

Victorian Heritage Database Report

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BAT

Location

Bass Strait

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S70

Date lost

05/1882

Official number

70978

Construction material

Iron

Hull

Round stern, clinker built, no galleries, iron framed, male bust figurehead; Classification L90 A1

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

2

Length/Breadth/Depth

109.60 Feet / 23.10 Feet / 11.60 Feet

Builder

John Reid and Co.

Year of construction

1865

Built port

Glasgow, County of Renfrew

Built country

Scotland

Registration Number

16 of 1882

Registration Port

Sydney

Date lost

05/1882

Departure

Belfast (Port Fairy)

Destination

Sydney

Cargo

2,210 bags potatoes (Nipper and See); 50 bags bran, 280 bags potatoes, 34 bags barley (J Goble); 80 tons of ballast

Owner

George Francis Mason, merchant, Patent Ship Wharf, Sydney.

Master

Gilbert Harrison

Weather conditions

Heavy weather, southwest gales

Cause of loss

Disappeared at sea, foundered with all hands

Statement of significance

The Bat has not been located and therefore its archaeological significance has not been assessed. Its historical significance lies in the fact that it was a typical type of vessel involved in Australian intercolonial coastal trades ie: representative of a type, and represents the dangers of navigating Bass Strait in the 19th century.

VHR history

The 194 ton iron brig Bat went missing with all hands, after clearing out from Port Fairy on 30 March 1882 for a voyage to Sydney with a cargo of potatoes, bran and barley. The Belfast Gazette reported on 2 May 1882 that there were serious apprehensions being felt for the safety of the Bat which was now 31 days out and had not been heard of since she left. The voyage to Sydney usually took eight to ten days. The paper went on to say that it was believed that the Bat was efficiently manned and seaworthy, and bad weather may have driven the vessel off course or it was sheltering off one of the islands in the straits. The Bat was last seen by the PS Murray on 31 March between Wilsons Promontory and Cape Otway. The government steamer Despatch was sent to search for the vessel. However the Despatch also experienced heavy weather and was not heard of herself for several days. On its return to Melbourne the Despatch reported that no trace had been found of the Bat. Captain Graven of the schooner Isabel reported that "in accordance with a promise he made" when starting from Melbourne (bound for Leven, Tasmania), he kept a strict look out both when going over and coming back, for any signs of the missing brig Bat. He searched Hervey's and Hunter's islands and made inquiries of fishing smacks and other vessels he passed in the straits, but failed to glean any intelligence of the missing vessel. He is of the opinion that she came to grief a good way eastward of the islands mentioned, and has no doubt that she foundered and all hands were lost." (Belfast Gazette 23/5/1882) VHR: The iron brig Bat disappeared on a voyage from Port Fairy to Sydney. The government steamer Despatch searched for the vessel, but without success. The Register for the Bat was closed on 11 October 1882. The site has not been reported nor located, but from the historical information it appears that the wreck site is more likely to lie in eastern Bass Strait, and not off Cape Otway as some secondary sources have reported.