

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 27/04/24

SS BARWON

Location

Cape Bridgewater

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S69

Date lost

03/04/1871

Official number

45255

Construction material

Iron

Hull

3 masted, schooner rigged iron steamship. Iron framed, no galleries, clincher built, 1 deck, 1/2 poop,elliptical stern, demi-woman figurehead.

Propulsion

Steam - Screw

Number of masts

3

Length/Breadth/Depth

172.30 Feet / 21.60 Feet / 14.00 Feet

Builder

R. Little & Co, Glasgow

Year of construction

1863

Built port

Greenock

Built country

Scotland

Registration Number

22 of 1863

Registration Port

Sydney

Date lost

03/04/1871

Departure

Adelaide

Destination

Sydney

Cargo

Wheat & Flour

Owner

1867: S.G. Henty

Master

Captain J. Shoobert

Weather conditions

Calm, heavy fog

Cause of loss

Struck a rock and foundered several hundred yards off the beach between Cape Nelson and Cape Bridgewater

VHR history

On 3 April 1871, while steaming between Adelaide and Sydney with 28 passengers, the S.S. BARWON struck a reef in foggy conditions off Cape Bridgewater and commenced to sink. The passengers took to the boats while the crew attempted to run the vessel ashore. The ship foundered between Cape Bridgewater and Cape Nelson

some 200 metres off the beach directly below McKinley's cottage. The Marine Board of Inquiry found that Captain James C. Shoobart contributed to the loss by not ascertaining the vessel's position more carefully when off Cape Northumberland. The wreck was blamed on the Second Officer, John Nelson, who was on watch and should have called the captain and slowed down when he first noticed the fog. The vessel's Register is marked "Customs House Sydney, 14 June 1871, Certificate of Registry delivered up and cancelled this day in consequence of the written vessel having struck at Cape Bridgewater about 10 o'clock on the morning of the 3rd of April 1871 and was beached between Cape Bridgewater and Cape Nelson in the colony of Victoria where she now lies". Vessel had been previously stranded at Queenscliff and was ashore for 6 months prior to it being refloated.

"SS Barwon on government slip at Williamstown, being scraped and painted prior to service in Cook's Straits and northern NZ ports." Argus Sat 15/7/1865 p4 c2.

The steamer Barwon struck rocks in thick fog near Cape Bridgewater and began to sink. The passengers took to the boats while the crew attempted to beach the vessel. However, the Barwon sank before it could be beached.

About 100 feet up from the rocks on the NW corner of Bridgewater Bay some stones stand out in a clear paddock. They are the remains of McKinlay's boarding house, a well known and well patronized residence, in the latter part of the 19th. On the morning of the 3rd April 1871, people at this house watched with surprise as a crippled steamer moved slowly into the bay heading straight for the beach. Directly opposite the boarding house she settled down and sank, some boats put off, loaded with crew and 28 passengers. The vessel was the Barwon loaded with flour on a voyage from Adelaide to Sydney. In a heavy fog she had run onto Wadmore's Rock on the rugged inhospitable west coast of Cape Bridgewater. In a very calm sea she slid off the rock and into deep water and the Captain brought her round into Bridgewater Bay intending to beach her. But the vessel sank before reaching the beach. Both passengers and sailors were given hospitality by the McKinlay family. Even today the remains can be seen outlined half a mile offshore, opposite the remains of the McKinlay's house.

Ref: Learmonth, N.F. 1960. The story of a port - Portland. pg 84-85