

## Yorke Peninsula Shipwrecks

"The vessel [Hougomont] was overtaken in the Great Australian Bight by a vast black cloud bank that unleashed cyclonic winds of up to 100 miles an hour. After she had spent nearly 12 hours fighting the storm, all that was left of her top-hammer were the stumps of her foremast, mizzenmast and lower jigger mast."

During 1802 and 1803, the European explorers, Matthew Flinders and Nicholas Baudin charted the coastline of Yorke Peninsula and their skill and accuracy in defining the coastline meant their charts were used well into the 20th century. From the 1840s through to the 1940s ships of various types and sizes were the major means of transport of cargo and people to and from Yorke Peninsula. It is not surprising then to find a total of 85 shipwrecks scattered around its coastline. Explore the coastline of Yorke Peninsula and discover for yourself the remains of the many wrecks in this region.

## A rich maritime history

Adelaide was settled in 1836 but it wasn't until 1846 that pastoralists ventured across to Yorke Peninsula. Finally, in 1859-60, settlement of the region took off, chiefly because of the discovery of copper at Wallaroo and Moonta. The area soon developed into one of the richest grain producing areas for Australia and continues to do so, with modern ships loading grain from both sides of the Peninsula. The last of the great sailing ships 'the windjammers' loaded their grain cargo from ports such as Port Victoria during the 1940s and competed in races back to Europe.



Diver on the wrecksite of the Australian



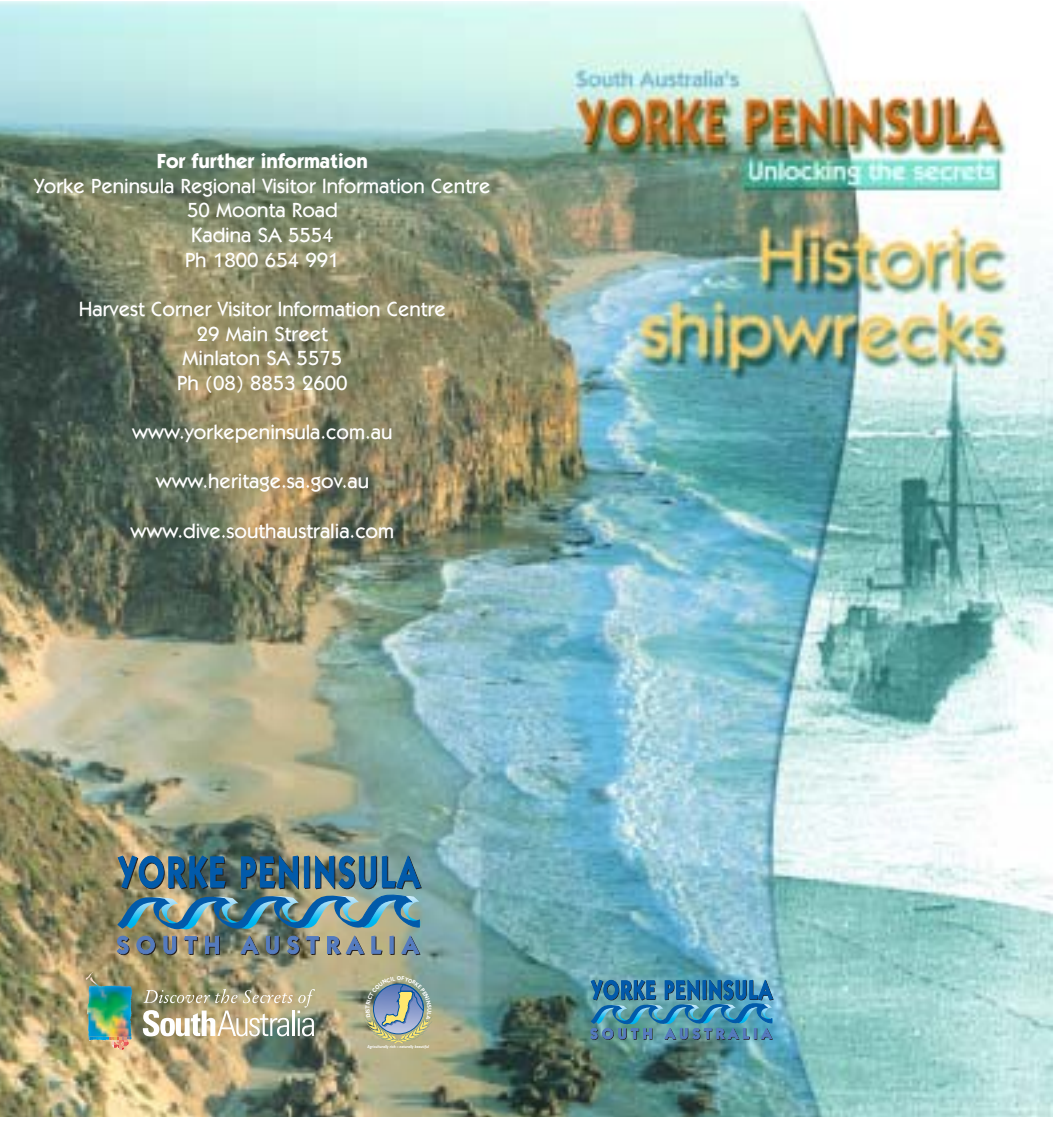
The Hougomont being scuttled at Stenhouse Bay 1933



## YORKE PENINSULA

Photos courtesy Heritage SA Department of Environment and Heritage

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South Australia's  
**YORKE PENINSULA**  
Unlocking the secrets

Historic  
shipwrecks

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### Troubridge Island Shipwrecks

Many of the shipwrecks around Yorke Peninsula are found clustered around the ports and naturally occurring navigation hazards. The shoals and reefs surrounding Troubridge Island (off Edithburgh) are 'home' to six of the region's earliest sailing vessels, namely the *Dart* and *Parsee* (both 1838), *Sultana* (1849), the immigrant ship *Marion* (1851), *Charles Carter* (1854) and the *Iron King* (1873). It was this *Marion* that provided the name for Marion Bay (at the bottom of Yorke Peninsula) as some survivors from the shipwreck found their way there in one of the ship's boats. Some other survivors in another lifeboat landed on the other side of Gulf St Vincent, near Rapid Bay.

Plate from the *Zanoni*



### Zanoni

Further north, in Gulf St. Vincent, one of the best-preserved sailing shipwrecks in Australia is located. The 338 ton, three masted sailing vessel *Zanoni* was on a voyage from Port Wakefield to London with a cargo of wheat and bark. While it sank in 1865 in a 'freak storm', it was not discovered until 1983, when a fisher took two divers to investigate a 'likely spot'. The shipwreck site is located in 18 metres of water, 15 kilometres south east of Ardrossan. This discovery has since led to the site being surveyed by archaeologists and a number of artefacts being recovered, some of which can be found in the

Ardrossan National Trust Museum. A permit is needed to visit the site, because of the potential to damage the wooden hull with anchors. In 1984, a barge was sunk, 1 nautical mile south of the *Zanoni* to act as an alternative place to fish.

### Investigator Strait shipwrecks

Some of the best shipwrecks to dive in South Australia are located in this stretch of clearer water, beginning with the SS *Clan Ranald* located near Troubridge Hill. The *Clan Ranald* was a turret deck steam ship, which was a design specifically used to reduce the amount of charges paid for going through the Suez Canal.

The vessel was on a voyage to South Africa in 1909 with 40 000 bags of wheat and 29 000 bags of flour. Having left Port Adelaide only hours before the *Clan Ranald* rolled over and sank in 20 metres of water, one kilometre off Troubridge Hill. The emptying of the water ballast tanks and the top-heavy cargo contributed to the vessel



Survivors of the *Clan Ranald* 1909

rolling over. Forty of the crew lost their lives. The majority of the crew were of Indian origin, and those that did not drown were treated according to the White Australia Policy and extradited to Colombo as soon as possible.

One of the region's earliest steam shipwrecks can be found further west along the southern part of Yorke Peninsula. The SS *Marion* was wrecked in 1862 while on a voyage between Port Adelaide and Wallaroo with 35 passengers. It was wrecked near Chinaman's Hat during poor visibility.

### The *Ethel* and *Ferret*

The *Ethel* shipwreck has been a landmark of the southern Yorke Peninsula since it was wrecked in 1904. The 711 ton sailing vessel was bound for Port Adelaide from South Africa to take on a cargo of grain, when it was driven ashore. On the night the ship was wrecked, a nineteen-year-old crew man, Leonard Sterneson attempted to swim to shore with a life line, but drowned. The next morning, the stricken vessel was found to be above low water and on the beach.



The *Ethel* and the *Ferret* 1920



Port Victoria c 1930

For many years the *Ethel* was a tourist attraction, but today the hull has totally collapsed and sand covers it for most of time. Within 200 metres of the *Ethel* lies the SS *Ferret*, its boiler can sometimes be seen protruding from the sand. This vessel had a colourful career. Built in Glasgow in 1873, it was stolen in 1880 and renamed SS *India*, but was recognised in Port Phillip as being the *Ferret* and seized by the authorities. It passed the *Ethel* when that vessel was wrecked in 1904, and by coincidence it was wrecked in the same location in 1920 during a bad fog.

### The *Wardang Island* shipwrecks

There are nine shipwrecks located around this low-lying island located off Port Victoria. International sailing vessels such as the *Songvaar* and the *Notre Dame D'Arvor* came to Port Victoria to load grain and were wrecked here in 1912 and 1920 respectively. The *Songvaar* had loaded its 40 000 bags of wheat and its master was ashore gaining clearance when it was noticed the vessel was low in the water and listing to port. Being fully laden and heavy, the vessel sat on its own anchor, which pierced the hull holding it to the seabed. This was the same day that the *Titanic* sank, on 14 April 1912.

### Shipwrecks off Moonta Bay

Tiparra Reef in the Spencer Gulf adjacent to Yorke Peninsula has witnessed both an early shipwreck and the more recent strandings of ships anywhere in South Australia. The 535 ton three masted iron sailing vessel *San Miguel* was sailing from Port

Adelaide to Wallaroo when it hit the reef and was totally wrecked in 1865. In 1995, the *Sea Crane*, and in 1997 the 30 000 tonne Korean grain carrier *Western Winner*, both stranded on the reef. Both vessels were refloated.



Diver on the wrecksite of the *Songvaar*