fish well, and had to fend the shark off with the tiller. There were teeth marks on the boat to prove it. [He] was as white as a sheet when he got back, and staggered into the pub to tell his story. He was shaking so bad he could hardly hold his beer. [PF]

[PF] recalled that this sometimes influenced the designs of boats:

Fishermen would also not paint their rudders white, as it attracted sharks. It was my understanding that if you were fishing on the snapper beds...if you painted your rudder white you were more prone to damage when trying to get the snapper in ... because the reflection of the rudder as it moved [if painted white] used to attract the sharks to the boats.

Another circumstance was detailed where fishermen at Port Welshpool supposedly increased their catch of barracouta by attaching a mirror to the bottom of their rudder, but this ruse which was designed to fool Gippsland fishermen (who were unfamiliar with couta fishing techniques) shows the receptiveness of the fishing community to integrate and adopt new folkloric ideas regardless of their seemingly inane methods:

When Jocka Todd and Smacka Jackson went down to Port Welshpool, they cleaned up. They told all the locals that they had put a mirror on the bottom of the rudder, and that this attracted the fish. Within weeks everyone there had a mirror on the bottom of their rudders, but they [the Queenscliff fishermen] had only been putting it over them. [HM]

Fishermen also gutted their fish out to sea, so as not to lead sharks back to shore around the piers. Fishers recognised that sharks were intelligent enough to follow net and line boats as they knew that fish would be caught near them (QS 23/3/1907). The Lorne Pier was apparently free of sharks until a fisherman broke the rule and gutted fish whilst tied up alongside, and there have been sharks there ever since [HM; LID; PF]. This observation has implications for expected archaeological remains for fishing sites, and might explain the lack of fish cleaning facilities in the Queenscliff area.

Although tall fishermen's tales of sharks abound and have been incorporated into local lore in various forms, they appear to have a thread of credibility in most accounts given their similarities to other historical accounts, which were told and retold to the author on many occasions. These forms of folklore tales represent parables in which social history is recorded, but that also reinforce the underlying need for caution when dealing with sharks. Their significance therefore lies not so much in the facts of the past, as opposed to its' implications to that society, a notion which is consistent with Gazin-Schwartz and Holtorf's (1999:13) observations of folklore meaning. These forms of stories also provide insights into cognition and perceptions that are often not accessible elsewhere.

The threat of shark attacks may also have produced tangible modification in vessel designs, albeit subtle avoidance of the use of certain colours. An expanded examination of superstition and folklore is included in Appendix E-7.

It is clear from the above accounts that local legends, folklore and superstitions in their many forms affected not only the perceptions of the community, but also left tangible remains of their existence. These notions are therefore important aspects of the local landscapes.

## **8) Fishing Community Landscapes**

### **A) The Fishermen's Flat**

As previously mentioned, the Fishermen's Flat formed the hub of the Queenscliff fishing community. Small fishing shacks and houses were erected in this area, along with personal storage sheds and other facilities used as part of the industry. The location of the Flats on what was considered wasteland further demonstrates the isolation of the fishing community from the rest of the community (which is discussed further in Chapter Eight).

### **B) The Fisherman's Pier**

A pier which had been built at the eastern end of Wharf St in 1856 to service small cargo steamers ("Bluelight" 1912) was linked to Queenscliff via a 15 ft wide raised plank road (built on 3ft high blocks) that was constructed in 1857 to traverse the marsh area from Gellibrand St to the pier (Dod 1931:19; Cuzens 1912:1). A lifeboat was added in 1856 along with a lifeboat shed in 1860 (Fanning 1892b). The pier was extended several times over the years due to siltation problems, with a northern arm added in 1860, a crane and tramway in 1861, and further lengthening in 1870, 1872 and 1875 (GA 21/7/1875:2; Sutherland 1888b:58; Raison, 1987:23). This pier became the focus of maritime activities in Queenscliff for many years. It was used by fishermen to offload produce, for boat maintenance and as a meeting place, and also acted as a wharf for various Bay Steamer tourist ferries from the 1870s onwards. With the opening of the Geelong to Queenscliff railway in 1879, fish were then transported to Melbourne via rail, and a branch line to the pier from the new railway station to service the fishermen's deliveries to Melbourne was constructed sometime after 1893 (QS 22/7/1893; Cash 1910 plan). Two sheds were located at the end of this line, the fish shed (used to load fish onto railway carts) and the pilots' coal shed (used to provide coal to the pilots boats), and by 1930 the coal shed had been replaced with the Ports and Harbours

Buoy Shed (Allom Lovell 1984:161). Although the spur line has been removed, its route (until recently) was still evident in a series of laneways through the Fishermen's Flat.

When a new pier was built to the south to service the deeper drafted Bay Steamers in 1884/85 (VPRS 2143: 84.5/257), the original pier was renamed the Fishermen's Pier (QS 10/5/1884; VPRS 2143: 84.5/257). The Fishermen's Pier became a central component of the fishermen's landscape being used to launch dinghies, repair boats, store equipment and offload fish (see Figures 6.15 and 7.16). It was a working pier as opposed to the Steamer Pier, and housed four pier sheds (Rope, Fishermen's, Lifeboat and Slip sheds) which were used respectively to store rope and tackle (but was originally built for fish storage with a concrete floor); for social gatherings; sea rescues; and a slipway winch was used for boat maintenance and removal of fishing boats onto the pier in rough weather [GW; LID]. A tramway line ran the length of the pier and was used to transport fish from the boats to the Fish Shed which stood at the base of the pier [LM; Cash 1910 Plan]. When the seafloor around the Fishermen's Pier began to silt up, fishermen temporarily used the New Pier until the former was extended in 1913-15 (QS 21/11/1908; [LID; PF]). The Fishermen's Pier functioned not only as a central workplace, but also as an important social hub, where fishermen congregated daily prior to embarkation for the days work [CS; GW; HM; PF].

Around 1890, an island pier (commonly known as a "dolphin") was built between the two piers. It was used for secure craypots and net storage, and a coal shed was constructed on it to supply fuel for the cross Rip military delivery vessel *Mars*. The dolphin also aligned with the dogleg extensions of the both piers to provide additional shelter for the fishing fleet in bad weather in the enclosure between the piers and to the north of the Fishermen's Pier (Allom Lovell 1984:162; [LID; LM; PF]).

In 1889, after canvassing from a number of "agitators" within the community, a third major pier was proposed under the fort at Shortland's Bluff. In June 1889, the Commissioner of Customs visited the township to assess the necessity and possible location for the new jetty. The jetty was opposed by the Defence Department, due to its proximity to the fort, and by a number of community members, who lamented the slow progress of the New Pier, and that the proposed construction of another pier would either divert badly needed money away from it, or sink both projects. The new jetty's location was proposed under the site of the lighthouse, and would extend into 27 ft of water at a cost of £8500. It was advocated that ocean going steamers would be able to unload here in preference to Williamstown, which could have had major implications for the

development of Queenscliff as a major international port (QS 22/6/1889), but the structure was never built.



**Figure 6. 14: Fisherman's Pier (on right) 1925. Note fishermen's moorings between piers and to the north (Photo C. Pratt, Image b14708, SLV Collection).**



**Figure 6. 15: "Fishermen's Jetty", c. 1908, showing Fishermen's Shed (centre) and Fish Shed on right (Image a03485, SLV Collection).**



**Figure 6. 16: Unloading fish at Fishermen's Pier. c. 1940s (Photo: QHM Collection).**

### ***C) Fish Marketing Companies, Associations and Local Transport Networks***

The remoteness of Queenscliff from a major city was always a problem for fishermen, as the fish had to be transported to market before they spoiled. Prior to 1879, fish were transported to Geelong via a fish cart (Raison 1987:7) or were reliant on the regular Bay Steamer services, a coach service, or an arrangement where fishers shared the task of sailing the entire catch to market the next day [CS; GW; LID]. Several fish marketing companies were successively established at Queenscliff between 1859-1878 (GA 26/4/1867:3; Raison 1987:7), but the opening of the Geelong to Queenscliff Railway in 1879 dramatically expanded the scope and viability of the Queenscliff

fishing industry to include Melbourne, Ballarat, Bendigo and Portland. Although established for the military (GA 13/9/1877:2), the railway became an integral component of the fishers' landscape. Despite daily train services with special louvered cars for ventilation from the mid 1890s onwards ([CS]; Evans 2003:93), fish still spoiled enroute when trains were delayed, a situation which in 1917 led to the importation of ice for packing market consignments; by 1938 a local iceworks was opened for this purpose (Raison, 1987:7, [LID]). By 1933, fish was transported to market using trucks ([JP]; Raison 1987:7).

From a very early period, the fishermen also began organising the distribution of fish. The first of a series of professional fishing associations was founded in 1864 to protect fishing interests, which began marketing large quantities of fish in competition to other suppliers (GA 7/2/1866; Raison 1987:8). When an oversupply of fish at the Melbourne market in 1892 saw good fish condemned for lack of demand, local producers realised that they needed a mechanism to control fish supplies so as not to produce a glut (QS, 10/12/1892), and fishermen subsequently imposed their own quota system to limit their daily catch:

There were 30-40 couta boats in the early days. There were usually three people onboard, a father and two sons. Boys 14-16 were allowed a quota of 3 boxes, and men could have six boxes a day. The quota was imposed by the fishermen to keep the price stable on the market. It was tough until after the war. [HM]

The formation of the Queenscliff Fishermen's Cooperative in 1949 allowed fishermen a degree of certainty regarding catch prices, as fish were now sold to the co-op at a daily fixed price, and fish could be held back to avoid a glut and low prices at markets (Raison 1987:8; [JP]). An expanded history of fish marketing companies and Fisher Associations is presented in Appendix E-8.

## ***D) Changing Fishermen's Landscapes***

### **I) Fishermen's Anchorages and Moorings**

The landscape of fishermen's boat mooring areas changed many times as new maritime infrastructure was built in the area. In the early days of the settlement, fishermen would shelter their boats into the waters of Swan Ponds via "*The Creek*" (as it was known), which was a shallow bar inlet located between the shifting spit of Chinaman's Point and Swan Island. Several fishermen or recreational yachtsmen moored their boats below Swan Hill in Swan Bay, and piles from a small jetty and tie posts are still located in this area [CA]. Several small piers existed in this region, including Tobin's Jetty behind the Railway Station (QS 24/12/1910), which were used until the

installation of a low bridge to Swan Island prevented boat access via the bar. This location was only accessible in calm conditions, and during unexpected bad weather fishermen trapped outside The Creek were forced to shelter behind the northern extremity of Swan Island or in Stingaree Bight. [HM] recalled crossing the bar:

The sea used to break through [the Spit] naturally in a big sea, and the entrance would move up and down from Swan Island. But it was not deep enough for the fishing fleet to sail through loaded up, so we would throw our ballast out at the pier and sail in on an angle to the landing at Swan Island. The ballast was pig iron and fireplates, which was all we could get as we couldn't afford lead. We used to go to Swan Island in a big blow. We had to get permission to go to the island at Swan Island. They had an electric rail across the bridge to Swan Island to take the workers to the naval area. There was an old bridge that the trolley went across.

When Swan Island was taken over by the military in the late 1870s, the fishermen were allowed to continue this practice, and usually moored to the defence jetty (built in 1882) or laid their own moorings in Stingaree Bight. The fishermen were then transported via a horse drawn cart (and later an electric tramway) over the island back to Queenscliff (Raison 1987:24-5).

The area between the two piers was used as a semi- sheltered area for fishermen after the construction of the second pier in 1884. By 1894, there were at least 50-60 boats moored between the two piers (QS 7/4/1894), and the area developed into an important mooring area for fishing boats. Couta boats were moored in this area in moderate weather, but were pulled up on the shore between the two piers during onshore breezes, or taken around to Swan Island during gales:

...the wind was usually off the land in winter. If the wind came onshore we would pull the boats up on the shore. If it was offshore we left the boats on the moorings between the piers. In Queenscliff we had one central anchor that we would free swing on, and you had your own area to anchor in. We used to go to Swan Island in a big blow. [HM]

A boat slip was added for the convenience of fishermen near the naval depot at Swan Island in November 1908 (QS 21/11/1908). The slipway was still accessible to fishermen in the 1930s [HM] and many used the facility:

Grandad had his boats in between the piers until the wind got up, when he would shift them to Swan Island to in between the Piers at the Navy docks. The fishermen were brought back home on the trolley, and they would bring the boats back when the weather cleared. There was a good relationship [between the fishermen and] with the army and navy [JB]

After lobbying by fishermen, new breakwater arms were built at the New Pier in 1911 and the Fishermen's Pier in 1913-15 (QS 19/8/1911, 8/4/1916), which added further protection for fishermen's moorings between the two piers, and more were later added to the north of the northern



pier ([GW; HM]; Larkin 1928, 1929 Plans). Boats could now be moored there in most conditions, but still had to be taken to Swan Island during gales ([HM]; Raison 1987:25). This practice led to the formation of cordial relationships between the Defence Base staff and the fishermen, who were forced to use the Defence Department's electric tramway to access their vessels.

The need for a new sheltered anchorage was sorely felt by the fishermen, whose vigilance was required to avoid damage to their boats moored between the two piers. After severe storms in late 1934 caused extensive damage around Port Phillip, work began the next year to install a permanent channel into Swan Ponds (Raison 1987:25). The new 80 m long canal (known as "The Cut") that was dug through the Queenscliff Spit at Chinaman's Point was lined with timber sheet piling (Figure 6.17). The venture was financed by the PHD (PWD), and was excavated in a few months predominantly by fishermen using shovels and picks and a horse drawn scoop [HM]. Access to Swan Bay still proved problematic even after the work was completed:

When it was first built, the cut finished up where the [current] slipway was. It would never run straight, it would start to bend towards Swan Island (at the entrance), and fishermen would have to go halfway up to Swan Island and then turn back. One bloke got stuck in The Cut after a low tide and it sanded up. They extended the length in the 1950s, as the end was silting up...all the sand on the other side of the creek [at Dutchie's Island] was pumped there by dredging. [GW]



**Figure 6. 17: The Cut opening, c. 1935. Note the timber training walls on either side (Photo: PH215 QHM Collection).**

The new channel was also referred to as "The Creek", a name which had been previously applied to the entrance through the Queenscliff Bar. Even though fishermen established moorings in Swan Bay, silting proved a problem, and a breakwater, sheet piling and causeways were built between the former northern end of the Chinaman's Point Spit and Swan Island to force water through the cut, and prevent water from breaking through the sand spit to form a new entrance. Despite all these efforts, constant dredging has been required for the area ever since, and the spoil which was pumped to the northern side of the creek has led to the formation of a new island (Dutchie's Island)

and alteration of the northern Queenscliff coast (Raison 2002:25). These structures also led to extensive flooding on many of the foreshore Flat houses in Beach and Bay St, as the water from Swan Bay backed up behind them as it was funnelled through the narrow gap [JP; PF].

In 1960, all civilian access to Swan Island was discontinued when the army took over the base there [LID], which then prevented its use as an emergency fishing boat harbour. The combination of these circumstances and the increased silting between the piers made the waters too shallow to safely moor at the same time, led to the construction of a new boat harbour that was dug on the southeast side of the cut in the newly formed land. A slipway was built at the western extremity of the basin in 1964 to replace the previous slipway located on the Fishermen's Pier, with a second slipway added by 1972. The basin was extended to its present size between 1975-1982. A trailer boat ramp was added behind Wharf St on reclaimed land in 1972, and a car ferry began operating between Queenscliff and Sorrento in 1987 (Raison 2002:26).

## **II) Boatbuilding Landscapes**

Boatbuilding establishments and activities were essential components of the fishing landscape, with many boatbuilders having established premises in Queenscliff and Pt Lonsdale. The region's first boatbuilder, Anders Hanson originated from Denmark, and may have introduced Danish shipbuilding techniques into the area. The first boat builders in Queenscliff operated close to the open shoreline of Port Phillip Bay just above the high tide mark in Beach Street, and were forced to launch into exposed water over sand dunes. Subsequent boatbuilders who had their businesses at the top of Hobsons St behind the Vue Grand Hotel, probably also launched into Swan Ponds behind the current railway station. However, as the port evolved with the opening of the Cut in the mid-1930s, boatbuilding facilities were moved closer to the sheltered waters of Swan Bay, where an outlet to the deep water was now available. With the construction of the new harbour in the 1960s, along with two new slipways in the 1970s, boatbuilding activities moved closer to the centre the Queenscliff Harbour precinct. Eventually, as road transport networks improved, later boatbuilding, especially of smaller craft, decentralised outside the central borough region (Ferrier 1981, Kerr 1985; Raison 2002:10; QMM display; [PF]).

In most cases subsequent boatbuilders had been apprenticed to the previous tradesmen, who often took over the same business, and then trained underlings themselves, creating an unbroken generational dynasty of craftsmen. Most of the boatbuilding sites in Queenscliff were constantly re-

used for that purpose, and therefore boatbuilding landscapes in themselves represent ancestral landscapes, where the knowledge passed down not from family but from master to apprentice. An expanded history of boatbuilding in the area is outlined in Appendix E-9.

### III) Boat Maintenance

Fishermen were also known to build boats in winter to survive [PF], and many undertook their own boat repairs. Several areas were significant for fishing boat maintenance around the town. Many cousta boats were careened by early fishermen along the shore of the Swan Spit beach up to as far as the Swan Island Beacon. The boats were dragged ashore on greased skids using block and tackle, were chocked on each side with timber poles, and then anti-fouled and painted (Dod 1931:27-8; [CS; LID]). Historic photographs reveal that the northern foreshore of the Fishermen's Flat was also used to careen boats around the late 1880s (Photos PH 10, PH 409, QHM - see Figure 6.18). Goldsmith Carter (1945:21-3) observed similar behavior in Kent (where fishing boats were launched and recovered using greased roller blocks), and in other places worldwide (e.g. Smolarek 1981:56).



**Figure 6. 18: Boat slipping area, Swan Bay. Near the locality of the current Cut - c. 1890 (Ph 409: QHS Collection).**

Several slipways were known to have existed in the area. These included those associated with boatbuilding (e.g. Lacco's informal launching area behind 31 Beach St, Cayzer's slipway at the end of Beach St and the slipway in the new Harbour). A new slip was built at Swan Creek in 1912 to allow boats to be slipped and cleaned after the crane was removed from the old Pier (QS 25/5/1912). Several informants [CA; GW; HM] recalled a slipway behind the train station that was possibly used by a yacht club and/or lifeboat [LID] and which was probably associated with

Tobin's Jetty. During the 1920s-30s, a slipway was based on the extremity of the Fishermen's Pier, which was used to slip vessels for maintenance, and vessels could also be pulled out of the water in rough weather and stored on the pier [GW].

The Gasworks was also an important component of the fishermen's and boatbuilding landscape. Monk (2003:10) recorded that tar from the gasworks was used to seal many a recreational flat bottomed boats used in Swan Bay, and this observation was repeated during interviews with fishermen:

When I was a kid, I was sent up to the gasworks at Queenscliff to get tar in a four gallon kerosene drum. We used to tar the yards with it, and used to tar the inside and outside of the boats before we put on the anti-fouling. It gave a good seal for the boats. We would throw beach sand on it after it was finished, and this was done every year. We used to get a sixpence for doing it. [CS]

Tar was also used to preserve craypots and buoy float lines: "We used tar to tar the ti-tree, and we tarred the pot lines in the early days too. We used sisal for the ropes" [HM].

#### **IV) Military Sites as Resources for Boatbuilding Materials**

Several Queenscliff fishermen indicated that various military sites provided materials for boatbuilding. After the South Channel Fort closed in the 1960s, fishermen would go over and take the jarrah supporting beams which were re-used as keels [CS; LID], a factor that probably led to the collapse of some of the underground sections of the fort (Kitson 1987:5.4). The former entrance tunnel into Fort Queenscliff at the base of Shortlands Bluff, which was once lined with thick jarrah beams, also appears to have been mined for this resource [SH]. [WN] maintained that the defence forces were also involved in the removal of beams to make furniture at both of these sites. Kerr (1985:54) has recorded similar behaviour at Port Melbourne, where fishermen cut sections off the pier to form the stem and sternposts for their fishing boat.

Artillery sites also provided unexpected boons for fishermen. It was common knowledge in the community that shells had been fired at Duck Island for artillery practice [CS; HM; LID], and these were salvaged for use in boatbuilding [LID]:

The fishermen used to go to Duck Island to get the rifling bands from the shells [copper rims around the iron shell] that they fired at there. They used them for the quarter bands on the backs of the couta boats, you know as a rubbing strake to protect the stern of the boat. They had a howitzer in Swan Bay that used to fire at the island. [HM]

## 9) The Archaeology of Fishing Landscapes

### *A) Piers and Associated Amenities*

The fishing industry provided much more subtle evidence than many of the other industries in the Queenscliff area. Though partially demolished, substantial remains of the former Fishermen's Pier still exist under reclaimed land of the Queensland Maritime Museum and former Marine Science Laboratories sites, and were evident during redevelopment works in 2005 (see Chapter Eight). The course of the former plank road (now Wharf St) is still distinguishable in the raised embankment that fronts the adjacent reserve.

Several structures that formerly stood on the Fishermen's Pier are now located in the Queenscliff Maritime Museum and adjacent Parks Victoria grounds, including the Fishermen's Shed, The Fish Shed (Figures 6.19-6.21), and the Morgue. These structures are all of timber construction with corrugated iron roofs, and The Fishermen's Shed was decorated inside with paintings of passing vessels. Other work related areas of significance include the Fishermen's Co-operative Building and a branch line railway siding from the train station to the former fish shed site (near the current co-op, which is now only visible by its former path along a laneway between the fishermen's houses.



**Figure 6. 19: Fishermen's Pier Fishermen's Shed, now located in the QMM.**



**Figure 6. 20: Interior of Fishermen's Shed.**

Many small piers were located at Swan Bay (Figure 6.22), South Red Bluff (Jameison's Jetty), St Leonards (Figure 6.23) and at the Mud Islands, which were used for landing catches and nets (the latter of which was also used for guano mining). These piers were of vernacular construction, using lightweight sawn or unformed timber piles. Two small piers found north of the township St Leonards, and another at South Red Bluff (near Pt Edwards) used un-worked ti-tree branches as pier piles, and were associated either with the fishing or firewood trade, or both [GH].



**Figure 6. 21: Fisherman's Pier Fish Shed, QMM.**

The northern area of Queenscliff between Bridge St and Weeroona Parade was an important boatbuilding area, as was the seaward side of Beach St, where boats were launched directly into the water. The remains of a Cayzer Brothers former slipway and boatbuilding shed (which were built by Locke) are still visible at the end of Beach St, and are characterized by a dock formed in the sheet piling wall and scattered timber (Figure 6.24). An earlier slipway behind the railway station consists of substantial circular piles with vertical iron bolts, attached leeway timbers and an excavated area in the bank, which is probably the early slipway used by the fishermen and local Yacht Club (Figure 6.25). However, the construction of the railway in front of the facility, along with the installation of the low bridge to Swan Island either suggest that it was only used for slipping smaller vessels, predates those facilities, or that it was only ever accessed from the sea. Buried evidence in these areas, and along the sand spit to the north might include careening debris, rollers and other structural material and fittings, although none were identified during the study. Slipways increased in size over time as the size of fishing boats and other coastal vessels increased, as was evidenced by the latest dual slipway installed in the 1960s at Queenscliff Harbour (Figure 6.26).

Other facilities associated with the fishers presence included a barometer which once stood on the Fishermen's Pier, but which was moved to the top of the new Harbour Slipway when the pier was demolished. This area then became the focus for fishers' gatherings after the Fishermen's Shed was also removed (Figure 6.27). A weathervane was also mounted on the top of the Ports and Harbours Building, which probably originates from the West Channel Pile Light (Figure 6.28).





**Figure 6. 22: Vernacular fishing boat pier, Queenscliff, Swan Bay.**



**Figure 6. 23: St Leonards fisherman's/ firewood trade pier piles. (Scale =20cm).**



**Figure 6. 24: Cayzers boat shed dock/ slipway.**



**Figure 6. 25: Recording the Swan Bay Slipway.**



**Figure 6. 26: Queenscliff slipway.**



**Figure 6. 27: Queenscliff slipway winch shed. Note former Fisherman's Pier barometer and Fishermen's meeting place seat on right.**



**Figure 6. 28: Weathervane atop the former Ports and Harbours building. This feature probably originates from the West Channel Pile Light.**

### ***B) Fishing Boat Anchorages***

Fishing anchorages were usually located in sheltered shallow waters, usually with some degree of protection from prevailing gale force winds. Fishing anchorages were also evident in historic times by the presence of breakwater planks and cranes on the piers, the former to provide shelter for the vessels inside. The most obvious evidence of fishers' anchorages at Queenscliff was the current boat harbour and remains of The Cut. At the western extremity of the Creek (Figure 6.29) and current boat harbour, two extant (but degraded parallel timber training walls mark the original length of The Cut (Figure 6.30). A substantial breakwater/ causeway installed to silt up the former creek entrance were also evident on the northern side of the cut in the Swan Ponds, and consisted of a timber piled and planked wall reinforced with rough-cut bluestone boulders (Figure 6.31). Similar training walls/ breakwater entrances across a bar have also been observed at Gippsland Lakes (on a much grander scale). Anchorages were ideally located in a bay predominately sheltered from south westerly winds, and this protection was usually enhanced by the use of singular or paired breakwaters for housing fishing fleets have been observed by the author throughout Port Phillip (Mornington, Sorrento, Queenscliff, Geelong, Melbourne, Portarlington, St Leonards, Swan Island, Swan Bay), and Westernport Bays (e.g. San Remo, Hastings, Phillip Island), and along the entire Victorian coastline (e.g. Warrnambool, Port Fairy, Lorne, Apollo Bay, Port Albert, Port Welshpool, Toora). Strategically placed hulks and or actual shipwrecks were also used to provide shelter (e.g. Indented Head, Sorrento), as were timber sand groynes which encouraged sand accretion on the seaward side, whilst forming a deeper sheltered area on the other side (e.g. St Leonards – Portarlington, Avalon Beach Geelong – Duncan 2004a, Werribee). Where no protection was available on exposed coasts, fishing fleets were often located in tidal inlets, estuaries or lakes, and might be encountered miles inland in very shallow/ narrow waterways (Duncan 2003b). This was



particularly the case where there were sandy beaches in the Gippsland region (e.g. Mallacoota, Port Franklin, Foster) and cliffy coasts of Western Victoria (Port Fairy, Warrnambool).

Furthermore, the differences in the size and type of moorings further indicated the type of weather each mooring was used for (i.e. everyday/storm moorings). As it was known from oral histories that couta fishermen used single anchor moorings between the piers at Queenscliff [HM], the use of permanent moorings at different sites around Queenscliff and Swan Island might further be used to differentiate between types of fishermen and their economic catches (e.g. net vs. line fishermen). Several vernacular fishing boat moorings (e.g. engines, heavy scrap iron and kerosene tins filled with concrete – Figure 6.32) were discovered at Swan Ponds, Stingaree Bight [PF] and St Leonards [RA], respectively, and similar opportunistic use of local materials (i.e. curbing stones) has been documented at Williamstown near Melbourne (Duncan 2003a: 287). Although old train wheels were the favoured mooring type, none were identified in this area. Fishing boats were also evident in the archaeological record through discarded/lost ballast (e.g. lead ingots 30 x 10 x 8 cm) and/or pig iron/fireplates at the Portsea Pier (e.g. [PF]; VHR S737 database record – *Winfred* shipwreck).

An unexpected type of fishers' boat storage was observed at Portsea close to Pt Franklin in Collins Bay, where a former fisher's camp was formerly situated on an exposed beach. A number of caves had been carved out of the cliff face and a block and tackle were installed in the rock roof to raise the boat out of the water/tidal range in bad weather ([RG]- Figure 6.33), but the interior of these features were not inspected.

Fishing anchorages were also identified by timber or iron tie posts (2-3ft high) that were used to secure small boats fore and aft (Figure 6.34). These were spaced 10-15m apart, usually in a perpendicular line to the shore, usually sheltered from prevailing winds. These features were often the only indicator visible of fishing anchorages in some areas, and these types of characterisations have been observed by the author in other regions (e.g. Melbourne, Gippsland, Geelong, – Duncan 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, respectively).

Fishing anchorages have been tentatively identified by distinct artefacts used by fishermen. These include recycled marble aerated water bottles with intact oil inside (which were used as engine oil storage for couta boats). Other possible archaeological signatures of fishermen's moorings include rabbit traps (for eradicating rats that ate nets) and half sheep shears which were used for filleting knives. [SA] observed that there were no alcohol bottles near the *Wauchope* (shipwreck), which was



**Figure 6. 29: Queenscliff Harbour and The Creek from the east.**



**Figure 6. 30: Extant northern timber training wall of the original Cut entrance, western end of The Creek.**



**Figure 6. 31: Swan Ponds breakwater/ causeway.**



**Figure 6. 32: Vernacular fishing moorings discovered offshore at St Leonards (Photo: Heritage Victoria).**



**Figure 6. 33: Fishers boat storage cave, near Pt Franklin.**



**Figure 6. 34: Pt Norgate tie posts, Swan Island.**

a former fishermen's anchorage, an observation which could reveal more about fishers work habits, and the separation of work from recreational areas, but was not tested further here.

Although several fishing boats were known to have wrecked in the area, at the time of this study no fishing boat wreck sites had been located outside of Swan Ponds (where several had sunk at their moorings). This observation possibly indicated that those boats that foundered in open waters were either recovered soon after the incident, or the hulls quickly deteriorated after the wrecking event.

### ***C) Fish Species and Differentiation of Economic Catches***

Physical evidence of fishing activities underwater often indicated the historical fishing locations, and included preserved craypots; scallop dredges; lead sinkers, hooks and grapnels and nets, that were usually found in conjunction with concentrations of underwater bottle scatters (e.g. the West Anchorage [PF]). Modern recreational fishing locations were often evident by scatters of aluminium beer cans [PF]. Examination of the types of sinkers, in conjunction with ethnographic accounts and oral histories, may reveal the types of economic fish species caught in various areas, based on observed traditional fishing practices that varied for different types of fish (i.e. bottom feeding fish require heavy sinker in current etc). Most of the sinkers appear to be of vernacular construction (probably using a homemade mould) and some were made from lead filled copper pipe or scale weights, providing further insights into the recycling practices of the fishing industry (Figures 6.35 – 6.38). These artefacts were generally located along on rock bottoms at the edge of the rocky reefs (over an area of 200 and 700ft long) [PF], where lines were more prone to catch, but these were also the areas where some fish species were more prevalent (e.g. snapper). Furthermore, snapper fishing often used very heavy weights to counteract the effects of currents (sometimes many kilograms in weight), and often resembled lead sounding weights used for determining water depth [PF], whilst whiting sinkers were more lightweight [LID]. Examples of specific recreational fishing rigs used in Port Phillip Bay have been documented Wedlick (1965: 27, 38, 39) - see Figure 6.39). Unfortunately the nebulous and vernacular scope of fishing sinkers, along with their predominant lack of any distinctive stamping that might be expected in commercially manufactured items often precludes any exact dating of these types of rigs. However, one sinker (in Figure 6.35) was scratched with “24” which might be a distinctive mark to signify ownership.



**Figure 6. 35: Snapper fishing sinkers used in Port Phillip Bay. Sinker on right was used as a beach casting sinker (probably for salmon fishing). Note scale = 15cm (P. Ferrier Collection).**



**Figure 6. 36: Possible scale weights (left) used as fishing sinkers (P. Ferrier Collection).**



**Figure 6. 37: Fishing sinkers made of recycled cartridges and copper pipe - found at West Channel Pile Light (P. Ferrier Collection).**



**Figure 6. 38: Snapper fishing sinkers (P. Ferrier Collection).**

### ***D) Housing***

The earliest fishermen's huts were nearly always located on the Fishermen's Flat, as it was originally reserved Crown land for this purpose. Many fishing residences are still extant on The Flat, and were characterised by their small size, timber construction and few rooms (Figure 6.40), and often smaller rear cottages for leasing to tourists during the summer season (Figure 6.41). As fishermen's housing areas were marginalised to low-lying marshy areas, they were also indicated by the presence of anti-erosion devices such as sandstone walls, timber groynes (Queenscliff – Figure 6.42, St Leonards, and South Red Bluff) and even a former shipping hulk (*HMVS Lonsdale*).



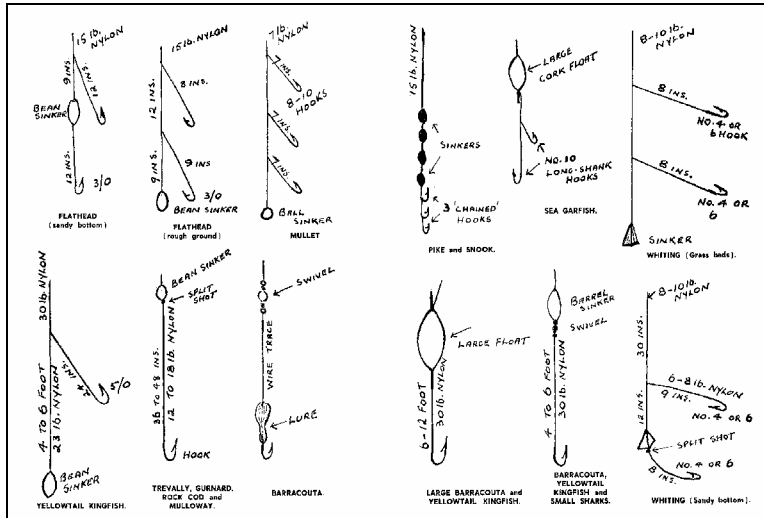


Figure 6. 39: Examples of fishing rigs used in Port Phillip Bay (in Wedlick 1965: 38-9).



Figure 6. 40: Fisher's house (left) and rear cottage, Bridge St, Queenscliff.

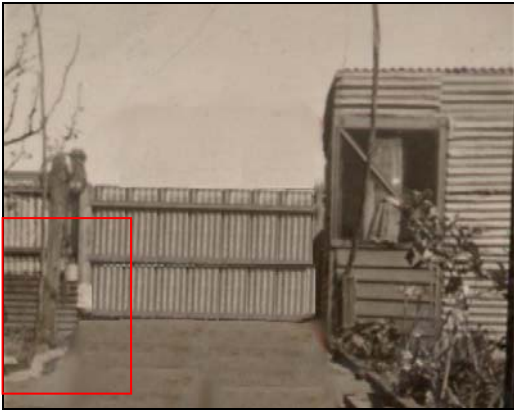


Figure 6. 41: Fisherman's cottage, Queenscliff Maritime Museum.



Figure 6. 42: Excavated timber groyne uncovered behind Beach St Fishermen's Houses in 2006 (Scale = 2m).

Fishing houses usually did not have their own water supply, but many were known to have open ended timber barrels buried in the yards which were used for soaks, where ground water seeped into the barrel overnight, a practice that was also common in the early pilots' service (Dod 1931:17). An iron tank around a spring was located at 16 Wharf St in recent years [GW]. Some housing blocks also had small net storage sheds, and concrete tanks with corrugated iron forming formwork, or cut down corrugated iron tanks which were used for the annual net tanning (Figure 7.43). Similar examples have been observed by the author at Hastings, Westernport Bay.



**Figure 6. 43: Shapter Family net tanning tank (left) and net storage shed (After Photo: PH160 QHM Collection).**



**Figure 6. 44: Edwards Point fishermen's road/hard (Scale = 1.5m).**

Due to the popularity of looting amongst fishermen, it has also been suggested that finds of contraband wreck or smuggled material buried in backyards or secreted within the house structure [GW; HM; LID; PF] might also characterise historic fishermen's residences. This aspect is discussed further in the following chapter.

Remains of isolated timber and corrugated iron shacks and house foundations were once evident on Mud and Swan Islands, along with alcohol bottles [GrW; IS; LJ]. Drop-pit toilets were also used at fisher's cottages, and Thompson (n.d.:2) reported that 13 years worth of toilet pits were located under the 7<sup>th</sup> hole of the Swan Island Golf Course. Only flattened areas of former Mud Island house sites were located during the survey, along with some exotic plant species (but the latter could have been transported there by birds). House sites at Duck Island were indicated by brick, bluestone, timber, corrugated iron and concrete remains; it is probable that further archaeological remains are buried in these areas. Huers Huts (bird/fish watching huts) were once located in Weeroona Bay, but

were not investigated as part of this survey, and no similar features were identified on the Bellarine Peninsula.

### ***E) Other Signatures***

Access roads or hards for net fishermen at Edwards Pt Peninsula (Figure 6.44) were constructed over swamps using brick rubble, and some of these tracks formed the foundations for many of the current roads into the area [GH; LJ; PM; SS]. The brick road is still visible along the eastern finger arm, and may have altered the environmental conditions of the area to produce a third peninsula finger. Similar features have been observed at Port Albert on the east coast of Victoria and in Westernport Bay (Duncan 2003b, 2004b). Other signatures encountered of fishing include environmental indicators, such as the denudation of ti-tree stocks in the Rye area and wattle trees from the Swan Bay and Swan Island regions, which were respectively used for manufacturing craypots, and for tanning nets and fishing lines.

Perhaps the greatest physical indicator of fishing landscapes lies in the environmental change they wrought. Aside from the obvious effects of denudation of natural resources (i.e. fish stocks and local vegetation) and the effects of constant anchoring on the seabed, the installation of pier and fishing boat harbours to extensive changes in local geomorphology. The installation of the first pier began a cycle of sand accretion in the area, and the creation of an enclosed boat harbour through the installation of breakwater planks on the two major piers further between (c.1914-1935) complicated the problem (see Appendix G-3 for further details). The final implementation of The Cut and the associated breakwater/causeway to close the old entrance caused massive siltation and erosion problems along the Queenscliff and Swan Bay foreshores respectively, and led to dramatic reshaping of the Queenscliff coastline and the installation of erosion control devices to protect the fishers houses from washing away ([HM; JP; LID]; Larkin 1928 [plan]; Raison, 2002: 24). The changes also demonstrated at Edwards Point show the extent to which fishing anchorages and activities effectively changed coastal topography, and therefore it might be said that the biggest archaeological indicator of the fishing industry is in fact environmental change. This aspect is discussed in further detail in Chapter Eight. A summary table of archaeological signatures associated with fishing landscapes is presented in Appendix E-10, and an overview of fishing landscape sites is presented in Figures 6.45-6.49.

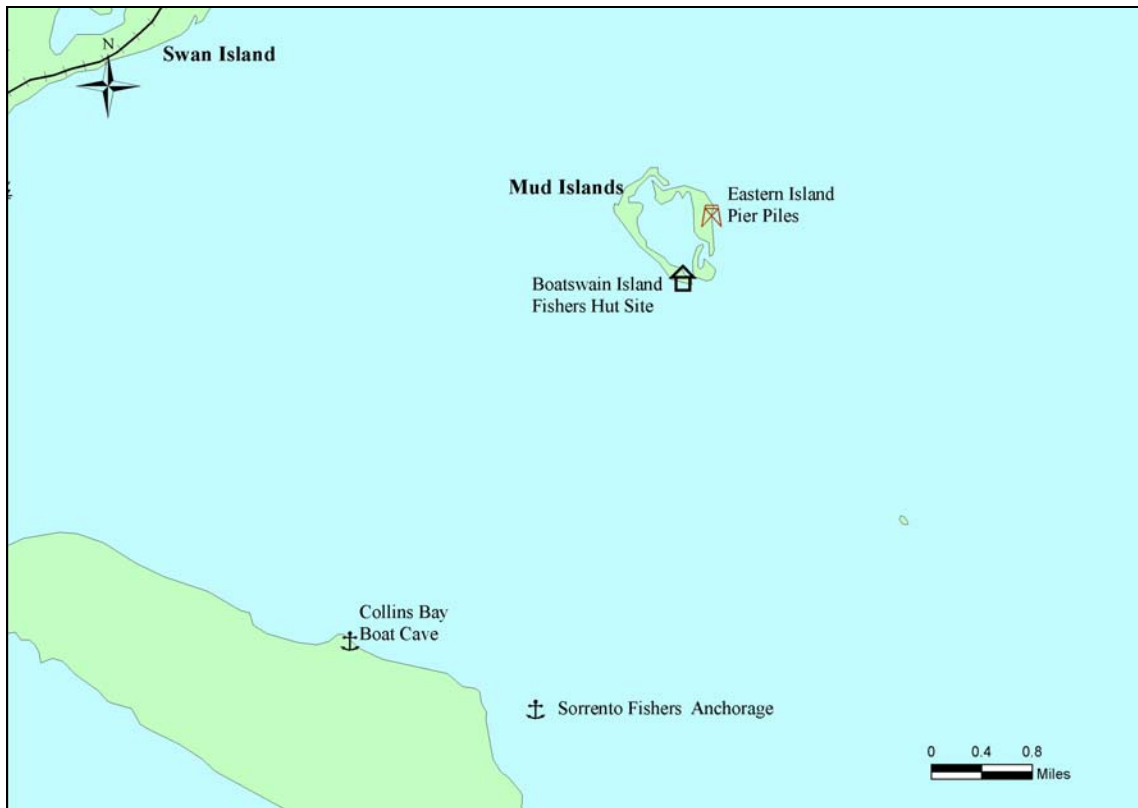


Figure 6. 45: Fishers landscapes of the South Channel.



Figure 6. 46: Fishers landscape sites of the Swan Bay.



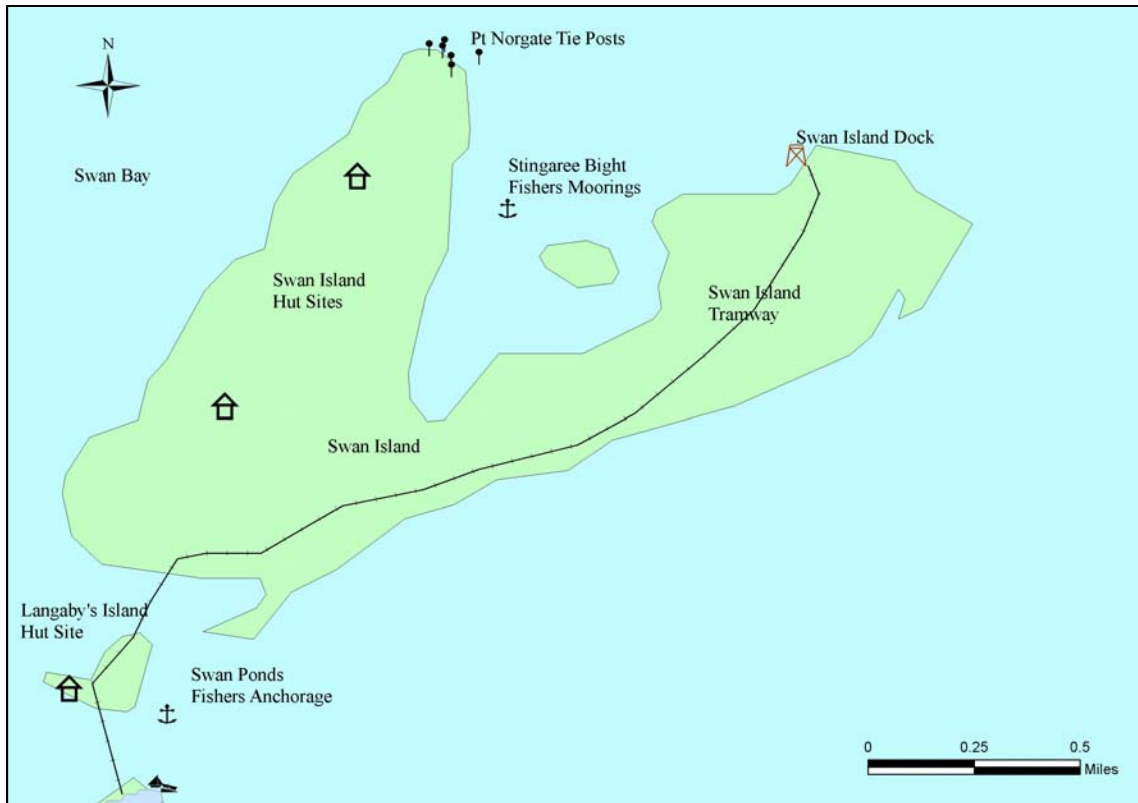


Figure 6. 47: Fishers landscape sites of Swan Island.

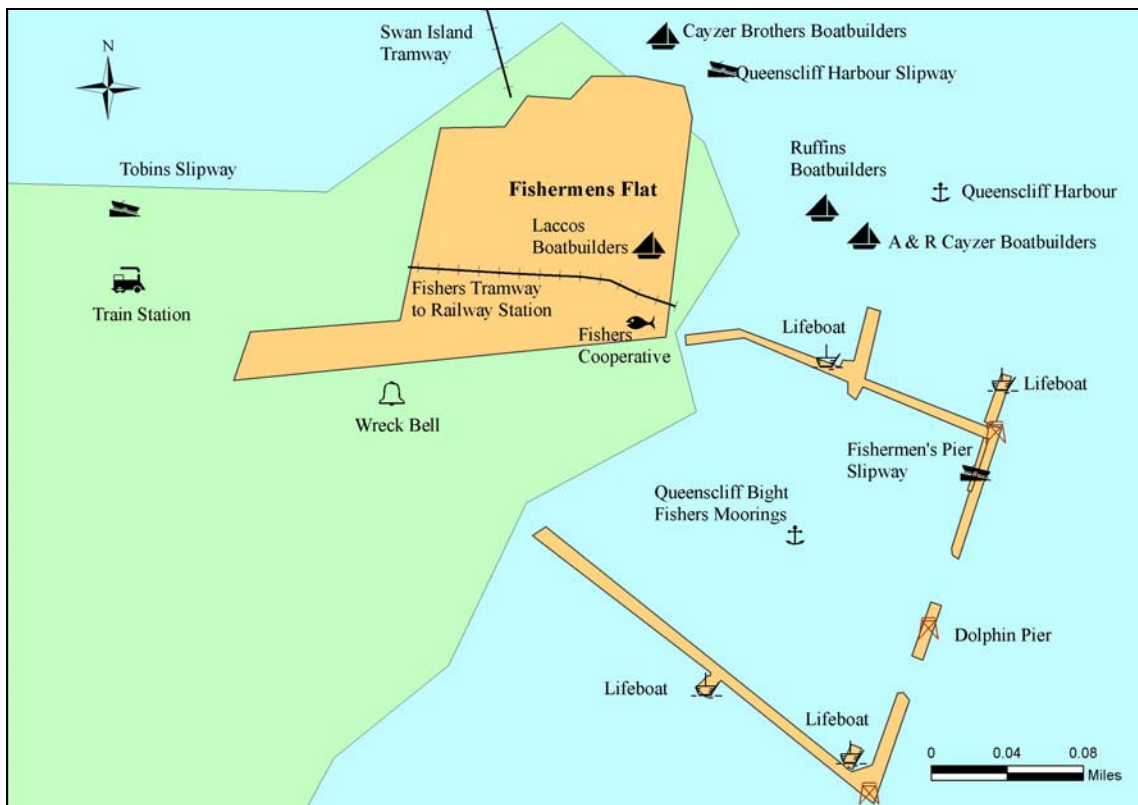


Figure 6. 48: Fishers landscape sites of Queenscliff (east side).

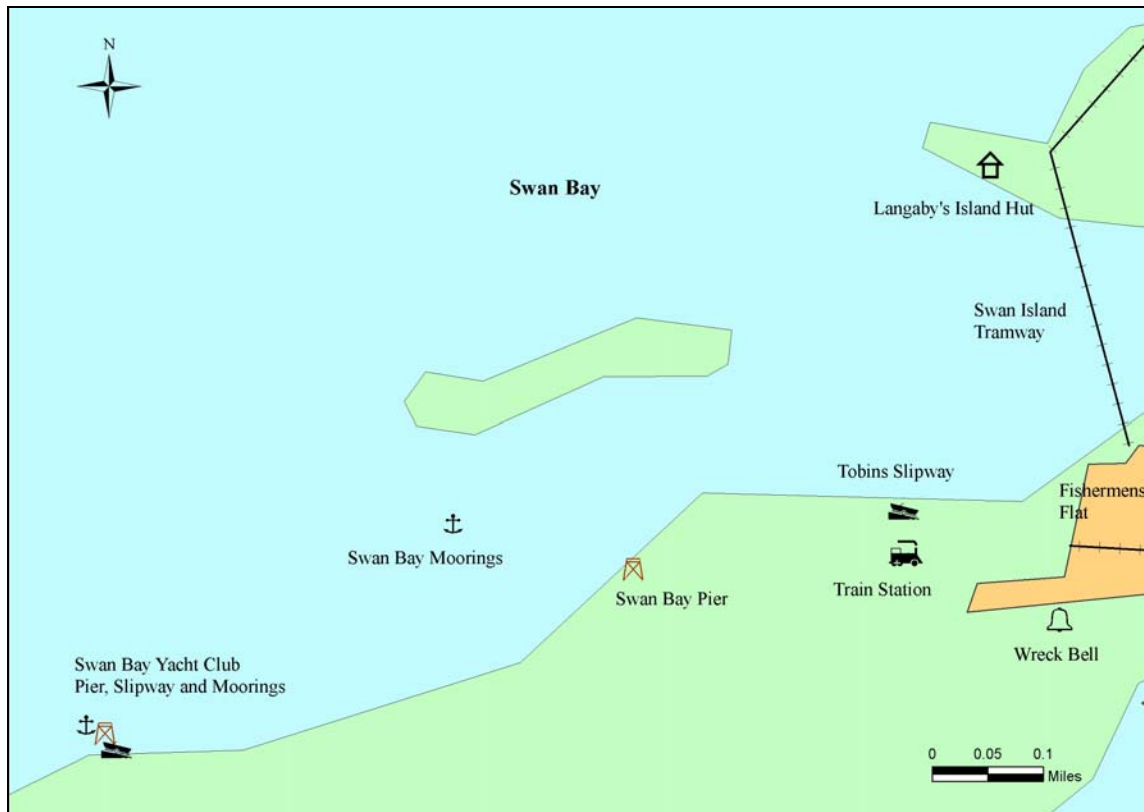


Figure 6. 49: Fishers landscapes of Queenscliff (west side).

## 10) Cognitive Landscapes

### A) Gendered Fishing Community Landscapes

#### I) Fisher Men's Landscapes

Examination of the fishing community also provided an opportunity to discriminate between gender based activities of that social group. Aside from the obvious examples of workplace practices already outlined above, there were many apparent disparities between the areas accessed by men and women who regularly mixed in and experienced very different worlds to each other, and often held different views of other community groups within the township. These exposures to disparate experiences of Queenscliff society may have led to the generation of very diverse landscapes based on gender, which will be explored in further detail below.

#### (a) Entertainment for Young Men

There were many popular recreation venues throughout the region for fishermen which represented male dominated spaces. Several informants indicated that the lower end of the town, between

Hesse and Gellibrand Streets was often frequented by the younger men of the fishing community who did not venture outside the world of the Fishermen's Flat or their own pubs:

...if they [the fishermen] didn't go to the footy ground they wouldn't know what the other side of town looked like...they used to hang out at the Esplanade Hotel, and never went any further than the Vic [Victoria Hotel at the eastern end of Hesse St]. They would sit on the windows [sills] and talk all day if the weather was bad. One bloke was called the rounder, because he spent the whole day doing the rounds of three pubs at the bottom end of town...They didn't go to the top of the town too much, except for the football. [name withheld] came back from uptown the other day, and asked where the Asters Boarding House had gone, and that had been pulled down 20 years ago, which shows how often he goes up there. [GW]

The proximity of the Esplanade Hotel to the fishermen's moorings meant that fishermen (of all ages) could watch their boats whilst enjoying a beer outside the pub, and it became the favourite watering hole for fishermen [HM]. Similar practices were noted amongst fishermen at Lorne in Western Victoria, many of whom were probably also Queenscliff fishermen (Hunt 1999:132). Several visitors to Queenscliff over the years recorded a larrikin element at the bottom end of town were a problem (QS, 21/6/1884, 27/3/1886, 10/8/1907), and the triangle shaped park opposite the Esplanade Hotel developed a reputation as a place where drunk fishermen went to fight soldiers, urinate and sleep after overindulging at the pub [GW].

The Mud Islands were another venue that was used almost exclusively by male fisherfolk and local football clubs. The earliest use of the Mud Islands was related in oral accounts where fishermen would tow barrels of alcohol they had found from shipwrecks to the island, where they would remain until they had consumed its contents [LF]. Many respondents recalled that "Barrel Days" that had taken place at the Mud Islands, where (often underage) teenagers took a keg of beer over to the north-west extremity of the islands, and would stay there until the barrel was empty [GrW], which has obvious parallels to the looting behaviour outlined above, and suggests that these customs may have been traditional practices. [GR] remembered:

I've been to Mud Islands for BBQs with the footy club. We had all sorts of fun there. We used to have a thing called the Mud Island Gift. It was a race, 100 yards up to your knees in mud. It was won once by a bloke from Fiji. You would also see how many toadies you could fit into a beer glass. It was fun having to catch them in the mud. You usually stayed for the day...You would anchor the big boat offshore and wade or paddle in. We took barrels of beer, sometimes 7 nine gallon barrels. Up to 60 people used to go. We went to the NW island and came in the NW side in the shallows.

The visits continued at least up until the 1960s, when a fishing accident that claimed the life of two young boys led to the cessation of this practice [GR].

Football was a popular sport with fishermen, and regular Australian Rules football matches were held in the park (now the Queenscliff Fort parade ground), and later at the football oval. The local league included not only teams fielded by the local fishermen, military, and Portarlington and Drysdale districts, but also other sides from the across the bay on the Mornington Peninsula, and in one circumstance, Queenscliff won the league after an entire opposing football team was lost when their boat sank during a squall coming back from a match (Moorhead, 1980:133; [HM]). Derby matches with Sorrento were known as the “Battle of the Rip”, and spectators often sailed across and around The Bay to watch ([GW; HM]. The matches presented opportunities to let off steam, impress the local women and to even old scores, and were often rough affairs (this is discussed further in Chapter Eight).

Sailing regattas were another popular sport for the fishing community, who quickly dominated the sport from the 1860s onwards (Fanning 1893; QS 28/12/1912). Local fishermen were often such good sailors that they were banned from sailing in competitions at Port Melbourne on the grounds that they were professional sailors (Raison, 1987:29). Annual regattas are still held in the community, and are closely tied to the annual blessing of the fleet (QH, Feb 2004:1, Mar 2004:1). Ferrier (1989:20) recalled that youths would often take their fathers boats across to other coastal towns (e.g. Portsea and Sorrento) for nights out with their friends and girlfriends, but were often punished with a days fishing when they arrived home early in the morning.

### **(b) Fishermen’s Sacred/ Traditional/ Ritual, Spiritual Fishing Landscapes**

Many informants revealed the existences of a number of localities which were considered of special importance within the fishing community, especially to the men.

#### **(i) The Rip**

It is without doubt that that The Rip is one of the most dangerous stretches of water in the world, accounting for many lives (and near mishaps) amongst the Queenscliff community, and the negotiation of which required specialist knowledge of its intricacies and irregularities. The Rip was often spoken of in reverential terms by many mariners, as recounted by Dod (1931:39): “many mariners venturing through The Rip breathe a long sigh of relief when they are safely through its terrors”. Many feared the crossing, but were forced to accept it as an occupational hazard [JM]. One informant summed up the fishing community’s perception of The Rip:

Was The Rip Dangerous? Christ yeah! Especially in a south west wind and a big break, with the tide and a break coming behind you. A few boats got sunk there. I wasn't too happy sometimes coming through I tell yeh! [CS]

Fishermen often relied on their own intuitive perceptions of The Rip to guide them through. One fisherman described The Rip with religious overtones, where he attributed his salvation from the monstrous conditions he experience to a Higher Authority, and others were known to plead the almighty for their salvation [LF]. It was clear that the area was held in exalted and solemn regard by all mariners who traversed it. Those who faced its dangers were highly respected for their abilities amongst the general community. The fishermen in particular were respected within the community for their specialist knowledge of its intricacies and variations. A former boatbuilder for the Pilots Service stated:

Fishermen had a better knowledge of the Rip than pilots. Pilots stuck to one entrance, fishermen worked the Rip, knew the currents, swell, seas. Fishermen knew the Rip, knew every swell that came in. Pilots knew The Rip to suit the job. [JB]

The Rip presented a greater danger to fishermen due to the restricted size of their boats, which were hence more exposed to the dangerous currents and eddies than larger vessels. Many accounts attest to the hazards of the fishing industry (QS 7/4/1894), and in one family alone, three sons were lost in separate incidents (QS 22/10/1892). Fishermen therefore used alternate routes to mainstream traffic whenever the weather was boisterous. Smaller channels inaccessible to larger vessels were used inshore of Lonsdale and Corsair Rocks in certain weather conditions to avoid the full effect of the tide or seas (PHB 1959:185). Fishermen used the Boat Channel (inshore of Lonsdale Reef) when the wind was blowing from the north/northwest and strong spring ebb tides [HM]. They would also use the channel between the Campbell shipwreck and Corsair Rock, to avoid the full effects of the tidal eddies ([PF]; PHB 1959:185; 191). These routes were initially guided by vernacular lead marks ashore, which were later replaced with official lead beacons (see Figure 4.4).

## **(ii) Fishermen's Shed**

The Fishermen's Pier had two sheds which were used by fishermen to wait for daybreak to assess if the fishing fleet could put to sea. The Fishermen's Shed was reserved for senior fishermen, with the other hut for younger lads not permitted amongst their elders (Ferrier 1989:20). This structure stood midway along the Fishermen's Pier, and was the central focus of the fishermen's life before embarking for work:

Fishermen used the shed to talk in the morning before they went out fishing of a morning. They played cards in there when the weather was bad and sat and talked. When they

were coutering, they [the fishermen] went out at daybreak, and they would go into the shed and talk...and one by one they would gradually slip away. The young ones had to stand outside in the cold. The kids were not allowed into the shed when the fishermen were there...only when they weren't there. The shed was never locked and anyone could come in, but when the fishermen were there, the kids weren't allowed in. You weren't allowed in the shed until you were a man. When you got to a certain size you were allowed to go in to talk to them, and they were good talkers too. Some young kids once were playing around and nailed a dead squid to the underside of the [cards] table. Every time someone thumped the table, maggots would fall off, and eventually someone upended the table in a rage, and there was cursing in eight different languages. [GW]

Boys were only allowed into the shed after they had become fishermen themselves (i.e. not just assistants to their father). Some exceptions were made to allow boys to run errands [LF], and to read for their illiterate fathers ([PF]; Raison 2002:22), but generally this was a place reserved for elder fishermen only, and it was a habit of the elder fishermen to tease the young lads (Ferrier, 1989:20). Similar behaviour has been observed by Evans (as cited in Kerr 2003b), where boys were excluded to the periphery of congregations on the wharf, and fishers also gathered in the Round Topped Shed. Fights were also sometimes settled in the sheds, along with occasional championship boxing bouts [LF]. When the Fishermen's Shed was removed from the Fishermen's Pier after it was demolished, fishers congregated at the winch shed at the top of the slipway in the new boat harbour (Kerr, 1985; [DG]).

### **(c) Fishing Initiation and Rites of Passage**

The restriction of children into the Fishermen's Shed until they were a given age suggests that a process of education and initiation as a fisherman was undertaken there. Symbolically, admission to the shed represented an acceptance by one's mentors into manhood and as an equal. Final acceptance as an initiated fisherman was earned when the individual could negotiate The Rip on his own. In some cases, boys as young as 14 owned their own boat, but were not accepted as fishermen until they were 16. [HM] recalled the hierarchy of the shed:

Boys weren't allowed in until they were 14-16. They could go in when they were men. They usually got their fishing licence around that time, and then they could go in. They would go out with their fathers fishing before then, and they were only allowed a partial quota. When they turned 16 they could go in the shed, and that was around the same time as when they got their licence. (Q. Was it a kind of initiation, like in other places where boys had to perform a certain task to be accepted as men?)...Oh yes. That's what it was like. You had to be a man to be allowed into the shed, and you had to be accepted as a fisherman before you could go in...Some boys shied away from it [The Rip] when they first tried, and went back in. You had to be able to show that you were a man though to get in the shed. You had to prove that you were a man to get in, through fishing. You had to be able to show you could handle yourself. I didn't start fishing until I was 14, and I didn't get in until I was 16. They were different times back then.

Sognnes (1994, as cited in Westerdahl 2000:12) recognised that the transition from sea to land (and vice versa) could be seen as a rite of passage, of the type called territorial passages, where the time spent at sea represented the liminal period away from normality, after which the participant would return anew.

It appears that the shed was a revered or ritualistic space, where free admission signified not only membership of a special order (i.e. of fishermen), but also of those who had been initiated into manhood or accepted as men, possibly through a rite of passage through The Rip. The exclusion of outsiders during the hours of use by fishermen signifies that the shed itself was not significant, but the actual space during the time that it was used by fishermen symbolically was. This practice is analogous with halls that are used for Masonic Temples (and other Lodges), which possess significance as a semi sacred landscapes when in use by the Lodges, but are often used by other parties outside those times for other purposes.

This practice of exclusivity has often been adopted by numerous other trade guilds (e.g. Freemasons, Horsemen's Society (Evans 1966:235)) to reinforce their own cultural identity through secretiveness and mysticism. Minegal et al. (2003) and Wright (1992) have observed the importance of hereditary knowledge in fishing communities lay in the ability of those members to recount and identify themselves as part of those groups, whether they were related to those in the stories or not. In Queenscliff, secrets of the trade (e.g. fishing locations and technological secrets) were closely guarded, and exclusion of the uninitiated and other outsiders from the fishermen's secret inner world thus maintained the social differentiation both within and without the fishing community. Those who were outside the fishing community were excluded from the hereditary knowledge of the secrets of local fishing, and younger members of the community were placed within the social stratum of the fishing society by restricted access to that information. This restriction of understanding has similarities to ritual initiation cults, where manipulation of knowledge and successive levels of secrecy is used by elders to gain social and political domination over younger men (Barth 1975, as cited in Smith 1986:250). The rationing of knowledge to those who were part of the hereditary fishing community and the exclusion of those who were not, was a significant component of maintaining the cultural identity of the Queenscliff fishing community. Furthermore, the existence of a specialist and secretive body of maritime knowledge has parallels to the Polynesian societies, where traditional understandings of the localized maritime environment was passed from generation to generation as a closely guarded specialized trade secrets (e.g. Gladwin 1970; Lewis 1994; Hviding 1996;), and often helped establish a separate cultural identity

from those who were terrestrially based (Thomas 1997:45-8). This issue is discussed further with reference to external social differentiation in Chapter Eight.

The lifeboat service may have represented a further step in the initiation process, as originally seasoned mariners only were accepted for the service. Membership of the lifeboat was made up predominantly of fishermen, many of whom were teenagers in the late twentieth century [CA; HM; PF]. Membership of this institution was predominantly a necessity in most cases to make ends meet, but was also bestowed a degree of admiration from the township and tourists, as the work was often undertaken in very dangerous conditions. It is therefore possible that a place in the lifeboat was yet another way that fishermen demonstrated the depths of their courage and status of manhood. Other aspects of fishermen's service in this activity are discussed in Chapter Seven.

## **II) Fisher Women's Landscapes**

In stark contrast to their male counterparts, fishing women often had a much broader exposure to other sectors of the township. This intermingling with other social groups within the town, even if only in a professional capacity, led to different landscapes/experiences to those of their male counterparts. Although the worlds of the fisher women were only explored in much shallower depth than the fishermen (due to times constraints predominantly), they present interesting alternative and often unexplored insights into the other half of the fisher community.

Married women often had very large families of up to 17 children [JM; PF]. However, far from being submissive domestic housewives, the women of the Queenscliff and Pt Lonsdale communities often dominated the households. [JM] claimed that especially within the fishing community, the women ruled the roost:

They were tough characters, with strong and often loud women who controlled the families and money. It was a matriarchal society.

Fishermen's wives often forced their husbands to get jobs during the winter months, and according to one informant [PF]: "The weather and the wife were the boss". [WN] reaffirmed this observation:

Yes it was peculiarly matriarchal around here. It was the same in all the families I knew of. It was a product of the war. The women took up the reins while the men were away, and they didn't want to hand them back when the war was finished. All the families I knew were like that. It seemed to be while the war was on, that the women took up the reins. Women did things then that normally would be frowned upon. Auntie Nola played the drums in a band, and mum played the guitar in a local band, which were usually roles



played by men. I know when Bob was away, Nan speculated on land, and made a lot of money doing it too. When Bob came back he spent all the money, and was in the doghouse for a long time after that. They used to call a lot of the husbands the lovable dopes. They were nice people, but the men were no good with money. That sort of thing. Women still are the same strong figures in the community. If you look at the historic records, they mention a lot of strong mother figures, which was a common facet of Pt Lonsdale and Queenscliff life.

Furthermore, one informant maintained that boats were always named after women:

All their boats were named after women. My boats were named after women in my family, and in the end I ran out of women's names and named my last boat after the dog.  
[HM]

This was a common observation in Victorian fishing communities (Dwyer et al, 2003:11), and might suggest women also have exercised influence over sea as well as home life.

### **(a) Work and Employment**

Although women do not appear to have been involved in waterborne fishing, several informants (both male and female) indicated that women played a role in the seine fishery, and were mainly involved in helping haul in the nets, predominantly in the early days [JM; LF; PF].

Single women from fishing families were not afforded the luxury of staying at home, but were forced to train for a profession either in the technical trades (e.g. seamstress, music teacher etc) or to bring some form of income into their often large families [WN]. Fishing women were involved in a variety of professions over the years, including washing clothes at the fort around the turn of the century [PF], or making souvenirs from shells and other flotsam and jetsam to sell to tourists Dod (1931:25-6).

Fishing women often completed higher standards of education than their male counterparts, especially in the technical trades such as tailoring and photography [DS; WN]:

You made all your own clothes back then, and it was reported in the local paper. Nan made ball gowns, white silk shirts for boys, and foundation garments (undergarments). She was trained at the Gordon Tech. You weren't allowed to stay at home. Women had to be trained to do something - that was mainly the fisher women folk. She did right up to merit at High School. Mum took her own photos and developed them. Mum had a dressmaking and Millinery shop... in 1940. [WN]

Guest houses were also an important part of many fishing communities (e.g. Lorne - see Hunt 1999:25), as they provided supplementary work especially for young women. Several descendents

of fishers recounted how their family's womenfolk were extensively involved in the guest house trade, where they worked very long hours, but also occasionally had time to swim at the more exclusive Pt Lonsdale Beaches [DS].

The women of many fishing families often worked in, or ran guesthouses, and made all the decisions even when the fishermen owned the facility [WN]:

All his sons were fishermen, and all his daughters were in the boarding house business... Jonah Aitken owned the guesthouse behind the nursing home...Her husband sat down and cried when his wife told him that she was starting a guest house, as it meant more work for him. The husband had to compact the latrines. [JM]

Beachcombing appears to have been a significant component of fishing women's landscapes, but was also undertaken by other family or community members. Women often patrolled the beach in search of fuel for home fires [DS; PF; WN]. Driftwood and shipwreck timbers were also collected by women as firewood from the same area, and also at Swan Island, despite being officially out of bounds for the local community (Ferrier 1991:2). Beach combing is explored further in Chapter Seven in relation to shipwreck flotsam.

### **(b) Army Personnel**

The fortress at Queenscliff played an important role in many women's landscapes, particularly for the younger daughters of the fishermen. Many informants revealed that the army personnel were very popular with the townships younger female population:

The young ladies loved the men at the fortress. The Gunners at the fort were the backbone of the Australian Infantry Forces, and many of them went to Tobruk and El Alemein. Lots of young men returned from the war as commissioned officers. The war had a big effect on the town, and the army was well educated. The fort had a big effect on the town, and the girls too. And the fishermen. The army (personnel) took all the girls. [JM]

The forts at Shortlands Bluff and Crows Nest were therefore important components of the recreational landscapes of many single Queenscliff women. Additionally, as the army personnel had more money than the fishermen [GW], their spouses and girlfriends were also likely to have had exposure to the more affluent areas of the town that were inaccessible to the poorer male fishing population, which further contributed to the ill feeling between these two social groups. This aspect is explored further in Chapter Eight.

It appears that fisher men and women occupied very different landscapes within the Queenscliff community. It is clear from the above analysis that there were many gendered aspects to landscapes within Queenscliff, particularly a division where the sea was predominantly accessible to males, from which women rarely ventured. However, it can also be seen that women also had areas where fishermen were excluded, and in particular this was into military areas (and their associated recreational regions) that were accessible to women either through work or fraternisation with soldiers, and into tourism areas through their work commitments.

### *III) Fisher Children's Landscapes*

Children's landscapes presented another opportunity to investigate gendered landscape perspectives. Of particular note was the involvement of boys in fishing activities from an early age to assist their fathers. Given that many followed their fathers into the business, these formative years can be seen as a prelude to a fishing apprenticeship. Fishers' children were educated in the use of boats from a very young age to prepare them for a maritime career:

I knew a lot about boats and boat handling from Dad and Granddad. I was always in boats with Grandad. To get to the boat, we would go out in the dinghy, and [we would] muck around on the pier and other boats. [JB]

Often children missed school to go fishing with their fathers:

Oh yeh, they went out fairly early, most kids were fishing by 14. [Name withheld] didn't get to school too much. He got as far as the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. I can remember the schoolmaster shouting and waving at him as he went out in the boat when he was supposed to be at school...as soon as you could walk you went fishing with your father... a lot of kids often didn't go to school in the early days because they were out fishing [GW]

Children were often recruited to assist their fathers with the maintenance of fishing equipment, including procuring bark (for) and tanning nets, and tarring fishing boats [CS]. However, the initial excitement of fishing often became a mundane chore for many children, some of whom would go to extreme lengths to avoid it.

The fishermen would go down to the shed of a morning before going out, and to see how the water was. If there had been a rough sea, the pier would be covered in kelp, and that usually meant it was too rough to fish. The boys would often put kelp on the pier to save having to go out fishing. [PF]

Many other observations of fisher children's landscapes are included in Appendix E-11. Gender was clearly a significant factor in the determination and differentiation of landscapes of the Queenscliff fisher community.

## 11) Discussion

This chapter has shown the scope of activities undertaken by just one section of the Queenscliff community, and the rich diversity of cultural landscapes that exist even within one thematic group. In particular the fishing community appears to have developed an inherited ancestral knowledge of fishing practices that is analogous to the indigenous fishing communities of the Pacific Islands regions. This knowledge is often expressed informally as folklore, and extends to specialist knowledge of seasonal and spatial availability of fish and ancillary resources, climatic indicators, traditional fishing practices, history of the fishing community and superstitious beliefs. An informal toponymy for places of fishing resources has also been illuminated, which records fishing resources areas and their associated history, and of which knowledge is often restricted even within the local community.

At first glance, the fishing community were portrayed by a number of informants as an egalitarian sub-culture of Queenscliff society, a world of equal opportunities where rewards were based on hard work and experience that could lead to good fortune and the respect of their peers. However, fishing knowledge particularly of individual species locations was often closely guarded and represents a degree of territoriality towards resources. The external perceptions of unity within fishing society often masked internal social differentiation and underlying tensions within the community that were based on different social status that was associated with age, experience and gender.

It has been demonstrated that the evolution of fishing landscapes was influenced by a number of diverse factors, but primarily by the seasonality of resources availability. The cyclic nature of fish stocks influenced not only the working practices of fishermen and the development of associated material culture, but also shaped the cognitive perceptions of the area. These insights into fish habitats, weather and other phenomena generated new folklore and oral histories that imbued meaning to seemingly intangible and “natural” places. These understandings were also used as a social ordering mechanism, where access to restricted knowledge was used to discriminate between community elders, and later to define one’s membership within the fishing culture. Furthermore, the migratory nature of fishing practices has been shown to affect the residential landscape of fishermen, and has led to seasonal links between other communities, which are connected by cognitive waterborne routes. Localised fishing landscapes have also been driven by environmental determinants on many levels. Changes in coastal shorelines as a result of both geomorphologic and

culture influences have led to several transpositions of fishing harbours, mooring sites and boat building ventures.

Economic market forces have also driven and been driven by fishing landscapes. It has been shown that fish prices drove the viability of fishing to make a living, and that the subsequent paucity or glut of supply then drove the market. These mechanisms were eventually harnessed by the fishers, and used to steer prices to their advantage. It has been further shown that folklore and ideologies such as superstition and religion also played a role in the manipulation of the market and its working times.

The heavy reliance of fishers on shore-based resources to supplement or substitute their income demonstrates the inherently problematic notion of a land- sea divide when applied to maritime studies. As has been illustrated, fisher folk not only stamped their presence on the sea, but also on land, where their recreational, business and familial affairs have created firm presences and landscapes that drive the local community. The degree of accumulated ancestral knowledge in this area has obvious parallels to indigenous societies, a remarkable feat given that fishers have a relatively limited presence of 150 years in the region. As has been alluded to repeatedly above, traditional knowledge from overseas fishing societies may have been imported with the arrival of foreign fishermen, who brought their cultural practices and material culture with them, thereby reinforcing the notion of transported landscapes in this area.

Exploitation of specific fish resources of the industry has also been shown to produce divergent landscapes, even amongst fishermen, which further demonstrates the individual nature of landscapes and the depth of detail which these types of studies can investigate. Gender has also been demonstrated to be a significant determinant of landscape generation and differentiation. In particular, individual members of the community may often have access to some landscape areas where admission to others is denied based on gender or initiatory status. The social ramifications of this observation will be discussed further in Chapter Eight, along with the fishers' relationships with other community groups. Furthermore, the existence of an initiation process has been shown to facilitate the progression between child and adult male fishing landscapes, whilst also imbuing power based on age for older fishermen, which again has parallels with indigenous cultures. These practices have led to revered landscape features, some of which are still evident within the town.

The initial relative paucity of archaeological and historical evidence of the fishing community has demonstrated the necessary reliance on ethnography and oral histories for analysis of these sub-cultures. As shown from the evidence above, fishermen essentially represent hunter gatherer groups, and the investigative use of informal traditional knowledge networks has parallels to studies of other indigenous groups engaged in similar practices worldwide. Although some locations used by fishers may reveal negligible archaeological evidence or may be widely dispersed across large areas, it has been demonstrated that even small finds can significantly inform on wider work practices and daily life. It is also notable that fishing and its associated activities have contributed to biological/coastal change numerous ways, which in turn has altered the physical landscape itself. These environmental alterations are in themselves significant archaeological indicators of the presence of fishing landscapes.

To summarise, fishing practice is largely driven by seasonal availability of resources, market demand and other economic forces, and environmental determinants and changes, which pervade and change the communities' landscapes. This chapter has demonstrated the multivalency of fishing community landscapes that exist within a particular sub-group of the Queenscliff society. In particular, the collection of oral histories, folklore and recorded memoirs has elucidated an area of social history that has until now been largely ignored in official historical records, and demonstrates the importance of these sources for alternative social analysis of (often poorly documented) cultures.

The next chapter will examine Queenscliff from another direction, and the effects of an introduced event in the form of shipping disasters. In this case, the multivalency of singular incidents will be examined from many different and often conflicting viewpoints, where the community is both galvanised and polarised in their subsequent reactions.

And the clamorous bell spake out right well  
To the hamlet under the hill,  
And it roused the slumb'ring fishers, nor its warning task gave o'er,  
'Till a hundred fleet and eager feet were hurrying to the shore. (Treanor 1904:132)

The cargo was piled breast high on the shore for a mile and the wreckers of Queenscliff and all the district around had a great time. All the drays and spring carts were commandeered, and on Saturday afternoon there was a steady procession of vehicles rolling into the Cliff, loaded up with every variety of goods, cartes of crockery, bales of drapery, bundles of brushware of every kind, in fact an innumerable list of articles. The Customs authorities had not taken any action, and the police seemed to think it was a case of flotsam and jetsam, where finders were keepers. It was too late on Saturday evening when the lot arrived for us boys to make for the wreck, but at daylight on Sunday morning a band of us were off hotfoot to share in the plunder...I was business bent. I had a private tip that there was some good things planted in the ti-tree scrub above the sand dunes on the Saturday, by folk who were too heavily laden to carry away all they had gathered. Seeing the patrol on the beach, I restricted my searches to the scrub and was quickly rewarded with the discovery of an iron bath tub full of all sorts of brushes of every kind...(Dod 1931:68)

## **Chapter Seven: Shipwreck, Smuggling and Salvage Landscapes**

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### **1) Introduction**

The sea is a tempestuous and unpredictable medium, and its many moods have accounted for numerous shipping tragedies since time immemorial. The abundance of treacherous shorelines close to ports has led to many coastal townships being exposed to a multitude of nearby shipping tragedies. Although the physical remains of shipwrecks have been well documented around Australia, little consideration has been paid to the effects that such catastrophic events might inflict upon nearby communities. The study of the consequences of shipping mishaps on coastal communities, and how these essentially external influences might affect the cultural landscapes development of a community offers another dimension to cultural landscapes studies.

The shipwreck resource in Australia has been well documented and provides ample indications of what shipwrecks represent in terms of technical construction specifications, transport and trade links, and cargoes carried. Shipwreck studies highlight an inherent problem in archaeology (Gavin-Schwartz and Holtorf 1999:5), as for many of its practitioners, shipwrecks represent episodic and isolated events which signal the transformation point of these cultural features from the systematic to the archaeological context, and thereby a terminus of cultural utility. Nowhere is this more evident than in the often used term “time capsule” (Muckelroy 1978 56-7; Dean et al. 1996:32;

Gould 2000:12-3). However, this approach is somewhat insular, as most shipwrecks (particularly in Victoria) occurred within the coastal arena (often close to townships), and therefore site specific interpretation disregards the possible effects of these catastrophic events on neighbouring communities. These incidents potentially stimulate a range of reactive behavioural traits and cognitive perceptions from nearby residents that have not been previously explored, and which may offer new understandings of the effects of shipping mishaps on local societies.

This chapter will demonstrate the impact of shipwrecks and strandings on the town of Queenscliff, and consider what they have added to the cultural landscapes of the community. As will be shown, shipwrecks were continuously utilised long after the wrecking event, playing an active role not only as an ongoing economic resource, but also in the formulation of a social relationships both within and outside the township. The types of behaviour associated with two distinct stages of maritime mishaps will be examined, the first being that linked directly with the shipwreck event, where the ship is transformed into a shipwreck, and secondly, the cultural practices associated with resources generated by maritime disasters, whereby the shipwreck becomes a place in the environment over the longer time period.

Although several authors have noted the historical occurrence of salvage and looting associated with shipwrecks in the study area (e.g. Foster 1987, 1988; Loney 1989b; Anderson 1997a; Anderson and Cahir 2003), little analysis of the effects of these events on the local communities has been undertaken (with the exception of Fielding 2003). Countless newspaper accounts and oral traditions detail the utilisation of these sites, both during and after the wreck event, which inform of the shipwreck site formation processes. Furthermore, there is also a suite of other sites associated with shipwrecks that are largely unrecognised in archaeological literature (such as stranding sites, and flotsam and jetsam traps). The behaviours associated with the generation of these and other site types may reveal community responses to wrecks, and how wrecks have affected the social environment, demography and geography of Queenscliff itself. For the purpose of this section four types of sites/events/landscape features will be investigated: shipwrecks, strandings, and flotsam and jetsam traps. It will be shown that in general there is little perceptive distinction between the four site types within the local community, as the difference lies in the amount and type of material available, and that they all represent economic opportunities. The problem addressed here is not necessarily what type of resources the sites are characterised by, but what these sites mean for the Queenscliff community. Therefore for the purposes of this chapter I will treat these events generally under the same banner to begin with.



This chapter has been structured slightly differently to other sections, as it seeks to examine community landscapes from a different direction than those previously addressed. The complex interactive nature of community relations associated with shipwrecks and their subsequent exploitation has necessitated the use of an often seemingly disjointed historical narrative, that jumps backwards and forwards between sub-themes, but whose reasoning will become apparent as the chapter progresses.

## 2) Shipping Mishaps at Port Phillip Heads

The causes of shipwrecks at The Heads have been extensively attributed to the dangers of striking the often uncharted rocks and reefs (Heritage Victoria Shiplist Database; Williams and Searle 1963; 1964; Loney n.d. a, n.d. b, 1971, 1981, Arnott n.d.; Naylor n.d.; Foster 1987-1990; Wealthy and Bugg 1995; Anderson 1997a; Anderson and Cahir 2003; Love 2006). Many vessels tore open their hulls on the rocks at Pts Nepean and Lonsdale, and were either wrecked at those locations, or foundered inside the Bay as water filled their hulls (Figure 7.1). Some ships sank as a result of collisions and some ran aground on sandbanks and were subsequently destroyed by storms. Vessels that could not be removed became shipwrecks (also known as “total constructive losses”), whilst successfully removed vessels were termed strandings (Broxham and Nash 2000: x). Gibbs (2006) refers to the latter sites types as “phantom shipwrecks...the ones that got away”.

The first documented shipwreck at The Heads occurred in 1840, when the cutter *Prince Albert* went ashore at Port Phillip Heads (Bateson 1972:149). Since then, innumerable shipwrecks and strandings have occurred in the area, with the hulks of over 95 wrecks lying within 10 km of The Rip, both inside and outside the Bay (Foster 1987-1990; Anderson 1997a, Anderson and Cahir 2003 – see Figure 7.1). The proximity of the wrecks to the coastline, popular resorts and other essential services has led to a rich historical documentation of these events, along with an extensive collection of images of vessels ashore on shallow reefs at both sides of The Heads.

Poor navigational services initially contributed to numerous strandings of vessels, particularly inside The Bay where vessels often grounded on the constantly changing sandbanks and uncharted rocks. Previous historical research has identified well over 100 strandings or collisions in the study area (see DPH 1959/ Miller 1860/ Cole 1860, 1865 as cited in Taylor In Prep; Williams and Searle 1963, 1964; Loney 1971:143), which has been supplemented by the author’s own selective primary research (see Appendix F-1). The first stranding in Port Phillip occurred in 1831 before the

establishment of any permanent European settlement, when the cutter *Lively* washed ashore (Bateson 1972:93). The first stranding positively identified inside the study area occurred in 1839, when the cutter *Superb* went aground in the West Channel (Williams and Searle 1964:83).

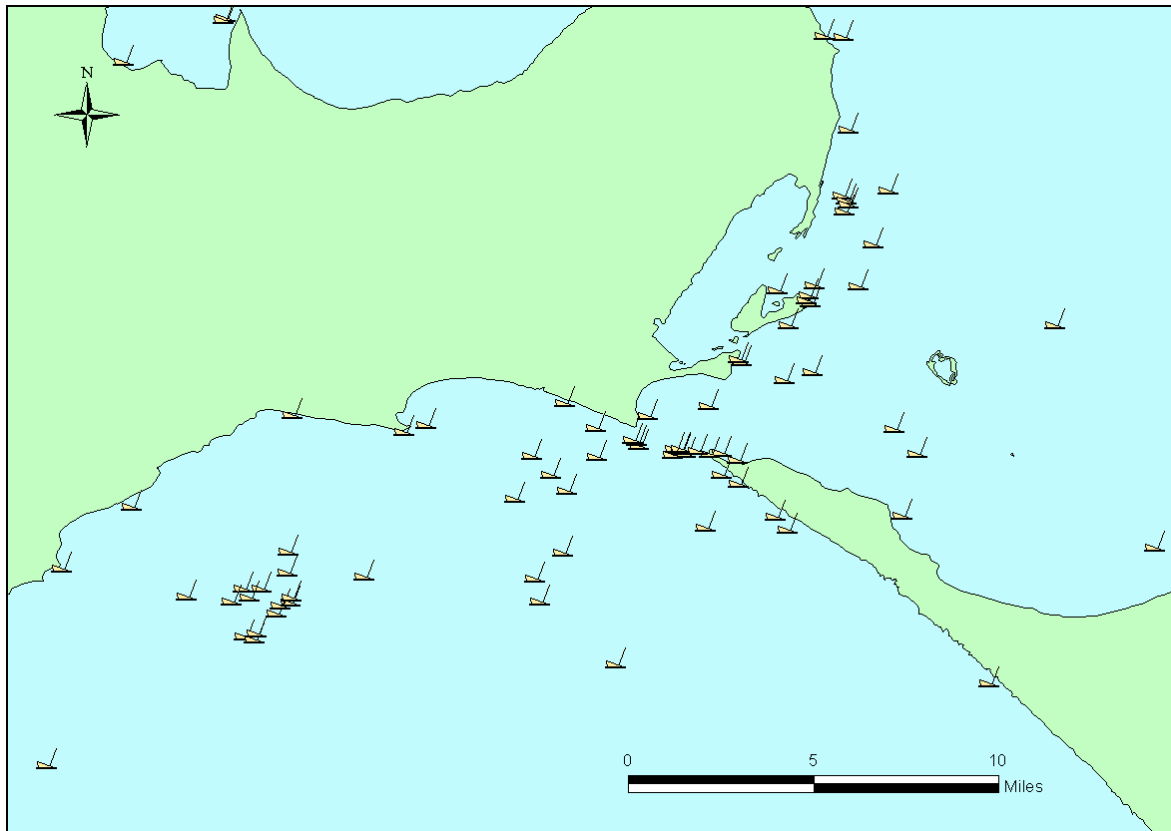


Figure 7. 1: Distribution of archaeological known shipwrecks around The Heads.

### 3) Shipping Disasters as Events and Places in Maritime Communities

A cultural landscapes approach enables shipping mishaps to be viewed from multiple perspectives, both as an event and a place. Wrecks may initially be perceived as the scenes of disastrous calamities, and as such are the settings of frantic activity to save life and cargo, and might be interpreted as the nineteenth century historical equivalent of a modern day jumbo jet crash [PH]. Alternatively shipwrecks can also represent new places in the landscape, which fill or reconstitute the space/place that preceded them. They may embody multiple meanings to different people, through their tangible symbolic representations of historical events (e.g. grave sites), contested space, or memorials of significant incidents (Gibbs 2005).

The role of wrecks, strandings and other associated sites as centres of social activities (and associated behaviours) requires further examination. Gibbs (2002, 2003, 2006) has outlined a sequence of actions and behaviour that takes place after a shipwreck has occurred (Figure 7.2). The first phase involves the actual wrecking event, followed by subsequent rescue attempts, and possible official salvage claims to the wreck. These are followed by stages of physical salvage at both official and illegal levels, and distinct behavioural practices associated with long term exploitation of the wreck. These phases and their associated behaviour have been used as a guide for investigating the various activities and behavioural traits associated with shipping mishaps around The Rip.

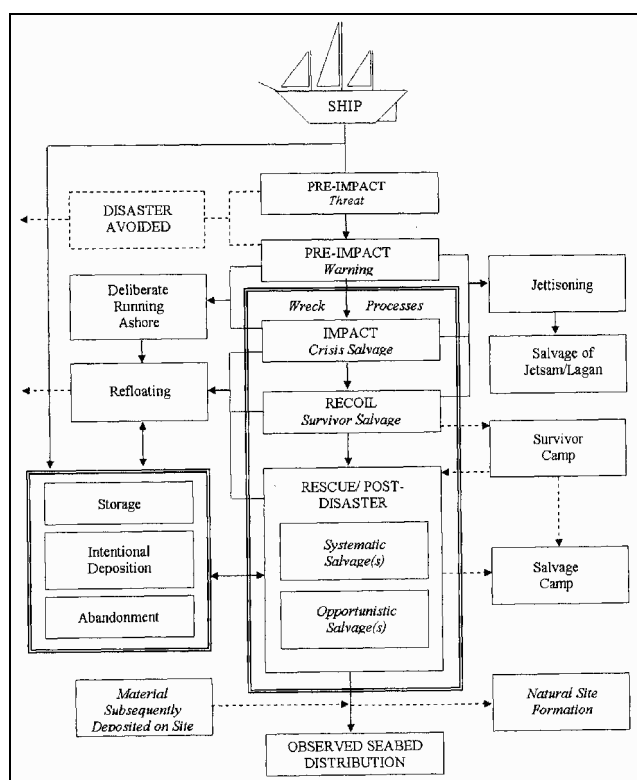


Figure 7. 2: Flow diagram of stages of cultural deposition on shipwrecks sites (Gibbs 2006).

Shipwrecks around The Heads usually prompted a range of official and unauthorized responses from the Queenscliff community on many different levels which were instigated to save lives and property. However, shipping mishaps also represented significant economic opportunities for salvage by a range of social groups, which were at once both routine and opportunistic, a dichotomy that will be further explored below. These official and unofficial responses were shaped by (and helped shape) not only subsequent practices at wreck sites, but also the physical and cognitive culture of the township itself.

## *A) Shipwrecks and Strandings as Events*

### **I) Strandings Events and Reactions (Impact Stage)**

Strandings represent a previously unexplored archaeological resource in Australia. Aside from the recovery of isolated anchors lost from vessels when anchored or aground, few deposits from stranding sites have been documented in Australia (see Henderson 1980:90; Knuckley 1988:3). Several researchers have recognised the potential significance for archaeological investigation of stranding sites (Duncan, 2000:56, 2004c; Gibbs and McPhee 2004:46-7).

Although stranding sites are often overlooked as the ship involved in the incident is no longer present at that location, historical accounts have documented numerous instances of large quantities of cargo and ballast jettisoned in attempts to lighten and refloat vessels (see Table 7.1; Williams and Searle 1963, 1964; Loney 1971). It was not possible to plot the exact locations of most of these sites, as many were described on in only general terms, and most have not been previously investigated archaeologically. In one account, over 50 tons of general cargo was thrown overboard when the *Victory* stranded in Lonsdale Bight (MMH 19/8/1850:2). Many wrecked and stranded coal carrying vessels lost or discarded their cargoes around the vicinity of Shortland's Bluff or Lonsdale Bight, including the *SS Milora* which discharged 1500 tons of coal into the sea (Williams and Searle 1963:54). Stranding sites therefore present an opportunity to study shipping mishaps that may only be evident from cargo or discarded structural remains.

<b>Vessel</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Cargo</b>	<b>Source</b>
<i>Victory</i>	1850	Victoria Shoal	General, slate, iron pots	MMH 19/8/1850:2
<i>Lady Peel</i>	1852	Queenscliff Bight	Coal	GA 7/6/1852:2
<i>Success</i>	1862	Queenscliff Bight	Coal	GA 20/4/1862:2
<i>George</i>	1862	West Channel	Coal	Cole 1865:8
<i>Hindoo</i>	1863	South Channel	Coal	Cole 1865:10
<i>Success</i>	1863	Shortland's Bluff	Coal	Cole 1865:10
<i>SS Barwon</i>	1866	Lonsdale Bight	Coal	GA 28/6/1866:2
<i>SS Wodonga</i>	1882	Lonsdale Bight	Coal	Dunn 1949:55
<i>Endeavour</i>	1891	Bell Rock	Maize, general	BA 2/6/1891
<i>SS Milora</i>	1934	Victoria Shoal	Coal	Williams and Searle 1963:54

**Table 7.1: Identified cases of jettisoned cargo from historically identified strandings around Queenscliff.**

Strandings had obvious visual impacts on the community, particularly when they occurred close to shore. One informant recalled witnessing the stranding of the *SS Milora* (Figure 7.3):

I remember that I was 4 years old when that happened. My parents had taken us over to the beach with my brother to look at this ship. It was close to the Clark Beacon and closer to Pt Lonsdale. This was an enormous ship up on the beach. [JP]

Similarly, when the 39000 tonne tanker *Golden Gate Sun* ran ashore off the Queenscliff Back Beach (see Figure 7.4) it presented an imposing site that towered above the lighthouse and other beacons in the area (Wane 2003:51).



**Figure 7. 3: *SS Milora* stranded on Victory Shoal (Photo: John Patrick Collection from QHM Collection).**



**Figure 7. 4: *Golden Gate Sun* ashore at Shortland's Bluff in 1984 (Photo: © Rodney Nicholson, Sea Gems Gallery, Queenscliff).**

## **II) Unofficial Stranding Areas to Prevent Vessels Becoming Total Wrecks (Recoil Stage)**

One phase not examined by Gibbs (2003) involved behaviour where vessels were deliberately ran aground on shallow shelving beaches to stop them from sinking into deeper water after their hulls were unexpectedly holed. Despite the presence of a complex network of navigational beacons, many vessels often struck uncharted rocks, causing serious damage to their hulls. Local researchers [DL; PF] have observed that, in order to prevent distressed vessels from sinking, many vessels were often deliberately run aground or beached in the shallow and gradually sloping waters off Swan Island Spit, Popes Eye, Pt Nepean Beach or the Mud Islands as these areas were better protected than Lonsdale Bight from sudden gales. This practice enabled the vessel to be repaired or sufficiently lightened to continue its journey, by either throwing cargo overboard or through its transferral to lighters. The first historical evidence of a deliberate stranding was reported when the barque *William Salthouse* was run ashore in Nepean Bay in 1841 (Williams and Searle 1963:1).

Several similar instances were reported from 1852-55, when a number of vessels were intentionally grounded in Swan Bay after they had torn open their hulls on Corsair Rock:

The *Marie* made water so fast after striking [Nepean Rock] that to save her life, the pilot...ran her ashore in Swan Bay, near the spot where *St George* was stranded...(GA 16/11/1853)

A Queenscliff pilot reported this practice was used as early as 1855, and in particular Swan Island and Swan Bay (north of the Swan Spit Buoy, where the lighthouse stood afterwards) presented the most favourable conditions, as it was sheltered from most of the prevailing winds and was close to a settlement (Draper 1900:8-9). This practice was evident in several other historical accounts:

The Ship *St George*...arrived at The Heads on Tuesday...she got on some rocks off Pt Nepean, and struck heavily for a few minutes. The force of the current carried her clear of the rocks, but so leaky that the pump could not keep the water under. The Captain then...got inside of Pt Lonsdale, where a pilot was got on board – there was now seven feet of water in the hold in spite of an incessant pumping. He decided to take her into Swan Bay, and beach her, which manoeuvre was safely effected...The ship is described to be in a perfectly safe position, beached in Swan Bay, and the Captain is confident that he can get her into harbour after discharging a portion of the cargo. (MMH 31/12/1852)

Vessel	Date	Location	Source
<i>William Salthouse</i>	1841	Nepean Bay	Noble 1979:7, 45
<i>Marie</i>	1852	Swan Spit	DPH 1859; GA 16/11/1853; MMH 31/12/1852 (as cited in Love 2006)
<i>Ontario</i>	1852	Swan Spit	DPH 1859; <i>Argus</i> 31/12/1852:4 (as cited in Love 2006)
<i>St George</i>	1852	Swan Spit	<i>Argus</i> 31/12/1852:4 (as cited in Love 2006)
<i>Marchioness</i>	1853	Swan Spit	DPH 1859; <i>Argus</i> 16/11/1853 & 17/11/1853 (as cited in Love 2006)
<i>Antoinette Cezard</i>	1854	Swan Bay	DPH 1859; Williams and Searle 1963:17
<i>Lady Harvey</i>	1854	Queenscliff Bight	Williams and Searle 1963:1
<i>Prince of the Seas</i>	1854	Pt King (Sorrento)	DPH 1859; Williams and Searle 1963:16
<i>Empress of the Seas</i>	1861	Nepean Bay	Simpkin n.d.:9
<i>Emily</i>	1877	Queenscliff Bight	Williams and Searle 1963:17
<i>Lulu</i>	1883	Queenscliff Bight	Anderson 1997a:29
<i>Trusty</i>	1883	Nepean Bay	Williams and Searle 1963:37

**Table 7.2: Cases of deliberate strandings identified from historical research in the study area.**

Deliberate beaching was also used in cases where vessels were ablaze, as was the case with the *Empress of the Sea* where: “the cables had been slipped and the vessel ran on shore as far as she would go” (Simpkin n.d.:9). This practice was also undertaken place at the Mud Islands/Great Sands Bank and Popes Eye Shoal [DL; PF].

Deliberate stranding sites in the study area are shown in Table 7.2 and Figure 7.5. The role of strandings as a deliberate hazard prevention practice amongst coal vessels in the Gippsland region of Victoria has been investigated by Duncan (2000, 2004c), who suggested that these vessels deliberately sailed closer to the coast than advised, so that if these often dilapidated ships got into difficulty, they could purposely strand on the beach rather than risk foundering at sea.

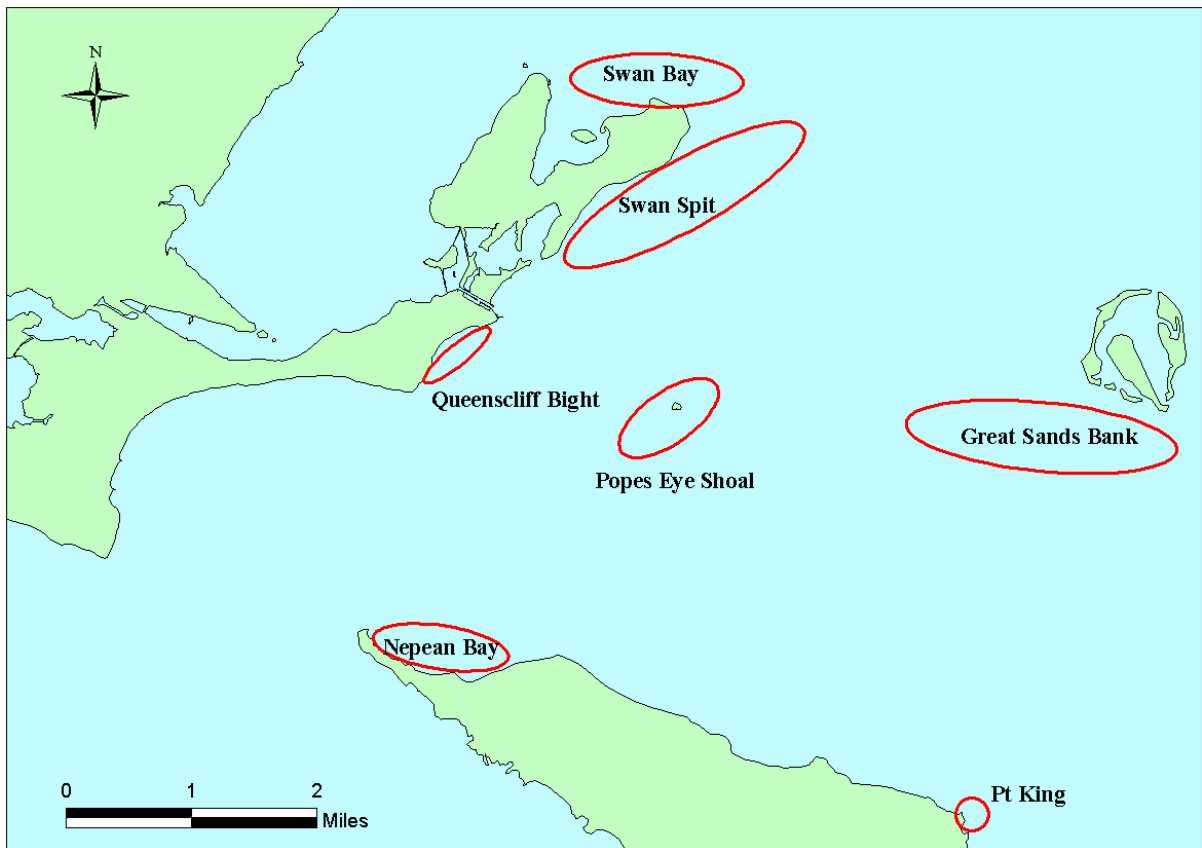


Figure 7.5: General locations of known deliberate stranding sites in the study area.

### III) Altruistic Responses to Shipping Mishap Crises (Rescue/Responsive Stage)

If a ship could not be saved through deliberate stranding and/or subsequent refloating, it became a shipwreck, an incident that was experienced and perceived differentially by diverse groups within and without the community. As such the wrecking event can be divided into a number of distinct landscapes dependent on the experience and perspective of those involved. Furthermore, as will be demonstrated below, community members exposed to shipping mishaps often experienced multiple perspectives of the same event.

The initial shipwreck event often attracted large numbers of visitors to the site for sightseeing (e.g. GA 4/1/1872), and to render assistance wherever possible. Many historical accounts and images show large crowds of people gathered by the wreck (Figures 7.6), presumably both for humanitarian and other reasons, which will be explored further below.

### **(a) Lifeboats and Lifesaving: Rescuers and Wreck Management Landscapes of Port Phillip**

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, almost a third of British seamen would die either from accidents on board or in shipwrecks (Bathurst 2000:2). The massive loss of life associated with early UK shipwrecks led to the design of many innovative life saving devices from around 1808 onwards, including Manby's lifesaving mortar (that fired a shot weighted rope to wrecked vessels) and lifesaving vessels with watertight compartments which were the forerunners of modern lifeboats. By 1824, the Royal Society for the Preservation of Life from Shipwreck (England) was established to facilitate organised rescue of shipwreck survivors (Bathurst 2000:2-3). These landscapes of shipwreck management (see Duncan 2000, 2004c) ordered and directed physical resources and people to not only co-ordinate the rescue of shipwrecks survivors, but also address their subsequent welfare after the event.

The initial agglomeration of shipwrecks around Port Phillip Heads fell within the same period of the development of lifesaving services in the UK and eventually led to the establishment of a lifeboat service at Queenscliff and similar shipwreck management regimes. From the 1840s onwards pilots were expected to assist all distressed vessels, which became a formal requirement from 1852-56. When the *Sacramento* wrecked at Pt Lonsdale in 1853, both pilot boats were used to assist, and the pilot later proceeded to an incoming vessel immediately from the wreck (Draper 1900:10). The Health Officers yawl was also used for this purpose (see Figure 7.7). An ordinary ship's lifeboat was put into service at Shortland's Bluff in 1856 as the first dedicated lifeboat, and was moored off the Customs Quarters (near the current Pilots Jetty).

A series of purpose-built lifeboats were constructed from 1858, the first (*Queenscliff*) being mounted in a shed (constructed 1860) on the northern arm of the Queenscliff Pier, where she was lowered using falls and from which she was manned for 30 years (Raison 2002:26). The oared vessel was rowed by 10 men, and had a Coxswain, Bowman and Superintendent (who was the Head Lightkeeper). After the wreck of the *Gange* in 1887, public scrutiny highlighted the necessity for a



lifeboat to be stationed at Pt Lonsdale after time was lost rowing from Queenscliff to Pt Lonsdale. A new larger self-righting lifeboat (Pt Lonsdale Lifeboat #2 - later known as the Queenscliff Steamer Pier Lifeboat) was purpose built, along with a pier and lifeboat shed at Pt Lonsdale (Noble 1979:48; Boyd and Roddick 1996:3). However, when the Pt Lonsdale pier (Figure 7.8) proved inadequate for the size of the new vessel, it was exchanged with the *Queenscliff* (lifeboat) and the new lifeboat was housed in the shed (built for the previous lifeboat in 1888-89) on the new Queenscliff Steamer Pier. The presence of two lifeboats in the same area enabled their crews to practice their lifesaving and rocket skills with and between boats, but the *Queenscliff* lifeboat was never involved in any rescue attempts during this time (Boyd and Roddick 1996:3; Rasion 2002:27, 37). A new motor driven lifeboat, *Queenscliffe*, was purpose built in 1926 to specifications of the RNLI (QS 26/4/1919). It was shifted to the New Pier after the Cut caused sand accretion around its launching ramp on the Fishermen's Pier, and was moved to deep water in 1949 ([JB]; Rasion 2002:28). From the 1950s onwards, a search and rescue service was established to coordinate searches for smaller vessels such as pleasure craft. When the search and rescue service was disbanded in 1979, the lifeboat was also decommissioned (Noble 1979:49). Further details of the lifeboat service and lifeboats and a summary table are contained in Appendix F-2.

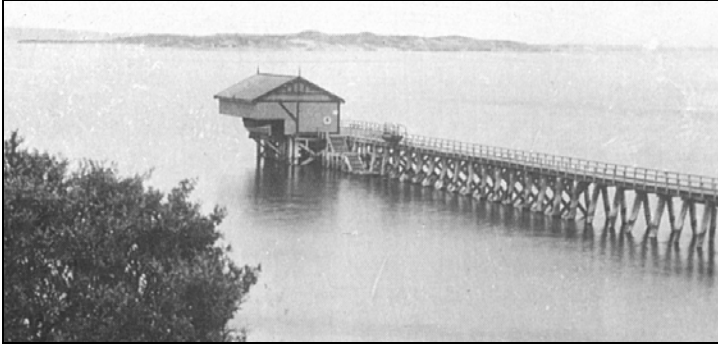


**Figure 7. 6: The *Gange* wrecked at Pt Lonsdale (Marine History Postcards, Jack Loney Collection).**



**Figure 7. 7: Health Officer's yawl, c. 1864 (Photo PH42, Baillieu Collection, PH 42, QHM Collection).**

The lifeboat was primarily intended to service the regions around The Heads at Queenscliff, Pt Lonsdale and Pt Nepean, occasionally up to 3 miles out to sea, and as far as Barwon Heads or Cape Schank. The lifeboat also serviced inside the Bay, up the West and South Channels and around the Mud Islands (GA 18/4/1867:3). However, in 1932, the lifeboat was called on to rescue crew from the *Casino*, which had gone ashore at Apollo Bay, but they were recalled before they had gotten past Barwon Heads as the journey would have taken six hours (Boyd and Roddick 1996:13-4).



**Figure 7. 8: Pt Lonsdale lifeboat shed and pier, c. 1890 (QHM Collection Display).**

### **(i) Sequence for Rescues**

#### ***(One) Emergency Personnel***

Whenever wrecks occurred around The Heads, a series of pre-planned and organised actions were instituted. International regulations at the time specified that light rockets and blue flares were to be used as signals of distress in times of shipwreck (GA 1/2/1872:2; Draper 1900:9). Wrecks were often first observed by the Signal Station on Shortland's Bluff (which appears to have been the watchdog for The Rip area around the 1870s) as the Queenscliff postmaster or the signal station staff were often the first to report a wrecking incident (Dod 1931:13, 21, 39; Boyd and Roddick 1996: 12). The Pt Lonsdale Flagstaff was also used to convey messages of wrecks further to the west along the beach (QS 27/3/1886). The Lighthouse Keeper was officially appointed as the Superintendent of the Lifeboat, and was responsible for the administration, reporting, and safety of the vessel and crew, with the Coxswain in charge when at sea (Boyd and Roddick 1996:3). Most of the crew were young (but experienced) "Queenscliff lads" (W. Baillieu, In QS 30/1/1887). The lifeboat could not be launched without the Superintendent and Coxswain present, and the crew ranged in number from eight to eighteen, dependent on who was available at the time. Permission to launch the lifeboat was required from the Harbour Master, and this often delayed the launch, sometimes by hours, during which lives were periodically lost. Emergency call-outs were later regularly transmitted from the Queenscliff Post Office to the Light House Keeper via the telegraph (Boyd and Roddick 1996:3, 6, 14).

Lifeboat service was extremely dangerous work, and the crew were handpicked from experienced seamen (QS 20/1/1894). It was originally crewed by members of the Customs, Health and Pilots Boats (Fanning 1892b; McGrath n.d.:1; Boyd and Roddick 1996:3). Fishermen had joined the service by 1861 (Fanning 1892b), and formed the entire crew after the Customs and Health Boats

crews were withdrawn from Queenscliff around 1867, and were commanded by the Lighthouse Service Superintendent (GA 18/4/1867; Raison 2002:26). Fishermen were the natural choice for the lifeboat crew:

...fishermen had a better knowledge of The Rip than pilots. The Pilots stuck to one entrance, the fishermen worked The Rip, knew the currents, swell, and seas. Fishermen knew The Rip, knew every swell that came in. Pilots knew The Rip to suit the job. [JB]

This sentiment was reiterated by historical local newspapers, who stated that the boat was manned by: “a crew of hardy and experienced fishermen who know the eddies, currents and dangers of The Rip as well as they know Hesse St” (QS 10/12/1892).

***(Two) The Wreck Bell and Lifeboat Launching Procedures***

When a shipwreck was reported, a wreck bell was rung to alert the community and particularly the lifeboat crew. Wreck bells were integral components for many coastal communities and wreck bells were located at both Sorrento (NHS 1966:63) and Queenscliff (see Figure 7.9) where shipwrecks were common events. The original Queenscliff alarm bell was mounted on a flagstaff at the signal station (Figure 7.10) close to the black (High) lighthouse by at least 1877 (Dod 1931:13, 21, 39; [LID]). However, the bell could not be heard by the lifeboat crew at the bottom of the hill in a south easterly gale, which led to complaints that the bell’s location was unsatisfactory (GA 20/7/1871:3). A new bell provided by the Ports and Harbours Division (PWD) was erected on the corners of Gellibrand and Wharf St in 1891-92 (Boyd and Roddick 1996:5).

The bell was only ever rung in the event of a maritime emergency involving a wreck where the lifeboat was required, and had a very unique tone that could be distinguished from the fire alarm bell located in Hesse St near the post office ([LID; PF]; “Bluelight” 1912). In 1890, a reward was suggested for the first person who rang the bell during times of shipping mishaps (QS 5/9/1891). During disasters, the bell was sounded continuously for 15 minutes (QS 10/3/1894), and all the voluntary lifeboat crew ceased all other activities and ran to the lifeboat shed. The lifeboat crew was always available for service, and boasted that they could be ready for service within 12 minutes of the bell tolling (Ferrier 1991:4). The procedure for launching the lifeboat was described in a local newspaper:

...suddenly the alarm bell rings out, The clanging of the bell startled many a one at their comfortable fireside, its clanging tones rousing into instant action the hardy lifeboat men. As the iron tongue of midnight prolongs its clamorous appealing, it seems to voice the terror and helplessness of the shipwrecked, making the night darkness vibrate with sounds, indeed such heart shaking music once heard can never be forgotten. The large

crowd which rapidly gathers is informed that a ship is ashore at Pt Lonsdale Reef. (QS 24/9/1892)



**Figure 7. 9: Location of alarm bells in Queenscliff.**

Competition for a position in the Queenscliff lifeboat appears to have been fierce in the early days. Tom Dickson, superintendent of the lifeboat crew reported in 1887, that “in a few minutes we had double the crew that we wanted for the lifeboat” (QS 30/7/1887). In 1919 (QS 26/4/1919), it was reported that up to 30 people would show up for 12 places when the wreck bell was rung, and that the trouble was not in getting volunteers, but preventing them from getting into the boat. The problem became so acute that after the first 16 men from the No. 1 Lifeboat had reported for duty, the lifeboat shed doors were locked to prevent others entering the shed (Kerr 1985:73). However, in later years (1949), there was less haste when the bell was rung:

...there was no rush or panic to get launched...my family stayed tucked up in bed, while my father wandered over to see what needed to be done. [LID]

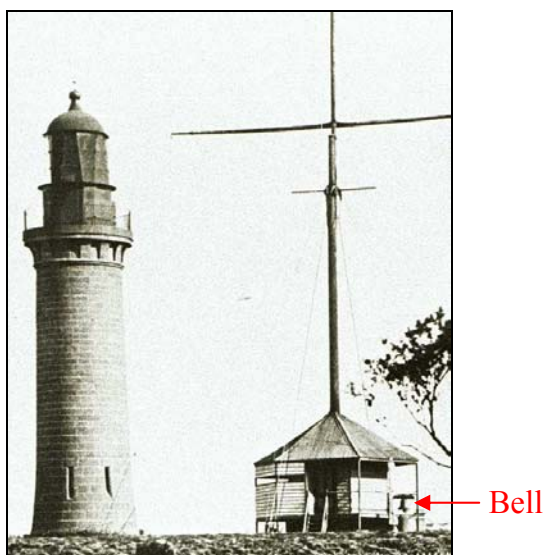
The original lifeboat launch procedure was described as follows:

At the pier, I met my fellows running quickly to the spot, and in a few minutes we had at least double the crew we wanted to man the lifeboat. Our boat is manned in the same way as the Humane Society, that is...a superintendent, a coxswain, a boatman, and as many men as there is oars, in our case 10. We quickly lowered the boat, which always hangs fully equipped for active service at a moments notice...from davits at the pier. (Dickson 1887).

Later launch procedures varied with the introduction of a motorised lifeboat mounted on an inclined slipway (see Figure 7.11):

The wreck bell was rung [organised] from the lighthouse, who got in touch with the coxswain of the lifeboat who would ring the wreck bell. Then all the crew would come down and they would ring anyone who didn't hear the bell. If the coxswain was away then the acting coxswain took over. Everyone had their own duties, and that might have been to put the bungs in, or make sure the cables were out of the way. When the order was given to, pairs of people would run forward to tip the boat over the cradle and into the water. The lifeboat had a Gardiner engine. [HM]

The lifeboat would then be rowed to the wreck, which was no mean feat in often gale force conditions (Figure 7.11; Fanning 1992b).



**Figure 7. 10: Shortland's Bluff signal station wreck bell, c. 1878. Note High Lighthouse at left (Photo: PH23, QHM Collection).**



**Figure 7. 11: Queenscliffe Lifeboat being launched (Photo: PH916 QHM Collection).**

### ***(Three) Onsite Rescue Procedures and Facilities***

Upon arrival at the scene, the lifeboat would indicate with flares to the signal station that they had found the wreck, and would then anchor to windward and drift back onto the wreck. The sequence of the procedure was extracted from a number of newspaper accounts:

...Mr Dickson burnt a blue light in response to the one at Pt Lonsdale. From that we knew that they had sighted the wreck...The line [was] fastened to the kedge [anchor] on which the lifeboat allowed herself to come down to the wreck. (Baillieu 1887)

First we let go an anchor, which kept the boat steadily to sea, then we paid out a rope attached to the anchor, as we slowly backed in towards the vessel...then two long lines were thrown to us...and made fast to the stem and stern, thus keeping us abreast of the barque.. After the rescue I gave the rescued party over to the *Albatross*, which took them across to the Quarantine station at Portsea to get a clean bill of health. (Dickson 1887)

After all had been safely placed in the boat, then it was a case of hauling off on the kedge line, which had to be cut, and pulling out to sea to wait until daybreak to get back to the harbour. At a little past seven all were safely landed on the Queenscliff Pier, and it would be 3 o'clock before the lifeboat crew would have their gallant craft stowed away. (Baillieu 1887)

The lifeboat crew also used a rocket launching device to pass an attached rope to the wreck, which could be deployed either from the lifeboat or from the shore. This was used to pass a thick secure line, which, when tied to the wreck mast could be used to transfer survivors via a breaches buoy to shore (Figure 7.13). Three different types of rockets were used over the years, and are outlined in (Table 7.3, Figures 7.14 and 7.15).



**Figure 7. 12: Queenscliff lifeboat approaching a wreck at Pt Nepean (Sutherland 1888a:443).**



**Figure 7. 13: Deploying a breaches buoy lifeline via a lifesaving rocket at Pt Nepean (NHS Collection, in McMeekin and Braithwaite 2004).**

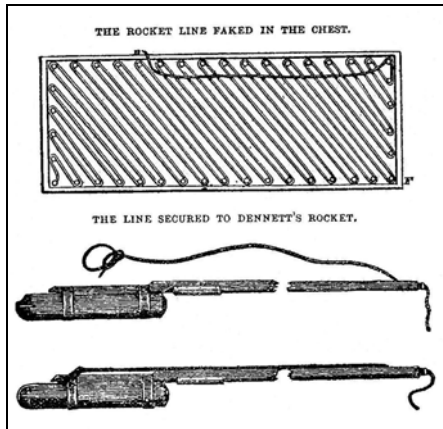
Rocket Type	Date Used	Range	Description	Reference
<b>Manby's Mortars</b>	1858 +	200-300 yards	5 ¼ " diameter brass mortar fired 11 lb projectile attached to a rope.	Syme 2001:27
<b>Dennet's Rocket</b>	Uncertain - sometime between the former and latter devices	Unknown	Single stage gunpowder charged rocket mounted on a pole attached to a line faked into a box.	Mullett 1919:13; Syme 2001:27
<b>Colonel Boxers Rocket</b>	1871 +	500-1000 yards	2 stage gunpowder charged projectile mounted on a 9'6" pole attached to a line faked into a box.	Syme 2001:27; Mullett 1919:20

**Table 7.3: Types of life rockets used at Port Phillip Heads.**

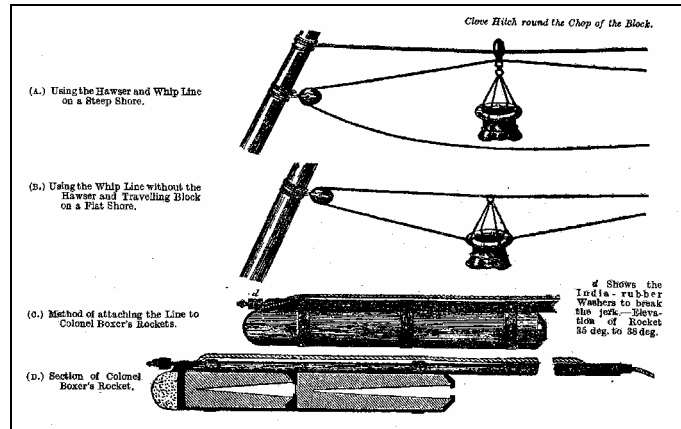
Lifesaving rockets were originally stored in a gabled weatherboard structure at Pt Lonsdale in 1860 (Syme 2001:27), but later additional rocket sheds were installed closer the most common wreck locations at Pt Nepean (stored in the Customs Shed in 1876 - QS 13/8/1887), Pt Lonsdale (a new brick structure in 1890), Sorrento (a portable rocket shed was built on the Sorrento Pier in 1891, and a more permanent version in 1899) and were also stored at Queenscliff in 1893 (VPRS 2143:

91-2-129; Noble 1979:48; O'Neill 1988:42; Boyd and Roddick 1996:11,13; Raison, 2002:27;). Specific details of rocket rescue procedures are outlined in Mullet (1919).

Before rocket facilities were stationed at Pt Nepean (1876), the lifeboat crew would row across The Rip inside the Bay when shipwrecks occurred at the front beaches at Sorrento or Portsea (particularly in bad weather when it was too dangerous to go to sea), and transfer the rocket launching gear overland to affect the rescue via the ocean beach (e.g. during the *Cheviot* and *Craigburn* shipwrecks -QS 20/1/1894; Welch 1969:43). Later a series a pathways was cut along the cliff faces of the Nepean Peninsula, with tracks leading down to the beach through the scrub to facilitate easier access to any potential local wrecks (McMeekin and Braithwaite 2004). These paths are still evident today as the beach access routes along the foreshore.



**Figure 7. 14: Dennet's rocket apparatus (After Mullett 1919:13).**



**Figure 7. 15: Breaches buoy and Colonel Boxer's rocket setup (In Mullett 1919:14).**

By 1894, calls were made to improve and implement the communications (via telegraph) between the lighthouse at Cape Schank, Pt Lonsdale and Queenscliff. When wrecks occurred at Pt Nepean or Sorrento Back Beach they had to be reported to Queenscliff via Melbourne, the folly of which was highlighted during the shipwreck of the *Alert* in 1894.

## **(ii) Lifeboat Service and Practice**

The lifeboat service also impacted the lives of the crew outside times of wreck. Lifeboat practice was usually undertaken on the first day of the month, and consisted of either rocket or lifeboat drills that lasted half a day (Figure 7.16). In the early days lifeboat practice took place outside The Heads, with later exercises held at St Leonards, Sorrento or outside The Rip, with rocket practice at



Queenscliff or Pt Lonsdale (Kerr 1985:73; Boyd and Roddick 1996:3-4). During this time, the crews would inspect and maintain the contents of the lifeboats, and the Rocket Sheds at Pts Nepean/Lonsdale, and conduct rocket firing practice (VPRS 2143). A former member of the lifeboat crew described the rocket practice in the 1960s:

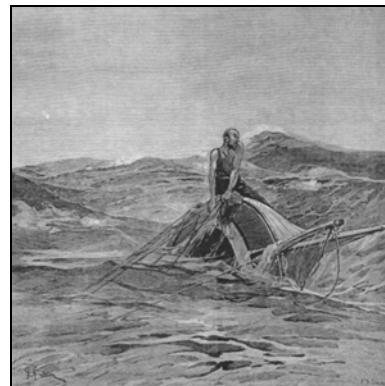
During rocket practice we would set up the apparatus on a certain angle, and would make sure that all the equipment was tied together the right way, and then we connected a lighter rope to the heavier rope that would later be pulled across. We would aim ahead of the target, and you needed to make sure that the rope stayed dry, as a wet rope would limit the range for the rocket. The later modern ones didn't work over considerable distances. The wreck needed to be almost onshore, or otherwise you had trouble firing into the wind. Later on the cost factor meant that the men couldn't physically fire the rockets, so there was no real practice. We also used to practice using the lantern to signal with. [PF]

The practices were well attended by the local fishing community:

They used to do the lifeboat practice here once a month and they would fire off the rocket for practice. The fishermen would always turn up for the practice as you got a pound for it and it was easy money. [GW]



**Figure 7. 16: Rocket practice between the Queenscliff and Pt Lonsdale lifeboats c. 1921 (Photo: QHM Collection).**



**Figure 7. 17: “The fatal boating accident in Port Phillip Bay” (Sleep, IMP 1/1/1890, SLV Collection).**

The lifeboat service pervaded many aspects of daily life within the community. The exertion of manning the lifeboat often affected the local football team, as often the Cliff team members had been involved in lengthy rescues (up to 19 hours) prior to the games, or were injured/too exhausted to play (QS 16/5/1891).



### **(iii) Perceptions of the Lifeboat Crew and Other Rescuers**

Those who assisted in wrecks were lauded as heroes, and rightly so. Wrecks most often occurred during gales, and rescuers often placed their own lives at risk to assist shipwreck survivors. Many pilots assisted in the early rescues at The Heads, and this group and members of the lifeboat crew were all highly regarded within the community for their lifesaving work. In 1919, the lifeboat service was referred to “as valuable as digger’s work...There are land diggers and sea diggers”, which drew parallels between them and recently returned war heroes (QS, 26/4/1919). After the rescue of the crew of the *Gange* shipwreck, they were compared to the Kentish lifeboatmen of Deal for their valour (QS 30/7/1887). Many accolades were bestowed on the lifeboat crews (QS 15/2/1890), including:

...the lifeboat...deserves mention, as well as the brave men that are ready in all seasons to risk their lives in the endeavour to save and rescue the storm tossed victim. It is a sight never to be forgotten, to behold this handful of strong athletic fishermen man the lifeboat and bend the oar with a sturdy willingness which speaks volumes for the promptitude which may be expected from them when the real occasion arrives. They form a pretty picture and are deserving of a more extended description than our pen can spare. (QS 7/4/1894)

The heroism of the crews was often compensated by rewards from the government and insurance companies, or charitable funds organised by local or even inland communities (e.g. Ballarat Township) who had interests or brethren who had been involved in the wreck (QS 4/7/1891, 13/8/1897; Fanning 1892a).

### **(iv) Military Assistance in Shipwreck Rescues**

The occurrence of shipwrecks often forced co-operation between the different organisations and services based at The Heads, including the military. Shipwrecks on the ocean beaches of Sorrento to Pt Nepean were often first accessed by military personnel from the fortresses in those locations (e.g. *Cheviot* 1887 - Welch 1969:43). However, the soldiers may have been restricted in their ability to leave the base during disasters due to lack of orders from their senior officers, and were sometimes accused of complacency at times when they did not turn out during times of wreck:

I saw the daring rescue of the crew by the Queenscliff lifeboat, the men of which deserve the greatest praise for their gallant conduct. Another thing I also noticed was the absence of the Artillerymen at the scene of the wreck...was it not their duty to have turned out when the Alarm bell was rung from the lookout station at Queenscliff, and make with all hands to the scene of the wreck...I am an old man...but when I hear the danger signal from outside The Heads. I hurried to the beach...and made my way...to where I could be

of use. Surely Victorian Artillery men are not afraid to face a wet night when precious lives are to be saved? (Neptune, Letter to Editor, QS 30/7/1887)

This did not bode well for the military forces' public image, and by 1887, approval was given to train the defence personnel at Pt Nepean in use of the rocket gear to assist in wrecks (QS 13/8/1887). In later years, military installations also played key roles in searches for survivors, where the searchlights at Crows Nest, Queenscliff Forts, and Pt Lonsdale were used to aid in rescues and the search for the survivors of various strandings, shipwrecks, and collisions [e.g. *Paroo* - 1902; *Edward* - 1912; *Wyrallah* and *Dilkira* - 1926; (QS 5/10/1912; Williams and Searle 1963:47; Boyd and Roddick, 1996:14)].

### **(b) Shipwreck Survivor Landscapes: Philanthropic Responses**

Much sympathy was expressed for shipwreck survivors by the local community, who often sprang into action to assist rescued survivors in any way possible. An 1850s newspaper account applauded the conduct of the Flagstaff and Lighthouse attendants, who “displayed great promptitude in sending a dray to convey the emigrants from the wreck to The Heads, where Mrs Dod (at Government house) hospitably cared for them on this and on other occasions” (GA 2/5/1853:2). Obvious sentiment for the plight of the survivors was regularly forthcoming in the local press:

Although no lives were lost at the wreck [*Sacramento*], the loss of the cargo and luggage must be felt by those to who it belonged. When the immigration agents arrived from Geelong, the scene was heart rendering, as many people as possible had been fed and sheltered by the pilots, but there was neither food nor accommodation for 300 people. Many sufferers were scattered along the beach, wringing their hands in despair...and relatives had lost each other in the confusion. The arrival of the Government agents with provisions and other comforts was a most acceptable relief, and steps were taken to find out the scattered and lost...On arrival of the *Aphrasia* from Melbourne, they safely embarked and were conveyed to Melbourne. (GA 3/5/1853:2)

Other community members regularly displayed great acts of philanthropy towards shipwreck victims. During the *Sussex* shipwreck one local resident loaded his buggy full of brandy, tobacco and other stimulants in case survivors had made it ashore, as was also the case during the *Victoria Tower* shipwreck (GA, 1/2/1872). Prior to the establishment of the town in 1855, shipwreck survivors were commonly transferred to the Immigration Depot at Geelong for processing, where they were offered food and board, and access to employment until they found their own accommodation (Cuzens 1912:1; Kruithof 2002:89). These services were sorely needed as on many occasions the victims had lost everything in the wrecking event. Rescued shipwreck survivors were

often transferred to the Quarantine station at Portsea, as much for their accommodation, as to be checked for any symptoms of infection (Dickson 1887).

Whenever local fishermen or other mariners were lost during wrecks (Figure 7.17), the community galvanised to raise funds to support the family, and in some cases even bought the widow a house [JM]. There appears to have been an informal network to look after deceased fishermen, pilots or other mariner's families when they were killed at sea. Assistance was often requested for widows either through subscription lists or "some practical manner", and the community sometimes replaced the boats of wrecked fishermen (QS 22/10/1892, 26/11/1892; [AH]). Several charitable trusts were also established for shipwreck survivors (e.g. Nepean Disaster Fund; *Alert Distress Fund*), and concerts were held by the Victorian Engineers (defence forces) to assist (QS 10/12/1892, 23/9/1893).

It was clear that the communities at The Heads held strong sympathetic views for shipwreck victims, and in many cases were active philanthropists. The Queenscliff community was often represented as a heroic and noble populace, to whom shipwrecks were tragic events that befell the poor unfortunates who either owned the vessel or were onboard. However, as will be seen below, shipwrecks also offered an opportunity for income and resources that was often a boon for the town.

#### **IV) Exploitation Responses to Shipping Crises**

##### **(a) Claiming Salvage Rights to Vessels at the Time of Wreck**

Although a heroic front was presented during times of maritime disasters, shipwrecks also offered a financial windfall for many mariners in the area. Many rescuers often also acted as salvors, and several accounts documented where saviours later claimed salvage rights to wrecks after first removing the last of the survivors. One of the earliest cases of salvage claims resulted from the stranding of the barque *Victory* (on Victory Shoal, Lonsdale Bight), after the steamers *Vesta* and *Aphrasia* aided in towing the vessel off the reef, and two lighters belonging to a local merchant (Capt. Cole) aided in transferring goods that would otherwise have been thrown overboard (MMH 19/8/1850:2). Salvage was defined in the ensuing court case as "that compensation that is to be made to other persons by whose assistances a ship or its loading may be saved from impending peril, or recovered from actual loss" (MMH 16/9/1850:2). Cole became involved in a number of salvage cases at The Heads, where he also raised vessels using divers (MMH 9/3/1852:2, 14/2/1853:4).

Pilots were regularly involved in shipwreck rescues in the early days of the settlement, and often risked their lives to save survivors. However, on many occasions after pilots had rescued wreck victims, they claimed salvage rights on the vessel and/or their contents. In one instance, a pilot recovered enough specie from the *Sacramento* wreck to retire from piloting after only six weeks on the job, while his boatman invested his proceeds to establish the Melbourne Steamship Company (QS 30/7/1910; Draper 1900:10; Noble 1979:21). Similarly, when gold from the *Empress of the Sea* was transferred to the pilot boat after the ship had caught fire, the pilot schooner sailed directly to Williamstown where the gold was held in the Pilots' Office until a compensation claim was settled (Cuzens, 1912:7). Some historical sources even claimed that the pilots had engineered the transferral of the gold from the ship's longboat by delaying taking the towline until the vessel was swept outside The Heads, which thus increased the validity of their salvage claim, whilst the fishermen transferred the passengers ashore (Simpkin n.d.:10). Furthermore, pilots were often involved in rescuing or towing disabled vessels at sea, and frequently claimed salvage rights against them (e.g. *Lillies* – Noble 1979:55). It is of interest that salvage claims were still awarded to pilots as late as 1961 during the salvage of the tug *Walumba* by the *Wyuna* (Noble 1979:76).

Many government officials also advocated salvage rights for services provided to stranded vessels, even though they were operating in their official governmental duties. The Geelong Harbour Master (Capt. Bunbury) and crew of the Government schooner *Apollo*, the Geelong Customs Staff, and the master and crew of the steamer *Aphrasia*, all submitted salvage claims when they assisted in refloating the vessel *Victory* (MMH 16/9/1850:2). These government personnel were often reported attending various strandings and wrecks (e.g. *William Hyde* -GA 24/7/1849:2; *James T. Foord* - GA 3/5/1851:2; DPH 1859:0.). One newspaper went as far as to label Bunbury and his vessel as a “wrecker” (GA 23/5/1851:2), regardless of the fact that everyone except Customs personnel were legally entitled to salvage claims (MMH 16/9/1850:2). Despite the negative outcome to the case, the Customs officials continued their interest in shipwreck salvage, as is demonstrated in 1852, when they chartered the *Aphrasia* to proceed to the *Isabella Watson* wreck, and the former Customs official Mr Friend (by then the Geelong Harbour Master) waited by the wreck “in order to save as much as possible” (GA 24/3/1852).

The economic importance of salvage to local mariners often resulted in cut-throat practices. When the towline accidentally parted to the barque *Craigburn* whilst being towed through The Rip by the tugboat *Rescue* (1891), the pilot in command ordered the tug to return with the line after letting go the anchors. However the tugboat's captain demanded that another £500 was required or a salvage

agreement be entered into, as he claimed that the tow contract had expired when the rope was let go. The *Craigburn*'s Captain resisted attempts to raise the anchors, which led to several unsuccessful attempts by a number of competing tugboats to secure a towline, and resulted in the eventual wreck and drowning of some of the crew (Noble 1979:57).

Fishermen also engaged in legal salvage of cargo from distressed vessels. In 1861, Fisher Smith loaded his boat with chickens escaping the inferno of the wrecked *Empress of the Sea* (Simpkin n.d.:9).

Legitimate salvage continued to offer profitable economic opportunities in this region well into the late twentieth century. This included salvage payments to the *Queenscliffe* lifeboat crew and the Port Phillip Pilots for saving a tug that was assisting with the stranded *Walumba* at Pt Lonsdale in the mid-1960s [PF], and the salvage of tanker *Golden Gate Sun* stranded at Shortland's Bluff in 1984 where the owners of tugboats used to pull her free claimed salvage rights of \$400 000 (Wane 2003:51).

### **(b) Financial Benefits of Lifeboat Crew Membership**

This duality of roles as both saviours and salvers offers starkly contrasting views of the community and its attitudes to wrecks. If we examine the role of the lifeboat crew again in light of financial incentives an additional perspective to the situation arises. There were also other rewards for being in the lifeboat crew beside the benefit funds and prizes offered by the government and other charitable communities. The lifeboat crew was recompensed with a generous stipend for each wreck attended or each time the lifeboat was launched, although the crew did not always consider this payment was adequate (QS 4/7/1891). The crew were also paid about nine pence for attending weekly 5 hours practice sessions in 1893 (Boyd and Roddick 1996:11), and the lifeboat remuneration was an important source of income for fishermen:

They got about £3 when they attended a wreck, which was a lot of money back then (c. 1930s-50s). They used to look after the married men first, who would usually get first go at a place in the boat... They would get about a weeks wage if they attended a wreck. My nephew attended a wreck in the 1970s and got \$15 for it back then...it was easy money... You got a few pound for attending the lifeboat practice, and the fishermen always turned up, especially during winter when it was tight and the fishing wasn't so good...All the men would turn up at the practice for their money. [GW]

Several people within the township also suggested that after being involved in rescue attempts to save a wreck and crew, the saviours often transformed to salvors:

Men were involved on both sides of the wreck. They would save people from the wreck and then be involved in the salvage and/or looting of the same wreck. This included lifeboat people, fishermen, and even pilots. Once the crew and captain were off the wreck there were no witnesses when the looters returned to the wreck in the dark. [nw]

Aside from the obvious noble intentions and demonstrated bravery, a place in the lifeboat also represented a valuable bonus income, particularly if official salvage by the lifeboat crew took place, whereupon substantial dividends were possible. As most of the volunteers were fishermen, it is clear (given the discussions of Chapter Six) that fishers (particularly in the nineteenth century before salvage rights were abolished for lifeboat crew) may have heavily relied on the extra income to support their often large families, which probably explained the reported rushes to be amongst the crew (QS 30/7/1887, 26/4/1919; Kerr 1985:73).

### (c) Victualling and Transportation of Shipwreck Survivors and Cargo

Other economic benefits were also reaped by members of the community as a consequence of shipping tragedies, which often presented unexpected financial windfalls for local passenger steamers and victualling merchants. Shipwreck survivors had to be fed, and transported from the scene, and during the gold rush era of the 1850s, an increase in immigration often meant hundreds of people were aboard the wrecked and stranded vessels (see Table 7.4). Additionally, vessels were often chartered in attempts to refloat or tow the vessel, as were lighters to discharge cargo (see Table 7.5). The local vessel *Aphrasia* derived a substantial income from the transportation of shipwrecked and stranded passengers, and towing numerous derelict vessels (*Victory* -MMH, 19/8/1850:2; *Isabella Watson* – GA 24/3/1852:2; *Sacramento* - GA 3/5/1853:2).

Vessel	Date	Passengers	Source
<i>John T. Foord</i>	1851	300	GA 3/5/1851:2
<i>Considine</i>	1852	180	GA 16/9/1852:2
<i>St George</i>	1852	240	Argus 31/12/1852:4
<i>Sacramento</i>	1853	236	GA 3/5/1853:2

**Table 7.4: Examples of shipping incidents involving the transferral of immigrant shipwreck survivors.**

Vessel	Date	Source
<i>Sophia</i>	1848	GA 7/6/1848:2
<i>William Hyde</i>	1849	GA 24/7/1849
<i>Victory</i>	1850	GA 19/8/1850:2
<i>Cossipore</i>	1852	GA 10/12/1852:4
<i>Sylvia</i>	1855	GA 8/9/1855:2
<i>Barwon</i>	1866	GA 26/6/1866:2
<i>Sussex</i>	1872	GA 20/1/1872:2

**Table 7.5: Examples of shipping chartered vessels were used for towing or lighterage.**

## **V) Ancillary Industries**

### **(a) Pilots**

The inauguration of a Pilots Service was primarily a mitigative response to shipwrecks around The Heads, and continued shipping mishaps reaffirmed the need for reliable assistance (Argus 23/9/1853:4; MMH 13/8/1852:2, 9/12/1852:4). This situation led to the establishment of the Victorian Pilots Service Board, a major industry that was to further affect the development of Queenscliff through to the present day. Shipwrecks were considered not only a human tragedy for the colony, but also a financial loss that discouraged shipping trade. Official correspondence in 1852 regarding the need for pilots revealed: “every shipwreck was dangerous to the character of the port” (Noble 1979:21). As outlined above, pilots often assisted in early shipwrecks, but were later excluded from any official rescue capacity due to their commitments as an essential service [CSp].

Comparison of the Lifeboat and Pilots Service represents an interesting dichotomy, where the former is a reactive response to shipwrecks primarily to save lives, and the latter is a pre-emptive strategy designed predominantly protect the business interests of shipping company merchants (although protection of life was also a major consideration) through the prevention of shipwrecks.

The Service brought many economic benefits to the town, as early pilots resided locally, and so contributed to its wealth and social strata. Many generations of merchant seamen were employed by the Pilots Service to run their cruising vessels which patrolled the coast outside The Heads (Noble 1979:73-4), while boatbuilders were engaged to manufacture small craft for pilot transferals [JB; JP].

This industry has archaeological imprints that are expressed in a variety of ways, such as piers, slipway and boatbuilding sites, groynes, wrecks, relics at former mooring sites, camps/ shed/office structures and comparatively luxurious housing (compared to other socio-economic classes), but these have not been included in this study due to space limitations.

### **(b) Loss of Life: Morgues, Undertakers and Cemeteries**

Many wrecks incurred great loss of life, and often there were numerous corpses which required burial. These events also presented unexpected economic opportunities for Queenscliff builders and carpenters who also acted as undertakers (e.g. Priddle Builders/Carpenters [CSp]), and ancillary

workers such as hearse operators and gravediggers at the Pt Lonsdale Cemetery. Although these events were predominantly treated with great respect, they were nonetheless valuable business transactions for those concerned. One instance was identified where the coffins of two shipwreck victims were removed from a funeral until a disagreement over the burial arrangements was sorted (QS 5/9/1891). Other burials of shipwreck victims and local dead were reportedly interred in the sand dunes below the Queenscliff lighthouse (Dunn 1949:39). The bodies of several shipwrecked mariners were interred in a former cemetery at Shortland's Bluff, but later corpses were buried at the new Pt Lonsdale graveyard from at least 1864 onwards (Dunn 1949:39; Simpkin n.d.:12).

### ***B) Shipwrecks and Strandings as Places of Opportunity***

All the activities outlined above were undertaken in direct relation to the shipwreck as an event. However, after the shipping tragedy had occurred, other behaviour was also recorded that utilised the shipwreck as a place. This transformation of the site from an event to a subsequent place has important implications for how these sites are interpreted. Until now, shipwrecks have predominantly been viewed as the archaeological representation of a maritime disaster event, an approach which has treated the site as an area largely outside the realm of cultural utility. However, this attitude ignores that the wreck was often accessed, exploited and utilised long after the wrecking event, and was not just archaeological in nature, but was imbued with a variety of meanings based on its relative importance to each user group. Therefore although ships have been transformed initially to shipwrecks, which produce their own archaeological signatures, when they are further accessed they also become places within the landscape. As this cycle takes place, the behaviour associated with the wreck slowly changes from altruism to opportunism, as will be demonstrated below.

### **I) Setting the Scene: Smuggling, Looting, and the Establishment of Customs Services**

An examination of shipwreck exploitation would be inadequate without also examining smuggling, as these practices were often inextricably linked. The new found wealth of the 1850s gold rush period attracted many smugglers to The Heads region, and also led to an increase in smuggled goods, which included more luxurious goods such as French champagne and obscene literature, and a huge trade in illicit alcohol. Smugglers of illicitly imported goods were commonly known to bury contraband goods directly in dunes or in barrels to avoid detection, and special customs officers



were assigned to police these offences. The grog trade/ smuggling was rife the Mornington Peninsula, especially given the absence of an adequate police force in the area (NHS 1966; Day 1992:284-5, 293).

In 1852, all customs duties, taxes and charges were abolished on imported goods except on spirits, wine, tea and coffee, tobacco. Wharfage fees were also abolished to encourage foreign (predominantly French) vessels to begin importation of luxury goods to meet the demand of the newly wealthy gold miners and pastoralists. Goods from the wrecks of these vessels presented attractive targets for looting, particularly in frontier communities such as Queenscliff where even basic household goods were often scarce. As the cargo of these foreign shipwrecks had not cleared customs, many of those involved in opportunistic plundering from shipwrecks were regarded in the strictest terms of the law as smugglers (Day 1992:283).

The looting of vessels on the foreshore presented a twofold loss to the fledgling colony. Not only were owners deprived of their cargoes which were badly needed by the settlement, but the government was denied essential income generated through importation and customs duties on the international cargoes. The pillaging led to the establishment of a Customs Service to police not only looting, but also to try to control smuggling of illicit goods into the colony. A token customs force was stationed at Shortland's Bluff in 1853, but given the large expanse of coastline and hundreds of vessels entering The Heads each year, the complement of a junior Customs officer and boat crew proved ineffectual. A request was made in 1854 for an experienced customs officer and two policemen be stationed at Shortland's Bluff (Day 1992:292).

The Customs boat stationed at Queenscliff was making raids in search of smuggled spirits as far as Portarlington, but raised the ire of the local population in 1863 when the raid was carried out on the Sabbath (GA 8/1/1863:2, 9/3/1863:3). By 1867, the Queenscliff Customs Station was removed, despite the continued activity of sly grog merchants (GA 24/6/1867), prompting concern that the former smuggling trade that existed there would be renewed. In past time "uncustomed brandy and Geneva were regularly planted (buried) on the beach...and now that there is a fleet of fishing boats in this sub-port, .the prevention of smuggling will be almost...an impossibility" (GA 18/4/1867:3).

In later periods drug smuggling became popular, and in the 1920s local fisherman discovered a potato sack full of tins of opium (Ferrier 1989:20). Upon arrival at the pier, one of the tins was opened to reveal the contents, and many were souvenired by locals until police were contacted and

called for their return. This trade has continued until comparatively recently when one former resident reported that he had been approached to smuggle ashore goods dumped outside The Heads [name withheld], and as late as 2004, drugs were dumped offshore for collection by smugglers (Howard 2003). The lawlessness described in this section sets the scene for subsequent shipwreck looting which was widespread in the study area. An expanded consideration of the Customs Service in Victoria is contained in Appendix F-3.

## II) Opportunistic Salvage (Looting)/Profiteering Directly from Shipping

### Mishaps

Many early accounts of shipwrecks at The Heads detailed the prominence of pillaging after survivors had been removed from the wreck. Looting from shipwrecks was a major source of income for many Queenscliff households since the inception of the town, as demonstrated in the following account:

*Wrecking at The Heads:* We are assured that this offence has become quite habitual, and that Port Phillip Heads have become a den of wreckers, the impunity with which these depredations are committed adding daily to their audacity. A vessel is no sooner in a disabled state than she is surrounded by bands of men who can be no better described as so many pirates – plundering the vessel of all that is valuable and easily removed. Not long since the unfortunate purchasers of the *Sea*, and *Will o' the Wisp*, were robbed by these rascals of all that could easily be taken away; even anchors, chains, copper sheathing, from the bottom, and in these cases the loss will amount to many hundreds. It is stated that a vessel has been stopped by information, at Williamstown, with plunder from the wreck of the *Ontario*, to the amount of many hundreds of pounds; and report says a thousand pounds worth is now buried in the sand at The Heads, awaiting an opportunity of being brought secretly to market. It is unnecessary to say that this ought to be immediately seen after, and put a stop to. (Argus 29/11/1853)

This account was typical for the time, and was repeated in content for many other shipping tragedies. When the vessel *Ant* wrecked at Breamlea in 1866, and it was reported that “The wreckers have made sad havoc with all available materials. It is known, and those who have done the despoiling will be called upon to render an account of their ill doing” (GA 28/6/1866:2).

Customs Officials and Police were regularly stationed on and nearby wrecks (Figure 7.18) to protect the vessels from the hoards of looters (Figure 7.19) attracted to the wrecks (e.g. *Light of the Age* - GA 18/1/1868:3; *Sussex* - GA 4/1/1872):

In all directions - under bushes and beneath some canvas tents that had been erected, suspicious looking prowlers may be seen evidently anxiously awaiting a squall to give

them the opportunity of wrecking. Picnic parties mixed with those who were bent on more earnest work. (GA 4/1/1872)



**Figure 7. 18: Customs camp at the wreck site of the *Joseph H. Scammel* in 1891 (Photo in Brownhill 1990: 310).**



**Figure 7. 19: Wreck of the *George Roper*. Note policeman beating a looter in foreground (Photo: PH2801, QHM Collection).**

The *Sussex* wreck attracted many speculators and valuers from the Melbourne iron trade (who were interested in its sale), along with many Queenscliff men who came to see or plunder from the wreck (GA 4/1/1872). The day after the wreck, 1500 people were encamped on the shore nearby (GA 6/1/1872). Many reports appeared of items not only being looted from the shoreline, but visitors' property also being stolen (GA 17/1/1872:2). The cliff at the Barwon Heads were covered with the tents of Police and Customs officers from both Geelong and Queenscliff, along with former crew from the wreck, who had been sent down to watch over the site: "There were a large number of carts in close proximity to the shore, and scores of land sharks waiting for something to turn up" (BS 5/1/1872). Many looters showed scant regard for the authorities, and a bush fire that destroyed the Customs tent probably acted as a decoy to distract officers from pilferage further along the beach (Loney 1989:18).

The incidence of so many wrecks had obvious cognitive effects on an often impoverished fishing community. An editorial account (QS, 24/9/1892) recalled "the early days" when a vessel had gone ashore near Queenscliff close to the old lighthouse quarters and a cargo of hams were piled on the shore with an armed guard to protect them. The locals were driven to despair by the sight of the hams, which were a luxury item, especially in a fishing community that was sustained predominantly on seafood. Locals gathered on the cliff top to feast their eyes alone on the pile of tempting food:

I don't particularly want the blessed hams, only they do put me so much in mind of dear old Yorkshire. I have'na ben able to eat or sup a' the morn, my appetite's a clean awa,

owing to the thinking o' the hams, and the morn's porridge has lost a' its flavour: do ye no ken, at a' what's to be done? (QS 24/9/1892)

A scheme was devised to steal the hams whereby a one culprit distracted the guard with conversation, and secured a hook attached to a string to the hams by stooping to retie his shoelaces, whereupon his accomplices hauled the ham away with the string, and at least a dozen hams were procured in this way (QS 24/9/1892). This wreck was probably the barque *Glaneuse*, wrecked in 1886 with a cargo of luxury imported items including sardines, hams and champagne. This account demonstrates the enticement the wrecked cargoes presented to the local Queenscliff population, and reveals the ancestral origins of some of those who were involved in pilfering (i.e. Yorkshire). It also showed that there was a degree of status to be gained through involvement in this activity, which appears to have been incorporated into local folklore.

Several informants recounted that local townspeople would often visit the scene of a wreck, often with diverse intentions: "Some people wanted to help, and some wanted to help themselves. It was almost an act of God in their favour" [PF]. This observation highlights the underlying mixture of altruism and opportunism. The loot from these endeavours would be sold at the Geelong Market to generate extra income. Reports during the wreck of the *Joseph H. Scammel* detail that the looting during this period was so bad that the road to Geelong had to be closed to keep the salvaged material from leaving the district, as carts were piled high with the proceeds (Loney 1989:42).

Another story often recounted by informants was how a local mariner was towing back a hogshead barrel of whisky from the wreck of the *Sacramento* (1853), and was caught by a local Customs officer, who confiscated the prize. The barrel was raised onto the local jetty, and a guard placed on it overnight. Incensed at losing his prize, the man rowed under the jetty in a small boat later that night, and drilled a hole through the jetty deck and barrel to drain its contents into casks and buckets in the boat before rowing away (Loney 1989b:10). In the morning when five large men came to lift the barrel onto a cart "they nearly launched it into space" [PF].

Plundering of wrecks continued throughout the community right well into the twentieth century. When the steamer *SS Time* grounded on Corsair Rock in 1949, it was alleged that droves of mariners descended on the abandoned vessel. [Note: Because of the recent nature of this event, specific details of the informant and other historic participants have been withheld, although the details have been corroborated by Jurgens (1974:3)]:

When the *Time* went ashore some people helped themselves to it. They were more or less pirates. Some fishermen went aboard and took timber, hides and bags of sugar, which was piled high on the pier until it was taken home. Some of them had to buy their way out of it when they were caught. [Name withheld] dived down below and blew the propeller off. He later bought the rights to the wreck, and it was rumoured that he had been made to buy the wreck to stop being prosecuted after he had been caught taking stuff off it. Just a few boats were involved in wrecking then. [nw]

When the *Time* went ashore, [names withheld] went aboard and pinched everything...doors, rope, paint, the lot. The police recovered [some of] the gear from the fishermen, and the police auctioned all the gear. [CS]

Similar opportunistic salvage was also being undertaken across The Rip on the back beaches at Sorrento and Portsea, where a wreck bell also existed, and men and women responded not only to save life, but to gain liquor, china and household goods (NHS 1966:63).

Despite formal salvage law, it appears that this behaviour reflected the common attitude of the time that shipwrecks and associated debris represented a godsend from the sea, which every citizen had the right to exploit. Shipwrecks were often a boon for struggling fishermen, as they occurred in the winter when the fishing was poor, and the weather was bad:

Some fishermen used to say “please God, send me a wreck”...Shipwrecks were a blessing and a curse. Fishermen were the bottom of the food line. They had to build boats in winter to survive. Fishermen had other part time jobs to survive. The wrecks were a real economic resource, there was extreme poverty in the fishing community from the 1850s-1900s. [PF]

Neither was looting restricted only to the poorer members of the town. Dod (1931:97) recalled the events of when the *George Roper* (1883) wrecked on Lonsdale Reef:

When heavy gale set in, the holds broke open and many whisky barrels and other liquors floated around bay and channels. Soldiers even got in on the act when a barrel floated ashore at the bottom of the bluff, and formed a bucket line up to their barracks to empty its contents until a local pastor reported them to their officer.

Another account also documented Indigenous peoples accessing spoil from wreck sites in the mid-1850s (Simpkin n.d.:5).

However, although Queenscliff and Pt Lonsdale residents demonstrated a great reliance on shipwrecks and strandings for opportunistic salvage, other communities close to the coast but located along Swan Bay did not, even though they did purchase shipwreck items from salvors:

The kitchen of our house was lined with stuff and panels from the *Time*...We had to pay for it from salvagers...it may have been from black market sales. [DB]

It therefore appears that although shipwreck materials were relied upon as part of the material culture of the Swan Bay District residents, these inland communities (who were predominantly farmers) did not place an economic reliance on shipwrecks to the extent that the coastal communities did.

### III) Looting Behaviour: Camouflaging or Caching the Evidence

#### (a) Burying loot in the Sandhills

The establishment of Customs and Police forces in the area led to new types of behaviour associated with looting. In attempts to circumvent discovery, several informants described how local residents would often hide contraband material close by the wreck by collapsing eroding sand dunes over the booty for recovery at a later time [GW; LID; PF]:

Yes, the people here used to pinch a bit of stuff off of shipwrecks. My old man told me about the when the *Sierra Nevada* wrecked...there were dead pigs and bodies everywhere, and barrels of whisky washing ashore. Some soldiers found one of the barrels, and they collapsed sand over the top to hide it. [CS]

Often this technique was successful, and looters would return to the scene days or months afterwards when activity associated with the wreck had died down. Many historical accounts were found to substantiate this practice:

A foray has recently been made to, at and about The Heads by Sergeant Draper and others of the Brighton police, with a view to find what of the property and cargo they could which was wrecked in the *Ontario*. The sergeant succeeded in getting two casks of brandy, one cask of gin, one pipe of wine, two puncheons of oil, twenty three hogsheads of porter, besides large amounts of other property, all of which he has brought to Melbourne, having first dug it out of the beach sand, where there is no doubt property to a very large amount similarly secreted. (Argus 10/12/1853, as cited in Love 2006)

Another account reported that “Thousands of pounds worth [of plunder] is now buried in the sands at The Heads, awaiting an opportunity of being brought secretly to market” (Argus 29/11/1853 as cited in Love 2006). This practice was recorded many times in association with a number of wrecks, including the *George Roper*, *Ontario*, *Light of the Age* and *Joseph H. Scammel* (Argus 29/11/1853, 10/12/1853; Dod 1931:69, 97; Dunn 1949: 40; Loney 1989: 37, 40). There were many caching areas around the district where goods were either buried close to the wreck, or where debris was hidden where it washed ashore at flotsam traps (see below for further discussion). Local residents often towed barrels into the back of Swan Island (Stingaree Bight) and rolled up into hills to “dry out” the barrels, and “it was a poor house in Queenscliff in those days that could not show a few good bottles of whisky” (Dod 1931: 97). The local Customs Inspector reported finding many instances of goods hidden between various wreck sites and Geelong (Anderson and Cahir 2003:30).

The looters were often quite organised; Customs Officers using probes in 1891 uncovered under nine inches of earth 29 boxes of tobacco from the *Joseph Scammel* (outside the study area at Bream Creek) buried in a trench lined with corrugated iron (Brownhill 1990:311). However, more often than not, copious amounts of alcohol from the wreck were first consumed, blurring the memory of the booty site location, which could not be subsequently relocated [GW]. In some cases the proceeds were never found, raising the possibility that new types of secondary archaeological sites associated with shipwrecks still exist in the area:

There was lots of stuff buried in the sand. Someone in the [name withheld] family found a figurehead and hid it in the sand at Pt Nepean, but couldn't find it again. There was lots of stuff from wrecks hidden in the sand at Pt Lonsdale, the Headlands and Bluff, and at Queenscliff Back Beach and Swan Island. [PF]

### **(b) Overindulgence**

Many accounts also detailed 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:

The cases of debauchery and wantonness which are going on there amongst the wreckers, who loiter about the place, are past belief and extent, and their bacchanalian orgies would be disgraceful to savages. Surely the government should do something, either by having police station at The Heads or otherwise, to protect property and suppress or prevent scenes like those we have referred to (Argus 10/12/1853, as cited in Love 2006)

These scenes were common occurrences associated with many shipwreck incidents (see Loney 1989b; Anderson and Cahir 2003:23, 154, 165). When the *Sussex* went ashore on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1871 with a cargo of liquor, extensive local looting was reported (GA 1/2/1872), leading one maritime archaeologist [MS] to comment that it must have been the best New Years Eve they ever had.

This intemperate behaviour also took place at flotsam traps (see discussion below), where the mariners would overindulge in liquor that had been washed ashore out of sight of the authorities:

When the *Light of the Age* and the *Sierra Nevada* wrecked, many casks of wine and rum were washed ashore at Swan Island, Lonsdale Bight, Pt Lonsdale and Mud Islands and for the next fortnight barrels were floating all over the bay. Men would disappear for weeks at a time, drinking until the barrels were finished. [LF]

Nor was this extreme behaviour limited to adults, as Dod (1931:69) recalled the scenes of wanton destruction of property at wrecks sites by children:

Some of my mates finding a crate of bedroom crockery, some distance from the police, amused themselves by tying bedroom jugs and utensils together by the handles and

playing horses with them. Galloping up and down the beach till they were broken to atoms.

**(c) Contraband Houses/ Public Places**

Loot was also buried closer to home as the opportunity presented. The following instance was recalled by several sources (Loney 1989:43; [PF]): “Once a fellow got some tobacco and buried it in his back yard in kerosene tins to hide it. When he dug it up he found it was unusable, as the kerosene vapours had permeated through it, so he used it to dip his sheep instead”. Loot was often buried to in backyards or under beaches:

One time the customs guys came down to town and all the fishermen hid their stuff from the wreck by burying it. There was lots of cloth and silk, bolts of it, you know for making clothes, and they all took their bits they had down to the beach and buried it...that’s right, they buried it just over there, in behind the Beach St houses in the dunes. But the only guy who got caught was a bloke who took the lining boards off his house and put it in behind there, and when the customs came down they could see bits of the cloth sticking out from behind the boards. [GW]

Several people recalled that there were some houses that were locally known for storing contraband salvaged shipwreck material (Jurgens 1974:3), including *Mythian* (an ex-pilot’s residence), where goods were often hidden in the ceiling rafters or cellar [LID; PF].

This caching behaviour may have led to secondary professions within the community, whereby it was locally known that given individuals could supply certain types of materials (e.g. people wanting wedding dresses may have approached the holder of the silk roll outlined above), and these may have led to informal trade networks which further strengthened relationships within and around the town. This observation was further supported the reliance of some Swan Bay residents on a black-market trade in shipwreck material.

Public places were also allegedly used to conceal contraband, possibly because direct blame could not be associated with any one person, or because the officials were also involved. Kerr (1985: 73) reported that alcohol from the *Sierra Nevada* was hidden at Pt Nepean and behind the Queenscliff Railway Station to avoid detection by Customs, and that many bottles had been rediscovered in these locations for many years afterwards. Rumours also abounded in the town of a relatively recent occurrence when timber from a wreck at Pt Lonsdale washed ashore at Queenscliff, and was hidden under government buildings to conceal it from an aerial search by a helicopter [nw]. This incident was probably the subject for an episode of a popular local television series (*Seachange*) that was based in this area.



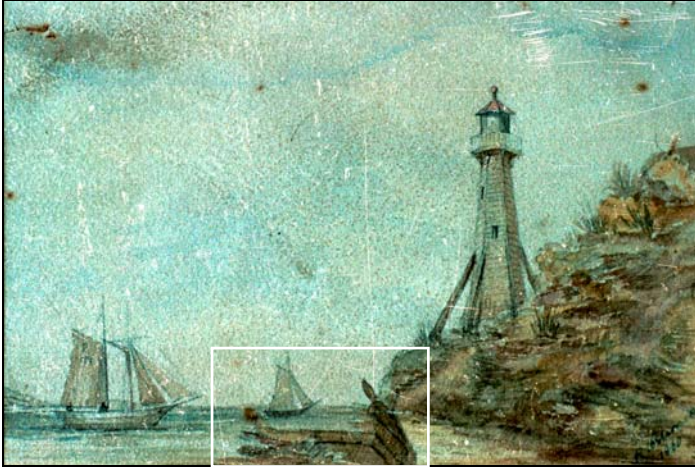
#### **(d) Deliberate Fires**

Several residents [nw] suggested that unexplained fires had occurred during shipwreck looting on a number of occasions during the twentieth century, to conceal evidence of theft, to ensure the wreck (which was a rich source of income) could not be removed, and also to distract Customs staff onshore (see above). It therefore appears that fire was an important tool of concealment and procurement during looting activities, which might have implications for the discovery of burnt material on or near shipwrecks that might normally be attributed to an accident at the time of wrecking.

#### **IV) Flotsam Wreckage Traps/ Beachcombing**

Many shipwrecks were quickly pounded to pieces in the large ocean swells of Bass Strait, and floating items of their superstructure and cargoes were often spread by the seas. Flotsam from many wrecks along the ocean beaches was spread for miles along the coast (*Light of the Age* - GA 20/1/1868:3; *Sussex* - BS 5/1/1872), and debris from those near to The Heads was often scattered on the beaches throughout the Bay, or caught in the tidal currents in the channels (e.g. *Marmion* -GA 30/5/1853:2; *Ontario* – [PF]; *George Roper*). The confluence and regularity of so many wrecks near The Heads exposed many local vessels, especially fishing boats to hazards from wrecked vessel debris, and in 1912, fishermen were forced to use the southern channel extremity to avoid the debris (QS 5/10/1912).

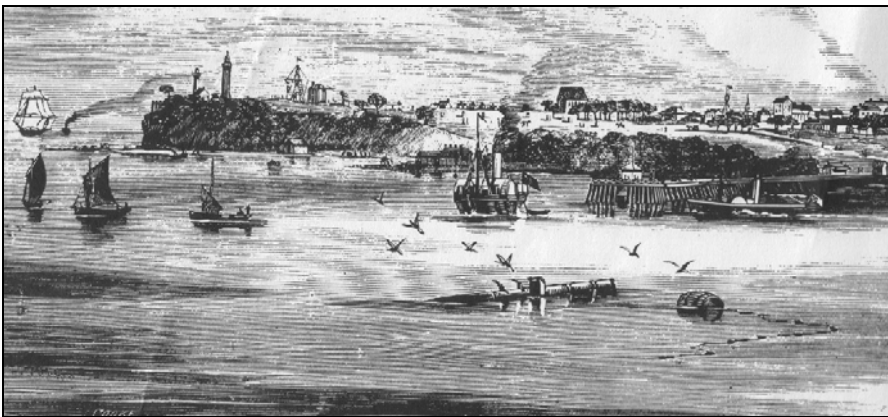
The Pt Lonsdale back beach (extending to Barwon Heads) and Lonsdale Bight at became known as a wreckage and flotsam trap, and various newspaper accounts reported that the area was strewn with timber and materials after shipping disasters at The Heads (e.g. *Sacramento* – GA 2/5/1853:2; PPH 4/5/1853). Wreckage was also known to have washed ashore at Shortland's Bluff near the Pilots' station (MMH 20/4/1850; Figure 7.20), Pt Nepean Beach (GA 16/6/1848), Queenscliff Bight (Figure 7.21), Swan Spit, Swan Island, and at the Mud Islands [LF]. The sheer volume of flotsam enabled one Pt Lonsdale resident to build his own cottage entirely from shipwreck timbers where the beach was described as "a great timber yard" (Simpkin n.d.:4). Knowledge of these coastal dynamics was used to advantage by official salvors, who often threw buoyant items overboard (e.g. masts, yards - lagan) as they knew where it would float ashore for later collection (GA 15/1/1872), and also regularly exploited these flotsam traps as an economic by-product of shipwrecks elsewhere (QS 10/12/1892).



**Figure 7. 20: Wreckage below Shortland's Bluff timber lighthouse tower 1860 (Watercolour by R. Cossamore, Photo WD55, QHM Collection).**

The flotsam deposition processes associated with these locations was cyclic, and local people would collect wreckage and debris brought in by successive tides [JB]. Residents developed a traditional knowledge of the locations and conditions under which wreckage would be available at these types of sites [LF], and they would anticipate the availability of flotsam both at the immediate wreck site and elsewhere based on the prevailing weather conditions.

You often see the photos of people in their Sunday best who'd come down to look at the wreck. The people in the wreck could be looters looking at the conditions surrounding the wreck, the environment, and assessing when the ship is likely to break up and wash ashore...things like what is the swell size, wave conditions and cloud formations., so they could work out when and where the stuff would come ashore...they would wonder, what was the wreck made of, how soon will it break up...In 1928, a wreck, I think it was the *Wyrallah*, wrecked with a cargo of axe handles and broom handles. The fishermen knew where the cargo would wash ashore, and collected it all. [PF]



**Figure 7. 21: Floating wreckage (possibly the *Lady Harvey*) marked by a barrel buoy in Queenscliff Bight, c. 1863 (Picture: "New Lighthouse at Queenscliff", Cooke, IMP 10/1/1863, SLV Collection).**

Flotsam traps also provided concentrations of other materials that were washed overboard from passing shipping. Beachcombing for these resources was always a popular pastime in the community:

We collected dunnage off the beach. You used to get planks 15ft long and an inch wide. Johnny Geats lived on Swan Island, and he built a shack from dunnage and lived in it. We used to find this beautiful timber on the beach. We would tie a rope to it and we dragged it back along the beach to where you came down, and then would get someone to help lug it back to your house. Old Miss Siddle...had seats in her garden made out of driftwood. Some of that was proper timber that would have been sold, and came from the timber boats from Tasmania. They would sometimes lose some of it, it got washed off, and you were lucky if you got that...The timber was very important, as dressed timber was quite expensive then. [JP]

Anything that washed up on the beach was considered fair game. When a small coastal sailing ship went aground during a storm at Swan Island in the early 1900s, sheep that scrambled ashore were quickly corralled in the centre of the Island and used for meat for several months. Residents of the island clearly relied on the exploitation of flotsam material for everyday resources:

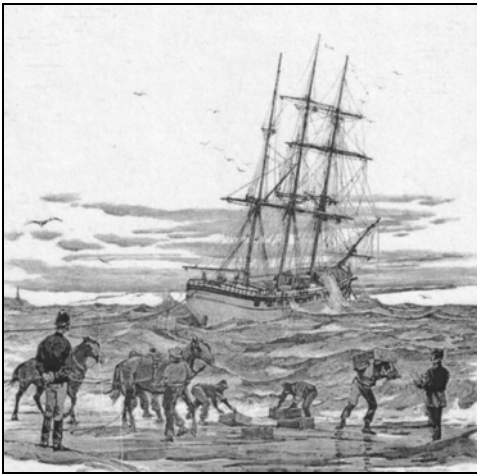
One night during a storm a cargo ship [probably the *Wyrallah*] was cut in half during a collision with another ship in The Rip, and cases of chocolates were washed up on our island. The contents were quite alright as each case was wrapped in zinc, so you can see it was like Christmas for us...We would often find bunches bananas/coconuts washed overboard from ships, timber planks and square kerosene tins...which were always taken home and all our outside sheds were made from them. (Thompson n.d.)

## V) Organised and Official Salvage

Official salving wrecks was clearly an important component of the Queenscliff landscape for many years (Figure 7.22). Even before the time of the initial establishment of the township, many community members profited from the salvage of shipwrecks at The Heads. From as early as 1844, when a Mr Raleigh purchased the wreck of the *Thetis*, opportunistic merchants speculated on direct salvage attempts (MMH 6/3/1849:4). In the 1850s, an itinerant professional wrecker (William Bailey, nick-named Wandering Willy), made a floating home from shipwreck materials whilst salvaging the *Lady Harvey*:

Wandering Willy was a Scotsman who led a nomadic existence...around the earliest occupation of Queenscliff. Willy occasionally was involved in fishing, but his main occupation was shipping salvage. He would often shift his tent, boats and gear to remote locations around the coast from towards Barwon Heads, the Mud Islands or Point Nepean, where he would stop for months at a time. Just when locals believed he had drowned, he would show up with a large quantity of wreckage for his main raft. His raft was moored to the north of the old jetty with chains and anchors, and took two years to build. The raft was made from the mast and spars of the *Lady Harvey* shipwreck as super structure, with planks and beams lashed and betted together. His cargo was laid on top of

this makeshift platform, and consisted of anchors, chains, winches, assorted bolts, rigging, and cabin fittings. At this time, Barwon Heads to Queenscliff and from Cape Schank to Pt Nepean was strewn with wreckage, but people were too absorbed with the gold rush to salvage this material. His craft was completed at the end of 1855, and fitted with a square sail and side lights. The *Lady Harvey's* Galley was fitted up as the Captains Cabin, with a nail keg as a store. A bell was fitted in case of fog, and a keg of unbonded rum secured for the voyage. The voyage to Williamstown took three weeks, and as the raft was thought to be a derelict, many seamen raced to claim the prize, only to be disappointed to discover Willey at the tiller. The raft was broken up and sold in lots at auction, and the Galley was brought ashore to be used as an office. It was reported that Willy was also involved in the salvage of the *Cataraqui* at King Island in 1844. (Fanning 1892c)



**Figure 7. 22: Official salvagers at work on the *Glaneuse* shipwreck. Note the police guarding the operations (Sleap, IAN 16/10/1886, SLV Collection).**



**Figure 7. 23: Salvors at work on the *Sussex*. Note the use of tramway to the wreck (Image in Loney 1989b:18).**

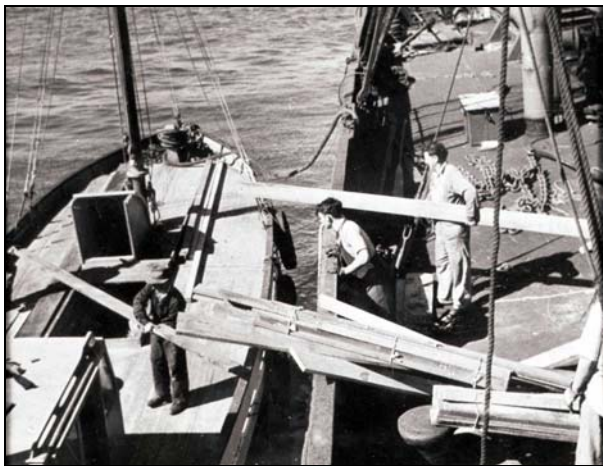
The salvaging of shipwrecks proved to be a lucrative business for many entrepreneurs at Queenscliff, including a Mr Miller who was involved in the salvage of at least four shipwrecks during the 1870s-80s (*Sussex*, *Gange*, *George Roper*, and *Gambier*), and successfully worked at least one of the wrecks for many years (GA 20/1/1872; QS 13/8/1887, 26/11/1892). Wrecks were a profitable venture for salvors, who often paid substantial sums to purchase them for later salvage (QS 29/3/1890). In at least one case (*Sussex*), shares were offered to salvage the wreck, which proved very profitable as it was salvaged before it was destroyed by the elements (see Figure 7.23; GA 1/2/1872).

Organised salving continued to be profitable well into the twentieth century. One syndicate bought the rights to several wrecks in the area, including the steamships *Orungal*, *Australia* and *Time* (see Figure 7.24), which proved lucrative enough to purchase a new boat [PF].

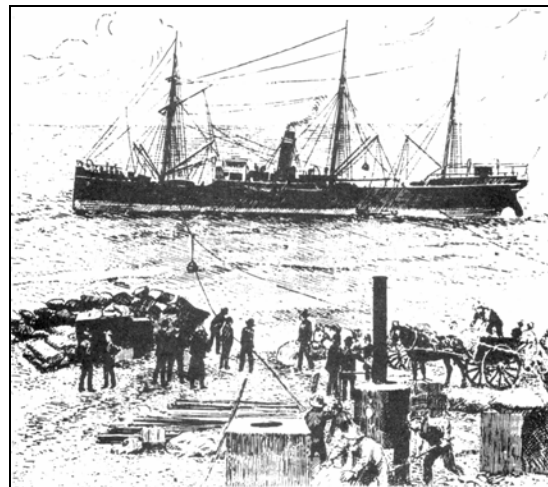
When the *Time* went ashore...a mob bought the salvage rights to the wreck...you would see them taking off walnut and silky oak timber, and there was a craft loading sugar from it. They even had a guard on board, to stop people pinching their stuff. The pier was loaded with timber and sugar. They used the crayfish boats to ferry all the gear ashore. They would hook up the [sugar] bags off the bottom of the hold using grapples. [CS]

As alluded to previously, organised salvage presented many other economic opportunities for the community as well as the salvors. Queenscliff fishermen were often hired to assist with salvage operations (Simpkin n.d.:9; Dod 1931:97): “Barges would come down from Melbourne to salvage stuff on the rocks, and they would employ locals to salvage wrecks, fishermen” [JB]. The salvage of shipwreck material often provided cheap economic benefits to the local and regional communities, when mercantile produce was sold at a very competitive rate. Many sales of shipwreck materials appeared in local newspapers, which included kerosene, cases of seafood and axe handles from the *Joseph H. Scammell* (QS 4/7/1891). Many locals recalled using household goods from wrecks:

My family had a big bag of sugar from the wreck of the *Time*, and I can clearly remember using the sugar; which was very hard and raw, from this bag on my cornflakes as a kid for many years. [LID]



**Figure 7. 24:** Salving timber from the *Time* shipwreck (Photo: PH3442, QHM Collection).



**Figure 7. 25:** Salvors unloading the *SS Bancoora*. Note corrugated road leading into the water, ships tank and donkey engine (Egersdorfer, IAN 1/8/1891, SLV Collection)

Salving led to the development of its own individual types of material culture used to transport merchandise from the wreck. Salvors of the *Sussex* used an iron tank as an airtight raft for transporting cargo ashore, established an iron tramway over the sand dunes to the wreck, and also used a wooden sled pulled by 12 bullocks to transport heavy objects. A flying fox made from a



ships mast embedded in the sandhills, along with a ships winch, donkey engine and corrugated road were used at the site of the *Bancoora* stranding (Breamlea) to transport cargo ashore (see Figure 7.25; Brownhill 1990:311; Loney 1989b: 45). Explosives were extensively used to break apart the *Hurricane* (QS 22/2/1908) and *Gambier* shipwreck, and some 300-400 tons of material were subsequently recovered by divers from the latter (QS 26/11/1892). Grappling hooks were used to hoist cargo out of the hold of the *SS Time* [BM].

## VI) Jetsam Traps and Beachcombing

Long after the occurrence of shipwrecks or strandings, jetsam was often washed ashore in areas close to the previous mishap site. Jetsam traps were important components of the Queenscliff economy, and of particular note were coal deposits that were regularly washed ashore in Lonsdale Bight. Since the early days of the settlement coal from strandings on the foreshore has been extensively accessed by the community in Lonsdale Bight, which provided a much needed economic resource for the area [CSp; DS; GW; HM; JP; PF; WN]. When the *SS Barwon* stranded in Lonsdale Bight in 1866 part of her coal cargo was sold locally as a cheap alternate fuel source (GA 28/6/1866:2). The Ferrier fishermen were a large family, and relied heavily on any supplementation of their income (which was a common situation amongst that social group), and fisher women often collected coal for their fires from the Shortland's Bluff Back beach after large storms:

My grandmother would wear several petticoats down to the beach and would walk along at low tide mark collecting coal. She would pull up one petticoat hem and fill it with coal that had washed ashore, and when that was full, she would pull up another and use them as a basket until they were all full. All the kids would nick off if she asked us to go for a walk with her, as we knew we would have to carry coal. Needless to say she preferred the small pieces...You can still find lots of coal at Shortland's Bluff and at the *Milora* stranding site after a strong easterly gale, which with its short swell brought it up on the beach. There is also lots of coal from the *Time* shipwreck in that area. [PF]

This was a common practice amongst other fishing families, and was considered “a godsend to the local people” as it was a regular and reliable resource [DS]. Nor was this practice restricted to fishing families or poorer community members. Pilots also heavily exploited this resource [CSp], as did affluent visitors to the town:

They were wealthy people...Old Mrs Hart would come over to the beach... She had a carpet bag, and she had a proper fur coat and she would go along the beach in bare feet with her carpet bag collecting coal. Her whole idea was to be away from Melbourne and she enjoyed it. [JP]

Although the coal was regarded as communal property accessible to all and sundry like most other items exploited from the sea, there also appears to have been an informal etiquette that applied in regards to obviously collected coal:

We used to walk along the beach and collect the coal as we went along and make small piles as you went or put it in old fertiliser bags. You would drag the bag back along the beach to the track where you went up to home, and then you would get someone to help lug it back to your house. No one would steal your coal if you left it on the beach. It was just something that wasn't done if you knew someone else had collected it. [JP]

The coal's regular availability after storms [CSp] led to the development of special implements to harvest this resource in the littoral zone:

A ship came ashore in 1934 in Lonsdale Bight, and had to dump its cargo of coal to get off. That coal kept many a house warm for years in Queenscliff. People went down to the beach and used rakes meshed into baskets to scope it out of the water [Figures 7.26 & 7.27]. They stored it in tanks in their backyards. It was a blessing in the depression - it kept everyone warm. [GW]

The development of this new material culture is an important characterisation of the use of this resource. This behaviour also reflects the presence of other industries in the area. In the early to mid-twentieth century, Queenscliff suffered a chronic shortage of timber fuel as the demand for firewood and bark trade that supplied the Melbourne biscuit factories and tanneries had stripped most of the wood stocks on the Bellarine Peninsula [JP]. Although a gas plant was installed in the area in 1884 (QS 21/1/1884), gas reticulation was only available to the lower end of town, and hence the local community were compelled to access this resource as it was not only readily available, but also substantially cheaper than ordering firewood from further afield: "It was free fuel. It was a highly commercial thing; you saved money on gas and firewood" [JP].



**Figure 7. 26: Coal harvesting using coal rakes in Lonsdale Bight (John Patrick Collection, from QHM Collection).**



**Figure 7. 27: Harvesting jettisoned coal using coal rakes in Lonsdale Bight (John Patrick Collection, from QHM Collection).**

### ***C) Shipwrecks as Other Types of Places***

With the passage of time, the importance of shipwrecks and their cargoes as potential physical exploitable resources diminished, and their utility was often identified with a whole suite of other functions, which extended beyond their association of the place with the actual wrecking event.

#### **I) Shipwrecks as Tourist Attractions**

With up to 2000 sightseers inundating the town on any one day in summer, shipwrecks played an important tourism role with local newspapers actively promoting the exposed hulks as attractions (QS 22/2/1908). Many early photographs show locals or tourists in their Sunday best on the rocks at Pt Lonsdale posing in front of shipwrecks, which were produced as tourist postcards (see Figures 7.28 & 7.29).

Indeed shipwreck sites were often subsequently treated with a carnival atmosphere which was a stark contrast to the solemnity of the initial emergency. When the *Sussex* wrecked near Barwon Heads in 1872, many picnickers visited the scene, and a crayfisherman nearby was kept busy by ferrying visitors across the river (GA 4/1/1872). The road to The Heads was besieged with vehicles of every description, including many dignitaries such as Geelong Councillors and politicians (BS 5/1/1872). Local newspapers described the festival mood associated with the wreck:

Scores of people made use of the half holiday and went out to see how the wreck of the *Sussex* was getting on. Cries of “to the wreck, now for the wreck” were heard throughout Geelong, as the touts secured passengers for their vehicles. Visitors (men, women and children) were scattered in every direction looking for mementoes of the wreck, but finding few. Entrepreneurs also established tents for the accommodation and refreshment of visitors. (GA 15/1/1872)

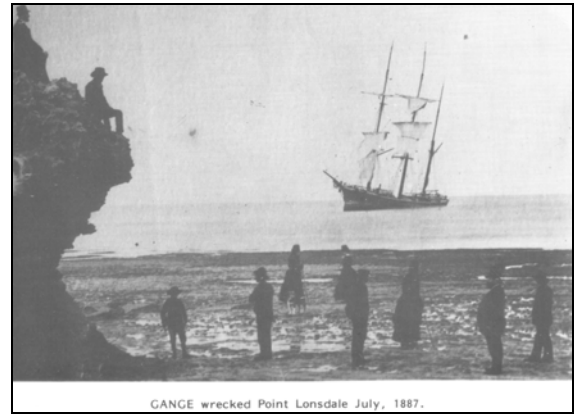
Similar events were described at Pt Lonsdale in 1890:

It’s an ill wind that blows nobody any good. The marine accident to the *Holyhead* has made business a bit lively on the Cliff during the past few days, especially vehicular traffic. There has been a constant stream of buses and traps of all descriptions, loaded with passengers, visiting the scene of the wreck, and notwithstanding the inclemency of the weather there was a large crowd of spectators an hour after the event happened. (QS 15/2/1890)





**Figure 7. 28: *George Roper* ashore at Lonsdale Reef (Marine History Postcards, Photograph: Roy Holden)**



**Figure 7. 29: *Gange* wrecked at Lonsdale Reef (Marine History Postcards, Photo: Jack Loney Collection)**

The seasonal nature of the local tourist industry meant that most tourists frequented the area in the summer period. As shipwrecks usually occurred in winter, they represented a welcome added draw card for tourists, who would often visit the wrecks to collect their own souvenirs. [CA; PF]

Many wrecks were drew crowds to the area in their own right. [WN] recalled an entry in her mother's 1941 diary: "Someone said there was a wreck [*SS Orungal*] and everyone piled into the car to have a look the next day".

Other activities associated with shipwrecks were also fashionable, such as the regular rocket practice by lifeboat crew [GW], or the displays of lifesaving procedures during Military Tattoos during the late 1890s (QS 5/1/1897). The popularity of these events demonstrated the curiosity and aura fundamentally associated with shipping mishaps. Shipwrecks continue to be a valuable economic resource for the region, both through heritage trails and a wreck focused diving industry that encourages thousands of annual visitors. Local museums, hotels and historical authors (e.g. Jack Loney) draw heavily on past shipping tragedies which are actively promoted as points of interest for visitors.

Periodic opportunistic use of recently wrecked vessels still takes place, although with more harmless intentions. [JBd] recalled that when the vessel *Golden Gate Sun* went ashore beneath the low lighthouse at Shortland's Bluff in the late 1980s, framed pictures of the vessel were available that same afternoon. Gibbs (2005) has observed similar behaviour associated with modern day wrecks in Queensland, and the author has witnessed the continuing innate curiosity of visitors towards many shipwrecks in many coastal localities around Australia and the world.

## II) Shipwrecks as Picnic and Recreational Playgrounds

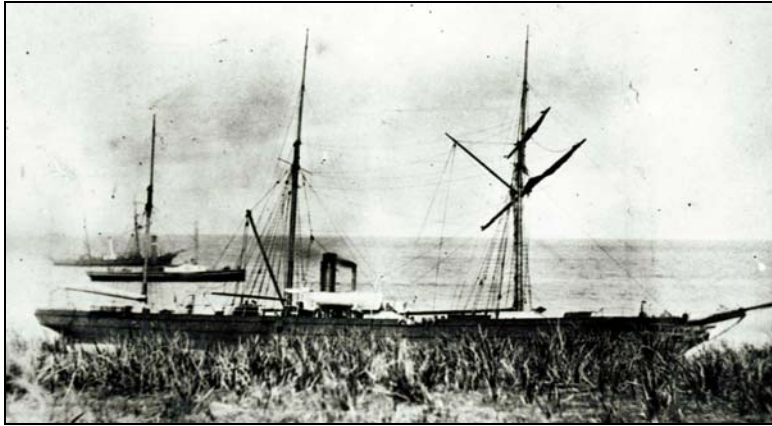


Figure 7. 30: *SS Barwon* aground at Lonsdale Bight in 1866 (Photo PH41, QHM Collection).

After the initial disaster event, shipwrecks usually became integrated into the community as a new place. Wrecks became the focus for sightseeing on Sunday picnics, where the whole family would visit the wreck site, which was often visible above the water. Wrecks, stranded vessels and old hulks often provided a playground for local children. As early as 1867, stranded vessels in Lonsdale Bight proved to be popular recreational facilities for local boys, especially the *SS Barwon* (which was ashore for more than a year - Dod 1931:66; Dunn 1949:40; Figure 7.30). Re-cycled hulks used as breakwaters were also popular recreational haunts. [HM] recalled playing submarines inside the hulk of the *HMVS Lonsdale* before it sank into the sand, and many informants [LM; RB] played or fished on the *J3 Submarine* at Swan Island until access was restricted by the military. Similar behaviour was also observed at Lorne, where wrecks were also used as diving platforms (Hunt 1999:23). Some shipwrecks eventually became social meeting venues. “People would say lets meet at the *Rosebud* [to loot it]. That’s how the town got its name” (Rogers 1960:50). Other places such as submerged rocks toponymically recorded their associations with wrecked or stranded ships (Lightning Rock, Victory Shoal [pt Lonsdale], Corsair Rock, Petriana Reef, Cheviot Beach, Sierra Nevada Rocks [Pt Nepean]).

## III) Modern Looting of Wreck Sites

It is interesting to note that even in modern times, shipwrecks continue to provide an attraction as a source of booty and possible illicit income. Since the inception of the diving industry in Victoria in the 1960s, shipwrecks became a focus for divers interested in collecting bottles and plates/ relics (e.g. Nayler n.d.) or purely for the visual experience. Many wrecks in the area have been heavily

looted, and the classic example being the *William Salthouse*, which when discovered in 1982 (Elliget and Breidahl 1991:3), was almost destroyed in what was described by Heritage Victoria staff as a looting frenzy. These observations demonstrate the continuity of wreck exploitation in this region, that this is an ongoing process that did not stop within the community, and that it was only the means of exploitation that have changed (i.e. scuba diving). However, this aspect was deliberately not a focus area for this study, due to the potential legal ramifications associated with wreck pilfering and any perceived linkage of the author to these activities.

#### **IV) Shipwrecks as Marine Navigational Markers and Fishing Resources**

Many wreck sites have become integral components of the fishing community's landscapes, and have been used by fishermen as seamarks, especially where structural components are visible above water. The boilers from the wreck *Campbell* are often still used to delineate a narrow channel used by fishing boats to avoid the full force of The Rip:

They would use the boat channel when the wind was blowing from the north west, and the tide was running inwards. They would use the channel between the *Campbell* shipwreck and Corsair Rock, when going out on an ebb tide. [HM]

These directions were later enshrined in official sailing directions, as were the *Australia*, *Orungal*, *Time*, *Wauchope* and several other wrecks that were used as sea marks for navigational purposes (PHB 1959:189,191).

Wreck sites 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. The *Hurricane* shipwreck was a favourite location for Queencliff and Rosebud fishermen, as it acted as a haven for snapper, but unfortunately, divers also expressed interest in the contents of the wreck and in 1908 explosives were used to salvage its remains (QS 22/2/1908). Similarly, the *Eliza Ramsden* was known as a good location to catch yellowtail [PF]. The proliferation of fish on wreck sites has also been repeatedly observed by the author on numerous occasions nationally. These fish concentrations have been known on many occasions to attract seals to the area, which have subsequently been used by fishermen to identify the locations of wreck sites, and hence the fish schools [GrH; PT].

#### **V) Adaptive Re-use of Hulks/Wrecks**

Shipwrecks and abandoned hulks played a significant role as erosion control devices. In 1914, fishermen's houses north of the Fishermen's Pier were threatened with inundation from high tides

and storm surges (especially during easterly winds), despite recently installed dyking, raised paths and repairs to the sandstone seawall (QS 14/2/1914, 18/7/1914; [PF]). Despite all efforts, the back yard fences of the houses were often flooded or washed away at regular intervals (eg. QS 8/4/1916, 18/7/1914; [HM; GW]). Eventually, a former obsolete Victorian Naval Torpedo Boat, *HMVS Lonsdale* (Figure 7.31), was placed behind the house as breakwater around 1914, which appeared to solve the problem [MW]. The hulk was also utilised as a change room and informal toilet by local residents using the beach in this area [GW]. Today the vessel remains still lie under the grounds of the QMM. The hulks of the torpedo boat *Countess of Hopetoun* and another unidentified vessel were used for erosion control Swan Island to protect the beacon and/or the fort (Ferrier 1991:5; [LID]). At Swan Spit Point, the *J3 submarine* was moored for the dual purpose of erosion control and as a power supply (using its generators) for the naval depot (Anderson 1984; Thompson n.d.:2).



Figure 7. 31: The hulk of the *HMVS Lonsdale* on the Queenscliff Bight foreshore (QMM Collection).

## VI) Shipwrecks Used for Advertising Campaigns

Shipwrecks were obviously a pervasive element of township life. This fact was exploited to sell a medicinal product, which drew analogies between the suffering of shipwreck victims and curable diseases:

A shipwreck is a frightful experience. To hear the wind whistle, the timber creak and crash the cordage strain, the sailors swear and the women scream, tremble and run hither and thither like maniacs is enough to appeal to the bravest heart. Yet with all its terrors, death by shipwreck is not half so terrible as the slow and insidious course of disease for which the latter years of the stricken ones life makes existence a misery, not only to the victim, but to all of those around him. With such terrible facts staring me in the face, how careful we should be to preserve that Providence, health and strength...have suffered severely from indigestion, and like a drowning man clutching at straw have tried every remedy, but without relief...[until] benefited greatly by Clements Tonic. (QS 25/3/1893)

The piece obviously drew on the familiar experience of the Queenscliff community to sell their product, and demonstrates the extent to which shipwreck incidents were an integral part of the community's everyday life and identity.

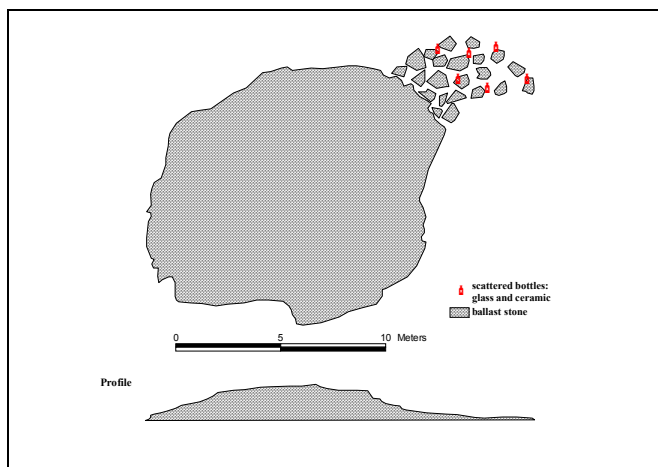
#### **4) The Archaeology of Shipping Mishap Landscapes**

##### ***A) Shipwreck Management Landscapes***

Shipwrecks as archaeological sites have already been exhaustively investigated by Heritage Victoria, and that aspect will not be further addressed here. However, aside from the obvious structural evidence underwater, several key features of associated with shipwrecks were located within the community.

##### **I) Archaeological Signatures of Stranding Sites**

Several informal and historical sources demonstrated that major underwater archaeological deposits were probably associated with stranding sites in the Bay. Artefacts probably from the stranded vessels *Antoinette Cezard*, *Dumfries*, *St George* and/or *Marie* on Swan Spit had already been documented by local researchers/divers (Love 2006, n.d.; [DL; PF]). Several stranding sites were identified and/or inspected during the course of fieldwork to assess the extent and nature of the archaeological deposits reported by informants. Substantial deposits of French luxury goods (Figure 7.32; Table 7.6) discovered at Swan Spit demonstrated not only historical international trade links, but also indications of changing social hierarchy and status within the fledgling community, which might not otherwise be evident if actual strandings had not occurred in the area. Although bottle collectors had removed most of the deposits from this area, inspections still revealed traces of early patterned ceramics that became more concentrated closer to the sites. All of the potential stranding sites revealed varying deposits of archaeological remnants, (some of them substantial) which are exemplified in Table 7.7.



**Figure 7.32: Survey of Hobson's Bay ballast mound.**



**Figure 7.33: French perfume bottle recovered from Swan Spit. Scale = 15cm (Peter Ferrier Collection).**

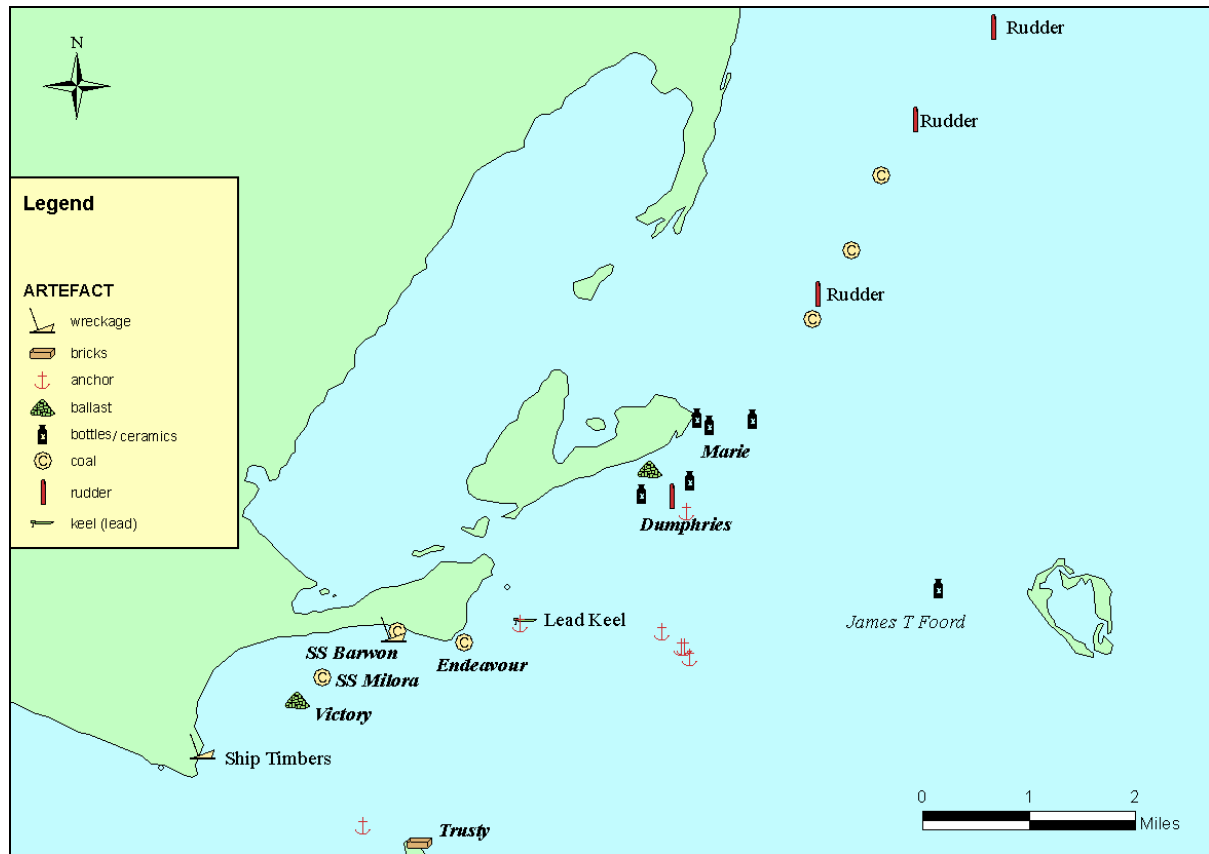
Type	Embossed Marking
Champagne Bottle	<i>E &amp; H Rey, Cognac, 1811, Champagne, Bordeaux</i>
Fish Paste Jar	<i>Lovit Frere's and Co, Bordeaux</i>
Perfume Jar	<i>Edduard Pinaud, Paris, Londres &amp; Bruxelles</i>
Pickle Jar	<i>Vase Brevetes Sanscarante Du Gouvernmenta F. Nantes</i>
Vinegar Bottle	<i>Vinaigre Aromatique, De Jean.....Buily</i>

**Table 7.6: A sample of French luxury items recovered from the Swan Spit stranding ground, P. Ferrier Collection.**

Coal accumulations from stranded vessels in Lonsdale Bight formed the largest deposits, which were not only evident in a number of underwater locations, but were often washed ashore where they were collected by the community, as has been previously addressed above. Coal was also sometimes found in crayfish pots recovered from Lonsdale Bight [HM], as was an intense scatter along the West Channel, which may represent another stranding site or could be from the wreck of the *Faugh a Ballaugh*. Substantial brick deposits were discovered from the *Trusty* stranding site in Nepean Bay near the ammunition pier (see site plan in Appendix C-6: Figure 82). Several anchors were found in shallow water near Popes Eye Shoal and Swan Spit, which could either have eventuated from strandings, near mishaps or cut lines (deliberate or accidentally parted). Several rudders were located in the West Channel and on Swan Spit, along with a lead keel and ballast mound on the latter (Figure 7.34).

Location	Stranded Vessel	Archaeological Remains	Date	Source
<b>Lonsdale Bight</b>	<i>Victory</i>	Slate blocks/cut stone/ballast mound - mound approx 10 x 8 x 3 m high, with 2.5 ft long x 18 inches square cut blocks (possibly slate) and cut pitches (curbing stone).	1850	[PT]
	<i>SS Barwon/ SS Wodonga</i>	Coal/ structural timbers wedged in reef	1866/ 1882	Authors Inspection
	<i>SS Milora</i>	Coal - large deposits of coal both underwater and washed up on beach	1934	multiple oral histories
	Bell Reef, Shortland's Bluff Unidentified – <i>Endeavour?</i>	Coal/Ceramics/Bottles/Brass Fittings		[PF]
<b>Nepean Bay (alongside former Defence Pier)</b>	<i>Trusty</i>	Bricks (substantial deposits) stamped “Hoffman” – destined for building of Fort Nepean buildings	1883	[DL;PF], Authors Inspection
<b>Pt Nepean</b>	Unknown	Dozens of Anchors near Corsair Rock		[MS]
<b>Swan Spit</b>	<i>Dumfries/ Marie/ St George/ Antoinette Cezard</i>	French Luxury Goods (see Table 7.6); perfume, fish paste, vinegar, pickles, schnapps, champagne bottles, onion bottles), ceramics (Chinese style urns), rudder	1840/ 1853/ 1852/ 1856	[DL; PF] Authors Inspection
	Anchors, ballast mound, lead keel		?	[DL; PF]
<b>West Channel</b>	unknown	Several rudders, coal scatter, bluestone blocks and chip clusters	?	[DL; PF], Authors Inspection
<b>Symonds Channel</b>	Possibly <i>Gem</i> , <i>James T. Foord</i>	Ceramics/Bottles/Unspecified	1851/ 1864	[CP; PF]
<b>Hobson's Bay, Melbourne</b>	Hobson's Bay Ballast Mound	12.5 x 13 wide x 1.5 m high. 19th century bottles (salad oil, wine, beer, whisky). Mound tapers to a slightly fan shaped wedge on one side, suggesting the vessel may have swung around with the wind during the unloading operation. Stones cut to a roughly standard size between approx 30 and 60 cm long		[PT]; Authors Inspection; Duncan, 2003a:253
	St Kilda Ballast Mound #1	Large ballast mound of local bluestone rock		[PT]; Duncan, 2003a:419
	St Kilda Ballast Mound #2	Two parallel ballast mounds 6-7 m apart, approx 26 m long x 3-4 m wide and stand about 1.5 -2 m high. (It appears that the stranded vessel discharged ballast from either side of vessel to create ballast mounds. Three modern lead yacht keels from later collisions with mound		[MV]; Duncan, 2003a:419

Table 7.7: Archaeological remains of stranding sites identified in Port Phillip.



**Figure 7. 34: Possible archaeological signatures of stranding sites.**

Several ballast mound sites possibly associated with strandings have been documented by local divers in Hobson's Bay [MV; PT; SA], and numerous other stranding sites have also been identified in other areas around Victoria during the course of this study (Duncan 2003a:419). One ballast mound was inspected in Hobson's Bay as a comparative site during this study (Figure 7.33). The mound was approximately 1.5 m high, and between 12-13 m wide, and was covered in deposits of nineteenth century artefacts. One side of the mound exhibited a small offshoot pile where the ballast trailed away, which may have been caused by the ship swinging at her anchor as she was lightened off the bottom.

## II) Archaeological Signatures of the Lifeboat Service

The landscapes of wreck management were still abundantly evident in the study area. Lifesaving signatures included a signal station, a wreck bell for summoning the lifeboat crew, a lifeboat shed (usually located on a pier, either on davits or an inclined slipway) and intact lifeboat, and rocket sheds at Pt Lonsdale and Sorrento Pier (see Figures 7.35-7.43). The former two structures were



located close to the lifeboat crew, who were predominantly fishermen, and the latter close to the probable wreck sites (at Pt Lonsdale and Pt Nepean). A signal station was also used as a lookout tower to visually determine shipwreck occurrences, although these features might not occur in more isolated shipping laneways. Given the lighthouse service coordinated any rescue, lighthouse facilities were also often located close by, and these included lighthouses and accommodation quarters, beacons, tidal flagstaffs and telegraph facilities. Appendix F-4 provides further historical details and archaeological signatures of navigational landscapes. Other signatures of the lifeboat service might also include small kedge anchors left close to the wrecks, which were used to haul the lifeboat away from the scene after the rescue in heavy weather. Three “scuba tank shaped objects” located off Swan Island [SA] may be the remains of the projectile rockets used for the breaches buoy lifelines (see Figure 7.41). These relics do not necessarily designate the locations of actual wreck rescues, but could also indicate rocket firing practice areas.



**Figure 7.35: Queenscliff New Pier lifeboat shed.**



**Figure 7.36: *Queenscliffe* lifeboat, Queenscliff Maritime Museum.**



**Figure 7.37: Signal Station inside Fort Queenscliff.**



**Figure 7.38: Queenscliff wreck bell.**



**Figure 7.39: Pt Lonsdale pier lifeboat from c. 1940s-50s, QMM Collection.**



**Figure 7. 40: Pt Lonsdale rocket shed and lifeboat pier.**



**Figure 7. 41: Lifesaving rocket launchers display. Note rockets projectile in barrels tubes (QMM Collection).**



**Figure 7. 42: Figure 8. 42: Probable rocket shed, Sorrento Pier.**



**Figure 7. 43: Probable rocket shed, Sorrento Pier.**

### **III) Archaeological Signatures of Shipwreck Victims**

The extant workshop of former Priddle's Coffin Makers were shown to the author by Colin Springhall at his property in Hesse St (Figures 7.44-7.47). The original workbench, sharpening grindstones, tools, coffin storage and office are still extant (now used as an informal workshop), along with the former morgue, which is still located on the property. Another morgue which formerly stood on the Fishermen's Pier (Figure 7.48) is now located in the QMM [LJ; PF], and the rocket shed at Pt Lonsdale was occasionally used as a temporary mortuary [WN]. As The Esplanade was the closest hotel to The Bay, The Heads and also to the New Pier, in the 1960s it was required by law to maintain a coffin on its premises should a body be recovered in these areas [JnA], which could possibly have been extending a former tradition identified in Melbourne, where waterfront hotels were often used as makeshift morgues (Duncan 2004a).

Other archaeological evidence included shipwreck victim grave sites at the Pt Lonsdale cemetery. Although not undertaken during this study, it is recognised that there is further potential to examine the spatial distribution of shipwreck victims internments to determine whether they were buried locally, in mass graves or transported to (and buried in) other areas. Although early burials (which probably included wreck victims) were known to have been interred beneath the current Queenscliff Football Ground and to the south of the low light (see Figure 7.51; GA 20/11/1866; 29/11/1866; McWilliams 1865 plan), only some of these corpses were re-interred (Simpkin n.d.:12) when the Pt Lonsdale Cemetery opened around 1864 (Dunn 1949:39). The subsequent development of these areas has obscured and removed all traces of any former monuments related to these grave sites, but the opportunity exists to pinpoint their presence through remote sensing. It is also probable that where early wrecks occurred that bodies, (possibly in mass graves) were buried close to the wreck sites at Pts Lonsdale and Nepean.

Other sites of interest arising from shipwrecks include a conglomeration of memorials on the south side of Shortland's Bluff (Figure 7.49), and the St Georges Church memorial to a recent Pilot boat tragedy (Figure 7.50). It is of interest that all the memorials in this area and elsewhere around Queenscliff are dedicated either to local loss of life in wrecks, or military personnel lost elsewhere, but that nowhere in the town is there a memorial to the victims of the numerous other shipwrecks that occurred in this region. This suggests that the memorials themselves have personal and communal local value as tangible sites for grieving for relatives and acquaintances lost at sea, where the actual loss site is seemingly intangible due to its invisibility from being underwater, an observation that is supported by Gibbs (2005). Figure 7.51 shows the locations associated with the dead in Queenscliff.

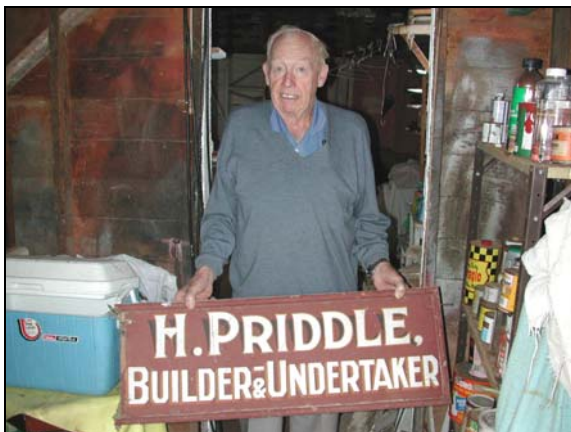


Figure 7. 44: Colin Springhall in Priddle's coffin maker's workshop.



Figure 7. 45: Coffin making workbench, Priddle's coffin makers.





**Figure 7. 46: Former coffin maker's workshop from Andrews St, Queenscliff.**



**Figure 7. 47: Former morgue in Andrews St, Queenscliff.**



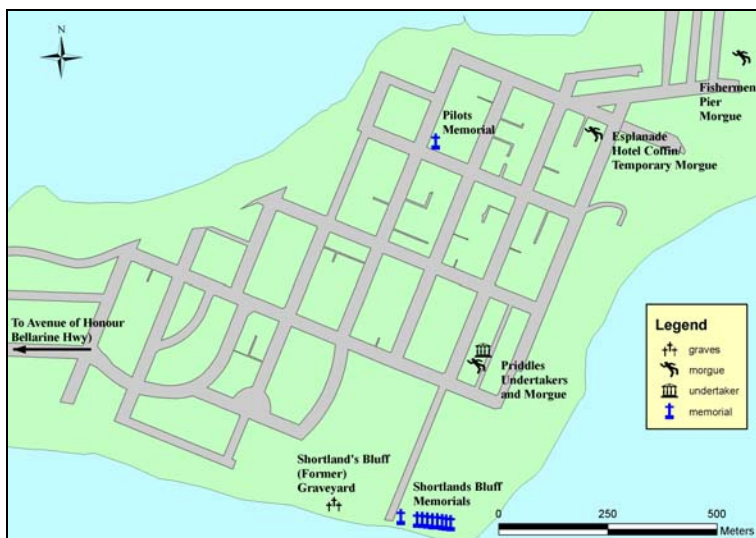
**Figure 7. 48: Former Fishermen's Pier morgue, now located in Queenscliff Maritime Museum.**



**Figure 7. 49: Shortlands Bluff memorials.**



**Figure 7. 50: Pilots memorial lights, St Georges Church.**



**Figure 7. 51: Sites associated with the dead in Queenscliff.**

## ***B) Shipwreck Exploitation Landscapes***

### **I) Official Salving**

Salving of wrecks was evident by the remains of a tugboat *Black Boy* at Pt Lonsdale, and the salvage barge *Eleutheria* (in central Port Phillip Bay) both of which were wrecked when engaged in salvage operations on other shipwrecks (Anderson 1997a:29; Strachan 2000:25). Several informants suggested that the remains of a salvaged shipwreck were once evident in the sand dunes behind the Pt Lonsdale Golf Course (off Gill Rd – [WN]), and others have suggested that sand blowout in this area was a result of the operations to salvage sections of the wreck of the *Light of the Age* [LH], which is immediately opposite the wreck site. A donkey boiler reported to the west of this site (Anderson and Cahir 2003: 237) may also be associated with shipwreck salvage efforts. As mentioned previously, other potential archaeological signatures of salvage include salvors camps, rail or tram lines to wreck sites, flying foxes, corrugated roads, other cleared areas through the scrub, donkey boilers and other machinery, flotsam trap accumulations of lagan material, or the remains of buoyancy devices (e.g. ship tanks), evidence of explosives use (e.g. *Hurricane*), grappling hooks, flotation devices (e.g. the Mackay devices found on the *City of Launceston* - Strachan 2000:24) or absence of cargo (which had been salvaged).

Other types of exploitative sites associated with hulks include ship breaking sites where vessels are dismantled either where they were either deliberately or accidentally run aground in shallow water (e.g. *Lady Harvey* at Queenscliff - Fanning 1892c, *Light of the Age* at Pt Lonsdale). A number of ship-breaking sites were also visited outside the study area including the *Kakariki* which lay approximately 500m offshore in shallow water (3m) at Williamstown (Melbourne), a ship-breakers yard in the Maribyrnong River (Melbourne), where the bow of the former Bay Steamer *Edina* was evident projecting from the river bank (Duncan 2003), and a number of ship-breakers yards at Geelong (Duncan 2004a). The latter sites were characterised by the remains of vessels in shallow water or onshore with stone access piers, crane/derrick remnants (consisting of anchor points in rocks, concrete filled drums and wire cables) which were used to haul the hulks ashore over artificial rubble hard, and the facilities were situated on the periphery of populated areas. These types of sites represent a component of shipwreck utilisation which with a few exceptions (e.g. Pastron and Delgado 1991) has been sparsely explored.

## II) Archaeological Signatures of Shipwreck Looting and Caching/ Flotsam Traps

Although no physical evidence of looting or cache was located during this study, analysis of historical documentation and oral histories suggested that new types of archaeological sites associated with these activities may be discovered in the future. The archaeological characterisations of looting and caching behaviour may include isolated clusters of similar types of artefacts close to wreck sites, individual barrel remains above the high water mark, trenches lined with corrugated iron, or isolated boxed/tinned/barrelled artefacts in unexpected places (e.g. fields, sand dunes etc). Examination of the Pt Lonsdale and Lonsdale Bight foreshores revealed that the high often vertical sand dunes are still ripe for this kind of behaviour (Figure 7.52), as they are continually eroding with the seas and tide. Furthermore, the abundance of reburied looted items may explain the origins of several coin hoards discovered at Rabbit and Swan Islands (QS 25/9/1909; Thompson n.d.:8), and the discovery of an ancient compass (Hayden 1966:15; Lawson 2004a), which was subsequently used to reinforce the Benito Bonito legend.



**Figure 7. 52: Di Smitt and eroding sandhills in Lonsdale Bight.**

Numerous shipwreck sites are known in the study area, along with scattered wreckage throughout the Bay. It has been demonstrated that looting was widespread throughout the community. A number of potential areas for looted material were identified (by documentary and oral histories) predominantly close to wreck sites in sandhills, but also in remote areas away from the wrecking event, such as Swan Island, Mud Island, Nepean Bay and Lonsdale Bight. Looting may be characterised by isolated finds above the high water mark, some of which may be buried in lined trenches, kerosene tins or other containers.

Schmidt and Mrozowski (1988:36-39) have suggested that evidence of smuggling may be found in the cargoes of wrecked ships, or in rubbish dumps in the form of imported exotic alcohol and perfume bottles. Furthermore, the archaeological presence of luxury items within poorer housing areas and their associated rubbish dumps, or under public amenities/buildings may not necessarily indicate affluence (as may be first indicated), but could be attributed to caching behaviour or illegal trading associated with looted shipwreck material. Looting may also be evidenced by the presence of maritime building materials in local houses (e.g. copper bolts or spikes, shipwreck timbers).

Underwater deposits of spirits bottles (some *Belfast Whiskey* bottles) on the northern tip of Swan Island are consistent with historical accounts of excessive drinking amongst looters of the wreck of the nearby *Will o' the Wisp*, or may also possibly originate from the *Sierra Nevada* shipwreck (which was carrying a similar cargo). The proximity of these deposits to the nearby fisher's anchorage in Stingaree Bight (Swan Island) provides possible indications of the identity of the looters (Love 2006; [PF]). These observations are consistent with the excessive types of behaviour outlined above, and it is postulated that overindulgence sites will be characterised by large quantities of alcoholic containers (bottles, ceramics, barrels etc), and large quantities of broken artefacts (which are possibly luxury goods). Given the repeated insinuations of the involvement of the fishing community in these activities, archaeological evidence of looting is also more likely to be found close to areas used by the fishing community (e.g. anchorages, residences, camps and piers).

A summary table of potential sites associated with shipwrecks, strandings, salvage and looting is contained in Appendix F-5.

Evidence of several flotsam traps were identified in the study area, including Lonsdale Bight where a ship's timbers was wedged between rocks in the intertidal zone, and several isolated finds of ships spars around Pt Nepean and in The Rip, all of which concur with historical data. Further evidence of flotsam traps may exist under prograded or collapsed sand dunes in Lonsdale Bight, the eastern shoreline of Swan Island (which could not be inspected) and at the Mud Islands. The lack of visible evidence of wreckage at these locations could also be attributed to the prolific professional and opportunistic salvaging that was undertaken in these areas in historic times.

### ***C) Did Deliberate Wrecking Take Place around Queenscliffe and Port Phillip?***

#### **I) Possible Archaeological Signatures of Deliberate Wrecking Behaviour/Threats**

The demonstrated economic importance of shipwrecks to the Queenscliff region also raises the spectre of another more sinister practice, deliberate wrecking, where vessels were intentionally enticed into dangerous areas to cause shipwrecks. Deliberate wrecking was a common practice around the world during the early nineteenth century, where ships were lured ashore by creating false beacon lights that were confused with expected navigational facilities, whereupon it would be stripped of all valuables and on occasions the crew and passengers were murdered to protect the wreckers' identities (Bathurst 2000, 2006). Given the demonstrated economic importance of shipwrecks to the local community, this study specifically searched for evidence of this practice in the greater Queenscliff region.

Both the High and Low lead lighthouses at Shortland's Bluff (from the 1860s) revealed that the original doors were set approximately 4 m above the ground, which were later changed to set the door at ground level (Figures 7.53 and 7.54). A local historian (Raison 1997:) has suggested that the raised doorways were part of a standard design that was exported from England, where the original raised doors reflected the British intention for installation in lighthouses which were set at sea level and under threat of inundation (similar to the Bell Rock Lighthouse). However, as these structures were manufactured and designed by the PWD in Melbourne (GA 28/4/1862:2; QS 11/5/1912), the opportunity existed to modify the UK design prior to construction, and as the lighthouses were set 74 and 93 ft above sea level (respectively), there was no need for a raised doorway. Furthermore, a slightly earlier Cape Wickham Lighthouse (built at King Island in Bass Strait in 1861) was of a similar shape to the Shortland's Bluff lighthouses, but the access door was set at ground level (Walker 1998:104; DTC 1988: 70-1). UK lighthouses set at water level had doors several metres higher than the Queenscliff versions (Bathurst 2000), with solid bases for added strength, suggesting that the local lighthouses were not a standard English design. Similar raised doorways in the UK were also implemented to stop wreckers extinguishing lights to cause shipwrecks. This raised the possibility that the elevated doorways were designed to restrict access to the light and therefore, by inference, that deliberate wrecking may have been a concern when the lights were constructed. Further investigation of this hypothesis was warranted.





**Figure 7. 53: Former raised Doorway in the High Lighthouse, Shortland's Bluff.**



**Figure 7. 54: Former raised doorway in the Low Lighthouse, Shortland's Bluff.**

## **II) Evidence of Potential Wrecking Behaviour: Local Historical Accounts**

Although rigorously denied by the local community, a few examples were identified of possible deliberate attempts at wrecking of vessels by third parties onshore. In one account, the Pilot Cutter *Corsair* had nearly gone ashore in 1854 when following a beam they took for a ship requesting pilot's services, which turned out to be from a fire onshore. The pilot complained that the light might have led ships to wreck, which would have happened if not for his local knowledge. It was revealed that the fires had been lit by "fishermen from Queenscliff" who were camped in the foothills on Pt Nepean, but no explanation was offered as to why they were there in the first place. It should also be noted that a trade in supplying sly grog into the Quarantine Station was thriving at the time, and certain parties from Queenscliff often visited the area under the guise of collecting firewood or water from the station's well (Welch 1969: 47-8).

Further evidence of potential wrecking behaviour was located when the clipper *Sussex* went ashore, near Barwon Heads in 1872. The remains of two fires lit one above the other were located later in the foreshore dunes, which the vessels master had confused for the lead lights at the entrance to the Bay and gone ashore. Although it was suggested that these fires had caused the wreck, no plausible explanation for the lighting of the fires in this location was given (GA 6/1/1872, 10/1/1872).

The final case involved the vessel *SS Nubia*. Nepean fishermen had netted a large shoal of salmon and had “paddocked” the fish inside the net at a beach, where they were securely held until the next morning. When the fishermen lit a large fire for the night, the pilot in charge of the vessel mistook it for South Channel Light, and it nearly wrecked on Pt Nepean (Dod 1931:76-7).

Although these events demonstrate the potential for wrecking behaviour they are in themselves not conclusive evidence of it. In order to establish if actual wrecking did take place in the area, it was first necessary to investigate the historical circumstances of the time. Although the possibility has been discounted by numerous local historians [JG], if wrecking did take place, it was probably restricted to the period prior to the establishment of the town, when government services were limited in the area and/or navigational facilities were minimal.

Most of the early opportunistic salvaging from shipwrecks took place predominantly from around the 1850-70s, and gradually decreased until the turn of the twentieth century as navigational and safety installations were improved. This situation was consistent with the last days of piracy that was still being experienced predominantly at frontier locations in the West Indies, UK, Canada and USA (see Appendix F-6).

### **III) Immigration and the Potential Importation of Deliberate Wrecking Practices During the Victorian Gold Rush Era**

The discovery of gold in Victoria in the 1850s introduced an astonishing degree of lawlessness to the colony that had not been hitherto experienced. Incoming ships at this time also suffered from an alarming desertion rate, as crews left in droves for the goldfields (Draper 1900:13). The situation became so bad that some crews even set fire to their ship to prevent its outwards voyage (Foster 197:38). A great number of wrecks occurred at The Heads during the Gold rush period (1850-70s), when immigration into the colony had boomed, and settlers from all socioeconomic backgrounds flooded the colony, initially from the goldfields of California, and later from Britain. Incoming ships during this time were frequently laden with extensive cargoes of industrial or luxury goods and immigrants’ possessions, and often carried substantial cargoes of gold for the return voyage home (Foster 1988: 17-9, 26), and some of these were hijacked on their way home (e.g. *Madagascar*- Bradlee 1923:169-71, 174). Many in the colony were also concerned that any privateer entering Port Phillip could hold Melbourne to ransom for the gold shipments to England, which led to agitation for the installation of Heads defences as early as 1852 (Raison 1997:7). Gold

rush shipping around this time therefore clearly offered lucrative bounty for both pirates and wreckers, particularly if wrecked close to shore.

A quick review of the origins of a cross-section of the Queenscliff and Mornington Peninsula communities revealed that many inhabitants had emigrated from Cornwall, Devonshire, and other coastal regions of England, Scotland and Ireland, and California (Sutherland 1888b:159-71, 390-401; QS 22/10/1892), all of whose populations have at times harboured looting/wrecking communities. There was a demonstrated influx of Cornish miners associated with the gold rush during this period (Birmingham et al. 1979:37, 44), and other immigrant miners came from the California Goldfields, whose lawless frontiers often attracted speculative prospectors across the country. It is therefore possible that former members of wrecking communities from southern England and the American eastern seaboard may have immigrated to the Victorian goldfields, and may have found richer pickings along the coastline by luring gold laden and immigrant ships ashore.

Furthermore, during this period the colony experienced increased problems associated with ex-convicts and thieves. Violent robberies were prolific on the gold fields, and bandits even targeted gold transport vessels at their moorings in the very heart of the new metropolis at Hobson's Bay (Sutherland 1888a:136, 333; Draper 1900:1-6). The fear of increased crime associated with the influx of ticket of leave and ex-convicts (who were referred to as "moral sewerage") from NSW and Tasmania into the colony in the 1840-50s prompted a campaign against the transportation of convicts to the Victorian colony. This ultimately led to the introduction of the *Convict Preventions Act* in 1851, which denied them access to the colony (GA 12/9/1854:4; Sutherland 1888a 334, 337). Despite the bans, large numbers of ex-convicts entered Victoria from Van Diemen's Land during the gold rush period, some by pirating vessels in Tasmania (eg. *Gratitude*, MMH 8/6/1852:2), and these unwelcome visitors often caused trouble in several isolated districts (Day 1992:286). By 1853, the Victorian Police Force consisted of 1589 men to combat the increased crime rate (Sutherland 1888a:339). As many early convicts were originally from Ireland, Cornwall and Devon (locations previously known to have housed wrecking communities), it is conceivable that when large mobs of former criminals failed at gold fossicking, they may have turned their hands to other economic endeavours including opportunistic salvage or possibly even wrecking. Clearly both the community and government were paranoid about the safety of the colony and threats to it, from both external and internal threats.

Given the remote location of Queenscliff, it was possible that this pursuit could have been practiced by some unscrupulous characters very early in the region's history, but (if practiced) was unlikely to have continued much later than the 1870s when permanent military bases were housed in the area, which would have probably prevented this activity.

#### **IV) Raised Doorways = Heightened Paranoia?**

It is clear from the previous discussion that there was a perceptive fear of the increase in lawlessness around the early periods of the settlement (see GA 12/9/1854:4), but it was unclear as to whether the raised doorways equated to evidence of wrecking. There are two ways to read the situation, the first being that there was a fear of actual deliberate wrecking as these individuals sought to benefit through these illegal activities. It is interesting that although the local population expressed interest in the raised doorways, there was no clear evidence of this sort of behaviour in oral histories, and all those interviewed said it did not happen. Furthermore, an historical memoir in a local newspaper recalled that the coasts were often littered with the debris from wrecks, especially around the 1850s when "people were too absorbed with the gold rush to salvage this material" (Fanning 1892c). Additionally, the first lighthouse built in the area in 1842 and the subsequent timber lead lighthouse (1852) both had their doors set at ground level (Images PH1; Ph 4560 and WD 54, QHM Collection – see Appendix F-4), and these were built during periods in which wrecking was more likely to have occurred as Shortland's Bluff was undeveloped and undefended. It was therefore unlikely that wrecking took place during this period, and any illegal activities were probably limited to opportunistic salvage only. The increased presence of the military from the mid 1860s onwards would have further reduced the scope for this activity to have taken place.

It was therefore necessary to examine other possible explanations for the raised doorways, and an examination of the contemporary political scenarios at the time of the building of the lights revealed a more plausible explanation. The Shortland's Bluff bluestone lead lighthouses were installed in 1862/1863 (GA 1/1/1863:2), and coincided with the period of the threat of war with America in 1861 (Barkley 1861) and a visit to the colony by a Russian warship in 1862 (Scratchley 1863: 29; Tate 1982: 50). When the lights were being constructed although the first three guns at the fort had been delivered to a battery where works were underway, they were not supplied with ammunition until at least 1862 (VPD 1862: 420, 718), and a volunteer force only manned the battery location on the weekends. As has been demonstrated in Chapter Five, this was a period of great paranoia in the

Colony, where perceptions were rife of invasion and this area was very isolated from the main defences at Hobson's Bay. As the light towers were essential elements for guiding ships through The Rip, they represented key strategic targets to any foreign power that might want to lay siege to the Colony. They were possibly perceived as being under threat at this time as they were essentially unguarded. It is also possible that the installation of the above ground level doorways were implemented to curtail any deliberate activity by privateers and/or a foreign power to close the harbour, or deliberately wreck vessels while they held the port to ransom, as the installation of the lighthouses coincided with the fortification of the gateways to the Colony against such events. This is supported by the observation that the doorway entrances were lowered to ground level well after the fortress was built around the upper light in the 1880s.

[JG] has suggested a more pragmatic solution was that the doorway entrance may have been raised as oil storage tanks may have been located under the raised doorway. While plans of the former lighthouse were not located to test this theory, Dod (1931:16) recorded that the Colza oil for the lighthouse lamps was stored in wooden barrels in the 1860s, suggesting that oil tanks were not used in the lighthouse (an observation that has also been made by the author at other lighthouses around Victoria, where external oil stores were constructed to prevent the risk of major fires inside the light structure - e.g. Gabo Island). Furthermore, a cellar was known to exist underneath the High Light in the 1880s [PF], which suggests that the area under the original doorway was hollow to allow access to the underlying basement. As the construction of the lighthouse was delayed until a site with suitable foundation was located (Raison, 1997:6), it is unlikely that the cellar was dug after the lighthouse was completed. Until further evidence is found to the contrary, this may support the above observations that the doorways were raised to prevent access to the lighthouse by undesirable parties who threatened to extinguish the light. Although it is possible that wrecking may have taken place in the Queenscliff area, it is more likely that this custom was limited to looting once shipwrecks had already occurred (a practice that appears to have continued until recent times), and that the raised doorways were actually part of the defence system at The Heads.

## **5) Traditional Practice/Transported Landscapes Associated with Shipping Mishaps**

### ***A) International Shipwreck Assistance and Exploitation Practices***

The numerous incidences of shipwrecks in the study area have produced many reactions that have similarities in many other maritime communities worldwide. Observations of the salvation/salvage

behaviour described above at Queenscliff were repeated in many nineteenth century American (Thoreau 1865:4, 5, 29, 34) and English coastal townships (Treanor, 1904:57, 102). Lifesaving in the UK was largely undertaken by companies of beachmen and fishermen who supported themselves by salvaging cargo from vessels (Malster 1974; Hedges 1989: 24-5). There are obvious comparisons with the lifeboat service in Britain. Yawls were adopted for use in early rescues by the Queenscliff based government boat crews (see Figure 7.7) since their applicability for these tasks had already been proven in similar situations throughout the UK (e.g. Malster, 1974:34), as were subsequent later overseas lifeboat designs. Many of the practices and organisational procedures used in lifesaving were adopted directly from England (Treanor, 1904:83, 97, 121, 141; Malster 1974; Goldsmith Carter 1945:12). Wreck bells were also centrally located in these communities, and observations of similar rushes by fishers to be included in the lifeboat crew (Treanor 1904:65, 143 - Figure 7.55) further reinforce the financial dependence on the lifeboat stipends and potential wreck salvage opportunities for these communities.



**Figure 7. 55: Volunteers rush to get on the lifeboat crew in response to the wreck bell in Kent, UK (In: Treanor 1904).**

Although many overseas townships relied heavily on shipwrecks for incomes through legitimate salvage (Treanor 1904; Goldsmith Carter 1945:14-5; Malster 1974; Souza 1998: 25-7; US Dept of Commerce et al. 1999), numerous communities also actively exploited and/or encouraged shipping mishaps for economic exploitation (e.g. New Jersey - Bradlee, 1923; Florida and Bahamas - Souza 1998: 25-7; Massachusetts - Thoreau (1865); Lake Huron - US Dept of Commerce et al. 1999:138; Goodwin Sands/Cornwall/Devon/ Scilly Isles/Hebrides Islands/Scottish Highlands/Ireland UK - Stevenson 1912:17; Larn and Carter 1973; Bathurst 2000, 2006; Evans 1957:232; Södertörn, Sweden – Rönnby 1998). In these instances, plunder from shipwrecks was often seen as an

inalienable right, especially where local natural resources were scarce (Bathurst 2000). This behaviour was often associated with nearby fishing or mining communities, particularly on the Cornish coasts, and was also usually historically linked to smuggling activities (Vivian 1969; Larn and Carter 1973).

Looting of wrecks and smuggling were often complementary activities (Larn and Carter 1973), especially as items taken off wrecks were often deemed smuggled goods. Many similar observations were made of small contemporary maritime communities (particularly around south western England, Ireland and the American East Coast) involved in these activities. These included: the extensive involvement of fishers in the contraband trade; the burial of contraband goods to avoid confiscation; preferences for imported luxury status items (e.g. French goods); a universal disdain for authority; traditional knowledge of favourable weather conditions linked to shipwreck occurrences and seasonal availability of jetsam trap resources; the economic importance of beachcombing (particularly coal) with its associated resource collection tools (e.g. rakes) and etiquette (Thoreau 1865:27-8; Treanor 1904:26, 41-2, 69; Bradlee 1923:183; Goldsmith Carter 1945:14-5; Evans 1957:225, 232; Vivian 1969; Schmidt and Mrowski 1988:41; White 1997; Pipkin 2003:8; Westerdahl 2003b:19; Bathurst 2006). These observations are expanded in Appendix F-6.

### ***B) Shipwreck Exploitation/Looting as Traditional Local Practice***

There are many parallels here with the sorts of behaviours that have already been described above in the study area. The incidence of looting in the region has many antecedents to similar behaviour worldwide, and may therefore reflect the transferral of traditional practices from the “old country” where they were embedded in routine seasonal activities. The regular occurrence of shipwrecks has been shown to have spawned many behavioural traits that have become embedded in customary community practices, which may in themselves characterise the Queenscliff community. These include a strange mixture of altruism and opportunism that in itself separates the nature of the shipping tragedies as events from places of resource utilisation. Several types of exploitative activities have been investigated, which range from official and illegal salvage, caching of looted goods, and seasonal exploitation of flotsam and jetsam traps. These behaviours have in themselves generated adaptive material culture to exploit (and hide) these resources.

It is clear from the observations above that many of the practices associated with shipwrecks in the Queenscliff area may have eventuated as a result of transported practices and beliefs that arrived at

the colony with immigrants. What we are therefore confronted with are not only extensions of traditional practices from ancient cultures, but that the Queenscliff area is actually an extension of ancestral homelands that exist many thousands of miles away. These practices represent a depth of hereditary knowledge and traditional customs that have simply been applied to a new setting, and suggest the wreck landscapes of Queenscliff have a cognitive time depth that extends far beyond the settlement of the township. It is therefore suggested that the exploitation of shipwreck and flotsam/jetsam resources is not a new phenomena that developed locally, but actually represents the transportation of a suite of traditional practices that were previously widely undertaken in various ancestral homelands, and that these activities are but a continuation of a traditional communal lifestyle that may be centuries old.

Furthermore, where local divers demonstrate lengthy ancestral ties to this area, their continued collection of shipwreck material may be alternatively viewed as a traditional practice (rather than souvenir hunting) in light of this study, as it is clear from the above discussion that wrecks have always 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.

## **6) Shipwrecks and Strandings as a Social Phenomena**

As wrecks become associated with places in the landscape, we might question which groups and their associated behaviours are involved directly with them. Perhaps the most obvious group involved with wrecks are the Customs Department, who were responsible for policing smuggling activities (both from wrecks and illegal importation), and the crackdown on theft from wrecks. These official responses often led to the (attempted) suppression of many illegal activities, and hence generated subsequent reactions to authority that created an antipathy between the authority and community groups, which in themselves helped shaped the diverse thematic landscapes of the region. These reactions included the unification of normally socially separated local community (including the resident authorities - i.e. defence) and fishermen against the external law enforcers (i.e. Customs and Police).

It has been shown in previous chapters that many of the individual maritime trades within the community maintained their distance from one another, and that 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. Perhaps the most pronounced transmutation was the elevation of the fishermen from the lowest social strata to local heroes as lifeboatmen, who shared a common cause with the lighthouse service and military. Furthermore, this same social group was commonly vilified as the perpetrators of pillaging of wrecked vessels. Shipwrecks therefore presented an interesting dichotomy, which transmogrified fishers to temporarily become a class of respected lifeboatmen, whilst later reinforcing the class conscious status quo through their popular identification as looters. It is clear 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. These aspects will be further explored in Chapter Eight.

Perhaps less well recognised is the suite of sites associated with shipwrecks and strandings that represent critical elements for constructing landscapes that are based around economic resources for a broad section of the Queenscliff community. Strandings and shipwrecks 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 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 to 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 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.

If we widen the scope of shipwreck research to include these new kinds of sites (which have something in common with shipwrecks through removal of cargo) 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 places of hunter/gatherer behaviour that are resource areas, and what may not be further recognised is that these practices result in a whole set of behaviours that help define Queenscliff, and have associated archaeological signatures (e.g. wrecks/flotsam traps etc). 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.

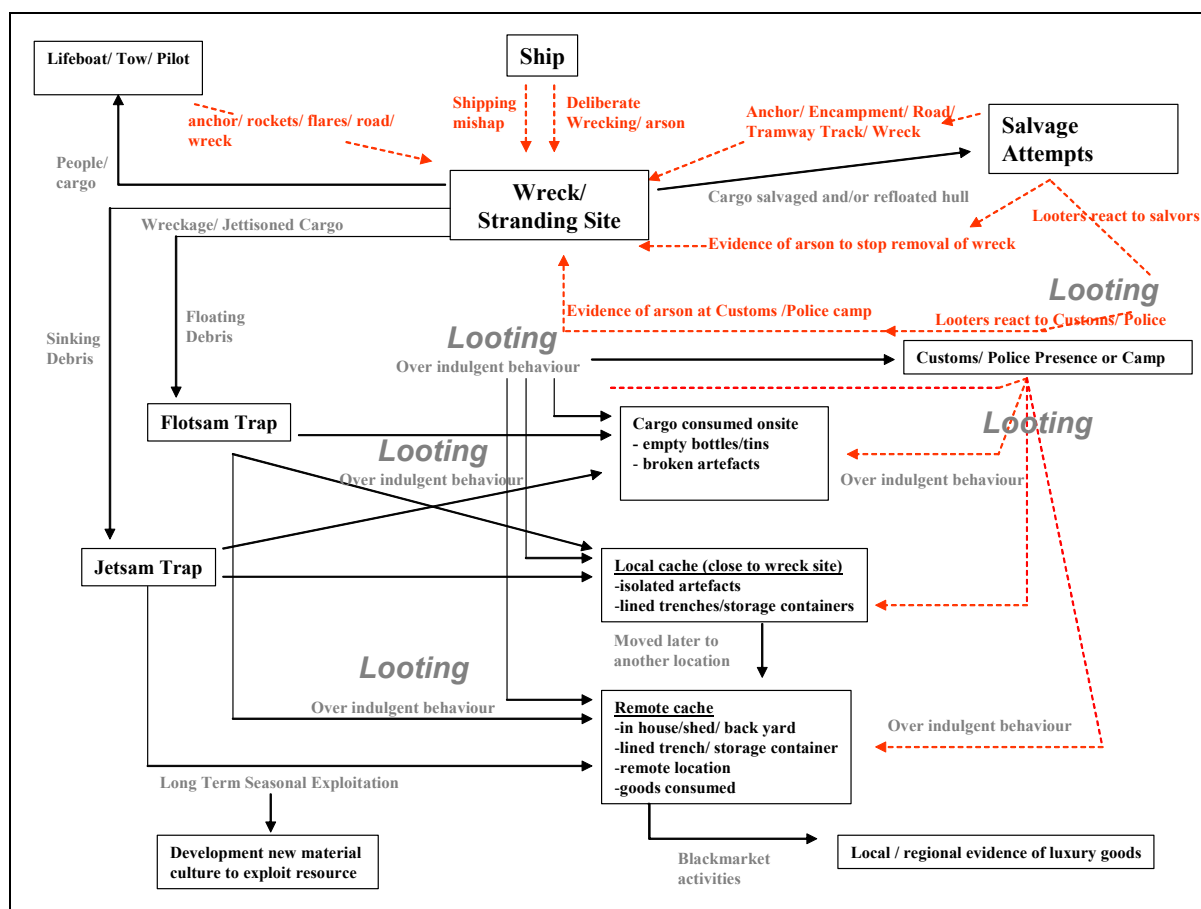


Figure 7. 56: Archaeological characterizations of shipwreck and stranding site exploitation.

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 upon 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. Figure 7.56 represents a schematic of wreck usage in Queenscliff.

This dependence on shipping tragedies 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 the probability of their occurrence increases over time. This highlights the duality of shipping tragedies, where both certainty and uncertainty co-exist, which thus generate a plethora of diverse and often opposite behaviours. The certainty of the event has generated a suite of responsive organised routines and procedures designed mitigate and minimise the damage caused by a shipwreck, which are centred around 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 (the flotsam/jetsam traps).

## 7) Discussion

It is clear that 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 alter the landscape initially as introduced events (and through the variety of reactions to them). They later become places which further alter perceptions and actual use of the landscape, both physically as economic resources, and navigational markers, and symbolically through their identification with dangerous regions, and their toponymic and individual/ personal memorialisation of events that become associated with specific places. 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. In summary, shipwrecks and strandings create (and are systemic components of) 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 landscape.

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.

Furthermore, the investigation of local folklore, documentary and archaeological data sources has demonstrated 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 shipwrecks 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 as an event and a place of resource procurement, which cross-cut the social boundaries normally extant in nineteenth century Australian culture.

In summary, shipwreck and stranding landscapes are predominantly evident in historical, oral traditions and toponymic sources, and are most archaeologically visible at the primary site itself. However, these incidents are perhaps most pertinently evident in the subsequent archaeological signatures of material culture of other thematic maritime landscapes, in the rigid organisation of the landscape in ways designed to prevent them, and their creation (and subsequent use of) new places in the landscape. In addition to the traditional environmental determinants usually associated with shipwrecks, shipping mishap landscapes were principally driven by altruism and economics, both through risk mitigation attempts (pilots/lighthouse service) to prevent their occurrence and minimise loss when they did occur (lifeboat/Customs/ Police), but also through their subsequent exploitation as opportunistic seasonal resources. Furthermore, it has been shown that seemingly intangible natural phenomena, such as wind, sea conditions, sound, tide and currents were all significant aspects of this cognitive cultural landscape. Wrecks therefore do not represent only dead ships associated with an isolated event, but also in a fundamental way create new landscapes and places. 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, shipwrecks and strandings do not necessarily only indicate a dangerous coast, but actually represent a coast of opportunity.