

Significance

The *Booya* is significant for its natural and cultural values. It was a historic schooner that continued to operate commercially long after the peak of the coastal sailing trade. As a communications vessel it played a significant role in the WWII allied war effort.

It is the grave of five people and a highly significant place for the family of those that died.

The wreck also stands as a monument to the loss of life at sea endured as a consequence of Tracy.



Marine life on hull surface
Courtesy of Heritage Conservation Services

The site is valuable to archaeologists because it displays a series of adaptations over its working life, and more poignantly, the deck displays the efforts of crew to save their ship.

Finally the particular characteristics of the wreck and the fact it remained undisturbed for decades has resulted in the site evolving into a diverse and rich marine habitat.

Front cover images

Booya
Courtesy of G. Andrews collection
Diver at mast rigging
Courtesy of Tek Ventures

Protection and Access

The *Booya* is a protected historic shipwreck under the NT *Heritage Conservation Act*. It is illegal to disturb, remove or destroy any of the shipwreck's remains. This includes the removal of objects, the removal of marine life through fishing and the use of anchors which can damage the structure.

The *Booya* is located within an exclusion zone that constitutes a 150 metre radius around the designated location.

This exclusion zone is administered by the Harbourmaster under the *Darwin Port Corporation Act*. It is illegal to enter this area without permission.

Controlled public access is based on a strategy that assures the conservation of the site and suitable respect for the place as a grave.



One of two mooring buoys on the Booya

Contact

For further information on the conservation and management of the *Booya*, contact:
Heritage Conservation Services
Department of Natural Resources, Environment and The Arts
(08) 8924 4143
www.nt.gov.au/heritage

NORTHERN TERRITORY SHIPWRECKS



BOOYA

1917 – 1974
A Cyclone Tracy Wreck




Northern
Territory
Government

The *Booya* went down in Darwin Harbour during Cyclone Tracy on Christmas Eve 1974. Five people lost their lives on the schooner, which was built in 1917. This shipwreck marks the grave of those that died and stands as a monument to the tragic loss of life at sea endured as a consequence of Tracy.

Construction and Working History

The *Booya* was a three masted auxiliary schooner with a steel hull. At the time of its loss it was 35.8 metres long and had a gross tonnage of 262 tons.

First named the *De Lauwers*, it was built in 1917 in Waterhuizen the Netherlands.

In 1923 it was brought to Australia and played an active role in coastal shipping, working numerous ports including Port Adelaide and Hobart.

In 1942 the ship was sold to the Commonwealth Government and played an intriguing role in the US Army Small Ships Section, functioning as a radio communication vessel in the Arafura and Timor Seas. By this time it had been renamed the *Argosy Lemal*.

In 1949 the ship was renamed the *Ametco* and then the *Claire Crouch*.

In 1971 the ship was bought by the Denham Island Transport Company, registered in Townsville and renamed the *Booya*. As the *Booya* its work included taking cargo between Darwin and Dili.



Some of the crew when part of the US Small Ships Section
Courtesy of Ivan George



Stern light
Courtesy of Heritage Conservation Services

Discovery

On 22 October 2003 Tek Ventures accurately located the wreck in the northern reaches of Darwin Harbour, after piecing together evidence of a possible wreck site in the area that had been provided by a number of people over the years.

A coronial enquiry was held and police divers dredged the hull. The bodies of those that died were not recovered but the divers raised a number of personal belongings that were returned to families.



Binoculars recovered by police divers

Christmas Eve 1974

Government records tell us that on Christmas Eve 1974, the day Cyclone Tracy struck, there were 53 vessels in Darwin Harbour. Of these 53 vessels, 26 boats were tied up at the harbour's three main wharves. The *Booya*, the largest of the 26, was tied up at Fort Hill Wharf.

With the storm approaching all able vessels were ordered away from the wharves, and the *Booya* departed for safe anchorage with the skipper, three crew and one passenger aboard.

Vessels lost as a consequence of Tracy included fishing trawlers, harbour ferries, yachts and even naval vessels. Records show that 25 vessels were wrecked or missing. Sixteen people lost their lives on Darwin Harbour.



Map by S.Jung



Argosy Lemal
Courtesy State Library of Tasmania