



## a very great lady

by  
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Cardwell

# Lady Diamantina Bowen

In 1856 at the wonderfully young age of 23, in the idyllic islands of Greece, the Contessa Diamantina Roma married Sir George Bowen who, shortly afterwards, carved out Queensland as an independent State of Australia and became its first Governor.

After many successful years in which both he and his wife, the now Lady Bowen, had become endeared to the Queensland population, they then moved on to New Zealand where Sir George replaced another Sir George (Grey) as its new Governor General.

Surfing the web gives a lot of inspirational stuff about how brilliant (and sometimes not) both of the Sir Georges were in their respective jobs but you will find nothing but gushing accounts of how wonderful a person Diamantina was. This is reflected

in the many notable sites and structures named after her. Citing an article written by Dr Owen Harris (2006):

*Lady Bowen is remembered by Queenslanders when various Governments named after her a hospital (Diamantina), a street (Roma Street) and a park (Lady Bowen Park) in Brisbane, a Western Queensland town of Roma, and a North Queensland river (Diamantina River) and shire (Diamantina Shire). Then in Victoria named after her is the Diamantina Falls, in Canberra – Diamantina Street, and an early riverclass frigate HMAS Diamantina has carried on her name by discovering a deep ocean cleft off Western Australia – the Diamantina Trench.*

*This important contribution to Queensland and Australia's history by Contessa Diamantina Roma, Lady Bowen, is*

*highlighted now because the Princess Alexandra that began its life as the Diamantina Hospital for Chronic Diseases opened at Woolloongabba, Brisbane on 5 August 1901.*

*During the Foundation Day celebrations on 5 August 2004, the Diamantina Health Care Museum will be opened in the only remaining building from the original Diamantina hospital, the Dispenser's House.*

A wonderful lady, a wonderful life and many iconic landmarks named in respect and admiration of her obviously charming and inspirational character and personality. But little mention at all of the four-mast schooner *Lady Bowen* also named in honour of the Contessa. Originally built as a paddle steamer it was converted to sail in 1890. Then 64 metres long with a beam



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of eight metres and three and a half metres deep, it was later extended to 69 metres in length with the optimistic view of carrying more cargo. However, in 1894, during heavy seas, the *Lady Bowen* foundered on Kennedy Shoal in the Far North of Queensland and gave the crew something to do. Abandon ship and row! The rosy bit of that day was that all crew members survived, even though the ship seemed to have disappeared.

### The Lady (re?)discovered!

In 1996 and a clear 100 years after her disappearance, local divers from Mission Beach in the far North of Queensland made a discovery that made them really suck their air! Like a ghostly skeleton appearing from the gloom of depth, the *Lady* now filled out their vision to show herself exquisitely festooned with marine life as if she were dressed for some underwater fancy dress ball.

Lying upright but with a slight lean to the port side and with all of the timber framework long gone, she lies open wide with ready access to both fish and divers. The steel skeleton that remains is covered with myriads of shellfish, sea stars, urchins and cucumbers, ascidians, nudibranchs, flatworms and thorny corals.



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*Then there are the olive sea snakes that are close to two metres long, nosy as my cat when I've got fish on my hands and absolute narcissists when it comes to having their photos taken.*

Angels, butterflies, schools of fusiliers, snapper, sweetlips and trevally mixed in with cardinals, big-eyes and cod, it's a veritable smorgasbord of fish to fill your memory card with. One unusual feature of this aquatic menagerie is the abundance of lionfish and sea snakes. The lions are in numbers I have never seen anywhere else in the world. Not only lots of them, but as 'couldn't care less' as the proverbial family dog and the size of corgis. Then there are the olive sea snakes that are close to two metres long, nosy as my cat when I've got fish on my hands and absolute narcissists when it comes to having their photos taken.

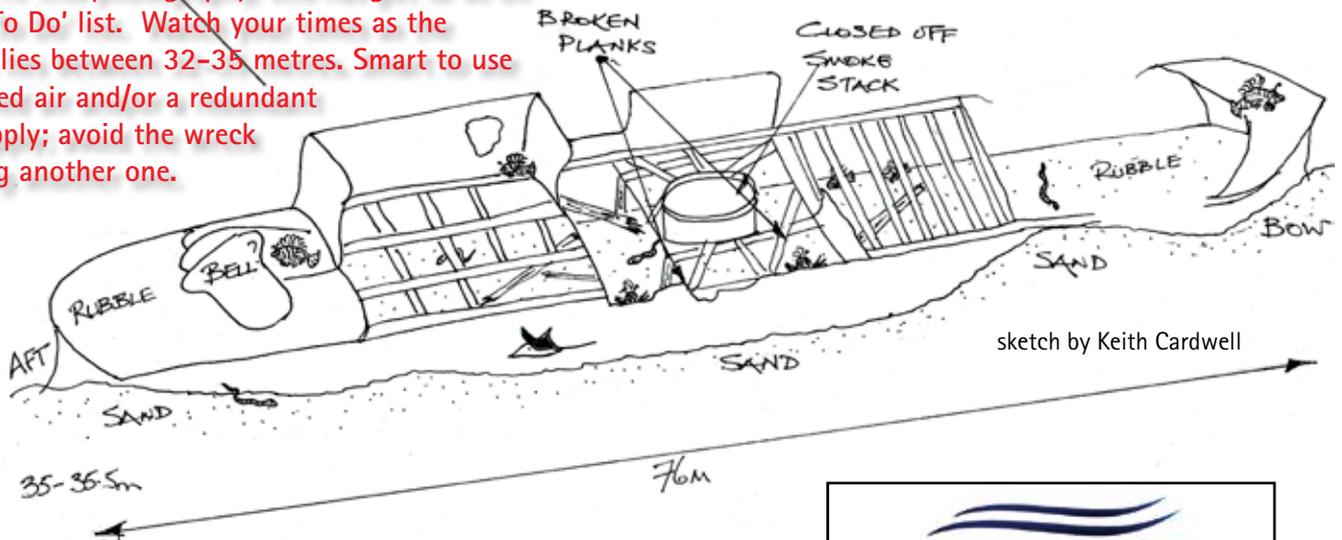
If you're into photography, this has got to be put on your 'To Do' list. I'm sure your shots will come out better than mine, but do watch your times as the wreck lies between 32-35 metres. Smart to use enriched air and/or a redundant air supply; avoid the wreck making another one.



LADY BOWEN (4 Masted Schooner)  
76m long, 11m wide



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Apart from this, the only real drawback to diving this wreck is that unlike the respect given to other memorials in Lady Bowen's memory, this site is still unprotected and it is constantly being festooned in fishing line and lost anchor lines left by unlucky anglers.

This wreck should be made as iconic as Lady Bowen's other memorials.

Much is written of the wreck of the *Yongala* found a bit further away down the coast. Articles about that particular wreck are found all too (boringly) frequently in the diving media. Without doubt, that is a great dive but I would claim that the *Lady Bowen* is better and much more accessible.

To go diving with this Lady, contact Andy or Richard at Calypso Dive, Mission Beach at +61 7 40688432. email [info@calypsoadventures.com.au](mailto:info@calypsoadventures.com.au) [www.calypsoadventures.com.au](http://www.calypsoadventures.com.au)

## UNESCO Convention 2001 • Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage

The 2001 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage came into force on 2 January 2009, three months after the 20th country ratified. A further five countries have joined since 2 October 2008: Tunisia, Albania, Grenada, Slovakia and Bosnia / Herzegovina (on 24/04/09). This increases the concentration of countries in the Mediterranean and Black Sea which have signed up to the Convention.

The First Meeting of the States Parties took place in Paris on 26 and 27 March 2009 with 19 of the States Parties attending the meeting. Tunisia, Albania, Grenada and Slovakia attended as Observers, along with a further 71 States Non Parties as Observers, as well as five Inter Governmental and 23 Non Governmental organisations.

Amongst the countries that sent Observers was the United States. The UK sent a delegation including representatives of their Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Australia was sending Leath McKenzie

who is engaged in a review of Australian legislation on historic shipwrecks. New Zealand was not represented.

The meeting began with a 'festive opening' and adopted the Rules of Procedures and established a Scientific and Technical Advisory Body. This body will assist the meetings of the States Parties in questions of a scientific or technical nature regarding the implementation of the Rules in the Annex to the Convention and other issues. Another meeting will be held in December 2009 to elaborate and fix the Operational Guidelines for the Convention. For details go to: [http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=34114](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=34114)

From the speeches given at the opening there is clearly considerable optimism that the 2001 UNESCO Convention will have a major part to play in the future. Of course the Convention will not have a direct effect on New Zealand unless New Zealand decides to amend its legislation and ratify the Convention. However, it is clear that the

Convention is going to be very important in the Mediterranean / Black Sea area and the Rules in the Annex will be increasingly referred to as an International Law norm.

- Piers Davies,

