

SHIPWRECKS OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA

HOUGOMONT

The four-masted barque *Hougomont* was built in 1897 by Scott Shipbuilding and Engineering Co. of Greenock, Scotland, for J. Hardie and Co. of Glasgow. The steel-hulled vessel of 2378 gross tons measured 292.4 feet (89.1 m) in length, 43.3 feet (13.2 m) breadth and 24.1 feet (7.3 m) depth.

At 1.00 am on 21 April 1932 *Hougomont* was west-south-west of Kangaroo Island (111 days out from London), in ballast and bound for Port Lincoln to load a cargo of wheat, when a brief but fierce gale struck.



Hougomont, 1930 (Photo: Ron Blum)

Within minutes the steel foremast and mainmast had snapped and crashed to the deck, together with their rigging and the mizzen top-gallant rigging. *Hougomont* was seriously damaged and wallowing in heavy seas. The pounding wreckage was cut clear and the vessel proceeded under jury rig to the Semaphore – a slow 18-day journey during which the captain resisted all offers of assistance, to avoid possible salvage fees.

Despite this amazing feat, repair of *Hougomont* was considered too expensive and the owners decided that it should be scuttled. After stripping the fittings, the barque was towed to Stenhouse Bay, Yorke Peninsula, on 8 January 1933. It was positioned south-west of the jetty and sunk with explosives to provide a breakwater for vessels loading gypsum.

The scuttling was witnessed and radioed to Adelaide by a reporter aboard the tug *Wato*:

...The vessel was manoeuvred into the position, where she will be used as a breakwater. A charge of dynamite was exploded in the forehold, and the ship slowly sank, until only the decks and rails were above the water.

Leaving Semaphore on Saturday afternoon, in tow of the Wato, the Hougomont made her last trip, which was a model one. She rode the seas like a liner, and never faltered. At Stenhouse Bay difficulty was experienced in mooring her. About 11 a.m. a terrific explosion shook her, and the Hougomont's end had come..

Captain Lindholm, who was the last of the crew to leave her, said, "Sinking her is the saddest job of my life." The Wato left on the return journey late this afternoon.

The Advertiser, 9 January 1933

Today the full length of the hull of the *Hougomont* still lies on the seabed in 9 m of water. The bow and stern sections stand upright, although the majority of the vessel has collapsed.

Explore this link for some great historic images and information:

http://www.kolumbus.fi/jamikko/Purjelaivat_Hougomont.htm

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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