

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 11/10/24

TRADER

Location

Point Castries, east of Lorne

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S678

Date lost

02/04/1889

Official number

61045

Construction material

Wood

Hull

Single deck, elliptic stern, carvel built, scroll figurehead, timbers and planking - eucalyptus, decks and spars - celery hop

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

2

Length/Breadth/Depth

72.10 Feet / 17.50 Feet / 6.90 Feet

Builder

H. Bennett

Year of construction

1870

Built port

Penguin Creek, Launceston

Built country

Australia

Registration Number

14/1886

Registration Port

Melbourne

Date lost

02/04/1889

Departure

Melbourne

Destination

Lorne and Gabo Island

Cargo

Full cargo for Lorne and Gabo Island (possibly including tombstones for Lorne cemetery).

Owner

William F. Walker and Company of Melbourne

Master

Captain G. A. Staton/ Stanton

Weather conditions

calm; south-east gusty wind change

Cause of loss

Sudden wind direction change, sails split, blown ashore

Number of crew

4

Crew comments

Statement of significance

The wreck of the *Trader* is significant as being representative of a type ie: an Australian built schooner once part of a fleet of small vessels trading in Bass Strait between Port Phillip, Victorian coastal ports and Tasmania.

VHR history

The *Argus* gave high praise to the practical and aesthetic qualities of the *Trader* when it first arrived in Melbourne: "Amongst the arrivals from intercolonial ports on Saturday was a Tasmanian built craft, the schooner *Trader* from River Leven, with a cargo of oats &c. She looks a fine handy vessel, and one well adapted for the coasting or intercolonial trade from her light draught of water and good carrying capacity....Colonial woods only have been employed in her construction, the timbers and planking being of gum and the spars and decks of a description of pine known as celery hop... She has been well and faithfully built and will prove an acquisition not only in name but in reality to our fleet of intercolonial traders" (*Argus* 8/8/1870).
The *Trader* had been previously 'wrecked' and refloated at Penguin Creek in June 1872 (*ASR* Jan/Feb 1990, p.47), and sank in 12 feet of water in the Coles Channel off St. Leonards in November 1888 (*Notices to Mariners, Govt. Gazette* 23/11/1888), a position from which it was also refloated. In September 1878 the Mate of the *Trader* boasted fondly of its speedy sailing qualities: "The schooner *Trader* made the passage from Port Phillip Heads to Circular Head in 18 hours. She made another from the Heads to the River Leven, Tasmania, in 17 hours. The same vessel made the run from Warrnambool to the West Channel Light ship in Hobsons Bay in the space of 18 hours" (Emery).
On 22 October 1882 while on a voyage from Ulverstone, Tasmania to Melbourne it sprang a leak, forcing the crew to jettison the cargo and keep the pumps going until arrival (*ASN* 28/10/1882). It is also recorded to have stranded at Williamstown (Cecil & Carr, 1992: 56).
On a voyage to Lorne with a cargo for Lorne and Gabo Island (supposed to include marble tombstones for the Lorne cemetery), the *Trader* was becalmed, when a light breeze sprang up. Sail was set but without warning the wind veered south-easterly and a sudden squall shredded the sails. The vessel was helpless and was driven onto rocks at Loutit Bay, about 4 miles from Lorne. (*ASR* Jan/ Feb 1990, p. 47).
The *Colac Herald* described the event: The vessel was sailing with a light easterly wind towards Lorne with a full cargo when it got too close to shore. The vessel was in difficulty after passing Eagle Rock. With all the exertions of her crew to tow her off the land she caught the ground about 4 miles from Lorne township near the Big Hill and anchored. After two hours she got under weigh and then a squall from the south-east came on and drove her further in shore. When she struck she made water so fast that the master and crew took to the boat, reaching the shore with great difficulty. The schooner has since broken up and only a small portion of the cargo will be recovered" (*CH* 5/4/1889).
Another account said that the master and crew jumped overboard and were washed ashore. (*Argus*, 13 April 1889)
The Secretary of the Marine Board received a report from the master of the *Trader*, who stated that the accident was due to the wind suddenly veering around and blowing from the south-east. The vessel was taken aback by the sudden change and the sails splitting, she became unnavigable. It was resolved that the matter should be referred to the Court of Marine Inquiry. The recommendation of the Court was that vessels like the *Trader* should be made to carry a suit of storm sails. Mr Smith of the Board said that he had never heard of vessels like the *Trader* carrying a suit of storm sails and if they did they would probably be found to be rotten when they were wanted. The matter was then referred to the Regulations Committee (*Argus* 27/4/1889).
The crew of the *Trader* wrote a letter to the editor of the *Argus* thanking the people of Lorne for their courtesy and kindness, and the aid raised to enable them to reach Melbourne. (*Argus* 15/4/1889)
The site of the wreck of the *Trader* was described as lying just offshore at Point Castries, four miles north of Lorne, wedged between two rocks (*Argus* 3/4/1889), with the hull and cargo a total loss. An anchor was recovered from the site by local fishermen in the 1960-1970s. Eroded pieces of marble have been found washed up on the beach (Walding, pers. comm. 2000) in this area that may have been part of the *Trader*'s cargo.