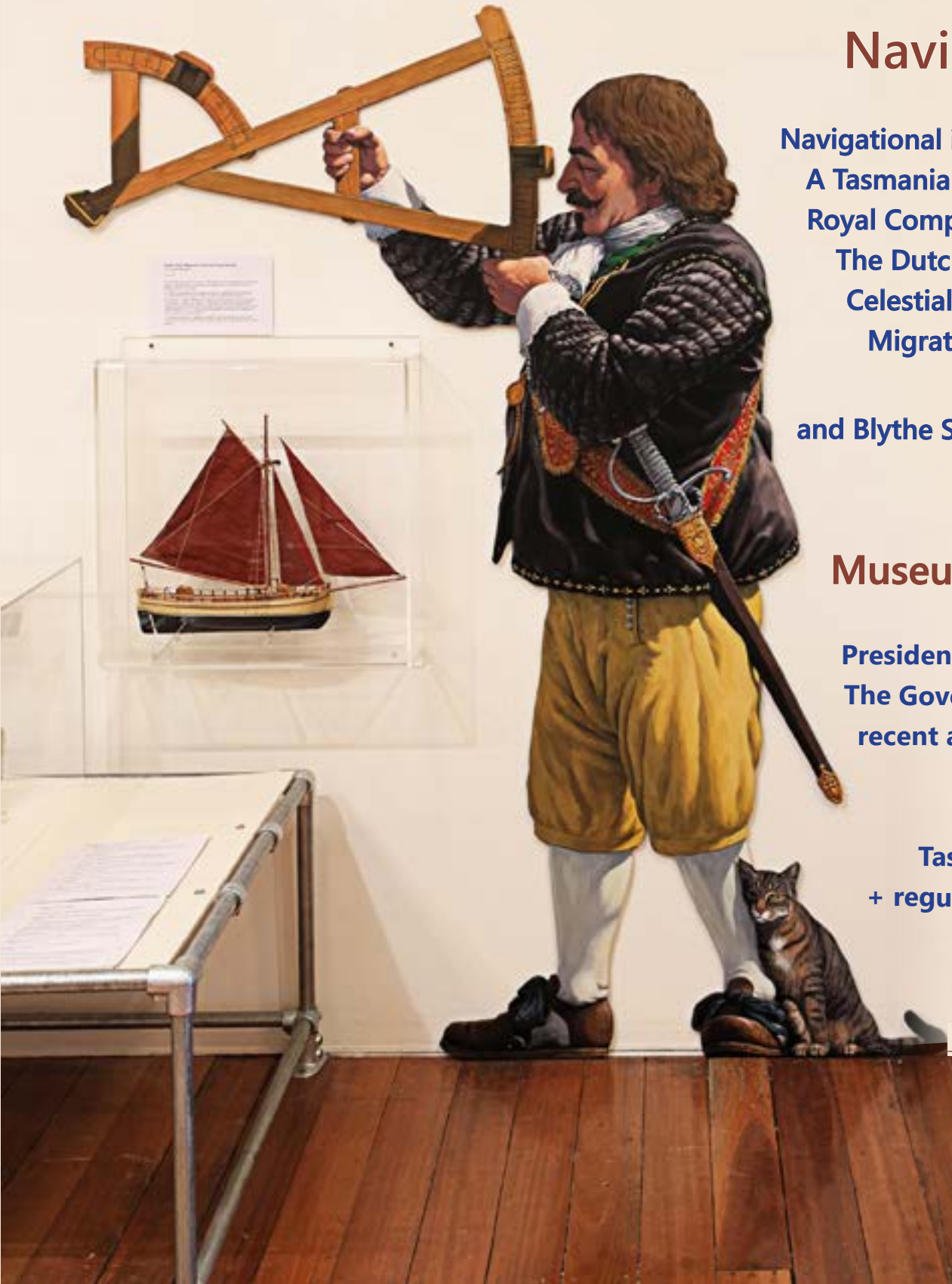
Maritime Times
Tasmania

No 84 – Spring 2023

$3.50



Navigation

Navigational instruments
A Tasmanian Navigator
Royal Company Islands
The Dutch Navigator
Celestial Navigation
Migratory animals

and Blythe Star updates

Museum News

President's message
The Governor's visit
recent acquisitions
exhibitions

TasPorts news
+ regular features

Maritime Museum Tasmania

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Open Daily 9am–5pm
(closed Christmas Day)

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

Maritime Museum Tasmania acknowledges and respects the palawa/pakana peoples as the traditional and ongoing owners and custodians of the skies, land, and water of lutruwita.
We pay our respects to their Elders both past and present and acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded.

Our Patron

Maritime Museum Tasmania is pleased to acknowledge the support of its Patron: The Governor of Tasmania, Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC.

Our Supporters

Maritime Museum Tasmania gratefully acknowledges the support of the City of Hobart, Murdoch Clarke lawyers, TasPorts, Arts Tasmania and Nanni Diesel Australia.

Maritime Times Tasmania

The quarterly magazine produced by the Maritime Museum Tasmania
ISSN 2652-1393 print | ISSN 2652-1342 digital

Cover: Dutch Navigator in the Carnegie Gallery at the Maritime Museum
Artist: Peter Gouldthorpe
Photo: Barry Champion

Maritime Times Tasmania welcomes original historical or newsworthy articles for publication

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS, reflecting the Museum's mission to promote research into, and the interpretation of, Tasmania's maritime heritage, can be short notes or original articles with text about 700–1200 words, accompanied by images, if possible. TEXT will be edited to comply with the magazine's style and publication is at the discretion of the editor.

DO NOT COPY word-for-word from websites, newspapers, books or other publications unless clearly indicating a quote and adding a reference, e.g *Mercury* /date/ page number. Plagiarism is unacceptable. Please be aware of plagiarism (copying another's work), copyright, referencing and photo credits.

CONTRIBUTIONS can be in a Word document, with embedded images or, preferably, with separate 300 dpi jpeg or tiff files.

We can accept legible handwritten articles, with loose photographs, which we will copy for you, and return if required

IMAGES must have a caption, be credited to the photographer or to the source, and have written permission to publish; e.g. if you would like to add an image you see on a website, contact that source (there is usually a 'Contact Us' email link) and request permission to publish in *Maritime Times Tasmania*.

Please email your contributions, with attachments, to admin@maritimetas.org or post to The Editor, 'Maritime Times Tasmania', Maritime Museum, GPO Box 1118, Hobart, TAS 7001. Alternatively, you can leave your contribution, with contact details, at the front desk of the Museum at the street address above. Please add to your calendar:

DEADLINE for the Summer issue is Wednesday 16 November 2023

from the president's log

by Chris Tassell

Recently the Maritime Museum launched its new website. With its fresh and accessible design, the website is an important step for the Museum in developing its online capacity and promoting our increasingly active exhibition and events programs. In particular the new website will enable the online purchase of admission tickets and membership as well as a greatly enhanced shop presence that can in particular promote our own products and publications. The new website project has been a demanding one involving all our staff and many volunteers and is one that will continue to develop as we add more content.

The Museum has also commenced two new projects. The first is a major survey of the shipwreck material held in Tasmania's regional and local museums. Supported by Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service this project will provide for the first time a comprehensive understanding of the scale and diversity of the state's shipwreck material and the challenges in managing this material for the community's benefit. While much of this material is held by members of the Tasmanian Maritime Heritage Network the project also provides an opportunity to document other material held publicly or privately.

The other new project is the Tasmanian seafood packaging initiative that aims to build a collection of contemporary Tasmanian seafood packaging that forms a snapshot of the great growth and diversity of the state's seafood industries. The project which is supported by the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council, while focused on the present, will also extend to include earlier examples of seafood packaging to provide a better understanding of the history of our state's seafood industry. The Museum is particularly interested in early packaging given that in 1905 Henry Jones IXL were the first to successfully produce canned fish products in Australia.

The report on the donation of the Max Angus watercolour in the Winter issue of *Maritime Times* and the request for further donations of works by Tasmanian artists prompted a very generous response from our members. Works by a number of artists including Elspeth Vaughan, Greg Ramsay, David Hopkins and Fearn Rowntree have been donated and form the core of a recent acquisitions exhibition on the Carnegie Landing (right and p. 6). I would like to thank all those who so generously supported the Museum by donating these works.

The annual fund-raising appeal associated with this year's membership renewal was focused on the development of the Museum's Tasmanian racing dinghy collection and the provision of appropriate storage for the collection. Again, this appeal was generously supported by members. As a result of the appeal the Museum has been donated a Mirror dinghy raced by three generations of a family and can now begin planning the installation of new storage shelving at our Cambridge store.

October will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the loss of *Blythe Star* and three articles in this issue of *Maritime Times* explore aspects of this tragedy. A reunion of *Blythe Star* survivors and their families is planned during the month and the Museum will be presenting a small exhibition about *Blythe Star* and its loss. The Museum's collection includes perhaps the most poignant item associated with the *Blythe Star* tragedy, the life raft. This carried the crew members from the south-west of Tasmania to Deep Glen Bay on the Forestier Peninsula and was then used for improvised clothing and footwear. The exhibition will also feature the more recent confirmation of the vessel's location off Tasmania's south-west coast by RV *Investigator*.

Next year will mark the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Maritime Museum and a program of special events and exhibitions drawing upon our nationally significant collections is planned. If you have not renewed your membership, I would encourage you to do so to be a part of these celebrations while also supporting the Museum into the future. □

MMT news

Welcome to the Spring issue of *Maritime Times* MTT 84. We hope you enjoy reading through it.

Navigation

In this issue we showcase a few of the navigational items in the Museum's collection: chronometers, octants, sextants, telescopes, compasses, charts and books, and the Dutch Navigator with his backstaff, based on the beautifully crafted replica backstaff in our collection. There are also interesting articles on navigation.

Blythe Star

Important news earlier this year was the CSIRO's identification of the wreck of *Blythe Star*, lost 50 years ago. We bring you details of that event as well as the the story of two ships named *Blythe Star*, then a firsthand account of the strenuous trek three of the survivors made to seek help. And, from September, there will be a display at the Museum featuring *Blythe Star*.

Special Visitors at the Museum

On July 28 we welcomed our patron, Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker and Emeritus Professor Don Chalmers to the Maritime Museum. Both were very interested in exploring not just the temporary Barbie Kjar exhibit, but our entire Museum. Her Excellency and Professor Chalmers spoke with curator Camille at length, and met front desk volunteers Mary and Natalie.

May Queen

The May Queen Trust has been successful with a grant application to help fund the recaulking of *May Queen's* deck (right). The funding comes from the Australian National Maritime Museum's (ANMM) Maritime Museum of Australia Project Support Scheme (MMAPSS) and covers about three-quarters of the budget for this important part of the ongoing conservation of this significant heritage vessel. The work will be undertaken over the coming spring and summer. If you would like to contribute to the project, please contact the Trust via the Maritime Museum admin@maritimetas.org

Photo: David Smith

A visit from our Patron

Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker is greeted by our curator, Camille

During their walk around the Museum, the visitors stopped to examine several displays, including:
—the model of the Tasman Bridge and the *Lake Illawarra* shipwreck
—the dinghy *Van Diemen*
—the ningher bark watercraft, and
—'Lion Tides' the Barbie Kjar exhibition

Photos: Emily Quintin

Exhibitions at the Maritime Museum

OUR RECENT EXHIBITIONS HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL despite the colder and darker days of Tasmania's off-season, and received much positive feedback. This is encouraging as we aim to offer an active and non-monotonous exhibition program.

And whether we expand our horizons and open our doors to new perspectives or dive into the depth of our rich maritime heritage, when it comes to exhibitions, our goal is to provide our diverse audience with opportunities to learn, be surprised and inspired.

Visit
be Surprised
be Inspired
Learn

Front page *Mercury* 17 October 1973

Remembering *Blythe Star*

On the Carnegie Landing, where the artworks (above) created by esteemed local artists like Fearn Rowntree and Max Angus were recently displayed, you will, from September, be able to view the display commemorating 50 years since the *Blythe Star* tragedy. On the landing and in the stairwell, through archival material and photographs from our collection, we will look back at the tragic incident as we consider the courage of the crew involved, and their legacy. Also see pages 24–31 for the *Blythe Star* story and updates.

Reimagining the Ocean

In our new temporary exhibition, Reimagining the Ocean, a group of artists delves into themes revolving around humanity's relationship with the ocean. With the aim to challenge historical perceptions of the sea as an adversary to be conquered, they imagine, through various artworks, the ocean as a source of life and sanctuary rather than a threat. They also question and reflect on the evolving maritime narrative.

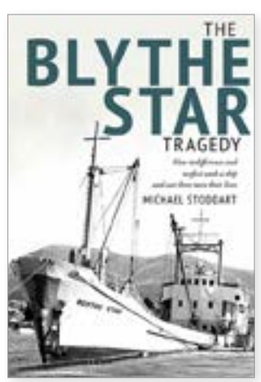
Subverting the idea of the feminine as the embodiment of the perils of the sea is an important theme of the exhibition. Chantale Delrue, for instance, considers and dismantles with humour the supposedly dangerous allure of the mermaid figure in two of her works, Mermaid's Tool Bag (see pic) and Something Fishy about these Fish?

Several of the works also spotlight the vulnerability of the ocean's ecosystem due to climate change and plastic pollution. They emphasise the urgent need for environmental consciousness and action but also hold hope for the future. Linda Erceg's work, Tentacular, (below right) for example, is composed of plant-based bioplastic packing peanuts that dissolve in water — a product that provides an alternative for single-use plastics such as polystyrene.

Overall, this beautiful exhibition attempts, through diverse artistic expressions, to transcend traditional narratives of the ocean, inviting us to view it as a nurturing force and a shared home. □

Chantale Delrue, Mermaid's Tool Bag

Linda Erceg, Tentacular



in our shop

THE
BLYTHE STAR
TRAGEDY

the background story
by Michael Stoddart

Star Finder and Identifier (US Navy Hydrographic Office - No.2102-D) will be included in the 'Reimagining the Ocean' exhibition (p. 7). It consists of a round base plate and eight overlays with instruction page, all kept in a round plastic case, 245mm diameter.

Glass float to be incorporated into the 'Reimagining the Ocean' exhibition.

The remains of the life raft from Blythe Star are on display in the Carnegie Gallery at the Maritime Museum. The raft is displayed without the canopy because the latter was cut up in Deep Glen Bay, where the survivors landed, to provide rudimentary footwear and clothing for those who went in search of help (see Deep Glen Bay p. 30).

Photo: Barry Champion

MMT welcomes new member

Brendan Fletcher

Membership

CALL IN or JOIN ONLINE

DOWNLOAD AN APPLICATION FORM

and see the benefits of membership at:

www.maritimetas.org/support/membership

CATEGORIES OF MEMBERSHIP and annual fees, effective each year 1 July to 30 June (incl. GST) are:

Volunteer	$15	
Individual	$35	Family $45
Concessions / Interstate / Overseas	$25	
Perennial	$1000	(once only)

MMT Volunteers: Jenny in the shop
Stuart and John on the front desk

Mary on the front desk Photos MMT Collection
Volunteers Peter, Louis, Beth and John taking a break from duty on *May Queen*

Photo: David Smith

CELEBRATING

50 YEARS

VOLUNTEERS

A major part of the Museum's fast approaching fiftieth year will be to reflect on how much has been achieved by a team of volunteers. Volunteers established the first museum and ran it in its entirety for well over half its life so far. That the Museum can now employ a small team of staff is testament to the dedication and commitment of countless volunteers over the years.

The Museum today still relies on volunteers to keep it open to the public seven days a week, with the Museum's doors only remaining locked on Christmas Day. This is an amazing achievement that everyone at the Museum can be proud of. The post-COVID era, though, is proving difficult for organisations like the Museum. Our core demographic of volunteers is in huge demand while many people who would volunteer are not as available as they were. They are having to work longer or are helping family with childcare as the cost of living crisis continues to bite.

The Museum is always on the lookout for new volunteers to help especially with the reception desk and gift and book shop. You don't need heaps of maritime knowledge, just an interest in talking to people and a curiosity for history. If you think you or anyone you know might be interested in sparing four hours or so a week greeting visitors to the Maritime Museum, please do get in touch via

admin@maritimetas.org

recent acquisitions

by Colin Denny

HMAS *Melbourne* Inclinometer, front
Photo: Barry Champion

HMAS *Melbourne* Inclinometer

Recently we received the inclinometer formerly located in the Damage Control Headquarters of the aircraft carrier HMAS *Melbourne* (CVS 21). This historic instrument, manufactured by Kelvin & Hughes Ltd in Britain, helps engineers when stabilising the ship.

Sadly, Australia's worst peacetime naval disaster occurred in February 1964 when HMAS *Melbourne* sliced the Daring Class Destroyer HMAS *Voyager* in two resulting in the death of eighty-two officers and men from the destroyer.

In June 1969, less than six years later, HMAS *Melbourne* was in a collision with another destroyer, USS *Frank E. Evans* of the US Navy. The destroyer lost seventy-four officers and men. HMAS *Melbourne* was cleared of blame in both incidents.

The donated inclinometer may have assisted the engineering officers who assessed the damage to the carrier at the time.

Mirror Dinghy *Tobermory* sailing.
Photo: Peter Wright

The Wright Family Mirror Dinghy

Our recent quest for popular wooden sailing dinghies succeeded when committee member Peter Wright and his family donated their Jack Holt designed Mirror Dinghy to the Museum. The dinghy, *Tobermory,* was amateur-built by Peter from a kit in 1976 in a second floor flat. It was the time of rapid expansion of kit-built Mirrors in Australia, and therefore is representative of the boats at the time of peak numbers in Australia.

Tobermory is unique in longevity having sailed in State Championships, National Championships in every State and the ACT, and various regattas from 1977 to 2019. It has been owned by one family and skippered and crewed by three generations. A full record is available, including many images from build (in the flat) to the present.

The dinghy is still in good sailing condition and last raced in 2019. Mirror dinghies were popular in Tasmania and several clubs had large fleets. *Tobermory* with its well documented and extensive history is an important addition to our collection.

Replica pulling boat *Ramping Lion*

The replica of *Ramping Lion*, a nineteenth-century Waterman's pulling boat, has arrived at the Maritime Museum, a donation from the Australian National Maritime Museum. It joins the Maritime Museum's expanding small boat collection.

In 1981 Hobart collector George Burrows commissioned well-known Battery Point boat builder Max Creese to build a 6.25m replica of an 1840s clinker pulling boat. Creese got the design by studying a nineteenth-century photograph of pulling boats in Watermens Dock. *Ramping Lion* is based on an original boat of the same name and constructed of six Huon pine planks on each side. The fittings are bronze and there is decorative scroll work with shields on the port and starboard bow. George undertook the detailed paint work himself.

Sometime after launching and display in Hobart, the Australian National Maritime Museum purchased the replica. When their Collection Policy changed so that the ANMM no longer accepted replicas, *Ramping Lion* was deaccessioned and sent to Hobart, close to where the Watermen once worked.

Ramping Lion - from album P_DIG-2023-017 at MMT
Photo: George Burrows

Model tugboat *Buccaneer*

The Museum has many interesting model ships but very few of them are workboats. So, we were pleased when Robbie Stevenson offered to donate his excellent model of the tugboat *Buccaneer*.

Carrington Slipways launched the original in Newcastle, Australia in 1974. While *Buccaneer* never operated in Tasmanian waters it is the same class and almost identical to *Fullerton Cove*, *Sirius Cove* and *Campbell Cove*, which worked North West Tasmanian ports at various times.

Buccaneer at Maritime Museum Tasmania
Photo: Barry Champion

The Dutch Navigator with Backstaff

Local artist Peter Gouldthorpe was asked in 2017 to produce a cut-out life-size figure of a seventeenth-century Dutch navigator taking astronomical measurements for the Museum's navigation display. He incorporated the recently acquired replica backstaff (below) and the result, an acrylic painting on marine ply, is now on display in the Carnegie Gallery at the Museum. The work was funded by a grant from the Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme

As you will see in the pages of this issue of *Maritime Times*, octants, sextants, telescopes and navigational tables from the late 1700s through the 1800s in our collection provide examples of instruments used by migrant and trading ships in Tasmanian waters during the colonial period. Sextants, star charts and compasses from the 1900s are also displayed as well as images and examples of today's satellite navigation systems.

right: the Dutch Navigator
by Peter Gouldthorpe
on display in the Carnegie Gallery
Photo: Barry Champion

The Replica Backstaff

In 2014, the Maritime Museum acquired a replica of a backstaff, carefully researched and beautifully crafted by Graham Holden, a retired Master Mariner and Hydrographer. The backstaff, used to determine latitude by measuring the altitude of the sun, was invented by English captain, John Davis, about 1595. It was a major improvement on its predecessor, the cross staff, which was often inaccurate due to movement and the need for an observer to look directly into the sun. The backstaff, used with the observer's back to the sun, overcame these problems. It was in common use until Hadley's invention of the reflecting quadrant in 1731. Abel Tasman probably used a Dutch copy of the instrument called a 'Hoekboog' or 'angle bow' when he became the first European to sight Tasmania in 1642. (His measurements of latitude recorded during this voyage were too accurate to have been made by a cross staff.)

Graham Holden gained his early nautical training as a cadet on HMS *Conway* in 1955–56. His interest in maritime history and his fine woodworking skills lead to his replicating an ancient backstaff using authentic timbers. Bob Frost, another 'Conway boy', saw Graham's first version and thought a similar replica would be a wonderful addition to the Museum's navigation display.

We agreed! Graham has crafted for us a beautiful backstaff, made from reclaimed mahogany, beechwood and iroko, with all joints glued and pegged. It was on show at the 2015 Wooden Boat Festival before becoming a fascinating addition to our navigation collection. (*Maritime Times* 49, December 2014, p. 19)

top: the replica backstaff
above: scribing the backstaff
below: the backstaff in use

Photos supplied by Graham Holden

Bay of Fires

En Plein Air Painting Retreat
with Peter Gouldthorpe
12–15 May 2024

details and booking at:
www.taswalkingco.com.au/bay-of-fires-lodge-art-retreat/

Tasmanian Walking Company
and Handmark Gallery

Turtle hatchlings make their way to the sea. Those female turtles that survive will navigate their way back to this beach to lay the eggs of the next generation Photo: Marc-Andre Julien

IF NAVIGATION WERE AN OLYMPIC SPORT it's safe to assume we humans—if stripped of our compasses and GPS units, and the chronometers and backstaffs of yesteryear— would never make the finals. The gold medal would be won, in perpetuum it would seem, by the Arctic tern, a bird that flies from the Arctic to the Antarctic and back every year, a distance of 90,000km. As terns can live for 30 years, the total distance covered in a lifetime is 2,700,000 km or the equivalent of 410 return flights from Sydney to Perth, or over three return trips to the moon. That's a lot of Frequent Flyer points for a little chap no heavier than half a dozen Tim Tams! Not only do they fly these enormous distances effortlessly but – astonishingly - they return to the very Arctic beach on which they hatched, with spot-on accuracy.

In comparing our navigational ability with Arctic terns, we stand naked. The best we can do is to create a memory map of our surroundings and perhaps of the Heavens above us, but even then we all know how easy it is to become disorientated when trying to get back to camp after a trip into the bush with spade and paper. The reason we are such poor navigators is because our ancestors evolved from animals which lived in defined territories who had no need for navigation beyond the local. For sure, they undertook amazing one-way migrations out of Africa far into northern Europe and Asia, but returning to where they started from was never in the game plan. As they learned more about the world they discovered that slivers of lodestone (a naturally magnetic mineral called magnetite), poised so they could swing freely, would always orientate in a north-south plane. And thus was born the compass.

Migratory animals, like sea turtles and terns, have compasses in their brains made of grains of magnetite. We don't know yet how magnetoreception (as navigation using Earth's magnetic field is called) works, but recent research suggests animals are able to sense the angle at which the magnetic field lines intersect with Earth's surface through the creation of special molecules in the eyes. Research into the link between vision and magnetic sensing is coming along nicely, but precisely how these ultra-short-lived molecules influence the animal's flight direction requires us to step into the arcane world of quantum physics. Best not to go any further - unless your stomach can withstand an Atlantic force ten gale!

When terns, petrels, mutton birds, homing pigeons and sea turtles come close to their destinations they switch off their magnetic navigation systems and turn on their noses. Petrels with experimentally

The Arctic tern: a champion navigator Photo: Mattias Kost
Title photo, facing page: Theodor Vasile on Unsplash

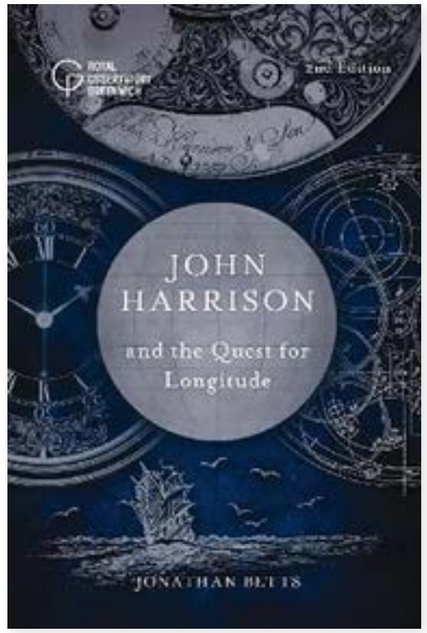
plugged nostrils wander round in circles unable to work out which is their burrow. Remove the plugs, and hey presto! They make a bee-line to Home-Sweet-Home.

Speaking of bees, they and many other insects can see sky patterns made of sunlight scattered by atmospheric particles. They remember the position of the sun when they set off to forage, and thanks to the presence of these patterns can find their way back even if the sun is clouded over. Bumblebees supplement these powers by putting droplets of scent on prominent objects around their territories, landing to smell-check their waypoints to ensure they have not strayed off course.

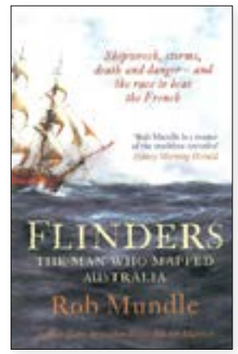
We all know that fish smell, but few know that migratory fish, like Atlantic salmon and European eels find their way back to the exact headstream where they hatched years before and thousands of sea miles away using nothing more than their noses, and a fantastic memory for the smell of their birthplace. Despite rising ocean pollution and plastic particles interfering with their delicate noses they can lock-on to the tiniest traces of the smell of home and let nothing deviate them from following the scent-trail. Not only can your dog follow its nose to get home but it should have no trouble finding you and your spade lost in the bush and lead you back to camp. It's said owners of old dogs frequently don't know that their pets have been blind for years; blind to sight that is, not blind to scents.

As a species lacking the biological ability to navigate much beyond the back of one's hand, it's hats off to the Abel Tasmans and James Cooks who put their faith in man-made devices to transport them safely across the globe, and in so doing opened up a whole new world for so many of us. □

in our shop



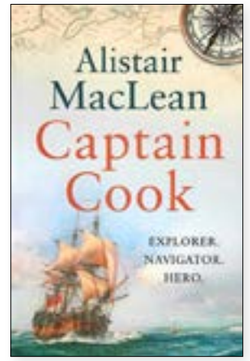
JOHN HARRISON and the QUEST FOR LONGITUDE
by Jonathan Betts



FLINDERS

The man who mapped Australia

by Rob Mundle



CAPTAIN COOK

Explorer
Navigator
Hero

by Alistair MacLean

HAROLD GATTY

a Tasmanian Navigator

by Colin Denny

SS *Gabo*

THE GRANDSON OF AN IRISH HIGHWAYMAN, Harold Gatty became a pioneering navigator whose extraordinary skills and understanding of the visible universe made the world a safer place to travel.

Harold Gatty was born at Campbell Town on 6 January 1903, the third child of James and Lucy Gatty. James, the son of the convicted highwayman transported to Van Diemen's Land in 1842, was a well-respected school headmaster. James Gatty moved with his family to Zeehan on his appointment to a new school where, in 1915, St Virgil's College awarded Harold Gatty a bursary. He left Zeehan for boarding school in Hobart.

Gatty's St Virgil's friend, Noel Monks, remembered the desperate loneliness of boarding so far from their families and homes. The wharf area became the boys' playground where visiting ships stirred up dreams of adventure. Monks later wrote that the sight of the three-masted American schooner *Omega* sailing into Hobart made them determined to go to sea to see the world.

Gatty sat the Australian Navy's entrance examination and joined an intake of 17 cadets at the Royal Naval College, Jervis Bay in January 1917. He struggled at the College and surprisingly, the man who was to become such a great navigator, admitted, 'I encountered most of my difficulties mastering mathematics and navigation'.

At the end of the First World War, as the Navy demobilised, just 12 of the 17 cadets received postings. Gatty withdrew from the College without graduating and joined the merchant shipping firm James Patrick & Co of Sydney as an apprentice in 1920. Beyond the classroom, instructed by old sea dog Captain Allison aboard the SS *Gabo*, Gatty developed a real interest in navigation. As he stood watch at night, he wondered at the splendour of the stars of the South Seas and later recalled, 'It is the finest possible school for instruction'.

Returning to Hobart in 1924, Gatty gained his second mate's certificate. He signed on with the Union Steamship Company oil tanker SS *Orowaiti* trading from California to New Zealand. Here he honed his navigation skills and experimented with new methods. The Pacific Ocean aroused his interest in the use of man's own senses as an aid to traditional navigation.

The young deck officer became frustrated with the slow pace of advancement within the Union Steamship Company. He signed off and tried unsuccessfully to set up his own business first in Hobart and then in Sydney. Disillusioned with his failures in Australia, Gatty applied for an entry visa to work in the United States. His wife Vera and young son left for California but Harold worked on a coaster awaiting his own visa. When formalities were complete Gatty was reunited with his family on Christmas Eve 1927.

Gatty took a job as mate on the luxury schooner *Goodwill*, owned by US sporting-goods millionaire, Keith Spaulding. The following year he resigned to start a navigation school in Los Angeles. He taught mainly amateur yachtsmen and worked as a compass adjuster for both marine and aviation compasses. The latter work brought him into contact with aviators who wanted to learn to navigate. His school grew and he took on an assistant leaving him more time to research ways of improving aerial navigation. During his research, he met Lieutenant Commander Phillip VH Weems USN, a serving naval officer, who had already developed methods of teaching air navigation. The simplified procedures used tables of pre-calculated position lines called the Weems Curves.

The two navigators worked together on their research. Gatty had a mind for unravelling complex problems. An early invention was his air sextant, effectively a conventional sea sextant with a spirit level attached to create an artificial horizon, but his greatest invention was the Gatty Drift Sight.

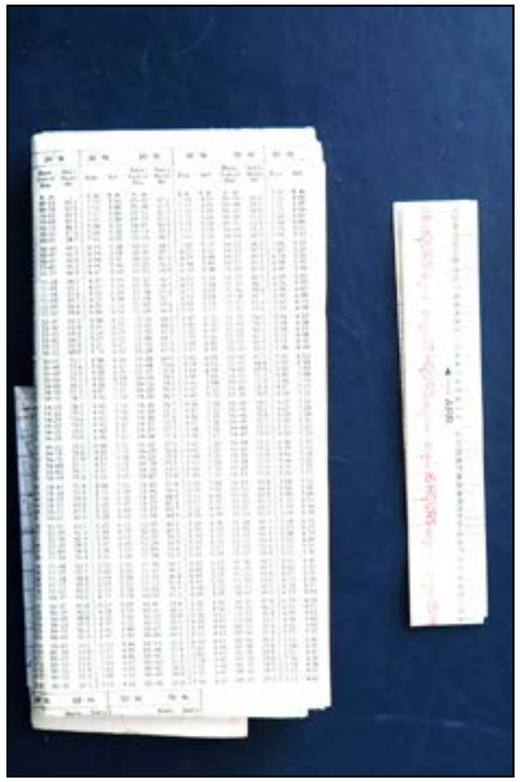
One impediment to accurate navigation was the difficulty in determining the aircraft's ground speed owing to the angle of drift occasioned by the wind. Gatty's invention helped overcome the problem. It was a vast improvement on earlier instruments and formed the basis of the automatic pilot that was to become standard equipment for most aircraft.

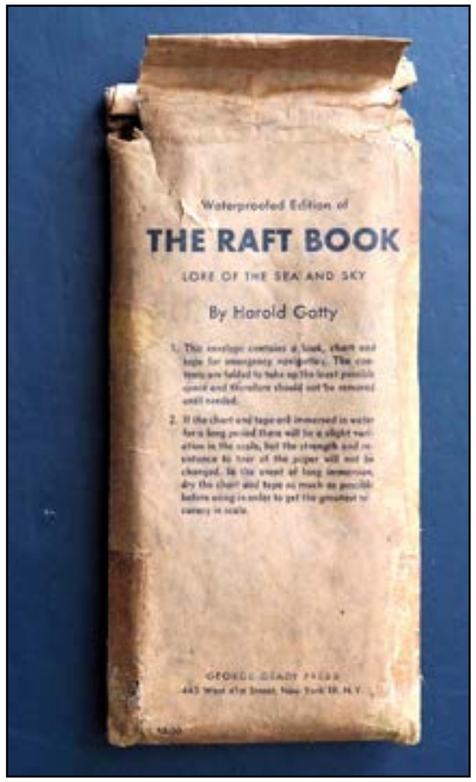
When Weems transferred to the US Naval Academy in Annapolis to teach postgraduate navigation, Gatty took over management of the Weems navigation school in San Diego. In the textbook *Weems System of Air Navigation,* Weems credited Harold Gatty for the work undertaken in its compilation. He described Gatty as 'a compass and map expert who has done more practical work on celestial navigation than any other person

Harold Gatty signed on as mate on the schooner *Goodwill* when he first arrived in the US Photo: NOAO/AURA/NSF

facing page:
top: Harold Gatty 1931
bottom: Harold Gatty was apprenticed to SS *Gabo* in 1920
Photo: MMT, Slevin Collection, Gabo P_Sle_02_37

U156797ACME – the original caption on 23 June 1931 read "Roosevelt Field, N.Y., Harold Gatty and Wiley Post, the two adventurous aviators who intend to circle the globe in ten days, took off on the first hop of their journey from Roosevelt Field, N.Y., to Harbour Grace, Newfoundland in the mist." Photo: ©Bettmann/CORBIS.





above, left to right:
Globe memorial erected to honour Harold Gatty at Campbell Town, Tasmania

Tables for The Raft Book

The Raft Book cover

Memorial plaque and transcription

in the world today'. Gatty had refocussed from marine navigation as pilots throughout the world desperately sought new challenges and records. Many brilliant pilots needed good navigators and in 1929, Roscoe Turner a flamboyant former circus lion-tamer approached Gatty to navigate him in his attempt to break the US transcontinental record. In that first attempt adverse winds denied them the outright record.

Gatty's most celebrated flight was with adventurer Wiley Post in a Lockheed Vega monoplane powered by a single Pratt and Witney Wasp engine. In 1931, Post asked the Tasmanian to join him in an attempt on the around-the-world record of 21 days held by the German airship *Graf Zeppelin*. Gatty accepted the offer and they took off in the *Winnie Mae* from New York's Roosevelt Field on June 23, 1931. *Winnie Mae* landed back at Roosevelt Field after circumnavigating the globe in a flight lasting less than nine days. They received a hero's welcome and were each awarded the US Distinguished Flying Cross, the first civilians so honoured.

In January 1932, Gatty accepted the position of Chief Air Service Navigation Research Engineer with the United States Army Air Corps. He made it clear that he would not forgo his Australian citizenship so Congress passed a special act to allow him to take up the position. Gatty then set up the military celestial navigation schools that taught the officers who were to control US strategic air operations.

Maritime and terrestrial navigation requires two-dimensional coordinates. Once in the air a third coordinate comes into play — altitude. It was Gatty's research and practical application that led to a solution to many of the complex problems associated with three-dimensional navigation.
Following the outbreak of the war in the Pacific in 1941 Gatty returned to Australia as Director of Air Transport for the South West Pacific with the rank of Group Captain in the RAAF. His work resulted in a remarkable improvement in the movement of supplies but in early 1943, following the defeat of Japanese forces in New Guinea, Gatty stepped down from the position and returned to the US.

He set about writing a book for the US Navy to help downed navy airmen survive and navigate their life rafts. The emergency maritime navigation manual was called *The Raft Book* and was placed in the survival kits of every allied airman in the Pacific. After the Second World War, Gatty moved to Fiji to work. Here he wrote *Nature is Your Guide*, a book on navigation using natural senses and powers of observation. It was published after his sudden death by stroke in 1957 when just 54 years old.

On a visit to Annapolis in April 1968, this writer met the famous navigator PVH Weems who had been in business with Harold Gatty. Weems confirmed that Harold Gatty had developed many of the principles of three-dimensional celestial navigation for aircraft and said Gatty's earlier research work was critical to the understanding of navigation in space.

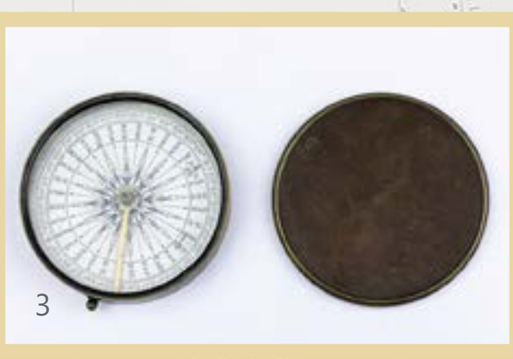
Gatty is indeed a celebrated Tasmanian navigator. □

THIS MONUMENT IS TO HONOUR THE MEMORY OF
HAROLD GATTY
WHO IN 1931 WON WORLD FAME AS AN AIR NAVIGATOR
AFTER HIS RECORD-BREAKING FLIGHT WITH WILEY POST
IN THE "WINNIE MAE" DURING THE SECOND
WORLD WAR AS A GROUP CAPTAIN IN THE R.A.A.F.
HE WAS DIRECTOR OF AIR TRANSPORT FOR THE
ALLIED FORCES IN THE PACIFIC AREA.
BORN AT CAMPBELL TOWN 1903– DIED AT FIJI 1957
THIS MEMORIAL WAS CONSTRUCTED J.C. O'BRIEN
BY THE HOBART TECHNICAL COLLEGE WARDEN 1960

Selection of Navigational Aids in our Museum's collection


1


2


3


4


5


7


6


8

1 Navigation Light green – starboard side
2 Chronometer –Parkinson & Frodsham, London, ca 1838-1840, set on gimbals
3 Compass – Brass pocket compass with removable cover and pointer holder
4 Octant – Hadley's octant ca 1820, in case, supplied by Norie & Co., London
5 Ship's Compass mounted on gimbals
6 Navigation Light red – port side
7 Sextant– belonged to Captain Richard Copping 1848
8 Telescope – Brass with side focus adjustment screw knob

Background: British Admiralty Chart No 1079 Tasmania
Printed October 1860 - MMT Collection

Tasmania's Phantom Isles

the mysterious Royal Company Islands

by Brendon Bowes

PERUSING A MUCH LOVED COPY of my uncle Elliot's *Royal Atlas and Gazetteer of Australasia*, published 1890 by JG Bartholomew, FRGS (Fellow of the Royal Geographic Society) I was intrigued by a map of Tasmania and the Southern Ocean. It showed a place I had never known existed; directly south of Tasmania, below 50 degrees latitude, the Royal Company Islands were clearly marked, their name underlined in red ink.

• Was the publisher of that nineteenth-century atlas bamboozled by wayward navigators or by tall tales of seafarers when he included an imaginary island on the chart?

• Or does Australia still have a top-secret territory, tucked away far to the south, purposely erased from modern maps? Abundant possibilities for modern-day conspiracy theorists.

I started looking for answers to this geographical mystery, by delving into the strange phenomenon of phantom islands.

It is claimed that in 1772 a Spanish vessel bound for Manilla by the southern route reported sighting a group of islands to the south of Van Diemen's Land. The vessel belonged to the Royal Company which had been formed to promote trade in the Philippines, hence the islands' given name. Duly marked thereafter on maps, verifying the existence of the Royal Company Islands baffled international explorers and scientists for over 150 years.

On some old maps of the South Polar regions, they were marked as situated 600 miles south of Tasmania. Some charts showed their location precisely at 50°20'S 140°0'E or 52°20'S 143°0'E.

I found that the Royal Company Islands are today regarded as phantom islands. A phantom island is a purported island which was included on maps, but later found not to exist. They stemmed from reports of early explorers and are probably the result of navigational errors, mistaken observations, unverified misinformation, or a deliberate fabrication by cartographers to expose map plagiarism.

Some bogus islands remained on maps for centuries before being 'un-discovered'.

The existence of the Royal Company Islands had proved problematic as early as 1840. In January a French scientific exploration of Commodore Dumont D'Urville departed Hobart. On the 11th the fifty-first parallel was crossed close to the position on the charts assigned to the Royal Company Islands, but no sign of land was seen before pack ice was encountered five days later.

The United States Exploring Expedition under the command of Lieutenant Charles Wilkes USN, also failed to find them. On March 1st, 1840, the flagship USS *Vincennes* reached the supposed latitude of the Royal Company Islands and then ran for eight degrees of latitude along that parallel, but without any indication of land.

In October 1894 the vessel *Antarctic* (on an exploratory whaling expedition) steered for the location of the Royal Company Islands and searched for a couple of days, but met with gales. Not finding these elusive islands, they headed for the comparative safety of Macquarie Island.

In 1912 an Australian newspaper optimistically reported that:

> It is hoped that a search for the Royal Company Islands, conducted by the Steam Yacht *Aurora*, belonging to the Douglas Mawson Antarctic Expedition, will be rewarded with success. If the islands can be rediscovered, they will furnish an admirable site for a wireless meteorological station. The place originally assigned to them on the Admiralty chart is exactly in the path of the much-dreaded southerly disturbances, which burst upon Australia with practically no announcement. For this reason, the Federal Government meteorologist (Mr. Hunt) wrote to the expedition, urging that: 'no efforts should be spared to locate the islands'.
> (*Barrier Miner,* Broken Hill, 7 June 1912, p.4)

Alas, there was disappointment, as Captain JK Davis wrote in Chapter 18 of Mawson's 1915 book, T*he Home of the Blizzard*:

> We had a fine run through Bass Strait with a light southeast breeze, arriving off King's Island at noon on May 28 [1912]. The trawling gear was got ready for the following day, but the sea was too high and the ship continued south towards the position of the Royal Company Islands.
>
> On June 1 we were in latitude 53° south, longitude 152° east, and had been cruising about fruitlessly in heavy weather for days.
>
> I was able to send the following message to Professor Edgeworth David: 'Aurora arrived Macquarie Island, all well, June 7; constant gales and high seas have prevented [seabed] dredging so far. Royal Company Islands not found in the position indicated on the chart'.

Not giving up, the expedition again tried to locate the mysterious islands. After departing Hobart for the Antarctic, Davis wrote on 31 December 1912:

> We were in the vicinity of the reputed position of the Royal Company Islands. A sounding was taken with great difficulty, finding two thousand and twenty fathoms [3694m] and a mud bottom.

One newspaper duly reported the island's demise:

> The elusive Royal Company Islands, which, after being twice placed on the Admiralty chart, are now supposed to have subsided beneath the ocean in one of those volcanic disturbances which are known to be frequent in that region. (*Mercury* 30 May 1912, p. 4)

In 1921 the steamer *Carnegie* returned to San Francisco after a scientific expedition to investigate the earth's magnetism. Scientists on the ship had earlier expressed their doubt as to these islands' existence, and again, no trace of them was found in the far Southern Ocean.

As late as 1932, a proposal for a Commonwealth-led expedition to find the Royal Company Islands was suggested. However, the plan was firmly rejected by the Geographical Society of NSW, as by then scientific evidence showed it would have been a waste of time and money.

So, what caused early seafarers to believe they saw land so far south? One theory is that they mistook a giant raft of pumice created by volcanic eruptions. Rafts of pumice can drift for years before becoming waterlogged and sinking. Far to the west, a real Australian sub-Antarctic island may have been the source of a geological peculiarity that could have deceived an early Spanish explorer.

In February 2016, Australian scientists caught a rare glimpse of the eruption of Big Ben volcano on remote Heard Island. Lying 4099km southwest of Perth, this island ranks among the most remote places on Earth. Prevailing currents and wind would take pumice rafts from there to the south of Tasmania — right in the path of where our phantom Royal Company Islands were meant to exist. □

Further Reading

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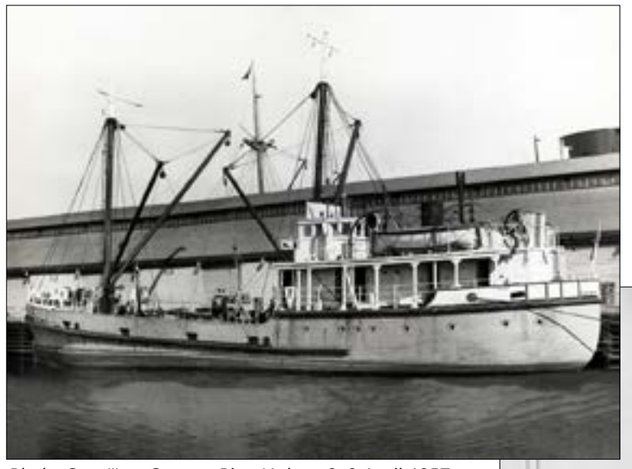
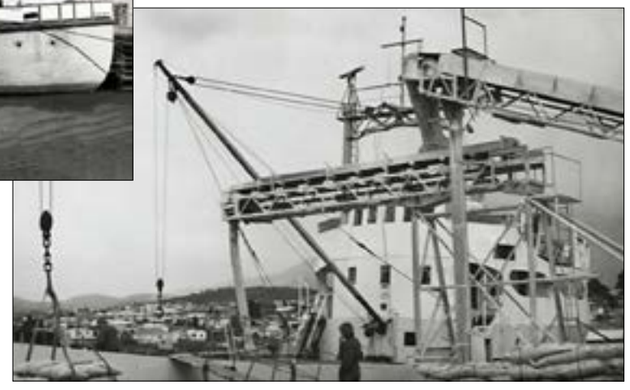
The Story of Two Ships named *Blythe Star*

by Rex Cox



Blythe Star (I) at Queens Pier, Hobart 8–9 April 1957
Photo: John Craike



right: *Blythe Star* (II) loading fertiliser at Prince of Wales Bay, Hobart. AOT NS-3745-1-693

Blythe Star in Melbourne, June 1971
Photo: Rex Cox

left: *Tandik* at Le Havre
Aquarelle by Maurice R Mélissent
Courtesy Roland Grard

IT'S INTRIGUING, AS WELL AS SAD, that two ships bearing the same name should be lost off the Tasmanian coast within 14 years of each other. Both derived their names from the Blythe River near Burnie, which in turn owed its name (with slight mis-spelling) to the Blyth River in Northumberland, UK.

The first *Blythe Star* (316grt/1949) began life as one of the 300 tonners, wooden cargo vessels built for the Australian Army during World War 2 by the Commonwealth Government Shipyard at Prince of Wales Bay (a yard in which the Tasmanian Government also had a considerable interest). It was launched as *Lappa* (AV 1373) on 4 September 1945, but, as the conflict had already ended, work was suspended eight days later and the vessel laid up in March 1946 awaiting a decision on its future. It was finally completed as *Blythe Star* in 1949 for timber company Alstergren Pty Ltd, which the previous year had formed Leven Shipping Company Pty Ltd in partnership with the master and crew of an earlier acquisition—and sister ship—the appropriately named *Leven Star* (316/1947). Both ships were registered in Melbourne, where Alstergren's main office was located. Principal agent was FH Stephens Pty Ltd.

The *Mercury* of 17 May 1949 mentioned that:

> Blythe Star …has been converted for cargo service between the Mainland and Tasmania. At the Hobart wharves yesterday the ship had her masts stepped and workmen were completing alterations…. Reconstruction work on the ship is expected to be completed by the end of this week. The vessel will then load a full cargo at Hobart for Melbourne.

By coincidence *Leven Star* was also in Hobart at that time, having arrived on 6 May with general cargo from Melbourne and then lying at Prince of Wales Bay and the Domain Slip for an overhaul and survey which took nearly five months, finally departing on 18 October. Meanwhile, *Blythe Star* had sailed on 13 July and spent the first half of the 1950s in the Bass Strait trade, carrying mostly timber, potatoes and minerals northbound and a mixed general cargo southbound.

Ulverstone wags reckoned that 'Shooting Star' would be a more appropriate name for the ship after a particularly fast round trip of 87 hours in July 1952. It left the Tasmanian port fully laden at 1000 on Sunday, discharged and reloaded in Melbourne and berthed again in Ulverstone at 0100 on Thursday. Though considered quite remarkable then, this feat pales in comparison with the hectic schedules of today's much larger Bass Strait traders.

During an eventful career *Blythe Star* grounded at Leven Heads when outbound on 5 June 1951, to be floated off undamaged at high tide next day. In July the following year a broken crankshaft combined with annual overhaul kept it out of service until November. A fire while alongside in Melbourne on 8 May 1953 was more serious, destroying much of the superstructure and accommodation, with the ship laid up until March 1957. It then did ten trips between Melbourne and Hobart from May to September 1957, bringing general and returning with timber loaded at Lunawanna, Bruny Island, and was probably the last occasion that an interstate cargo vessel called there.

Blythe Star left Ulverstone at 0430 on 17 May 1959 with a cargo of timber and canned peas for Melbourne. When off Burnie an hour later there was an explosion in the engine room and fire quickly took hold. One man lost his life, but the Master and nine other crew members managed to scramble into a lifeboat and head for the Burnie wharves, landing about 0930. Meanwhile the fire had attracted attention and unsuccessful efforts to extinguish it were made by the pilot launch *Miowera* (21/1952) and the Union Company freighter *Kumalla* (1865/1956), which also attempted a tow. *Blythe Star* drifted, burning to the waterline and sinking around midday. A considerable amount of the timber cargo was saved when it washed ashore between Burnie and Wynyard.

The principals of Leven Shipping Company were soon in the market for a new ship and established Bass Strait Shipping Company Pty Ltd, perhaps indicating a broader sphere of operations.

The second *Blythe Star*

Arriving at Melbourne in early 1960, *Tandik* (321/1955) was a stylish looking little vessel. It had been launched on 3 November 1955 by Duchesne et Bossiere, Le Havre, for Norwegian owner Rederi A/S Orion (Tandberg & Møinichen), Drammen, and was completed by year's end.

Tandik was renamed *Blythe Star* in Sydney, but I haven't been able to establish exactly when it started operating as such. However, *The Examiner* reported its arrival at Kings Wharf, Launceston from Geelong on 13 July 1960, with departure next day for Melbourne.

Cargoes varied, though explosives from the I.C.I. magazine at Point Wilson, near Geelong, were common. These brought the ship to Hobart for the first time on 25 August 1963, with two more visits that year, followed by another twelve to July 1966. After that *Blythe Star* was not seen in Hobart again until chartered by the Transport Commission seven years later.

Blythe Star ranged widely, despite its small size, visiting Queensland and making a number of crossings of the Great Australian Bight to Fremantle. It ran aground at Woodman Point, an ammunition depot south of that port, on 30 June 1965 and developed engine trouble off Cape Leeuwin on a voyage from Fremantle to eastern states in January

Blythe Star in Fremantle 15 May 1973
Photo: Chris Gee

right: *Pompey Power* (Goole) Photo: C Hill

1973, being diverted to Albany for repairs to a broken propeller shaft. Chris Gee has also provided his photograph taken in Fremantle on 15 May 1973 on what was most likely the last trip prior to commencing work for the Tasmanian Government.

An initial Transport Commission charter of three months from June 1973 had the option to extend by another three plus the possibility of purchase. While a particular objective was to serve King Island, 27 voyages for the Commission saw *Blythe Star* also calling at Flinders Island and Stanley as well as Melbourne, Launceston and Hobart.

It arrived at the latter port on 1 September 1973, sharing the Commission's wharf at Prince of Wales Bay with the newly acquired *Straitsman* (720/1972), which was to make a name for itself by sinking in the Yarra on 23 March 1974 — but that's another story. Would that I had the foresight at the time to take a photograph of these two ships during the few days they were together!

Having sailed for King Island on 4 September, thence Launceston and King Island again, *Blythe Star* was back at Prince of Wales Bay from 2–4 October. It returned six days later and departed for Grassy on 12 October with a cargo of bagged fertiliser. What happened subsequently is fully documented in Michael Stoddart's book *The Blythe Star Tragedy*, so I will give the bare details only. The ship capsized and sank about five miles west of South West Cape on 13 October. It was several days before the alarm was raised and an extensive but unsuccessful air and sea search followed. Having drifted in a raft for eight days, during which one crew member died, survivors came ashore at Deep Glen Bay on 21 October. Two died on the beach, but the others made contact with authorities at Dunalley three days later and were brought to Hobart — an inspiring note on which to end a tragic story.

Notes: The first *Leven Star* was launched as *Turrah* (AV 1370) on 6 December 1944, laid up incomplete during May 1945 and sold in 1947 to timber merchant Alstergren Pty. Ltd. Transferred to the newly formed Leven Shipping Company Pty. Ltd. in 1948, it was renamed *Leven Star* for a cargo service between Ulverstone and Melbourne. By April 1950 the company was advertising regular weekly sailings from Melbourne to Ulverstone and Burnie with both *Leven Star* and *Blythe Star*, but later that year the former was sold to New Zealand as *Kuaka* and broken up sometime after 1985 as *Hong Ann*.

A tenuous connection with the 1973 tragedy still survives in Norway. Following sale of *Tandik* to Leven Shipping Company in 1960, Rederi A/S Orion purchased an older but larger Sunderland built British collier, *Pompey Power (*1428/1949), which inherited the name *Tandik*. Sold to other Norwegian owners three years later, it lasted in service as *Hamen* till the mid-1980s. After a lengthy period laid up and in poor condition, the vessel was purchased in 2004 by the Norwegian Ship Preservation Association which aimed to restore it as a floating museum. *Hamen* was reported to have arrived at Kristiansand, Norway in 2018 and is now berthed at the Bredalsholmen Shipyard and Preservation Centre (right), where it is open to visitors in the summer. □

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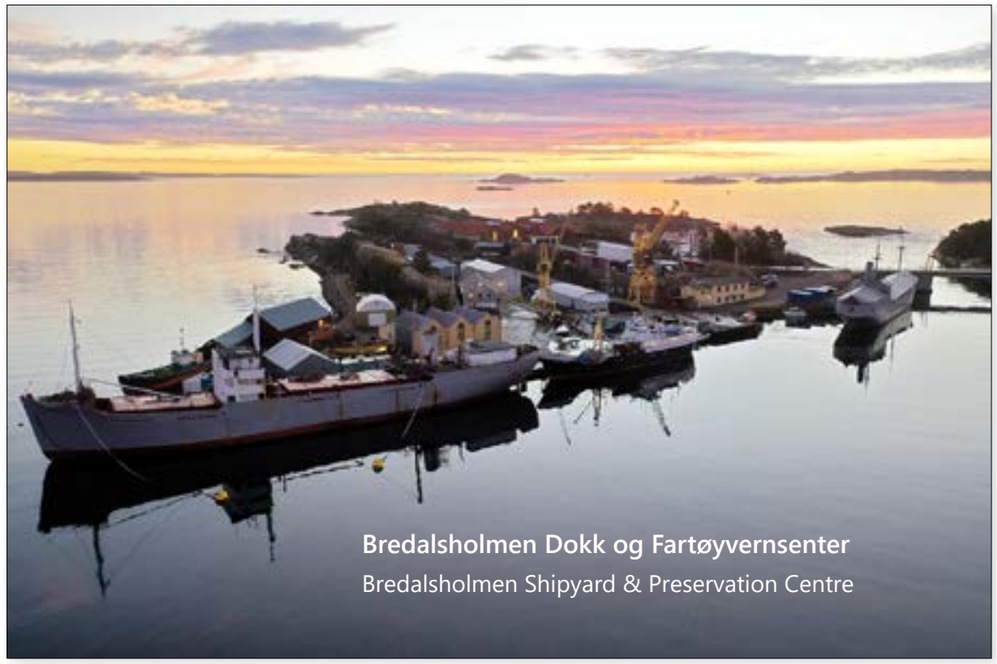
Acknowledgements:
Michael Stoddart, Chris Gee and Anna Lucas.



postcard from Kristiansand

«Hamen» —Bredalsholmen Dokk og Fartøyvernsenter
Photo: Heritage Centre

Hei! Bredalsholmen Shipyard and Preservation Centre was established in Kristiansand, Norway, in 1996 as a national preservation centre for noteworthy ships.

«Hamen» arrived in 2018 and is still very much alive. We are currently working on a «opportunity study» that will present how «Hamen» best can be used in the future. We have funds to keep the ship afloat until that future has been decided.
There is an open exhibition onboard about the «golden age» of the Norwegian merchant fleet in the 50s and 60s.
The ship is open every summer for visitors.

Med vennlig hilsen,
Håkon

The Editor
Maritime Times Tasmania
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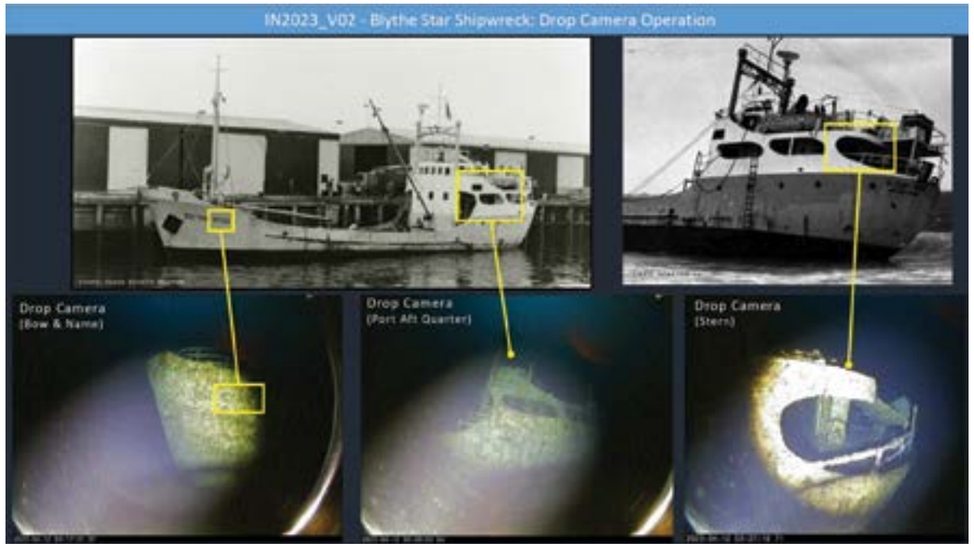
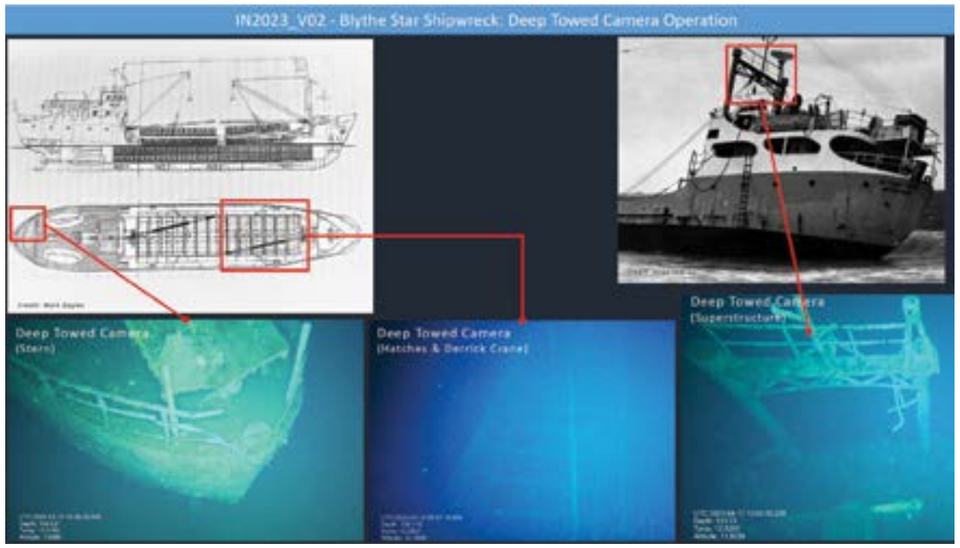
https://www.bredalsholmen.no/en/





Identification of the wreck of MV *Blythe Star*

by Michael Stoddart

SOMETIME between 8.00am and 8.30am on the morning of Saturday 13th October 1973, MV *Blythe Star* sank at sea on its way from Hobart to King Island. The last anyone saw of it was its bow proudly announcing its name as it sank stern first, in 150m of water, 10.5km west of South West Cape. All that was left on the surface were a few wooden pallets and a couple of life buoys, a sad legacy of the ship's last voyage.

During the Court of Marine Inquiry which commenced in Melbourne a few weeks after the disaster, questions were asked about whether it was possible for a diver to descend to examine the wreck but the idea was scotched when the strength of the currents flowing around the south of Tasmania were realised. And so the wreck remained, unvisited, for decades.

Thirty years later a trawler out from Strahan entangled its net in the approximate position of the wreck and nearly lost its tackle but was able to retrieve its gear without much damage. Nestled inside the net was a ship's davit which the crew took back to Strahan. Comparison of the davit with pictures of *Blythe Star* confirmed in the fishermen's minds that they had stumbled on the wreck of the doomed ship. For the next twenty years the davit lay in the backyard of the trawler owner's house until renovations saw it disappear under a new driveway.

In 2019, MV *Bluefin* from the Australian Maritime College surveyed the place where the ship was thought to be and confirmed the presence of a shipwreck in that location. However, those on board the MV *Bluefin* only had time to complete a single survey line with their echosounder and did not have the ability to conduct a camera inspection of the wreck to confirm its identity.

Following the publication of my book *The Blythe Star Tragedy* in 2022 (see p. 7), I approached the operations team of the CSIRO Marine National Facility, a national research facility that includes the ocean-class research vessel, RV *Investigator*, with a project proposal. I suggested that, as October 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the loss of *Blythe Star* when the families of the crew were intending to hold a commemoration, it would be fitting if the wreck could be located and confirmed to be that of *Blythe Star*. The team at CSIRO had previously received similar petitions from other parties for such a project and indicated that a possibility might exist to undertake the project in March 2023 when a voyage was planned to take the ship to the edge of the continental shelf southwest of Tasmania. The wide capacity and capability of RV *Investigator* provides the opportunity for additional projects to be added to scheduled voyages, subject to those projects meeting research excellence and national benefit criteria. A project to survey the unidentified wreck was added to the 2023 voyage as a 'piggyback project' and a couple of hours was scheduled for a bathymetric survey and camera inspection on the final day of the voyage during RV *Investigator's* return to port. They warned me that piggyback projects were the first to be abandoned in the event of the primary objective of the research voyage requiring additional time to be delivered (with a piggyback project often using contingency time allocated to the primary research project).

It is important to also note that this project could only be added to the voyage with the permission of the voyage Chief Scientist, Dr Martin Jutzeler from the University of Tasmania. Dr Jutzeler had been awarded the grant of sea time to conduct the primary research project that was the purpose of this voyage. His support, which also included an allocation of additional project time during the voyage, was vital for the successful outcome that was achieved.

Cast your mind back to Easter weekend, April 2023. The weather in Hobart was bad with strong south westerly winds and low temperatures, but off the edge of the continental shelf south west of Tasmania a decision was made to take the ship closer to Tasmania in search of shelter. As RV *Investigator* approached SW Cape, Voyage Management made the decision to bring forward the shipwreck investigation project, to use time profitably in sheltered waters. RV *Investigator* undertook a systematic seafloor survey over the reported position of the wreck using its swath-mapping sonar. The wreck was located at the position that had been indicated and the sonar revealed the ship to be in water 148 m deep, sitting squarely on its keel and heading to the north west, as if still travelling up the west coast.

The deployment of two underwater camera systems over the wreck during several hours allowed a careful examination of the wreck from stern to bow along the port side of the hull; the current was too strong for the camera systems to be deployed on the starboard side as both camera units tended to orient head-on to the current. The ship appeared to be in remarkably good condition, though the wheel house was missing and there was some damage to the stern. A starboard side davit was missing, now underneath that driveway in Strahan.

The detail revealed by the cameras was of such high quality that the faintest image of the word 'STAR' could be deciphered on the portside bow amongst the settlements of gallery worms, sponges and algal growth. The pictures revealed details which were compared with photographs of the ship taken in happier days leaving no doubt that the wreck of *Blythe Star* had been found.

In this 50th anniversary year of the loss of *Blythe Star* the identification of the wreck will bring a measure of comfort to families whose loved ones never made it home. The pictures from 150m beneath the waves will stand as a permanent memorial to a disaster brought about through indifference and neglect of a stout ship and its heroic crew. □

This project was supported by a grant of sea time on RV *Investigator* from the CSIRO Marine National Facility and through the endorsement of voyage Chief Scientist, Dr Martin Jutzeler, University of Tasmania.

The assistance of Matt Marrison, CSIRO, in the preparation of this article is gratefully acknowledged.

Photos courtesy CSIRO

... a walk into history

Maritime writer and keen bushwalker Brendon Bowes recounts his walk to where the Blythe Star *survivors reached land.*

FASCINATED SINCE CHILDHOOD by the rescue of the *Blythe Star* survivors, I had often wondered what it was like to see inaccessible Deep Glen Bay. With no roads or footpaths reaching it, visiting seemed impossible.

But taking up bushwalking as a hobby opened new possibilities. I eagerly scanned the Hobart Walking Club's monthly circular.

Finally, in November 2022, a walk to Deep Glen Bay was offered by Dunalley resident Jim Baptist, a skilled bushman.

Kitted with 'quagmire' gaiters for leg protection, waterproofed leather boots and warm clothing, modern-day bushwalkers may feel they can tackle anything the Tasmanian bush can throw at them.

But I soon found that it was going to be a long and arduous day for myself and my companions. The Forestier Peninsula rainforest was holding on to its secrets and would not give them up easily to imprudent intruders.

On the MacGregor Peak track near Murdunna, the walk started off using disused forestry roads, now eroded and pocked with deep holes. A wet winter and spring had turned sections of the 'road' into a swamp, necessitating either hopping across them on stones or gingerly walking around their edges, trying not to trip on dense cutting grass.

At intervals the track was straddled by fallen trees, so large in girth they had to be walked around, as stepping over was impossible.

And this was just the first part of the walk.

After two hours (6km) we reached a clearing for morning tea. The walk down to Deep Glen Bay would now be all 'off track'. The only route was to walk along the watercourse of the creek that ran steeply down into the bay.

Descending abruptly into a gully, we reached prehistoric rainforest, unchanged since European settlement. Enormous tree ferns and myrtles filtered out the light as we made our way carefully over the steep mossy ground, made slippery by exposed tree roots and dry fern fronds.

Walk leader Jim periodically stopped to check that we were following the ribbons of orange tape tied at intervals to tree branches, our only guidance of the route. Constantly crisscrossing of the creek was necessitated by cascades rushing underfoot after recent downpours.

Descending the steepest sections meant the indignity of sliding down on our backsides; filthy, but safer than risking a serious fall, with little hope of a quick rescue.

Near the coast a recent landslide had to be negotiated. Soft disturbed soil was crossed with utmost care lest we triggered another fall.

After hours of walking, the final appearance of the bay was a revelation; it appeared from behind the last coastal bushes, the jagged orange sea cliffs of this natural amphitheatre making an instantaneous impression of desolation. The 'beach' consisted of water-worn boulders, exposed to the strong winds of the Tasman Sea.

No safe haven for shipwrecked mariners here; high bluffs on either side offered no easy escape. This bay was a natural prison, harsher and more secure than Port Arthur's penitentiary.

The only way out was behind us, back up Deep Glen Creek, so steep that sometimes we were climbing on hands and knees. Well prepared, fit and healthy walkers, with modern clothing, found the walk back from Deep Glen Bay tough going. Jim conceded that the final climb to the McGregor Peak car park was pushing his limits.

Half a century earlier, three *Blythe Star* survivors had made the same walk out of the bay. From sea level they climbed over 400m through the same dense rainforest in pouring rain. Clad in scanty clothing and improvised footwear, their journey over two days to seek help must have been horrific.

They had already suffered shipwreck, thirst, hunger, exposure and the shock of losing three shipmates.

I felt deeply affected by their selfless courage in the face of adversity. □

- Return walk distance 15.6km
- Walk duration 8 hours
- Total ascent 715m

Photos: Brendon Bowes

ship spotter

by Rex Cox

Spirit of Tasmania II arriving in Hobart
18 July 2023 Photo: Rex Cox

below: *Spirit of Tasmania I* and *Spirit of Tasmania II* (front) arriving in Hobart for a refit, 29 July 2002 ***Mercury*** photo Rex Cox Collection

TO THE CASUAL OBSERVER TT-Line's *Spirit of Tasmania II* (29 067/1998) was well off the beaten track when seen sailing up the Derwent on 18 July (above). Arriving from Devonport, the ferry berthed at Macquarie Wharf cruise terminal for routine maintenance and repairs and departed on 7 August for Geelong and resumption of normal Bass Strait service.

This wasn't its first foray into southern waters as both *Spirit of Tasmania I* (also 29067/1998) and *II* spent a fortnight in Hobart refitting from 29 July to 13 August 2002, prior to entering regular service on the Devonport-Melbourne run. They had previously operated in the Mediterranean as *Superfast IV* and *Superfast III* for Greek owner — you guessed it — Superfast.

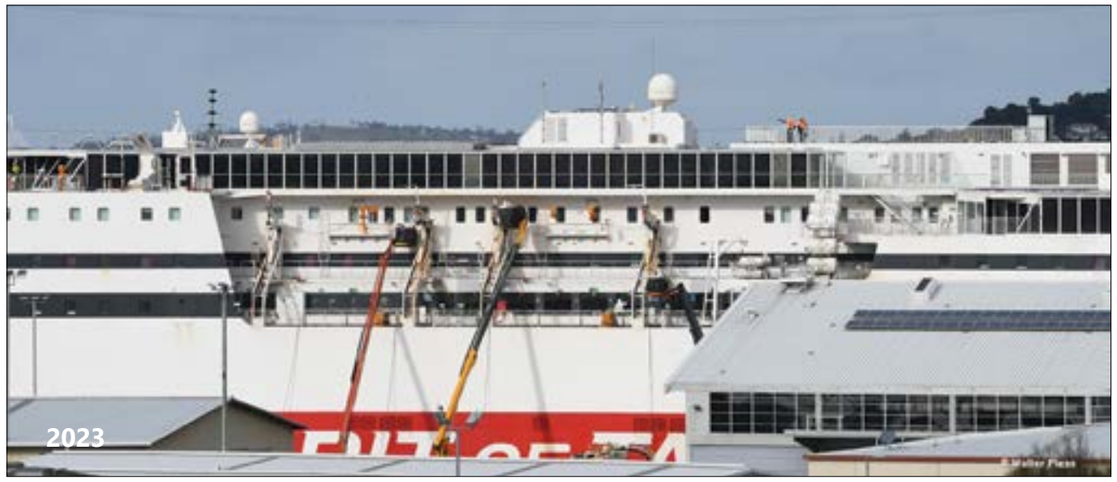
The two ferries alternate their dockings, one each year, during the low tourist season in July/August. These have always been carried out by Captain Cook Graving Dock, operated by Thales Australia and attached to The RAN's Fleet Base East at Garden Island, Sydney. This year, however, Captain Cook Dock was unavailable due to Navy commitments, and a shortage of other suitable dry docking facilities in Australia prompted the decision to undertake in-water maintenance in Hobart. While in Hobart, *Spirit of Tasmania II* underwent deck and hull preservation and painting, scheduled tank inspections, routine maintenance on the main engine, main gearboxes, generators and auxiliary equipment. General repairs were also done to the ship's interior to ensure the vessel was in top condition when it resumed service in early August.

Chief Executive Officer and Managing Director, Bernard Dwyer, said having the maintenance works done in Hobart presented another opportunity for Tasmanian companies to benefit.

'Our current Spirit of Tasmania vessels remain very highly regarded on the international ship market because of our rigorous schedule of maintenance. Tasmania has such a strong reputation for quality workmanship in the maritime sector and this lay-up provided the ideal opportunity for local companies to maintain this iconic Tasmanian ship,' he said.

Between 18 July and 7 August, twin ship *Spirit of Tasmania I* operated on an amended schedule between Devonport and Geelong. □

With thanks to Dale Crisp for supplying additional information for this article.



Work on *Spirit of Tasmania II*, taken from the Cenotaph, Hobart
19 July 2023 Photo: Walter Pless

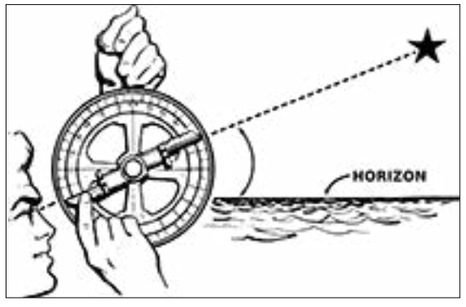
Spirit of Tasmania II at Princes Wharf, 2 August 2002
Photo: Rex Cox

Spirit of Tasmania I taken from the hill at East Devonport, with the ship doing a summer schedule daylight sailing, 20 December 2010 Photo: Cody Williams

Celestial Navigation in the southern hemisphere

by John Bourke

Technology is wonderful,
but, when it fails,
basic navigating skills
and respect for the sea
can save lives



I DID SOME OF MY TIME BEFORE THE MAST with Bern Cuthbertson. The overriding theme was a simple yet profound respect for the sea. Thinking about the 90-odd years that Bern lived set my mind to the changes we've seen over the past century and the things that have stayed the same. My son Alex has done some of his time on *Ocean Protector*, an Australian vessel that operates everywhere from the Indian and Pacific Oceans to Antarctica. It is ECDIS and Dynamic Positioning equipped. This means there is no legal or logical requirement for paper charts and the vessel can be positioned and maneuvered within centimeters with joysticks, compliments of satellite technology.

Yet during his cadetship, Alex was trained in what is now considered the ancient art of celestial navigation along with the rigor of taking watches during long weeks at sea and short periods of time off. One of the benefits of celestial navigation is that it gives a perspective of where you are in the world and how the whole system of navigating works. And doing the hard yards on a ship was not dissimilar to the pre-dawn starts I had with Bern on the sailing fishing vessel, *Derwent Hunter*, a 72 ft Blue Nosed Schooner, steaming out to the '30 mile patch', about 70 miles from Hobart and 30 miles due south of Tasman Island, chasing trevalla (Blue Eye).

You had to understand the currents in 240 fathoms of water on the edge of the continental shelf and we had no land marks, chart plotters or transponders to locate the gear once it was down. You built a chart in your head using the southwesterly ground swell, compass, depth sounder and clunky radar that, on a good day, gave a signal off Mount Wellington., always with one eye on the glass (barometer). At the end of the trip we would sail home on the leading edge of a front, the old man and the apprentice both revelling in the joy of a big boat powering along under sail in a Southern Ocean swell.

In essence, it was the discipline, learning and following the hard rules of being at sea that meant surviving. Developing the ability to observe and react if something wasn't quite right came in useful many times in later years. In 2006 Al and I sailed *Helsal 4* home to Hobart from France via the Panama Canal. We sailed 13 000 miles and made 28 port entries in 10 different countries in 6 months. I lost count of the number of times that training in observation and reaction kept us safe. A change in the smell of the breeze and swell pattern confirmed a landfall was imminent. A drop in the glass and a change in the feel of the wind and the wave pattern and we'd reef down before a storm hit, the sense that a sheet or halyard wasn't quite right and we avoided a foul up before it became an issue. We sailed *H4* without any wind gear and learnt the boat by observing how it felt. The boat will talk to you. You just have to learn how to listen. It's a skill that only good training and long hard miles can develop.

These days there is so much technology available that we run the risk of losing some of these skills because instead of listening we can get tied up in the white noise of a plethora of information at our fingertips. Back in the 'old days' it was an oft' quoted saying that you could sail around Australia on a depth sounder and more than one voyage was made with the old Shell road map plonked on the chart table to save money on the Admiralty charts. While it was not my preferred option (my chart folio is a couple of inches thick) good seamanship and respect for the sea has kept many people alive where the latest technology has failed.

I vividly recall sailing *Breakaway*, a 38ft aluminium sloop, back to Perth after the 1984 Hobart race, before the advent of GPS or Satnav. We hadn't seen the sun for a few days out of Adelaide and had been rolling along in a fresh, rambunctious easterly when, just before a storm hit, we spied a glimpse of sun through the cloud in the late afternoon. We had two sextants on board and the two of us that could drive them dived downstairs for the gear and quickly snapped off half a dozen sun shots each. Comparing notes we agreed that the log had been under reading, putting us some 220 miles further west than our DR (dead reckoning). As luck (or Murphy) would have it, the steering cable snapped shortly after and with a serous nor' westerly bearing down on us the rushed repair job on the steering resulted in the cables being wired up back to front. Put simply, to go to port you had to steer to starboard and vice versa.

As the blow settled in we decided that rather than trying to rewire the system in an uncomfortable choppy sea it was safer to leave the steering as it was, at least until the front passed through. After a couple of predictably unintended and therefore quite humorous tacks while we figured it all out *Breakaway* subsequently wandered on down the track being steered in reverse. In due course Esperance turned up on the horizon within half an hour of our amended ETA, compliments of the glimpse of sun that previous afternoon and, in the safety of port, we rewired the steering. On pulling out of Esperance we found the hardest part of the whole exercise was retraining ourselves to steer the boat the way the designer had intended. □

Reprinted with permission, this article was originally published in *The Tasmanian Yachtsman* Autumn 2014

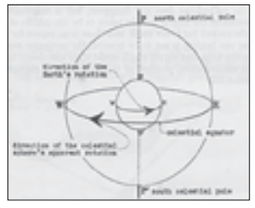
NOTE: Many readers will remember Bern Cuthbertson. He was a donor and long-standing member of the Maritime Museum. He had an extensive collection of maritime artefacts and was a well-known professional fisherman. Bern was also a maritime historian particularly interested in authentically re-enacting historic voyages in replicas of the original vessels

THE SOUTHERN CROSS is a well-known formation in southern hemisphere skies. These stars became incredibly important in navigation as explorers discovered they pointed toward due south.

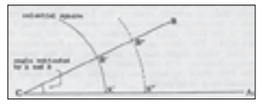
Locate the Southern Cross, run an imaginary line down the long axis and continue for 4.5 times the length of the Southern Cross itself. Here you will find the South Celestial Pole

The Maritime Museum has books on basic navigation, including the Manual quoted below. As one of our members said: 'Technology might have changed, but the stars haven't.'

'To an observer on Earth ... the stars appear to be situated on the inside of a sphere of immense radius, with the Earth as centre. This is called the celestial sphere.'



The Celestial Sphere (above) and the Angular Distance



'Angular distance between stars ... Star A might be 10 times more remote than Star B but the angle ACB is almost constant' allowing calculations as in the Manual.

Ch. VII, *Admiralty Navigation Manual* 1938 Vol II – MMT Coll.

Incat to deliver the world's largest Battery-Electric Ship

INCAT TASMANIA is leading the world in producing pure-electric lightweight zero-emission ferries.

Australian shipbuilder Incat Tasmania has under construction the largest lightweight battery-electric ship (130m in length) so far constructed in the world for delivery to its South American customer, Buquebus.

This ship, the world's largest battery-electric Ro-Pax ferry, will be 100% battery-electric. The energy storage system (ESS) battery storage at over 40MWh will be four times larger than any battery installation that has been constructed and installed anywhere in the world for the marine transport environment. The batteries power a series of E-motors which drive the water jet propulsion system. The electrical system integration is by Wärtsilä and ESS by Corvus Energy.

The interest in these battery-electric ships is very positive and Incat is now working toward the construction of its second but smaller battery-electric vehicle/passenger ferry.

Incat Founder Robert Clifford said, 'We are proud to be building in Tasmania this first in class ship for Buquebus who, like us, share a vision to be at the leading edge of low emission shipping in the world. Incat has always been an innovator and once again we are leading the world and the world is taking notice.

This worldwide interest in Incat's capabilities to deliver electric ships is a great opportunity for Tasmania and we expect this interest to magnify.

We are already increasing our workforce and have just finalised plans for the recruitment of at least another 200 employees over the next 12 months with the expectation that our workforce will more than double in coming years.'

Incat Managing Director Craig Clifford said, 'The build of the Buquebus ship is leading the world in this type of ship construction and will have leading edge technology in terms of zero emissions propulsion and storage systems. Once in operation the shore-side charging systems will have 50% more capacity than any current installation worldwide.

'The world first Incat Hull 096 will have a capacity for 2100 passengers and crew, 225 cars and will also include a Duty Free Shop of over 2000 square metres on the one level.

'The feedback from overseas has been extraordinarily positive and I expect that we are going to see many more battery-electric ships built here at Incat in Tasmania. The opportunities for jobs and investment here in Tasmania are exceptional.

'The Australian Federal Government has a clear plan for decarbonising the economy and with 100% renewable energy and already net zero emissions having been achieved here in Tasmania we are ideally placed to build zero-emission ships for the world right here.

In fact due to Tasmania already having achieved overall net zero emissions we are the only location on the planet that is able to construct zero-emission, battery electric ships in an already net zero emissions environment for our customers.'

The Buquebus stern under construction at Incat Tasmania
Photos © Incat Tasmania Pry Ltd

Incat Tasmania Pty Ltd

Incat's strength as a world-leading builder of lightweight vessels positions the company to lead the electric revolution. Constructing in marine grade aluminium means the ships are lighter than an equivalent size steel ship, hence require far less power for propulsion. The energy level can be utilized for greater range at slower speeds or for higher speed on shorter routes.

Aluminium is lightweight without sacrificing strength, it's one-third the weight of steel, but after design factors the finished weight of an Incat aluminium ship will be around HALF that of steel.

Incat is currently 100% export focused. The 130m ferry will operate in Argentina. Large Ro-Pax vessels up to 112m in length operate in waters around Europe, the UK, Asia and South America.

In Australia, Incat ferries built as early as the 1980's can still be found operating off the Queensland coast, there are two passenger craft with Port Philip Ferries, and eleven on Sydney Harbour. However none of the large vehicle/passenger ferries operate in Australian waters.

The shipyard located on Hobart's River Derwent has undercover building halls to accommodate several vessels under construction simultaneously. □

Photo: Barry Champion

Lindisfarne Bay

ACROSS THE STATE, TASPORTS HAS A NETWORK of highly experienced marine pilots responsible for ensuring the safe passage of large vessels within port areas.

To become a TasPorts Pilot, a comprehensive traineeship must be undertaken.

In addition to their many years of experience as professional mariners, Marine Pilots must complete a significant accreditation process, including up to 12 months as a trainee pilot.

This rigorous training includes vessel transits both at night and during the day, in all manner of environmental conditions, incorporating an understanding of vessel type, length, breadth, draft, propulsion, bridge visibility, handling characteristics and berth particulars.

To commence training, a specific standard of physical and mental fitness must be demonstrated and the applicants have either:

• A valid Certificate of Competency as an Australian Master Unlimited

• A Certificate of Recognition issued by AMSA in relation to an international qualification

• Royal Australian Navy qualifications and such additional competencies recognised by AMSA that are required to achieve a Certificate of Competency as a Master Unlimited, or

• A valid pilot's licence issued in another Australian jurisdiction.

Pilot licenses are port-specific, meaning trainees must complete a specific number of trips at a nominated port within a 12-month period on vessels longer than 35 metres.

How to Become a TasPorts' Marine Pilot

For each port, the required numbers of trips are:

• Hobart Zone "A", thirty (30) trips

• Hobart Zone "B", sixty (60) trips

• Bell Bay Zone "E", one hundred (100) trips

• Devonport, thirty (30) trips

• Burnie, thirty (30) trips, and

• Port Latta, twenty (20) trips.

The training also includes understanding the type of pilotage to be undertaken, such as anchoring, berth shift, river transit or open-water navigation.

Once this is completed, they can be issued with a restricted license which allows pilotage based on a risk assessment undertaken in consultation with an experienced pilot (known as a check pilot). Only after obtaining a restricted licence can a pilot apply for an unrestricted licence, which requires further trips and the recommendation of a check pilot.

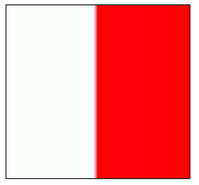
Once a licence is obtained, to ensure the highest standards of maritime safety are adhered to, TasPorts' pilots undertake regular, continuous training involving regular ship simulator training for emergency procedures, port limit validation, and ongoing Check Pilotage Assessment.

To ensure further adherence to safe maritime operations, the TasPorts' Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) team based in Launceston oversee waterways safety, including piloted vessel movements, 24/7. This is the nerve centre of more than 4500 commercial vessel movements across Tasmania's multi-port system each year.

What this means for recreational water users

During TasPorts marine operations, it is critical all recreational vessels (including rowers and kayakers) keep at least 60m away at all times from vessels engaged in pilotage, berthing operations or being assisted by tugs.

State legislation gives right of way to vessels under pilotage within Tasmanian Port Pilotage Areas. Always give piloted ships room safely manoeuvre, and if your vessel has AIS, ensure it's turned on to improve your visibility. It is important to remember if you can't see the bridge of a ship, chances are the Master or Pilot may not be able to readily see you.



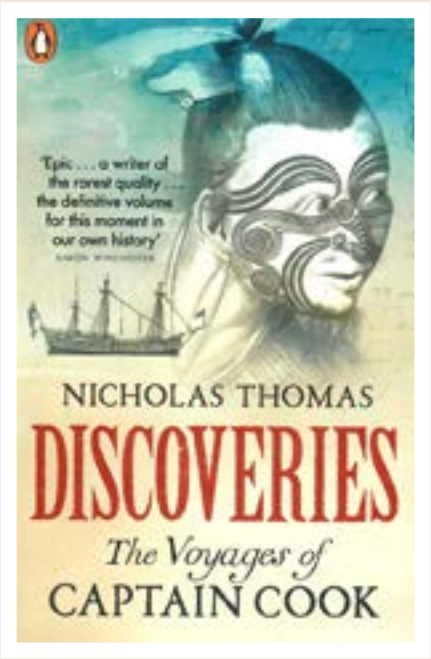
Flag H

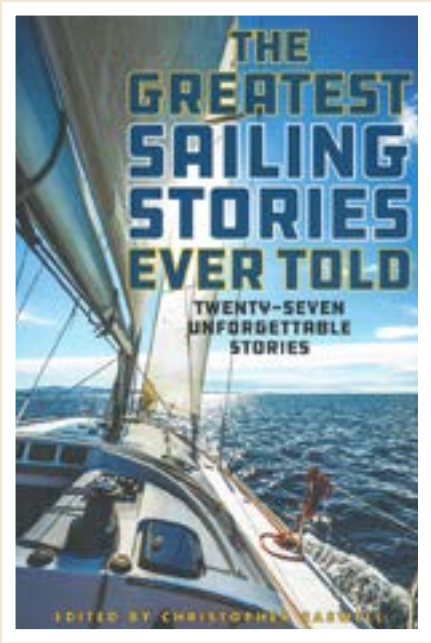
Keep an eye out for the international code flag H. If a ship is flying this flag, it signifies it is under pilotage control and you must keep clear at all times. Pilotage-exempt vessels will fly an all-white flag and have the same rights as a vessel under pilotage. □

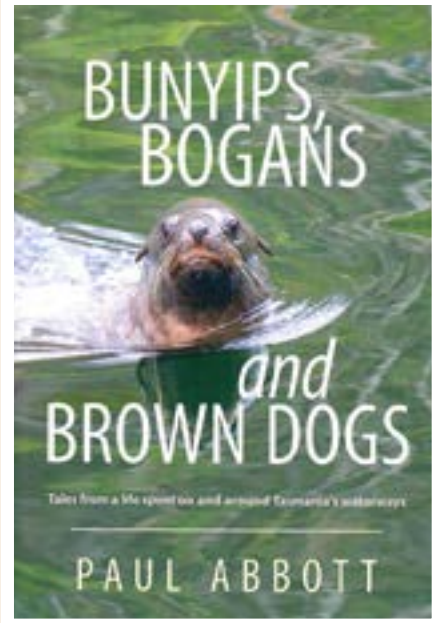
TasPorts

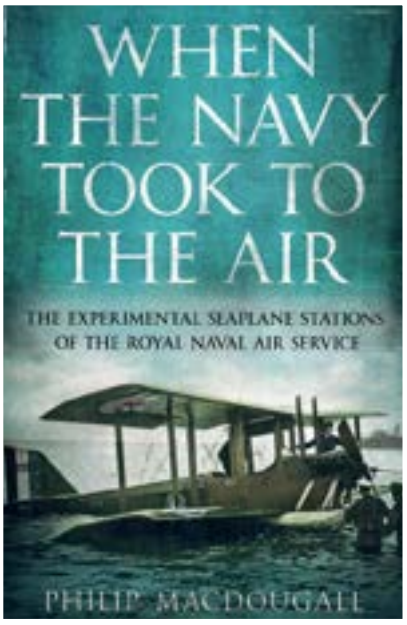
www.tasports.com.au

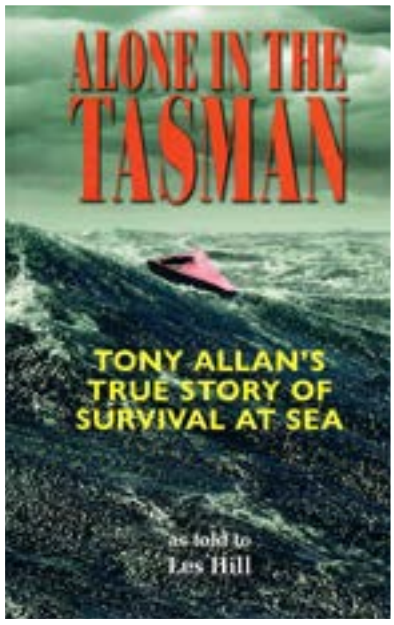
Books in our Shop











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