

SHIPWRECKS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN

(also known as 'The Glenelg Dredge')

The steam dredge *South Australian* was built in 1911 by A F Smulders at Schiedam, Holland for the South Australian Harbors Board. The steel vessel was a self-propelled sea going cutter suction dredge, measuring 137.5 feet (41.9m) in length, 29.6 feet (9.0m) breadth, 11.6 feet (3.5m) depth and 395 gross tons.

The *South Australian* steamed to Port Adelaide under its own power, arriving in early 1912, to join one of the most up to date dredging fleets in the Commonwealth (including the bucket dredge *Adelaide*, the steam tug *Tandanya* and two steel hopper barges). The *South Australian* was originally built for side discharging of spoil into barges. One of its first jobs was the dredging of the South Australian Company's wharf. Later it was connected to a floating pipeline and fitted for pumping spoil ashore for land reclamation.



Ready for scuttling, January 1985. Photo: PortsCorp

The dredge spent most of its working life in Port Adelaide and Outer Harbor, but also assisted with the dredging of the Port Pirie Swinging Basin from 1958-61. In 1971 the vessel was refitted at the Marine and Harbors dockyard at Glanville. Work included the replacement of the steam engines with four diesel engines. The original deckhouse was removed and the wheelhouse was replaced with a modern control room with a centralised control system.

The *South Australian* continued to dredge at Port Adelaide and Outer Harbor for another 11 years. During its survey in 1982, it became apparent that an extensive refit was necessary for the vessel to remain in commission. For economic reasons it was decided not to proceed with repairs and the dredge was laid up, awaiting disposal.



South Australian, 1911. Photo: PortsCorp

In 1984, after more than 70 years of active service, the decommissioned dredge was stripped of all useful items and transferred to the Department of Fisheries. On 16 January 1985, it was towed to a position 6.5km off the Glenelg coast and deliberately sunk, as part of that Department's artificial reefs program. To assist with the scuttling, Marine and Harbors' staff had removed the *South Australian's* bulkheads and used its suction equipment to fill the hull with water.

Today the *South Australian* sits upright in approximately 20 metres of water. The vessel is intact, with the bow facing south. The wreck is the habitat of a variety of marine creatures and is one of Adelaide's most popular dive sites, providing limited opportunities for penetration and exploration.



Down she goes! January 1985. Photo: PortsCorp

The dredge's original steam engines, wheelhouse, deckhouse, control room and builder's plates were preserved by the Austbuilt Museum and were later donated to the South Australian Maritime Museum's collection.



Diving the South Australian. Photo: Greg Adams

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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