

SHIPWRECKS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

NO.5 DUMB HOPPER BARGE

(also known as 'The Zanoni Barge'
and the 'Ardrossan Barge')

Following the implementation of a Protected Zone around the historic *Zanoni* shipwreck in 1983, the Department of Fisheries decided to establish a new artificial reef nearby, and acquired an obsolete Department of Marine and Harbors barge for the purpose.

Built in Sydney in 1911 by Pool and Steel for the Marine Board of South Australia, No. 5 dumb hopper barge measured 140 feet (42.6m) in length, 26 feet (7.9m) width, 13.5 feet (4.1m) depth and had a capacity of 450 cubic yards. The steel barge had 9 watertight compartments and 6 sets of hopper doors, which were originally opened by hand but later converted to hydraulic operation. The barge had been used to dump spoil from dredging operations in Port Adelaide and most major outports, but became surplus to requirements after the commissioning of two self-propelled barges in 1978.



Preparing for demolition, April 1984



The barge was stripped by the Department of Marine and Harbors and, to add to its effectiveness as a reef, six 30 metre steel pipes, donated by Steel Mains Pty Ltd of North Haven, were placed inside the hoppers. The Department of Fisheries believed that the layout of the barge and pipes would provide an excellent habitat for fish.

On 11 April 1984 the motorised barge *Denis O'Malley* towed No. 5 dumb hopper barge to a site one nautical mile south of the *Zanoni* shipwreck. Explosive experts from the Department of Mines and Energy then carried out the required demolition work.

In ideal weather conditions, and with a large number of spectators present, the sinking was spectacular. Smoke and flames shot from the barge four minutes after the delayed fuse was lit, and within three minutes it had disappeared. Underwater observations by divers within 30 minutes of the sinking showed that the barge lay upright on the seabed.



Soft corals on the barge, May 1993

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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