

Victorian Heritage Database Report

Report generated on - 28/04/24

BLACK WATCH

Location

Bass Strait, west of Cape Otway

Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) Number

S78

Date lost

16/04/1867

Official number

52403

Construction material

Wood

Propulsion

Sail

Number of masts

2

Length/Breadth/Depth

81.00 Feet / 21.40 Feet / 9.50 Feet

Builder

Archibald Stuart

Year of construction

1866

Built port

Whangarei

Built country

New Zealand

Registration Port

Auckland

Date lost

16/04/1867

Departure

Adelaide

Destination

Taranaki, New Zealand

Cargo

996 bags wheat, G. A. and H. Bartleet; 85 do., flour, Captain Stewart

Owner

Brown, Campbell and Co., Alexander McKenzie

Master

Captain Stewart

Weather conditions

Not known

Cause of loss

Sprang leak

Statement of significance

<p>It is impossible to assess the archaeological significance of the Black Watch as the site has not been located. Its historical significance is that it is representative of the types of vessels involved in the Australian and New Zealand intercolonial trades.</p>

VHR history

While on a voyage from Adelaide to New Zealand, the New Zealand built schooner Black Watch was abandoned after springing a leak off Cape Otway.

 The vessel was midway between Warrnambool and Cape Otway, and well to the south-east of Warrnambool, when the captain and carpenter discovered a quantity of water in the hold. It was 11pm and it was evident that the vessel was filling rapidly, and would have to be abandoned. When the water was a foot over the cabin floor the crew took to the boats, but remained in the vicinity.

 By daylight the Black Watch had disappeared. Later that morning the steamer Coorong from

Adelaide to Melbourne, hove in sight and took the shipwrecked crewmen aboard.

 The Warrnambool Examiner reported that the Black Watch had sailed from Warrnambool for Adelaide on 22 March with a cargo of potatoes and was returning to Melbourne when she foundered (Warrnambool Examiner 23/4/1867). According to the Adelaide Register however, the vessel was in harbour at Adelaide on 27 March and was cleared out on 29 March for Taranaki, New Zealand. The vessel was probably delayed by contrary winds as it cleared out again from Adelaide for Taranaki on 8 April with a cargo of wheat and flour and sailed on 11 April (Adelaide Register 12 April 1867).

 The Belfast Gazette reported that the crew were able to get away in a small boat with a compass, chart and very few clothes. The SS Coorong picked them up 25 miles west of Cape Otway (Warrnambool Examiner 23/4/1867).

 The wreck of the Black Watch has not been positively identified, although it has been speculated that shipwreck remains near Separation Creek that match its tonnage may be from the Black Watch. However this is now considered unlikely as the evidence is that the Black Watch had foundered and disappeared 25 miles west of Cape Otway.

 #VHR: While on a voyage from Adelaide to Melbourne, the New Zealand schooner Black Watch sprang a leak. It was soon evident that the vessel was sinking, so the master and crew abandoned ship mid way between Warrnambool and Cape Otway.#