SHIPWRECKS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

JUPITER - Mutton Cove

The composite paddle steamer *Jupiter* was originally built as an iron barge, which was shipped in sections from Scotland and assembled by Henry Fletcher at Port Adelaide in 1866. It was imported specifically for trading on the River Murray, through the Mouth, but continued delays waiting for favourable conditions made the project unprofitable.

In 1868 an engine was installed at Goolwa, and the *Jupiter* converted to a side paddler measuring 110.0 feet (33.5m) in length, 19.5 feet (5.9m) breadth, 6.0 feet (1.8m) depth, 119 gross tons and rated at seven knots. For more than 30 years the *Jupiter* was employed on the Murray and Darling Rivers, regularly carrying bales of wool to ports including Morgan and Wentworth, from stations such as Lake Victoria, Tapalin and Cobdogla. The vessel also carried passengers, shearers and even sheep between river towns.

In 1903 the *Jupiter* became the mail steamer on Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, trading 40 miles across the lakes between Milang, Narrung and Meningie. During 1923 the owners, Messrs Dunk, tried to establish an excursion trade and had the vessel altered. When completed the *Jupiter* was 127 gross tons and was licensed to carry 164 passengers – 134 on deck and 30 in cabins. In 1930, when it was laid up at Milang, the *Jupiter* was the last regular trader on the lakes.

PS Jupiter on the River Murray c1900's. Photo: Ron Blum

After two years tied up at the Milang wharf, the *Jupiter* was eventually sold to F T Frinsdorf. On 27 February 1933 it negotiated the Murray Mouth on its way to Port Adelaide, reportedly arriving there under tow of the fishing cutter *Rapid* on 8 March.

During the next few months, the vessel was converted into a crayfish depot at Birkenhead.

The funnels, engines and paddles were removed, with a landing platform built in place of the paddles. A 40 foot by 18 foot well was built into the steamer's old engine room and 5000 slots cut into the walls. As this area was largely below water level, these slots enabled sea water to wash through the four compartments of the well. The depot's capacity was estimated at 10 000 'fish'.

On 17 June 1933, with the conversions completed, the *Jupiter* was towed down the Port River to new moorings opposite the north end of the Outer

Harbor Wharf. Fishing cutters operating in the Gulf were able to discharge catches of crayfish into the barge's wells, where they remained alive until required, thus regulating the market supply. The *Jupiter* is believed to have been the first floating fish depot in Australia. In addition to the crayfish, any unusual marine specimens caught by the fishermen were also placed in the wells until they could be transferred to the Glenelg Aquarium.

PS Jupiter **today**

The vessel's history from this time to the mid 1940s is not definite. What is known is that, after only a short time off Outer Harbor, the vessel was towed back upstream to Corporation Wharf, Port Adelaide, where it continued to store and trade in fresh crayfish, before being abandoned at Mutton Cove c1945.

Today the hull is basically intact to deck level, but is predominantly covered by silt and the tides. Detached iron superstructure is lying off the stern.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Government of South Australia