

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 18/10/24

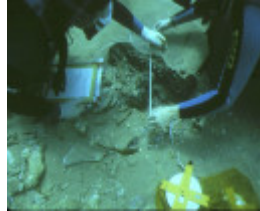
EMPRESS OF THE SEA



S237 EmpressOfTheSea
PortPhillipBayQuarrantineStatic
StempostAndTimbers
Jan1985



S237 EmpressOfTheSea
PortPhillipBayQuarrantineStatic
DetailOfWreck Jan1985



S237 EmpressOfTheSea
PortPhillipBayQuarrantineStatic
DiversMeasuring Jan1985



S237 EmpressOfTheSea
PortPhillipBayQuarrantineStatic
HullSection Jan1985



S237
_EmpressoftheSea_SitePlan_c

Location

Quarantine Station, Port Phillip Bay

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S237

Date lost

19/12/1861

Construction material

Wood

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

3

Length/Breadth/Depth

240.00 Feet / 43.00 Feet / 27.00 Feet

Builder

Donald McKay

Year of construction

1853

Built port

Boston, Massachusetts

Built country

USA

Date lost

19/12/1861

Departure

Melbourne

Destination

London

Cargo

Full cargo, incl. 2,016 oz. gold, valued at 80,000 pounds;wool, sheepskins, tallow, wheat, flour, copper ore, whale bone, whale oil

Owner

James Baines Black Ball Line (5/9/1860) , under charter to White Star Line at time of loss.

Master

Capt. W. (Bully) Bragg(e)

Cause of loss

Caught fire at Queenscliff at 4 am. when the officer of the watch attempted to extinguish the fire they found fire pump handles missing and buckets ineffective. Fire became out of control and the ship was sailed from anchorage and ran ashore at Point Nepean. Ship rolled over onto starboard side by force of the tide and the shifting ballast. The port side was burnt "to the copper" (UID 72)

Passenger comments

12 saloon passengers

Number of crew

45

Crew comments

Goldman (german crewman suspected of the arson)

Statement of significance

<p>The Empress of the Sea is historically and archaeologically significant as it was one of Donald Mackay's famous wooden clipper ships ie: representative of a particular design or type. It was also associated with both the Black Ball and White Star Lines of Australian Packets, which carried thousands of immigrants from Britain to Australia.</p>

VHR history

Clipper ship Hull: seasoned white oak, hard pine Main yard 93-1/2 feet in length; female figurehead. Crew incompetent. Capt. Bragge went ashore at Queenscliff to obtain 10 men at Geelong; away over night. Vessel caught fire about 4 am. Pump handles missing, buckets could not quench fire. The gold, passengers and cargo were got off, then vessel was run ashore. Burnt to the copper (21-23 ft mark) and sank in 18-20 ft of water. Goldman, the German quarter-master who had previously been convicted of killing a fellow policeman, was under suspicion but nothing was proved. Sold for 3,750 pounds. Salvagers of gold awarded 20,000 pounds Chartered to White Star Line at time of loss. Tonnage space: 189.8 x 39.2 x 23.7 feet. Co-efficient:0.64 Original inspection of site by MAU (M.Staniforth) identified the site as the Sea. Record voyage London-Melbourne 66-1/2 days - 1861 For five years vessel made speedy voyages to many ports before purchase by James Baines for Australian Black Ball Line. On second and last voyage to Australia, arrived 6 August 1861. Delay in departure may have been caused because of difficulty in obtaining a crew due to desertions to goldfields. Confusion over name (' Sea ' and 'Seas ') has arisen because there were two vessels with similar names, entering Melbourne at about the same time.