

# Victorian Heritage Database Report

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## LONSDALE (HMVS)



S425 Lonsdale  
PortPhillipQueenscliff  
HistoricView



S425 Lonsdale  
PortPhillipQueenscliff  
Artefacts JH



S425 Lonsdale  
PortPhillipQueenscliff  
WreckSite JH



S425 Lonsdale  
PortPhillipQueenscliff Trypot  
JH

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### Location

Reclaimed land, Queenscliff

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S425

### Date lost

1914

### Construction material

Steel

### Hull

Galvanized steel, length 63', length overall 67', Draught for'd 1' 1", 3' 3" aft, bunker capacity 15cwt, bilge ejectors. 14" whitehead torpedoes carried in dropping gear on each side (UID 115)). Normally carried 2 officers and 5 men. Steel hull, displacem

## **Propulsion**

Steam - Unknown

## **Engine specification**

Single screw, 150 IHP, cylinder diameter HP 8 1/4", LP 13 1/2" Stroke 8", 3 blade propellor diam. 2 10" Pitch 3 9", Boiler working pressure 130 pounds/ square inch. Boiler 3 3" diameter length 8 4" (Source: James Break s notebook, Fleet Engineer Vi

## **Engine builder**

Thornycroft & Co.

## **Length/Breadth/Depth**

67.00 Feet / 7.50 Feet / 3.20 Feet

## **Builder**

Thornycroft & Co.

## **Year of construction**

1883

## **Built port**

Chiswick

## **Built country**

England

## **Registration Port**

Melbourne

## **Date lost**

1914

## **Owner**

Commonwealth of Australia

## **Cause of loss**

Scuttled for a breakwater

## **Crew comments**

Normal crew 2 officers, 5 men

## Statement of significance

Ten torpedo boats made up part of the frontline defences of several of the Australian colonies in the late 19th century, when there was a real and perceived threat of invasion by the Russians and French. H.M.V.S Lonsdale is historically significant as a rare and representative example of a Victorian second-class torpedo boat. Lonsdale demonstrates technical significance as an early example of the development of the fast attack torpedo craft, culminating in the 'PT' boats used so effectively during World War II. The vessel has archaeological significance contributing to the study of abandoned watercraft and subsequent site formation processes and scientific significance through future corrosion studies.

Significance assessed against criteria defined in Guidelines for the Management of Australia's Shipwrecks (1994)

**CRITERION 1: HISTORIC**

H.M.V.S Lonsdale has historical significance as a key element of the Victorian Colonial Navy. International wars, threats of invasions and local rebellions encouraged uncertainty, fed partly by the popular press, in Britain's ability to protect its colonies. As an early member of Victoria's colonial navy, H.M.V.S Lonsdale was a significant part of Victoria's defence. Along with the other first-and second-class torpedo boats - Nepean, Childers, Countess of Hopetoun and Gordon - Lonsdale formed part of the frontline defence for the last twenty years of the Victorian colony.

**CRITERION 2: TECHNICAL**

H.M.V.S. Lonsdale was built at the shipyard of John Thornycroft who went on to produce the fast attack Patrol Torpedo (PT) boats used with great effect in the Pacific during WWII. Lonsdale represents a rare, early example highlighting the development of these fast, hit-and-run type of vessels.

**CRITERION 3: SOCIAL**

H.M.V.S. Lonsdale has minor social significance. The vessel has some social significance as a member of the colonial naval defence force of the late 19th century that represented protection for the Victorian colony.

**CRITERION 4: ARCHAEOLOGICAL**

The 2006 excavation results appeared to indicate that the section forward of the machinery space is no longer coherent, although a 1.7 metre section of the bow exists lying on the port side, disarticulated from the main structure. Information gathered to date suggests that the ship aft of the conning tower still exists, although its condition is unknown (Hewitt and Tucker 2009: 32).

**CRITERION 5: SCIENTIFIC**

Anodes were placed on the wreck during the archaeological survey in 1997, but there has been no subsequent electrode potential survey. Due to high ground water and tidal fluctuations, the wreck is frequently exposed to water and is at risk of collapse (Hewitt and Tucker 2009:32). Although H.M.V.S Lonsdale has been scrapped and hulked, it still has possible scientific significance through contributions to ongoing work on corrosion studies.

**CRITERION 6: INTERPRETIVE**

H.M.V.S Lonsdale is currently the subject of a small interpretive display at the Queenscliff Maritime Centre. The vessel has future interpretive significance, not only in the development of the Navy in Australia, but also the types of vessels that contributed to the defence of the colonies.

**CRITERION 7: RARE**

H.M.V.S Lonsdale is a rare surviving example of a second-class torpedo boat and the only surviving example of a second-class torpedo boat from the Victorian Colonial Navy.

**CRITERION 8: REPRESENTATIVE**

H.M.V.S Lonsdale is significant as one of only three surviving second-class torpedo boats that were used in the defence of the Australian and New Zealand colonies.

## VHR history

Ten torpedo boats served across Australia from the early 1880s onwards. They were purchased by the individual colonies in response to a perceived threat of a Russian (and briefly French) invasion (Hunter 2011:1). The British-based Thornycroft, the builder of H.M.V.S. Lonsdale, went on to build the fast PT attack boats used with great success in World War II. H.M.V.S. Lonsdale and H.M.V.S. Nepean, another Thornycroft second-class torpedo boat, were commissioned in 1883 and arrived in Australia in 1884.

H.M.V.S. Lonsdale never saw battle action but did take part in the annual and rather festive Easter exercises, even hitting H.M.V.S. Cerberus in 1885 with one of its spar torpedoes, the only time Cerberus came under fire in its career (Hewitt and Tucker 2009:13). Based on British advice the second-class torpedo boats underwent some Australian modification to their torpedo gear, which subsequently improved their speed and performance (Argus 23 February 1888). By 1892, Victoria had three-second class torpedo boats, two first-class boats and 32 torpedoes (Cahill 2009:134).

The torpedo boats were handed over to the Commonwealth after Federation in 1901 and put up for sale in 1902, but, with no buyers, Nepean and Lonsdale continued to take part in manoeuvres (Cahill 2009: 132). When the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was officially formed, Lonsdale and Nepean, considered 'outmoded', were again unsuccessfully put up for sale in 1914 (Hewitt and Tucker 2009:13). What happened to H.M.V.S. Lonsdale over the next six years is unclear. But sometime before 1920, the vessel ended up on the beach at Queenscliff, briefly becoming a meeting point for local beach goers, before the sand slowly swallowed the vessel and it faded from memory.

The remains of H.M.V.S. Lonsdale were first located in 1983 by members

of the Maritime Archaeology Association of Victoria (MAAV) following the long-buried 1920s shoreline (Cahill 1999). A short survey followed to confirm the identity of the vessel. The conning tower was re-excavated in 1997 for an attempted geophysical survey, but it was largely unsuccessful due to the large amounts of extraneous ferrous material scattered around the site (Shwartz 1997:2). Due to the recent redevelopment of Queenscliff Harbour, H.M.V.S. Lonsdale was re-excavated in 2005/2006 in an effort to determine the full extent of the wreck (Hewitt and Tucker 2009).