

The lime-trader Eivion

1888–1921

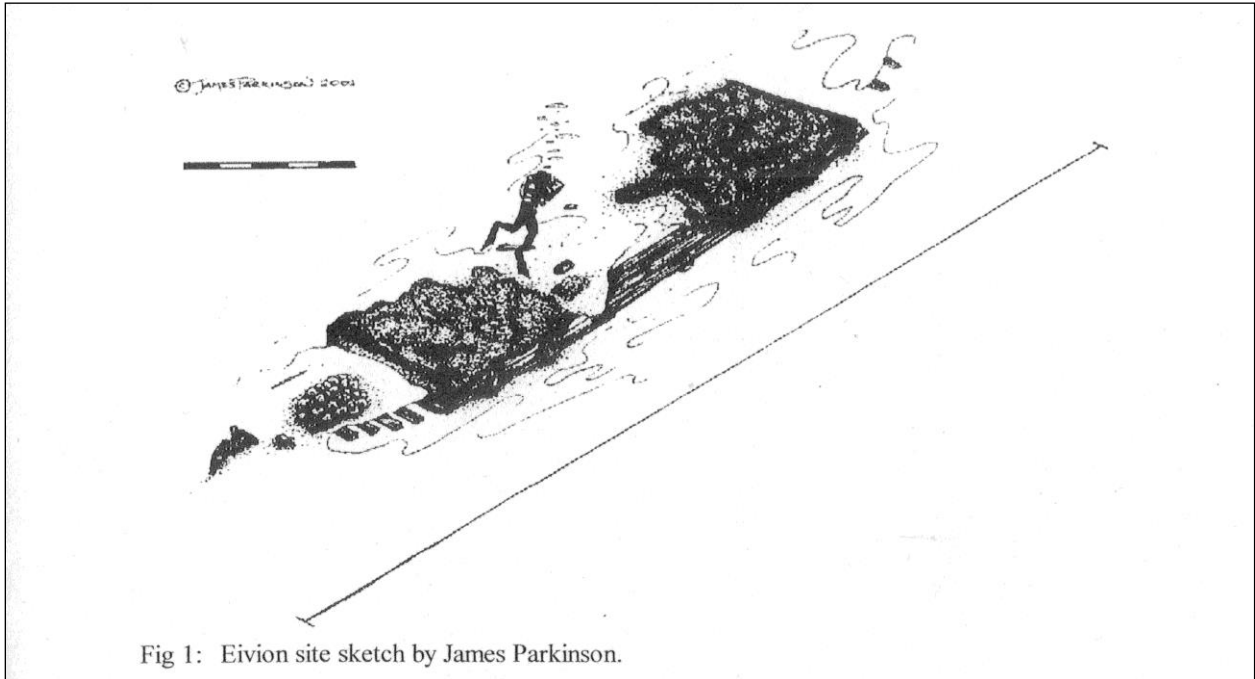


Fig 1: Eivion site sketch by James Parkinson.

Robert Leek and James Parkinson

EIVION

Wooden ketch, built at Williamstown in 1886. O.N.88958, 27 ton, dim. 65.8' x 16.2' x 4.2', reg. at Melbourne.

8/1894 - A M.H.T. license was granted to John Morris, Spottiswoode, to operate the vessel as a ballaster. Reg. No. - M.H.T.96.

13/4/1895 - The ketch *Eivion*, for Geelong with timber, missed stays on leaving the Bay yesterday and went on the reef inside the lightship. She was towed off early in the afternoon by the steamer *Hope*, apparently nothing the worse for the mishap.

30/5/1900 - For Dromana

Ketch *Eivion* receiving cargo at Little Dock, leaves Saturday.

6/4/1904 - For Dromana and Rosebud

Ketch *Eivion* receiving cargo at Little Dock, leaving Saturday, noon.

17/1/1914 - When Mr John Olson, owner of the craft *Eivion*, awoke about 1.30am in his bunk last Sunday morning, curiosity led him to examine whether his dinghy was safe. He at once became perturbed on discovering that it had vanished, and not only was this so, but his deckhand had apparently vanished with it. The dinghy, which is painted a slate colour and has a red bottom, is valued at £10.

24/4/1915 - Rosebud and Rye

Ketch *Eivion* leaves Little Dock on Wednesday at noon. H.J. Lamb, agents, Tel.8622.

7/1/1920 - Sorrento, Rye and Rosebud

Ketch *Eivion* leaves Little Dock Friday, now booking cargo. H.J. Lamb, agents.

25/11/1921 - Need For Caution

At yesterday's meeting of the Marine Board, it was resolved to direct the attention of mariners to the need of caution being exercised in navigating vessels when leaving or making Hobson's Bay, and precautions being taken in respect of proper provisions of regulation lights and lookout. The matter arose out of consideration of circumstances attending a collision between the steam hopper *Charles Duckett* and the ketch *Eivion* about 6 ½ miles south of the Gellibrand Pile Light at 3.40am on the 7th. November last. The committee was unable to determine whether there was a sufficient careful lookout observed on the hopper, or whether the lights of the ketch, particularly the green light,

were burning brightly at the time. The collision was fortunately unattended by serious results, and it was decided to take no further action.

1921 - *Eivion* wrecked at Rye

‘Coming down Bay, encountered S.W. weather, sheltered at Swan Bay, Queenscliff. Towed out by *Cicada/Gertrude*, hoisted sail, arrived Rye about 10.am - (day, month not known) weather worsening’. A westerly gale then wrecked the vessel. The vessel was wrecked next to Rye pier 4–5 December, 1921 (*Argus* 5/12/1921: 9).

1928 – Register closed, with notation: ‘wrecked’.

The Eivion

A preliminary study on the wreck of the Port Phillip lime and firewood trader, *Eivion*, 1888–1921.

Introduction

In late November 2000 the Maritime Heritage Unit received information from MAAV President Malcolm Venturoni, that a site located close inshore, 60 metres east of Rye Pier, tentatively identified as the *Eivion*, had recently experienced a large degree of sand movement, and would therefore be worthy further investigation. Sand movement in the area threatened to cover the site within a short period of time, so it was decided to conduct a Nautical Archaeology Part 2 Course on the *Eivion*. The shallow depth of the site (two metres), relative ease of access, and the opportunity to gather information on an Australian built bay trader, only further enhanced the importance of documenting the site before it disappeared. On the 26 November 2000, 10 archaeology students met at Rye to survey, and photograph the site. The results of the day enabled a greater understanding of the site, with all students, enthusiastically, undertaking prescribed tasks to help map the site of the *Eivion*.

Identifying the wreck site

Historical accounts of shipwrecks at Rye inform us that four wrecks have occurred in the vicinity of Rye Pier.

- *Opossum*, cutter, carvel built, Macquarie Harbour, Tasmania, 1827, 36.2’ x 10.8’ x 6.4’ (feet), 19 tons. Totally wrecked White Cliffs ca 1853.

- *Barbara*: schooner, built at Exeter River Tamar, Tasmania, 1841, 39.3' x 10.8' x 5.5' (feet), 16 tons. Owned by Capt. G. W. Cole. Totally wrecked at White Cliffs (Rye), 6 August, 1852.
- *Adieu*: ketch, built at Gravelly Beach, Tasmania, 1877, 38.9' x 13.8' x 5.5' (feet), 15 tons, owned by David Inverarity, totally wrecked below Rye, 3 September, 1882.
- *Eivion*: ketch, built Williamstown, 1886, 27 tons, 65.8' x 16.2' x 4.2' (feet), previously owned by Benjamin Stenniken. Totally wrecked in the vicinity of Rye Pier 4–5 December, 1921.

The length of the wreck site, 63 feet, corresponds with the length of the *Eivion* given in the shipping register, 65.8 feet. (ANZ.REG 1922-23) The identity is given more credit when one examines the local history, a surviving photograph of the wrecked craft and local knowledge. The three other wrecks *Barbara*, *Adieu*, and *Opossum* are 20 feet shorter than the site near Rye Pier. (Arnold, 1974) The location of the wreck site, 60 metres east of the pier, corresponds closely with historical accounts of the wrecking of the *Eivion*.

The Wreck Event

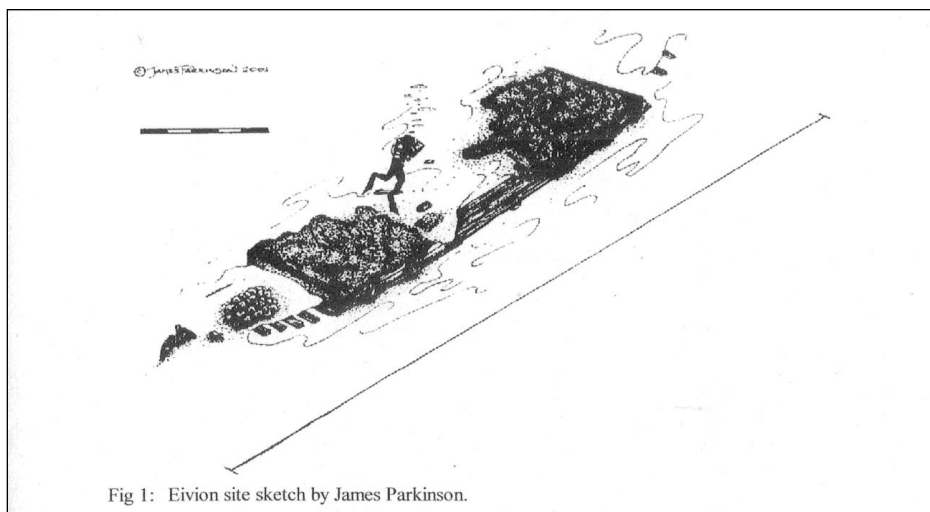
After a week of wild weather from the north, the *Eivion* slipped her moorings in sheltered Swan Bay near Queenscliff, and headed for Rye Pier. Upon arrival she was to be loaded with 70 tons of tea tree wood, primarily used for firewood, fuelling the bakeries of settlements surrounding Port Phillip. The wind was blowing hard from the west whereby Vic Kallie, the *Eivion*'s skipper, became concerned about being caught on a weather shore. He knew that under the circumstances loading in such weather put the crew and the vessel at high risk, but the economics of securing the cargo was of utmost importance. (Hollinshed, 1962)

As foam began to be whipped from the caps of the waves, the clunk of ships timbers against the pier soon resounded over the Rye foreshore, as the *Eivion* began to ride the incoming swell against the pier. Working at a frantic pace the *Eivion*'s crew had loaded all but two trolleys full of wood. The breaking seas swelled, then rose, tapering into giant hills, leaving the *Eivion* at the mercy of the gale. For hours the crew endeavoured to let go the anchor, but the conditions would not allow the winch to be operated. Without warning the *Eivion* was buffeted against the pier, spilling its cargo, eventually resting in a dilapidated condition close to shore.

When the storm abated the next morning the *Eivion* was awash, rigging in a tangle. The vessel was abandoned, and eventually blown up by the authorities, using gelignite.

A Case for Further Study

Surprisingly, (as is not recorded on a cargo manifest), the *Eivion* wreck site is dominated by two large mounds of bagged lime. At either end of the wreck site are the remains of cant-timbers (frames housed into the stern deadwood). Surrounding the lime, along the starboard side is fragmentary remains of hull structure, ceiling planking supported by futtocks, and various unidentifiable iron concretions. The lime is readily identifiable, as it is white and powdery, extremely fragile to the touch. Remarkably, along the starboard side, forward of the exposed inner hull ceiling planking, remains a hessian bag. This gives a clear indication that parts of the site, especially the ceiling planking, and areas of lime, have only recently been exposed. If one pays close attention to the surrounding geology, it quickly becomes apparent that sand movement in the area can vary as much as one to two metres.



Of particular interest to Maritime Archaeologists is the discovery of what appears to be the method in which the lime was stored aboard the *Eivion*. It became apparent to archaeology students that the bagged lime was separated from water logged ships timbers, by what looked like a layer of cement covering areas that may have been susceptible to incurring leaks. In particular the lime appears to have been separated into two compartments. This may have been to increase the ease of access in order to manage the lime safely. Iron bulkheads were found at both the stern and bow ends respectfully. It is not understood, at this stage, whether the compartments were enclosed midships by more bulkheads. The area appears, especially along the port side, to

have been heavily damaged, perhaps during blasting of the site.

The *Eivion* provides maritime archaeologists with a greater understanding of the methods used by bay traders to avoid highly combustible roche lime contacting with the surrounding sea. This may be the case, but many questions remained unanswered. For instance, was the storage of lime aboard the *Eivion* typical of this type of trader? This can only be answered by comparing methods of storage aboard other lime traders, primarily the *Joanna*, a fore and aft schooner of 34.25 tons, totally wrecked on the western bank of the West Channel, 9 July 1857. (Williams and Serle, 1964)

The survey carried out in November 2000 was only brief. Further historical analysis and survey work on the wreck and other similar wrecks, will be of great importance and contribute new knowledge of the lime and firewood-traders of Port Phillip. Understanding ship construction with regards to the lime trade has remained a neglected area of study in Victoria. The knowledge gathered from the *Eivion* opens up an exciting new chapter in deciphering how lime traders overcame the dangers of transporting such a volatile substance.

James Parkinson MAAV

References

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Hollinshed, C, Notes for Lime Land and Leisure, Nepean Historical Society, 1964

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