

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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TSS CORAMBA

Location

Bass Strait, off Phillip Island

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S153

Date lost

30 Nov 1934

Official number

131495

Construction material

Steel

Hull

Single decked, steel steamer, electric light, water ballasted:Forepeak tank, 29 tons, Afterpeak tank, 14 tons. 4 Cemented bulkheads, flat plate keel, Fitted with refrigerating equipment. two masted, schooner rigged, elliptical stern,clinker built, no gall

Propulsion

Steam - Screw

Number of masts

2

Length/Breadth/Depth

160.00 Feet / 30.00 Feet / 10.00 Feet

Builder

Ailsa Ship Building Co. Ltd. Ayr, Scotland

Year of construction

1911

Built port

Troon

Built country

Scotland

Registration Number

3 of 1933

Registration Port

Melbourne

Date lost

30 Nov 1934

Departure

Portland

Destination

Melbourne, via Port Fairy and Warrnambool

Cargo

Wool and Nestles condensed milk.

Owner

Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Co.

Master

Capt. John Dowling

Weather conditions

The Coramba Storm , hurricane force winds and huge seas

Cause of loss

Sank during storm

Number of crew

16

Crew comments

Chief Officer - DP Sinclair
Second Officer - RM Wishart
Able Seaman - J. Sullivan
Able Seaman - R. McNeillage
Able Seaman - M Foley
Able Seaman - JG Clancy
Seaman - T Byrne
Cook - G Madden
Steward - J Bellairs
Chief Engineer - A Elder
Second Engineer - George Newlands
Donkeyman - Harry Jensen
Fireman - A Murphy
Fireman - D Hassell
Fireman - A Brown
Deck boy - LG Nicholson

Statement of significance

The Coramba is socially and historically significant, as one of Victoria's worst shipwreck tragedies in living memory. Relatives of those who were lost are still alive, and the tragedy claimed the lives of fathers and breadwinners during the Depression. 17 lives were lost in the tragedy. The Coramba served the Western District ports and had replaced the Casino which had also been tragically wrecked two years before. The wrecks of the Casino and Coramba were the death knell for steamship services to the Western District as railways and road transport replaced shipping for trade. 'The Coramba Gale' in which the Coramba foundered is still one of the worst storms recorded to have hit Victoria, with widespread flooding, wind damage and property loss in the south eastern Melbourne metropolitan district.

VHR history

The T.S.S. CORAMBA was owned by the Belfast and Koroit Steam Navigation Company. The vessel was purchased by them to replace the S.S. CASINO which had been wrecked at Apollo Bay with major loss of life in 1932. The CORAMBA left Warrnambool at 1300 hrs, on 29 November 1934 bound for Melbourne with a cargo of wool and Nestles Condensed Milk. It was due to arrive at about 0700 hrs the following morning. Overnight the weather worsened and became a furious storm. The ship never arrived, and grave fears were held for its safety. In early December, parts of the CORAMBA's deckhouse (identified by the vessel's bell) and other wreckage came ashore on the southern coast of Phillip Island along with a number of bodies. Well-known Victorian diver Johnno Johnstone was called in to locate the hull. Johnstone reported finding the hull in 27 fathoms of water about 1.5 miles west of Seal Rocks. However, attempts to relocate the vessel failed.