The Deeban Spit Jetty and Maianbar Boardwalks

Port Hacking NSW

The discovery of remnants at the Deeban Spit, Port Hacking
December 2016, January 2017

George Cotis 2017

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Location

Fig.1 The Deeban Spit, 2015. Simpsons Bay to the right of picture, and the village of Maianbar, centre, bottom (Shire Maps, 2015)

The Deeban Spit Jetty and Maianbar Boardwalks.
With the evolution of recreational use of the National Park (later, Royal) and the residential/holiday villages of Bundeena and Maianbar through the late 19th and 20th Centuries, access to the southern shores of Port Hacking was always problematic. In the earliest days, the regular means of access was by boat. The ferry services to Bundeena and the tourist point of Bonnie Vale (Simpsons Hotel) had been established by the 20th Century. The other means of access was the lengthy road journey via Audley.

“The boardwalk connecting the Maianbar ferry wharf and the township was begun in 1950 and eventually ran from the sand spit, across Cabbage Tree Creek onto Constables Point Reserve and back toward the car park in front of the shop, a distance of one kilometre. The Cabbage Tree Creek section was completed in 1951.” (“Maianbar”, Anne Carrick, Lynne Christie)

The ferry wharf was on the north-eastern sea front of the Deeban Spit dune because of the deep water there. The connecting boardwalks provided all-tide foot access to the village. These structures were timber trestle boardwalks, the trestles embedded in the sand. Although narrow, they were of substantial length. Dimensions (length) of the structures were: A, 67m; B, 56m; C, 30m; D, 62m. (Fig.2)

Fig.2 Top right shows a landing jetty, and further in the photograph a series of bridges connecting “permanently” exposed islets to the village of Maianbar. Photo 1955 when the bridges/boardwalks were only several years old. The arrows indicate the location of the interconnecting boardwalks/bridges and from top to bottom the respective lengths are: A, 67m; B, 56m; C, 30m; D, 62m. Therefore they were significant structures. (SSC. Shire Maps 1955)

Fig.3 People arriving at Maianbar from the ferry (perhaps holidaymakers?). The picture possibly depicts section "A" the jetty. Distant centre-right is Fishermans Bay. Note the vegetated dunes (*Protectorate*, Port Hacking Protection Society, December, 1997).

Access to, and the intended usefulness of the wharf were always going to be short-lived. This part of the marine delta is the unstable, the most mobile, because of its exposure to the energy of sea swell, wave and tide. This should have been known and understood but obviously was underestimated. (The Port Hacking marine delta processes in general, and of the Deeban Spit/Shoals are explained in "Port Hacking, past and present of an estuarine environment, Albani/Cotis, 2013

The sequence of aerial photos presented in this paper demonstrates clearly the highly ephemeral nature of the frontal face of the Spit and the intertidal flats to the west. The ferry wharf was redundant by 1960, illustrated in the 1961 aerial photo at Fig. 4 and in detail at Fig. 5.

Through redundancy caused by the shifting sands combined with neglect, the jetty (Section "A") had become ramshackle by 1970- see Figures 4, 5 and 6.

Overtime, the shifting sands had made all the structures redundant and then derelict. Aerial photographs show that the remnants progressively disappeared, the last being those at Constables Point. These two sections, "C" and "D" are visible as remnants in the 1984 aerial photographs but had totally disappeared by 1994.

Of particular interest now, over 60 years later, is the jetty, Section "A".

A remnant of the Deeban Spit Jetty?

The frontal part of the Spit had been overlaid on several occasions with spoil from navigation channel dredging in the marine delta. (See "Port Hacking, past and present of an estuarine environment" Albani/Cotis)). This had created a substantial area of dry dune, approximately 2 metres above high tide and of substantial width westwards, and vegetated. The creek entrance to Cabbage Tree Basin runs behind it. These dunes became vegetated and were of substantial size in height and width for garbage collection trucks to travel on them.

This area has always been subject to high energy and an ever-changing morphology. However, there have been substantial and accelerating changes to this frontal area since 2012. These changes have been precipitated by severe storm events and high tides. In particular, and most dramatically were the storms of April 2015, and June 2016, which have resulted in the almost total removal of dry dune.

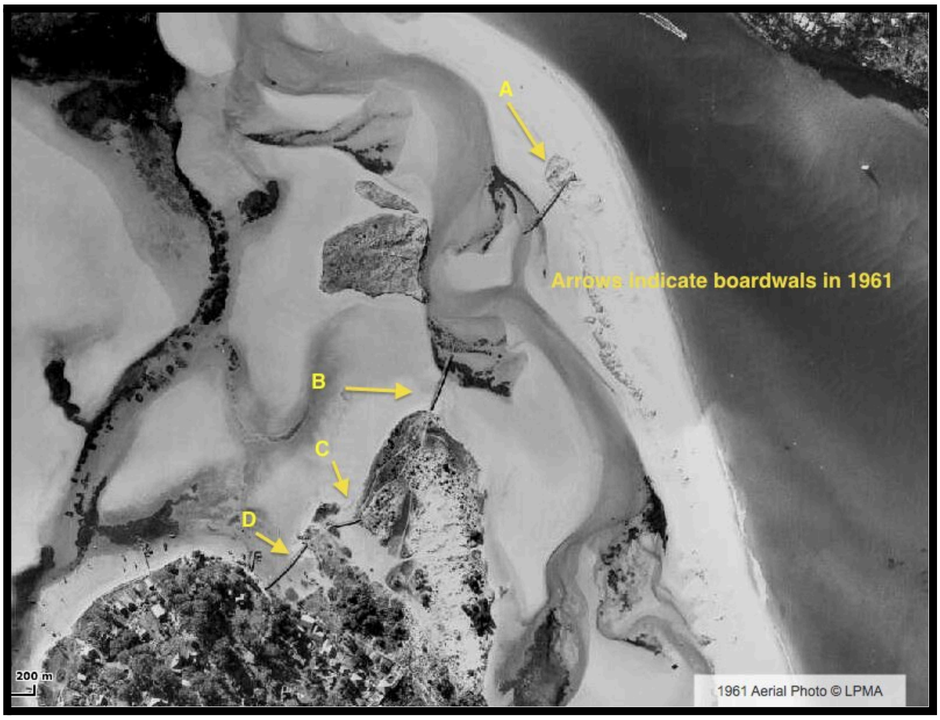


Fig.4 The same jetty and bridges in 1961. The eastern growth of the Spit has isolated the landing jetty from the water. Other changes to the shoal are clear but links “B”, “C”, and “D” remain intact. (Shire Maps, 1961)

Fig.5 1961 outer bridges/boardwalks in close-up. Sections “A” at top, “B” centre, lower. (Shire Maps, 1961)

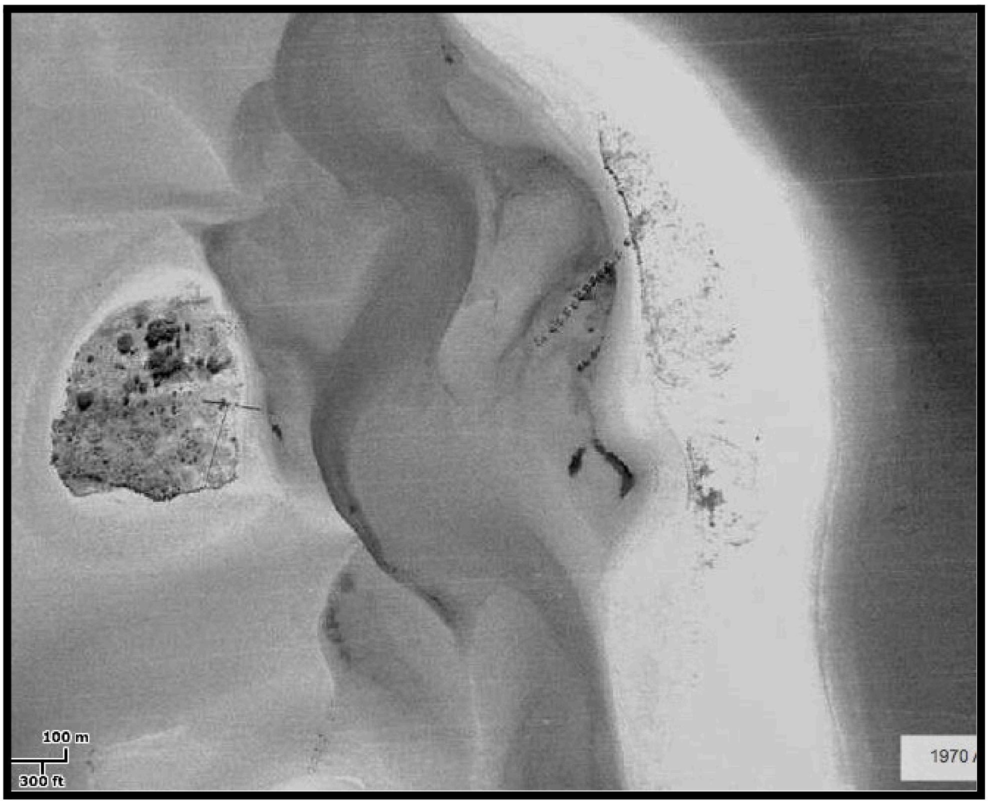


Fig.6 Deeban Spit, 1970, showing the remnant boardwalk Section “A” (Shire Maps)

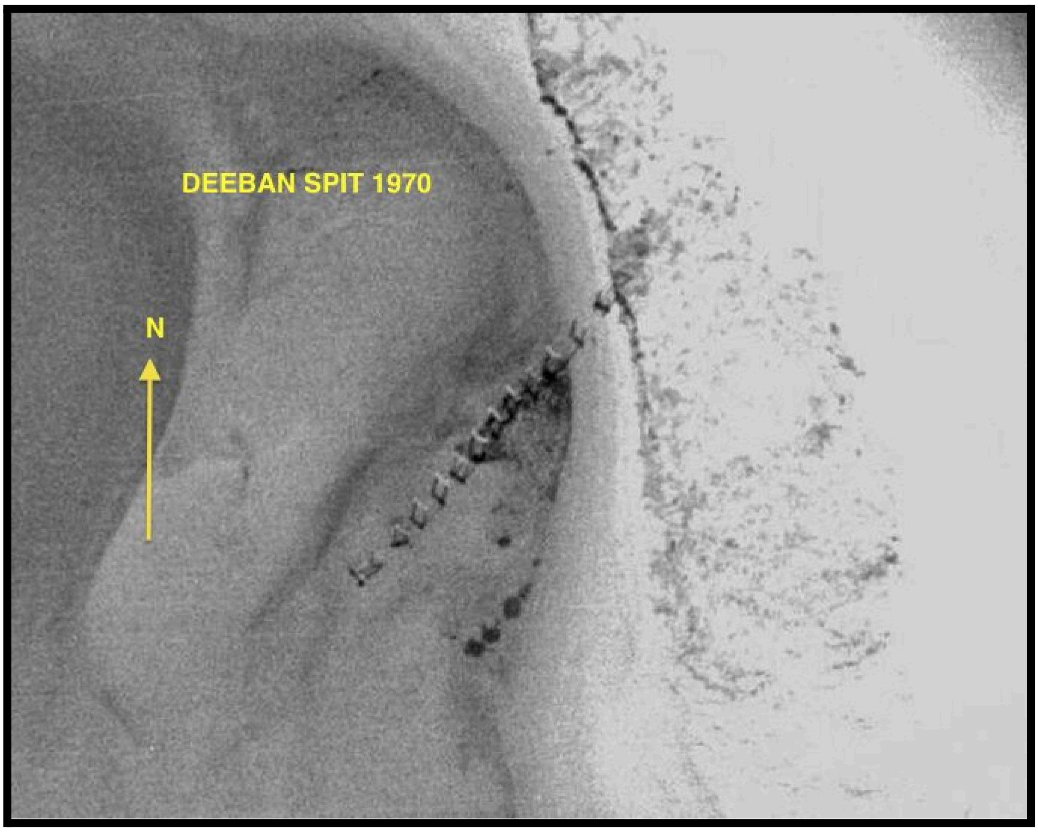


Fig. 7 Deeban Spit jetty, Section “A”, 1970, close-up. Some trestles still standing but the boardwalk has gone. The end point of the jetty where once passengers would have landed is now dry dune. (Shire Maps)

Fig. 8 Deeban Spit jetty, Section “A”, as per Fig.7. Hungry Point distant background (K. and J. Palmer, Dolans Bay)

Fig.9 Deeban Spit jetty, Section “A” has all but disappeared by 1978.

On 17 December, 2016, the author discovered an object underwater, offshore of the north-eastern part of the front of the Spit, at an approximate depth 2.5m at mid-tide. Photographs of the object appear at Figs 10 and 11. The size and weight were significant enough for the object not to have been easily moved, and it presented as not having been exposed for sufficient time for attaching organisms to have covered it completely and thus obscuring details of its nature. The location of this discovery was not fixed by GPS, and has been estimated.

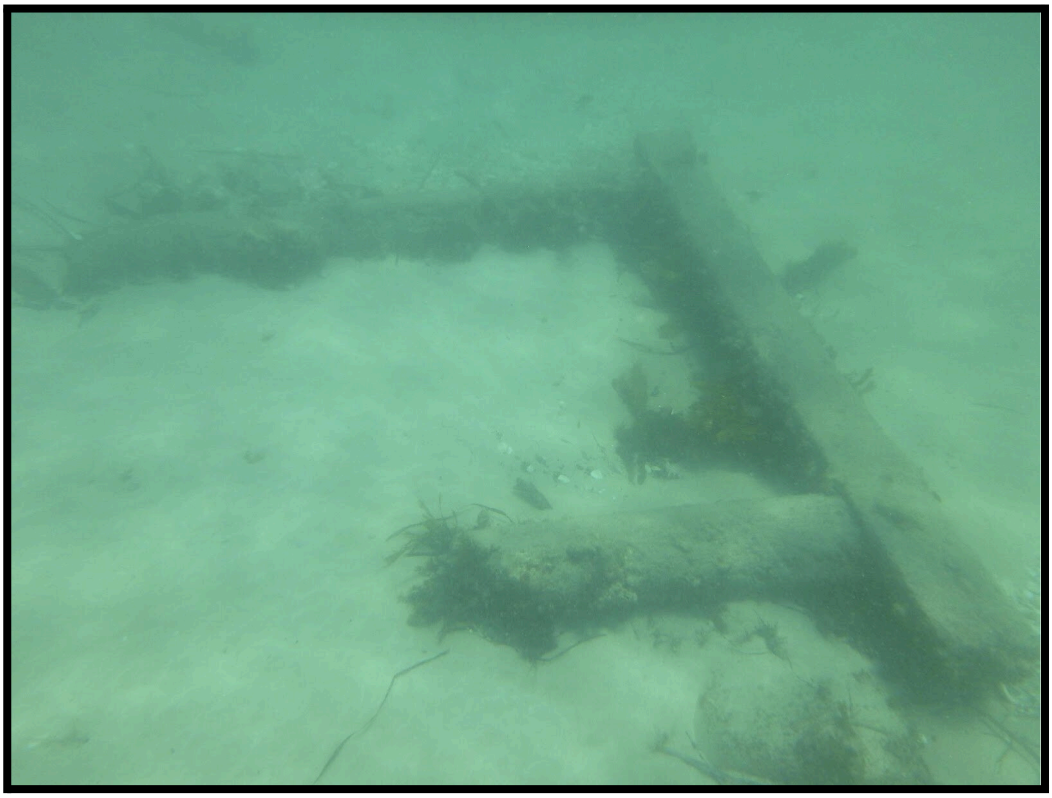


Fig. 10 Artefact found on the seafloor east of the frontal face of the Deeban Spit. 17 12 2016

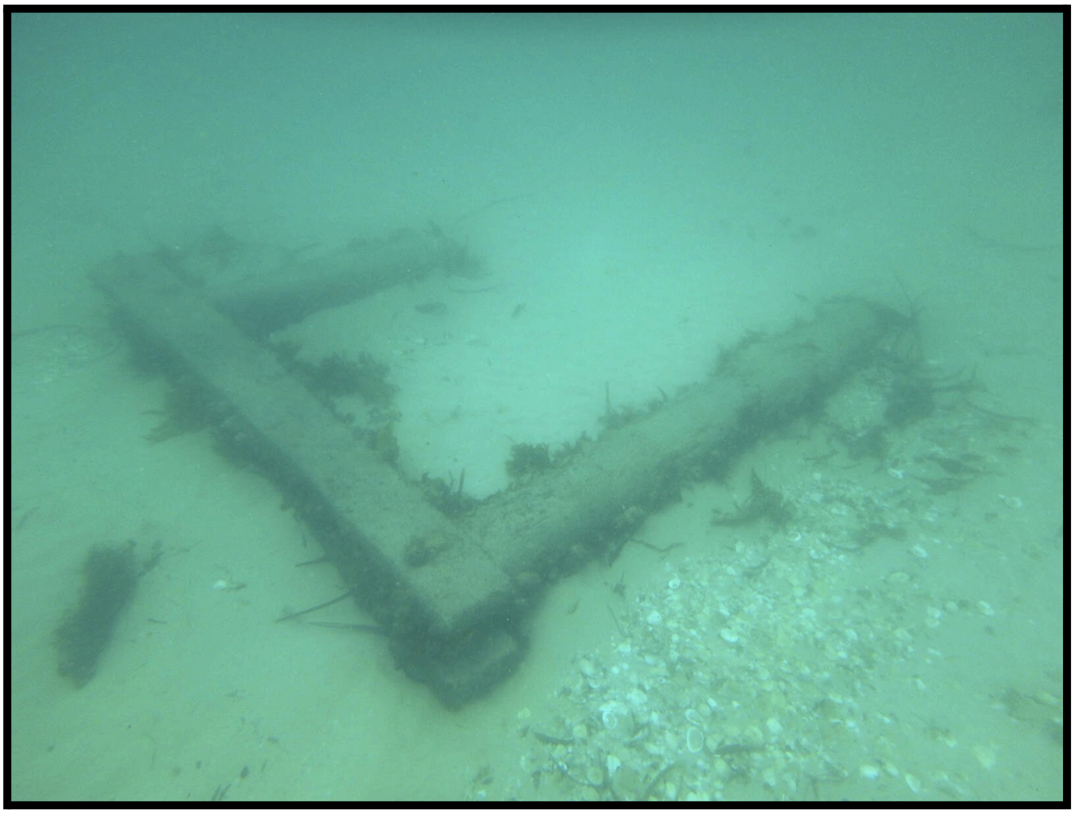


Fig. 11 Artefact found on the seafloor east of the frontal face of the Deeban Spit. This angle shows the joint of the supports and the cross beam and can be compared with Fig. 3. 17 12 2016

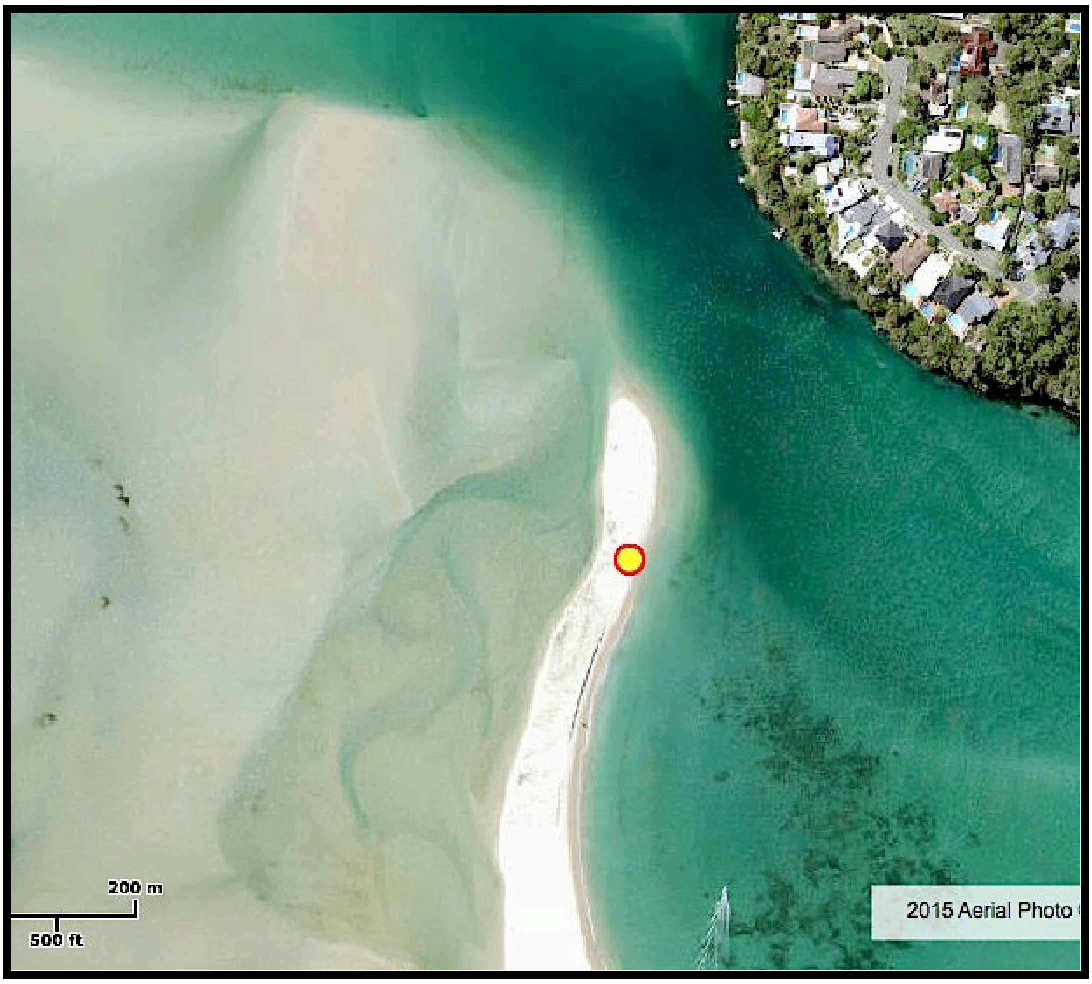


Fig.12 The end point of the Deeban Spit jetty at 1955 has been superimposed on the 2015 aerial map by the coloured circle. This clearly shows the westward retreat of the frontal face, and the considerable diminution in bulk above the water.

The author is of the view that the nature of the artefact, and its location is strongly suggestive of it being one of the, if not outermost trestles of the Deeban Spit jetty. The Spit has been further eroded since the aerial photograph at Fig. 12. The severe storm of 5 June 2016 resulted in the frontal face retreating approximately 20-25 meters west. This would result in the location indicated at Fig.12 now being in water. This corresponds with the location of a warning sign, which was fixed in the dunes to the south of this artefact. The sign toppled with the erosion of the dune in 2015 and was located by the author on 5 September 2016.

George Cotis
December 2016

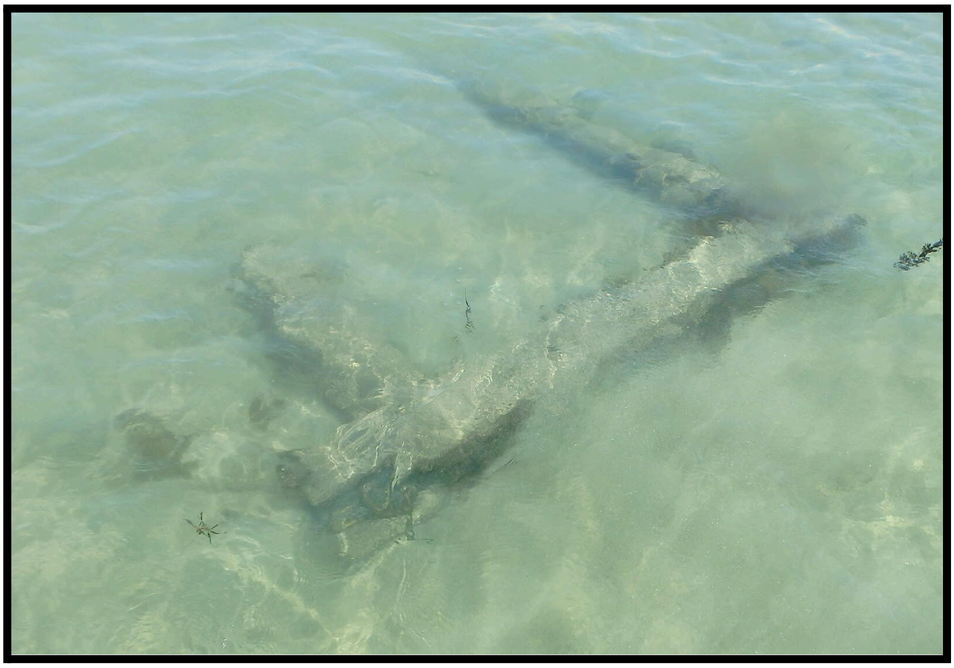
References:
Maianbar Anne Carrick and Lyn Christie, Nov 2003
Protectorate Port Hacking Protection Society, December, 1997, Port Hacking Protection Society,
Port Hacking, past and present of an estuarine environment, A D Albani and G Cotis, 2013

Deeban Spit Jetty and Boardwalks
Addendum

The following photographs of 09 01 2017 illustrate the changes since 17 12 2016. The photos were taken at 0.53m of tide at approximately 112hrs. They reveal two newly exposed uprights and other submerged debris, all associated with the Deeban jetty.

Fig.A1 The eastern face of the Deeban Spit. The newly exposed uprights/pylons of the Deeban Jetty exposed. 09 01 2017

Fig.A2 The pylons of Fig.A1 looking south. 09 01 2017



Fig, A3. Jetty end trestle/pylon in.05m water.

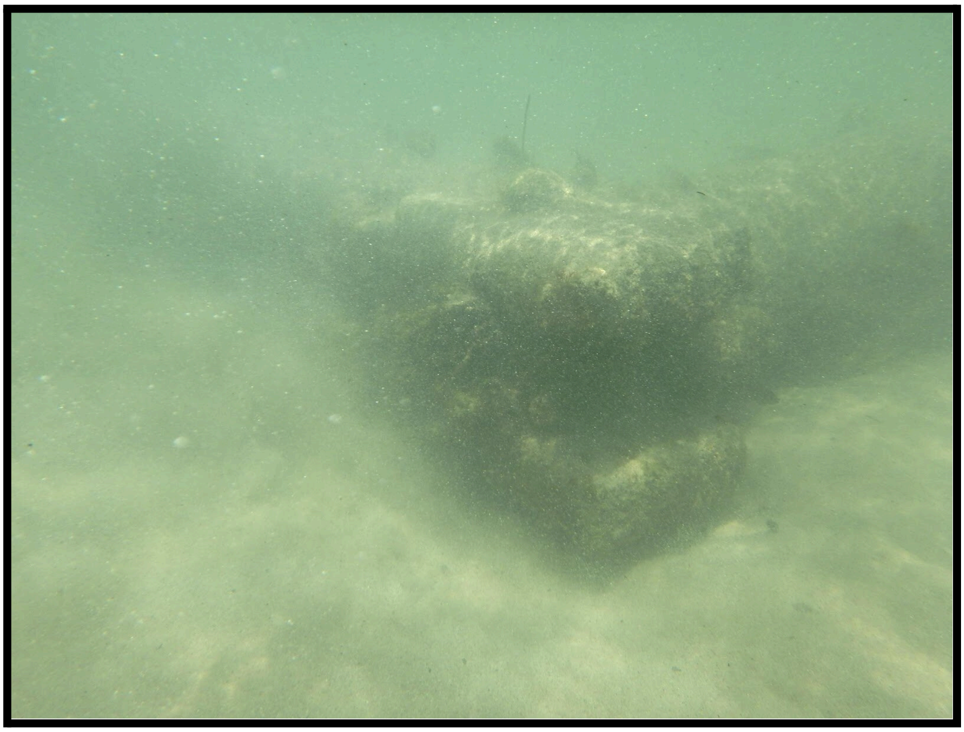


Fig.A4 As per Fig.A3 .joint between pylon and cross piece. The cross piece is estimated to be approximately 2.0m. 09 01 2017

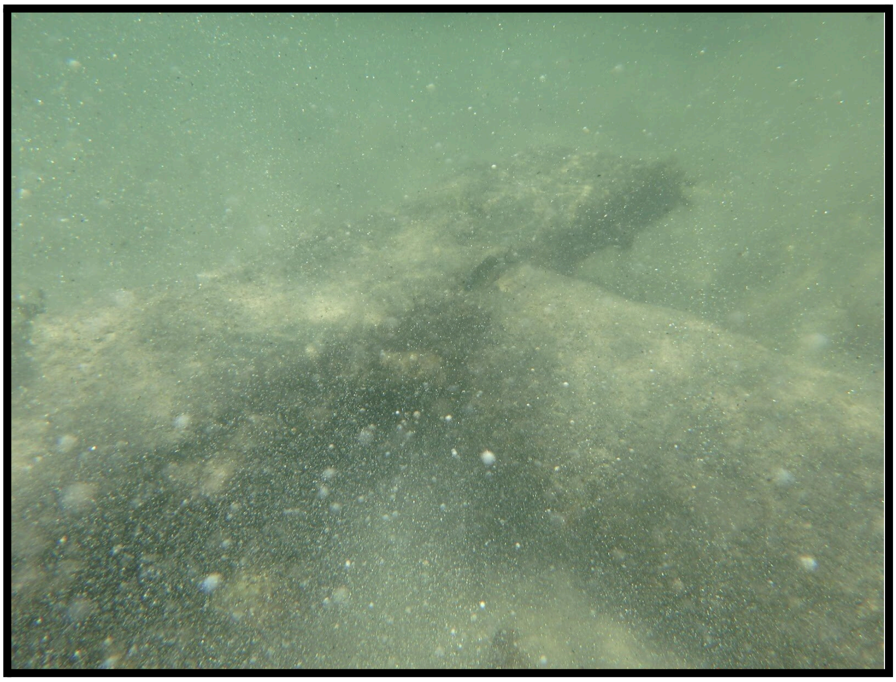


Fig.A5 Detail of Figs A3 and A4 09 01 2017

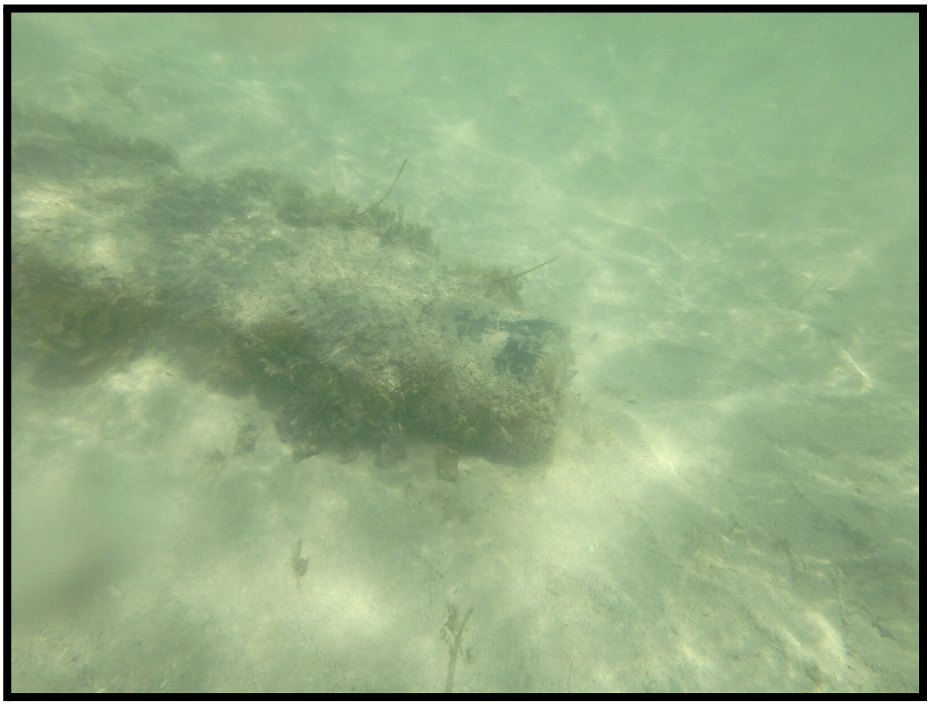


Fig.A6 Newly revealed small section of jetty, adjacent that already featured. 09 01 2017