

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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CAPE VERDE



S103 CapeVerde
HobsonsBay
LithographOfDiverOnDeck
dateunknown

Location

Hobsons Bay, Off Williamstown, Port Phillip Bay

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S103

Date lost

23 Jun 1889

Official number

67949

Construction material

Iron

Hull

1 bulk-head, cemented 1874; classified A1 for iron ships,anchors and chains proved 1887; 2 decks: poop - 41.5',forecastle 36.25', moulded depth 24.7', freeboard amidships5.0'

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

3

Length/Breadth/Depth

249.00 Feet / 40.30 Feet / 23.10 Feet

Builder

T. Wingate & Co.

Year of construction

1874

Built port

Glasgow

Built country

Scotland

Registration Port

Greenock

Date lost

23 Jun 1889

Departure

London

Destination

Melbourne

Cargo

General, 100 tons gunpowder (most for Vic. Dept of Defence). 3700 tons of cargo, including a very large amount of dead weight (UID 120)
 vinegar in casks (UID 100). Ale, stout, pulley wheels, fencing wire, Waygood's lifts, galvanised iron, vinegar, oakum, lumber (UID 52)

Owner

Abram Lyle & Sons of Greenock

Master

John Mitchell

Weather conditions

Squally; cold; dark evening; 6.30 pm

Cause of loss

At anchor , struck by iron barque Lolanthe. Crew took to rigging as vessel settled on seabed with water halfway up foremast (UID 9)

Number of crew

33

Crew comments

1st officer Archibald Menzies, 2nd officer Mr Dewherst, 3rd officer Mr Erskine (UID 9)

Statement of significance

<p>Historically significant for participation in international trade.</p>

VHR history

"..a sensational collision took place in Hobson's Bay, which although it was not attended by loss of life, was fraught with great danger to a ship's crew who had to seek safety high up in the riggings of their sunken vessel, from whence they were rescued with difficulty. The ship lost was the Cape Verde, an iron clipper owned by Messrs. Abram Lyle and Son, of Greenock. She left London on March 14 with a general cargo of merchandise, including about 100 tons of gunpowder (part of which was for the Defence department of Victoria) bound for Melbourne. Captain John Mitchell was in command."....."Suddenly at about half past 6 o'clock, the chief officer saw a ship approaching on the port bow."...."The captain had only just left his cabin, when the Lolanthe struck the Cape Verde a terrific blow on the port side, just between the main and the mizzen masts, abreast of the after hatch, cutting away the whole of the port quarter." (UID 9)

 "It is nearly three years since the Cape Verde was sunk in the Bay off Williamstown, and it is only now that there seems any prospect of the wreck being removed from the fairway." ... "although the hull is said to be sound, the danger the divers are exposed to while working the cargo is great. The men work in three shifts, two being below at one time. The water is thick with the sediment, so that the men have to carry on operations in the dark. When they first started, a light platform was suspended high up between the masts, so that the heavy waves could not reach it. The gear for lifting the cargo is worked from this stage, and the goods as they are lifted are placed in a small lighter."....."The danger lights... have to be attended to, and this work is now done by a man who lives at the wreck. His quarters are confined, and consist of a small galvanised iron hut, built on two spars 15 feet above the water. The hut is made fast by lashings to the spars, which are dependent upon the mizzen mast for support when the sea is rough."..."the occupant of this hut, Cornelius Heemakker is jovial young German."

 "A scene of great excitement and danger, the result of a protracted dispute between Captain Wymark,and the purchasers of the hull of the sunken ship Cape Verde, occurred on board that vessel on Monday morning, and for a time made it appear likely that some serious results to the lives of those on board would follow." " ...Mr Miller commenced to cut the staging away, on which nearly 100 men were standing, and below which in the water were two divers. He had cut away two beams, when all hands began to perceive the danger they were in, and a truce was come to. The dispute has arisen through the purchasers of the hull of the vessel being unable to work amicably with the Underwriters' Association, who have charge of the cargo." (UID 100)

 Moored at outer anchorage, Williamstown, when struck 6' abaft of magazine by Lolanthe . Explosion of gunpowder could have been disastrous. Crew forced to take to rigging as vessel settled on seabed with water half way up foremast. Rescued 90 minutes later. Marine Board Inquiry suspended licence of Pilot Gifford (in charge of Lolanthe) for want of caution. Owners sold Cape Verde (valued at about 20,000 pounds) for 1,200 pounds and received 13,000 pounds from insurance claim. Four successive contractors attempted to remove vessel in next few years, using various methods, including blasting. By 12 August 1895 remains wreck had been removed to navigable depth of 31' at low water. Tug Pilot foundered at wreck site 1893 during salvage operations.