

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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shipNo23 2013 04 24 1366778408486
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shipNo23 2013 04 24 1366778582315
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shipNo23 2013 04 24 1366778630906
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shipNo23 2015 04 27 1430096847985
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Rigging block

Location

East Coast, Venus Bay near Andersons Inlet

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S23

Date lost

13 Dec 1863

Construction material

Wood

Hull

two decks, square stern, carvel built, wooden framed, no galleries, billet head, felt and yellow metalled in 1861 over copper fastenings.

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

3

Length/Breadth/Depth

131.50 Feet / 25.50 Feet / 16.20 Feet

Builder

Frederick Charles Clarke

Year of construction

1855

Built port

Jersey

Built country

United Kingdom

Registration Port

Jersey

Date lost

13 Dec 1863

Departure

Melbourne

Destination

Mauritius

Cargo

Salted meat

Owner

1855-wrecking: Carrel and Co.

Master

Captain A. Ogier

Weather conditions

South westerly gale and heavy rain

Cause of loss

Blown onto a lee shore during a gale

Statement of significance

Amazon is archaeologically significant as a rare example of an international wooden trading ship from the mid-19th century. Amazon is historically significant for its potential to shed light on life onboard an international cargo vessel at this time and the construction practices associated with 19th century wooden meat packing and transporting practices from that time. Amazon is a representative example of mid-19th century wooden cargo carriers and while Victoria has a number of iron and steel international cargo carrying shipwrecks.

****Amazon's significance will need to be monitored as the site when exposed is at the mercy of the tides and looters.**

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

CRITERION 1: HISTORIC

Amazon is historically significant as an example of a mid-19th century wooden international trading vessel that contributed to Victoria's economy in the 1800s. Built in 1855 in Jersey, one of the Channel Islands of the United Kingdom, the ship may have historical insights into the shipbuilding tradition of that era.

CRITERION 2: TECHNICAL

Wooden three-masted barques were the more common types of deep-water international cargo carriers in the mid-19th century. The technical significance of the vessel cannot be determined without further research, but may offer some technical significance of Jersey shipbuilding.

CRITERION 3: SOCIAL

Social significance is minor although there are echoes of the wrecking of the Amazon at Inverloch as the entrance to Wreck Creek (named for the wreck) is approximately 20 metres to the east of the site. When Amazon ran aground on the beach, this area of coastline was deserted and the crew were lucky Mr Heales passed by on his way to Melbourne. Due to the limited exposure of the wreck since 1863, the local community do not appear to have embraced the wreck site until the recent exposure.

Currently, local interest and value in the Amazon wrecksite is increasing. This is due to the current uncovered state of the site and the push by Heritage Victoria to record the site and raise awareness about its preservation state.

CRITERION 4: ARCHAEOLOGICAL

The archaeological potential of the wreck is still to be determined. The exposed frames and ballast mound at the low tide mark is jumbled and much of the context may not be in its original form. However, the fact that the wreckage does not appear to have been exposed often since the wreck event in 1863 - and the ship was said to be beached into the sand up to 3 metres (?) indicates there may well be parts of the vessel still intact under the sand. If any of the salted meat cargo remains, further archaeological work could contribute to studies around the practice of importing and exporting food into and out of the Australian. Previous work in this subject matter in Victoria includes research into the salted meat cargo of the William Salthouse that was being imported from Canada. The archaeology also has the potential to highlight mid-19th century UK shipbuilding techniques that are under-represented in the Victorian UCH resource.

CRITERION 5: SCIENTIFIC

Amazon is not currently the subject of any scientific studies. However, it has the potential to provide insight into an historic shipwreck located in the intertidal zone. Particularly preservation of wooden and iron features that are intermittently uncovered.

CRITERION 6: INTERPRETIVE

Due to its current exposure, Amazon has interpretive significance, particularly for the local community. This can be further explored through signage and images. Amazon may have interpretive potential after further archaeological study.

CRITERION 7: RARE

The Victorian shipwreck resource has quite a few examples of international iron and steel trading ships but, the wreck of the Amazon is a rare example of a mid-19th century wooden international cargo carrier. The wreck is also the only example in the Victorian wreck resource that was built in New Jersey, one of the Channel Islands in the United Kingdom. The erosion that occurred during the Autumn storms in April 2015, exposed rare and delicate organic artefacts such as a deadeye with a knot still tied at one end.

CRITERION 8: REPRESENTATIVE

Amazon is representative of a mid-19th century international wooden cargo carrier, transporting goods across the world.

VHR history

Amazon left Melbourne bound for Mauritius on 12 December 1863 with a cargo of salted meats. The vessel cleared Port Phillip Heads at 8pm that same evening and turned to starboard to head west towards the Indian Ocean. By 2am on the 13 December the wind had picked up and by 4am the Captain reported the gale had turned into a hurricane. 14 miles off Cape Otway, the wind tore off some of Amazon's sails. By the 14

December, Amazon attempted to return to the Heads and the relative safety of Port Phillip but by noon on the 15th, the Captain realised they weren't going to make it and turned his attention to keeping his vessel away from the shore.

Amazon continued to drift east as the storm still raged through into the next day and at 6am, there were breakers off the port bow and rocks ahead. Amazon struck the beach near what is now the Inverloch surf beach at 10am and Captain Ogier kept the vessel on course in an effort to drive the ship as far up the beach as possible. The crew, having been on deck for 48 hours straight were exhausted, and it wasn't until 3pm in the afternoon that everyone made it to shore.

They set up tents on the beach the next day and searched the nearby area for signs of inhabitants. There was no sign of anyone until the 21st December when Mr Heales who was passing close by on his way to Melbourne to visit family for Christmas saw a distress flag flying. He escorted Captain Ogier to Melbourne who raised the alarm.

The crew were rescued by H.M.C.S Victoria (which happened to be the first vessel of the Victorian Colonial Navy). Victoria's captain reported that the wreck was lying broadside onto the beach but embedded into the sand about three metres. The ship was high enough up the beach that it was dry at low tide. He also reported that sixty feet of the main keel and forefoot was broken off and lying on the beach at the high-water mark.