

# Victorian Heritage Database Report

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## S.S. CITY OF LAUNCESTON



S124 CityOfLaunceston PortPhillipBay  
HistoricView



S124 CityOfLaunceston PortPhillipBay  
ArtifactsAtSite



S124 CityOfLaunceston PortPhillipBay  
ConservedBottle



S124 CityOfLaunceston PortPhillipBay  
ConservedJug



S124 CityOfLaunceston PortPhillipBay  
Deck



S124 CityOfLaunceston PortPhillipBay  
Pipe



S124 CityOfLaunceston PortPhillipBay  
Deck PrintOfSinking

### Location

north of West Channel, Port Phillip Bay

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S124

**Date lost**

19 Nov 1865

**Official number**

32240

**Construction material**

Iron

**Hull**

Iron, clipper bow, elliptic stern

**Propulsion**

Steam - Screw

**Engine specification**

direct acting inverted 2 cylinder, 80 HP, fitted with Thomas Silver s Patent steam governor, cylinders 34" diameter with 27 inch stroke, boiler 30lbs psi

**Engine builder**

Blackwood & Gordon

**Number of masts**

2

**Length/Breadth/Depth**

177.20 Feet / 24.40 Feet / 11.70 Feet

**Builder**

Blackwood & Gordon

**Year of construction**

1863

**Built port**

Newark, Glasgow

**Built country**

Scotland

**Registration Number**

11 of 1863

**Registration Port**

Launceston

**Date lost**

19 Nov 1865

**Departure**

Melbourne

**Destination**

Launceston

**Cargo**

General cargo including English mails, luggage, drapery inc. crinolines, cases of brandy, port, rum, cigars, tea, boots, sheepwash

**Owner**

G. Fisher and partners, trading as Launceston and Melbourne Steam Navigation Co.

**Master**

Capt. William Thom

**Weather conditions**

Clear; starlit night; calm seas

**Cause of loss**

Confusion between ships masters, collision

**Passenger comments**

Mr & Mrs Bowland, Mr & Mrs Horne and their 2 children, Mrs Woods (wife of the vessel's usual captain), Mrs Richards, Mrs McDonald, Dr Brook, Dr Moore and Messrs. J Moore, Chesterman, Thom, Bowland, M. Miller, E Miller and Roff.

Included in the steerage passengers Messrs. Lister, Hancock and Pilkington. The other steerage passengers are unknown as they bought their tickets onboard.

18 cabin, 7 steerage

**Number of crew**

23

## **Statement of significance**

The City of Launceston is one of Victoria's most significant shipwrecks. The discovery and reporting of the wreck and subsequent lobbying of the State Government led to the proclamation of the State Historic Shipwrecks Act 1981. It is one of the most intact iron steamship wrecks of its age in Australian waters, is technically and scientifically significant for the remains of its engine and boiler, and evidence of the experimental salvage attempts using Patented Maquay hydrogen gas generating devices. The City of Launceston is archaeologically highly significant for the state of preservation of a complete intra-colonial steamship with evidence of its cabin fittings, passengers luggage and cargo.

## **VHR history**

About 9 pm, incoming SS Penola ( 500 tons) struck and ran down City of Launceston which began to settle almost immediately. Passengers and crew transferred with difficulty to Penola. Sunken vessel valued at about 17,000 pounds - not insured. Sold by auction to Barrett, engineer of City of Launceston, who sold to a syndicate but salvage attempts eventually abandoned. Victorian Steam Navigation Board Inquiry held City of Launceston to blame for accident. Two separate Supreme Court actions by the respective owners for damages found in favour of the plaintiff in each case! An appeal by the aggrieved owner of the Penola for a non suit or a new trial was ultimately refused. Eleutheria, lighter, exhibited light at wreck site until it too sank. City of Launceston was the first shipwreck to be declared an Historic Shipwreck under new Victorian legislation. Built for the Melbourne to Launceston Bass Strait run, it was a regular trader across Bass Strait.