

For further information contact:  
Heritage Conservation Branch, Department of  
Lands, Planning & Environment  
(08) 8924 4056

or

Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory  
(08) 8999 8201

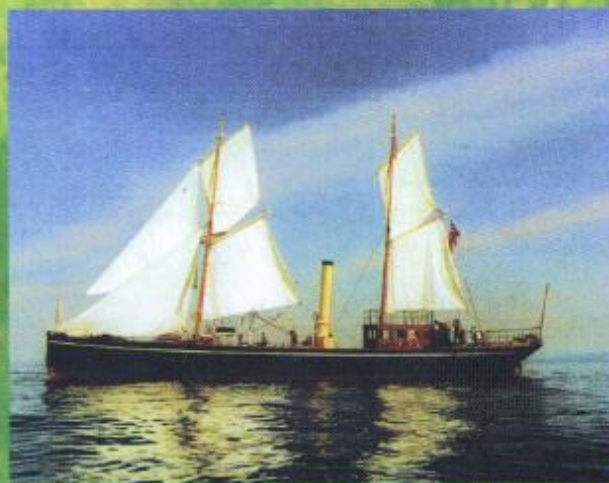


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## Northern Territory Shipwrecks

### *S.S. Ellengowan* 1866 - 1888



Cover photo: A link with the past; the *Hansteen*, built in Christiania in 1866, a contemporary of the *Ellengowan* and of similar construction, representing the union of sail and steam. It is the only surviving operational schooner rigged steamship in the world (Norwegian Maritime Directorate, 1991).



### **The Schooner Rigged Steamship**

The iron clinker hull, schooner rigged, single screw steamer *Ellengowan* was built in 1866 by Akers Mekaniske Vaerksted in Christiania (Oslo) Norway, for Mr. D. Hegermann. The vessel was 79 feet (24.08m) long, 15 feet (4.6m) wide, had a depth of 8 feet (2.44m) and had a gross displacement of 58 tons.

The vessel was powered by sail and a vertical direct acting steam engine. Steam was supplied by a round 'Scotch' type boiler.

### **Early History**

*Ellengowan* was originally named Nøkken. Hegermann used the Nøkken as a private yacht until it was sold to the London Missionary Society (LMS) in 1874. The Reverend Samuel Macfarlane persuaded Miss Baxter, of Dundee, to donate £3000 for the steamer, renaming it after her own home 'Ellengowan'.

Macfarlane wanted the *Ellengowan* for missionary work in New Guinea. Departing from Somerset, Cape York Peninsula, the work began with a trip to Anuapata (Port Morseby) in November 1874, to establish the first mission station in New Guinea. W. G. Lawes, a missionary with the LMS, his wife and the Reverend A. W. Murray travelled on this first trip. Lawes later became the first European missionary to take-up residence in Port Morseby.

Macfarlane then organised an expedition to find the mainstream of the Fly River, a major waterway in New Guinea, to determine if suitable land was available up-river to establish further missions. *Ellengowan* steamed for 103 kilometres up a river, 20 kilometres west of Dauan, but it was not the Fly. Macfarlane named this river the 'Baxter River' after Miss Baxter.

Upon the vessel's return to Somerset, Macfarlane granted leave to James Runcie, captain of the *Ellengowan*, to take Lawrence Hargraves, an Australian inventor and explorer, Octavius Stone and

Kendal Broadbent, both naturalists, in another attempt to find the mainstream of the Fly River and to cross the Owen Stanley Mountains.

A third expedition to find the Fly River was again mounted by Macfarlane on 3 December 1875. He was accompanied by Luigi Maria D'Albertis, an Italian naturalist, and the police magistrate in Somerset, Lieutenant Chester. On this occasion, the expedition was successful. The *Ellengowan* steamed 150 miles upstream, establishing that the Fly was a large and navigable river. As a result, the *Ellengowan* was the first European vessel to sail up the Fly and Baxter Rivers.

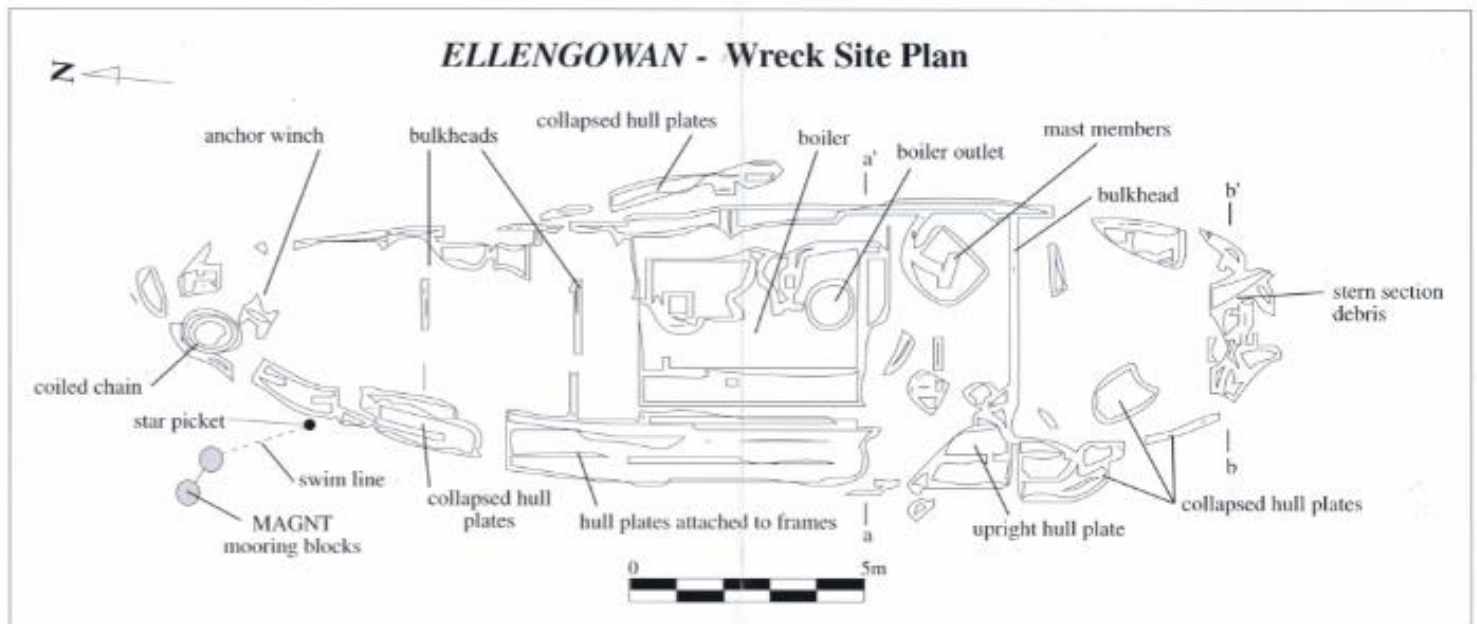
### **The *Ellengowan* in the Northern Territory**

The vessel was purchased from the LMS in 1881 by the Palmerston Plantation Co., managed by W. Owston, to undertake supply voyages from Palmerston (Darwin) to the Daly River where a sugar plantation was established. While operating in this role, the vessel struck a sand bar on the Daly and sank.

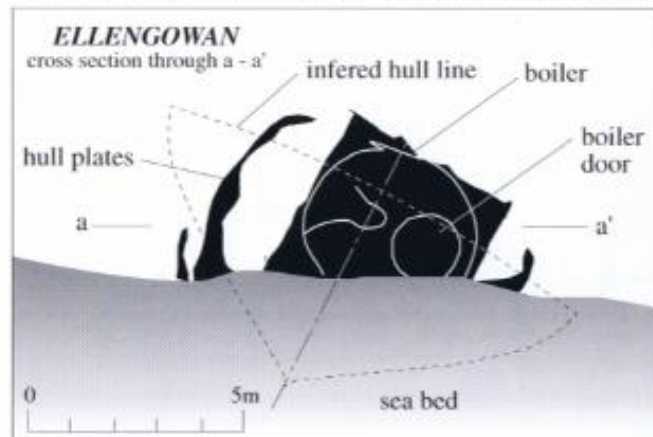
*Ellengowan* remained a shipwreck for four years until it was eventually raised in 1885 by Charles Stuart Copeland who intended to use the vessel to supply camps along the Roper and McArthur Rivers.

The vessel's first trip since being raised was a charter from the government to take a customs officer, Alfred Searcy, in search of Macassan *perahu* along the N.T. coast. However, *Ellengowan* was so poorly repaired after its stay at the bottom of the Daly, that upon its return to Port Darwin it was pronounced unseaworthy.

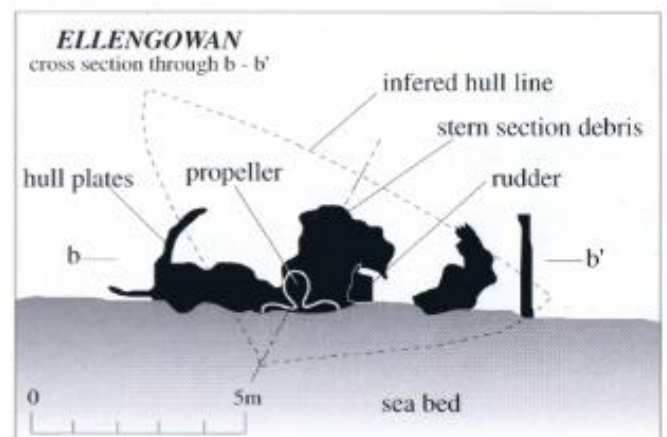
Copeland had mortgaged the *Ellengowan* to Herbert H. Adcock and Richard De la Poer Beresford who then used the vessel as a quarantine hulk for Chinese passengers from Hong Kong to make up the 21 days from port before being allowed to land. Being in such a poor state of repair, the *Ellengowan* sank at its moorings, unmanned, during the night of 27 April 1888.



Wreck site plan of the Ellengowan shipwreck (MAGNT 1994).



Cross section through a - a' Ellengowan shipwreck (MAGNT 1994).



Cross section through b - b' Ellengowan shipwreck (MAGNT 1994).

### Modern day discovery

The *Ellengowan* shipwreck was discovered in 1991 by local SCUBA divers Rob Williamson, Phil Franklin, Peter Watkins and Greg Freeman with the assistance of historical research conducted by Margaret Clinch. The shipwreck's identity was later verified by archaeologists from the Museum & Art Gallery of the Northern Territory (MAGNT) in 1994, making it the oldest located shipwreck in Darwin Harbour.

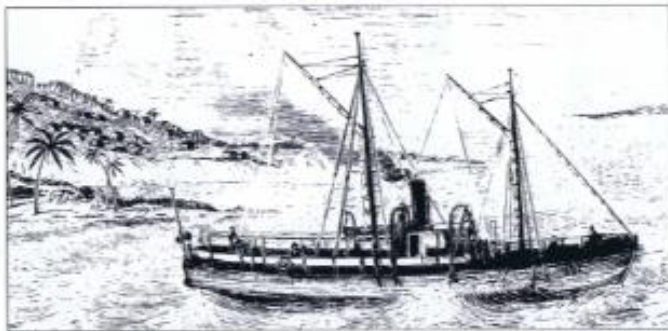
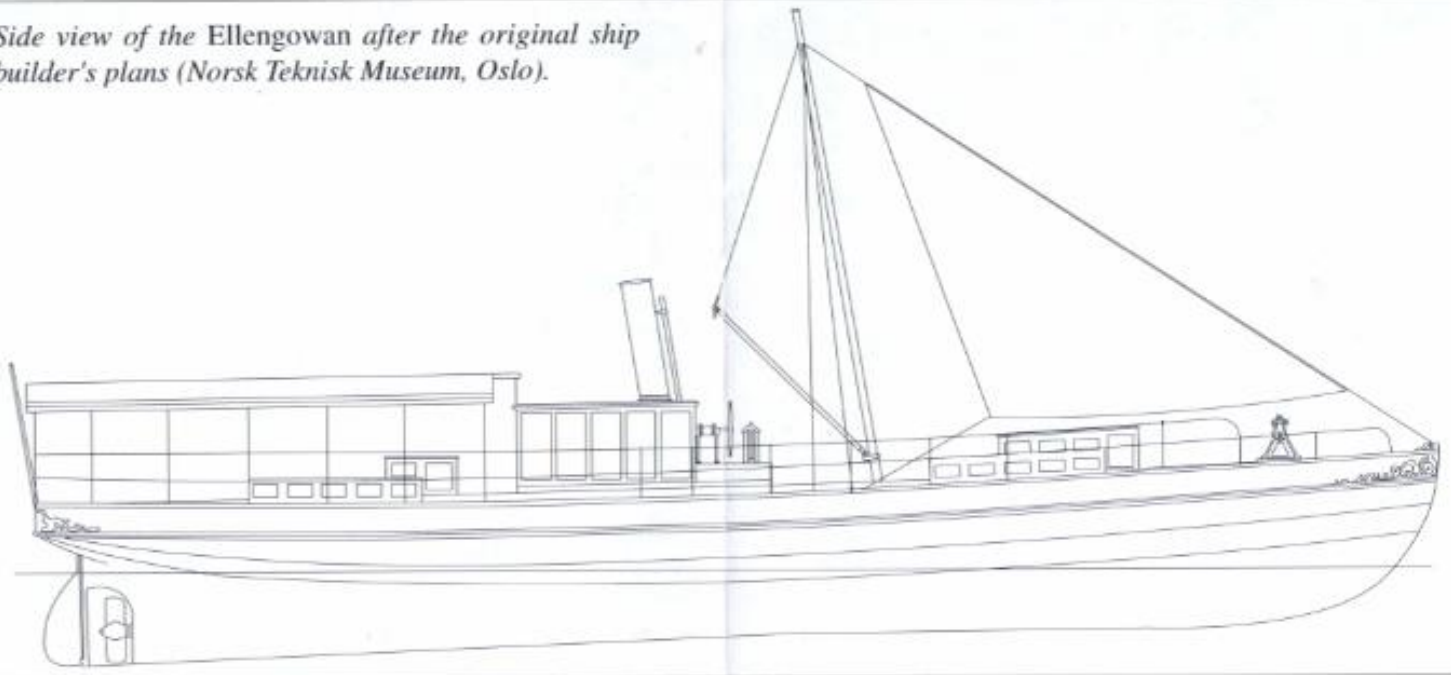
### Shipwreck condition

The mid section of the wreck, containing the boiler, is the most intact surviving structure. The bow has broken-up with few upright members *in situ*. The stern is also preserved with rudder post and propeller still on site. Iron hull plates are attached to frames amidships.

The shipwreck lies listing to starboard and is half buried by mud. The two section views above, illustrate how much of the wreck is exposed.



Side view of the Ellengowan after the original ship builder's plans (Norsk Teknisk Museum, Oslo).

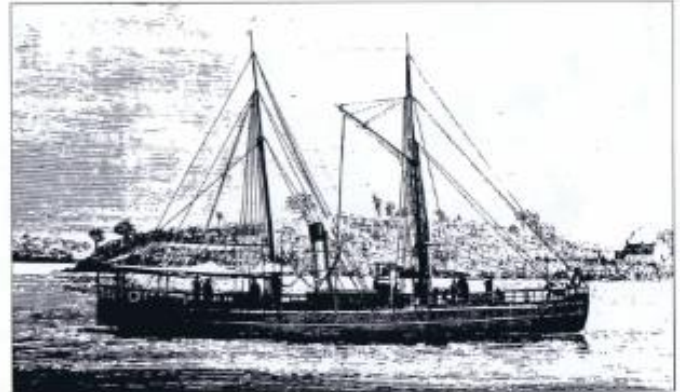


Ellengowan, somewhere off the New Guinea coast (Goode 1977:100).

### How to find the *Ellengowan*

The shipwreck lies at a depth of 14 metres, in the channel between Wickham Point and Channel Island, in Darwin Harbour's Middle Arm. The wreck is the largest feature to appear on a depth sounder in the area, standing about 3 metres off the harbour floor. Visitors to the site should go to the GPS coordinates and then follow the transit marks (overleaf) to locate the wreck.

Anchor near the wreck, not on it, to help preserve the wreck site's integrity.



Ellengowan, from an illustration of the vessel near Garden Island, Sydney (Illustrated Sydney News 1874).

### Protected Shipwreck for the future

The *Ellengowan* is a protected shipwreck under the *Northern Territory Heritage Conservation Act 1991*. Visitors to the site are required not to disturb the site in any way, in an effort to preserve the remaining structure and artefacts for the enjoyment of future generations of site visitors.