

Place No. 16 Enderby Island Graves and Sedjarta Shipwreck



Grave on Enderby Island (with birds nest on top)

LOCATION	
Name of Place	Enderby Island Graves and Sedjarta Shipwreck
Other Name (1)	Dampier Archipelago
Other Name (2)	Dampier Archipelago Marine Area
Location/Address	
Suburb/Town	Mermaid Strait, Dampier Archipelago
Other Locational descriptor (text)	Northwest coast of island mE447006 mN7723242 Latitude: 116.4915 Latitude: -20.5891

OWNERSHIP & LAND DESCRIPTION				
Owner	Address	Phone/fax	Status	Item No.
Crown Land vested in Dept of Environment & Conservation	Lot 3 Anderson Road Karratha Industrial Estate KARRATHA PO Box 835 KARRATHA 6714	Ph (08) 9143 1488 Fx (08) 9144 1118		
Reserve No.	Lot/Location No.	Plan/Diagram	Vol/Folio	Item No.
VCL				

LISTING AND ASSESSMENT	
HCWA Reference Number	8668
State Register of Heritage Places: (Y/N)	No
Classified by the National Trust (Y/N)	No
Register of the National Estate (Y/N)	Yes
Local Town Planning Scheme (Y/N)	Yes
Management Category	B

DESCRIPTION	
Construction Date (1)	Graves: c. 1850s
Construction Date (2)	Shipwreck: 1944

Site Type (Place Type)	Historic Site Landscape
Use(s) of Place	
<i>Original</i>	MONUMENT/CEMETERY: Graves OTHER: Shipwreck Aboriginal Occupation
<i>Present</i>	PARK/RESERVE
<i>Other</i>	'A' class reserve
Construction Materials:	
<i>Walls</i>	9. STONE 904 Local Stone
<i>Roof</i>	
Condition	
Integrity (how much of the original fabric is intact?):	Only some elements of grave intact. Site exposed to coastal conditions and nesting birds. Shipwreck consists of timber elements only, often obscured by sand.
Physical Description	
<p>Enderby Island is a large island situated in the Dampier Archipelago. The listed site includes the remains of at least one historic burial and one shipwreck on a headland and cove on the northwest coastline of the island.</p> <p><i>Burial</i></p> <p>The burial is located on a stony beach platform just above the high tide mark. The platform faces towards the northeast. There is one grave made of stone and coral, with a grave marker of bone (presumably of a large marine mammal). The grave is being used as a nest for large bird, possible an eagle. There are several mounds of stone in circular rings which may have been burials now eroded, or shelters. There are also at least 10 engraved stones near the grave, depicting a whale, a squid, anthropomorphs, and other motifs.</p> <p><i>Shipwreck(s)</i></p> <p>The remains of the hull of a vessel were reported at a nearby cove. These were visible in 2004, but not in 2012. They were on the beach near a small creek cutting through the costal dune. In 2004 the hull remains consisted of three timber ribs. This is assumed to be the wreck of the <i>Sedjarta</i> (wrecked 1944).</p> <p>In the cove closer to the burial there were elements of ship's timbers located on the beach at the edge of a small creek gully. These may either be elements of the <i>Sedjarta</i>, or from another vessel currently unknown.</p>	
History	
<p>In September 1851 Lieut Helpman of the <i>Saucy Jack</i> reported three graves, tracks of Aborigines, a recently dug well and whale bones on a beach. His assumption was that the graves were of whalers. This was much earlier than the establishment of a colonial shore based whaling station on Malus Island in the 1870s. American whalers, however, have been visiting the Dampier Archipelago and the coastal northwest since the early part of the 1800s. In 1801 the whaler <i>Kingston</i> arrived at the 'Rosemary Islands' as they were sometimes referred following Dampier (KWM logbook 263). In the 1840s log books from several American whalers suggest the islands were suitable for several months of whaling and that these were reliable waters for whales. The description then of whale bones and graves is potential evidence of whaling and of the treatment of the dead. The relationship of the engravings to the graves is enigmatic – most appear to be Aboriginal, although a singular whale motif is less convincing.</p> <p>In March 1879 Pemberton Walcott of the <i>Gertrude</i> found five graves built of stone and felt that these</p>	

were whalers' burials at least 20 years old.

Archaeology

The historical descriptions suggest that the one grave now present was once accompanied by at least four more graves. The associated raised mounds were therefore possibly graves, since disturbed in this very active coastal environment.

The remains of the ships timbers in two locations suggest either a single vessel, or two separate events. The record of the wreck of the *Sedjarta*, a 30 ton motor yacht, suggests that this is the most likely candidate for the timber frames visible in 2004.

Aboriginal archaeology:

The engravings on small stone near the grave reveal a historic Aboriginal presence and perhaps knowledge of the activities of the whalers.

The western extent of the island is a Registered Aboriginal Site (Engravings), DAA Site ID 11820.

Enderby Island has many Aboriginal sites including petroglyphs, fish traps, hides and quarries.

SIGNIFICANCE

Historic theme (s)

1. DEMOGRAPHIC SETTLEMENT & MOBILITY
102 Aboriginal Occupation
3. OCCUPATIONS
301 Fishing and other maritime activity

Statement of Significance:

The significance of the Enderby Island burial is of one of potentially a group of up to five burials predating the colonisation of the Northwest. The likely association with American whaling suggests an extraordinarily rare site type for Australasia. The rock art is extremely significant evidence for forms of pre-colonial culture contacts.

The remains of the shipwreck *Sedjatra* represent a local historical event, one of only several known twentieth century wrecks in the Dampier Archipelago.

ASSOCIATIONS

Architect/Designer (1)

Architect/Designer (2)

Other Associated Person(s)

Lieut Helpman
Pemberton Walcott

OTHER

References

McIlroy, J. 1979, *Dampier Archipelago Historic Sites Survey*, for Australian Heritage Commission.

Paterson, A. and C. Souter 2004, *Cultural Heritage Assessment & Management Proposal for Historical Archaeological Sites – Dampier Archipelago, Western Australia*, Karratha: Conservation and Land Management (Karratha).

Paterson, A. 2006, 'Towards a Historical Archaeology of Western Australia's Northwest', *Australasian Historical Archaeology* 24, pp 99-111.

Souter, C, A. Paterson and F. Hook 2006, 'The Assessment of Archaeological Sites on Barrow Island and the Dampier Archipelago, Pilbara, Western Australia: A Collaborative Approach', *Bulletin of the Australasian Institute of Maritime Archaeology* 30, pp 85-92.

MHI – 1996	Assessment undertaken, Place Record Form created as “Enderby Island”.
MHI Review – 2012	Entry updated and renamed “Enderby Island Graves and <i>Sedjarta</i> Shipwreck”.



Engraved stone near the grave, depicting a whale



Remains of shipwreck on Enderby Island