

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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BLACK WITCH I

Location

Apollo Bay

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S53

Date lost

22/01/1954

Construction material

Steel

Propulsion

Steam - Screw

Length/Breadth/Depth

70.00 Feet / 14.00 Feet / 9.00 Feet

Year of construction

1914

Registration Port

Apollo Bay

Date lost

22/01/1954

Departure

Apollo Bay

Destination

Apollo Bay

Owner

Jim Anderson

Master

Jim Anderson

Weather conditions

Easterly gale

Cause of loss

Ran ashore in a gale, harbour entrance blocked by sand

Statement of significance

<p>At time of writing the Black Witch I is not classified as an historic shipwreck, however along with its replacement the Black Witch II wrecked four years later in similar circumstances, are the only wrecks that are evidence of commercial fishing operations along the Otway coast.</p>

VHR history

A steel screw steamer, the Black Witch I was originally named the Cheopis and was used by the Customs Department in Adelaide. It then was involved in the passenger trade to Kangaroo Island. Jim Anderson of Apollo Bay purchased it and converted it to a fishing vessel. During an easterly gale the vessel was washed ashore at Apollo Bay and badly holed. Several attempts to refloat her failed and she was finally abandoned (Loney, 1975: 76-77)

 "On 22nd June the Black Witch I was wrecked outside the partly completed breakwater. The boat could not get into the harbour because of sand which had built up at the entrance" (Bellair: 56)

 The wreck of the Black Witch I indicates the changes in coastal geography that were occurring as a result of the breakwall harbour construction. Today the harbour entrance requires constant dredging to keep it clear of sand transported around Point Bunbury by northwards littoral drift. It also shows that fishing vessels were using the harbour prior to full completion of the construction works in 1955.