



SUMMER BY THE SEA

Shipwrecks on the South East Coast

DON LOVE:

My name's Don Love, I'm probably the local historian or guru of Shipwrecks along the Victorian coast now, and this is one of the wrecks I do visit from time to time. This is a virtual tour of the wreck of the *Trinculo* that went ashore in the late 1870s. And yeah, this tour is for you to enjoy and to take it in.

This podcast is sponsored by Coastcare. Coastcare have been heavily involved in sponsoring environmental heritage and just information sessions along the whole of the Victorian coast. And they've been doing it for many, many years. Myself and our group of volunteers, we give away our time and effort to, you know, run programs for Coastcare.

And it's been a most successful initiative that's gone on for, but we've been involved in some of those for about 15 years, so, you know, it's a long-term thing. And Coastcare is all about looking after our coast. It's, it's not there forever if we abuse it. So, our group is very, very big on making sure the environment is looked after. And we're volunteers and as volunteers, we would, you know, encourage all sorts of people to get involved in something near them, because it can be very fulfilling to be a volunteer. So, that's what we're all about, in Coastcare is all about. So, enjoy the tour.

There's a car park with a sign 'Trinculo'. And it lies about 6.1 kilometres along the coast road from Golden Beach. So, as soon as you turn on the coast road, at Golden Beach, a 6.1 km along the car parks on your left, so you can't miss it. And I'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are meeting, the Gunaikurnai people and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

What kind of fitness level would you recommend for the walk from the car park to the beach?

DON LOVE:

Just basic, but remember, just look, if you're unstable, if you've got a wheelie walker, you're not going to do it because it's soft sand. You know, you got to have you know, fairly strong in your legs and be able to walk up, you know, gentle sand dune this side, but the other side, it's a lot steeper so yeah, you got to have basic fitness. So, you know, if you can walk a couple of kilometres, you'd be fine. If you've got a walking stick you might not be. And once you go through the little mini gateway, there you've have a sign on your right and I suggest you stop and read because it gives a little bit of an insight into how the vessel got there when it got there. And it's a little bit of the history of the area.

This sign was installed by Parks Victoria in the early 2000s, because so many people used to visit the site and I think they got endless inquiries. So, me being a historian, I was involved in putting together some of the text and the photos. And of course, I got a designer to put it all in place and as 1000s of people come through here and I think it's probably one of the most looked at signs probably along the coast, so it was quite exciting. It was one of the first signs I had anything to do with.



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SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

And the sign says sailing under a Lee Shore, what's the lee shore?

DON LOVE:

Lee shore is where the winds blowing on to it. It means the lee of a vessel, so the vessels going along the off the shore it means the lee shore is the shore on the right-hand side. If it's going you know that that way and yeah, and it just means a sailing ship if you're on a lee shore you're in danger. If there's the wind was blowing towards the land and that's why they said sailing under the lee shore because that is exactly what happened to these vessels. When you walk over this dune as you go you have to watch out for the routes, it's exposed to tea tree roots. Also the sand in summer gets red hot and you got to wear some footwear because you'll almost get burned I think and then the other thing is mosquitoes will eat you alive while you're here and on the beach. The march flies, like once you get into summer really vicious. And you know you covered in march flies than the summer...

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

Bring bug screen.

DON LOVE:

Yeah bug spray in your sunscreen and always look down where you know of what's in front of yours because this can be the odd black snake and also the other thing we've got these people I call litterers that quite often break glass and stuff and you've got to really watch your feet. So, yeah, just be aware of where your feet.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

You're a marine historian. When did your interest in the sea begin?

DON LOVE:

Probably way back in the 1960s when I started diving, you know, down at Point Lonsdale. So we had a holiday house down there. And I was blessed with a really fantastic childhood. And, you know, we used to spear fish and all that sort of stuff. And then now, slowly, in the late 60s, we started coming across wrecks and we started getting artefacts off them and collecting bits and pieces. And in those days, yeah, probably the late 60s, early 70s I started researching, you know, to find out where wrecks went. Because in those days, a lot of them weren't discovered, and I think I've discovered about of them along the coast here over the years. So, yeah, I got into that in the, you know, late 60s, early 70s. And then, you know, marriage and all the other stuff, and it slows you down. Then I started actually cataloguing all my artefacts and doing drawings of them, then I end up with four and a half thousand drawings. And I thought, well, it's not just having this or sitting on my computer. So, I started researching my first book, and published the *Shipwrecks on the East Gippsland Coast* in 2003.

What we've got in front of us is a wreck on the beach called the *Trinculo*, which went ashore 1979 and it was an ironbark rigged vessel, which means it's hull was made solid iron. And, you know, which was pretty new material back in those years. And it was sailing from through Bass Strait to



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Newcastle to pick up a cargo of coal. And it was what they call 'in ballast'. In other words, it only had enough weight in it just to keep it up right so it wouldn't blow over.

And unfortunately, it encountered a similar wind to today, which is an onshore wind, but it was a gale force wind and of course, because the ship was 'in ballast' it couldn't work off the shore. It was actually drifting sideways relentlessly. And they got to a stage where they weren't far off the beach and the captain decided well to save lives, you'd run it ashore. And luckily, crewmen swam ashore with a rope and then they swam with a bigger rope ashore and a couple other crewmen went through that and then three crewmen held one end, because there's no trees here to tie anything to and each passenger then was dragged along to the shore through the surf.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

How many people?

DON LOVE:

I think it was about 20 odd but the captain had his wife and child on board too. For a woman that in those days were very rare to have them at sea and then she must have been horrified but she got through and the captain actually tied the baby to his back and got dumped in the shore break but the baby survived. Yeah, all survived. Yeah, so you know that it's why was that heroic little story nowadays, you know, you probably get some medal for it, but in those days, a lot of wrecks, which was just the done thing people saving lives. So, but this wreck actually is broken in half and there's only the stern section up on the beach here. The bow section somewhere out in that under the sand out in the water there so.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

Have there been any dives to find it?

DON LOVE:

Not that I know of because as you can see the waters pretty dirty he'd be lucky to see 30 centimetres so you literally had to bump into it to see it so.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

And what year did the *Trinculo* wash ashore here?

DON LOVE:

1879 yeh, and there's another backstory to it as well. Two years later in 1881 a little paddle steamer was going from Lakes Entrance back to Melbourne and it sprung a leak off here and they sort of anchored the vessel, they tried to plug the leak but were unsuccessful because they thought oh we'll go up to Port Albert, but they didn't make it. And got slowly washed inch further and further to shore till it washed up right next to here it's under the sand here somewhere, what's left of it and it was called the pedal steamer Painesville. Because it was a paddle steam in those days the engines and boilers were worth a lot of money. So, of course the salvage is just cut a track through, then



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because it was high up on the beach, they just took everything off it that was a value and it's disappeared under the sand, never to be seen again.

You can see the ribs are the main bit that's sticking up and you can see the plating on the outside of the ribs there and that that was all riveted together. But you know this this used to be about 20 foot above our heads originally. But it's slowly time and tide, you know, you can see how the metal is sort of flaking and every year I've been coming here since 1973. I think and and I should probably look at all photos, but you probably would have found the ribs were 30 to 60 centimetres higher than what they are now.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

So they are eroding away?

DON LOVE:

Yeah so you know in the foreseeable future you know it'll all go into the sand and will only be revealed when it's a really big sea on so you know as you as you can see is but nothing here now so.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

How big was the ship?

DON LOVE:

It was about 330 tonne, I think that's about 180 odd feet long so wasn't a huge ship but was one of the workhorses of the ocean and quite obviously coal was one of its main cargo. So it was probably just going around, would go to Newcastle with cargo, get, pick up the cargo go to Sydney or Melbourne or wherever else it had to take it and in this case it never got the Newcastle, this load of coal, so that is up on the beach.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

What's this big part sticking up here?

DON LOVE:

That's just a rib that survived a little bit better.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

More than any of the others...

DON LOVE:

When I first saw it, it use to have some bollards up high here, and it used to have a rudder that was intact with one of the locals came along with a cutting torch and cut half the rudder off.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

When did that happen?

DON LOVE:



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About 15 years ago, you know, it takes all types you just don't know. Yeh, so anyhow that was a bit sad but and during actually after the wreck went ashore a Doctor in Sale bought the rights, the salvage right. And then he came down with a wagon and stuff to get it and half the stuff had gone missing. And somebody, one of the locals quite obviously pinched it, they found out who he was. And you know, they were going to take him to court. And but all the crew and the captain had gone, so they didn't have any witnesses left to say, Oh, this was off this wreck and that was off that wreck, you know, everything that was movable got taken. So, the poor old Doctor paid his salvage rights, and he lost a lot of the valuable stuff to somebody else, because they couldn't prove that it actually came off this vessel. If you go down two meters, you'll get to the lower hull, and I have seen it all scoured out, I got photos of it too, like that.

So, but you know, you can only see look a little bit of ribs sticking up here and out there, just a little tiny bit. So yeah, but anyway, you know, you can see the outer beaches being eroded away, so another storm will come and that might take off of two or three feet or a meter of sand here and you'll see a heck of a lot more. So, you know, as time goes on, it'll eventually disappear and never be seen again and probably 50 years' time. You might be still alive, I won't be (laughs), that's why I tell these stories because you know, posterity and you know, take photos of it and it hopefully in a digital format it'll survive the years.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

I imagine this site attracts a lot of attention.

DON LOVE:

Yeah, most people are curious about this wreck. One that what is it, two how did it come to be here? And when did it get come to be here sort of thing. So, they want the story. And I suppose that's the whole thing about a maritime story. So, I spent a lot of time trying to get the stories right, because if you're a historian of any, you know, worth, you know, how much myth becomes fact, and trying to weed it all out. And I don't know how they're going to cope with Google and all that because it's not vetted at all, people can write whatever they like there. And that's one thing, I'm happy I was in an era where people criticized your work and pointed out where your mistakes were that that doesn't seem to happen anymore.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

The *Trinculo* isn't the only shipwreck around here. How many others have you got in the area?

DON LOVE:

179, I think along the East Gippsland coast, that's from Wilson's Prom, to the border New South Wales. Along this beach like a few miles up there is the Norfolk, which was a steamer that caught fire. And they ran ashore in 1914. And it burned for days and weeks. And it's still out there. Because once a ship burns, the plates buckle and let water in and all that sort of stuff. And then you go, yeh, a similar distance up is a little steamer called Pretty Jane, it also sprung a leak, and they ran it a shore. So, it's been under the sea and I've dived on it a couple of times, but it's I don't think it's been out of the sand for years. So, the time I saw it, it had a couple of ribs and a boiler and stuff out just in the



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shallow water. But you know, like you see, today, you know, the shallow water can quite often bury it, but the sand up there can disappear.

So, you got to remember dunes and beaches are very dynamic, they never say the same. And then there's another one the *County Atrium*, the same sort of thing about five mile, this side of Lakes Entrance, it had a cargo of railway iron and the cargo shifted and it was banging around in the hull you know in the whole, tonnes rails was sliding one way and then the other and the crew tried to tie them all down and some got injured. Then the captain decided to run the ship ashore you know because it was going to punch holes in the side. Then, the not so funny thing but he got he got his certificate suspended for six or twelve months, for running his ship ashore. Then he appealed it and they chucked it out of court and said he did the right thing you know to save life. Because some of the crew got pretty severely injured, leg wise, you know getting hit by rails and you imagine railway iron hitting you, so but it's still up there too, it stands up, but it's on the outer bar, about 100 meters offshore.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

Can you tell me more about Golden Beach and the significance of this area?

DON LOVE:

This is one of the longest sand beaches in Australia, continuous sand beaches. It officially sort of starts down I suppose Port Albert way, and then goes right up to Red Bluff, but Red Bluff only sticks out miniscule and then it goes all the way on up to Cape Conran or Pearl Point so it's a very very very long beach. And you know it's very dynamic, it shifts backwards and forwards there's no shelter along here, they used to call it the paddock because if you view struck anything along here there was no harbour to go in. Once you left the shelter of the Prom the nearest shelter was I suppose, Point Hicks for a small vessel or a bigger vessel Gabo Island so it's a long way for it I say sailing ships especially you know and he gets a monstrous you know when a south-easterly or easterly low forms, they get monster seas and there's just nowhere to go.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

What are most summers down here like?

DON LOVE:

Busy, all you would have seen all the campsites along here they're chock-o-block full. Yeah lots of rubbish, or suddenly everybody chucks their rubbish on the beach, which is something that I don't like. It's important to take your rubbish with you because there's so many side effects with litter and especially with the plastics and nylon, it can do serious damage to the fish and birdlife that, you know call is home. And it's not uncommon to see fish, I mean birds with hooks near their mouth or, or nylon around their feet.

And you see fish tangled up and you know, we've seen sharks and that tangled in nets that have been chucked in the water and, you know, it's just so sad, you know, it's something that's so easy to solve, but it's so sad.



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SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

What kind of birds do we find along this beach?

DON LOVE:

There's a Pacific Gull there, that one of the Seagulls, Little Terns', Oystercatchers, two or three different kinds of them, and is this mainly wading birds and shorebirds you know. You get the odd Sea Eagle along here, crows will come down though, scavenge anything they can, they won't go over the water, so long as it is over the land, they'll scavenge it. So, don't lie on your back on the beach with the eyes open because they'll have your eyes out quick look at you (laughs). That's farmer talking.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

Why do you volunteer with Coastcare?

DON LOVE:

Well, I've volunteered with Coastcare since the late 1990s, myself and John Ariens. Started giving little impromptu talks around the place just with a slide projector and a few artefacts and, you know, share the stories with the, mainly during the tourist season. And since then, we've gone on and because we got into marine science in 2008, our focus has been more on marine animals and plants and invertebrates as well. So, you know, it's been a I suppose it's been a journey and yeah, I've had a lot of fun doing it. It's a bit selfish - so, you spend thousands of hours as I was doing it, so, but it gobbles up time.

Summer by the Sea, I'm not quite sure when it actually morphed into that but the early Coastcare presentations were just, you know, impromptu ones I just said either. Can you go to Painesville or can you go to Lakes Entrance and give a talk at the caravan parks, so that sort of thing? But somewhere in the 2000s, probably in 2010 roughly, they invented the Summer by the Sea, which was a program, you know, for the tourists, and they had beach walks, and they are course slide presentations and talks and they had a lot of children's interaction sort of things in rockpool rambles, and they became really, really popular.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN

Tell me about your involvement with Friends of the Beware Reef, where's Beware Reef and what do you do in that group?

DON LOVE:

Well, Friends of Beware Reef, started in 2005, Parks Victoria initiative to get just volunteers to help, you know. I suppose highlight some of the good stuff that was under the water at the reef, because you got to remember, the vast, vast majority people don't stick their head underwater. So, you know, we started that. And we actually did site plans of two out of the three shipwrecks there. And that took us two years to do both wrecks and do technical drawings to scale of each ship. So, yeah, that that was our first project. And then once that finished, we went on to do start on the marine fish and the marine invertebrates and start to catalogue them and photograph and we've got last



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count about 120 fish species in over 250 invertebrate species we've actually got photos of so yeah, that was pretty cool fun.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN

What do you enjoy about it? What do you get out of this?

DON LOVE:

I don't know (laughs). I've been doing it for so long, like I've had, I've had over 6000 dives. So, diving, for me is nothing special. It's got to be something really cool, like Beware Reef we swam with a five-meter-wide Pointer (shark), that was pretty cool. Especially since he didn't decide to take a lump out of me, that was even better. But you know, where you get, you know, clear water events, where can see 30 meters or something, yeah, the whole bottom just looks magnificent. And then other times we've been up there during floods, we couldn't even see 30 centimetres. And you know, you went down to the bottom it was pitch black dark like night. Yeah, you remember that too. Not for not for a good reason for a bad reason.

So, you know, I've been up here since 1973 and I've dived here all that time. And I've seen some big differences. The, the ocean is definitely changing. Up at Beware Reef the urchins absolutely ate the whole reef down to bare rot there and they've removed a lot of the urchins.

So, it's repairing itself which is good but you know that you can get water temperatures only going down to thirteen degrees in winter and when I was younger, the winter temperature used to be nine degrees so you know something's happening. And you know, we can always do the ostrich thing and bury our head in the sand but you know, science if you listen to it does tell another story. But we're in a year of denial at the moment. So, this is my home the ocean, I love it. You know, from the age of seven or even before I interacted with the ocean, I was a hunter gatherer to start with now I'm more of a photographer so I don't take anything anymore so I've gone 180 degrees so yeah, I've seen mended my evil ways. So, that's good. But yeah, I just feel a freedom. And I love walking along beaches. And, you know, come down here on a good day and just wander along. And you know, see what's what and take photos. And you might do another book on something along the shore one day.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

Any books in progress now?

DON LOVE:

Yeah, I've got one of the printers now. So...

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

What's that about?



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DON LOVE:

So that's the *Sail Traders of the Gippsland Lakes*. Now I've done three this year. So, this is the third one.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

Keeping really busy.

DON LOVE:

Yeah, I'll probably have a rest now.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

For kids keen on learning more about the marine environment, what would you say?

DON LOVE:

Just got to keep an open mind and keep your curiosity going. Because kids are naturally curious. You know, you just get rid of their devices and put them on a beach and a kid or find something to do you know, it'd be like a castle, you'll chuck sand into somebody or run around in the waves, you know, that kids are made to do that. That's their stage of life. And I don't think our society really caters for that anymore. It's more convenience, convenience, and that's sad. And for older people, you know, it doesn't matter how old you are. If you volunteer, you get a bit of a buzz out of volunteering. I've been a volunteer 40 odd years.

SAJITHRA NITHIANANTHAN:

At Coastcare?

DON LOVE:

Not only that, but fire brigade, and all other stuff. So, you know, it's just part of my DNA. Not that I planned it, I just got into it. But, you know, especially for retirees, it is really good to get out there and volunteer because it is get out in the fresh air you, you talk to people, you engage with people, because so many people just sit at home and look at four walls and watch TV and I can't do that, you know, I get sick of myself. So, you know, I think a lot of people are like that. So, you know, just get out there and, you know, whatever, you know there's Landcare, Coastcare. There's all sorts of million sort of things that we can engage in. So, just pick something that's your cup of tea.

Thank you very much for joining me at the *Trinculo* wreck site on the 90 Mile Beach and if you want to further engage, you know, visit the Coastcare website where further details will await you.