Searching for shipwrecks in the Swan and Canning rivers using open multi-beam sonar data

An avocational study • Most of the maritime archaeological work in the rivers has been avocational. • In 1980, Colin Scrimshaw published 'Swan and Canning River wrecks', compiling information for 21 sites of historical interest • In recent years, David Jackson has been discovering more wrecks, and keeping them up-to-date on his website (and popular Facebook page) 'Diving Western Australia's Shipwrecks'. Claremont Cliffs Motorbo • There are now more than 30 known shipwrecks in the rivers, representing a history of industry, military and leisure. ...with new data to explore • In 2023, the WA Department of Transport published a huge collection of existing seabed and riverbed data on the 'WA Bathymetry Portal'. 21-Linear Mound 16m • Of particular interest is the 2010 multi-beam survey for the Swan and Canning Rivers (SC20100413). • At 1 m resolution, you can clearly resolve the known wreck sites, and many more structures of interest. 27-Circular Mound 5m 25-Circular Mound 7m The Dalkeith structure The Point Walter shipwreck bit.ly/swanriversurvey Known wrecks at Mosman Bay ular Mound 6m vall Reach Porthole Cruiser Open desktop assessment • Targets have been catalogued in QGIS and prioritised Depth (m) **⋄** Known wrecks according to their shape, structure, length, evidence for High Priority scour, and association with known wrecks. Medium Priority **♦** Low Priority • An online map is available through the QR code above. Fieldwork has begun • In August 2023, we started to visit these targets, with 3-Tapered Mound 10m

Managing river sites

• The WA Maritime Archaeology Act 1973 is the relevant legislation for rivers, and is currently under review. If updated from a pre-1900 to a rolling 75-year threshold, many more river wrecks may be protected.

side-scan sonar followed by scuba diving.

notified, and we are working to identify it.

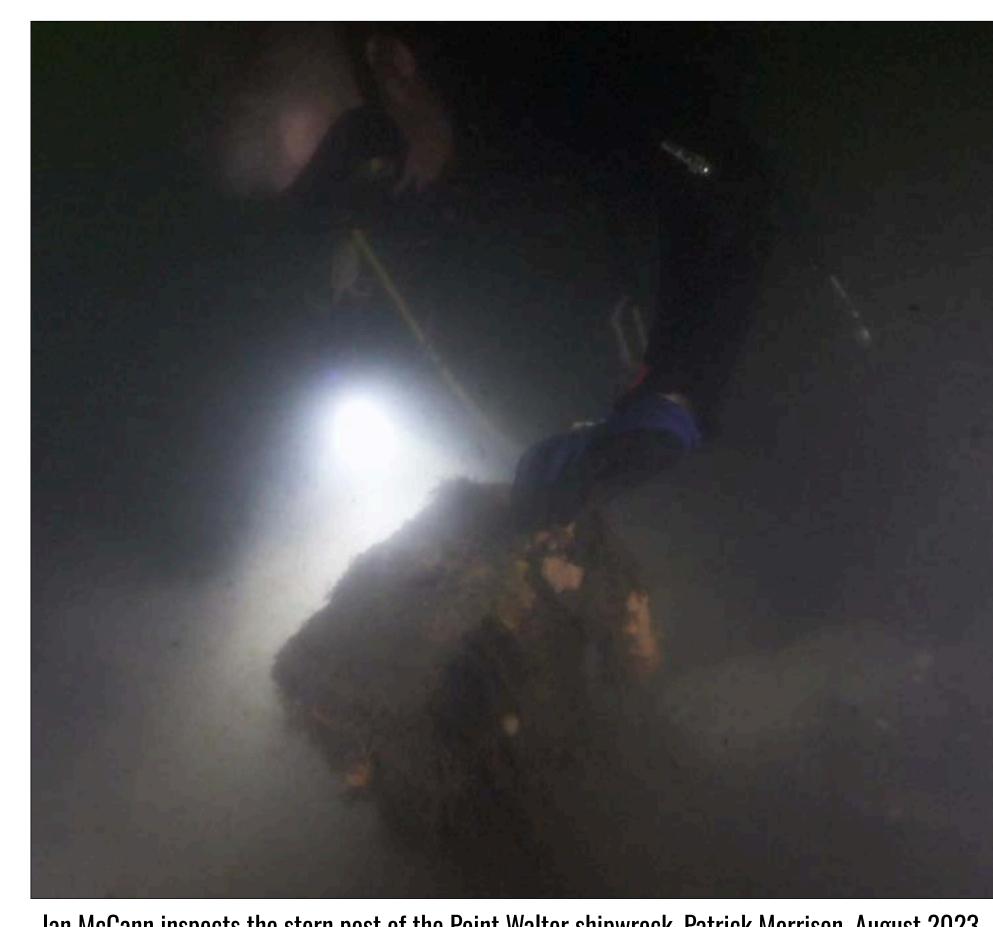
• All structures visited so far are clearly still in-place.

• We have confirmed the elongated mound off Point Walter

is a 20 m-long shipwreck. It is filled with rock, and was

possibly deliberately sunk. The WA Museum has been

- MAAWA reports avocational findings to the WA Museum, to inform regulation and management.
- The open availability of existing government data can be hugely beneficial to maritime archaeology. Existing multi-beam surveys are more than sufficient for desktop assessment of metropolitan riverbeds.



Ian McCann inspects the stern post of the Point Walter shipwreck. Patrick Morrison, August 2023.

