

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 30/09/24

MARTHA

Location

Port Phillip Heads

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S452

Date lost

05/03/1895

Official number

74664

Construction material

Wood

Hull

Fore and aft schooner, one deck, square stern, carvel built, no galleries, shield head (UID 102)

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

2

Length/Breadth/Depth

68.00 Feet / 17.50 Feet / 5.70 Feet

Builder

John Thomas Legg, of Williamstown

Year of construction

1877

Built port

Williamstown, Victoria

Built country

Australia

Registration Port

Melbourne

Date lost

05/03/1895

Departure

Circular Head

Destination

Melbourne

Cargo

50 tons potatoes, grain - value approx. 200 pounds (UID 9)

Owner

11 Dec 1894 - William Cowper, shipowner, of Melbourne; William John Roberts, merchant of Bairnsdale; Alexander Higham, shipowner of Melbourne; Jane Mobbs, widow of Melbourne

Master

Captain A. Stutz

Weather conditions

ebb tide; increasing westerly gale, heavy sea

Cause of loss

Capsized in sudden squall in the middle of the Rip while entering the Heads on an ebb tide with a westerly wind (contrary to sailing directions)

Number of crew

3

Crew comments

A Stutz, master, 38, born Germany, residing in Tasmania with wife & child; J. Delmer, mate, 59 years, native of Germany; and F. Brown, seaman, 39 years of Tasmania (UID 9, 152)

Statement of significance

<p>The wreck of the 'Martha' is socially significant for its association with an event in which 3 men lost their lives.</p>

VHR history

The Martha was wrecked while trying to enter Port Phillip Heads without a pilot and in improper weather conditions. The 3 crew members were seen clinging to the wreckage, but were unable to be saved due to increasingly strong weather conditions (UID 9, 152). The ship had previously stranded Lakes Entrance 1881, 1889, under a different master. The Martha frequently sailed between Tasmania and Melbourne in the last months before being wrecked. There was a suggestion that the ship was not properly loaded for last voyage, but an inquiry by the Marine Board of Victoria found it was not improperly loaded, and that the casualty was attributable to master's misjudgement in attempting to enter Heads in unsuitable weather conditions (Marine Board of Victoria minutes 1895). Registry closed 17 April 1895.