

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 31/07/24

CRAIGBURN

Location

Rye Back Beach, Point Nepean

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S148

Date lost

08 May 1891

Official number

87409

Construction material

Iron

Hull

Iron, 1 bulkhead, cemented; 2 decks: 1 iron, 1 sheathed with wood; poop 40', forecastle 42'; moulded depth 25'3". Classified A1 Lloyd's.

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

4

Length/Breadth/Depth

289.70 Feet / 42.20 Feet / 23.90 Feet

Builder

W.B. Thompson

Year of construction

1884

Built port

Glasgow

Built country

Scotland

Registration Port

Greenock

Date lost

08 May 1891

Departure

Melbourne

Destination

Wellington, NZ

Cargo

In ballast

Owner

R. Shankland & Co

Master

Capt. Alexander Kerr

Weather conditions

SW gale; dark night

Cause of loss

Blown ashore after refusing tug salvage rates and anchor dragged

Number of crew

33

Crew comments

33 crew including the captain

Statement of significance

<p>The wreck of the Craighburn is archaeologically significant for its remains of a typical 19th century iron sailing barque. As a dive site set amongst typically spectacular Mornington Peninsula underwater topography and marine life, it also has recreational and educational significance.</p>

VHR history

Being towed out through Heads by tug Rescue. Hawser slipped, attempts to get another line aboard failed, anchors dropped. Captain Kerr, on his last voyage before retirement, refused offer of further tow from Rescue, claiming charge of 500 pounds was exorbitant. Offers from other vessels rejected also, in spite of Craighburn's close proximity to land. After argument and struggle between Kerr and Pilot Blanchard, two crew members seized Kerr and locked him aft. The tug Eagle made fast with a hawser and went ahead, but the carpenter, who may have been drunk, refused to work the winches to raise the anchors without the captain's orders, and the tow again parted. Two boats got away - one under the pilot's direction, finally reached safety, but the other was swept into the breakers where five men drowned. Captain Kerr, the carpenter, and a brave seaman (who had tried in vain to save the first mate - who was drunk) were rescued by rocket apparatus, overlanded from Sorrento by the lifeboat crew. The Court of Marine Inquiry found Captain Kerr guilty of drunkenness and neglect of duty in refusing assistance of tow. His certificate was cancelled and ordered to pay 50 pounds costs but he had already left Victoria. The vessel had arrived from Liverpool on 8 April with a full general cargo. Belonged to same fleet of clippers as the other '-burn' vessels, well known in the Australian trade. Pilot critical of authorities in not summoning the lifeboat -all might have been saved. 1 2 4 6
 A drunken captain and a dispute over the cost towing the barque Craighburn out of a dangerous position had a tragic outcome. The vessel drifted ashore on the Rye Back Beach and six of the crew lost their lives.