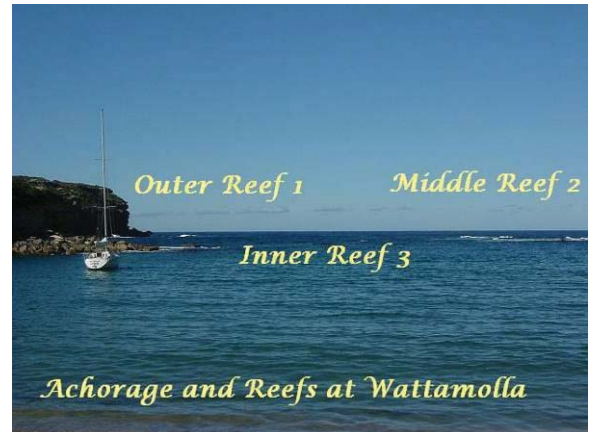
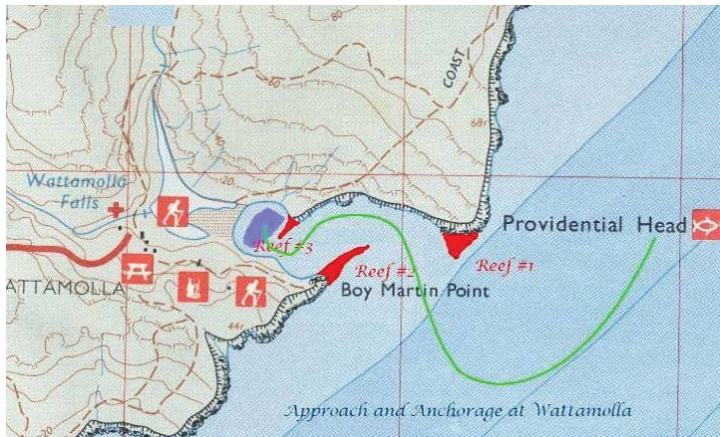




## Port Hacking Cruising Division

### Wattamolla (Providential Cove)



Approach from the SE heading NW to clear reef #1 and stay to seaward of reef #2. The depth is good off the northern cliffs. Run parallel to the cliffs with reef #2 to seaward and continue to the SW shore where a turn can be made around reef #3 to the anchor area marked in blue.

#### Protection direction

The anchorage is protected from most winds less than 20 knots, but not protected from easterlies and vulnerable to SE/E/NE swell.

#### Depth of water

Good depth all the way in with sufficient clearance to all reefs and shore lines.

The average depth in the anchoring area is 3 metres.

#### Anchoring

Best position behind reef #3. If any swell comes through it's advisable to use a stern anchor to hold the bow to the swell.

#### Description

This inlet as well as having great historical interest is in one of the world's first national parks. It is accessible by road via the Audley weir or by sea.

Approaching Wattamolla from the sea on the right day is a privilege that would not be forgotten. After a short run from Port Hacking the inlet materialises via a gap in the high sandstone cliffs. The entrance is guarded by three reefs and beyond is a beautiful white beach whose backdrop in a high waterfall cascading into the lagoon behind the beach.

The holding is good into sand; however, care must be taken to choose the right weather conditions.

You could imagine yourself to be at an exotic south sea paradise and only one hours sailing from Port Hacking. It is also interesting to imagine how Bass and Flinders must have felt when one moment being fearful for their lives in a violent storm and the next landing in the lagoon.

#### Mobile Phone services

Nil





# Port Hacking Cruising Group



## Picture Galley of Wattamolla







## The Tom Thumb

# Port Hacking Cruising Division

Even the greatest of explorers have to start somewhere. George Bass and Matthew Flinders undertook an extraordinary voyage of discovery upon the diminutive *Tom Thumb*. At only 244cm, or 8 feet in length, the *Tom Thumb* was an unlikely surveying vessel. However, in 1795, with the use of this tiny craft Bass and Flinders explored and charted the coastline south of Port Jackson and traveled 20 miles further up the Georges River than any European had previously.

Bass and Flinders upgraded to the *Tom Thumb II*, a vessel barely superior to the original for their second exploratory voyage to the South Coast in 1796. After capsizing and being washed up on a beach the explorers found themselves in the company of Aborigines. The Aborigines were cautious in their dealings with the visitors, however, Flinders persuaded the Aborigines to allow him to shave their beards.



On their return journey the *Tom Thumb II* was caught in a strong storm. The crew was in grave danger, as they were caught between the forbidding cliffs of the (now) Royal National Park and a tumultuous sea. Luckily, as they struggled northwards with the storm they saw a gap in the dark forms of the cliff and took a chance that this was a safe anchorage rather than a dangerous cleft. The explorers soon found themselves in the sheltered anchorage of Wattamolla. In the days after this lucky escape Bass and Flinders mapped and named Port Hacking.



It was achievements such as this that enabled Flinders to raise his reputation as an exemplary surveyor and explorer, and that prompted Sir Joseph Banks to recommend Flinders "for a greater role in exploration."



**Wattamolla:** Civil Parish of Wattamolla (1835) Aboriginal meaning: 'place near running water'.



## Diving at Wattamolla

The park, the second oldest national park in the World, has magnificent cliffs that run all the way along the coastline except for a couple of beaches and two inlets. One of the inlets is Wattamolla Cove.

This very sheltered bay is located about a third of the way down the coast from Port Hacking. The inlet is about 500 metres deep and 150 metres wide. The northern headland juts out further than the southern headland and is home to a number of very good dive sites. Probably the best of these is the deeper sponge garden site.

To find this site, head south from Port Hacking for about 8.5 kilometres till you are off the centre of Wattamolla Cove.

Turn around and head due north towards the water off the northern headland. Aim for GPS mark of 34° 08' 25"S 151° 07' 43"E (note that all my GPS Readings are using AUS66 - if you use any other datum, you will need to convert the

reading - see my [GPS Page](#) for more details) and drop anchor once the wall comes up from 25 to 26 metres to 20 to 21 metres.

The spot where you are anchored is on the southern wall of the dive site. From here, the reef runs west towards the headland and a little to the east. A good way to dive here is to first head to the east. This has some small gutters and the depth drops from 25 metres to over 27 metres. There are some large rocks off the main wall. The reef then turns north and runs in this direction for perhaps 50 to 75 metres. The reef then turns to the west and the depth comes up gradually to 18 to 20 metres. This is probably as far as you will be able to get, so head south from here. Follow one of the small walls of just head due south. You will come to the wall after about 100 to 125 metres. The sand here is about 22 to 23 metres. Turn left and follow the reef back to the starting point. If you get lost at any time, just head south till you strike the wall and then follow it to the east.

You will have to keep moving to do all the dive as described as you will only get a maximum of about 34 to 36 minutes bottom time before going into decompression. For a first dive here, it may be preferable to only do a in/out dive, that is go one way and come back along the same route.

The fish life can be prolific here. To the east of the anchor spot there are normally thousands of silver sweep and to the west of the anchor dozens of bastard trumpeters. Further west there are thousands of small nannygais in between the rocks just off the reef.

The sand edge has sea dragons, serpent eels and rays. There are eagle rays, wobbegongs, Port Jackson sharks, cuttlefish and luderick on the reef top. Keep an eye out for Red Indian fish, they can also be found here. The whole reef is covered in a great mass of sponges, sea squirts, gorgonians, giant jelly ascidians and other fixed marine life.





## Port Hacking Cruising Division

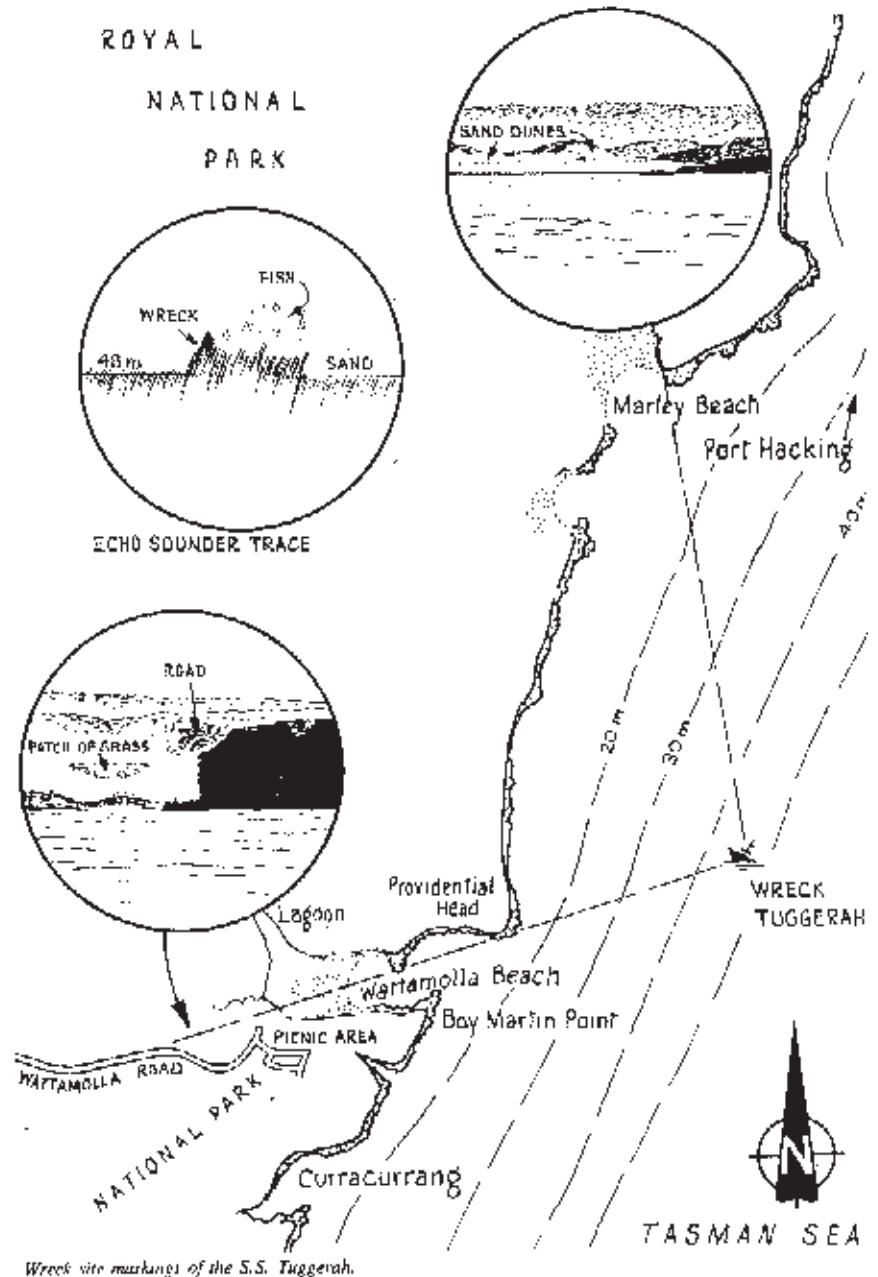
### S.S. TUGGERAH

On the 17th May 1919 a British ship, Tuggerah, a coal collier, sank in very rough seas off Wattamolla, south of Port Hacking with the loss of six lives, they were three crew, the Master, First Mate and Chief Engineer. For many months the Tuggerah had been engaged in the transportation of coal between the mines at Bulli and Sydney. At the time of departure Tuggerah had a slight list to port side and in addition to this both hatch covers were left off. Crew throughout the journey, up until shortly before the time of sinking, were engaged in levelling off coal to try and stabilize the boat, but the list gradually increased to a point where holes were taking in water with nearly every wave. Two and a half hours after leaving port the Tuggerah capsized and sank.

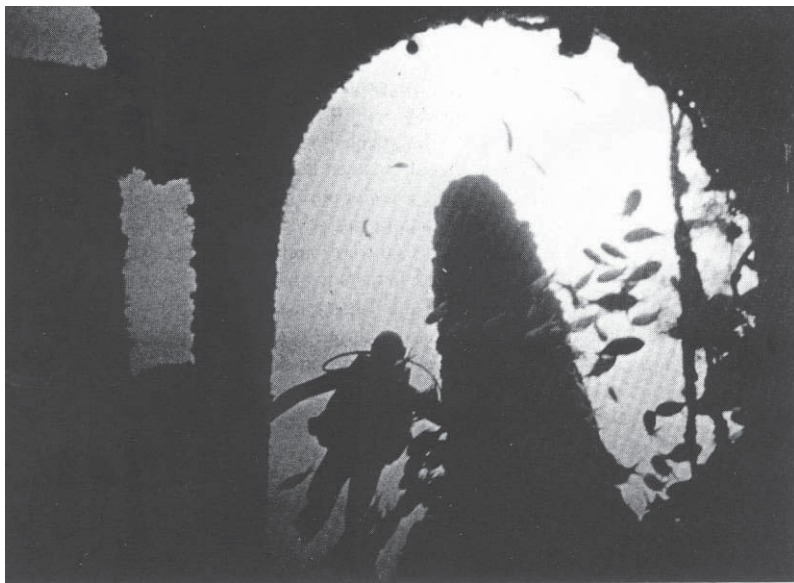
When the vessel left the jetty seas were moderate to rough and coal cargo was well above the coaming so that hatches were not battened down. The vessel had a list to port when leaving. All available seamen were set to trim coal in the holds and this work continued until off Wattamolla, a distance of 26 kilometres from Bulli. At the time No. 1 hold on the fore deck had been trimmed down, hatch covers put on, and tarpaulins were being spread.

When off Wattamolla and three kilometres out at sea the vessel lurched to starboard and shipped a heavy sea on that side. She apparently never recovered. The hatch covers were not on No. 2 hold at the time and crew were spreading the tarpaulin on No. 1 hold, second mate who was then carrying on work with the crew gave orders to clear all boats.

Alex Sillattis, who was at the wheel of the Tuggerah, told his story after rescue. "I was at the wheel as she foundered; when the ship left the jetty at Bulli the Captain ordered me to the wheel. The ship had a list to port when we left. There was some coal still on deck starboard side as it was removed the list increased a little bit more. I was steering a north-east course, and seas were very rough. The course was still the same at the time of the accident. Waves were running just aft of the beam and were coming on deck a little. Just immediately before the accident the ship took a heavy sea over the starboard side. When the first wave hit us, water stopped on deck and caused the ship to list over further, this is when coal shifted below decks. When the second wave washed over us the ship took more water on board and she did not steer. I sang out to the Captain, 'she won't steer any more'. The Captain said, 'hard aport'. I put the helm hard aport, then the third sea came on board. The Captain looked back at No. 2 hatch and said, 'She is gone, that is the end of her. Get the boats out'. I put my head out of the wheel-house to look at the port side hatch combings, the sea was rushing in. That was the







*Propeller of the Sydney wreck S.S. Tuggerah.*

third wave that hit us. The remaining three waves in succession gradually swallowed the Tuggerah until she was struck by the sixth, the ship disappeared inside the giant sixth wave, then she failed to recover, rolled over and sank while completely submerged under that wave."

Fred Tait, Second Officer on the Tuggerah, records his last few seconds before the Tuggerah sank; "When the ship took heavy seas on deck she did not recover. There was one wave bigger than the rest. I sang out to clear away the boats when I came up onto the bridge deck. The men went to clear away the boats and I followed. Then all of a sudden there were crew in the water struggling all around me, we were hauled on board a life boat and picked up all men we could find and

then with great difficulty in heavy seas made for the safe waters of Port Hacking".

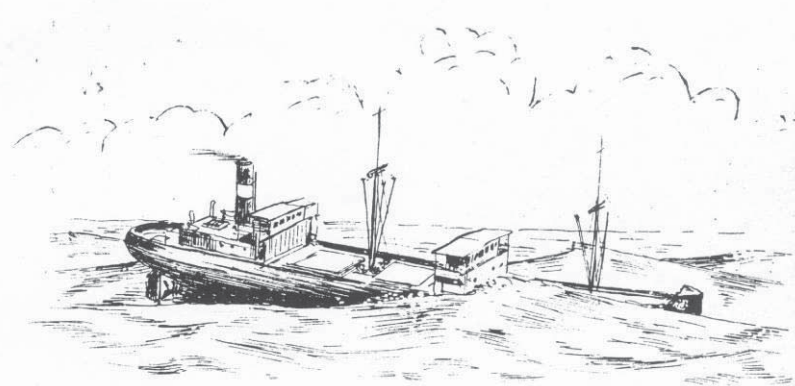
Today the Tuggerah is a popular site for the weekend fisherman and scuba divers, particularly on a good calm Sunday, as many as six small boats can be anchored over the wreck. Nanagui by the millions cover the entire ship, large schools of kingfish continually circle as the diver descends the anchor rope. On a clear day when the visibility is good you can see the entire wreck from about 21 metres down. Once on the bottom a diver is literally surrounded by fish, your buddy may be only 3 metres away, but there is little chance of seeing him. Wobbegongs by the dozens laze about all over the wreck.

The Tuggerah lies upside down in 46 metres of water and after nearly 60 years submersion is half buried, it is not entirely broken up, the propellers are visible and part of the hull is still intact. It's a good wreck to photograph and an interesting one to dive.

**Markings for the S.S. Tuggerah:** From Port Hacking proceed to the seaward side of Jibbon Bommie and then steer a southerly course parallel to the coast until opposite the northern end of Wattamolla Headland, you should be about three kilometres offshore.

**Marks:** To your port side facing the mainland is a cliff face that forms the northern end of Wattamolla Bay, just to the front of this cliff face, back a little, can be seen part of a tar road that runs down to Wattamolla Beach, this tar road should be in a position just in front of the cliff face (see map).

**Marks:** To your starboard side is Marley Beach, the extreme north of this beach where the sand finishes abruptly should line up with a small cliff face almost at waters edge. When these two marks come together you should be directly over the wreck site. A depth sounder is needed and should read approximately 46 metres along the sand until you run over the wreck then reads a rise of about 9 metres on the graph.



*Sinking of the Tuggerah in rough water.*

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