

Amazon

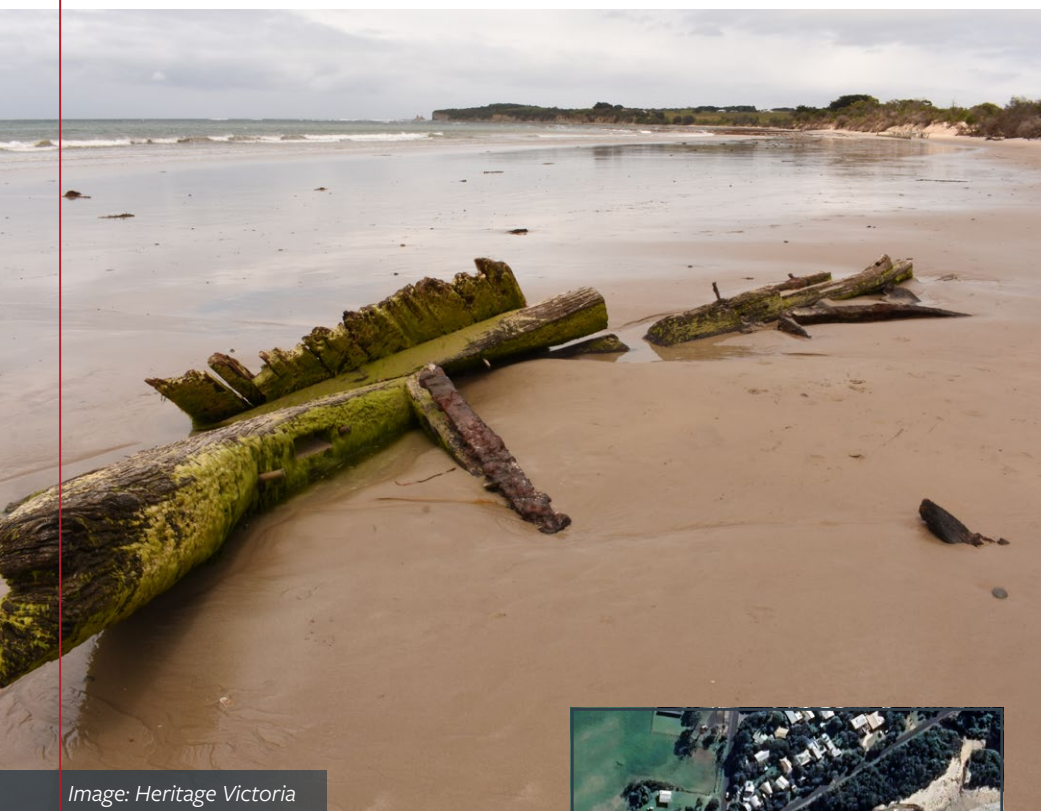


Image: Heritage Victoria

The place

The barque *Amazon* was built in 1855 in Jersey, one of the Channel Islands of the United Kingdom. In December 1863, after clearing Port Phillip Heads, the vessel lost sails in a severe gale, and was driven ashore at Inverloch on the Bass Coast. The wreckage is scattered across the beach, and the main section of the wreck is in shallow water.

Parks Victoria is responsible for managing *Amazon* and the surrounding land. Active management is limited to times when the shipwreck is exposed, as happened in 2018. At such times Heritage Victoria is contacted to aid the management of the wreck.



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Location

Inverloch, Shire of Bass Coast

Traditional Owners

Bunurong People

Main Impacts



Sea levels **rising**
by **around 24cm**



More **intense**
downpours


Type

19th century coastal shipwreck,
comprising:

- o timber and metal objects.

Heritage Listing

Victorian Heritage Register



Scattered material from the wreck along the beach. (Image: Heritage Victoria)

Heritage significance

Amazon is significant as a rare example of a mid-nineteenth-century international wooden trading ship in Victorian waters. It is important for its contribution to Victoria's economy in the 1800s. It has the potential to shed light on meat processing, packing and transporting practices from that time, as well as Jersey shipbuilding techniques. Since its exposure in 2014, the wreck has also become an important place to the local Inverloch community, inspiring the creation of the *Amazon* 1863 Project Inc. group who participate in monitoring the wreck.

Climate change impacts

The *Amazon* wreck lies on a dynamic coast that has experienced a substantial loss of beach and dune sand in recent years. The effects of climate change, particularly more frequent and more intense storms and storm surges, are expected to have a significant impact at the site.

For most shipwrecks, a warmer and more humid climate will impact the population and life cycle of marine invertebrates or marine fauna as well as the timber

of the wreck, increasing the rate of deterioration of the fabric. In the case of *Amazon*, however, the most substantial climate change impacts are associated with physical damage to the wreck as a result of storm surges.

Site vulnerability and heritage impacts

More frequent and larger storm surges will increase erosion and expose the wreck more often and more completely. This will increase the rate of deterioration through tidal and wave action physically impacting and dispersing the wreck site.

More frequent and intense storms are likely to result in changing the direction of Wreck Creek and where the creek mouth opens near the site of *Amazon*. This will continue to cause erosion across the site and expose new material.

Repeated burial and exposure will lead to instability of the *Amazon* shipwreck material. Waterlogged timbers warp and crack when they dry out and the damage worsens as this action repeats over time. Algal, fungal and bacterial growth also degrades exposed timbers, causing the material to rot.

A warmer climate will increase the risk of timber and iron being decayed by fungal and bacterial attack or damage by marine organisms that bore into timber. Changes to marine conditions such as salinity or pH could increase the corrosion and decay rates of timbers and metals.

Coastal erosion will result in more exposure and degradation of the wreck. Over the last 10 years, approximately 60–70 metres of sand have been lost laterally from the beach.

Current management for climate resilience

Given the shipwreck is in an uncontrolled dynamic environment, it is inevitable that it will gradually decline. This means the broad management approach to climate impact is mainly reactive. The focus is on monitoring and recording rather than building resilience. Parks Victoria patrols the area after major storms, collecting any material that is dislodged from the wreck and erecting signs regarding its protection and significance. Parks Victoria also contacts Heritage Victoria when new elements of the wreck are exposed, so archaeologists can assess, record and collect new features or artefacts.

The Amazon 1863 Project Inc. community group is active in protecting and promoting the wreck when it is exposed, placing signs about the site and protecting exposed elements. The Inverloch Surf Lifesaving Club also provides monthly updates to Heritage Victoria regarding the exposure and state of the wreck.

Potential strategies for building resilience

Coastal shipwrecks are transient and deteriorate over time, particularly when they are in the intertidal zone. Strategies for protecting and conserving the wreck therefore need to move from short-term strategies such as beach nourishment to long-term strategies such as curated decay. Managed and carefully recorded decay can be a conservation strategy for shipwrecks in accepting inevitable loss and degradation over time. This ensures that the site is documented and

significant elements can be selectively removed for conservation.

Balancing the often conflicting aspects of social and physical significance also needs to be addressed. Building awareness about the ephemeral nature of the wreck and interpreting the intangible significance to the community will involve managing community perceptions and expectations. Installing interpretation will ensure the story is carried through to the future. Ensuring the wreck is properly recorded for both scientific and interpretative purposes is key.

Given the wreck is managed by a government agency, plans and policies for its management could also be integrated with the Victorian Government's Cape to Cape Resilience project. This project is a proactive strategy for building coastal resilience from Cape Paterson to Cape Liptrap. It brings together scientific and technical assessments and community aspirations.



Part of the beach site before (top) and during (middle) excavation. (Image: Heritage Victoria)



Repeated burial and exposure leads to degradation of the timber as well as algal, fungal and bacterial growth. (Image: Parks Victoria)

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