Dive Information Sheet

LA BELLA (1883-1905)

A four masted barquentine sailing ship constructed from iron and steel. It was used as a trading vessel in the Pacific.

Diving Conditions
The current is usually minimal although in south-westerly winds the swell can make boating dangerous, particularly near the reef.

If you wish to dive on the La Bella, please register at the Flagstaff Maritime Village.

Locating the Wreck of the La Bella
Launch Site: Lady Bay boat ramp
Chart No: AUS 140 (see also AUS 786)
Latitude: 38 24'22" S
Longitude: 142 29'14" E

Compass Bearings:
1. Thunder Point Trig Point - 304° (T)
2. Upper Lighthouse - 030° (T)
3. Flagstaff at Flagstaff Hill - 014° (T)
4. Hopkin's River Mouth Trig Point - 079° (T)

Visual Transits
1. Two southernmost power poles line up exactly.

Diving on the Wreck of La Bella
The La Bella now lies on its port side, with its bow facing south-west, in 13 metres of water, 300 metres south-east of the end of the Warrnambool breakwater.

Although heavily covered in thick kelp and weed growth, the La Bella is a spectacular dive.

The five metre high ship's bow lies on its port side. Divers swimming around the bow will be able to see the bowsprit, several anchors, an anchor chain, catsheds, winches and hawsepipes.

In the midships region divers should see a donkey engine, parts of the rigging, deck frames, a deck winch, bilge pumps and bollards.

Over time the stern has broken up and has now disappeared. An information plinth lies in the midships region off the port side of the ship. It was placed there by staff of the National Safety Council and the Flagstaff Hill Maritime Museum, sponsored by Warrnambool Textiles.

Dive standard: Basic - Intermediate

Similar Wrecks in Victoria
Other wrecks of iron sailing ships included in the Underwater Shipwreck Discovery Trail are the Eliza Ramsden (Port Phillip Bay), the Fiji (Moonlight Head), Falls of Halladale (Curdies Point), George Roper (Point Lonsdale), Holyhead (Point Lonsdale), Hurricane (Port Phillip Bay), Loch Ard (Port Campbell) and Sierra Nevada (Portsea ocean beach).

Help Protect Our Maritime Heritage
The La Bella was protected as a Historic Shipwreck on 23rd April 1982 under the Commonwealth Historic Shipwrecks Act (1976). Any damage or interference to the La Bella 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:

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