

“FALLS OF HALLADALE”

The 2,085-ton barque *Falls of Halladale* was built in Glasgow in 1886, and was one of the first vessels built with fore and aft lifting bridges. This meant the crew could move along the entire deck and remain safe and dry in rough weather. She was built to carry as much cargo as possible rather than for speed and could maintain full sail in the heaviest gales without endangering her masts.

The *Falls of Halladale* was mostly used for the Pacific grain trade and because of her slow speed was thought to be missing or overdue on several occasions.

The *Falls of Halladale* sailed from New York towards the end of 1908 for Melbourne and Sydney. Her captain, Captain Thomson, estimated her to be off the Victorian coast on the night of 14th November 1908. Due to a heavy fog he was uncertain of his position until the fog lifted slightly and a glimpse of high cliffs made him realize that he was too close inshore. Because of the light wind conditions he was unable to manoeuvre the ship and it grounded on a reef west of Peterborough. The crew was able to launch the lifeboats and all 29 crew landed safely on shore.

For nearly two months after the ship grounded on the reef with all her sails still set, she attracted many sightseers. Salvage operators who dynamited her and heavy seas soon took their toll and she became a total wreck.

The court of Marine Inquiry found Captain Thomson guilty of misconduct and careless navigation by his neglect to take proper soundings and failing to put the ship on the port tack before it was too late. He was suspended for six months and made to pay inquiry expenses.

Eight buildings at Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village are roofed with slates recovered from the *Falls Of Halladale* wreck. Former manager, Peter Ronald salvaged 22,000 of the 56,763 slates she carried. 4,000 slate sheets were transported daily to Flagstaff Hill.

