Archeologists looking for shipwrecks at Sceale Bay

Researchers from Flinders University recently spent a week near Streaky Bay looking for two shipwrecks and the remains of camps set up to salvage material from the ships.

"We're researching the location of two shipwrecks in Sceale Bay," associate lecturer Emily Jateff said.

"One is the Arachne lost in 1848 and the other one is Elizabeth Rebecca and that was lost here in 1845."

"And we're also looking for information on a third vessel, Camilla, lost in -- we think -- the northwest quadrant of Streaky Bay in 1844 and all three were involved in the whaling operations here."

They found some material from the salvage camp at Sceale Bay but no conclusive evidence for the location of either ship.

"A location of a shipwreck in Sceale Bay that was shown to ... and we've done magnetometer surveys there. The magnetometer found iron."

Iron can indicate the bolts that were used to put the ship together but many of these were taken by the crew, who all survived.

The academics visited the Streaky Bay Museum and spoke to people in Streaky Bay and nearby towns, who all knew a little information, or had heard about, the shipwrecks.

"The interesting thing is information comes from very different sources," said Associate Professor Dr Mark Staniforth, an expert in marine archeology.

"The people in Yanerlie know of the area near Yanerlie but people in Sceale Bay know much more about that area..."

"One of the things we're interested in is explaining what happened in this area in the first years of European settlement."

"We're just trying to develop a more comprehensive history of shipwrecks lost in this portion of South Australia and the whaling history of the area," Mrs Jateff said, "and in terms of long term planning we'd like to create more interpretative material that's available to locals, the tourists that are coming."

David Nutley, from the Department of Environment and Heritage, urged people to contact Mrs Jateff or Dr Staniforth to build up information about the shipwrecks and early whaling history.

"There's so much community interest that's been there for some time and the more people we can get to talk to us the more we can put the story together," he said.

People can contact Mrs Jateff on 0416 410 613 or Dr Staniforth on 0408 802 198.

BEACH COMBING: ALA fellow Zainab Tahir from Indonesia participating in a magnetometer survey of the beach at Yanerlie. She was joined by others from Indonesia and Cambodia on the shipwreck search.