SHIPWRECKS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

GEM - Garden Island

The double-ended paddle steamer *Gem* was built in 1868 at Simpson's Yarra Bank Works, Melbourne and equipped with oscillating engines that maintained a speed of ten knots. The composite vessel measured 129.4 feet (39.4 m) in length, 17.8 feet (5.4 m) breadth, 8.4 feet (2.7 m) depth and was 145 gross tons.
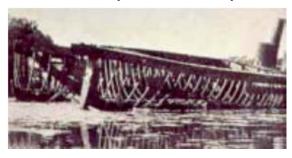
The *Gem* worked as a ferry between Port Melbourne and Williamstown until the early 1900s when it was converted to a silt-pumping barge. In 1911 the vessel was towed to Port Adelaide to assist with the construction of the Port River's No 2 Dock.

Once this project was completed the wheelhouse, engines and paddles were removed and the funnels cut down. A gangway was built across the hull and the vessel was moved across the entrance of the new dock to serve as a floating footbridge for pedestrian traffic. The hull could also be swung about by a tug to allow access for ships into and out of the dock.

With the widening of No 2 Dock, the *Gem* was removed on 19 July 1927 and laid up, before being towed to Garden Island. It was later sold and broken up for firewood. Today the most visible remains are the timber keel, stem and sternpost.

Gem in Hobson's Bay, Victoria (*Photo*: Terry Arnott)

Gem at Garden Island, 1933 (*Photo*: SLSA: *Adelaide Chronicle*, 20 July 1933)

Remains of *Gem* at Garden Island

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Government of South Australia