

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 27/09/24

INVERLOCHY

Location

Ingoldsby Reef, Anglesea

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S338

Date lost

18/12/1902

Official number

104513

Construction material

Steel

Hull

1 Deck, 2 tiers beams. Poop 28'; Forecastle 32'; Bar Keel 12"; 1 Bulk Head cemented; Moulded depth 23'1".

Propulsion

Sail

Length/Breadth/Depth

238.50 Feet / 36.00 Feet / 21.70 Feet

Builder

Russell & Co

Year of construction

1895

Built port

Glasgow

Built country

Scotland

Registration Port

Aberdeen

Date lost

18/12/1902

Departure

Liverpool

Destination

Melbourne

Cargo

2809 tons general cargo

Owner

G. Milne & Co., Aberdeen

Master

Capt. Kendrick

Weather conditions

Moderate south westerly wind, westerly current setting into the shore and heavy swell

Cause of loss

Ran aground after sailing too close inshore

Passenger comments

Mrs Kendrick, who lost jewellery, two pianos and a high grade bicycle

Number of crew

21

Crew comments

1st Officer W. Stewart, 2nd Officer Mr Bumberbee, Steward McGee, Asst Steward Rogers, Apprentices Halliday, Duke, Barr, Leckie and Collie. ABs Stephen, Young, Steel, Lowrie, Owen, Parry, Jones, Lassiter, Shearer,

Statement of significance

The Inverlochy is historically significant as the wreck of a international commercial steel sailing barque with evidence of an inward bound cargo. It is educationally and recreationally significant as a dive site with remains of the hull and cargo discernible. It is useful to compare the wreck of the steel Inverlochy with that of the Victoria Tower built of iron (and wrecked over 40 years earlier) to gauge the lasting qualities of iron versus steel hull plating.

VHR history

The 1471 ton steel barque Inverlochy belonging to G. Milne and Co. of Aberdeen, was bound from Liverpool to Port Phillip, Launceston and Hobart with a general cargo including: 5000 bags of slag, 100 boxes of firebricks, 360 cases of borax, 90 casks of boracic acid, 884 drums carbonate of soda, 40 kegs paint, 35 bales cotton waste, 40 cases mangles, 35 cases ploughshares, 22 cases scythe stones, 493 reels of wire netting, hoop iron, tinplate, 57 cases of beer, 273 cases of stout, 1778 cases, casks and quarter casks of whisky, 45 tanks extract of soap, 1300 bars of steel, 9 casks of tiles, 8 casks of glue, 29 quarter casks of rum, 233 cases brandy, 12934 bundles of iron, 118 cases of softgoods, 19 tons pig iron, 1297 cases of wood ash, 48 drums silicate of soda and 213 cases earthenware (Age, 20 December 1902). Following the wreck the cargo valued at 40,000 pounds was sold for 160 pounds (Age, 7 December 1940).

The Inverlochy's master Captain E.R. Kendrick was well known in shipping circles, with experience as an officer on ships belonging to the Loch line as well as having been master of the Invergarry, before taking command of the Inverlochy. Also on this trip were 29 officers and crew, and Mrs Kendrick, who was on board with the intention of taking a pleasure trip with her husband.

After an uneventful voyage from Liverpool the Inverlochy sighted Cape Otway, and set course for Port Phillip Heads. However its progress was impeded by easterly headwinds, and the Inverlochy was forced to tack along the Otway coast. The circumstances of it striking Anglesea Reef (a patch of two reefs off Anglesea River also known separately as Hereford and Ingoldsby Reefs), were described by Captain Kendrick at the time:

"The wind kept up fairly during the early part of the night, and at 10 o'clock we were going at the rate of about five miles an hour towards the north-west. The the wind fell away all of a sudden, and we were left drifting. My watch ended at 10, and as the first mate took over the job, I lay down on the companion to get a bit of sleep. I was awakened by the mate calling to me, at about 11, that there were breakers ahead. We tried to tack, but missed stays. Then I tried to wear the ship, but could not do so. In the meantime we were drifting closer to the breakers, and just as we dropped anchors she bumped. At that time the water was comparatively smooth, but a big swell rose, sufficient to cause some trouble in getting out the boats. The vessel was rocking from side to side, and the poop fittings were cast about on deck like corks. The masts swayed and shook, straining the stays to the utmost, and expecting that they would come down on us every minute, we hurried to lower the boats" (GA, 20 December 1902)

After leaving the ship at about 11.30pm, the two ship's lifeboats with all aboard headed towards Port Phillip Heads where they burned blue lights in the hope of attracting a pilot boat to rescue them. When this failed, after a wet and uncomfortable night of strong westerly winds, heavy seas, and deluges of torrential rain, they eventually made it ashore near Thompsons Creek (Breamelea) at 7.00am, and walked along the sandy beach to Barwon Heads. Meanwhile local residents had raised the alarm and the Split Point lighthouse rocket apparatus and Queenscliff lifeboat were both despatched to the scene, but reported that there were no signs of life aboard the stricken barque.

Initially there were hopes held that the Inverlochy had only grounded on the shallows surrounding the reef and might be floated off. Agents Messrs Bright Gibb & Co. chartered Howard Smith & Co.'s powerful new tug Alacrity, and the tug Eagle was also later despatched to the scene. However the weather had changed to a strong westerly wind with heavy seas and a current, causing the Inverlochy's rudder to be washed off, and the tugs were forced to return to Williamstown (Argus, 22 December 1902). A priority for the salvagers was the recovery of 10 miles of cable weighing a total of 50 tons in the Inverlochy's hold, destined for the Melbourne Tramway Company (Argus, 6 January 1903).

The subsequent Marine Board Enquiry that charged Captain Kendrick with careless navigation and negligence was hampered by the Victorian state legislation. It was reported that "the looseness of the Act as amended, the laxity of the drafting of the presentiment, and the fact that the tribunal trying the case is still constituted in the same way as it was when emphatically condemned by the Marine Board in 1900 all, no doubt, contribute to the delay in bringing the case to a conclusion" (Argus, 10 January 1903). Eventually the Marine Board Inquiry was terminated and the case went to the Melbourne Court, where Captain Kendrick's had his certificate suspended for twelve months and was ordered to pay costs of 120 pounds (Loney 1979: 49)

Meanwhile salvage operations were slowly retrieving some of the cargo, including Mrs Kendrick's bicycle. Strong south-easterly winds in early February caused the vessel to break up, and large quantities of cargo were

floating around the wreck and washing up onto the beaches. By the 7th of February, only a small part of the bow and stern could be seen above the waves (Argus, 7 February 1903).
The wreck was purchased by S. Vizer of Geelong on 12 March 1903. During February and March a large number of casks of ale and spirits were washing ashore, and a Customs officer was assigned to the wreck to protect revenue while salvage operations on the chartered ketch Victoria were going on. However many "unauthorised visits" were made to the wreck and to the beach by locals and fishermen, who created a headache for the Customs and Police officers. Some were quite brazen such as in the case of one local Joseph Gardner who was "unfortunately known to police". Gardner rode up on horseback "infuriated while drunk", abused the officers, dismounted some distance away where he filled up two empty bottles with whisky, and rode off before the officers could reach him (Letter book of Sub-Collector of Customs, Geelong, December 1902 December 1903).
In early June 1903 a series of severe gales shook the wreck with the result that three tons of timber spars and the figurehead were washed ashore. In July 1903 "at least half the cargo" was still on board being "firmly lodged" in the hull, and a request was made that the wreck be blown up, to destroy the remaining cargo, thereby discouraging wreckers and saving the expense of employing a guard (Letter book of Sub-Collector of Customs, Geelong, December 1902 December 1903).
The site of the Inverlochy has been affected by natural forces, as the seaward side of the reef it lies up against broadside (almost exactly the same length as the ship) is almost constantly subjected to surge, tidal currents and breaking waves. As a result the structure has collapsed and it is mostly flattened out in 5-6 metres depth, although substantial structural features are evident including the stempost of the bow facing east, rudder post, a large section of steel deck frames, broken masts with rigging still attached, a deckwinch, windlass and evidence of the cargo in the form of broken glass and crockery. The ship's bell washed up at the time is known to exist in private hands (current whereabouts unknown, but possibly in Queensland), while the original ship's logbook can be seen on display in the museum of the Anglesea and District Historical Society.
Access can be difficult and requires calm weather and flat seas, most divers opting to launch from the more distant but protected Torquay boat ramp rather than the Point Roadknight ramp.