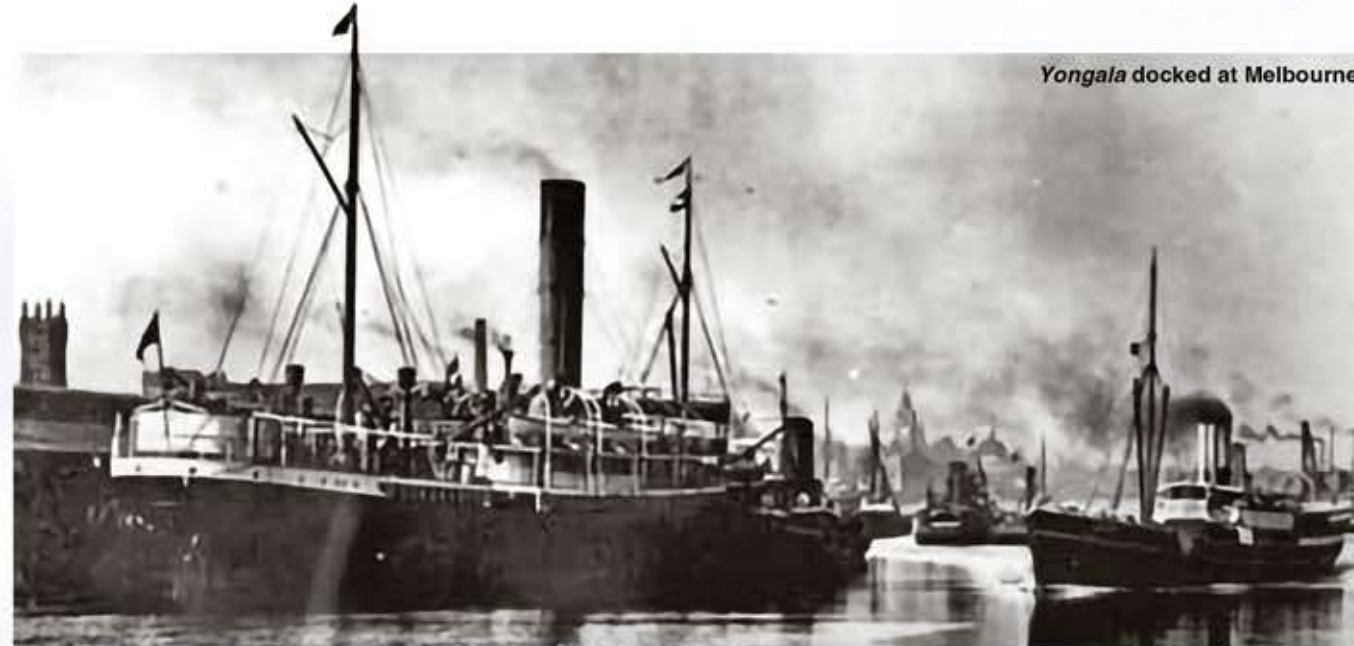


SHIP OF LOST SOULS

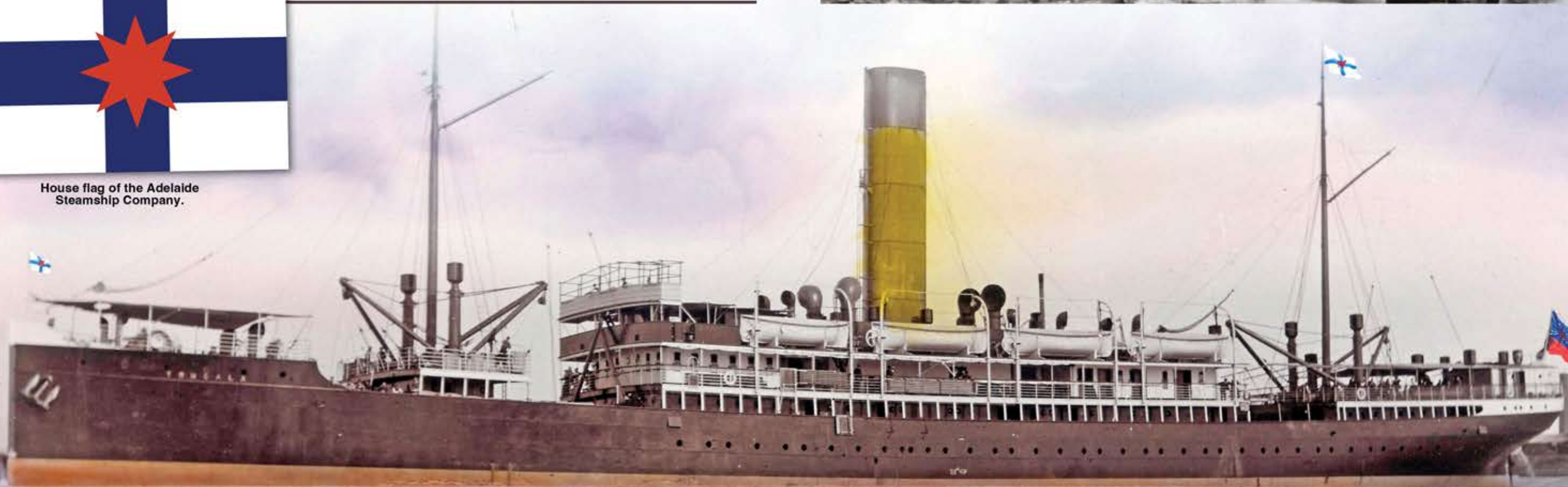
THE PASSENGERS AND CREW OF THE SS YONGALA
COMPLETELY DISAPPEARED AFTER THE SHIP SANK DURING A CYCLONE

BY SIMON REESE

Yongala docked at Melbourne



House flag of the Adelaide
Steamship Company.



To Captain William Knight, the morning of 23 March 1911 seemed quite pleasant as he prepared SS *Yongala* to depart Mackay, Australia, and continue her route — the ship's 99th voyage in Australian waters — down the coast of Queensland. She had arrived from Melbourne and the majority of her passengers had disembarked when the ship reached

Brisbane on 20 March. Going over his boarding list, Knight saw that there were now 29 first-class passengers, 19 second-class passengers, 72 crewmen, and 677 tons of cargo aboard his ship. The cargo also included a Lincoln Red bull and a well-known race horse named *Moonshine*. It seemed that this would be a typical voyage on the scenic coast for *Yongala*. However, it would be anything

but typical and the trip would turn into one of Australia's strangest nautical mysteries.

Yongala was one of two identical passenger/cargo ships completed in the Low Walker Yard of Sir W.G. Armstrong, Whitworth & Company in Newcastle upon Tyne during 1903 for the Adelaide Steamship Company. Constructed as Yard Number 736,

Yongala was launched on 29 April 1903 and completed that October. Named after the town of Yongala in South Australia, Yongala was the Ngadjuri word for "broad water" or "broad wide watering place." The sister ship was *Grantala* and she was Yard Number 737. Launched on 28 May 1903, she was completed that December.

Adelaide Steamship Company was formed by a group of South Australian businessmen in 1875. Their goal was to

control the transport of goods between Adelaide and Melbourne while also profiting from the need for an efficient and comfortable passenger service. *Yongala* had a registered length of 350-ft, beam of 45.2-ft, and her depth was 27.2-ft. Her tonnages were 3664-GRT and 1825-NRT. Power came from a three-cylinder triple expansion engine built by the Wallsend Slipway Company driving a single screw. She had five single-ended boilers that burned about

67 tons of coal per day. Rated at 690-hp, the engine gave the vessel a top speed of 16 knots.

As noted, the company wanted efficient and comfortable ships that could turn a good profit. She had accommodation for 110 first-class and 130 second-class passengers while her holds could carry about 3000 tons of cargo. The ship was equipped throughout with electrical lighting. She had a direct acting steam windlass

SS *Yongala* off the coast of Queensland.