

# Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 18/08/24

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## FOIG-A-BALLAGH



S263 FoigABallagh  
PortPhillipBay WreckRemains



S263 FoigABallagh  
PortPhillipBay DiverOnWreck



S263 FoigABallagh  
PortPhillipBay Measuring



S263 FoigABallagh  
PortPhillipBay TopView

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### Location

Between Coles and West Channel, Port Phillip Bay

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S263

### Date lost

06/08/1852

### Construction material

Wood

### Propulsion

Sail

### Number of masts

3

**Length/Breadth/Depth**

93.40 Feet / 21.70 Feet / 9.30 Feet

**Year of construction**

1845

**Built port**

Belfast

**Built country**

Ireland

**Registration Number**

53 of 1852

**Registration Port**

Sydney

**Date lost**

06/08/1852

**Departure**

Sydney

**Destination**

Melbourne

**Cargo**

Coal

**Owner**

Edward Davies (1852), shipowner, of Sydney

**Master**

Captain James Wilson

**Weather conditions**

Weather: East force 10, thick; Gale

**Cause of loss**

Was sheltering in the West Channel of Port Phillip Bay when anchors parted and went aground (UID 23)

## Number of crew

10

## Crew comments

Approximately

## Statement of significance

Foig-a-Ballagh is representative of one of the small trading sailing vessels, carrying essential goods into and out of Melbourne during the nineteenth century. Coal was becoming an indispensable commodity in Victoria from the 1850s onwards with the development of the railways and the new steamships that were becoming increasingly popular and Foig-a-Ballagh was a coal-carrying trader. Foig-a-Ballagh potentially has archaeological significance for Irish shipbuilding techniques as it is possible the bow is reasonably well preserved under the sand. The vessel holds potential significance as a training site for maritime archaeology students.

Significance assessed against criteria defined in Guidelines for the Management of Australia's Shipwrecks (1994)

**CRITERION 1: HISTORIC**

Foig-a-Ballagh has historical significance as representative of one of the small sailing trading vessels operating on Port Phillip Bay during the mid-nineteenth century.

**CRITERION 2: TECHNICAL**

Foig-a-Ballagh currently has no proven technical significance.

**CRITERION 3: SOCIAL**

Foig-a-Ballagh has minor social significance due to its part in the history of the coal trade in Victoria.

**CRITERION 4: ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

Foig-a-Ballagh may have archaeological significance in Irish shipbuilding techniques since what remains of the hull may be reasonably well preserved under sand. The site could be a useful training site for maritime archaeology students, in the right conditions, due to its relatively shallow depth and accessibility by boat. Training activities could include site location and non-disturbance surveys.

**CRITERION 5: SCIENTIFIC**

Foig-a-Ballagh is not currently the subject of any scientific studies.

**CRITERION 6: INTERPRETIVE**

Foig-a-Ballagh has interpretive potential both as a training site for archaeology students and as part of the history of Port Phillip Bay.

**CRITERION 7: RARE**

There are eight coal carrier wrecks sunk within Port Phillip Bay, six of those were in ballast. Only Foig-a-Ballagh and Seabird sank with their coal cargoes (Foster 1987: 22-23). The vessel is therefore a rare example in the archaeological record of Port Phillip Bay.

**CRITERION 8: REPRESENTATIVE**

Foig-a-Ballagh is representative of one of the small 'mosquito fleet' sailing vessels, carrying essential goods into and out of Melbourne during the nineteenth century.

## VHR history

Foig-a-Ballagh was a three-masted wooden barque built in 1845 in Belfast. Coal was becoming an indispensable commodity in Victoria from the 1850s onwards with the development of the railways and the new steamships that were becoming increasingly popular. Melbourne was reliant on NSW's black coal up until the 1920s when the Latrobe valley began giving up its brown coal (Foster 1987: 33). On its last voyage in August 1852, Foig-a-Ballagh was carrying coal from Sydney to Melbourne when it was forced to shelter from a storm. When the anchor cable broke, the ship was wrecked between Coles and West Channels in Port Phillip Bay. The weight of its coal cargo meant it could not be raised and the masts were visible above the surface for over ten years.

The vessel was located in 1982 by MAAV and one site inspection took place later that year. The report found that the bow was fairly well preserved and the majority of the remains were buried under sand offering natural protection. There are site sketches in the database of the bow section dated 1986. An attempt was made to relocate the wreck site in 2006 by Flinders University students, however they were unsuccessful. This was largely attributed to difficult diving conditions (McKinnon and Raupp 2006: 66). Heritage Victoria holds one artefact from Foig-a-Ballagh in its collection. Timber samples removed from the site in 1986 revealed that the vessel was constructed of White Oak.