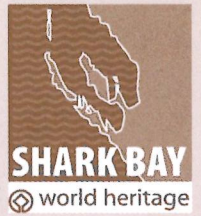


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Shark Bay World Heritage Notes



ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION DISTRICT OFFICE, DENHAM, WESTERN AUSTRALIA
GUDRUN WRECK

The mystery surrounding the location of the wrecked Norwegian barque Gudrun was solved 88 years after her sinking in 1901 when Paul Anderson, a Canadian studying dugongs in Shark bay, found her on the sand flats north of Cape Peron.

Professor Anderson's find in June 1989 of the largest intact and undisturbed wooden wreck on the Western Australian coast, has led to a sanctuary zone being declared to preserve the wreck, the marine life it attracts and the surrounding waters.

Built from tough and durable larch in 1880 by Charland of Quebec, Canada, the 966 ton barque was first named Braidwood by her Liverpool owner, J Roberts, before being sold in 1890 to Norwegian Matthias Hansen and renamed Gudrun, an old Norse female name.

Gudrun was registered under the command of Captain T Griff when she arrived in Western Australia in 1901 to load timber.

The events leading to the vessel sinking in Shark Bay started on August 4 that year when she left Bunbury for Falmouth, England, with a cargo of 3000 loads (tons) of timber, believed to be jarrah from Millar's Karri and Jarrah Forests Ltd mills.

About 100 miles into her voyage around the Cape of Good Hope the vessel started taking water through an inch and a half hole bored through her hull.

She was forced back to Fremantle for repairs. Following an investigation, the ship's 22-year old Norwegian carpenter, Azel Rawd, who had been on the Gudrun for a little over a year, admitted to drilling the hole and was arrested and charged with attempting to scuttle the ship.

Rawd offered no motive or reasons for his actions, although his articles on the vessel were due to expire when she reached England.

While the Gudrun was being repaired, Rawd appeared in court on August 15, 1901, and was remanded for eight days, the magistrate believing that he could not hear the charge because it was committed on the high seas.

Rawd was further remanded for eight days, before the Gudrun set sail again for England on October 3 with the ship's carpenter in irons in the vessel's hold.

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On October 23, the Gudrun was deliberately scuttled on the Peron Flats after it had sprung a leak about four days out of Fremantle and was forced north along the Western Australian coast by strong winds.

The crew was exhausted after manning the pumps for five days, and when Captain Griff sought the safety of the shallow, sandy Peron Flats in Shark Bay where he hoped to make repairs, the vessel had four feet of water in her hold.

Soon after the ship was scuttled, Captain Griff sailed a small whaler 45 nautical miles to Carnarvon to see if the police would hold his prisoner in the local lockup while the repairs were being undertaken. After checking with authorities in Perth, the police refused his request.

No further mention is made of the ship's carpenter and it is not known if he was still in irons when she sank or even if he was responsible for her eventual demise.

During the night of November 14, a gale swept through Shark Bay smashing the Gudrun's rudder.

Events occurred quickly with ten of the crew leaving the ship and arriving in Carnarvon on November 20, while the chief mate and two of the crew were the last to leave the vessel on about December 20.

A Lloyd's Surveyor, Captain Webster, was summonsed from Perth to inspect the Gudrun, and believing she could not be salvaged condemned her on the Peron flats where she was breaking up.

Today, the wreck of the Gudrun lies in about six metres of water on the southern side of the fourth sandbank 5.3 nautical miles north of Cape Peron.

The wreck attracts an abundance of fish and marine life, ranging from turtles, giant groper, stingrays, spotted cod, many species of trevally and sweetlips, prompting Maritime Museum archaeologists to declare that the site supports the most prolific range of sea life seen in one small area.

The wreck's superstructure has been flattened by the constant flow of the current and the occasional cyclone, and while her hull is buried largely intact up to a metre in the soft sands, iron frames and fittings rise above the seabed protecting and providing habitat for fish.

Part of the jarrah cargo lay strewn around the wreck site, but some of it was salvaged and used by pastoralists and pearlers at Freshwater Camp (now Denham).

Gudrun Figurehead

In 1967, Eric Berry of Carnarvon gave an attractive figurehead in the shape of a woman dressed in flowing robes to the Western Australian Museum.

It came into his possession when he bought the home of Carnarvon's first resident magistrate. The magistrate had bought the figurehead from Captain Griff off the Gudrun for one shilling and had it installed in his garden where it remained until donated to the Museum.

After being partly restored it was put on display in the Fremantle Museum.

Sources: WA Museum, Maritime Museum