

MEDIA STATEMENT



Tuesday, 16 February 2016

Shipwreck captures community's imagination

The excavation of a 176-year-old shipwreck on Koombana Drive has sparked significant interest in Bunbury's history with around 400 people taking part in tours of the site at the weekend.

The wreck has been uncovered by a team from the WA Museum Department of Maritime Archaeology in an effort to determine the identity of the ship, which is confirmed as a 19th Century whaler.

Further examinations, testing and analysis will be able to shed light on whether it is the Samuel Wright, which was wrecked in 1840. It has been excavated as part of the preliminary works being carried on land adjacent to the future site of the Department of Parks and Wildlife headquarters.

Bunbury Mayor Gary Brennan said it was exciting to see part of Bunbury's history being exposed to the public.

"The interest in this shipwreck has been amazing and archaeologists on site said the find has attracted national and international interest," Mr Brennan said.

"The team from the WA Museum has done an incredible job as they painstakingly sifted through the site, which has been an enormous undertaking."

A talk on Saturday night at the Bunbury Museum and Heritage Centre was also well attended as experts discussed the history of Bunbury shipwrecks, in particular whalers, and also how they will be remembered.

"It is anticipated that a photographic record of the excavation and the items recovered during the process will go on display when the Bunbury Museum and Heritage Centre officially opens later this year," Mr Brennan said.

Bunbury is home to 29 shipwrecks with three whalers located at the Koombana Drive site that has been under examination for a week. The whalers are all believed to be North American ships and are among Bunbury's most significant historical artefacts.

The Samuel Wright's mast was used as a triangulation point for surveyors to lay out the town site.

Work at the site ended on Monday with the wreck to be re-covered with sand, a delicate task that will take around two days to complete. Leaving the wreck in its current position and covered with sand in a moist environment is the best way to preserve the delicate timber and other artefacts.

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