



S.S. Dandenong foundering off Jervis Bay, 1876

William Murray

Victim of SS Dandenong disaster

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Arriving with his family in 1839 from Scotland, William Murray farmed a large property in Moonee Ponds until, at the age of 57, he sailed for Sydney with his daughter and niece aboard the ill-fated *S.S. Dandenong*.

Heavy storms rose even before the *Dandenong* left Victorian seas. The steamer was battered violently and a flock of sheep was lost overboard. The storm continued to rage until in Jervis Bay, 150 kilometres from Sydney, the ship's engines stopped and the captain discovered the propeller was lost, the shaft was cracked and a hole in the hull was taking water rapidly. Passengers and crew tried to stop the leak with mattresses and threw cargo overboard to lighten the ship, but water continued to pour into the hull.

A passing sailing ship, the *Albert William*, arrived to help. A lifeboat was lowered with women and children and several crew. Waves swamped the lifeboat and smashed it against the *Dandenong*, tossing most of its passengers into the water. Thirteen people drowned, including seven children. Other lifeboats were lowered and swamped as firstly women and children then the men tried their luck at transferring to the *Albert William*. Many were lost overboard, but almost forty people made it on board before it became too dark to continue.

By morning, nothing could be seen of the *S.S. Dandenong* and the forty passengers and crew who sank with her. Reported widely in newspapers across the country, this was considered the worst steamer disaster in Australia's maritime history.

William Murray's daughter and niece survived and many years later his fate was memorialised on the same monument as his wife Jane and son Robert.

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