HOW THE WRECK OF THE BARQUE WAS NOT DISCOVERED?

PART IV

EXCLUDED NARRATIVES

Josko Petkovic

On 20 June 1876, Pemberton Walcott arrived at Cossack on the Victoria with items he had collected from the Stefano wreck site at Point Cloates. The centrepiece of his collection was the wooden door from the original camp shelter inscribed with the names of the Stefano crew on it. This is the only documented material evidence retrieved directly from the Stefano campsite by anyone.

Walcott also had with him the sketch he made of the Point Cloates beach where he found the wreckage. His report and the sketch were both forwarded to the Government Resident in Roebourne, R. J. Sholl. [1] However, neither his sketch nor his written report specified where the shipwreck took place nor the location of the original campsite – his sketch only showed where the wreckage was found on the beach. In these circumstances it is possible to minimize the importance of Walcott’s account, when searching for the location of the Stefano wreck, by simply restating that he described where the wreckage was deposited and not where the wreck took place. The museum report on the wreck presumed to be the Stefano invokes Walcott’s report in this fashion. [2] This is unfortunate as Walcott’s account provides a strategic entry point in the search for the Stefano wreck site. The value of his account becomes evident once his report and his sketch are compared with other information available on the shipwreck. The most pertinent information to compare with Walcott’s report is the 1876 manuscript that contains the accounts of the two survivors.

The manuscript
A detailed story of the Stefano shipwreck story can be found in the 276-page manuscript authored primarily by the survivor Miho Baccich, with assistance of canon Stjepan Skurla from Dubrovnik, and the second survivor Ivan Jurich. The manuscript contains a lot of information on the shipwreck site including its coordinates, which are given as 22 48’ South. 113 37’40” East. [3] This information is depicted on a rudimentary and an inaccurate manuscript map shown below.
A map of the North West coast of Australia from the original 1876 manuscript.
Photo: Courtesy Gustave Rathe.
The NB notation (in Italian) on the original map explains that the points on the map marked with letters are points of importance referred to in the script and identified by these letters. The shipwreck site is designated as “A”, and the initial campsite as “B”.

**The manuscript map errors**
The shortcoming of the manuscript map is best evidenced by the latitude coordinate of Point Cloates itself which is depicted at latitude 22° 36' S. This is seven miles further north than Point Cloates on contemporary maps which has a latitude of 22° 43' S.

![Image of original manuscript map]

The latitude coordinates of Point Cloates, the shipwreck site (A) and the camp site (B) on the original manuscript map

Similarly, the wreck site at Point A is depicted as 12 miles south of Point Cloates, and the campsite at Point B as 14 nautical miles south of Point Cloates. These locations are very different from the camp and the wreckage discovered by Walcott very close to Point Cloates.

**Two wreck sites**
Another point of ambiguity on the manuscript map is the location of the shipwreck site, which is depicted with a sign “+” not once but twice: a faint font “+” records the shipwreck’s latitude coordinates at 22 48.0 S, as specified in the manuscript text, and a second, bold “+” depicts another shipwreck site, immediately under the letter “A” on the above map, at latitude of 22 46.0 S. We are not told how the coordinates of either of these two different sites were derived. [4]

**Cartographic solution**
Walcott’s sketch does away with these cartographic complications. The map he drew is consistent with what we now know as the Black Rock Passage at Point Cloates. A simple comparison of the sketch with a contemporary map can attest to this – as depicted below.
Walcott’s 1876 sketch of the wreckage at Point Cloates
Walcott was the first person to locate the campsite and the wreck site so close to Point Cloates. Without his map the location of the shipwreck would most likely still be uncertain. His sketch does away with this uncertainty and makes it possible to read the manuscript in a more informative light, and in a way that can help locate the shipwreck site.
Conferring and consulting: Walcott met the two Stefano survivors

On 20 June, Walcott returned to Cossack from Point Cloates only to be greeted by the two Stefano survivors who were already in port on-board the Rosette. The meeting is acknowledged in their respective writings. Walcott mentions the meeting in his report to Sholl. The manuscript entries confirm that the items Walcott collected at Point Cloates were indeed from the Stefano:

[257] Among the first visitors were Baćić and Jurić and their friend, Vuković. The Victoria had brought back all the relics which they had left behind as reminders of sorrowful days. Among these were the door of the Stefano on which poor Costa had inscribed all the names of those who were then the ten survivors, little dreaming that the number would soon be reduced to only two, the rest to perish in such awful agonies. [5]

As a result of their interaction, the two accounts of the shipwreck are interconnected and inform one another. Together they make it possible to locate the approximate position of the Stefano shipwreck site with a considerable degree of confidence. All that is necessary is to methodically work through both sources of information together.

Integrating the evidence

The manuscript describes Walcott’s journey from the North West Cape to the shipwreck site at Point Cloates. It mirrors Walcott’s report in every major detail while adding to our knowledge of the shipwreck site. For example, the manuscript text described the wreck site at Point Cloates as the “inauspicious point” which was the “precise spot” where the shipwreck took place, as highlighted in bold font below:

The natives were found at the very spot where the two survivors had left them [on the North West Cape]. Captain Walcott took with him a white man who understood the language of the tribe. The Aborigines were interrogated at length only to affirm that the whites had already been rescued. Flour, sugar and other goods were distributed to them and one of the tribe was taken as a guide to the precise spot of the shipwreck. Reaching the inauspicious point, the schooner was anchored between the treacherous shoals and the coast. Proceeding on a minute search, the party found the sheltering cave, the improvised tents, in fact everything just as it had been left. [6]

The above passage complements the sketch Walcott drew at Point Cloates and is consistent with his report. The consistency supports the proposition that Walcott shared his sketch with the Stefano survivors when he met them. Walcott’s report would not have been complete without such an exchange of information with the two men who knew where the Stefano was wrecked. Similarly, Walcott’s sketch of Point Cloates would have been beneficial to the Stefano survivors as it was yet another cartographic perspective on the shipwreck site. The exchange between Walcott and the two survivors was not fleeting. Walcott spent two weeks in close contact with them on the Rosetta and was involved with them when they delivered gifts to North West Cape Aborigines on 4 July 1876. All together they would have been in close contact for as long as three weeks – from 20 June until 12 July when Rosetta arrived at Fremantle. [7] The location of the Stefano wreck site was a likely topic of conversation during these 22 days together, as is evident in the quoted manuscript text.
By combining the manuscript description and Walcott’s sketch it is possible to locate the approximate position of the Stefano wreck site without any great ambiguity. According to the manuscript narrative, Walcott sailed to “the precise spot of the shipwreck”. When he reached this “inauspicious” point he entered the lagoon through the passage we now know as Black Rock Passage. Here he anchored his schooner “between the treacherous shoal and the coast” and marked this spot on his map with an anchor sign. From this we can conclude that “the precise spot of the shipwreck” is somewhere behind the anchor sign on Walcott’s map – that is to say somewhere along the Black Rock Passage.

There is yet another way of locating the Stefano wreck site using the manuscript map and Walcott’s map together.

**Line AB**
The manuscript map has many errors and it is difficult to use it with certainty. However, there is one map element that can be used with considerable confidence, namely the line between the shipwreck site and the first campsite. On the manuscript map this line is represented by points A and B, and the angle of this line is about 9 degrees north of west. Determining this angle was most probably the first estimate made by the stranded Stefano mariners from the Australian shore (Appendix 1).

![Direction of line AB on the Stefano manuscript map](image)

Estimating the approximate angle of the shipwreck site from the shore is reasonably simple and can be done even without any instruments. Such an estimate could have been made relative to some topographic features near the shipwreck site – Black Rock for example – or to the setting sun. Most observers are reasonably good at estimating angles as a fraction of a straight 180° line (by halving, quartering etc.).

When the 9° AB line is superimposed on a contemporary map near Point Cloates, a number of interesting observation can be made about its placement.

**Black Rock Channel**
Point Cloates is guarded by a line of reefs except for the Black Rock Passage. In practical terms the Passage also defines the zone through which the drifting shipwrecked sailors were able to safely reach the shore. Everywhere else, the
mariners were at risk of being fatally dashed against the sharp coral reef by the storm waves reported at the time of the shipwreck. In these circumstances the two $9^\circ$ AB lines that straddle the Black Rock Channel entrance give a good approximation of the safe passage for the shipwrecked Stefano sailors as depicted below.

![Point Cloates site with two AB lines ($9^\circ$) straddling the reef entrance to Jane Bay](image)

Miho Baccich subsequently reported to the Preliminary Court of Inquiry in Fremantle, that the shipwreck took place about six miles from the shore:

> The vessel was wrecked on 27 October 1875, at 2:00 am at the spot I know now by looking at the Chart. It was to the Southward of Point Cloates on an outlying reef about six miles from shore. [8]

Measuring six miles from the shore along the medium AB line places the shipwreck site in the vicinity of Black Rock and at latitude of 22 45.0 to 22 46.0 South – almost the exact designation of the coordinates in bold on the original manuscript map. Similarly, the campsite at Point B – in the first approximation – is located around $22^\circ$ 47.0’ to $22^\circ$ 48.0’ South.
Projected median AB line across the Black Rock Passage approximately six miles from the shore (the projected shipwreck site is at A and the first camp is at B)

The line AB on Walcott’s map
Moving the $9^0$ AB line between the marked entrance reefs on Walcott’s map yields a similar result.

Walcott’s Point Cloates sketch with two $9^0$ AB lines straddling the reef entrance
The seaward side of this band includes an “outlying reef (6 feet ab water)”, we now know as Black Rock which is about 6 miles from the shore along the AB line. The shore-end includes a spot designated with “Water”. Above the “Water” sign there is also a directional arrows pointing to it from the Victoria’s anchorage. It is possible that the “Water” designation was near the campsite on Walcott’s map but never named as such as finding water was of great significance to Walcott – arguably more so than the remains of the Stefano campsite.

The wreckage at Point Cloates is located around 22° 45.0 S on a contemporary map. The “Water” sign is located about 2 – 3 nautical miles further south from the wreckage. This would place the campsite at approximate latitude of 22 47.0’ to 22 48.0’ S.

The Wreck Presumed to be the Stefano
A similar 9° AB line can be drawn for coordinates of the wreck presumed to be the Stefano at 22° 49.723’ S and 113° 43.167’ E.

The 9° AB lines straddling the reef entrance near Point Cloates and at the location of the wreck presumed to be the Stefano.
The 9° AB line originating from the approximate location of the wreck presumed to be the Stefano on Walcott’s map

The wreck presumed to be the Stefano is too far south on Walcott’s map

The approximate latitude of the wreck presumed to be the Stefano (22° 49.723 S), as depicted on the above map, is located close to the margin of Walcott’s map. Accordingly, we can reasonably certain that the wreck discovered in 1997, and presumed to be the Stefano, is unlikely to be:

- “the precise spot of the shipwreck”,
• “the inauspicious point” where the Stefano was shipwrecked,
• six miles from shore as reported by Baccich at Preliminary Court of Inquiry in Fremantle on 8 May 1876 – the distance is closer to 3 miles,

Accordingly, we can be reasonably certain that the wreck discovered in 1997 and presumed to be the Stefano is unlikely to be Stefano.

This conclusion is supported by the location of the Stefano campsite visited by Walcott.

Campsite for the wreck presumed to be the Stefano is too far south

on the above sketch, the 9° AB line through the latitude coordinate of the wreck presumed to be the Stefano (22. 49.723 S) meets the shore around 22 51.5’ S. This “campsite” location is too far south for Walcott to have visited during his inspection because we know from his report that he had a very limited time to complete his observations. On 8 June he left the Victoria at 6:00 am and was back on board at noon – a total of 6 hours. To depart the Victoria at 6:00 am, then walk 10 to 13 miles (from 22 45.0 to 22 51.5 S and back) along a sandy shore as well as to complete a detailed inspection of the wrecks and establish bearings – all of this in 6 hours – seems an unlikely undertaking. It is also improbable that Walcott would have done all this without indicating as much on his map and in his report.

If this “camp” locality at 22 51.5’ S was not inspected by Walcott who did inspect the Stefano camp site, it then follows that this locality was not the Stefano camp; and it also follows that the locality of the wreck presumed to be the Stefano – that lies on the AB line linked to distant “camp” site is not the locality of the Stefano wreck site.

Critical Angle

The above conclusions assume that the 9° AB line on the manuscript map is correct and not carelessly drawn. Is this an unreasonable assumption? How reliable is this angle? This line may have been reproduced from memory as it is uncertain how visible the Stefano was after it had become shipwrecked and for how long. How confident can we be of the AB angle? The answer to these questions will depend, in part, on what we think of the 10 mariners who survived the initial shipwreck and on their navigational skills in particular.

Navigators

Of the ten mariners that survived the initial shipwreck five were experienced navigators who navigated the Stefano from Europe and across the Indian Ocean. Apart from the cadet Miho Baccich the survivors included Deputy Captain Karlo Costa, an experienced marine, and the Second Mate Ivan Lovrinovic who was the third-in-command. The Second Mate is the ship's primary navigator and in charge of all watch-keeping duties. He plans each stage of the ship’s passage.

Training

The Stefano was a Croatian ship built in Rijeka (Fiume) in 1873. But formally it was an Austro-Hungarian merchant ship subject to the imperial maritime protocols. Under these protocols, in the late-1800s, the training of the crew was prescribed by the curriculum of nautical schools in Rijeka and Dubrovnik (Ragusa).
Cadet Miho Baccich was a graduate of Dubrovnik Nautical School which was established in 1852 – some 23 years before the Stefano sailed for Hong Kong. Baccich graduated from the Academy’s two-year program in 1874. [10] We can discern the kind of training protocol that was expected from naval cadets from the curriculum content of the School he attended.


Both the Deputy Captain Costa and the Second Mate Lovrinovic would have been familiar with an advanced version of Miho’s nautical curriculum.

We notice the professionalism of the Stefano crew in action during the shipwreck itself. The first person to man the rescue boat was Henry Groiss, the youngest person on the Stefano, as prescribed by the protocol of the sea. The professionalism of the Stefano crew is also indicated by the praise that Charles Tuckey bestowed on Miho Baccich following his rescue.

The Englishman [Charles Tuckey], the master of the cutter, after having questioned me about navigation, praised me in front of many fine gentlemen and asked if I would join his ship as an officer. [12]

The ten initial survivors also included two quartermasters Josip Perancich and Fortuna Bucich. Quartermasters are responsible for the watch-to-watch navigation under the direction of the navigator. They are responsible for the maintenance of all navigational equipment, charts, chronometers, and chronometers’ corrections. They also oversee the training of the ship’s lookouts and helmsmen. In short there was no shortage of navigational skills among the survivors nor of understanding of the conventions of what needed to be done in situations where navigational skills are called for. To suggest that these five trained and experienced navigators could not have determined the direction of the shipwreck in relationship to the visible shore stretches credulity.

Of these five navigators, three remained on the Stefano until daybreak when the coast was clearly visible. They were: Jurich, Lovrinovich and Bucich. They would have seen coastal features very similar to those Walcott described in his report and plotted on his map, including the prominent hill and distinctive sand patches. [13]

Some other contextual factors are also relevant:

- All 10 survivors spent 10 – 12 daylight hours in the water orienting themselves to these topographical features as they made their way from the shipwreck site to the shore. [14]

- The survivors spent five days at Point Cloates locality and had enough time to orient themselves to the wreckage and the wreck site. They were also given a
map of the region by the passing Aborigines which would have helped them orient themselves. [15]

- The meeting that the two survivors subsequently had with Walcott on 20 June gives added confidence that the line AB is reasonably accurate – as accurate as Walcott’s map. [16]

The suggestion that the Stefano mariners made an error estimating the direction of the shipwreck from their initial campsite does not ring true.

For all of the above reasons we should be reasonably confident that:

- the estimates of the orientation of the BA line is correct
- the placement of the Stefano shipwreck site near Black Rock is correct
- the placement of the initial camp site is correct (around 22° 47.0’ S)

A number of important historical accounts support these conclusions as described below.

**Charles Tuckey**

The official Maritime Museum report on the wreck presumed to be the Stefano does not mention a number of historical sources that describe the location of the Stefano wreck site. The most specific of these comes from Charles Tuckey who rescued the two survivors from Bundegi Beach on 18 April 1876. Writing in the ‘Letter to Editor’ of The Western Australian, on 31 August 1909, some 33 years after the Stefano shipwreck, Tuckey describes in unambiguous terms that the shipwreck took place about 2 miles south west of Point Cloates:

> After sighting the cape [Cuvier] they shaped a course for Sunda Straits, but about 2 o’clock next morning the ship struck a rock about two miles S.W. of Point Cloates, near the North-West Cape, and the barque broke up in about one hour. [17]

Tuckey’s letter places the Stefano shipwreck near Black Rock, which is a little more than two miles S.W. of Point Cloates and about four nautical miles north of the wreck site presumed to be the Stefano. But a number of questions immediately arise with Tuckey’s description: How reliable is information that comes to us some 33 years after the shipwreck? Does Tuckey’s letter constitute evidence of any kind? Should we consider Tuckey as a primary source of information concerning the location of the Stefano wreck or is he yet another bystander speculating on the location of the shipwreck on the basis of bad maps, hearsay and potentially bad memory?

**Veracity of Tuckey’s information**

After Charles Tuckey rescued the two survivors on 18 April 1876, he then spent the next 17 days with them on his cutter Jessie, transporting them to Fremantle. During this voyage he had ample time to discuss the details of the shipwreck including the location where the wreck took place. Apart from the two Stefano survivors, Tuckey also had on-board with him two Indigenous Australians, Tondogoro and Chuchigo, who also knew the details of the story and could have added to his understanding of the shipwreck.
Tuckey sailed past the Stefano wreck site
Tuckey did not only talk about the shipwreck location he also saw it. On the way back to Fremantle with the two survivors he sailed the Jessie past the Stefano wreck site. The occasion turned into a memorable event. As they were passing “the spot where the ill-fated Stefano had met its watery grave” they met up with the brig Alexandra going the other way under the command of captain George Vinall. We have this in the words of the two survivors in the manuscript:

> Almost near the spot where the ill-fated Stefano had met its watery grave, the Jessie met an English barque Alexandra sailing due north. Captain Tuckey, signaling its master, told him all about the wreck of the Stefano, and the fate of its survivors, even writing on a large board:

\[ AUSTRIAN BARQUE STEFANO WRECKED NORTH WEST CAPE [18] \]

The original manuscript is a little more precise regarding the relative location of the Jessie and the shipwreck site:

> As soon as they passed the site of the shipwreck they met with English barque "Alexandra" going north. [19]

In these circumstances Tuckey should be considered as the primary source of information on the location of the wreck site. He also had an intimate knowledge of Point Cloates coastline and was in a good position to visualise in his memory the locality of the shipwreck site and to understand what the two survivors had to tell him about it. His knowledge of the shipwreck locality is supported by the following:

- There are reports of him being in the vicinity of Point Cloates 9 years earlier in 1867. [20]

- Nearly two year earlier, on 20 July 1874, Tuckey found himself rescuing another group of castaways wrecked at Point Cloates. On this occasion the cutter Bertha became shipwrecked very close to the entrance of the Black Rock Passage. The four remaining survivors made it to Cape Preston in a small whaleboat where they were picked up by Tuckey on the cutter Hampton. [21] The story that Tuckey would have heard regarding the shipwreck site would have been similar to the story he heard from the two Stefano survivors.

- Tuckey was interested in developing the Point Cloates area before the 1876 rescue of the Stefano survivors. According to Forrest he applied for a lease of 12,000 acres of land around Point Cloates in 1874. [22] This was two years before anyone else had explored the area by land.

- Tuckey’s familiarity with the Point Cloates coast arises, in part, from pearling activities with his brother John. According to Julius Brockman the stretch of coastal water around Yalobia (about 30 mile south of Point Cloates) was unofficially known as Tuckey’s Passage further indicating his familiarity with the coast not far from Point Cloates. [23]
• Tuckey had a close relationship with Aborigines who helped the two mariners survive, as is evident from the manuscript itself.

• Tuckey was reported as having extensive discussion regarding the shipwreck with Indigenous Australians immediately after the rescue of the two Stefano survivors and with Naman in particular. [24] Also, Tuckey arrived at Fremantle with two Australian nomads from the North West Cape, Chuchigo and Tondogoro. Both knew the details of the shipwreck story and potentially were able to provide additional information on the location of the wreck site.

• In Fremantle, Charles Tuckey attended the Preliminary Court of Inquiry, when on 11 May 1876 Michael Baccich informed the Court in a sworn testimony where the shipwreck took place:

  The vessel was wrecked on 27 October 1875, at 2:00 am at the spot I know now by looking at the Chart. It was to the Southward of Point Cloates on an outlying reef about six miles from shore. [25]

  The only feature six miles from the shore at Point Cloates is Black Rock.

• Baccich resumed contact with Tuckey some 28 years later in 1894 when he began to correspond with him. At that time Baccich was living in USA with his family and remained in good health for another 26 years. [26] There is no mention in his correspondence with Tuckey to anything related to the Stefano shipwreck site – most probably because the location of the wreck site was never in doubt.

Against this background, Tuckey’s 1909 statement that Stefano shipwreck took place two miles south west of Point Cloates comes with considerable credibility. His ‘Letter to Editor’ was written when maps of Point Cloates were not that different from contemporary maps and all locations were properly labelled.

Tuckey’s letter places the shipwreck site near Black Rock. This in turn suggests that the wreck discovered by the Maritime Museum in 1997 and presumed to be the Stefano is not the wreck of the Stefano but of an unknown vessel similar in size to the Stefano or bigger.

Tom Carter
Another historical description not invoked by the Maritime Museum report on the wreck presumed to be the Stefano is that of the ornithologist and pastoralist Tom Carter. Carter lived at Point Cloates Station for 13 years from 1889 until 1902. Although Carter was not in Australia when the Stefano was wrecked he was subsequently in close daily contact with the local Aboriginal groups that camped at Point Cloates. [27]

Carter came to Australia as a young man in 1887 and worked for Julius Brockman for two years before taking up work for George Gooch at his Wandigee Station in 1889. In the same year he travelled westward from Wandigee to Warroora where he come
across the remains of several *Stefano* mariners on the beach near Warroora. Carter personally heard of the story from the Aborigines at Bulbarli and Warroora Well and no doubt from the local pastoralists.

In his 1889 diary entry he describes visiting the beach cave where he found the remains of some of the *Stefano* mariners. In his diary he notes in passing that the *Stefano* was wrecked at the “Black Rock Channel at Point Cloates”.

At Warroora was a limited supply of water – a soak, in a sort of basin surrounded by rocks – and water had to be carried up to the horses in bucket and emptied into a trough above, so watering took some time. Brockman had been shearing there one year, but loading the wool bales through the surf was so difficult that boats would not call there again. In a cave on the beach were the skeletons of some of the crew of the Austrian ship Stefanie [sic], which was wrecked at the Black Rock Channel at Point Cloates. Some of the crew wondered to Warroora, and no one ever knew if they died of starvation – which is most unlikely as the sea swarmed with turtle and fish, and there were turtle eggs and quantities of oysters all along the beach or if the natives had killed them. [28]

In 1889 Carter bought Point Cloates Station from Julius Brockman. For the next 13 years he lived within a short walk from Point Cloates in the company of local Aboriginal people and with only one other white person. Here he heard more shipwreck tales from the “old natives” including the tales “of the shipwreck men and women that lived with them”. He tells us as much in an article he wrote for the *Western Mail*, on Friday 12 December 1913 – some 37 years after the *Stefano* shipwreck:

Many wrecks have occurred along that dangerous coast before the country was settled, as the remains of several could be seen years ago, and old natives could speak of shipwrecked men and women who lived with them. When digging holes for the corner posts of my first house near the beach in 1889, we found great bulks of timber (ships' timber) with copper bolts, etc., buried three feet below the ground, and overgrown with thicket and stunted trees. Who can tell to what early Dutch or Portuguese exploring vessel they originally belonged, and how many brave souls "went out" there. [29]

Carter then reconfirms the earlier description of the *Stefano* wreck site as being on one of the boulder at the entrance of Black Rock Channel:

Some time in the 1880’s an Austrian ship, the Stefanie [sic], broke her back on one of the boulders at the entrance of Black Rock Channel at Point Cloates. The crew landed, wandered south about sixty miles to Warroora, where several died, their skeletons being there for many years. [30]

On this occasion he also provides a reason why many *Stefano* mariners died at Warroora:

The natives said [they died] from eating poisonous beans from a native plant growing there, much resembling the "Seven year bean." (Abor, name *me mere*). The survivors wandered north again and kept dying until two only were left, and were taken on board a pearling lugger at N.W. Cape. [31]
Carter account is believable as he was a very keen observer of the local coastline and had drawn his own map of the North West Cape labelling them with Aboriginal names that are still in use today. The errors he found in the existing North West charts were used by British Admiralty to correct their own charts. [32] Carter’s keenness as an observer of the local coastline and his closeness to Point Cloates Aborigines underlies the soundness of his Black Rock testimony.

Although the information he provides on the Stefano shipwreck is limited, it is consistent with the Black Rock location of the shipwreck site and is at odds with the 1997 Maritime Museum’s find.

**Indigenous Australians were a major source of information**

Indigenous Australians can easily be erased from the early colonial records because they did not read or write in English. But their contribution to our knowledge of the Stefano shipwreck is not without a trace and with a little care one can find it in the accounts of Pemberton Walcott, Charles Tuckey, Tom Carter and in the content of the Stefano manuscript itself.

When Pemberton Walcott discovered the Stefano wreckage at Point Cloates he did not just stumble onto it but was led to it by “Tony”, the Indigenous Australian who Walcott picked up on the North West Cape:

… one of the tribe was taken as a guide to the precise spot of the shipwreck [33]

That is to say, Walcott discovered “the precise spot of the shipwreck” because “Tony” had travelled with the two surviving Stefano mariners and knew where they had camped. Hence the success of Walcott’s venture in finding the Stefano wreckage is a reflection of the advice he received from “Tony”, his Aboriginal guide. Similarly, descriptions of the Stefano shipwreck site by Tuckey and Carter were informed by extensive communications with Aboriginal Australians. Tuckey worked with them. Carter lived with them, as did the two Stefano survivors. Their contribution to the analysis in this publication could be summarised with the following interconnected knowledge-transfer diagram:

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Baccich & Jurich

Indigenous Australians

Charles Tuckey

Tom Carter

Pemberton Walcott
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**Conclusion**

This publication considered a range of archival documents to ascertain if the wreck discovered by the Western Australian Maritime Museum divers in 1997, and presumed to be the *Stefano*, is the *Stefano* or a wreck of another unknown vessel.

These documents do not support the proposition that the wreck discovered by the Western Australian Maritime Museum divers in 1997 and presumed to be the *Stefano* was the wreck of the *Stefano*.

Most likely the 1997 wreck was the “large” wreck described by Pemberton Walcott in his 1876 report.

Moreover, these documents support the proposition that the *Stefano* was wrecked in the vicinity of Black Rock and that future searchs for it should recommence at that locality.

**Notes and References**


[4] When the original manuscript map is analysed it turns out to be a very reliable document. Without such an analysis Walcott’s sketch provides an alternative approach for locating the shipwreck site.


Baccich, M., “Minutes of a Preliminary Court of Inquiry”, held 8 May 1876, Custom House, Fremantle, Alexander Library, Perth, WA. CSR 844/75.


Ibid. p. 27.

Ibid. p. 56.


The (Italian) expression in the original manuscript is: *Non appena ebbero oltrepassato il punto del naufragio che si incontrarono col Bark Inglese “Alexandra” diretto per Nord.*

The Inquirer & Commercial News, Wednesday 26 January 1876, p. 3.


[29] Carter, T., “The Jacob Remessens River - Alias Yardie Creek. Three Hundred Years Ago And Now.” *Western Mail*, Perth, Friday 12 December 1913, pp.19-


APPENDIX 1

The angle of the BA line on the manuscript map is about 9 degrees north of west.

It is derived from (i) the manuscript map coordinates and (ii) the official shipwreck position given in the manuscript on page 39. the campsite position are as follows:

Point A  
22 48.0 S  
113 37’ 40” E (from manuscript page 39)

Point B  
22 50.0  
113 50 20” E (from map coordinates)

From the above the AB points coordinates the following can be derived:

Latitude difference = 2’ minutes (22 50.0 - 22 48.0 nautical miles)
Longitude difference = 12.7’ minutes (113 50 20” – 113 37’ 40” miles)
Distance AB = 12.8’ minutes (miles)

These can be depicted as:

A
\[\begin{array}{c}
12.7 \text{ miles} \\
12.8 \text{ miles}
\end{array}\]

B

O

2 miles

A little computation gives the angle of the line AB as 9’ in south east direction:

A
\[\begin{array}{c}
12.7 \text{ miles} \\
9 \text{ degrees}
\end{array}\]

B

O

2 miles