

A Dangerous Port

Time line of shipwrecks around Newcastle



My grandfather Edward Luxton (diver suit left) and H. Chapman preparing to dive on a wreck site in 1914

Newcastle, situated at the entrance to the Hunter River developed as a major port due to the discovery of coal in 1797. The entrance to Port Hunter was not altogether sympathetic to shipping, and over 200 vessels were lost entering or leaving the port, many on the infamous Oyster Bank. It is interesting to note that some wrecks in Newcastle were on top of other wrecks that lay in the water.

As port facilities developed, some of these vessels were interred, no doubt exciting some future archaeologist. This time line contains vessels lost at Port Hunter, Hunter River, Nobbys Head, Stockton Bight, Stockton and other Newcastle Beaches, Oyster Bank and the Williams River. Several very large vessels have been lost in the region with the largest being the 53,000 ton Norwegian bulk carrier Sygna on Stockton Beach in 1974.

1800

- Norfolk, wooden sloop, lost at Pirate Point Newcastle

1805

- Surprise, wooden sloop, forced ashore near Hunter River

1806

- Governor King, schooner, blown off course and blown ashore off Newcastle

1808

- Dundee, wooden full rig ship, grounded near Hunter River, 2 lives lost

1812

- Boyd, wooden schooner, lost on Stockton Beach

1814

- Resource, wooden schooner, lost after leaving the Hunter River

1816

- Nautilus, wooden brig, ran aground at Oyster Bank

1817

- Endeavour, wooden schooner, grounded and lost at Nobbys

1825

- Elizabeth Henrietta, govt brig, driven onto rocks at Nobbys

1826

- Sophia, schooner, ran aground on Oyster Bank during gale

1827

- Charlotte, sloop, founded during gale off Newcastle, 4 lives lost

1829

- Governor Arthur, wooden cutter, hit reef and lost at Nobbys

1831

- Jessie, wooden cutter, lost in Hunter River

1834

- Redpole, lost off Hunter River entrance

- Ceylon, lost near harbour entrance

1835

- unidentified vessel off Stockton Beach

1837

- Vulcan, wooden sloop, wrecked during gale on Stockton Beach while entering Newcastle, several lives lost. The earliest record of the lifeboat service out of Newcastle was the rescue of the crew of the Vulcan

- Priscilla, cutter, lost on Stockton Beach

- Joseph Weller, wooden two masted schooner, lost at north beach near harbour entrance

- Joyron – wooden launch, lost at harbour entrance

1838

- Rob Roy – schooner, ran aground at Nobbys Head

- Delight, wooden cutter, sunk in Hunter River entrance

1839

- William IV (King William the Fourth), wooden paddle steamer, the first steam ship to be lost on Oyster Bank

1840

- Sir David Ogilby, two masted wooden schooner, wrecked north of Newcastle

1844

– Express, wooden schooner, lost on Newcastle reef

1845

– Paterson, wooden schooner, lost ashore 5nm north of Nobbys Head

1848

– Sarah Wilson, wooden brigantine, wrecked after hitting Nobbys Reef at entrance to harbour. The cutter Jane Williams also grounded on same night, mistook Sarah Wilson for a vessel at anchor

1849

– Pilot, schooner, wrecked on Nobbys Island

1850

– Wave, schooner ran aground at Newcastle Bight

1851

– Chance, ketch, lost off the coast of Newcastle

1852

– a composite ketch sank at Hunter River entrance

1853

– Fanny, brig, lost on the Oyster Bank

– Eliza Appleton, brig, ran aground on Oyster Bank

1854

– Waterwitch, wooden brig, lost on Oyster Bank

– Frederick, schooner, lost on Oyster Bank

– Canmore, wooden schooner, lost on Oyster Bank

1856

– Storm King, schooner, lost off Newcastle

– Eleanor Lancaster, wooden barque, grounded and lost on Oyster Bank in strong gale.

– Sea Nymph, wooden brig, ran ashore north of Newcastle

– Rover, wooden schooner, lost on Oyster Bank

– Hunter, schooner, lost ashore on north beach

– Maria Theresa, schooner, departed Newcastle and disappeared, wreckage washed ashore at several points. One of 8 vessels lost in one night following violent storm

1857

– Lion, schooner, lost on rock shelf at Nobbys Head

– Chance, wooden ketch, lost on Oyster Bank during gale

1858

– Vixen, schooner, left Newcastle for Sydney but ran onto rocks near Nobbys

1859

– Speculant, schooner, lost about 12nm north of Newcastle

– Paterson Packet, cutter, ran aground Nobbys Head

– Gilbert Jamieson, sank after hitting reef north of Nobbys

1860

– Phantom, brig, collided with the schooner Maragaret when entering harbour in strong gale, grounded on Oyster Bank

– Frederick Griffiths, wooden schooner, sprang leak and sank at Nobbys Head

– Margaret, schooner, after collision with Phantom, also grounded on Oyster Bank

– Gazelle, schooner, ashore when leaving Newcastle

– Agnes, cutter, grounded and lost during gale at Stockton

1861

- Shamrock, schooner, drifted onto Oyster Bank during gale
- Alice, wooden schooner, struck rocks at Nobbys Head
- Alexander and John, schooner, grounded at Nobbys when leaving harbour

1862

- Unity, ketch ran ashore off Nobbys
- Cumberland, wooden schooner, foundered off the Newcastle Coast, all lives lost

1863

- Herculean, wooden schooner, lost on rocks at Nobbys Head

1864 – Zone, schooner, in a gale drifted into the breakers off Newcastle, The tug Bungaree towed the Newcastle lifeboat to the schooner and stood by as the crew were rescued. However, when returning to the shelter of the harbour the lifeboat overturned, drowning 4 men

- Phoebe Dunbar, wooden full rig ship, destroyed by fire while lying in Newcastle Harbour
- Waratah, schooner, foundered during gale having left Newcastle for Sydney, 7 lives lost
- Fox, schooner, lost outside Scotts Point Newcastle
- Lone, brigantine lost on Newcastle Bight
- Grecian, brig, ashore on Nile Mile Beach Redhead
- James, wooden schooner, destroyed in gale on Nine Mile Beach Redhead
- Gertrude, wooden brig, destroyed in gale on Nine Mile Beach Redhead, 1 life lost, James lost in same gale

1866

- William Watson, barque. During the “great gale”, swept over Oyster Bank and ashore, 2 lives lost
- Caroline, ketch, founded inside Nobbys Head, there were no survivors
- Victor, brig, reported lost near the entrance to Newcastle
- Orient, wooden schooner, lost on North Beach, Newcastle
- Nautilus, wooden barque, grounded on Big Ben Reef
- Seagull, schooner, foundered off Newcastle lighthouse, 5 lives lost
- Rhoderick Dhu, wooden schooner, lost in Stockton Bight
- Arthur, wooden ketch, lost in Newcastle Bight during “the great gale” 5 lives lost
- Lismore, schooner, lost on Oyster Bank during “the great gale”
- Cawarra, iron paddle steamer, foundered in big seas off Oyster Bank during ‘the great gale’ 62 lives lost, one survivor
- Bungaree, paddle steamer, stranded on rocks at Nobbys Head
- Comet, wooden schooner, lost ashore in gale on Newcastle Bight

1867

- Otago, wooden schooner, lost at Newcastle

1868

- unidentified vessel believed to be French recovered off Newcastle

1869

- Messenger, wooden schooner, lost near Nobbys Head
- Burnett, brig, broke up in massive seas near Oyster Bank, 8 lives lost
- Nancy, wooden schooner, broke up in a gale that claimed several ships, 6 lives lost
- Jessie, wooden schooner, lost on Oyster Bank
- Laura, ketch, lost ashore, Stockton Beach

1870

- Ino, ketch, reported lost near Newcastle
- Islander, sloop, ashore at Newcastle and broken up

1872

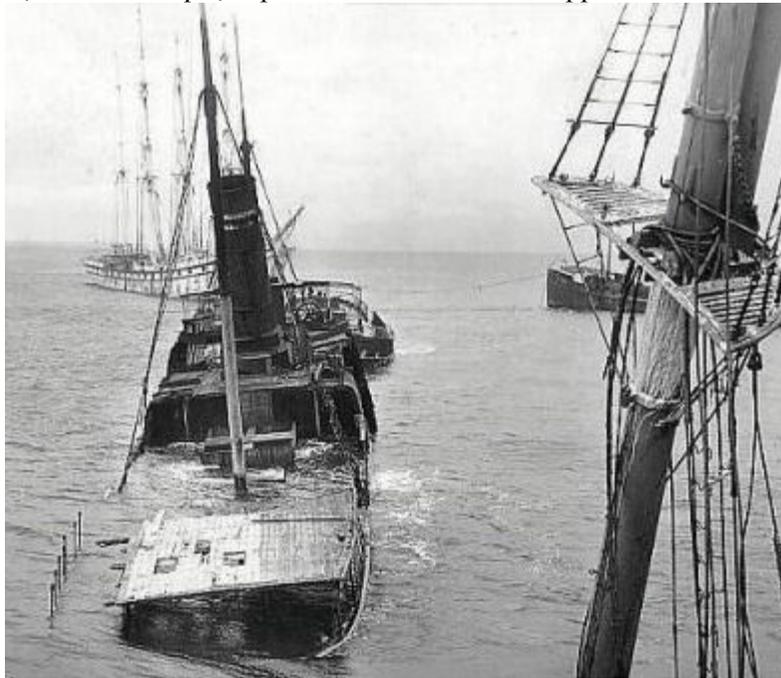
- Paterson, iron screw steamer, lost ashore Newcastle Harbour
- Bengal, barquentine, lost off Newcastle

1873

- Doorebang, iron screw steam tender, grounded and broke in two, near Nobbys

1874

- Surprise, topsail schooner, struck Oyster Bank in a gale and broke up
- Windhover sprang leak and foundered after leaving Newcastle, no lives lost
- Yarra wooden schooner, stranded in gale near the Oyster Bank and broke up, no lives lost
- Mary Lloyd, wooden cutter, lost at Nobbys Head
- Alice Cameron, wooden barque, departed Newcastle and disappeared

**1876**

- Seagull, ketch, lost near Nobbys Head
- Southland, iron paddle steamer, sank after collision with SS Waratah at entrance to harbour
- Ferryman, ketch, lost aground on North Beach

1877

- Yarra Yarra, iron paddle steamer, lost when overwhelmed by several big sea on Oyster Bank, all hands, number 18 were lost
- Champion, lighter, sliced in two by SS Maitland and sank off Newcastle, 1 life lost

1878

- City of Newcastle, iron paddle steamer, wrecked at Shepherds Hill

1879

- Margaret Chessel, schooner, lost ashore, north beach Newcastle
- Chance, cutter, abandoned in gale south of Newcastle
- Lillian, ketch, capsized off Newcastle entrance, 1 life lost
- Lovet Peacock, schooner, lost after drifting ashore 5 nm north of Newcastle

1880

- Susannah Goddefroy, full rigged ship, ran ashore south of Newcastle, 6 lives lost
- Gem, schooner, ran ashore after hitting rocks at Nobbys Head

1882

- Manhegan – barquentine, sunk in Newcastle Harbour

1883

- Santa Cruz, ketch, abandoned after drifting on to Oyster Bank

1884

- Susan Gilmore, wooden barque, ashore on Long Beach Newcastle
- Prosper, barque, collided with a mud punt and sank while leaving harbour

1885

- Daisy, wooden screw steamer, lost in Hunter River, Raymond Terrace

1886

- Mary Pashley, schooner, sank when struck by tug Game Cock off Newcastle
- Ann, wooden ketch, grounded on North Stockton Beach

1887

- May, wooden ketch, sunk in Harbour when hit by SS Hasketh

1888

- Transport, brig, lost on Nobbys Beach
- Berbice, composite, grounded on Oyster Bank in gale
- Alhambra, lost off Newcastle

1889

- May, ketch, broke up while leaving harbour
- Afghan, screw steamer, lost on harbour dyke

1890

- a silt punt wrecked off Nobbys Head
- Saturn, ketch, drifted ashore and broke up after springing a leak off Nobbys

1891

- Sir John Franklin, schooner, broke up on reef
- Jonathon, wooden ketch, ran aground on Oyster Bank
- Ranger, schooner, ran ashore on northern side of harbour entrance

1892

- Emily, wooden launch, lost on Stockton Beach after collision with Othello

1893

- Hebe, wooden brig, ran ashore at Stockton while trying to enter harbour

1894

- Colonist, steel steamer, grounded on Oyster Bank



1895

- Durisdeer, iron barquentine, grounded on Stockton Beach

1896

- Berlinda, steamship, broken up in Newcastle

1897

- Unknown name, a ketch wrecked on Oyster Bank
- Adderley, steel barquentine, grounded Stockton Beach
- Fitzroy, lost off Stockton Beach

1898

- Wendouree, steel screw steamship, wrecked on Oyster Bank while leaving Newcastle for Adelaide
- Adelaide, wooden schooner, disappeared off Newcastle
- Adelaide, iron screw steamer, sunk inside Newcastle harbour
- Virawa, steamship, rammed and sank the schooner Bessie Maud when the later was outward bound from Newcastle
- a wooden ketch struck a floating object while entering harbour and sank
- Merksworth, iron screw steamship, foundered in a gale off Stockton Beach, 9 lives lost
- Fido, barquentine, lost off Nine Mile beach Redhead

1899

- Regent Murray, iron barque, grounded on Oyster Bank while under tow from the tug Newburgh
- Lindus, iron steamship, ashore and lost on Oyster Bank, on wreck of Colonist

1900

- Ena – schooner, lost north Stockton

1901

- Kuring-gai, steel steamer, ex Manly ferry, abandoned in Hunter River at Hexham

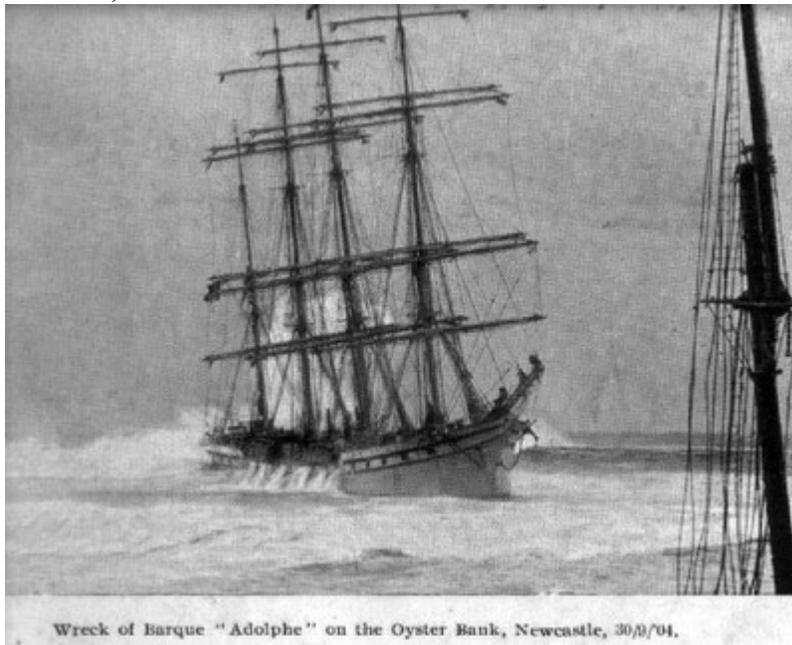
1903

- Illaroo, steel steamer, aground at Catherine Hill Bay



1904

- Western Star, schooner, sank quickly after colliding with S.S. Togliaferro off Nobbys, 4 lives lost
- Tagiaferro, steamship, survived collision with schooner Western Star off Nobbys
- Adolphe, four masted barque, lost on Oyster Bank, now forms part of northern breakwall
- Bell Flower, schooner, lost on northern breakwall



1905

- Elamang, iron screw steamer, sunk at Newcastle Breakwall
- Chipperkyle, barque, disappeared after leaving harbour
- Jones Brothers, three masted topsail schooner, whilst under tow to SS Helen Nicol, was swept onto remains of the Adolphe at Nobbys and broke up, 7 lives lost
- Katoomba, iron twin screw steamer, lost on Newcastle breakwater

1906

- Tarshaw, steamer, involved in a collision with the steamer Macleay
- Italia, iron barque, destroyed by fire while at wharf at Newcastle

1907

- Kate Tatham, iron three masted schooner, Abandoned on the Hunter River
- Unity, lost off Stockton Beach

1908

- Yarra wooden screw steamer, lost inside harbour, opposite pilot station
- Mareeba – steel screw steamship, ashore and lost 10nm north of Stockton
- Advance, tug, involved in a collision with Inverna off Newcastle

1909

- Electra, steel twin screw steamship, lost on Stockton Beach
- Karziah, screw steamer, lost on Stockton Beach

1910

- Duneam, barque, left Newcastle and disappeared

1912

- Merry Days, launch, lost near Newcastle

1914

- Marie, screw steamer, lost on Hunter River at Patterson
- Elaine, wooden screw steamer, lost on the river bank at Stockton

1919

- Goolwa, paddle steamer tug, sank at moorings, lies in mud in Hunter River

1922

- Williams, steamer battered to pieces after beaching at Stockton
- Meeinderry, steel screw steamer, lost at harbour entrance

1924

- Sylvan, iron screw steamer, sank in the Hunter River

1926

- Seagull, wooden screw steamship, sprang a leak and beached at Stockton

1927

- Alice, lost off Stockton Beach

1928

- White Bay, wooden screw steamer, swamped by heavy seas and broke into pieces at Stockton Bight, 5 lives lost. SS Uralla wrecked in same gale
- Ajax, iron screw steamer, operated as pilot boat at Newcastle, after service, wrecked north of Stockton Bridge
- Uralla, steel twin screw steamship, run ashore in a gale on Stockton Beach

1930

- Garnet, wooden screw steamer, lost in Williams River Seaham

1931

- Osprey, steel screw steamer, scuttled 5nm east of Newcastle
- Commodore, iron paddle steamer, scuttled off Nobbys Head

1934

- Blue Bell, ferry, involved in a collision with the Waraneen a coastal freighter in Newcastle Harbour, in which the ferry sank taking 3 lives
- Currumbene, wooden screw steamer, lost in Williams River near Seaham



1936

- San Pan, wooden yacht, lost on Big Ben Reef,

1937

- LF71, wooden launch, lost south of Newcastle

1940

- Maianbar – steel twin screw steamship, grounded south of Newcastle when the tow line to SS Arakoon parted

1944

- Toronto, wooden launch, wrecked at Stockton
- Davenport, wooden screw steamer, gutted by fire and sank off Newcastle Breakwater

1945

– WST 1, US Army Tug, wooden motor vessel lost at Susan Gilmore, Newcastle

1947

– Yua Hwa, motor vessel, sprang a leak and sank under tow of Newcastle pilot boat Birubi

– Tua Wha, motor vessel, lost 8km east of Stockton Bight

– Runette, wooden launch, lost off Newcastle Heads

1948

– Illalong, wooden steamer, ashore on Belmont Beach

1954

– LVT (A) 4, army amphibious vessel, lost on Stockton Beach, left Newcastle Harbour for Port Stephens in a flotilla when poor weather struck, 8 amphibious vehicles either sunk or were swamped, throwing 100 soldiers into the sea killing 2.

**1974**

– Sygna, bulk carrier, aground in a gale on Stockton Beach, crew of 30 rescued by helicopter

1988

– D.Flawless, sea catamaran, lost off Newcastle



The wreck of the Sygna today



The wreck of the Adolphe today

Time line compiled from various sources by Garry Luxton

My website - <http://lakescan.customer.net.au/list.html> If you have additions or alterations to the list above, or photos of Newcastle Shipwrecks, please email me at lakescanslist@netspace.net.au ©G.Luxton 2008 - PO Box 6055 Mt. Hutton NSW 2290