

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 10/11/24

R.M.S. AUSTRALIA



S49 RMSAustralia
PortPhillipHeads HistoricView
dateunknown



S49 RMSAustralia
PortPhillipHeads AfterFire
dateunknown



S49 RMSAustralia
PortPhillipHeads ViewIn1904
20/06/1904



S49 RMSAustralia
PortPhillipHeads Wreck
dateunknown RC

Location

Outer Corsair Reef, Point Nepean

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S49

Date lost

20/06/1904

Official number

99786

Construction material

Iron

Propulsion

Steam - Screw

Engine specification

Triple expansion engine: 3 cylinder 42", 67' & 108"x72" stroke 2500 HP. Boiler pressure 160 lbs psi UID: 3, 104

Engine builder

Caird & Co., Greenock

Number of masts

4

Length/Breadth/Depth

465.60 Feet / 52.20 Feet / 26.40 Feet

Builder

Caird & Co, Ltd

Year of construction

1892

Built port

Greenock

Built country

Scotland

Registration Port

Greenock

Date lost

20/06/1904

Departure

London

Destination

Sydney

Cargo

Mail, copper pipes, liquor, soft goods, sundries (UID: 152), steel bars, enamelware, "Boosey's brass band instruments", Irish whiskey, Indian tea, drapery and haberdashery (UID: 28)

Owner

P & O Steam Navigation Co Ltd

Master

Captain Francis Cole

Weather conditions

Moderate sea; light rain squalls

Cause of loss

Ran aground. Struck Corsair Rock travelling at 14.5 knots. Pilot Dennis revealed to have eye disease that impaired his vision Broke up after 2 years (UID: 53).

Passenger comments

Mr Campbell with wife & son; Miss J.H. Reid; Mr Nishimura (UID: 9)

Number of crew

224

Crew comments

white 54, Lascar 127, Goanese 43

Statement of significance

<p>The vessel is of historical significance due to the events that took place soon after the wrecking. It is of limited archaeological significance as a result of the heavy salvaging that took place soon after. It has been described as being a "mass of twisted, matted metal".</p>

VHR history

With Pilot Dennis in charge, the luxurious Royal Mail steamer struck Corsair Rock at 1.45 am, travelling at 14.5 knots. Medical evidence revealed Dennis was suffering from Bright's disease, causing defective eyesight - given as a reason for his not seeing properly the lead lights when altering course to enter the Heads. As a result, the Court of Marine Inquiry cancelled his licence. Stricter medical examinations for pilots were instituted as a consequence. Passengers and crew got off without incident, although evidence conflicted over alleged delay in arrival of lifeboat. As with the Petriana, a press and public outcry over treatment of Asian crew by the authorities. In July, a mysterious fire gutted the ship. Local fishermen under suspicion - not proven. Wreck visible for over 2 years. Wreck site blasted in 1911 to clear channel for fishing boats. Now 'a mass of twisted, matted metal'. Original cost approx. 250,000 pounds. Sold for 290 pounds to Melbourne merchant, J. G. Aikman, possibly yielding profit of between 100,000 and 150,000 pounds.