

Basic Detail Report



00049374

Title

Fork from the DUNBAR wreck site

Date

before 1857

Medium

Metal

Dimensions

Overall: 160 x 25 mm, 23 g

Name

Fork

History

The DUNBAR was a passenger and cargo ship that ran the route between London and Sydney as a result of the Australian gold rushes. She was owned by Duncan Dunbar and was the pride of his growing fleet. After being requisitioned during the Crimean War she was returned to Dunbar and in 1856 she made her first journey to Sydney which was a success and she was proclaimed a "splendid ship". In 1857 she left England again bound for Sydney and was looking forward to repeating her success. On this journey she was laden with both expensive and important cargo and also a full contingent of passengers including some local Sydney dignitaries who had been visiting England. Her Captain, Green, was no stranger to the route and managed to sail her to Australia where she arrived off the coast of Sydney on 20 August 1857. However, there was a raging storm that night which made visibility particularly poor and the sea very rough.

[http://www.anmm.gov.au/webdata/resources/pdfs/research_guides/Signals_79_p34

39_The_wreck_of_the_Dunbar.pdf] Shortly before midnight Captain Green estimated the ship's position off the entrance to the Heads and changed course to enter, keeping the Macquarie Light on the port bow. However, the estimation of where the ship was in relation to the heads was wrong and the DUNBAR, instead of entering the harbour through the heads was rammed against cliffs. The desolation in that weather was quick and savage. There were no survivors except one seaman, James Johnson, who had been thrown higher up the cliff face where he waited two days before being rescued. The shock the next morning was city wide and business came to a standstill as the populace tried to understand and process the disaster. Wreckage and bodies were widespread along the foreshores and there was a day of mourning and an estimated 20,000 people lined the streets on the day of the funeral procession. Many of who had relatives amongst the 121 people who had died. A memorial to the DUNBAR is located at South Head and the bodies of those victims located were buried together at Camperdown Cemetery. Both Ron Taylor and Valerie Taylor (née Heighes) were pioneers in Australian skindiving. Ron took up the sport in 1952 and Valerie in 1956; they met as members of St George Spearfishing Club in Sydney and were married in 1963.

At this period there was little awareness of marine conservation and both Ron and Valerie excelled at the sport of competitive spearfishing. Valerie won the Ladies National Spearfishing Championships three years in a row in the early 1960s, and Ron took out the World Spearfishing Championships in Tahiti in 1965. The Taylors' underwater interests grew to encompass scuba diving and underwater photography. Ron built the first of many underwater housings to take land cameras beneath the sea in 1953. When television came to Australia in 1956 he saw the potential for making underwater news stories and with the help of a friend, who lent him a Bell & Howell 16 mm movie camera, Ron built an acrylic housing for the camera and started selling underwater footage to television and to the cinema newsreel producer Movietone News.