

The Shipwrecks of Mossel Bay

Although Mossel Bay is a sheltered, safe haven for shipping, it's also seen its fair share of marine tragedies. Here's a list of the shipwrecks we know of:

1. Melbourne (1862)

Wooden ship of 1,170 tons; built in 1853 in Quebec, owned by Wilson & Slaters of Fenchurch Street, London, and commanded by Captain R. Whitehill. She struck a line of rocks 70 metres from the shore, and wrecked at Buffelshoek, 15 kilometres west of the Gourits River Mouth (probably at Ystervark Point) during a westerly gale on 4 November 1862. Three lives were lost.

She'd been sailing from Shanghai to London with £120,000 worth of cargo that included 900 tons of tea, 366 bales of cotton, 40 bales of grass cloth fibre, 92 bales of wool, 179 bales of cassia, 13 bales of silk, 5 bales of seeds, 3 bales of copper, 1 box of lacquered ware, 6 cases of tongues, 49 boxes of tobacco, and a stock of spices. A box of goods later washed ashore at Brandfontein.

References:

- Cape Argus, 11 (sale notice and account of wreck) 18 (sale list and account of wreck), 20 (account of wreck), 29 (enquiry into wreck)
- November, 20 December 1862
- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1862-63
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C.3/7/2/1

2. SS Haliartus - previously 'Dennistoun' (1932)

34° 23.60 S; 21° 41.70 E

Houston Line steamer of 5294 tons built in 1919 by J Redhead & Sons, of South Shields, on the River Tyne in England, and commanded by Captain JH Malpas. Wrecked in dense fog near Ystervark Point, west of the Gourits River Mouth, on 3 May 1932. Her cargo included 1,200 cases of whisky, 40 cars, oil, machinery, molasses, tyres, tinned foods, clothing and cyanide. Some of the cargo was salvaged at the time by a Captain van Delden.

- Cape Argus, 4 May 1932
- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1931-32

3. Cape Hangklip (1974)

A trawler belonging to fishing company Irvin & Johnson's. Wrecked near the Gourits River Mouth on 11 September 1974. No lives were lost.

- Museum research files

4. Cape Point (1982)

24 meter Irvin & Johnson trawler. Ran onto rocks near the Gourits River Mouth on 14 March 1982. A total loss.

- Museum research files.

5. Peter S (1986)

A trawler belonging to the Mariette Fishing Company. Sprang a leak and went aground 6 kilometres west of the Gourits River Mouth on 26 August 1986. She was declared a total loss.

- Museum research files.

6. Maranata (1986)

Privately owned trawler stranded on the rocks near the Gourits River Mouth on 5 September 1986 after springing a leak. The crew was helped by the local N.S.R.I.

- Museum research files.

7. Elephant (1750)

Danish ship commanded by Captain Andries Evertsz Grimstra. Run ashore close to Gourits River while on a homeward-bound voyage from Tranquebar, India on 8 August 1750. She was trying to reach Mossel Bay, but was wrecked on purpose in an effort to save the lives of the desperately sick crew. No lives were lost; the crew of 65 walked to Cape Town.

- Cape Archives, V.C.29

8. La Fortune (1763)

French man-o'-war wrecked opposite the freshwater spring near Kanonpunt in Vleesbaai in the Gourits area on 11 September 1763 while on a voyage from Reunion. No lives were lost. The crew of 441 soldiers and sailors went overland to Cape Town. A cannon is wedged in the rocks and can be seen at very low tide. All valuables were removed from the wreck at the time. The area name 'Fransmanshoek' honours the Frenchmen who survived the wreck.

- Cape Archives, V.C. 29

9. Trio–Triomf (1981)

Wooden-hulled Irvin & Johnson fishing trawler that ran onto the reef near Kanon in heavy seas on 8 July 1981. The crew was rescued by helicopter.

- Museum research files

10. Eclair (1938)

Fishing trawler that went aground at Kanon on 12 February 1938. Most of the crew were rescued by the local Rocket Brigade, but one life lost.

- Museum research files.

11. Asiatic (1884. Re-floated)

Steamer with sails. 2,084 tons, master: Captain Harrison. She ran aground in dense fog at Fish Bay on 25 April 1884, and was later re-floated.

- Museum research files.

12. Sabor (1943)

British cargo boat of 52212 tons that was torpedoed by a U Boat on 9 March 1943. 6 crewmen were killed, and the survivors were brought to Mossel Bay.

- Museum research files.

13. Lyndhurst (1911)

A barque (barque = a sailing vessel with three or more masts) that foundered off Mossel Bay in August 1911.

- Museum research files.

14. Seal (1983)

A fishing trawler owned by Da Gama Fisheries. Lost her anchor and sank near Danabaai on 5 May 1983, with the loss of one life.

- Museum research files.

15. The 'Soares wreck' (1505)

A fleet of thirteen Portuguese vessels under the command of Lopo Soares d'Albergaria sailed from Lisbon on 22 April 1504 on an expedition to bombard Calicut in India.

On the return voyage, the two fastest vessels were sent ahead to report on affairs in India. One of these, under the command of Pero de Mendonca, ran ashore a little to the west of Mossel Bay sometime in 1505. The disaster took place at night and the whole crew was lost. The vessel had been heavily armed and was carrying a cargo of pepper. Her name is not known to us.

In November 1505 two vessels left Lisbon to take military supplies and stores to Sofala, and also to search for possible survivors from the wreck. These vessels anchored in Mossel Bay and a convict and a ship's boy were sent to search the coast: after three days they found only a mast and a skeleton.

- Barros, Joao de, Da Asia 1-2. Lisbon 1777
- Theal, G.M. History of South Africa, Vol 2, 1922.

16. George T. Hay (1906)

Sank south of Cape St Blaize on 29 March 1906.

- Museum research files.

17. Zara (1881)

British yacht of 152 tons under Captain Chippendell. She sprung a leak near Agulhas, and managed to reach Mossel Bay. She was sealed over in Munro's Bay in July 1881, but declared a total loss.

- Museum research files.

18. Lady Pryse (1880)

British wooden brigantine of 286 tons, built in 1875 by Evans of Aberystwyth, and commanded by Captain EL Lloyd. Wrecked in Mossel Bay when her cables parted during a south-east gale on 6 November 1880. She had sailed from London with a general cargo. No lives were lost. She lies close to the Louisa Dorothea (1882).

- Eastern Province Herald, 9 November 1880
- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1880-81
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C.3/7/2/3

19. Louisa Dorothea (1882)

German three-masted schooner of 227 tons. Wrecked in Mossel Bay on 29 May 1882 during a south-east gale after sailing from Adelaide carrying wheat and flour. Three crew members were drowned, but five were rescued by the Rocket Crew. She lies near the Lady Pryse (1880)

- Eastern Province Herald, 6 June 1882.
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/3.

20. Ruby - previously Figilante (1866)

British schooner of 75 tons that was wrecked at Mossel Bay on 13 January 1866 during a strong south-east wind while. She was sailing from Algoa Bay for Cape Town with a cargo of rice, salt and general merchandise. No lives were lost. She was formerly the Figilante, and under that name went ashore in Table Bay on 17 May 1865.

- Eastern Province Herald, 9 February 1866.
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/1.

21. Kingfisher (1928)

A fishing trawler that broke her moorings and drifted onto Santos beach on 14 April 1928. She was declared a total loss.

- Museum research files.

22. Santos (1874)

German schooner of 163 tons, commanded by Captain Thaysen. Bound for Cape Town with a full cargo of skins, dried fruit and wool, but wrecked on Santos Beach after her cables parted during a heavy swell on 18 July 1874. No lives were lost.

- Shipping register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/2.

23. Firefly (1951)

24 ton fishing vessel driven onto Santos Beach in a storm on 30 September 1951. A total loss.

- Museum research files.

24. Mary (1824)

British ship of 547 tons, built of teak in 1813, and commanded by Captain Ardlie. Wrecked in Mossel Bay on 9 July 1824 after putting in for water while on a voyage from Calcutta and Madras to London with a cargo that included indigo and dye.

- Cape Town Gazette and African Advertiser, 17 July 1824.
- Lloyds Register of Shipping 1824.

25. Galera (1892)

34° 10.30 S; 22° 08.00 E

Norwegian wooden barque of 446 tons, built in 1873, and commanded by Captain J M Abrahamsen. Wrecked in the big gully on the west side of Danger Point, Mossel Bay, on 25 August 1892 during a south-east gale while on a voyage from the Friendly Isles to Marseilles with a cargo of copra. No lives were lost. She was first dived on in 1983, when little could be seen of her, since most of the site lies in sand.

- Cape Times, 27 August 1892.
- Lloyds Register of Shipping 1892-93

26. Galatea (1846)

British wooden brig of 223 tons built in 1829 at Chepstow and commanded by Captain T Owen. Wrecked on the rocks of Mossel Bay at 2:00 a.m. on 10 October 1846 after her cables parted during a south – east gale. Four people were drowned.

- Cape of Good Hope and Port Natal Shipping and Mercantile Gazette 23 October 1846.
- Lloyds Register of Shipping 1846-47.
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 2/16.

27. Seagull

34° 10.30 S; 22° 07.50 E

Norwegian three-masted wooden schooner of 373 tons, built in 1886, and commanded by Captain C Christensen. Wrecked on the beach below de Bakke on 11 March 1894 during a south –east gale after a voyage from Rio de Janeiro via Table Bay with a cargo of coffee. The crew were saved by means of rocket apparatus. She was first dived on in 1983 and many timbers, copper nails and iron knees were seen protruding from the sand. Her anchor and chain were still clearly visible.

- Cape Argus, 12 March 1894.
- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1893-94

28. Huijs Te Marquette (1734: Repaired)

East Indiaman damaged in a storm during June 1734. Extensive repairs were carried out in the area between Munro's Bay and Seal Island – and she returned to Holland.

- Museum research files.

29. Martha (1845)

Brig commanded by Captain Boustead. Wrecked 3 km from the landing-place in Mossel Bay in the evening of 30 August 1845 during a south-east gale. She had been sailing from Sydney to Table Bay with 20 immigrants and a large cargo of mail, and entered the bay because of the loss of her boats and the low state of her provisions. No lives were lost, and the mail was saved.

- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C.2/16
- South African Commercial Advertiser, 6 September 1845.

30. Nancy (1848)

Schooner commanded by Captain T Metcalf. Landed most of her cargo, but was wrecked in Mossel Bay on 5 April 1848 during a south-east gale. One seaman was drowned.

- Cape Town Mail, 15 April 1848
- Shipping register, Cape Archives, C.C. 2/17.

31. Kate (1849)

Schooner commanded by Captain Kirby. Wrecked in Mossel Bay on the night of 16 July 1849 during a south-east gale. No lives were lost. She lies in the same spot as Mary (1853).

- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C.2/17

32. Mary (1853)

Schooner of 117 tons, commanded by Captain J Wood. Wrecked in Mossel Bay on 16 February 1853 after her cables parted during a south-east gale. One seaman was drowned. She lies on the same place as Kate (1849)

- Shipping Register, Cape Archives C.C. 2/18

33. Argyle

Barque under Captain E Smith; carrying bags of linseed and bales of cotton. She ran aground in July 1860.

- Museum research files.

34. Dennia (1864)

English brig of 180 tons, commanded by Captain Crimp. Wrecked at Mossel Bay on 19 October 1864 after her cables parted during a south-east gale. She had sailed from London with a general cargo.

- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/2.

35. Annie Benn (1872)

Schooner of 50 tons, built in Knysna in 1867. Wrecked in Mossel Bay on 27 November 1872 during a south-east gale. She had been carrying a full cargo bound for the Cape.

- Cape Argus, 28 November 1872
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/2.
- Graham's Town journal, 27 November 1872

36. Erin (1872)

Barque wrecked at Mossel Bay on 27 November 1872 during a south-east gale. She had just loaded part of her cargo for London.

- Cape Argus, 28 November 1872
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/2

37. Wilhelmine (1880)

German schooner (sailing vessel with fore-and-aft sails on two or more masts, the forward mast always shorter than those aft). She was commanded by Captain Rane and was wrecked at Mossel Bay on 17 March 1880 after her cables parted during a south-east gale. She had been sailing from Rio de Janeiro with a cargo of 1,500 bags of coffee. The vessel and her cargo were sold for £75,000.

- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C 3/7/2/3

38. Philia (1880)

236 ton British wooden snow (a type of brig with square sails on both masts, but with a small trysail mast, or snowmast, immediately aft of the mainmast). She was built in 1862 by Mills, of Sunderland, in the River Wear in north-east England, and commanded by Captain J Edwards. She was wrecked at Mossel Bay on 11 January 1880 during a south-east gale. She had been carrying a general cargo that included the material for building the Little Brak River bridge. Most of her cargo had been discharged, and no lives were lost.

- Cape Argus, 13 January 1880
- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1879-80
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/3

39. Poseidon (1902)

Norwegian wooden barque of 606 tons, built in 1890 in Arendal, county of Aust-Agder, Norway, and commanded by Captain C Clausen. She was wrecked in Mossel Bay during a south-east gale on the night of 2 September 1902. She was carrying cargo of 1,500 bags of coffee. No lives were lost.

- Eastern Province Herald, 2 September 1902
- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1901-02

40. King Cenric (1903)

34° 09.50 S; 22° 06.80 E

Norwegian wooden sailing ship of 1519 tons, built in 1874 by JK Dunlop & Co, St John's, and commanded by Captain A Paulsen. Wrecked near Dias Beach on 14 November 1903 during a south-east gale. She had been sailing from Frederikstad with a cargo of Baltic timber. No lives were lost; the crew was saved with rocket apparatus. She lies near the Rosebud (1888).

- Cape Argus, 14 November 1903
- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1901-02.

41. Rosebud (1888)

34° 09.80 S; 22° 06.70 E

British three-masted wooden schooner of 341 tons, built in 1876 by Carnegie, in Peterhead, in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, and commanded by Captain J Collie. She was wrecked during a south-east gale on Diaz Beach on 30 August 1888, and had been sailing from Calcutta via Mossel Bay for Cape Town and London with a general cargo. No lives were lost.

- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1888-89
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C 3/7/2/4

42. Kron Prinsess van Denmark (1752)

Danish East-Indiaman (any ship running under charter or license from the East India companies of the 1700s and 1800s). Commanded by Captain Swen Finger. Damaged in a storm, and put into Mossel Bay on 9 June 1752. She was abandoned after her cargo had been saved.

- Cape Archives, V. C. 27

43. Susan Pardew (1872)

British wooden barque of 378 tons, built in 1863 by Hardie, of Sunderland. Wrecked at Mossel Bay on 28 April 1872. No lives were lost.

- Lloyds Register of Shipping 1871-72.
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/2

44. Floating Dock (1902)

The floating dock had been under tow by the steamer Baralong . She drifted onto Glentana Beach after the tow parted in November 1902.

- Museum research files.

45. Star of the East (1861)

British wooden ship of 1,219 tons, built in 1853 at New Brunswick, and commanded by Captain Alfred Grayston. Wrecked near Ystervark Point on 10 April 1861 while on voyage from Bombay to Liverpool with a cargo of cotton, linseed, coir, yarn, wool, seed and madder roots. No lives were lost.

- Cape Argus, 16 April 1861 (Sale notice)
- Lloyds Register of Shipping, 1860-61
- Shipping Register, Cape Archives, C.C. 3/7/2/1

Mossel Bay Tourism

www.visitmosselbay.co.za

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