

## DIVE INFORMATION SHEET

# EMPRESS OF THE SEA (1853-1861)

A magnificent three masted square rigged wooden clipper, built in Boston, USA.

### Diving on the Wreck of the *Empress of the Sea*

The remains of the 130 year old wreck of the *Empress of the Sea* are very fragile. Despite the nature of the site with its large timbers, massive tanks, chains and anchors, the wreck can be easily damaged particularly by boats dropping anchor directly on the wreck and divers carelessly pulling at timber and relics.

The *Empress of the Sea* lies in five to seven metres of water, 700 metres offshore from Nepean Bay, Port Phillip. The site covers an area 150 metres long and fifty metres wide. The bow lies towards the south-west.

Two large mounds of bluestone ballast rock (rounded river rock) lie to the north and south of the site. Protruding from these mounds are paired hull frames, remains of outer hull planking and the protective copper sheathing of the ship's hull.

Near the middle of the site, divers can see three large rectangular iron tanks and the ship's keel. Approximately thirty-five metres forward of the tanks divers can see a large chain mound, another iron tank and an anchor marking the bow of the ship. There are also a few iron buckets at the bow.

An information plinth put on the site by the Maritime Archaeology Unit can be found on the starboard side of the wreck adjacent to the three water tanks.

**Dive Standard:** Basic - Intermediate

### Dive Conditions

The site can be subject to strong tidal flow and divers should consult a tide book for Port Phillip Bay before diving. As the wreck site is large and spread out, a good way of exploring the wreck is on a drift dive. However, care must be taken because of the site's proximity to the Heads.

### Locating the Wreck of the *Empress of the Sea*

Launch Site: The wreck can be approached from Portsea or from Queenscliff. To the south of the site is an area of shallow reef.

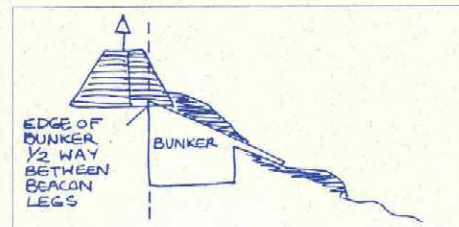
Chart No: AUS 158  
Area: Port Phillip Bay  
Latitude: 38° 18'14" S  
Longitude: 144° 39'30" E

Compass Bearings:

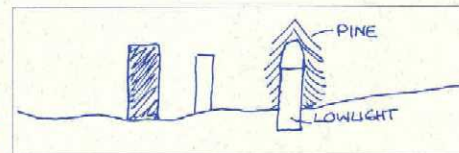
1. Beacon on Beacon Rock - 263° (T)
2. Lonsdale Lighthouse - 281° (T)
3. Pope's Eye - 051° (T)
4. Black Lighthouse - 000° (T)

### Visual transits

1. Looking towards the Heads, line up the right beacon leg with the left bunker wall.



2. Looking North to Queenscliff, line up the light so that it is in front of the tree.

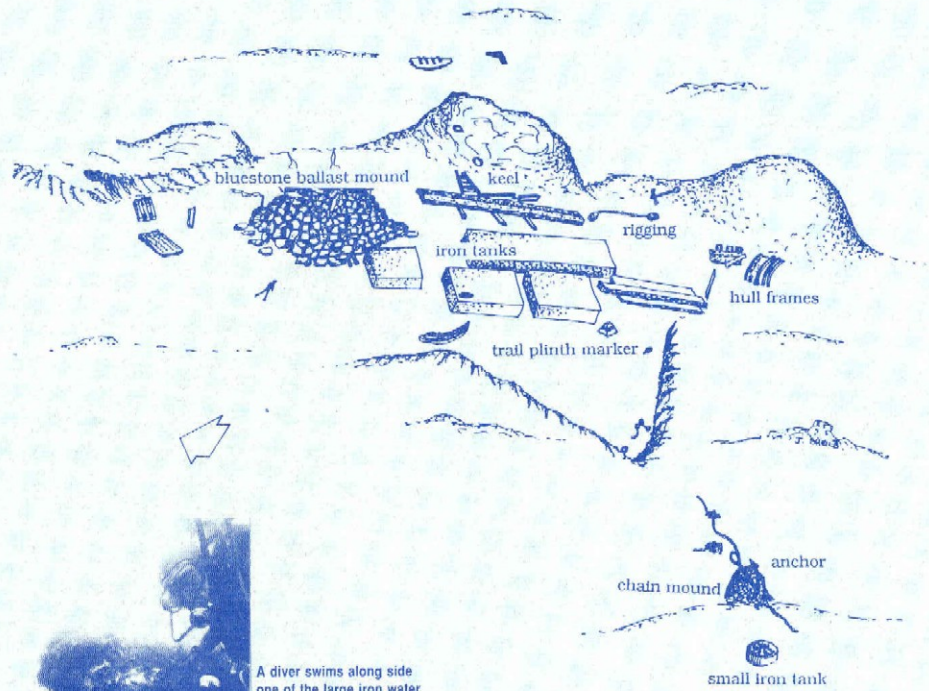


### Similar Wrecks in Victoria

The wreck of the large Scottish built clipper, *Schomberg* is another example of a fast and luxurious immigrant ship included in the Underwater Shipwreck Discovery Trail. The wreck of the *Schomberg* is located at Peterborough.

### EMPRESS OF THE SEA (1853-1861)

### Help Protect Our Maritime Heritage



A diver swims along side one of the large iron water tanks at the wreck site.

The *Empress of the Sea* was protected as an Historic Shipwreck on 10th December 1986, under Victoria's Historic Shipwrecks Act (1981). Any damage or interference to the *Empress of the Sea* is an offence under the Act and penalties are severe.

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:

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

