

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 16/08/24

SACRAMENTO

Location

Reclaimed land, Newport

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S602

Date lost

1885

Length/Breadth/Depth

0.00 Feet / 0.00 Feet / 0.00 Feet

Date lost

1885

Cause of loss

Abandoned and later broken up

Statement of significance

<p>Potentially historically significant as example of convict hulk. Archaeological significance could be limited due to ships being broken up. At the time of the first gold rushes, many vessels were abandoned by their crews on Port Phillip Bay. Lawlessness was rife, and existing penal institutions were unable to cope with the number of criminals being gaoled. The Deborah and Sacramento were therefore purchased by the Government in 1853 for hulking as prison ships and were moored off Williamstown with three other prison hulks Lysander, President and Success.</p>

VHR history

Former barque, purchased from Messrs Degraives by colonial government for use as an immigration hulk or depot. Then used as a penal hulk from 1852, one of five such hulks (Lysander, President, Deborah and Success were the others) employed during gold rushes to hold 1374 men in custody. The last hulk in service when in 1878 the 18 convicts were transferred to new Gellibrand's Point gaol. Laid alongside another hulk in Greenwich Bay in 1878. Broken up and partially burned and buried under silt when Greenwich Bay was reclaimed. Hulks usually moored off Gellibrand Point although, according to some secondary sources, moved to other locations when prisoners were required for public works, such as roadmaking and cutting stone for pier construction. Mainly used as store-ship for convict hulk fleet, although it housed a few prisoners. Sacramento and Deborah

became stores ships at Naval Depot, Fishermen's Bend. Recent extensive research by Wayne Manallack casts doubt on the identity of one of the convict hulks, and possibly even whether the buried hulks marked on a chart are indeed convict hulks.[However, if two convict hulks are buried under the reclaimed land, it seems likely they are the Sacramento and Deborah - not Sacramento and President, as claimed by Wilson Evans]. The existence of the hulks is dubious, although not impossible. The Illustrated Australian News stated, "The last relics of the Deborah and Sacramento, long used as timber hulks, but now
broken up, exist no longer, except as transmitted by the artist..." 28 April 1888, p. 82. Mooring anchors found in 1990 during bucket dredging operations were speculated to be mooring anchors for the prison hulks but were in fact proven to be related to the floating dock Habitant. (Wreckings Sept. 2001 No. 223)