

Basic Detail Report

00025394

Title

Button recovered from the wreck of the DUNBAR

Date

Before 1857

Medium

Brass

Dimensions

Overall: 7 x 14 mm, 0.001 kg

Name

Button

History

On the night of Thursday 20 August 1857, the clipper DUNBAR approached the heads of Sydney Harbour after a voyage of 81 days. Launched in 1853, the vessel was owned by Duncan Dunbar, and was the sister ship of the PHOEBE DUNBAR, the DUNBAR CASTLE and the DUNCAN DUNBAR. Under the command of Captain Green, the DUNBAR was on its second voyage to Sydney. Despite the treacherous weather conditions on the night, Captain Green and his crew attempted to enter Sydney Harbour that evening, rather than wait until morning. The DUNBAR was driven into the reef at the foot of South Head and began to break up immediately. In the hours that followed, all but one of the passengers and crew perished. The survivor, Able Seaman James Johnson clung to a ledge on the cliff face until he was rescued on the morning of 22 August, some 36 hours after the DUNBAR ran aground. When news of the wreck reached Sydney the following day, it immediately captured the attention of the public. In the days following, the media provided extensive coverage of the search for survivors and victims, and daily chronicled the progress of the inquest. Residents were drawn to the scene for the morbid task of identifying friends, relatives and business associates. Still only a relatively small town, Sydney was staggered by the enormity and proximity of the tragedy. A mass funeral for those who died and who, in most cases, could not be identified was held on 24 September. The interments took place at St. Stephen's Cemetery, Camperdown where there is still a monument to the victims.