

SHIPWRECKS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

HOUGOMONT

The four-masted barque *Hougomont* was built in 1897 by Scott Shipbuilding and Engineering Company of Greenock, Scotland for J Hardie and Co. of Glasgow. The steel-hulled vessel of 2378 gross tons measured 292.4 feet (89.1 m) in length, 43.3 feet (13.2 m) breadth and 24.1 feet (7.3 m) depth.

At 1.00 am on 21 April 1932 the *Hougomont* was west-south-west of Kangaroo Island (111 days out from London), in ballast and bound for Port Lincoln to load a cargo of wheat, when a brief but fierce gale struck.



Hougomont 1930. Photo: Ron Blum

Within minutes the steel foremast and mainmast had snapped and crashed to the deck, together with their rigging and the mizzen top-gallant

rigging. Miraculously no crew member was injured, but the *Hougomont* was seriously damaged and wallowing in heavy seas. Anxious hours were spent cutting clear the pounding wreckage and the vessel proceeded under jury rig to the Semaphore anchorage – a slow 18-day journey during which the captain resisted all offers of assistance, to avoid possible salvage fees.

Despite this amazing feat, the owners felt that necessary repairs were too expensive and decided that the *Hougomont* should be scuttled. After stripping the vessel of its fittings, the barque was towed to Stenhouse Bay, Yorke Peninsula, on 8 January 1933. It was positioned south-west of the jetty and sunk with explosives to provide a breakwater for vessels loading gypsum.

The scuttling was witnessed and radioed to Adelaide by a reporter aboard the tug *Wato*:

...Making the tow in favourable weather, the barque Hougomont reached Stenhouse Bay at daylight yesterday, having made the 84 miles trip in 13½ hours. The vessel was manoeuvred into the position, where she will be used as a breakwater. A charge of dynamite was exploded in the forehold, and the ship slowly sank, until only the decks and rails were above the water.

Leaving Semaphore on Saturday afternoon, in tow of the Wato, the Hougomont made her last trip, which was a model one. She rode the seas like a liner, and never faltered. At Stenhouse Bay difficulty was experienced in mooring her. About 11 a.m. a terrific explosion shook her, and the Hougomont's end had come..

Captain Lindholm, who was the last of the crew to leave her, said, "Sinking her is the saddest job of my life." The Wato left on the return journey late this afternoon.

The Advertiser 9 January 1933

Today the full length of the hull of the *Hougomont* still lies on the seabed in 9 metres of water. The bow and stern sections stand upright, although the majority of the vessel has collapsed.

Explore the following links for some great historic images and information:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hougomont_\(barque\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hougomont_(barque))

http://www.kolumbus.fi/jamikko/Purjelaivat_Hougomont.htm

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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