

# Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 11/10/24

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## PRINCESS ROYAL

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### Location

Lonsdale Reef, Port Phillip Heads

### Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S542

### Date lost

24/02/1849

### Construction material

Wood

### Propulsion

Sail

### Number of masts

3

### Length/Breadth/Depth

0.00 Feet / 0.00 Feet / 0.00 Feet

### Date lost

24/02/1849

### Departure

Hong Kong

### Destination

Melbourne - Sydney

### Cargo

Tea, sugar, rice ,consigned to Nankeville of Griffiths,

## **Master**

Captain Sinclair

## **Weather conditions**

Clear; ebb tide Heavy gale from SW

## **Cause of loss**

Struck Lonsdale Reef and broke in half

## **Statement of significance**

<p>Princess Royal brought out the first 200 free female immigrants to Tasmania in 1832.</p>

## **VHR history**

The Princess Royal was wrecked as a result of the Shortlands Bluff light<br /> being moved. Although Captain Sinclair, the master of the vessel, was<br /> unaware of this at the time, he had decided to wait off the Heads until<br /> daylight before entering the bay and believed he was some distance out<br /> to sea. The Princess Royal was a 462-ton, wooden three-masted barque<br /> built in Bristol in 1841, and registered in Liverpool, UK. It was felt<br /> and yellow metalled and had had some major repairs carried out in 1845,<br /> as well as repairs for damage in 1848. Its dimensions are not known. It<br /> had sailed from Hong Kong on 17 December 1848 for Sydney, calling into<br /> Melbourne to receive orders from its owners Hall & Co. of London. It<br /> was carrying a cargo of eight cases of silk, 525 chests, 1011<br /> half-chests and 127 boxes of tea, 4120 bags sugar, three casks of wine<br /> and sundries. The Shortlands Bluff light in question had been moved<br /> from the top of its usual tower on to a platform between two of the<br /> pilots houses, where it could be obscured by the tower. Captain Sinclair<br /> was unaware of this when he went below with orders to the chief mate to<br /> heave to as soon as the light was seen. At 3 a.m. on the morning of 24<br /> February, in a heavy gale from the south-south-west and with an ebb<br /> tide, the Princess Royal struck the outer edge of the Lonsdale Reef<br /> three times, and broke in two on the third occasion. The captain and<br /> crew were lucky to escape with their lives as they had barely time to<br /> launch the boats. The vessel broke up immediately and little cargo was<br /> saved apart from a few tea chests, a small quantity of silk and a box of<br /> letters that floated on to shore. Captain Sinclair in a letter to the<br /> Lloyds agent wrote that "... the cause of this disaster is the<br /> light being placed on the inner island of the outer head, which serves<br /> as a meteor to lead a stranger into danger, instead of a guide to<br /> safety." However, the editor of the Geelong Advertiser was scathing<br /> in his judgement of the captain stating, "it is an undeniable<br /> fact...that no wreck has ever occurred on the shores of Port Philip<br /> which was not attributable to the ignorance, incapacity or recklessness<br /> of the captain or officer in charge...the Princess Royal was cast upon<br /> the rocks by a captain who saw the light, but, on his own confession,<br /> did not know where it was!" The vessel had totally disappeared by 1<br /> March, and was reportedly insured along with the cargo. The remains of<br /> the hull sold for £20. Identifiable remains of the wreck of the<br /> Princess Royal have not been located nor reported.