

# THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN (a.k.a. THE DREDGE) & THE GLENELG BARGE

by Steve Reynolds

In Christopher Deane's "South Aussie Snippets" column in the January 2008 issue of "Dive Log", Chris stated "I can never get over the fact that this vessel (the South Australian) scuttled in 1985 carried the name of our state but it seems every man and his dog deem to call it 'The Dredge'."

As the South Australian, it is actually named after all South Australian residents rather than the state itself. There could also be some confusion over names since the South Australian was also the name of one of SA's first shipwrecks.

The 236-ton wooden barque South Australian was wrecked in Encounter Bay on 8th December 1837. The ship had been anchored in the lee of the Bluff at Victor Harbor when she became caught up in a gale. She dragged her anchors and was driven on to Black Reef and then over it. Although everyone onboard her managed to reach the shore safely, the South Australian was a total loss.

In the past, not every diver knew that the Dredge was called the South Australian. They probably stuck to just calling it the 'Dredge' to differentiate between the 'Barge' and the 'Dredge'. (There are some people who would have us all call the ex-HMAS Hobart the Fleurieu Reef but most divers affectionately know her as just the Hobart.)

The dredge South Australian was scuttled off of Glenelg, South Australia on 16th January 1985 as part of the SA Department of Fisheries' artificial reefs program. As discussed above, she is now known simply as either 'The Dredge', the 'Glenelg Dredge', or just the 'Dredge'.

She was a self-propelled cutter suction steam dredge of 395 gross tons. In 1911, AF Smulders of Schiedamn, Holland built her of steel for South Australian Harbors Board. She measured 41.9m in length, 29.6m in breadth and 3.5m in depth. She

steamed under her own power from Holland to Port Adelaide where she was then used to dredge the Port Adelaide River and Outer Harbor.

She arrived at Port Adelaide to join the dredging fleet there in 1912. The Port Adelaide dredging fleet, with the South Australian now included, became one of the most up-to-date dredging fleets in the Commonwealth. The fleet now comprised of a bucket dredge called the Adelaide, a steam tug called the Tandanya, two steel dumb hopper barges (number 3 & 5?) and the suction dredge South Australian.

One of her first jobs around Port Adelaide was the dredging of the South Australian Company's wharf. In her early years, she side-discharged her spoil into barges. In later years, she was connected to a floating pipeline and pumped the spoil ashore where it was used for land reclamation.

Although she spent most of her working life in Port Adelaide and Outer Harbor, she was also used to dredge the swinging basin at Port Lincoln from 1958-61. She was laid up in 1971 to be refitted at Marine and Harbors' Glanville dockyard. Her steam engine was replaced by four diesel engines, her original deckhouse was removed and a modern control room (with a centralised control system) replaced her wheelhouse. Her original steam engines, wheelhouse, deckhouse, control room and builder's plates were preserved by Keith Le Leu's Austbuilt Museum. These items were later donated to the SA Maritime Museum in Port Adelaide.

After another eleven years of dredging around Port Adelaide, it became apparent that the South Australian needed another extensive refit if she was to remain in commission. The cost of such a refit was decided against, so she was laid up in 1982, awaiting disposal. The decommissioned dredge was stripped of all her useful

items in 1984 and given to the Department of Fisheries for their artificial reefs program.

She was towed to a position some 6.5km off of Glenelg to be scuttled. Her bulkheads were removed and her suction equipment was then used to fill her hull with water. She sank bow-first and settled upright in approximately 20m of water with her bow facing south.

The GPS marks given on the SDFS website for the South Australian (or Dredge) are: -

34:58:667 S 138:26:441 E. (Another website gives the marks as 34:58:803 S 138:26:359 E, along with the following notation: -

"WGS 84 satellite navigational systems (GPS) require an adjustment in position of 0.08 minutes SOUTHWARD and 0.08 minutes WESTWARD to agree with the AGD 66 coordinates listed.")

Her 'sister', the Barge (or Glenelg Barge) was the No. 3 dumb hopper barge used by the Department of Marine & Harbors to dump spoil from dredging operations in Port Adelaide and most major outports. She was sunk close to the South Australian, as another artificial reef, by the SA Department of Fisheries on 10th April 1984. It seems that she has no name of her own like the South Australian. Peter Christopher does not list her in his book "South Australian Shipwrecks - A Data Base 1802-1989", it seems, for that reason. According to the web page found at

[http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships\\_graveyard\\_s/pdfs/no3\\_dumb\\_hopper.pdf](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships_graveyard_s/pdfs/no3_dumb_hopper.pdf), she had been built in 1911 by Pool(e) and Steel(e) of Sydney for the Marine Board of South Australia. She became surplus to requirements after the commissioning of two self-propelled barges in 1978. Six 30m-long steel pipes were placed inside the hoppers to add to the barge's effectiveness as an artificial reef. The Department of Fisheries believed that the layout of the barge and pipes would provide a suitable habitat for fish and an excellent site for divers.

A "Glenelg Barges Fish List" published in the MLSSA Newsletter for July 1998 (No.246) listed some 48 species of fish that had been sighted at the Barge by David Muirhead to September 1997. That list can be viewed at <http://www.mlssa.asn.au/nletters/july98.htm>.

The GPS marks given on the SDFS website (at

[http://www.sdfs.net/adelaide\\_metro.htm](http://www.sdfs.net/adelaide_metro.htm)) for the Barge are: - 34:58:729 S, 138:26:462 E.

Another website gives the marks as 34:58:817 S, 138:26:384 E, along with the following notation: -

"WGS 84 satellite navigational systems (GPS) require an adjustment in position of 0.08 minutes SOUTHWARD and 0.08 minutes WESTWARD to agree with the AGD 66 coordinates listed."

She lies just 80m from the South Australian. Although I don't know the present condition of it, there is a star-dropper trail between the two vessels to enable divers to navigate the 80-metre distance, when the current is safe.

I had always understood that, as indicated on the SDFS website, (at [http://www.sdfs.net/adelaide\\_metro.htm](http://www.sdfs.net/adelaide_metro.htm)) "A star-dropper trail has been set up to enable divers to travel from the Barge to the South Australian, and vice versa, in times of low current." I was surprised, however, to view the website at [http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships\\_graveyard\\_s/histories.html](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships_graveyard_s/histories.html) which said that the Scuba Divers Federation themselves had installed the star-dropper trail.

Visit [http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships\\_graveyard\\_s/pdfs/no3\\_dumb\\_hopper.pdf](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships_graveyard_s/pdfs/no3_dumb_hopper.pdf) to see photos of the barge, including one of her in service in 1957 and some of her being scuttled in April 1984.

Visit the web page at [http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships\\_graveyard\\_s/pdfs/no3\\_dumb\\_hopper\\_scans.pdf](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships_graveyard_s/pdfs/no3_dumb_hopper_scans.pdf) to see some sonar images (swath\* bathymetry\*\* and side-scan images) of the Barge (and the Dredge), courtesy of Flinders Ports.

\* (Swath = 'mowing' i.e. a path or strip (as cut by one course of mowing.)

\*\* (Bathymetry = measurement of depth, esp. of the sea.)

Some of the sonar images from the web page are shown below: -



Digital Terrain Model (DTM) view of the (Glenelg Hopper) Barge produced from swath bathymetry (courtesy of Flinders Ports)

(No 5 dumb hopper barge was deliberately scuttled off of Ardrossan, approximately 1nm south of the Zanoni

wrecksite, on 11th April 1984 (34:31:509 S, 138:03:433 E). Visit [http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships\\_graveyard\\_s/pdfs/no5\\_dumb\\_hopper.pdf](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships_graveyard_s/pdfs/no5_dumb_hopper.pdf) for more details.)

I enjoyed a double dive on the South Australian on 1st December 2007 with friends Dennis Hutson and Geoff Prince. We enjoyed good sunny weather, flat calm seas, 12metre-plus viz, water temperature of 19-20° C and no sign of any current until the end of our second dive. The fish and invertebrate life was excellent. A few divers visited either the Barge or the South Australian that day. Some of them stayed down for the duration and completed dives on both sites (resulting in long decompression times). Some divers used twinned tanks for their dives. We could actually see some of them, 15m down, on the deck of the South Australian from inside our boat on the surface. It certainly was a magic day's diving.

BELOW ARE SOME OF DENNIS HUTSON'S PHOTOS FROM THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN



Winching gear on the South Australian



Old Wife on the Barge



Long-nouted Boarfish on the South Australian



Steve (the author) on his most recent dive on the South Australian



Source: [http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships\\_graveyards/pdfs/south\\_australian.pdf](http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/heritage/ships_graveyards/pdfs/south_australian.pdf)