**marine national facility**

MEDIA RELEASE - UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL TUESDAY 23 APRIL AT 12:30PM (AEST)

**WWII shipwreck discovered: Australian freighter SS *Iron Crown* found after being sunk by submarine in 1942**

**23 April 2019 - Released by Australian National Maritime Museum | CSIRO**

After being lost for 77 years, an Australian freighter sunk by a Japanese submarine during World War II has been located by maritime archaeologists using CSIRO research vessel *Investigator*.

The SS *Iron Crown*, a 100m long ore freighter, was sunk by a Japanese submarine on 4 June 1942 while travelling through Bass Strait with a cargo of manganese ore. The heavily loaded freighter was hit by a torpedo from the submarine and sank within 60 seconds.

Peter Harvey, a maritime archaeologist with Heritage Victoria said it is one of Victoria's worst shipwrecks in terms of loss of life.

“The *Iron Crown* is historically significant as one of only four World War II shipwrecks in Victorian waters and is the only ship to have been torpedoed by a submarine in Victorian waters,” said Peter.

“There were 43 crew from the Australian Merchant Navy on board the ship and 38 lost their lives in the attack. Locating the wreck after 77 years of not knowing its final resting place will bring closure for relatives and family of those that were lost at sea, as well as for Australia’s maritime community.”

*Iron Crown* was located using multibeam sonar equipment and a special drop camera on research vessel *Investigator*, which returned to its home port of Hobart this morning.

Voyage Chief Scientist, Emily Jateff from the Australian National Maritime Museum, led the search and said the wreck was located about 100km off the Victorian coastline south of the border with New South Wales.

“The wreck of *Iron Crown* appears to be relatively intact and the ship is sitting upright on the seafloor in about 700m of water,” said Emily.

“We have mapped the site and surrounding seafloor using sonar but have also taken a lot of close up vision of the ship structure using a drop camera. This will allow us to create a composite image of the whole site to assist in follow up surveys for its conservation and management.”

Imagery from the camera survey clearly shows the intact bow of the ship, with railings, anchor chains and both anchors still in position, as well as other structures on the deck.

Emily said that it was an exciting but solemn moment for all on board when they realised that the wreck had been located.

“This is an important discovery for Australia and all on board feel honoured to have been involved in this successful search,” said Emily.

“The fact that so many lives were lost in the sinking of *Iron Crown* was something that hit home with all scientists, staff and ship crew working on board *Investigator*.”

Identifying the location of the wreck has also involved many hours of prior survey work from volunteers of the Maritime Archaeology Association of Victoria.

The discovery of *Iron Crown* is an event of national significance and has been reported to the Victorian and Australian Governments. A memorial service will be planned for the site.

CSIRO research vessel *Investigator* has discovered a number of historic shipwrecks in recent years, including solving a 74-year mystery in 2017 when it located the wreck of SS *Macumba*, an Australian merchant ship sunk in World War II during a Japanese air attack in Northern Territory waters.

The latest discovery comes as part of a whole-of-government approach to seafloor mapping and surveying involving various national and state maritime agencies, as well as the Australian Hydrographic Office. This program aims to assist in improving maritime charts for safe navigation in Australian waters and improve knowledge of Australia’s maritime history.

All historic shipwrecks (shipwrecks greater than 75 years old) in Australian waters and any relics or artefacts from those wrecks are protected under the *Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976*.

**Ends**

**Media contact**

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**Interview opportunity**

Voyage Chief Scientist and maritime archaeologist, Emily Jateff, will be available for interview alongside RV *Investigator* at the CSIRO Marine Laboratories in **Hobart on Tuesday 23 April at 12:30PM (AEST).**

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| Date | Tuesday 23 April at 12:30PM (AEST) |
| Address | CSIRO Marine Laboratories, Castray Esplanade, BATTERY POINT TAS 7000 |
| Contact | Matt Marrison on 0438 785 399 or matt.marrison@csiro.au |

**Vison**

1. Video package from drop camera survey of SS *Iron Crown* (Credit CSIRO)
2. Video package of RV *Investigator* at sea (Credit CSIRO)

**Images**

1. Archival images of SS *Iron Crown* – 2 images
2. Bathymetric map showing SS *Iron Crown* on sea floor (Credit CSIRO) – 4 images
3. Still images from drop camera showing SS *Iron Crown* (Credit CSIRO) – 4 images
4. Drop camera used to investigate wreck (Credit CSIRO)
5. Science team watches wreck survey in Operations Room (Credit CSIRO)
6. Chief Scientist, Emily Jateff, Australian National Maritime Museum (Credit Max McGuire-CSIRO)
7. CSIRO research vessel *Investigator* (Credit Owen Foley-CSIRO)

All visual assets will be published at 12:30pm at <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/9nht5uiohrhvw3u/AAASeEt4ths3ACnFHteYJQMBa?dl=0>

Where material is published in a printed or electronic format (including on the internet), you are requested to acknowledge the photographer or videographer, as listed above. If used on social media please tag the Australian National Maritime Museum @sea.museum.