

# Shipwrecks of Apollo Bay & Surrounds

**SS Casino:** Steam/Screw

**Year of Construction:** 1882 Scotland

**Lost:** 10th July, 1932 Apollo Bay

The SS Casino or "Cassie" was a regular and important part of shipping and transportation in Apollo Bay, and along the western Victorian coastline. The SS Casino could carry 25 passengers, and amongst her cargo she often carried such goods as pianos, books, horses, pigs, chickens, cases of eggs, butter, beeswax, horns and hair. Advertisements appearing in the newspapers across the Western District allowed the population to arrange trips, or send cargo to other towns along the route.

## CASINO SINKS IN APOLLO BAY

### ATTEMPT TO BEACH LEAKING SHIP

### ALL ABOARD THROWN INTO SURF

(By Our Special Reporter.)

Ten lives were lost when the old coastal steamer Casino capsized and sank in Apollo Bay pier just after 9 o'clock on Sunday morning. Seven members of the crew and two passengers were saved. Some of the bodies have not yet been recovered. Approaching the Apollo Bay pier in a heavy sea the vessel bumped the sand heap and damaged her bottom. She drew away, but was leaking, and sank before she could be beached.

The fate of the members of the crew and the passengers — a married woman and an infant — is set out as follows:—

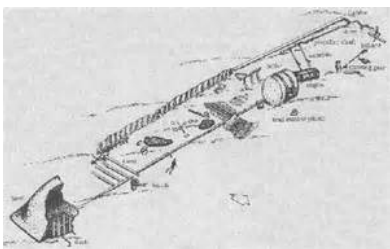
#### BODIES RECOVERED.

A celebration for the SS Casino's fiftieth anniversary was planned for the 29th July, 1932. Unfortunately soon after 9 o'clock on the morning of Sunday 10th July, 1932, disaster struck when the SS Casino was lost at Apollo Bay together with

the lives of the Captain and 9 crew members.

The SS Casino now lies in 9 meters of water on a flat sandy seabed at the northern end of Apollo Bay, almost opposite Wild Dog Creek. It lies 400 meters offshore, just beyond the breakers. The vessel lies on its port side, with its stern pointing towards the beach and bow to the ocean. The remains of the hull are around fifty meters long. The hull is relatively intact at the bow and near the engine and boiler, but toward the stern, it has collapsed, exposing the propeller shaft, steering gear and engine.

Other features of the site include lifeboat davits, bollards and masts. Remains of the ship's cargo such as papers occasionally appear as sand shifts across the site.



**Wollomai:** Wooden Ketch

**Year Of Construction:** 1857 Australia

**Lost:** 4th June 1923, Mount Bay, Apollo Bay

The wooden ketch the Wollomai was part of the Bass Strait traders commonly known as the "Mosquito fleet." In June 1923 the Wollomai was en-route to Adelaide from Burnie Tasmania carrying timber palings, posts, apples and kerosene, when she was caught in a week of fierce south easterly gales. It was reported that it was the worst weather seen in many years at the time. The Wollomai ran ashore in Mounts Bay at Marengo just south of Apollo Bay. Due to the extreme weather conditions and flooding of the Braham river, it took 15 men approx. 5 hours to reach the wreck.

The Wollomai's windlass and some attached deck planking is occasionally visible in the intertidal zone at Mounts Bay. A probe and magnetometer survey undertaken by the Maritime Heritage Unit in December 1987 determined that further remains lie buried and the lower part of the vessel is likely to be well preserved.



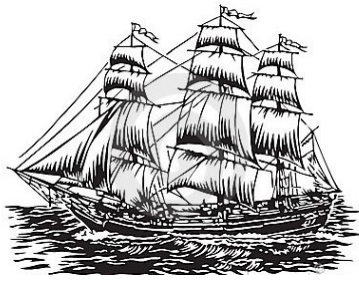
**The Grange:** Wooden Barque

**Year Of Construction:** 1840 Scotland

**Lost:** 25 March 1858 Little Henty Reef Apollo Bay.

The Grange was an international wooden trader, who whilst on course from Melbourne to Guam, became caught in a force 4 south easterly gale. The Captain believed that they were passing the Cape Otway light station, unfortunately The Grange was only passing Apollo Bay and in the confusion became wrecked on Little Henty Reef in Marengo. The site is located 300m from shore in a maximum 7m of water within the Marengo Reefs Marine Sanctuary.

The site is broken up and scattered along approximately 100m of the reef. Much of the site is covered by a dense cover of Bull Kelp over 1m tall. The site is prone to surge but relatively sheltered. It is a widely scattered site consisting of fastenings, hanging knees and timber planking and is the only wooden vessel accessible to divers along the coast.



**Eric the Red:**  
Wooden Sailing Ship  
**Year of Construction:**  
1871 USA  
**Lost:** 4th September  
1880, Cape Otway

Eric the Red began her life as a coal trader operating between Britain and South America. Eric the red set off on what was to be her final journey to Melbourne Australia. The cargo included some of Americas finest products to showcase to the rest of the world at the opening of the International Exhibition building in Melbourne. 85 days out from New York, Eric the red rounded Cape Otway. The weather was hazy and a light south westerly was blowing. An error in navigation proved to be fateful, Eric the Red hit Otway Reef directly under the lighthouse. It took 12 minutes for the ship to break apart and sink, all that was left floating was cargo and wreckage.

Three crew members and one passenger drowned.

Cargo on Eric the Red included: sewing machines, axes, globes, wine, desks, kerosene and bales of tobacco. None of the cargo was insured. Wreckage and cargo was washed ashore along the coastline from Apollo Bay to Peterborough. Some wreckage also washing ashore in New Zealand. Much of the wreckage was salvaged and used in houses in Apollo Bay and to built a Ketch called "The Apollo." Local legend suggests that there was a trade in tobacco from Eric the Red for up to 10 years afterwards.

Wreckage from Eric the Red can still be seen today. A section of the hull lies buried in the sand at Parker River Beach. An anchor with chain is embedded in the rocks east of Point Franklin and a second anchor, thought to be from Eric the Red, is on display at the Cape Otway light station. Parts of the ship are on display at Bimbi Park Caravan Park and at Apollo Bay Museum.



## ANOTHER SHIP SUNK IN AUSTRALIAN SEAS

**M.V. City Of Rayville:** Motor Vessel

**Year of Construction:** 1920

**Lost:** 8th November  
1940, Cape Otway

**American Freighter Blown Up  
Off Cape Otway**

**MINES LOCATED IN BASS STRAIT**

MELBOURNE, Sunday.

FOLLOWING closely the loss on Thursday night of a British ship off the Australian coast, a second vessel—the American freighter City of Rayville (5,880 tons)—was sunk off Cape Otway (V.) on Friday night. The Minister for the Navy (Mr. Hughes) said that the City of Rayville presumably struck a mine. The ship's boats were lowered, and assistance was given by naval vessels and fishing craft. Naval operations are in progress to deal with any mines which may be in the vicinity.

Owing to the American Pioneer Line, the City of Rayville was on her way from Adelaide to Melbourne with general cargo. There were no passengers aboard, but she carried a crew of 35, of whom 27 have been landed safely. One man is believed to have been drowned.

Because of the danger to shipping, Bass Strait will remain closed at least until tomorrow afternoon. The Navy Office will intimate when the sea will be lifted.

Minewatching flotillas operating in the waters where the two vessels were lost have swept up several mines and definitely estab-

lished the presence of a minefield. Naval authorities are inclined to believe that the minefield has been laid by an enemy raider. Though searching in Bass Strait is hampered by the onset of the monsooning season, which is curtailing the channels as rapidly as possible is of imperative nature.

Reports that other vessels have been sunk by the raider and that a pocket battleship was sighted off the Australian coast are discounted by naval authorities. All shipping in Australian waters has been advised of the danger area, and vessels approaching it have been diverted from their courses.

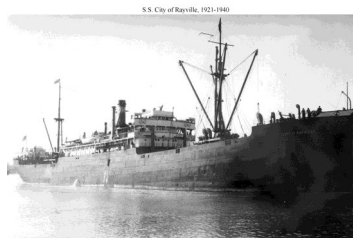
In 1940 the City of Rayville an American motor ship, and a unit of the American Pioneer

Line, was travelling from Adelaide to Melbourne, then on to New York with a cargo of lead. When she hit a German mine in Bass Strait just off the Cape Otway Light station.

The Germans had laid approx. 40 mines off Cape Otway between the 29th and the 31st October 1940.

At 7.47pm on 8 November 1940 as the City of Rayville entered the waters of Bass Strait, stars and stripes painted on both sides of its hull, it hit one of the German mines. The Cape Otway lighthouse keeper reported a shot of flame, and Apollo Bay locals playing billiards heard a loud explosion. The crew reported water and planks and hatch covers raining down on the superstructure of the vessel, and ingots from the cargo of lead in the forepart of the vessel were also thrown onto the superstructure. The force of the explosion tore out the foremast. One engineer lost his life that day with an ill timed visit to his locker to retrieve personal items.

The loss of his life marked the first USA casualty of the World War 2. The USA did not officially enter the war until over a year later after Pearl Harbor was attacked by the Japanese on 7 December 1941.



The wreck of the City of Rayville had eluded salvage and wreck recovery

attempts since the 1950s. In August 1997 it was reported to Heritage Victoria that a large steel wreck lay in a shipping lane off Cape Otway. The site lies in 82 metres depth on a sand bottom, in the shipping lane with the bow facing east.





**Speculant:** Barquentine  
**Date of construction and location:**  
 1895 - Scotland  
**Date of loss and location:**  
 10/02/1911– Cape Patton Apollo Bay, Australia

The barquentine Speculant began life as a timber trader between the UK and Russia. In 1905 she was purchased by a Warrnambool timber merchant and then began trading timber between Warrnambool and NZ. In 1911 after a month of wild weather the Speculant attempted to reach Melbourne from Portland. After successfully rounding Cape Otway Lightstation, the Speculant found herself 6 miles off Cape Patton. By now the weather had once again turned rough. Broken navigational aides and big seas and wild winds saw the Speculant hit rocks at the bottom of Cape Patton. The Captain and crew attempted to launch the life boats, huge waves smashed the lifeboat to pieces. A crew member then volunteered to take a line ashore, this then secured a safe escape for remain crew.

For many years the site of The Speculants demise was marked but anchors that had be washed ashore. In 1970 the largest of the anchors were retrieved and restored and now on display on the Apollo Bay foreshore.

The Speculant is historically significant as the largest ship to have been registered in Warrnambool, and is believed to have been the largest barquentine to visit Melbourne. It is evidence of the final days of large commercial sailing vessels involved in the Victorian and New Zealand timber trade.



**Fiji:** Barque  
**Date of construction and location:**  
 1875 - Belfast, Ireland  
**Date of loss and location:**  
 06/09/1891 - Moonlight Head

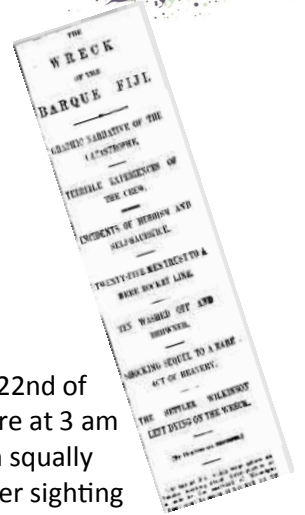
The barque Fiji left Hamburg on 22nd of May 1891. The vessel went ashore at 3 am on the morning of the disaster in squally and boisterous weather soon after sighting Cape Otway. The wind had suddenly veered, and the vessel missed stays after attempting to wear ship and was driven onto the rocks. Attempts were made to launch the boats but they were swamped and dashed to pieces. Delays in getting the lifeboat and rocket apparatus to the scene resulted in 12 of the 25 crew drowning after 10 hours trapped on board. A local resident, Arthur Wilkinson, lost his life trying to save one of the crew who was struggling in the surf. Coffins were made out of the wreck timbers and the men buried on the cliff top above the wreck. The deaths precipitated critical comment in the press over the lack of prompt action. Other news items appeared claiming drunk and disorderly behavior by plunderers amongst the corpses and wreckage on the beach.



**Marie Gabrielle:** Barque  
**Date of construction and location:**  
 1864 - France  
**Date of loss and location:**  
 25/11/1869 - Moonlight Head

The Marie Gabrielle was a tea transporter and was en route with a cargo of tea, from Foochow to Melbourne, when she hit rocks at Moonlight Head, and broke into two. Whilst it is believe that the Captain and all crew made it off the wreck, it was then reported that 4 south sea islanders were missing from the crew. 2 bodies where later found in a gully not far from the wreck site. The others were never found.

**The Anchors alongside other wreckage of the Fiji and the Marie Gabrielle are visible at low tide at Wreck beach Moonlight Head.**



**Anna** – wooden brig

**Date of construction and location:**

1849 – Prince Edward Island, Canada

**Date of loss and location:**

29/07/1854 – Apollo Bay, Australia

Owned by the Apollo Bay Timber Company, the Anna is the first wreck known to have occurred in Apollo Bay. The location of the wreck is unknown.

**Gazelle** – early iron screwed steamer

**Date of construction and location:**

1852 – Waterford, Ireland

**Date of loss and location:**

25/02/1888 – Apollo Bay, Australia

The Gazelle was used as a lighter (barge) in Apollo bay from 1884. The role of the lighter was to transport timber from the jetty to ships further out at sea. It is reported that the Gazelle sunk whilst transporting railway sleepers.

**Eleonora** - wooden brig

**Date of construction and location:**

1847 – Cincinnati, Ohio USA

**Date of loss and location:**

30/12/1856 – Apollo Bay, Australia

The Eleonora was blown ashore in Apollo Bay whilst in anchor, waiting to be loaded with sleepers to transport to Geelong.

**Christian** – wooden brig

**Date of construction and location:**

1845 – Germany

**Date of loss and location:**

30/12/1856 – Apollo Bay, Australia

The Christian was blown ashore along with the Eleonora, whilst being loaded with sleepers.

**Archilles** - wooden schooner

**Date of construction and location:**

unknown

**Date of loss and location:**

30/12/1856 – Apollo Bay, Australia

The Christian was blown ashore along with the Eleonora and Christin, whilst being loaded with sleepers.

**Hercules** – wooden brig

**Date of construction and location:**

1800 - Sweden

**Date of loss and location:**

15/12/1861 – Apollo Bay, Australia

Whilst attempting to leave Apollo Bay, after being loaded with heavy timber and sleepers, Hercules was blown ashore during rough weather.

**Alexander** – wooden cutter

**Date of construction and location:**

1843 - Tasmania

**Date of loss and location:**

03/11/1883– Apollo Bay, Australia

The Alexander was a trade vessel transporting produce to Melbourne from the Otway's. On the day that the Alexander was wrecked after encountering rough weather in Apollo Bay, she was carrying potatoes.

**Swan** – wooden ketch

**Date of construction and location:**

1862 - Tasmania

**Date of loss and location:**

20/10/1882– Apollo Bay, Australia

The Swan was a trade vessel operating between Melbourne, Lorne and Apollo Bay. On the night of the 19<sup>th</sup> the Swan reported springing a leak and turned back to Apollo Bay, due to rough weather the swan became wrecked on rocks close to the jetty.

**Black Witch I** -Steam/Screw

**Date of construction and location:**

1914—Black Witch was formerly known as the Cheopis

**Date of loss and location:**

22/01/1954 Apollo Bay, Australia

The Black witch was originally called the Cheopis, and was used as a passenger vessel by the Adelaide Customs department. The Black Witch was then purchased by an Apollo Bay fisherman Jim Anderson, and was converted to a fishing vessel. During an easterly gale she was washed ashore at Apollo Bay and badly holed. Several attempts were made to re float her until she was finally abandoned.

**Black Witch II**— wooden schooner

**Date Of Construction and Location:** 1924

**Date Of loss and Location:** 08/1958 Apollo Bay, Australia

The Royal Australian Naval Depot at Crib Point operated a small tender originally called the KOORONGA and later renamed H.M.A.S. CERBERUS. It foundered in Western Port in an incident during World War II but fortunately with no loss of life, and was soon after salvaged. In 1949 Apollo Bay fisherman Jim Anderson bought the vessel to replace his recently lost Black Witch I, he converted the ship to a schooner rigged fishing vessel and renamed her Black Witch II. In almost exactly the same circumstances as the loss of the Black Witch I four years previously ,the Black Witch II dragged her anchors into the surf in an easterly gale at Apollo Bay - the three crew aboard at the time were lucky to escape with their lives. It is believed the wreck is buried in sand on the Apollo Bay main beach, near the Surf lifesaving building, that has built up significantly since 1956 when the harbor breakwall was constructed.

**Miranda**— wooden schooner

**Date of construction and location:** 1877 Geelong Australia

**Date of loss and location:**

16/08/1881– Apollo Bay, Australia

The Miranda was a trader along the Western Victorian coast. On the 16th of August after arriving from Melbourne to Apollo Bay, the Miranda was being loaded with potatoes. The weather conditions were noted as calm, with no much wind when suddenly a big swell came up, which washed the Miranda adrift. Eventually she washed on the rocks near the old jetty.

*All shipwreck information and images sourced from [http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/vhd/heritage\\_shipwrecks](http://vhd.heritage.vic.gov.au/vhd/heritage_shipwrecks)*

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