

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 23/09/21

SCHOMBERG



S612 Schomberg
PeterboroughCurdiesInlet
StackedRailwayIron



S612 Schomberg
PeterboroughCurdiesInlet InletPosts



S612 Schomberg
PeterboroughCurdiesInlet PackedIron



S612 Schomberg
PeterboroughCurdiesInlet IronPot



S612 Schomberg SitePlan diveinfosheet
1992

Location

Peterborough, Curdies Inlet

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S612

Date lost

26/12/1855

Construction material

Wood

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

3

Length/Breadth/Depth

288.00 Feet / 45.00 Feet / 29.50 Feet

Builder

Alexander Hall and Co.

Year of construction

1855

Built port

Aberdeen

Built country

Scotland

Registration Port

Liverpool

Date lost

26/12/1855

Departure

Liverpool

Destination

Melbourne

Cargo

General

Owner

James Banes & Co., Liverpool - The Black Ball Line

Master

Capt. James Bully Forbes

Weather conditions

SE force 2, clear day

Cause of loss

Navigational error, vessel went ashore

Statement of significance

Schomberg was a large clipper ship built for James Baines' famous Black Ball Line. Schomberg has historical significance as one of the luxurious ships built to bring emigrants to Australia, cashing in on the gold rush era. The clipper is one of only three clipper wrecks in Victorian waters that operated the England to Australia run. While the other two, Empress of the Sea and Lightening, were built by the famous American shipbuilder, Donald MacKay, Schomberg was built in Aberdeen. It was an attempt to build a faster ship than MacKay and a vessel fast enough to break the sailing record to Australia. Schomberg never got the chance to break any records, sinking on its maiden voyage to Australia (Heritage Victoria 2010). Schomberg has interpretative significance as part of the Underwater Shipwreck Discovery Trail (Lomdahl 1992) and the land-based West Coast Historic Shipwreck Trail (Heritage Victoria 1994). The vessel is badly broken up and the remains are heavily concreted. Schomberg is not currently the subject of any archaeological or scientific studies. Significance assessed against criteria defined in Guidelines for the Management of Australia's Shipwrecks (1994) CRITERION 1: HISTORIC Schomberg has great historical significance as a representative example of a large, fast clipper ship on the England to Australia run, carrying emigrants attempting to cash in on the Victorian gold rush. CRITERION 2: TECHNICAL When Schomberg was built in 1855, the vessel was one of the largest clipper ships ever built, during an era of large and fast clipper ships. In an effort to make the vessel as fast as possible, it was heavily sparred and carried 16,000 square yards of canvas sail. Schomberg is representative of the technical advances made to break sailing records between Europe and Australia. CRITERION 3: SOCIAL Schomberg's social significance is aligned with its association with Captain 'Bully' Forbes, one of the most famous - and dangerous - captains of the era. The vessel also has social significance for its brief role in carrying passengers immigrating to Australia on a promise of finding gold. CRITERION 4: ARCHAEOLOGICAL The site is badly broken up and there are no hull features visible. Railway tracks and large girders can be seen. The site is heavily concreted. Some small artefacts such as shoes and belt buckles can be seen cemented into the limestone. Schomberg is not currently the subject of any archaeological studies. Last recorded site visit 1986. There are 73 artefacts in Heritage Victoria's Schomberg artefact collection, including a gudgeon and pintles. CRITERION 5: SCIENTIFIC Schomberg is not currently the subject of any scientific research. CRITERION 6: INTERPRETIVE Schomberg has interpretive significance as part of the "Underwater Shipwreck Discovery Trail" (Lomdahl 1992:Schomberg) and the land-based "West Coast Historic Shipwreck Trail (Heritage Victoria 1994). Schomberg's story is also the subject of shipwreck literature designed for a general audience (Charlewood 1996 and Loney 1979). CRITERION 7: RARE Schomberg is a rare example of the fast, luxurious clipper ships bringing immigrants from England to Australia. There are only two other examples of Black Ball Line clipper ships in Victorian waters - Lightening and Empress of the Seas - but Schomberg is the only one built in Aberdeen using a diagonal design. CRITERION 8: REPRESENTATIVE Schomberg is representative, not only of the fast clipper ships, but also the adventure and danger of sailing to the other side of the world for the chance to find gold.

VHR history

Schomberg was a three masted wooden clipper ship, built in 1855 at Aberdeen for James Baine's famous Black Ball line. The Schomberg story was almost the nineteenth century's Titanic; built at great expense, labelled the most perfect clipper ship ever built and designed to be the most comfortable vessel to sail to Melbourne and sinking on its maiden voyage in 1855. Built with diagonal planking, Schomberg's frame was British oak with layers of Scottish larch fitted diagonally to the frame. Incidentally, pieces of hull with this design feature were washed up on the New Zealand coast and thought to be a part of the hull of Schomberg. The clipper was almost

88 metres long, 13.7 metres beam and almost 9 metres in depth at the hold. Schomberg left Liverpool on 6th October 1855 with 430 passengers and 3,000 tons of general cargo. The Captain, 'Bully' Forbes was aiming to get to Melbourne in 60 days, which would have been a magnificent feat. But a few windless days at the equator meant the vessel had no chance of breaking the record. The ship sighted Moonlight Head on Christmas Day but through a deadly combination of wind, currents and unmarked sand spits, the vessel ran aground. Fortunately the SS Queen was nearby and managed to save all passengers and crew. The wrecking of the Schomberg caused quite the public stir particularly in light of the fact the vessel was supposed to be, the most perfect clipper ship ever built, (Lomdahl 1992:Schomberg). The sinking of the vessel did have further ramifications. Part of the cargo was an iron railway bridge destined to open the railway crossing at Hawthorn. Another bridge was not opened until 1861. Captain Forbes was charged in the Supreme Court under suspicion that he was playing cards with two female passengers below decks when his ship ran aground. Despite a protest meeting, two inquiries and the court proceedings, he was found not guilty and cleared of all charges (Uhl 1985:24). The vessel was gazetted as an Historic shipwreck in 1982, inspected twice in 1986 and was re-gazetted in 1990. Schomberg is part of the Underwater Shipwreck Discovery Trail (Lomdahl 1992:Schomberg) and the land-based West Coast Historic Shipwreck Trail (Heritage Victoria 1994).