

# Solitary Islands Marine Park

## Local Shipwrecks and Other Maritime Heritage

Many ships have been lost in or near the Solitary Islands Marine Park, we know the location of most of them and only a few are visible. The 310 ton timber barquentine **Buster** of 39 metres, was built in Nova Scotia, Canada in 1884. Arriving at Woolgoolga to load timber for New Zealand in 1893, the *Buster* tied up at Woolgoolga jetty. A storm hit from the south-east causing the anchor cable to snap and holding chains to fail.

Sometime during the night, the vessel broke away from the Jetty and was driven further up the beach, through the surf until it came to its final resting place approximately 200 yards north of the jetty near the mouth of Woolgoolga Lake. Salvage attempts failed. The wreck is sometimes exposed at the top of the beach near the local beach caravan park.



'Buster' became permanently grounded after breaking her hawsers in February 1893 during a storm.

The **Keilawarra**, built in 1878, was carrying passengers when she hit the *Helen Nicholl* near North Solitary Island on 8 December 1878. The *Keilawarra* sank in approximately 7 minutes and approximately 40 lives were lost. It was only in September 2000 that the wreck of the *Keilawarra* was found near North Solitary Island. She lies in approximately 70m of water.

The **Wyong**, built in 1884, lost its propeller and lost control, hitting south Solitary Island on 12 November 1901. No lives were lost. The boiler is located in approximately 10m of water and is home to a resident turtle.

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Pieces of the **Lady of Lorne**, wrecked in 1889, are visible in Moonee Creek. There is also unknown wooden wreckage at the entrance to Hearn's Lake near Woolgoolga, which is often fully covered with sand. The **Anne Moore** was wrecked in 1889 south of Sandon Bluff, the **Euroka**, lost in 1875 can be found in the mouth of the Sandon River and the wreck of the **Lucynder** (wrecked in 1867) is located within the river

Three jetties were built at Woolgoolga, the first in 1880 was used to load and unload sugar mill equipment. Holes for the piers are still visible on Woolgoolga Headland. A second was built to service the Woolgoolga Community. The third "Government" jetty was built in 1892. By 1941 shipping declined and the jetty closed. Storms damaged the jetty and it was pulled down in 1961.

The lighthouse at South Solitary Island began operation in March 1880 and was considered to be the most isolated station on the New South Wales Coast. Three large stone cottages were erected for the keepers and it was a solitary life for the families, with deliveries of food and supplies from the mainland taken to the island weekly. A gantry (equipment used to lift supplies from boats) was the main access onto the island. The South Solitary Lighthouse appears to be the first in New South Wales to use kerosene instead of colza oil (plant oil) and was not converted to automatic electric until as late as 1975. The old buildings still remain on the island and are heritage listed. Historians recall the few nights during the Second World War in May 1942 when the light was extinguished, when several vessels in the area were torpedoed by submarines, with some loss of life.



Photo: NPWS



Photo: NPWS



Photo: NPWS

Coffs Harbour takes its name from John Korff, a naval architect and ship builder who sought shelter from a storm in the 1840's. "Korff's Harbour" then became known as Coffs Harbour in 1861. The Coffs Harbour Jetty opened in 1892, supplying primarily timber to awaiting ships. The breakwalls that form the harbour were built between 1912 and 1939 using rock from the quarry at Corrambirra Point to the south of the harbour.

