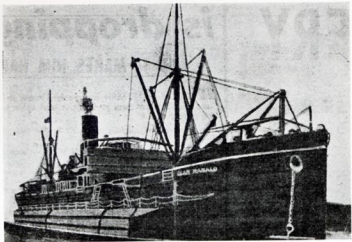


# "Clan Ranald"

an echo

from

the past



We recorded in the June magazine the discovery of the wreck of the *Clan Ranald* by members of the Under-Water Wreck Survey Group. Subsequently we received from The McArthur Shipping & Agency Co. Pty. Ltd., an article which appeared in the *Sydney Daily Mirror* of 28th May, giving particulars of the foundering of the vessel and the following précis may be of interest to readers:—

The 3,596-ton *Clan Ranald*, an iron "turret" vessel built in Glasgow in 1900, left Adelaide on the morning of 31st January, 1909, under the command of Captain Arthur Gladstone. She was carrying a cargo of 6,600 tons consisting mainly of wheat and flour for South Africa in addition to 70 tons of coal in one of her upper turret decks—50 tons on the starboard and 20 tons on the port, a further 50 tons being equally distributed on either side of a lower deck.

When the pilot handed over to the First Mate, Frederick Rose—the Captain, after having farewelled friends made in Adelaide, being unable to take the deck when the ship dropped her moorings—the vessel had a list of four degrees to starboard. Following consultation between the Pilot and First Mate, it was decided that the ship would straighten, but as she left sheltered waters the list to starboard increased to six degrees.

The sea began to freshen and *Clan Ranald* was already beginning to dip her bow hard; the officers again

conferred, but decided the list presented no danger. However, on entering Investigator Strait, a huge wave hit her hard on the port side; swinging full abreast of the seas she heeled so sharply over to starboard that her first turret deck went under and did not come clear.

Rose rushed to the bridge and ordered the helm swung over in a vain bid to counter the 45-degree list. Realising the dangerous position when the ship failed to respond, he had several distress rockets fired before dashing below in an unsuccessful endeavour to awaken the drunken Captain.

By 5 p.m. the seas had built up alarmingly, and Rose, realising there was no hope of again getting the vessel on an even keel, ordered the engines slow ahead and headed the stricken ship for the shore. Towering waves smashed into the hull and cascaded over the superstructure; thousands of gallons of water burst into the engine room where scalding, hissing steam filled the compartment and the engines ground into lifelessness.

At 8 p.m. the Captain made a brief appearance and ordered the starboard anchor to be lowered. At once she steadied and hove-to, now only two miles off-shore.

Meanwhile two farmers had seen the distress rockets and had individually reported the incident to the Harbour Master, who at once contacted the

Marine Board in Adelaide, they instructing him to send the vessel *Warooka* to the rescue. Unfortunately, darkness was not the only reason *Warooka* was not sent to the scene—her owners had failed to insure her!

At 10 p.m. a heavy wave slammed into the *Clan Ranald*, broke over her and ripped off the heavy tarpaulin cover on No. 5 hatch. A few minutes later the tips of the vessel's masts touched the water and her hull groaned as she turned turtle, many of her complement being caught in the tremendous suction as the ship dropped like a stone to the bottom.

A number of those who survived the initial sinking died on the verge of salvation when waves smashed them against the rock-lined shore. Of the crew only 5 seamen, 11 firemen, 3 quartermasters and one steward escaped with their lives. Forty were lost, including the Master and 5 of his Officers.

A Marine Board of Inquiry in Adelaide reported it could find no valid reason for laying charges against the four officers who survived the sinking. Nor would they accept the uneven stowage of coal as the reason for the foundering.

The steamer's loss provided an intriguing marine mystery which, after a period of 53 years, may be solved by the work of the S.A.'s Under-Water Wreck Survey Group.