

SHIPWRECKS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

YORK

The lighter *York* was built in Scotland c1862 for the P&O Company's King George's Sound coaling station at Albany, Western Australia. The iron hulled vessel, measuring 75.5 feet (23.0 m) length, 18.2 feet (5.5m) breadth, 7.0 feet (2.1 m) depth and 89.63 gross tons, was shipped to Australia in pieces, most probably by one of the sailing vessels supplying the coal depot.

In 1877, when ships no longer needed to refuel in WA and P&O's operations were being scaled down, the lighter was sold to the Adelaide Steam Tug Company on the condition that P&O was given preference for its use when one of their mail vessels was off Glenelg.

For its delivery to South Australia the vessel was jury-rigged as a cutter, but in September was declared unseaworthy by the WA marine authorities and prohibited from departing. The events of the next few months are uncertain, but it is known that the vessel eventually departed Albany on 13 November 1877, arriving at Port Adelaide two weeks later under unusual circumstances:

The YORK, which broke through the rules of the Port on Thursday by running in without being boarded, accounts for the circumstance by the

want of ground tackle. She reports leaving King George's Sound on the 13th, and for a couple of days had light winds. On the 17th there was a gale from E.N.E., but next day the wind backed to S.W., and she made as fair progress as could be wished. On the 22nd she experienced some very severe weather. For a time the wind blew at hurricane force with a very high sea. The barometer fell to 29.40 and the craft was hove-to under close canvas, but behaved very well, never shipping any heavy water. After a while she was kept away, and scudded before the gale till it moderated. On the 26th she sighted Kangaroo Island, and on the following day passed Troubridge Lighthouse, and headed up the Gulf.

Register 30 November 1877

Although no documentation has been found to support the theory, the absence of 'ground tackle' suggests that the captain had decided to 'cut and run' - leaving King George's Sound illegally by cutting the vessel's anchors and setting sail without authorisation.

By 15 December 1877 the *York* was engaged in lightering work for the Adelaide Steam Tug Company. In 1920, after many years lightering in Port Adelaide and Glenelg, the barge was transferred to Port Pirie to act as a coal lighter to the tugs.

In 1922 the *York* was sold to Captain William Pillberg and was largely employed carrying mallee stumps from the Whyalla area to Port Pirie. It proved too large for that purpose and was beached at nearby Weeroona Island. For some time the abandoned vessel was used as a wharf or loading platform for barges carting stone from the island to Port Pirie.

The *York*'s registry was closed on 20 January 1925 with advice received from the owner that it was to be broken up.



The *York* today

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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