

**Warrnambool Echo**  
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## **Discovery of the Mahogany Ship**

**[By Antipicatus]**

Whether the credit of being the first to draw the attention of the public, and more especially that of the Western District, to the rumor that somewhere between the rival ports of Warrnambool and Port Fairy there lay buried in the sand the remains of an ancient ship, presumably built of mahogany, belonged to Henry Kingsley, or to certain gentlemen of scientific attainments who reside in Warrnambool, is a question that will probably never be quite cleared up.

Several attempts have been made from time to time to discover the whereabouts of this interesting relic. Exploring parties have gone out, armed with boring rods and other implements necessary for the purpose, but no success has attended these efforts. Old residents of both Port Fairy and Warrnambool have affirmed that they have a very distinct remembrance of seeing the old ship lying on the beach, and have been very confident that they could point out the exact spot: but when taken there they might as well have been in the great desert of Sahara for any indication of a buried ship to be seen. Various theories have been propounded as to the nationality, build, or size of the mysterious craft. Why it should be supposed that it is built of mahogany is not very clear. As a matter of fact one of the oldest, if not the very oldest inhabitant, says that he once saw it, and is sure that it is not built of mahogany. However this may be, the fact that it has been seen by someone has always been considered as proof positive that it is or ought to be there now, and no one will be surprised to hear that the scientific gentlemen already referred to determined that a further search should be made.

Accordingly the hon. the Minister of Land and Works was communicated with, and a sum of money asked for to defray expenses, or a part of them. A full statement of the means to be employed to discover the hidden ship was drawn up, and submitted to the Minister for his approval.

It appears from this document that there is in our local museum, amongst other curios, ancient and modern, a divining rod, which if held in a proper position would indicate the precise spot where buried treasure lies hidden. It was argued that if, as was most probable, the buried ship was one of the old Spanish treasure brigantines of the time of Phillip II., driven out of her course and stranded on our coast, the ingots of gold and silver, to say nothing of the Spanish doubloons and pieces of eight, would naturally excite the indicating power of the divining rod, and it would at once point out the exact *[word unreadable in original article]*.

The reply of the minister was on the whole favorable to the enterprise. He said that he was fully aware of the importance of the projected search, and of the immense value of the discovery of such an ancient relic would be to the colony; but at the same time he expressed some surprise that, as the Warrnambool museum possessed such a valuable instrument as the divining rod was said to be, they could not put it to some better use than searching for an old wreck. However, he thought it might be used in this case as a test of its qualities, and if successful- there was a

glorious future for the colony of Victoria; for the government would immediately borrow it from the town council and use it for discovering gold bearing reefs. He concluded by stating that he had interviewed his colleague, the Chief Secretary, who, after some trouble, had agreed that a small sum, say one hundred pounds, should be available for the purpose.

Upon the receipt of this letter the Mayor called a special meeting of the Town council, and a sub-committee was appointed to make all the arrangements for the carrying out of this important search. It was considered that one of the scientific gentlemen referred to previously, who was noted for his deep and profound knowledge of things past, present and to come, should be appointed director of the exploring party.

The director lost no time in making his preparations. Having spent the best part of his life as an officer in Her Majesty's service he possessed all the necessary qualifications required in the management of men. Boring rods were made, picks, shovels, and axes were collected, and a few packages of dynamite, in case it was necessary to blow the old vessel to pieces. This last item was a happy thought of the director. "B'gad Sir," he said "they knew what they were about, those old ship builders, none of your flimsy gim-crack things of the present day; not a ha'porth of it, Sir, not a ha'porth. If we find anything, Sir, we shall find a good, solid structure, with red solid copper bolts, and a real good solid mahogany for her timber. "

One of the committee here innocently asked if he thought they would be French-polished, "Sir," said the director, "this is not a time for making bad jokes; the work we are about to engage in is too important for anything of that kind, Sir." The irreverent committeeman now asked another question, "Suppose you find this old hull, what are you going to do with it" Do with it, Sir? why, after we have blown it to pieces, we are going to gather them all up and bring them into Warrnambool, and have them properly set up in the vacant ground in front of the museum. Gad, Sir, There will be nothing like it in the whole world, let alone the *[word unreadable in original article]*." Some one said it would be a pity to destruct the view of the imposing front of the Museum buildings, and as there is a vacant piece of ground belonging to the Art Gallery, it would be better to put it there. "Art Gallery, Sir! Do you call that two-pomy *[sic]* halfpenny show in Liebig-street an Art Gallery? Let me tell you I would rather let the old ship lie buried in the sand for ever than see it there." Another member of the committee, evidently of a 'practical' turn of mind, suggested that it would be time enough to talk about what they should do with it, or where they should place it when it was found.

Everything being ready, the sacred rod was taken from its place in the museum and solemnly handed to the director, with many strict charges as to the care of it and also the proper use of it. Since it had been decided to make use of the divining rod, the curator of the Museum had made it his special study. He read up all the ancient authorities on divination he could find, and no doubt gathered some useful information, which he imparted to the director under a solemn *[sic]* promise of secrecy. The expedition took the form of a small procession. First came the director, mounted on a bicycle, followed by a trap, with six men in it. The rear was brought up by a dray with tools and tents. No event of any importance occurred during the journey, and they arrived at the part of the beach where the old wreck is supposed to be buried, about noon. A tent was pitched and preparations were made for a midday meal.

[To be concluded next Saturday]

*Discovery of the Mahogany ship, Written for the Echo 1896 By Geo Lance.*