Victorian Heritage Database Report

HENRY

Location

Louttit Bay, Lorne

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S317

Date lost

10/09/1877

Construction material

Wood

Hull

Ketch rigged with running bowsprit, square stern, carvel built, no galleries, no figurehead, one deck

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

2

Length/Breadth/Depth

48.00 Feet / 13.90 Feet / 6.30 Feet

Year of construction

1852

Built port

Hawkesbury River, New South Wales

Built country

Australia

Registration Number

31626

Registration Port

Melbourne

Date lost

10/09/1877

Departure

Melbourne

Destination

Lorne, via Geelong

Cargo

General

Owner

1854: Barbara Andrews, innkeeper of Melbourne
 1877: Mr Macmillan, timber merchant
 1878-79: Benjamin Cooke Jnr.
 1882-83: Benjamin Cooke Jnr.

Master

Capt. L. Tyndal/ Tindal/ Tyndall

Weather conditions

Gale force easterly winds

Cause of loss

Blown ashore in easterly gale

Statement of significance

<p>The Henry has historical significance for its role in the development of the Melbourne-Louttit Bay timber trade, and development of Lorne. As an Australian built vessel it has archaeological and technical significance for its potential to address questions relating to early Australian shipbuilding.</p>

VHR history

The Henry was a small 31 ton ketch, built in 1852 on the Hawkesbury River, NSW. One source states that "for a number of years" the ketch Henry had traded regularly to Lorne, typically bringing in general cargo such as building supplies and provisions, and taking away wattle bark (used for tanning animal hides), timber or ballast (Loney, 1979: 86).

 Another source states that "the shipping intelligence of the local press announced in June 1877 that the ketch Henry with Captain Tindall, master, would commence running between Melbourne,

Louttit Bay and Apollo Bay." Just three months later the Henry was reported as having been wrecked. (Cecil, 1989: 44)

 The Henry had been registered in the port of Melbourne as early as 1854 and is recorded to have undergone a survey there in July 1876, so it is likely to have visited coastal Victorian ports in the 23 years between 1854 and 1877.

 A later secondary source (ID 14) describes the Henry as having been wrecked in August 1878 however this is incorrect (see GA 14/9/1877 and Argus 14/9/1877).

 The Henry's owner at its time of loss, Mr MacMillan, was a timber merchant. There is an apparent discrepancy in the fact that a Henry, apparently the same vessel, is recorded to have been owned by a Benjamin Cooke Jnr. in 1878-79 and 1882-83 with this registry closed in 1899 as the vessel had broken up in 1888.

 This may be explained by the vessel having been sold as a wreck with the hope of repairing and refloating it at some later date, but the hopes of the new owner Benjamin Cooke Jnr. being dashed when the Henry finally succumbed to the forces of nature, breaking up beyond hope of repair in 1888.

 The Geelong Advertiser reported that the Henry arrived at Lorne on Sunday 9 September with a general cargo from Melbourne and Geelong. The wind had veered around to the eastward and increased to a gale. Her master Captain Tindal anchored the vessel. At 4.00 am Monday morning the heavy sea caused the vessel to drag her anchors and she drove broadside onto the shore, not far from the spot where the Osprey was wrecked, and "opposite the bathing-house built by Mr Mountjoy" (GA 14/9/1877). The Captain and crew reached shore in safety and later in the day began unloading the wrecked craft. This proved difficult but when nearly all the cargo had been safely landed the wind increased to such a force that it was dangerous to work in the surf. The Henry, having been lightened of most of her cargo, was driven further on the beach, and the men, trying to save more cargo, narrowly escaped with their lives (GA 14/9/1877).

 Efforts to refloat the vessel were unsuccessful, and another easterly gale gradually battered the Henry to pieces and it became a total wreck (Loney, 1979: 86).

 An etching of Lorne in the 1890s shows the beach with the remains of two wrecks clearly visible at the high water mark - it is surmised that the vessel in the centre of the beach is the Henry, Otway or Anne, the vessel closer to the Erskine River mouth most probably being the Osprey (ID 156 June 2000).

 A holidaymaker at Lorne in the 1950s, Bruce Tayler recalled what occurred when sand loss exposed the wreck of the Henry in 1957 and created a "potential danger to bathers."
 "Subsequently, one Saturday morning, the crash of the surf was drowned out by the roar of a bulldozer, which proceeded to dig out, and break off the frames and the stern post from the keel of the wreck. Spectators pounced on the copper alloy fastenings as each frame was dismembered. The timber sections were pushed up onto the edge of what is now a car park for subsequent burning, and the bulldozer departed with its trophy of the stern post and rudder complete with brass pintles and copper sheathing, no doubt for scrap value" (Tayler, 1998).

 What remains of this site today has not been seen since the 1970s, but a magnetometer survey has detected anomalies in the supposed area where the last surviving vestiges of it including the keel lie, just off the beach.

 There remain significant questions about the identity and construction of the wrecks at Lorne. For example, timber samples obtained from different parts of a wreck identified at the time as the Rebel (since found to have been refloated) were found to be Northern Hemisphere white oak, and northern NSW/ south QLD turpentine or satinay (CSIRO wood identification 26/6/91). Is this a native timber repair of a foreign-built vessel? Or an Australian built vessel constructed with imported and native timber? Or an Australian rebuilt wreck of foreign origin?

 Of the five vessels recorded to have been wrecked on the beach at Lorne (Rebel, Osprey, Otway, Anne and Henry) two were British built (Rebel, Osprey) two were Australian built (Otway (TAS) and Henry (NSW)) and one as yet unknown (Anne). Although if this Anne is confused with the Anne wrecked in July 1863 at Barwon Heads it was built in New Brunswick, Canada, and is not a Louttit Bay wreck.