

DIVE INFORMATION SHEET

SS BLACKBIRD (1863-1878)

A mid-19th century steamship designed to carry cargo and passengers and later converted to carrying coal from Newcastle to Melbourne.

Diving on the Wreck of the SS Blackbird

The wreck of the SS *Blackbird* now lies in shallow water 300-400 metres from the southern shore of Clonmel Island, three miles south of Port Albert.

The SS *Blackbird* offers divers an excellent opportunity to explore a traditional mid-19th century steamship. The wreck lies parallel to the shoreline. Its bow faces north-east. The hull is intact at the bow and stern where remnants of the original decking can be seen. Anchor chains hang from the bow and the anchors which are still attached are firmly embedded in sand. Two lifting davits can be seen at the bow. One is still attached to the vessel, the other lies nearby next to a winch and scattered hull plating.

Some of the ship's equipment including the engine, boiler and steering gear are in their original position towards the stern. In the midships region of the vessel, the sides of the ship have collapsed outwards.

Steering gear and the rudder are still in place at the stern of the steamship.

The SS *Blackbird* was extensively salvaged in the past and the Port Albert Maritime Museum has a number of relics from the ship. During the illegal salvage in the 1960s, the

vessel was blasted with explosives. A large mass of jumbled debris around the wreck is probably a result of this.

Dive standard: Intermediate

Dive Conditions

Divers should be aware that the wreck site is often subject to poor visibility. A strong current runs parallel to the shoreline making the dive, at times, quite difficult.

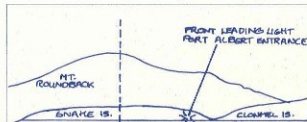
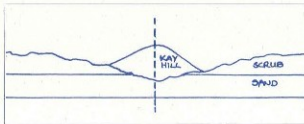
Port Albert has a reputation for one of the more difficult and dangerous estuarine entrances on the south-east coast. As sand bars often shift, it's wise to check conditions before venturing out by boat.

Locating the Wreck of the SS Blackbird

Launch Site: Port Albert
Chart No: AUS 357
Latitude: 38 43' 75" S
Longitude: 146 41' 75" E

Compass Bearings:
Mount Roundback 323° (T)
Kay Hill 270° (T)

Visual Transits



Similar Wrecks in Victoria

Wrecks of other steamships included in the Underwater Shipwreck Discovery Trail are the SS *Casino* (Apollo Bay), SS *Coogee* (Ships' Graveyard) and SS *Wauchopé* (Port Phillip Bay).

Help Protect Our Maritime Heritage

The SS *Blackbird* was protected as an Historic Shipwreck on the 21st November 1989, under the Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act (1976). Any deliberate damage or interference to the SS *Blackbird* is an offence under the Act and divers causing wilful damage face tough penalties.

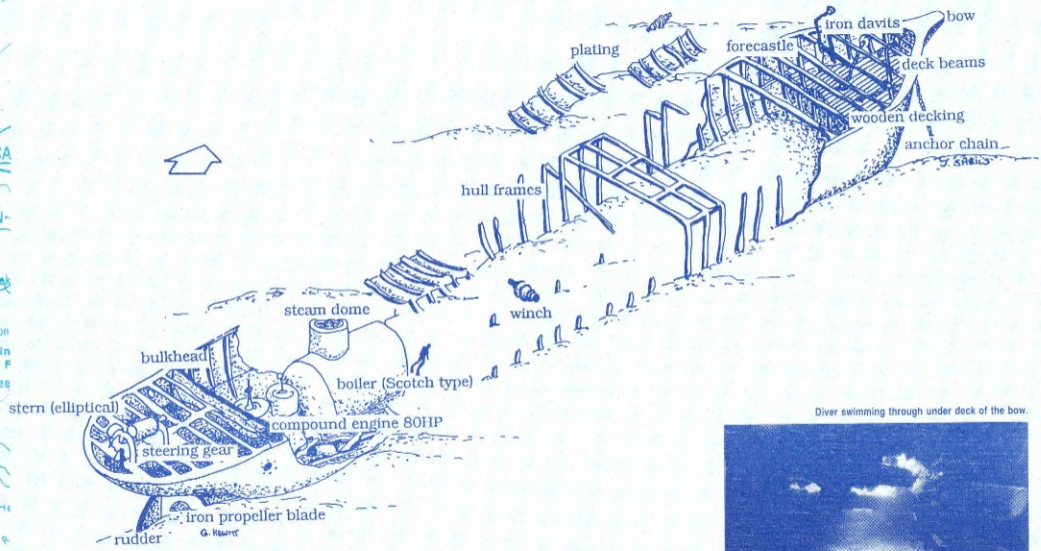
Many wrecks are fragile and require constant monitoring. Divers visiting wreck sites can help the Maritime Archaeology Unit protect and manage Victoria's Historic Shipwrecks by:

- Reporting any damage to wreck sites caused by natural erosion or the activities of divers.
- Reporting artefacts which have become exposed through erosion and are at risk from being washed away or looting.
- Reporting any diver seen actively looting a wreck.
- Informing the Unit of a new wreck site. Divers who find and report a new wreck may be entitled to a reward.

Please contact the Maritime Archaeology Unit at:

Victorian Archaeological Survey
29-31 Victoria Avenue Albert Park VIC 3206
Telephone: (03) 690 5322

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Diver swimming through under deck of the bow.

