

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 11/10/24

LADY HARVEY

Location

Thirteenth Beach, Barwon Heads

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S404

Date lost

04/02/1858

Official number

31732

Construction material

Wood

Hull

Wood; 1 deck; square stern; carvel built; no gallery; woman's bust head

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

2

Length/Breadth/Depth

78.50 Feet / 20.50 Feet / 12.00 Feet

Builder

Alexander Campbell

Year of construction

1846

Built port

Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia

Built country

Canada

Registration Number

135 of 1855

Registration Port

Melbourne

Date lost

04/02/1858

Departure

River Mersey, Tasmania

Destination

Melbourne

Cargo

Square timber and piles for Williamstown Railway Pier

Owner

J.C. Lloyd & Henry Hunt, merchants, of Melbourne

Master

Master W. Kirkus

Weather conditions

strong SSE winds approaching Heads, thick weather, changed to SW gale, heavy rain

Cause of loss

Ran ashore

Number of crew

9

Crew comments

Statement of significance

The Lady Harvey has historical significance for its association with its builder Alexander Campbell of Nova Scotia, shipbuilder, Member of the Legislature, Justice of the Peace and militia officer. It is impossible to assess its archaeological significance as the wreck has not been located, however it would be representative of a vessel type ie: a North American built, coastal trader of the 19th century.

VHR history

Severe gales were responsible for the loss of the Lady Harvey, a well known small coastal trader that sailed between Tasmania, Sydney, Adelaide and Melbourne. Built in Nova Scotia, Canada, the Lady Harvey's builder Alexander Campbell was described as "something of a legend", a prolific shipbuilder who started out poor but died a rich and powerful political figure, having been a Member of the Legislature, Justice of the Peace and a Militia Officer. It is recorded he built over a hundred ships between 1824 and 1854 when he died, mostly small square riggers in the 125-700 ton range for the British market. In the same year he built the Lady Harvey he completed four other ships, while the following year he equalled this feat launching four on the same day! (Conlin, D., May 2000, pers. comm.).

Confusion has existed over the correct identity of the Lady Harvey wrecked at Barwon Heads. A 300 ton brig Lady Harvey sank four years earlier at Shortlands Bluff on 29 April 1854, after striking Lonsdale Reef while attempting to enter Port Phillip Heads. One secondary source states that this Lady Harvey became a total wreck (Williams & Searle, 1967: 23). However Loney records the claim that after the cargo was salvaged the hull was towed free by the tug Lioness and resumed trading, only to be wrecked at Barwon Heads four years later (Holden, P. in Loney, Aust Shipwrecks Vol. 2: 46).

There were in fact two different Lady Harveys - the vessel wrecked at Barwon Heads was a smaller 145 ton, wooden two-masted brig, built in 1846 at Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia. After having been registered to various owners - in Port Adelaide from 1851, and in Melbourne from February 1853 - at the time of its wrecking it was owned by John Charles Lloyd and Henry Hunt, merchants of Melbourne (Parsons, Australian Shipowners and their fleets, Book 8, Vessels enrolled at Melbourne 1839-1854 A-R; ASRO Melbourne Registry 1855-59). It was described as well known in the coastal trade, voyaging between the Mersey River, Tasmania, and Victorian ports (MMH, 8 February 1858).

Departing the Mersey Heads at 5am on 3 February with Master Kirkus, nine crew and a cargo of square timber and piles bound for the Williamstown Railway Pier, the Lady Harvey was approaching Port Phillip Heads at 10am on the morning of 4 February. A strong south-south-easterly wind was blowing with the weather described as "öary thick". Late in the afternoon the fore-topsail was blown away and the mainsail split, and at 8pm the master wore ship and stood to the south-west, the wind increasing to a perfect gale with heavy rain (Herald, 8 February 1858).

The events that took place next were reported as follows: "ö 11.30pm, called the hands up to wear ship, very thick weather, when just as she was wearing she struck on the reef off the Barwon, and went on shore. The crew remained on board till the flood tide set in, and a very heavy sea breaking over her about 3 o'clock in the morning, the mainmast went through her, and she began to break up very fast; just then a very heavy sea struck her, one man being washed overboard (Henry Hume), and two more jumped overboard; one of them they never saw again; the rest of the crew, six in number, remained till the stern part of her cleared the rest; they then drove in with the sea till they got close in, and the frame got on shore safe. Daylight setting in, they found they were on shore close to the mouth of the Barwon, about twelve miles from Port Phillip Heads (MMH, 8 February 1858).

Another version of events was that the Lady Harvey broke up almost immediately after striking, and "ö of the seamen who were forward were washed overboard, and after great exertion, reached the shore; another poor fellow, less fortunate, was drowned in the attempt (Age, 8 February 1858).

The Argus reported that "öring the late gale, the Lady Harvey went ashore a little to the westward of the Barwon Heads while the Melbourne Morning Herald account above described it as having "öruck the reef off the Barwon, and went on shore". It seems most likely following these accounts that the Lady Harvey struck Charlemont Reef off Thirteenth Beach, and drove ashore somewhere along the eastern part of Thirteenth Beach. This part of the beach is almost always subject to surf and is usually sanded over, making survey and location of any remains - predicted to be broken up and buried in sand - difficult.

Wreckage including remains of rigging have been found along Thirteenth Beach just west of Barwon Head Bluff (Latter, B., pers. comm., June 2000), however this could have floated there from any of the Barwon Heads wrecks including the Earl of Charlemont, South Milton, Sussex, Ant or Lady Harvey. So far no wreckage has been located nor reported that could positively identify the remains of the Lady Harvey, nor further details found about successful salvage activities eg; recovery of anchors, auction of gear etc. Registry was closed on 31 December 1858 (ASRO Melbourne Registry, 1858-59). The Age reported that the vessel was insured (Age, 8 February 1858).