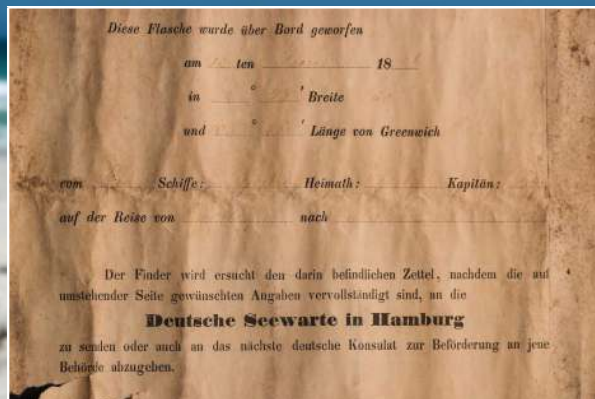


Oldest message in a bottle ever discovered

by Rob Green



Note Found inside bottle written in German

About the author: Rob Green runs MetalDetectorPlanet.com. He is interested in collecting antiques using his metal detector. He also enjoys reading, camping, and hiking.

An Australian family found the oldest message in a bottle ever discovered. It was jettisoned around 132 years ago by a German sailor.

The story goes back to the 12 June 1882. The German ship Paula was sailing from Australia to Indonesia. One of the sailors wrote a note that contained his coordinates, the date, other details about the ship and its captain, and the departure and the arrival port. He rolled the piece of paper and wrapped it with a string. Then he placed it inside a bottle and sealed it tightly. Finally, he threw it into the sea.

This wasn't the only bottle. There should be hundreds if not thousands of bottles thrown into the ocean over the years. The purpose of this practice is to study the ocean's currents which is important for the shipping routes. They hoped that if someone finds the bottle he will contact the nearest German consulate telling them where he found it.

This bottle's fate was unique. Nobody discovered it for nearly 132 years. On 21 January 2018, the Illman family's car got stuck on a beach in Australia. So they decided to take a walk. After a while, they found a bottle. Tonya Illman picked it up thinking that it would be great to decorate her bookshelf. However, when other members of the family examined it, they noticed the presence of something inside it.

When they got back home, they put it inside the oven to get rid of the moisture. They pulled out the paper, unrolled it and read it. The ink was faint; however, they were able to read the note. To their surprise, they found that the date was the 12 June 1882. They thought that this is too good to be true.

Experts at the Australian museum examined the bottle and the message. They confirmed, with the help of experts from Germany and the Netherlands, that this message is authentic. They even found the ship's meteorological journal that recorded that a bottle was thrown overboard on the same date with the same coordinates (32.49 South, 105.25 East).

Experts think that it didn't stay all of these years in the sea. It was probably hidden inside the sand and exposed from time to time to the sunrays. The bottle's narrow opening and the thick glass helped preserve the paper from the elements.

The practice of sending messages in bottles is very common. People do it for various reasons. Some use this communication mean asking to be rescued if their ships crashed into a remote island. Others are looking for pen pals. Others use it to say good-bye to their loved ones. And some send these messages as a joke.

If you want to take a look at the bottle found by the Illman family, you can visit the Western Australian Museum. The minister for Culture and the Arts said that he is happy to have such thing displayed for the public in a local museum.

