

# The SS Genista

Arrival in Cowes 1889



## “Captain Clarke at the helm with his long beard streaming in the wind”

In 1889, the Westernport Steamship Co., acquired the ferry *Genista*, a 24-metre timber screw steamer weighing 83 tons, constructed in Sydney in 1886 with the capacity to carry 350 passengers in the harbour precinct or 45 passengers at sea.

In May 1887, while the *Genista* was operating as a ferry on Sydney Harbour, a collision occurred with another ferry called *Leveret*. The damage was significant, with *Leveret* striking the *Genista* forcefully, penetrating her hull by six feet both above and below the waterline. All her passengers were immediately transferred to the other ferry, and the *Genista* was towed to Blue's Point and

beached, just reaching the shore as she filled with water. A marine board of inquiry determined that *Leveret* was at fault as *Genista* was on *Leveret*'s port side, and according to navigation rules, *Leveret* should have given way.

*Genista* was raised and repaired within a couple of months, at a cost exceeding £200. However, in October 1887, *Genista* was advertised for sale, and she was eventually purchased by the Western Port Steamship Company in the middle of 1889.

On July 24, 1889, Captain George Clarke, described as quite a presence at the helm with his long beard streaming in the wind, sailed the *Genista* out of Sydney en route to Western Port, where she underwent painting and preparations for her service that commenced in December 1889.

South Bourke & Mornington Journal 7 August 1889:

*‘The new steamship Genista, of the Westernport Steamship Company, arrived here (Hastings) on Thursday (7<sup>th</sup> August 1889) afternoon, having left Sydney on the previous Monday. She is a handsome vessel and is much admired by competent judges, possessing as she does all that is necessary for the comfort and “enjoyment of the travelling public. Her length is 96ft x 19ft beam, with a draft of 6ft, and with an average speed of 12 knots, She is to be under the command of Captain Clarke, so long and favourably known as the Commodore on this station.’*

# “SS Genista faithfully served the Phillip Island community for over 45 years”

Over the next 45 years, she faithfully served as the Stony Point to Phillip Island and San Remo ferry, endearing herself to the community.

Unfortunately, in 1935, the *Genista* was retired from service and met her end by sinking at her Rhyll moorings during the dismantling process. The remains of the *Genista* remained visible at low tide until 1966, when explosives were used to level the wreck.

