

Melbourne Argus
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The Mahogany Ship

To The Editor Of The Argus

Sir, - Mr. Petherick suggests the possibility of the wreck at Warrnambool being a Macquarie-built hardwood or Huon-pine ship. The following letter is taken from Osburne's "History of Warrnambool," which, I think, goes a long way to prove that it is of foreign build: -

1876. - Captain John Mason, an old resident of Belfast, wrote the following interesting letter to "The Argus" in April: - "Riding along the beach from Port Fairy to Warrnambool in the summer of 1846, my attention was attracted to the hull of a vessel embedded high and dry in the hummocks, far above the reach of any tide. It appeared have been that of a vessel about 100 tons burthen, and from its bleached and weatherbeaten appearance must have been there many years. The spars and decks were gone, and the hull full of drift-sand. The timber of which she was built had the appearance of either magogany [*sic*] or cedar. The fact of the vessel being in that position was well known to the whalers in 1846, when the first whaling station was formed in the neighbourhood, and the oldest natives, when questioned, stated their knowledge of it extended from their earliest recollection. My attention was again directed to this wreck during a conversation with Mr. MacGowan, the superintendent of the post office, in 1869, who, on making enquiries as to the exact locality, informed me that it was supposed to be one of a fleet of Portuguese or Spanish discovery ships, one of them having parted from the others in a storm, and was never again heard of. He referred me to a notice of a wreck having appeared in the novel, "Geoffrey Hamlyn," by Henry Kingsley, in which it is set down as a Dutch or Spanish vessel, and forms the subject of a remark from one of the characters, who said that the English should never swear at those two nations- they were before you everywhere. The wreck lies about midway between Belfast and Warrnambool, and is probably by this time entirely covered with drift-sand, as during a search made for it within the last few months it was not to be seen."

In connection with this wreck, the author remembers to have noticed a wreck in the hummocks between Belfast and Warrnambool, in 1847 or 1848; but it was much nearer Warrnambool than Belfast- in fact, it was only two or three miles from the former place, to the west of the big hummock which was supposed to fill Warrnambool Bay with drift sand washed by the Merri River until the cutting was made. It is a remarkable fact that some years ago Mr. Smale, of the Belfast Harbour Works, a diver, who is so well known in connection with the dredging works in the Moyne there, picked up in the bed of the Moyne a beautifully-worked rapier, supposed to have been a naval officer's of the 17th century. How did it get in the bed of the Moyne? Did it belong to one of the survivors of the vessel buried in the hummock west of Warrnambool? - Yours, &c.,

A.W.SHEVILL
Sept.26.