

Illustration of the S.S. Clan Ranald
 Courtesy State Library SA

The Gravesites

Only 36 bodies were found and these were buried in the Edithburgh Cemetery. The five British officers were buried in the main section and the 31 Lascar crew were buried in a mass grave at the rear of the cemetery. Timber to build the coffins was in short supply and many had to be improvised from the floorboards of a house being built nearby.

Marine Board Inquiry

Although the inquiry was unable to determine the reason for the loss, Doxford & Sons examined the stability of all turret ships they had built. Special loading instructions were then issued to the owners, directing that water ballast be put into the bottom tanks if ships were fully loaded or if coal was carried on the turret deck. In 1919 the captain of the S.S. Clan Gordon ignored this directive and soon after leaving New York the ship took on a 5° list and later capsized in similar fashion to the Clan Ranald.

Protection and Significance

The wreck was found in 1962 by the S.A. Museum Underwater Research Group who later purchased the remains. In 1988 ownership was transferred to the South Australian Government.

It has been declared an historic shipwreck under the Historic Shipwrecks Act 1976, and as such the remains cannot be disturbed without a permit. The wreck is also an outstanding feature of the Troubridge Hill Aquatic Reserve declared in 1983 to provide protection to a diverse and unique assemblage of marine flora and fauna.

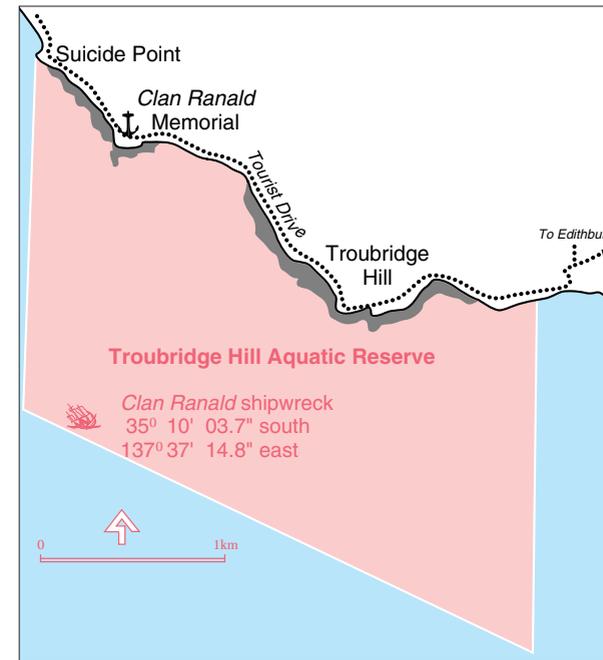


Survivors of the S.S. Clan Ranald
 Courtesy State Library SA

The Clan Ranald is the only turret ship to have been lost in Australian waters and the extensive remains of the hull lying upside down provides an impressive sight to any visitor. In association with the cemetery it serves as a sombre reminder of the tragedy, as well as providing a tangible link with this nation's maritime heritage and past white Australia policy.

The Future

As one of the best wreck dives in South Australia the Clan Ranald is an important recreational and tourist asset which forms part of the Investigator Strait Maritime Heritage Trail. The wreck has suffered in recent decades from damage caused by boat anchors, as well as the depletion of marine life from fishing, and these impacts need to be controlled if the site is to provide continued enjoyment.



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Department of Environment
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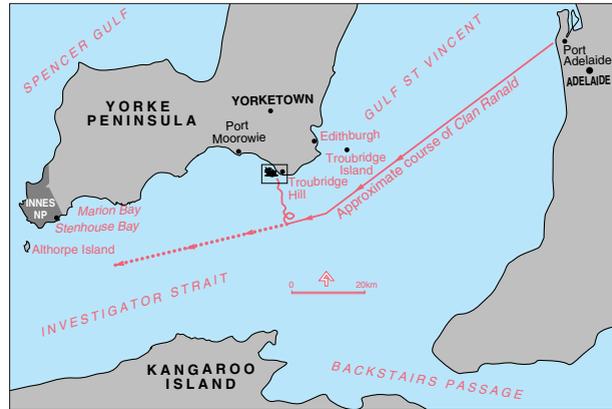
South Australian Shipwrecks

Investigator Strait
 maritime heritage trail

S.S. Clan Ranald
 1900 - 1909



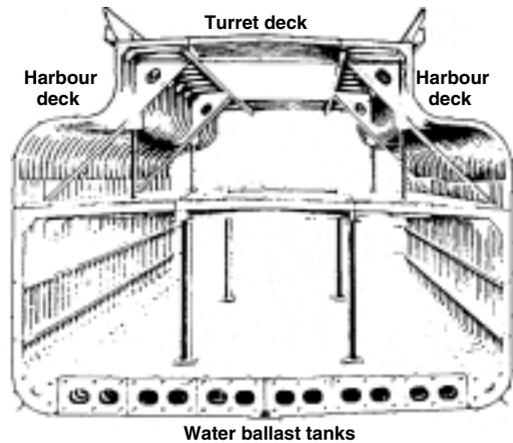
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The foundering of the steamship Clan Ranald in 1909 with the loss of 40 lives is one of South Australia's worst maritime disasters, only 24 members of the crew survived. Battered and bleeding when they reached shore, 20 Filipino and Indian crewmen were seized by the Commonwealth for being illegal immigrants.

The Ship

The steel hulled, single screw steamer Clan Ranald was built in 1900 by Doxford & Sons in Sunderland, England, as a two-deck turret ship for Clan Line Steamers of Glasgow. The ship was 355 feet (108.2m) in length with a net tonnage of 2285 tons.



Section view of a two-deck turret ship
The Doxford Turret Ships courtesy World Ship Society

The turret ship was a popular design around 1900 as it was considered seaworthy and economical for carrying bulk grain cargoes. It became the mark of the Clan Line for which thirty were built between 1897—1907. The advantage to a shipowner was that the narrow turret deck enabled a reduction in Suez Canal dues where charges were based on deck width.

Arrival in South Australia

The Clan Ranald arrived at Port Adelaide from Mauritius in ballast on 15 January 1909 under the command of Captain Arthur Gladstone. It berthed at Darling's Mill to take on 39 862 bags of wheat and 28 451 bags of flour. 638 tons of coal were also loaded, 170 tons of which were placed on the top decks.

The water ballast tanks were emptied as cargo was stowed but stability problems soon arose. The ship listed 5° to port away from the wharf and 50 tons of coal were placed on the starboard harbour deck to counteract the list. But wash from a passing steamer caused the Clan Ranald to list over 3° to starboard. The problem was supposedly rectified, but the list was not evident because the ship was sitting on the bottom at low tide.

The Final Voyage

Despite a 4° list to starboard, the Clan Ranald was towed from the Semaphore anchorage by the tug Eagle on 31 January bound for South Africa. On board were 64 crew, 50 of whom were of Asiatic and Indian origin, commonly referred to as Lascars. At 2:00pm the ship was south of Troubridge Island when it suddenly lurched onto its starboard side at a 45° angle. The crew rushed up to the deck leaving

the engines still running. The rudder was out of the water and the starboard deck submerged. At 4:30pm the wind blew up from the south east driving the ship towards Troubridge Hill on the south east coast of Yorke Peninsula. Rough seas smashed the two accessible lifeboats so the crew tried to construct wooden rafts as the ship was driven towards the cliffs.

The starboard anchor was dropped after nightfall which brought the bow into the wind, but the ship began to fill with water when hatches on the deck washed away. About 9:30pm the crew saw the lights of a ship and began to signal it without result.

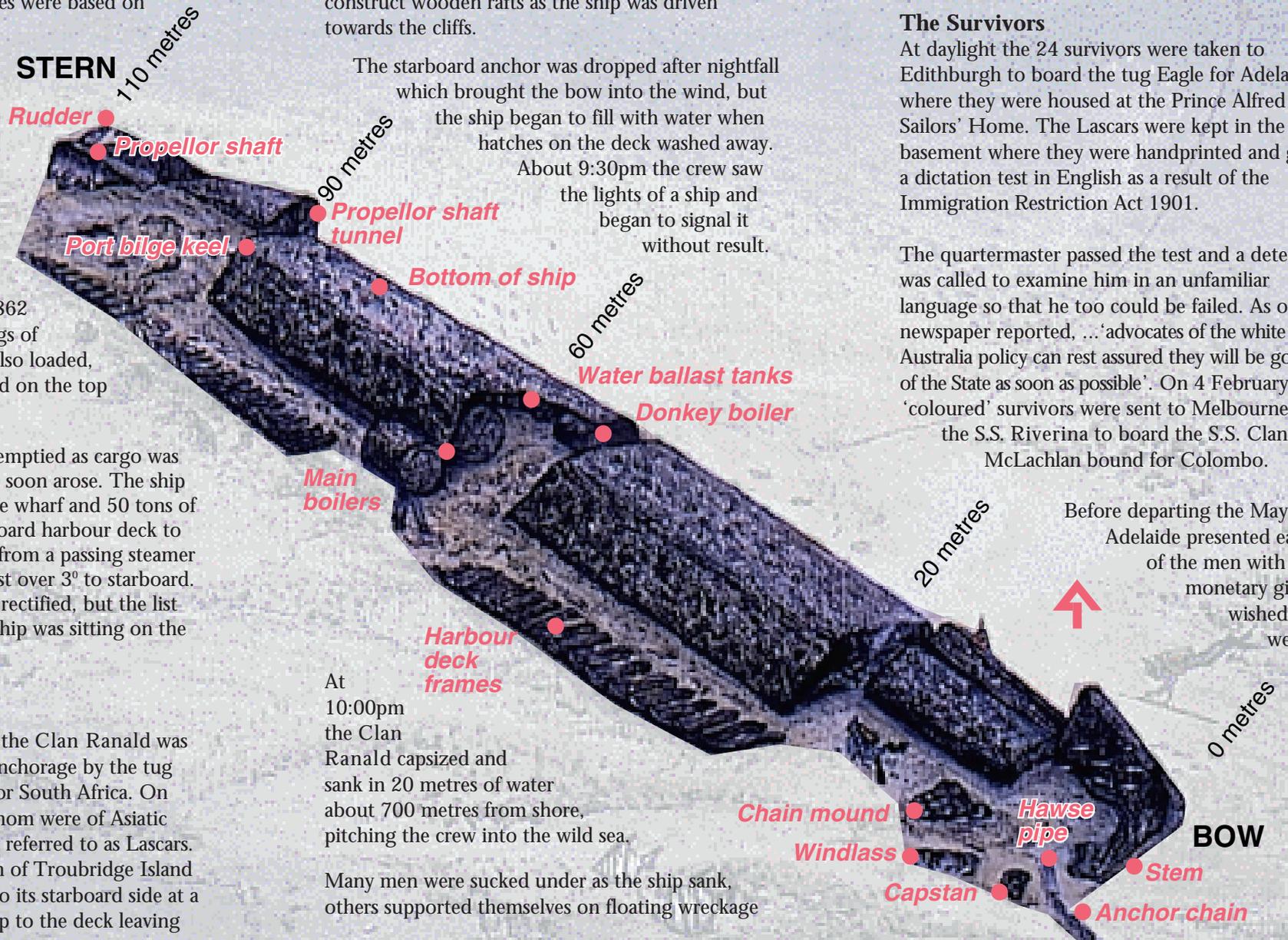
and swam ashore to the steep cliffs and jagged rocks. Many families living nearby saw the Clan Ranald in distress and rushed to help. The rescuers wept unashamedly at the sight of the mutilated bodies strewn along the shoreline, many battered beyond recognition.

The Survivors

At daylight the 24 survivors were taken to Edithburgh to board the tug Eagle for Adelaide where they were housed at the Prince Alfred Sailors' Home. The Lascars were kept in the basement where they were handprinted and given a dictation test in English as a result of the Immigration Restriction Act 1901.

The quartermaster passed the test and a detective was called to examine him in an unfamiliar language so that he too could be failed. As one newspaper reported, ... 'advocates of the white Australia policy can rest assured they will be got out of the State as soon as possible'. On 4 February the 'coloured' survivors were sent to Melbourne on the S.S. Riverina to board the S.S. Clan McLachlan bound for Colombo.

Before departing the Mayor of Adelaide presented each of the men with a monetary gift and wished them well.



At 10:00pm the Clan Ranald capsized and sank in 20 metres of water about 700 metres from shore, pitching the crew into the wild sea.

Many men were sucked under as the ship sank, others supported themselves on floating wreckage