

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 12/10/24

GAMBIER



S281 Gambier PortPhillipBay
Diver Feb1997

Location

Port Phillip Bay, between Queenscliff and Pope s Eye Shoal

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S281

Date lost

28/08/1891

Official number

68090

Construction material

Iron

Propulsion

Steam - Screw

Engine specification

compound vertical inverted direct action, 155 HP, 2 cy. 32" & 60"-39", 65lb boiler

Engine builder

Kincaid, donald & Co., Greenock

Length/Breadth/Depth

280.00 Feet / 31.90 Feet / 23.90 Feet

Builder

J. & R. Swan

Year of construction

1874

Built port

Dumbarton

Built country

Scotland

Registration Number

1885

Registration Port

Melbourne

Date lost

28/08/1891

Departure

Newcastle

Destination

Melbourne

Cargo

304 cases of fruit, 25 tons of fencing wire, 51 bags of maize, 50 bags of rice, 43 half-chests of tea, 10 barrels of corn, 31 cases of manufactured tobacco, 12 cases of plated ware, 3 cases of machinery, 4 packages of typewriters, 80 bales of wool, 500 hides from Sydney, 42 packages of effects, 7 bales of marines, 11 kegs of skins. From Brisbane - 20 cases of meats, 61 cases of tobacco, 105 bags of oysters, 25 cedar logs, 29 cases of pines, and numerous sundries (from Don Love's extract from the Herald)

Owner

Howard Smith and Sons Ltd

Master

Captain Frank Bell

Weather conditions

Clear fine morning

Cause of loss

Collided with the Easby, hit near funnel, Easby tore more than a third of the way through the ship sunk quickly (UID 9, 99, 125). Signal confusion, and neither ship slackened speed when approaching each other

Passenger comments

Mr Maloney, Mr Johnson, Mr Milne, Mr McMillan, Mr Shaw, Mr & Mrs Thorpe, Mr Kolbe, Mr Struthers, Mr Jefferson, Miss Harrington, Miss Crotty, Miss Woodling, Mrs McWhirter, Mrs Glanfield & child, Mrs Deorwyn, Miss Russell, Mr Hill, Miss Nuttall, Thomas, Phillip & Joseph Rooke, Mr & Mrs Robinson, Mr & Mrs Howe, Mr & Mrs Trevenick, Mr Simms, Miss Orchard, Mr Christison, Mr Bennett, Mr Thomas, Mr Green, Mr & Miss Gainor, Mr Loveday, Mr Dwyer, Mr Williams, Mr Horn, Mr Ryan, Mr Franklin, Lizzie & Kate Kelly, Jon Kelly, Mr & Mrs Turner & 3 children, Mr & Mrs McCarthy & child, Mrs Davidson & child, Mrs Leslie & child, Mr Logan, Mr Martin, Mr Williamson, Mr Paul, Mr Donahue, Mr Bannan, Mr Miller, Mr Quinn, Mr Dennis, Mr Walters (UID 9)

Number of crew

37

Crew comments

John Bell, donkeyman; R Cooper, A. Denyer, D. Spillman, J. Robert, W. Budge, A Macckay, G. Thomas, A. Burghand, J. Dunn, J. Alain, W. Shaw, C. Brown, Allison Brown, T. Carrick, John Laurie, R. Smith, D. Danielson, K. McKinnon, J. Haydon, W. Bowness, N Mcauley, A. Garry, J. Smith, Jas McDonald, J. Hughes, H. Davidson, H. Jacques, T. Bailey, J. Frawley, C. Dryden, Miss Lloyd, J. Webster, J. Connell, F. Queily, W. Willmott (UID 9)

Statement of significance

<p>The Gambier is historically and socially significant for its association with the wrecking incident that involved the loss of many lives and had an enormous impact on Victorian society</p>

VHR history

Originally the Ocean, the vessel was renamed in 1888. Had an expensive re-fit 1885 for work as passenger ship. on 28th August the Gambier had entered the heads and was in the West Channel. When signals were misunderstood, the Gambier was run down by the Easby. Up to 21 lives were lost, particularly as one life boat capsized during launch. There was considerable media interest in the event. Both captains were held responsible - gross misconduct - their certificates suspended by Court of Marine Inquiry: Bell (Gambier), 9 months; Prideaux (Easby), 6 months - both captains should have slackened speed. Writ issued for 35,000 pounds against James Paterson & Co., Easby's owners, by Howard Smith & Co. Ltd. Important unit of inter-colonial fleet, operating Melbourne, Sydney, Newcastle. Customs Dept removed wreck, reimbursed by owners who had failed to comply with warrant removal instructions. Site reveals that wreck not removed from sea-bed, just to extent of not being a hazard to shipping.