

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 12/07/24

J.W. ALEXANDER

Location

Hopetoun Channel, Corio Bay, Port Phillip Bay

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S380

Date lost

22/12/1936

Official number

125194

Construction material

Wood

Hull

Metalled 1909; surveyed Melbourne 1930; bottom painted 1928,1930; tail shaft inspected 1924, 1930

Propulsion

Steam - Screw

Engine specification

36 HP, then 22 HP (UID 154)

Length/Breadth/Depth

78.20 Feet / 18.50 Feet / 9.50 Feet

Builder

Wm. Ford

Year of construction

1909

Built port

Sydney

Built country

Australia

Registration Number

1924

Registration Port

Melbourne

Date lost

22/12/1936

Departure

Melbourne

Destination

Geelong

Cargo

None

Owner

Victorian Lighterage Co. Ltd

Master

William McBain

Weather conditions

Fairly clear; 3.30 am

Cause of loss

The JW Alexander was towing 2 barges when it collided with SS Allara, which hadn't reduced speed & was struck amidships. Hurlled onto sandbank until broken up (UID 191)

Number of crew

4

Crew comments

F. Hewett (chief engineer); Ernest Peterson (mate); Ralph Stubbs (fireman); Alfred Gevaux (fireman) (UID 9)

VHR history

The JW Alexander was towing the empty barges, Sidney and Orange Grove, when it was badly damaged in a collision with the Allara, which was bound for Melbourne with a coal cargo. The tug was struck amidships, nearly cut in half, and thrown on to the sand-bank on beam ends. Two crew were hurled into the water, one clung to a rope dangling from the Allara for 15 minutes before being heard. All five crew had lucky escapes. The lighterman on the Sidney cut the tow rope with an axe after the collision. Captain McBain claimed the tug was travelling at half speed. It grounded on the north bank, adjacent to No. 3 beacon. It was reported to be one of the best tugs visiting Geelong. The Marine Court of Inquiry verdict was that Captain H. H. Watson of the Allara had failed to reduce speed in the Channel and to keep his vessel under control: the Allara had struck the south bank, then tug. Both lighters owned by the Victorian Lighterage - Sidney (ex Protector) had been the famous cruiser of the South Australian Colonial Navy that went to resist the Boxer Rebellion in 1900, was integrated into the Australian Navy in 1911 and ended its days as a breakwater at Heron Island. The Orange Grove was crushed and sunk at No. North Wharf, Melbourne, in 1942, and raised as scrap metal. (ID 9, 154, 191)