

History Along The Waterways

THE ABANDONED HULKS OF THE BRISBANE RIVER AND MORETON BAY

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To see the abandoned hulk of an old vessel and recall its long history of work can be of interest to the tourist and the resident of the area alike. In the Brisbane River and Moreton Bay is a large collection of such hulks waiting to be discovered by those with an interest in history. While this history of them, with short notes on each, is by no means complete, it may help the observer to identify the hulk he sees and add increased interest to a voyage "down the river and into the bay".

We start from the Victoria Bridge, the usual starting point for tourist vessels, and proceed downriver.

The first vessel of note is the *Myora* which lies abandoned in the mud on Kangaroo Point a few yards upstream from the Customs House Ferry. The *Myora* was built as the *Teal*, by Tooth & Company, Maryborough, for the Harbours and Rivers Department in 1890. She was an iron steamer of 60 feet length, 38 tons gross. Apparently she worked as a pilot steamer in Townsville before coming to Brisbane in the ownership of William Collin in 1913. Sold to Histed Bros. in 1936, the ship later became the property of the Merchant Navy Cadets but ended abandoned on the river bank in her present position.

Rounding Kangaroo Point, we see the wharves related to Evans Deakin's, Peter's Slip and Horn Engineering. On the bank behind Peter's Slip wharf is a hull of wooden construction with a flat stem and fairly blunt bow. This was the *Belle*, built at Sandgate in 1883. She was a stern-wheel steamer, 99 feet long, of 101 tons, with a 32 h.p., 2 cylinder engine. Originally owned by Barker and Barham, she became

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the property of Hetherington and Rylance in 1909, and worked as a coal barge tug. I do not know the date she was abandoned.

Just downstream from Peter's Slip, behind the wharf, is an old wooden hull partly covered by debris. Like the last one, this consists mainly of the bottom frames. I have no definite information on this hulk.

A few remnants of the tug *Mystery* lie on the bank of the Bulimba Reach, just upstream from the Brisbane Gas Company plant.

THE DOWNSTREAM RELICS

Leaving this area, we pass downstream to rather more definite relics. Behind the Hamilton wall the Harbour and Marine Department laid up plant used to be berthed. Whether any hulks were abandoned here seems to be uncertain. Most of the ships that were discarded were taken downriver to other places. At the entrance to Aquarium Passage, incorporated in an old launching ramp on Gibson Island, is the hulk of the *Sir Charles Cowper*, a small tug which was used mainly for towing coal punts. An iron screw steamer built in Sydney in 1872, of 25 tons, 67 feet long, she was first registered here in 1877. She was abandoned in 1923.



The abandoned dredging fleet hulks at Tangalooma.

From the left: *Seal*, *Platypus II*, *Maryborough* (with *Stingaree* in front), *Morwong* and *Remora*.

On the Gibson Island Bank, in Aquarium Passage, lies the hulk of the *Boko*, once Brisbane's best known tug. She was built at Hebburn, England, in 1877, of iron, and was 125 feet in length. The *Boko* had side paddles, with a tall funnel, and after arrival in Brisbane served in the tug fleet until 1917. On week-ends and holidays she carried many passengers on excursions. The large steering wheel on her high open bridge came from the *Francis Cadell*, whose remains lie up at Normanton, and whose binnacle is in the Marine Room of Newstead House. She was cut down to a barge in 1917, and finally the hulk was abandoned at its present site.

Further up, in Doboy Creek, is the hulk of the *Taldora*. The *Taldora* was built in 1881 by the Campbelltown Ship-building Company in Scotland, and acquired by the Q.S.S. Co. Ltd. in 1882. She was an iron schooner-rigged steamer of 130 feet in length, 232 tons gross, with compound engine of 50 h.p. Her registry was transferred to Brisbane in the name of the A.U.S.N. Co. Ltd. in 1888. She operated as a tender and coaster until 1914, when she was converted to a lighter. After her useful life ended she was taken up Doboy Creek and abandoned.

As we proceed down the river, on the left bank is Bulwer Island, reclaimed land. Behind the wall here lie the *Bremer*, the *Lamprey* and the *Casuarina*, all Government vessels.

The *Bremer* was an iron bucket dredge built in 1864 by P. N. Russell & Company of Sydney. She worked in many Queensland parts, especially on the Fitzroy River and Port Douglas. In Port Douglas the master was W. M. Binnie, who later established Binnie's engineering works in Alice Street and then at South Brisbane. The works were sold to form part of Evans Deakin's. In 1897 the *Bremer* was dismantled and used as a rock-drilling barge at Lytton.

The *Lamprey* was built as No. 1 *Clam Dredge* and was later converted to a small suction cutter dredge and given the new name.

The *Casuarina* was built as a hopper barge in Scotland in 1896, but converted later to a suction dredge. She worked on the cutting away of Bulimba Point in the early 1900s, and on other major dredging works in the river. She was 170 feet long, of 620 tons, with a triple expansion steam engine.

GRAVEYARD OF SHIPS

Next, on the right bank, comes the graveyard of ships in Brisbane, Bishop Island. This island was formed from the spoil produced in the dredging of the Bar cutting by

Captain Bishop in the dredge *Hercules*, 1909-1912. The island has been the site for the disposal of many ships. These were unfortunately cut down for scrap some twenty years ago, so that the remains are now much reduced in size. Ships recorded as being discarded here include the *Groper*, *Adonis*, *Roderick Dhu*, *Excelsior*, *Yosemite*, *Maida*, *Civility*, *Captain Cook*, *Bingera*, *St. Kilda*, *Lucinda*, *Moreton*, *Miner*, *Schnapper*, *Lochiel*, *Queensland*, *Victoria*, and *Badger*.

The most famous of these vessels was the *Lucinda*, built by Denny's of Dumbarton in 1884. She was a side paddler, 172 feet long, 301 tons, and was altered during construction to a yacht rather than a cargo carrier as originally designed. The *Lucinda* arrived in Brisbane in 1885. Her most notable duty was to provide the conference base for the drafting sub-committee working on the framing of the Commonwealth Constitution in 1891. Social occasions included carrying the Duke and Duchess of York up the Brisbane River on their visit in 1901, and many voyages carrying school children on excursions. She was sold in 1923, and after dismantling was used as a coal hulk, until being discarded in 1937.

Many relics exist and some will later be displayed in the Queensland Maritime Museum. A model of the ship may be seen in the Queensland Museum.

Next is the *Bingera*, built in 1905 in Belfast for the A.U.S.N. mail service between Brisbane, Gladstone and Townsville. She was of 2,092 tons, 300 feet in length, with turbine engines of 3,500 h.p. The engines were later changed to triple expansion reciprocating, but the ship was never a great success. When the Brisbane-Townsville rail line was completed in 1926 she was dismantled and hulked.

The *Roderick Dhu* and the *Lochiel* were licensed vessels working in the island labour trade. The *Lochiel* was built in 1875 at Peterhead. She came to Queensland in 1883, in the ownership of Nathaniel Howes and Henry Donkin, registered in Brisbane. Various changes in ownership occurred until the end of the trade, and she was dismantled in 1907. The *Roderick Dhu* was built in Auckland in 1875, and came to Maryborough in 1882. She was dismantled and registry cancelled in 1914.

The *Maida* was built in Moulmein, Burma, in 1857, at the yards of Duncan Dunbar. In Brisbane she was used as a coal hulk, until her teak hull was discarded on the island.

The *Adonis*, a wooden-hulled side paddler, 160 tons, 110 feet, built 1883, was owned by Dath, Henderson and Company and operated in the Brisbane-Tewantin timber

trade. She later was owned by Burke's, but was so damaged while working on the run carrying rails for railway construction that the hull had to be discarded, being burnt on Bishop Island.

The *Moreton*, lying next to the *Lucinda*, had a varied life. She was built in 1878 as the *Gunga*, an iron screw steamer, and bought by the Q.S.S. Company, in 1881. She was 180 feet long, 357 gross tons with engines of 75 h.p. On the acquisition of the A.S.N. Company in 1886, and the formation of the A.U.S.N. Company, there were two ships of the same name in the fleet. While our *Gunga* was the newer, she was much smaller, and her name was changed to *Croydon*. She was sold to William Collin in 1898 and later renamed *Lady Lamington*. A further sale to Henry Carr in 1900 for use as a sanitary lighter, produced the final name change to *Moreton*. The register was closed in 1934.

The *Groper* was a bucket dredger built in Scotland in 1876. She was sold in 1915 to Peter's Slip, and cut down to a gravel barge. She was 160 feet long, 359 tons, a screw steamer of 75 h.p. Her low power meant she had to be sailed out from Scotland, coming via Torres Strait. The bell of the *Groper* stands in the office at Cairncross Dry Dock.

The steam hopper barge *Schnapper* was built in 1877 by Walkers Ltd., to service the *Groper*. She was iron, a screw steamer, 135 feet long. The register was closed in 1936.

The *Excelsior* was an excursion and passenger steamer on Port Phillip. She was built in 1882, for Huddart Parker, and came to Brisbane on a voyage north during the 1939-45 War. Being unseaworthy she could not be taken further, and was used here as a workshop. After the war, she was discarded on Bishop Island.

We still have the *Captain Cook*, *Miner*, *Civility*, *Yosemite*, *St. Kilda*, *Queensland*, *Victoria* and *Badger* to consider.

The *Captain Cook* was claimed to have been the first purpose-built steam pilot vessel in the world. She was built at Mort's Dock in 1876, of wood. In 1893 she was replaced and came to Queensland, working in the sanitary company service. Certainly other steamers had been used in pilotage work, for her temporary predecessor in Sydney was a steamer.

The *Miner*, built by Evans, Anderson & Phelan and launched in February 1887, was for use in tending the submarine mines off Lytton Fort. Later she was lengthened and went into other Government service, mainly on the St. Helena service. Occasional trips to the north, including relieving on the run through the Narrows between Gladstone

and Rockhampton, served to vary her more mundane duties in the bay. Finally the hull was dumped off the end of Bishop Island to help stay some erosion.

The *Civility* was a wooden three-masted steamer of 249 tons, built by Rock Davis of Brisbane Water in 1892; the *Yosemite* was a sailing ship hulked in Brisbane, intended for commercial use but apparently never much utilised; the *St. Kilda* was an iron three-masted schooner of 189 tons, built in Scotland in 1868; the *Queensland* was a 461-ton, steel-screw steamer built in 1894 in Scotland, and owned by R. Hart of Maryborough; the *Badger* was one of three small steam dredge tenders built by W. S. Binnie on the banks of Norman Creek in 1898-99; while the *Victoria I* have not yet identified clearly—there were 16 ships of that name in the Australian register in 1908.

This account of the Bishop Island hulks has been limited, but full details would require much space.

OUT IN THE BAY

We now venture out into the Bay, and at the eastern point of Mud Island find the remains of *Grazier*. She was built as a screw steamer in 1896, and operated on the river for the Queensport Meatworks. Sold about 1934 to William Collin, the vessel capsized in rough weather off Mud Island in 1947.

Turning south and coming back to the mainland at Cleve-land, Toondah boat harbour is named after the *Toondah*, a small Government vessel used for fisheries inspection. Her hull was discarded there, but has largely disappeared.

From here we sail in an easterly direction to Peel Island. At the eastern end of the island lies the hulk of the *Platypus*, a bucket dredge built at Paisley in 1883, and sailed out to Brisbane in 1884. She was 189 feet long, of 819 tons, and worked on the maintenance of the channels of the port until she was dismantled and beached on Peel Island when nearly 50 years old.

A short journey further brings us to Dunwich, where lies the hulk of the *Hercules*, the major dredge designed by Lyndon Bates for the development of the port; which under the command of Capt. Bishop built Bishop Island; which later dredged coral from Mud Island for cement making; and which was finally discarded about 1950.

Nearby is the *Lady Loch*, built in 1886 as a lighthouse tender for the Victorian Government. She was of iron, 487 tons, 182 feet long, and was classed as an auxiliary vessel of the Victorian Navy prior to Federation. She later was

owned by the Commonwealth Government. The *Lady Loch* came to Brisbane in 1940 and was used as a gravel barge until 1966, when the hulk was towed to Dunwich for use as a breakwater.

Moving northwards along the western shore of Stradbroke Island, we come to the hulk known as the *Norman* wreck, at Myora. This is the *Dugong*, built for the A.S.N. Company in 1875, which after years of service became a lighter in Normanton. With the cessation of the A.U.S.N. service to that port, she was towed to Brisbane, and after stripping the hull was discarded here.

On the beach at Amity are a few relics of a steam launch, the *Bandicoot*, which worked as an anchor tender to the dredges.

A long run now up to Tangalooma on Moreton Island brings us to a veritable graveyard of ships. Here many old units of the dredging fleet have been placed to form a small boat harbour. They include the *Platypus II*, *Maryborough*, *Remora* and *Morwong*, the *Seal* and *Stingaree*, as well as many barges.

The *Maryborough* was built by Walkers Ltd. in the 1880s as a bucket dredge. She was lengthened in 1913 on Peter's Slip to enable her to dredge deeper, and worked on to complete nearly 80 years of active life.

The bucket dredge *Platypus II* replaced the first *Platypus*, already mentioned on Peel Island, but had a relatively short life for a dredge.

The *Remora* was built in 1912 in Prussia, and was the fore-runner of many of the subsequent suction dredgers built for the Department.

Ships based on the same design were the *Trinity Bay*, *Townsville*, *Echeneis*, and *Morwong*. The *Morwong* was built in Adelaide in 1925, but was acquired by Queensland in 1935 and at that time her old name of No. 4 was changed to *Morwong*. She was discarded in April of 1973.

The *Seal* and *Stingaree* were steam hopper barges which served the bucket dredgers.

Continuing north to the artificial reef north of Cowan Cowan we come to three ships, visible only to the diving enthusiast. They are the *Lady Norman*, *Kos I* and *Kos II*.

The *Lady Norman* was built as the *Sea Horse*, a paddle tug, to work with the dredger *Saurian*, in 1884. She was sold to William Collin about 1895. He re-engined her with the engine taken from the *Dicky*, converting her to a screw steamer. In later years she worked as a gravel barge until she was sunk to form the reef in 1969.

The *Kos I* and *Kos II* were built in 1929 at Newcastle-on-Tyne. They were the first whale chasers built to work with a purpose-designed factory mother ship, the *Kosmos*. Coming to Brisbane to work at the Tangalooma whaling station, they later experienced a long period of lay-up before being dismantled and their hulls scuttled.

Back to the shore at Comboyuro, we see three hulks positioned to form a boat harbour. Unfortunately the harbour silted up, but the hulks remain.

They are the *Kallatina*, a North Coast Steam Navigation Co. ship later owned by John Burke; the *Mount Kembla*, a steamer which was used in Brisbane as a sanitary barge; and the *Hopewell*, a timber carrier from Maryborough.

The *Kallatina* was 179 feet long, 646 tons, built 1890, and carried passengers and cargo.

The *Mount Kembla* was built in England in 1885 for the Mount Kembla Coal and Oil Company. She was 180 feet long, of 716 tons.

The *Hopewell* was built in Scotland in 1900 for Hyne's of Maryborough. She was 145 feet long, of 337 tons, a screw steamer, and traded as a timber carrier until lower rail freights and high running costs made her uneconomical.

Only four hulks remain to be discussed. If we move north, still within the port limits, to Caloundra we find the *Dicky*, built at Kiel, Germany, in 1883, and cast ashore during the cyclone that produced the 1893 flood. At that time she was owned by the Brisbane firm of Bryden Jones & Co. She could not be refloated and the hull was left on the beach, the engines being removed and used in the *Lady Norman*.

On the southern end of Bribie Island, at Skirmish Point, is the *Cormorant*, a tug built in Scotland in 1900, to work with the new dredging fleet. Her sister, *Pelican*, was sold to New Zealand in 1905, and the *Cormorant* became among other things, a pilot steamer. Cut down to a sand barge by William Collin in 1932, the hull was discarded when her useful life was over.

Nearby lie the remains of a small anchor launch, the *Dingo*, another dredging fleet relic.

Last, at Woody Point, lies the *Gayundah*, the pride of the Queensland Navy, discarded after ending her life as a gravel barge. The story of the ship is too well documented to need repeating here.

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