



*H.M.S. Buffalo 1836.*



Originally built in India and launched 4 January 1813 as the *Hindustan*, whose purpose was as a merchantman to carry rice. The ship was purchased by the Royal Navy later that year to be used as a storeship, in 1833 for transportation of convicts. In May of that year The Buffalo transported 180 female convicts to Australia.

The Buffalo was then paid-off and recommissioned in January 1835. James Wood took command in July 1836. *Buffalo* sailed from Portsmouth on 23 July 1836, arriving in South Australian waters in December of that year, carrying 176 colonists, including Captain John Hindmarsh, who was to become the first Governor of the new colony of South Australia following the proclamation of that colony on 28 December 1836. As a tribute, a replica of the *Buffalo* is moored in the Patawalonga River at Glenelg.

Only three deaths were ever recorded on the Buffalo, a remarkable record considering the medical practices of that period and volumes of passengers she transported. Hindmarsh may have been captain in 1837 but James Wood returned to command and would remain her captain until her loss. She was fitted as a timber carrier again in 1839.

She was wrecked on 28 July 1840 by a storm while anchored in Mercury Bay off Whitianga and loaded with Kauri spars. *Buffalo* parted from her cables during a gale. As her crew could not save her, Wood steered her to go ashore on the beach. All the crew except two were saved, but she herself was a total loss.

The wreck site was located by a team of maritime archaeologists and volunteer divers led by the South Australian Government's State Heritage Branch in April 1986. The wreck of *HMS Buffalo* is still visible today at Buffalo Bay off Whitianga. The wreck is only visible from the air at low tide and in clear water conditions.

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