

LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

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An ad-hoc one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy

HMVS Cerberus

No, this is one site not to visit

Debate rages amongst classical scholars on his degree of polycephaly. In some versions The Hound of Hades has two heads, in others three. We'll stick with duocephaly, because that corresponds with the number of gun turrets on his namesake – the HMVS Cerberus.

HMVS? That's right – here in Victoria we had our own navy. If New South Wales had attacked, we would have beaten them. The chance has passed: the warship is hardly battle-ready, and what's more it has a new owner – the City of Bayside.

We're pretty sure Bayside doesn't want to own it, but they inherited it from the City of Sandringham, which had purchased it for a breakwater.



*Why is the wreck flying the Australian flag?
Surely it should be the Victorian flag?*

Perhaps Bayside could argue that the wreck has become a fixture, and is therefore owned by whoever owns the land – which in this case is the Crown. It's not even in the City of Bayside – because municipal boundaries are (by and large) at Low Water Mark. Maybe Bayside could disown the thing through some argument based on [maritime law](#) – but that wouldn't get rid of it, and certainly wouldn't restore it. And restoration is what's yearned for by a dedicated (but relatively impecunious) body of [friends](#).

Meanwhile the Cerberus is (a) historically significant, and (b) rusting away, and (c) lethally dangerous. So Lex Loci will not be going scuba-diving there.

Who is responsible for it? Parks Victoria is waterway manager for the local port of Port Phillip and Westernport. But that doesn't make PV responsible for the thing. It's on Crown land, but don't look to DELWP for assistance. Heritage Victoria has declared it to be protected – but protected from what? Certainly not from the elements. So what about the Coastal Management Act? What about the Feds under the EPBC Act? Or the Historic Shipwrecks Act? Wherever we look, we draw blanks.

What's needed is Hercules himself. As the eleventh of his twelve mythical labours Hercules sorted out the original Cerberus – duocephalous or tricephalous as the case may have been.

See you there! Lex Loci