

# Maritime Times

## Tasmania

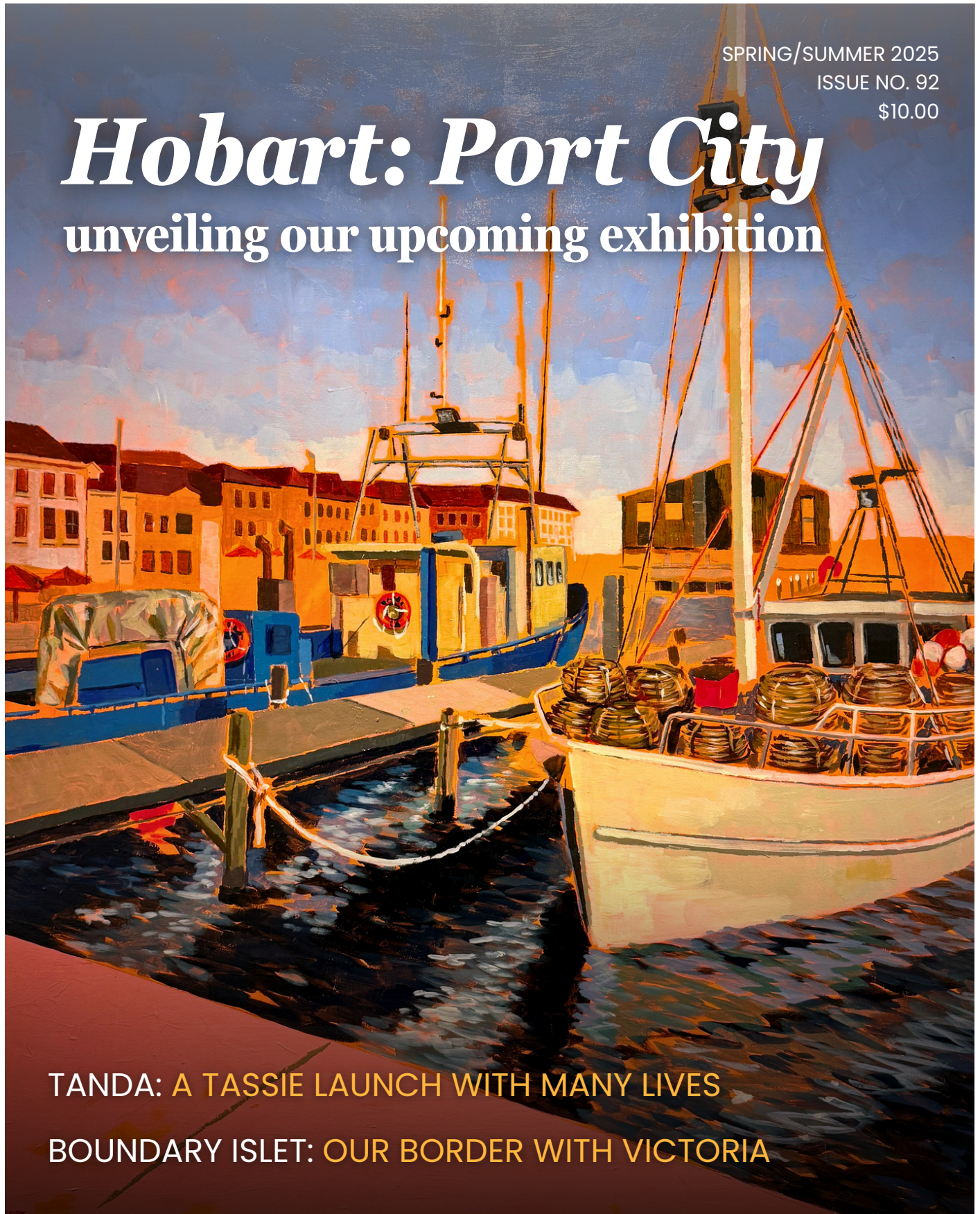
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## *Hobart: Port City*

unveiling our upcoming exhibition



TANDA: A TASSIE LAUNCH WITH MANY LIVES

BOUNDARY ISLET: OUR BORDER WITH VICTORIA

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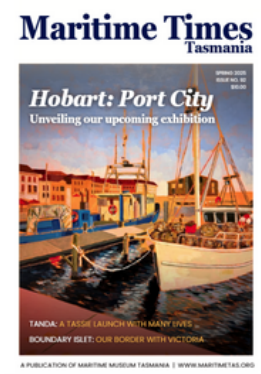


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Maritime Times Tasmania welcomes original historical or newsworthy articles for publication that reflect the Museum's mission to promote research into, and the interpretation of, Tasmania's maritime heritage. Contact [editor@maritimetas.org](mailto:editor@maritimetas.org) for further details on contribution requirements, guidelines and editorial standards.

# from the president's log

Hobart's port has been central to the life of the city for more than two hundred years and remains at its heart in many ways. The Museum's new exhibition *Hobart: Port City* will explore this history and the ways in which the port has changed, and continues to change, over time. While the exhibition draws on the Museum's nationally significant collections, it will also present a number of exciting new acquisitions. Together these works highlight the port's rich history and the stories of those who have lived, worked, commuted or simply visited the waterfront for fish and chips.

A central theme of the exhibition is the port's evolution in response to a changing world. One example is Hobart's transition from one of the world's leading whaling ports in the nineteenth century to a major centre for international marine and Antarctic research in the twenty first century. One of the exhibition's biggest challenges has been deciding which stories to tell, as the port's history is so extensive.

Developing this new exhibition has given the Museum the opportunity to document not only the port of the past but also the port as it exists today. Contemporary collecting allows Museums to gather material, record manufacturing processes and document the people involved. This is particularly important as new materials such as aluminium and High-Density Polyethylene are used in cutting edge maritime applications in Hobart.

*Hobart: Port City* is a major undertaking for the Museum's volunteers and staff and will involve temporary changes as the gallery is prepared and the exhibition installed. Some of the most popular objects from the current *Writers and the Sea* exhibition that are not included in *Hobart: Port City* will be reinstalled in the Carnegie Gallery and elsewhere in the Museum.

This project has only been made possible through the generous support of our principal sponsor [TasPorts](#), the [Master Mariners Association](#) of Tasmania, the Merchant Navy Welfare Society (Qld), [City of Hobart](#), [Incat Tasmania](#), [Sentinel Boats](#), [Muir Engineering](#), [CSIRO Hobart](#) and the Maritime Museum Endowment Fund.

Generosity also marked our members response to this year's annual acquisition appeal. We originally sought to purchase two important but very different works depicting the port of Hobart. The success of the appeal meant that we were in fact able to acquire a third work. Together these acquisitions provide a striking visual record of Hobart's port over more than 150 years. Curator Camille Reynes discusses these new additions and how they enrich the Museum's collections in this edition.

While our collections continue to grow through the generosity of members and the wider community, the conservation of Tasmania's maritime heritage remains an ongoing concern. Successes such as that of the *Erica J*, now restored and racing in Europe as Anne Ashford reports in this edition, are offset by continuing calls for assistance to save significant seagoing craft, including the Tasmanian One Design yacht *Pilgrim*.

These requests highlight that the maintenance and protection of our maritime heritage in Tasmania, and Australia more broadly, depends heavily on community goodwill and generosity.

The Museum remains dependent on community support, and we are particularly pleased that the Minister for Arts and Heritage, the Hon Madeleine Ogilvie, has recently confirmed funding of ninety thousand dollars a year for the next four years for our maritime heritage and statewide outreach program.

This year saw Rex Cox and Gerald Latham step down from the Museum Board. Both have made outstanding contributions over many years, and the Museum is deeply grateful for their service. The Annual General Meeting also welcomed two new Board members, Margaret Dalkin and Greg MacLennan.

On behalf of the Maritime Museum, I would like to thank all our volunteers, members and supporters, and wish everyone an enjoyable and successful 2026 as we look forward to another exciting year.

**CHRIS TASSELL,  
MMT PRESIDENT**

# Coming soon: Sue Pedley's *Prevailing Gales*

BY CAMILLE REYNES

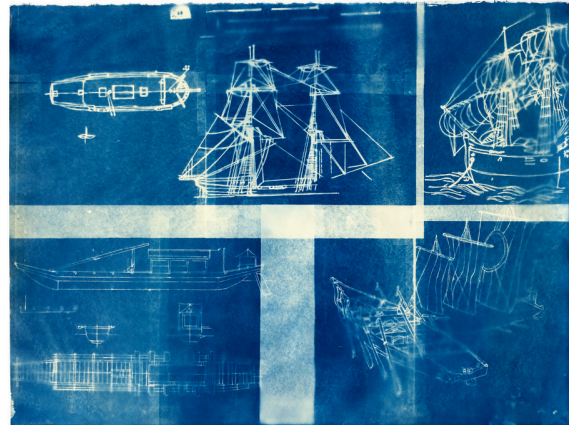
In February 2026, Maritime Museum Tasmania will present a remarkable new exhibition by Tasmanian-born artist Sue Pedley, whose practice draws together memory, materiality and the many ways maritime histories are carried across time and place. Pedley's exhibition, *Prevailing Gales*, invites visitors into an atmospheric reimagining of one of the most extraordinary encounters in Tasmania's seafaring past: the 1830 meeting between Tasmanian convicts aboard the brig *Cyprus* and samurai from Japan's Awa Domain. Her work brings this cross-cultural moment into the present, tracing the threads that connect oceans, archives and lived experience.

Central to Pedley's approach is a deep sensitivity to materials. Using handmade Awagami paper, indigo dye, inks, cyanotypes, rope, plaster and sound, she explores how stories take shape and how they drift, fragment and resurface. These are the same materials once used by samurai illustrators, creating a tactile link to the Japanese manuscripts that recorded the *Cyprus* encounter. Long forgotten, these documents were rediscovered by researcher Nick Russell, whose work has helped confirm the accuracy of the convicts' accounts and shed light on the Japanese perspective.

Pedley's exhibition does not simply retell the narrative. Instead, it meditates on what it means for a Tasmanian ship and its unwilling crew to arrive in a nation closed to the world, and how this encounter rippled across geographies and centuries. Through her installations, Pedley evokes the uncertainty of the mutineers' journey, the vigilance of the samurai, and the shifting boundaries between fact, memory and imagination.

*Prevailing Gales* continues Pedley's long-standing interest in the sensory and emotional dimensions of maritime space, as seen in earlier works exploring coastlines, navigation and displacement. Here, she expands that investigation into a layered story of cultural meeting, resistance and the enduring forces of the sea.

***We look forward to sharing this thoughtful and evocative exhibition with visitors from 20 February to 24 May 2026. Prevailing Gales is funded by Creative Australia.***





Macquarie Wharf 6, Port of Hobart. cityscape of Hobart and Kunanyi/Mount Wellington. image via Wikimedia.

# Hobart: Port City

## Major new exhibition opening at Maritime Museum Tasmania

BY EMILY QUINTIN

Maritime Museum Tasmania is proud to announce the upcoming launch of its most ambitious exhibition to date: *Hobart: Port City*.

Opening in 2026, this long-term exhibition explores the many lives of Hobart's waterfront—from its earliest days as a colonial port to the dynamic hub of industry, innovation and community we know today.

With generous support from naming rights sponsor TasPorts, *Hobart: Port City* has been developed over many months by the Museum's exhibition team in collaboration with partners across the maritime sector.

The exhibition brings together a collection of objects, photographs, artworks and personal stories that chart the port's evolution and the pivotal role it has played in shaping Tasmania's identity.

Visitors can expect an immersive and layered experience, with key themes including Hobart's place as an Antarctic gateway, the changing nature of river crossings and boat building, the lived experiences of those who have worked along the waterfront, and the port's ongoing transformation through modern technology and world-class innovation.

The exhibition includes contributions from organisations such as CSIRO, Sentinel Boats, Mures, and INCAT Tasmania, with more to be announced in the lead-up to opening.

Interactive elements throughout the gallery space will bring these stories to life; visitors will encounter video, oral histories, and hands-on features designed to engage all ages. A particular highlight for younger visitors will be a curious mascot designed by local artist Tom O'Hern, inspired by our local endangered spotted handfish, who will guide children through the exhibition with fun facts and questions to spark curiosity.

*Hobart: Port City* will form the centrepiece of the museum's programming into 2026 and beyond, offering new ways for Tasmanians and visitors to connect with the maritime stories that surround us. An official opening event will be announced soon, and the museum looks forward to welcoming guests to celebrate this major milestone.

Stay tuned via our website and social media for updates, sneak previews, and details of upcoming events and programming linked to the exhibition.

# Across the docks: Three artistic visions of Hobart's port

BY CAMILLE REYNES

Earlier this year, Maritime Museum Tasmania launched an appeal to acquire artworks exploring Hobart's port through the eyes of artists past and present. The campaign formed part of preparations for a major redevelopment of the museum's ground floor gallery, *Hobart: Port City*.

In shaping this new exhibition, we have been thinking of the port not just as a site of industry, but as a place rich with meaning, shaped by work, trade, movement, memory, and imagination. Art allows us to explore these layers in ways that artefacts or documents cannot, capturing atmosphere and emotion and revealing how history was lived as well as recorded.

Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, the museum was able to acquire not only the two key works at the heart of the appeal but also a third, equally significant piece. Together, these artworks span nearly two centuries, offering distinct yet connected visions of Hobart's port as it was, as it is, and as it has been imagined.

## **Louis Le Breton, *Vue de la rade d'Hobart-Town* (c.1841)**

This rare lithograph by Louis Le Breton, official artist aboard Dumont D'Urville's *Astrolabe* during its 1837–1840 Pacific voyage, provides a sweeping view of Sullivan's Cove during the expedition's 1838 visit. Both artwork and historical record, it captures Hobart's early colonial harbour alive with tall ships and busy wharves. It also reminds us how European audiences first encountered distant lands through such images, reflecting both curiosity and a colonial perspective.

## **Lili Montefiore, *Harbour 2025* (2024)**

In contrast, Montefiore's *Harbour 2025* presents a vibrant, contemporary view of Victoria Dock. Rather than a grand panorama, it shows a lived-in, intimate scene with glimpses of boats, buildings, and shifting reflections that capture the working port today. Montefiore, an early-career Australian artist, explores the layered nature of place. Her work speaks to the ongoing vitality of Hobart's maritime world and brings a fresh generational voice into the museum's collection.

## **Harry Kelly, *Tasmania for Your Next Holiday / Mt Wellington & the Port of Hobart* (c.1940s)**

The third acquisition, a rare tourism poster by leading mid-20th-century artist Harry Kelly, shows an idealised image of Hobart's port with calm waters, moored fishing boats, and Mount Wellington in soft pastels. Created during the rise of mass tourism, Kelly's design helped frame Tasmania as picturesque and inviting, transforming the port from an industrial centre into a symbol of beauty and leisure.

Together, these works chart how artists have viewed Hobart's port across time, from colonial documentation to contemporary reflection. Our sincere thanks go to all our generous supporters for making these important acquisitions possible and for helping us share the many stories of Hobart, our enduring port city.



*Vue Generale D'Hobart-Town, Louis Le Breton*



*Mt Wellington & the Port of Hobart, Harry Kelly*



*Harbour 2025, Lili Montifiore*

# The heart of Hobart: two centuries of our working port

BY CHRIS TASSELL

Surveyor George Harris wrote in early 1804, “we found a capital spot with a fine freshwater river running into a snug bay with good anchorage and a small island in it, admirably calculated for Storehouse and Battery”. The ‘capital spot’ was Sullivan’s Cove on the southern shore of the Derwent River, and it was here that Lieutenant Colonel David Collins established a British presence in southern Australia.

The suitability of Sullivan’s Cove saw it develop into the Port of Hobart and shape the growth of the city, which has flourished on its shores. After more than two centuries of often dramatic social, economic and technical change, Sullivan’s Cove continues to be the heart of Hobart.

At first, the industries were directly related to the needs of the port, with a wide range of trades such as coopers, shoemakers, blacksmiths and foundries. Provedores supplied food, while chandlers provided an array of ships’ needs including rope and metal fittings. Hotels and other establishments catered to the crews of visiting vessels.

It was not long before industries developed to process raw resources, such as timber and fruit, which were brought into the port for export. Similarly, the processing of raw products arriving from interstate and overseas, including wheat, other grains, zinc ore and cocoa beans, began at sites around the port and later expanded to new locations along the river.

Towards the end of the twentieth century, manufacturing was replaced by new industries centred on scientific research, education and tourism. Former warehouses and factories became hotels and events facilities. Cargo vessels have since been joined by cruise ships and research ships, while trading ketches have given way to tourist excursion vessels.

The Museum’s new exhibition *Hobart: Port City* explores how our port has changed over more than two centuries and how it continues to evolve while remaining central to the life of the city.



Kings Pier & the Argyle Street Pier in Constitution Dock with ships loading apples for export to Britain and Europe in the 1920's. image via MMT collection

Despite this ongoing change, there has also been remarkable continuity in the port's history. In 1849 Governor William Denison reported that "*Shipbuilding is going on, on a large scale: vessels of six hundred tons have been built, and a great number from two to three hundred or upwards*". More than 175 years later, shipbuilding does indeed continue on a large scale, but today it is known for its innovation and use of new materials and technologies. This year, for example, the world's largest battery electric ship was launched in Hobart by Incat.

*Hobart: Port City* will highlight this continuity with objects such as the model made by James Mackay when he was an apprentice to John Watson and working at Watson's shipyard at Battery Point in the 1840s. It will also feature wood working tools used by Jock Muir at his Battery Point boatyard in the 1950s and 60s, along with structural models of contemporary vessels made by Incat and Sentinel Boats using aluminium and high-density polyethylene.

Continuity has likewise been a hallmark of Hobart's fishing industry. In the early years of the settlement, fresh fish from the Derwent was an important food resource, but the first major fishing industry to develop was the wild oyster fishery in the 1840s. Since then, Hobart's fishing industry has continued to grow and diversify, with both inshore fishing boats and deep-sea trawlers working from the port on a daily basis.



Cleaning Barracouta ready for sale on a fishing boat Hobart port, 1920's.  
image via MMT collection.

The new exhibition will draw on the Museum's extensive collections and will feature many favourites, such as the Derwent ferry models, alongside previously unseen objects. As part of the exhibition preparation and planning process, several new acquisitions, including the 3D printed model of the *Aurora Australis*, have been made and will appear in the exhibition.

Installation of Port City has already begun, and anyone who has visited the Museum recently will have noticed the large generic cross-section of Incat's high-speed catamarans now in the ground floor exhibition gallery.

For a community-based volunteer organisation, developing and installing an exhibition on this scale is a major undertaking, and one that must be approached in stages. Over summer, visitors will be able to see the exhibition take shape while we keep the gallery open as much as practicable. As major developments occur, we will keep members informed through social media and our newsletter. The exhibition has been made possible through the generosity of the community, and we look forward to celebrating and acknowledging this support when we officially open *Hobart: Port City*.



Loading former Pioneer Tours clipper bus on the MV *Sumatra* in Hobart in July 1962. The bus was delivered to Flinders Island later that month to be used as a school bus.  
image via MMT collection.

# New acquisitions

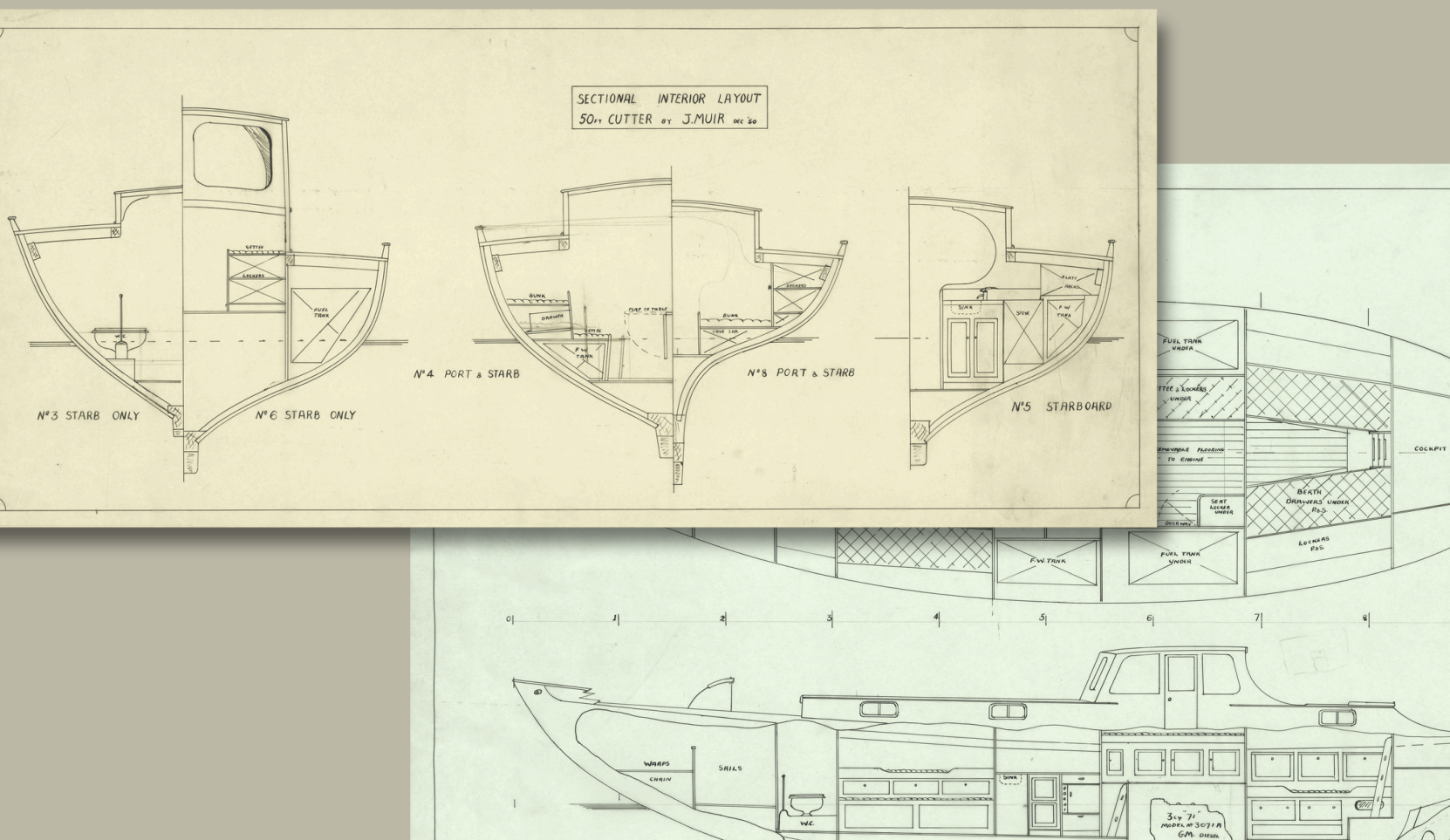
BY COLIN DENNY

A stream of interesting donation offers flow daily into the Maritime Museum for appraisal by the Acquisition Committee. One highlight related to a visit to Muir's Boatyard to review historic artefacts for the Museum. The boatyard is an important part of Tasmania's maritime history and the Museum wanted to recognise the role played by the late boatbuilder and yachtsman E.J. (Jock) Muir and his family. Their Battery Point boatyard has now closed.

Jock Muir set up his boatyard on the Battery Point foreshore in 1948 and following its recent sale, family member Philip Muir recognised the need to preserve its history. He worked tirelessly to document and photograph the items recovered from the boatyard. The Museum showed interest in his work and on completion he donated material to the Museum.

The artefacts include a remarkable collection of more than one thousand plywood shingles with hand drawn slipping plans. Initially Jock Muir concentrated on boatbuilding but in times of slowing demand he worked hard to promote the slipping business. His plywood shingles were a unique way of recording the characteristics of each client's vessel so that the cradle arms and bases could easily be set up to safely slip the boat.

The shingles once hung in alphabetical order from the workshop rafters until taken down by Philip Muir and photographed and preserved. He donated the full collection of slipping shingles to the Museum along with slipping documentation books and other written records.



Maritime Museum Tasmania accepts gifts of objects, documents and artefacts relating to Tasmanian maritime history and that meet the Museum's Acquisition and Collection Policy. These donations are tax deductible under the provisions of the Income Tax Assessment Act, subject to certain conditions. The Museum is happy to explain the procedures and benefits of donating to the collection to potential donors, simply [contact us](#) for more information.

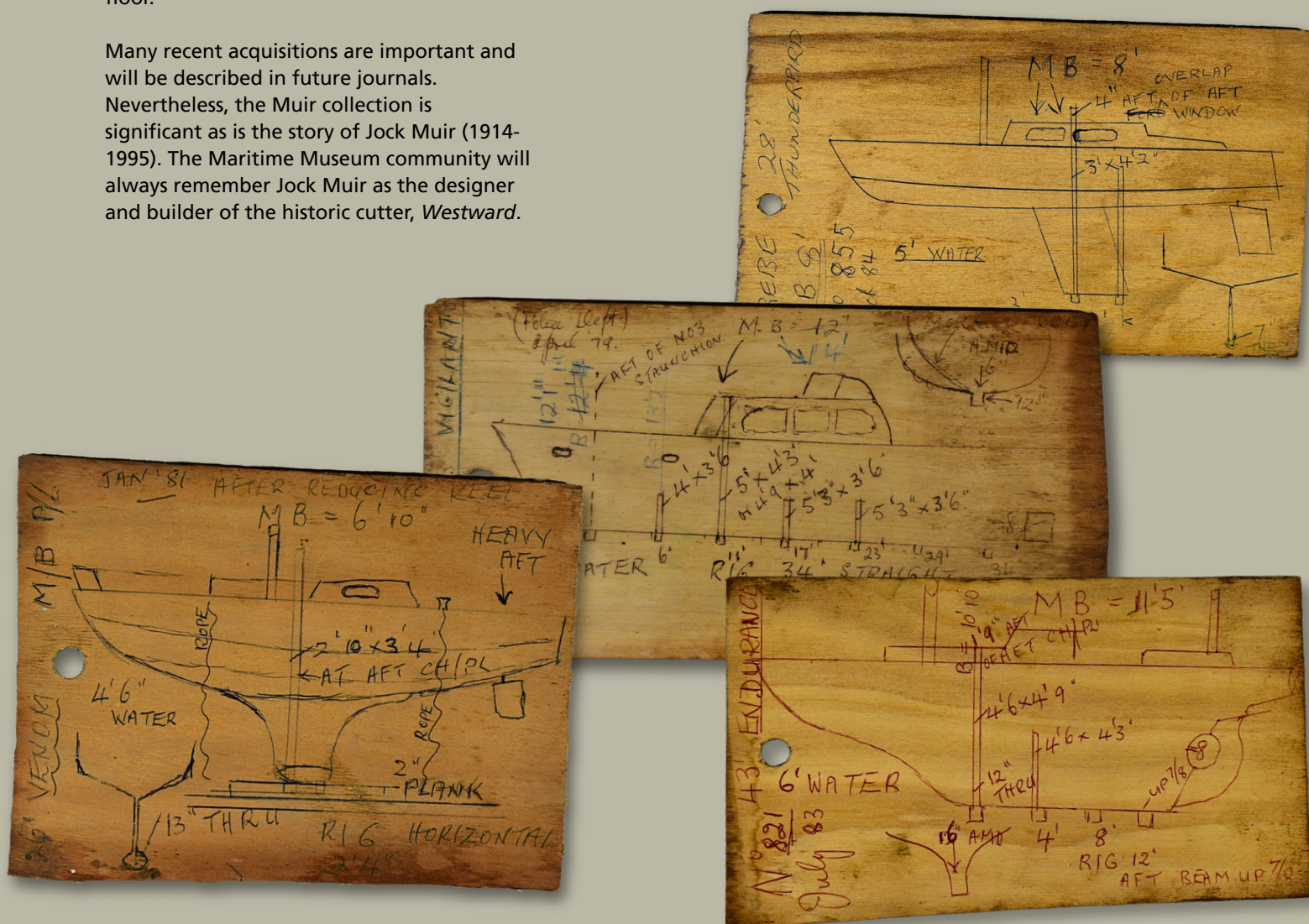
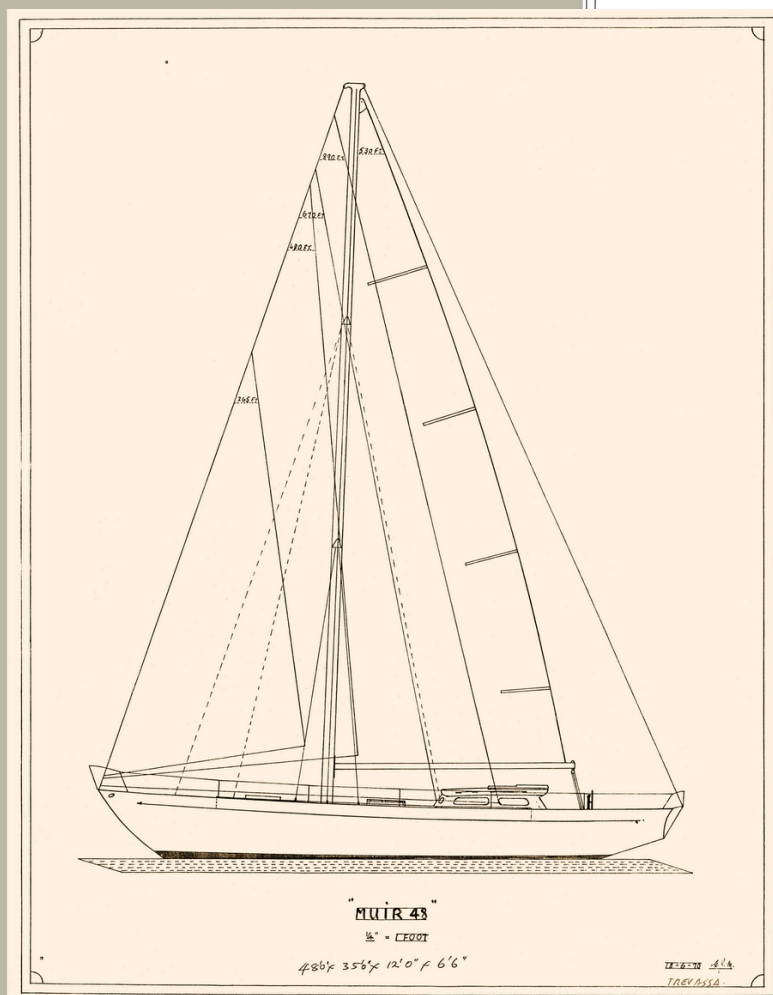
Muir kept hundreds of boat plans at the boatyard. They include designs by Jock Muir himself and designs provided by clients for vessels shipwrights built in the boatyard. The sorted plans were copied and donated to the Museum collection.

The plan collection includes one of Jock's later designs, the fifteen-metre sloop *Trevassa*, launched from the boatyard in 1971 and sold to a Sydney yachtsman. The Muir family brought the impressive yacht back to Tasmania and fully restored the vessel.

The Muir donation includes a set of gold painted lead lofting weights (also known as spline weights) and long wooden lofting battens (splines). Boatbuilders' lofting is the process of drawing a boat's design at full size to create templates for construction. It involves scaling up the small-scale lines plan onto a large, flat surface like a workshop floor.

The traditional lofting weights are used in boatyards to position the long flexible battens describing fair curves when drawing a boat's lines or during the lofting process. However, computer aided design has overtaken these practical tools for generating full size plans on the lofting floor.

Many recent acquisitions are important and will be described in future journals. Nevertheless, the Muir collection is significant as is the story of Jock Muir (1914-1995). The Maritime Museum community will always remember Jock Muir as the designer and builder of the historic cutter, *Westward*.



# Welcome

to the Museum's newest members...

Elizabeth Osborne  
Steven Osborne

Become a member and experience all the Maritime Museum has to offer.

- Free admission for the year,
- Invitations to member-only events,
- Access to the museum's library & photo collection,
- Subscription to member's email newsletter,
- 10% discount at the Museum Shop.

[Download an application form:](https://maritimetas.org/support/membership)  
[maritimetas.org/support/membership](https://maritimetas.org/support/membership)

## Maritime Museum & RYCT formalise partnership to support *Westward*

Maritime Museum Tasmania and the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania (RYCT) have signed a new agreement formalising their long-standing partnership in support of the historic Tasmanian racing yacht *Westward*.

Donated to the Museum twelve years ago, *Westward* has been actively restored and sailed by Museum volunteers, who continue to maintain the vessel as a living example of Tasmanian maritime craft and design. The agreement confirms the RYCT's continued support by providing access to Club facilities, including the slipway and boatyard cradle, for slipping, storage and maintenance. This includes the Club's practice of allowing *Westward* to slip free of charge during non-peak periods.

Under the agreement, the Museum will continue to manage all restoration and maintenance, supply materials and labour, and meet all safety and environmental requirements while working in the RYCT yard.

The partnership formalises more than a decade of cooperation between the organisations and ensures that *Westward* remains active on the River Derwent and accessible to the Tasmanian community.

Maritime Museum Tasmania President Chris Tassell says, "Westward is one of Tasmania's most important surviving racing yachts, and its preservation depends on strong partnerships. The Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania has supported this vessel for many years, and this agreement ensures that *Westward* can continue sailing and sharing its story with the public."



volunteer Ross James, RYCT Commodore Nick Hutton, and volunteer Peter Wright aboard *Westward*.

RYCT Commodore Nick Hutton adds, "The Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania is pleased to formalise our long-standing relationship with Maritime Museum Tasmania. *Westward* is an important vessel in our state's maritime history, and we are proud to support its ongoing care and operation."

Built in 1947 by renowned Battery Point shipwright Jock Muir, *Westward* is celebrated as one of Tasmania's great racing yachts. In its first year on the water the vessel won both the Maria Island Race and the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race on handicap, repeating the Sydney to Hobart victory the following year. *Westward* later undertook extensive blue-water cruising to New Zealand, across the Pacific and through the Panama Canal.

# *The Judge* travels all the way to France

BY EMILY QUINTIN

Every exhibition at Maritime Museum Tasmania has the potential to create new connections, but occasionally a single image resonates in ways none of us anticipate. This was the case with *The Judge*, a photograph by Tasmanian maritime photographer (and long-time Museum volunteer) Rex Cox, which featured in his recent exhibition of contemporary maritime photography.

During her 2024 visit to Hobart, Shaenaz Belmon, a judge from France, spent her first morning exploring the Museum. After touring the galleries, she entered the photography exhibition and stopped before *The Judge*, a striking photograph by local photographer Rex Cox. The image depicts a tanker being escorted along the River Derwent by two tugboats. Though not her usual preferred subject matter, something about it resonated immediately.

When she returned home, she hoped to obtain a print of the photograph as a significant birthday gift to herself. Unable to locate the name of the photographer, she reached out to the Museum via email for assistance.

Ms Belmon wrote, “I fell in love at first sight when I saw the picture *The Judge*. I smiled at the image but then, a more forceful emotion took possession and I felt like ... crying, overwhelmed.” She described her emotional response as both unexpected and deeply personal, shaped by the loneliness of her profession and the symbolism she recognised in the vessel and its escorts.

Research volunteer Ian Gibson received the email and connected her with Rex, who generously provided the original scanned image and granted permission for her to print it for personal use. He also shared an additional photograph taken from the Tasman Bridge.

For Rex, it was a gratifying reminder of how images can find meaning far from their point of origin. For the Museum, it was a quiet but memorable example of how exhibitions can foster unexpected connections, linking artist and audience across continents.

The story is a welcome affirmation that the work displayed at Maritime Museum Tasmania continues to reach, resonate with, and inspire visitors long after they have left Hobart’s waterfront.

below: The Judge heads for Selfs Point oil terminal,  
Hobart 13 January 2021, image via Rex Cox



# From Hobart to Cornwall:

## The remarkable story of *Erica J*

BY ANNE ASHFORD

As part of our ongoing work updating the Museum's registration and storage systems, we regularly come across material that adds depth to Tasmania's maritime history. One recent addition stood out to me for its unexpected international connection...

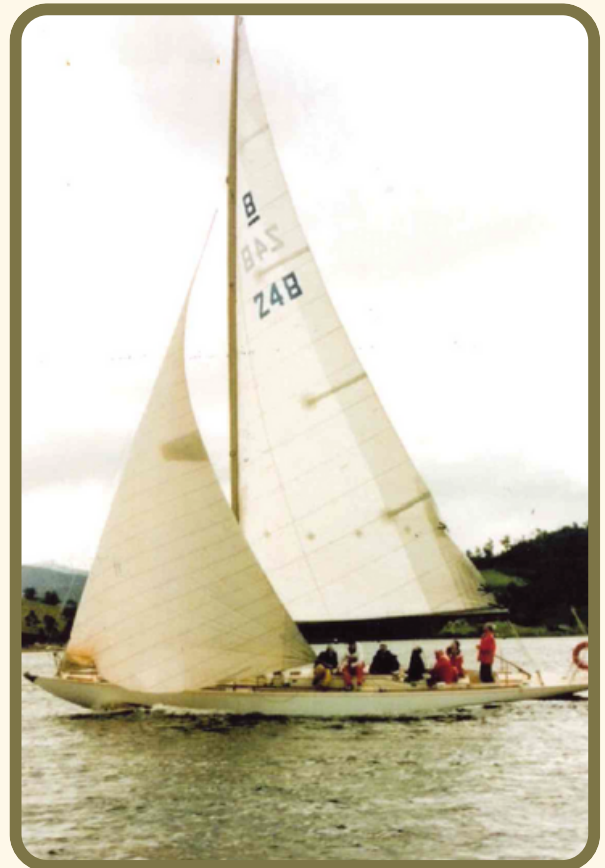
Among a donation from the late John Lucas—a long-serving volunteer and experienced yachtsman—was a small group of papers that documented an interesting episode.

In 1949, John had worked under shipwright Max Creese at Battery Point, helping to build the 8-metre yacht *Erica J*. He later raced against it on the Derwent while sailing Sandra, a sister yacht.

Decades later, John came across a reference to *Erica J* in *Classic Boat* magazine. The article noted that it was being restored by the Ocean Yacht Company in Penpol, Cornwall. Recognising the name, John worked with fellow volunteer Stuart Harris to contact the magazine and request the yard's details.

A reply soon came from the manager at Penpol, who confirmed that he had located the yacht in Sydney, moved it to Newcastle, and then arranged for it to be shipped to the UK. Now renamed simply *Erica*, the restored yacht was being prepared for the 2014 World Championships in La Trinité, France. John exchanged photos and historical information with the team at Penpol, contributing details about the yacht's original construction and early racing life in Hobart.

The exchange helped fill in significant gaps in the vessel's history—information that would otherwise have been lost. It also provided a rare example of a Tasmanian-built racing yacht from the post-war period not only surviving but continuing to perform internationally.



That kind of continuity is uncommon and valuable, particularly in the context of amateur boatbuilding and local design traditions.

These papers now form part of the Museum's collection. They document not only the story of *Erica J*, but also the broader legacy of Tasmanian-built yachts and the people involved in their design, construction, and competition. It's a practical example of how personal archives and firsthand knowledge can help expand and verify the Museum's records—and how Tasmanian craftsmanship continues to have a presence well beyond our shores.

# Wreck of the George III opens at Dover Museum + Gallery

BY CAROLINE HOMER,  
PHOTOS BY DOUGLAS JONES



The Dover History Group has opened a new exhibition at Dover Museum + Gallery to commemorate 190 years since the convict ship *George III* was wrecked off Tasmania's coast in 1835. The exhibition, *Wreck of the George III*, was officially opened in November by Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania, and will continue throughout summer.

Building on years of local research, the exhibition traces the ship's departure from England, the conditions on board, and the long, difficult voyage to Van Diemen's Land. It offers a detailed account of the events leading up to the disaster on the night of 12 April 1835, when the ship struck an uncharted rock in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel while attempting to reach Hobart. The collision caused catastrophic damage, and *George III* quickly began to sink. Of the 294 people on board, 133 lost their lives, many of them convicts who were still confined below decks. It remains one of the worst maritime disasters in Australia's colonial history.

Visitors will learn about the individuals who made the journey, including soldiers, crew and the convicts whose stories have been pieced together through archival records. The exhibition explores the fate of several survivors, some of whom went on to settle in Tasmania and contribute to the region's early development. It also features images and historical accounts of the monument erected on Southport Bluff in 1839, which stands as one of the state's earliest memorials to a maritime tragedy.

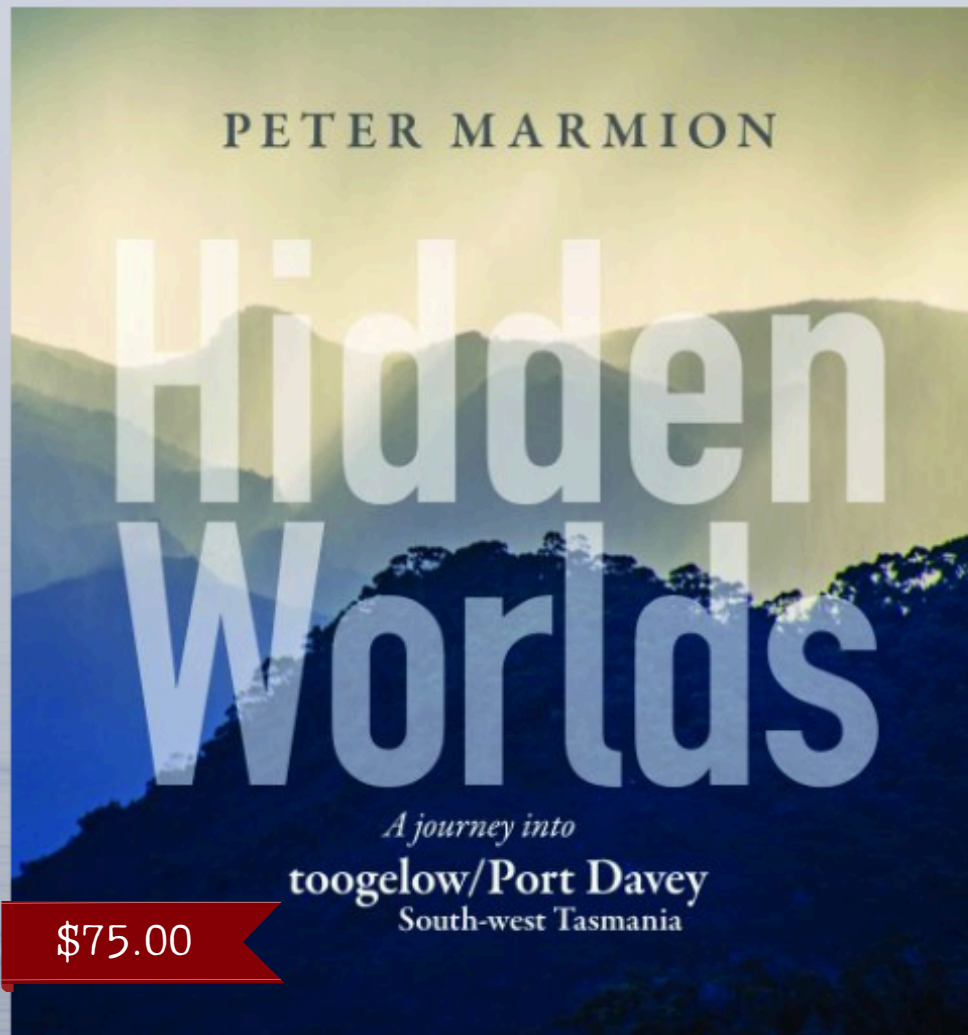
The broader legacy of the wreck is also examined. The scale of the loss prompted renewed efforts to improve safety in southern Tasmanian waters, leading to more accurate nautical charts and the construction of the Bruny Island lighthouse, completed in 1838, to guide vessels entering the channel.

A display of artefacts recovered from the site adds a tangible connection to the past, offering visitors a rare glimpse of items linked directly to the ship, the crew and the convicts whose lives were irrevocably changed by the disaster.



Dover Museum + Gallery, Dover Old School Building, 6989 Huon Highway, Dover  
Open Friday, Saturday, Sunday & Monday 10:30-4:00pm. Admission: by donation

## In the Museum bookshop: new arrivals



### ***Hidden Worlds, Peter Marmion***

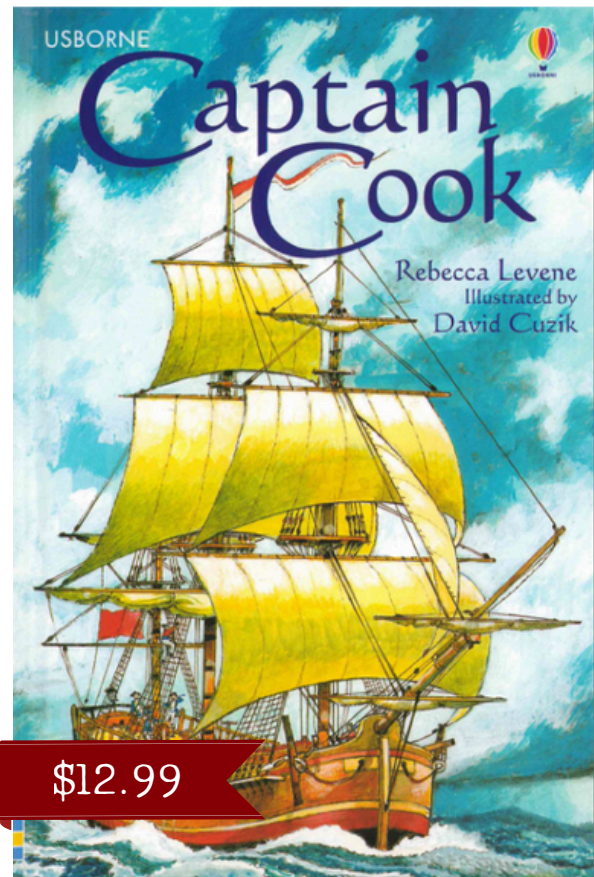
Mysterious, wild and remote, toogelow/Port Davey lies in south-west Tasmania. *Hidden Worlds* reveals a rich written and photographic portrait of Peter Marmion's fifty years of experience, research and adventure in this beguiling World Heritage area.

'In any given week, Peter Marmion could be anywhere in Lutrawita/Tasmania. He could be roaming the west coast, sailing, climbing a faraway mountain, assisting a conservation project on a small island off the coast – and between these adventures is home, family and garden. Yet Port Davey in Southwest Tasmania is the special place that keeps calling him back. Peter is an explorer by nature, but most of all he is a born teacher, guide and storyteller. He revels in sharing the beauty, natural world and human stories of the Southwest with anyone who cares to listen. In doing so, he calls for us all to pay attention to the value and vulnerability of such a place and how we can protect it from over-development and inadvertent introduction of unwanted marine species.' - Janet Fenton, author of *Win and Clyde*

### ***Captain Cook*, Rebecca Levene**

James Cook had always wanted to be a sailor. When he was asked to lead an expedition to the South Seas, he was ecstatic. It was the first of three major voyages he was to make, battling storms, icebergs and worse. His mission: to map the unknown world.

For readers 7-11 years of age, a vivid account of the extraordinary life of the explorer, Captain Cook, with lively narrative text, colourful illustrations and photographs to bring the subject alive. Includes detailed maps of each of Cook's three incredible voyages, along with a chronology of his life and links to recommended websites to find out more.

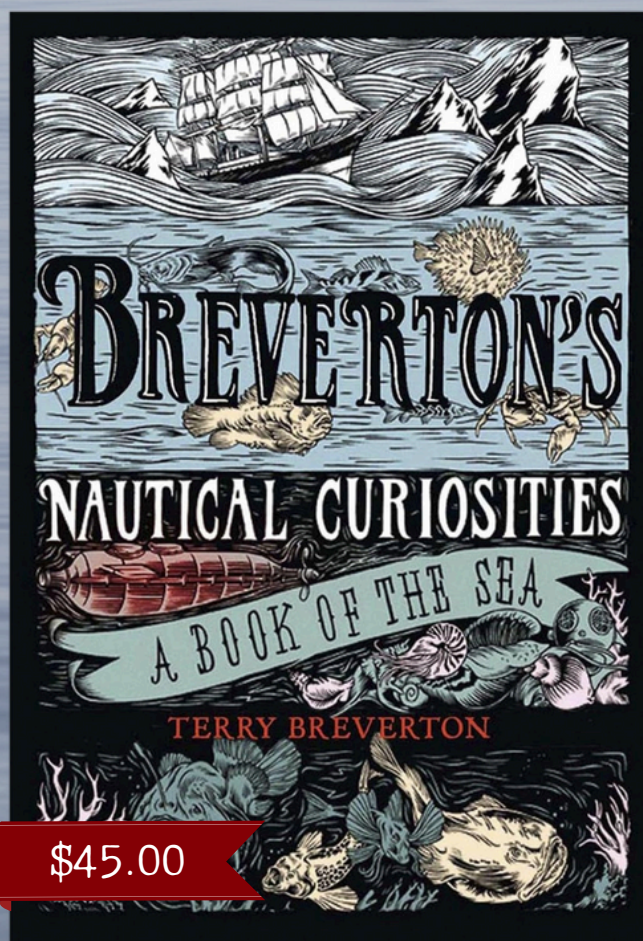


### ***Breverton's Nautical Curiosities*, Terry Breverton**

*Breverton's Nautical Curiosities* is about ships, people and the sea. However, unlike many other nautical compendiums, the focus of this book is on the unusual, the overlooked or the downright extraordinary. Read more about the remarkable men - explorers, admirals and trawlermen - who have shaped our world.

- What is the origin of the distress call 'mayday'?
- How did the cod change the world?
- Where was history's most devastating wave?

From famous naval battles to the parts of an anchor, from maritime slang and sayings to the heroes and villains of the high seas, and from the amazing creatures of the deep to how the oceans affect our weather, this remarkable compendium will entertain, inform, and enthrall anyone who has ever felt the call of the sea.



the loss of the auxiliary ketch *Willwatch*

BY COLIN DENNY

The ageing wooden auxiliary ketch *Willwatch* put to sea late on Tuesday 16 December 1958 on a voyage from Ulverstone in North-West Tasmania bound for Currie, King Island, carrying general cargo for Kimberley Trading Pty Ltd. The following morning, Peter Snodgrass arrived early at Kimberley Trading's Currie office to monitor a routine radio report from vessel's master, Captain George McCarthy.

At 7:10am McCarthy's voice crackled from the speaker:  
*"Willwatch is six miles NNW of the Hummocks, the  
 forecastle is full of water, we are down by the head and in  
 difficulty"*.

He reported that deck cargo had been shifted aft but the ship's pumps remained inoperative owing to the bow down trim. McCarthy said he would set a safer downwind course for Westernport, Victoria, more than 100 nautical miles from Three Hummock Island. He calmly reported on the grave situation and asked that the owner, Archibald Kimberley, be informed. At this point he did not request help.

Bass Strait was experiencing strong to gale-force winds and rough seas. Professional fisher Vic Hardy, sheltering under Three Hummock Island in his fishing boat *VSP*, recalled, “The swell was unusually large with a very strong wind. We did have a pretty hard time with the weather, though it did ease up that evening, but we had had all we wanted”.

*Willwatch* had been launched 63 years earlier on Brisbane Water in NSW. The 96-gross-ton ketch worked the east coast and Tasman Sea trade for many years until Straits Fisheries Pty Ltd purchased the vessel in 1951 for the interstate timber trade from Launceston. The company applied to the Commonwealth Director of Navigation for a certificate of survey, but it was found that extensive work was necessary to bring the vessel up to scratch. Accordingly, the Launceston Marine Board was asked for a state survey certificate, but once again it was found that the requirements could not be met and the old ketch was laid up.

In 1955, *Willwatch* moved to the Mersey River for repairs prior to seeking a survey certificate for intrastate trade from the Devonport Marine Board. Although the certificate was issued, the work fell far short of that deemed necessary by the Commonwealth Director of Navigation. Apparently, Devonport was less demanding.

While the repairs were in progress, Archibald Kimberley purchased the ketch.

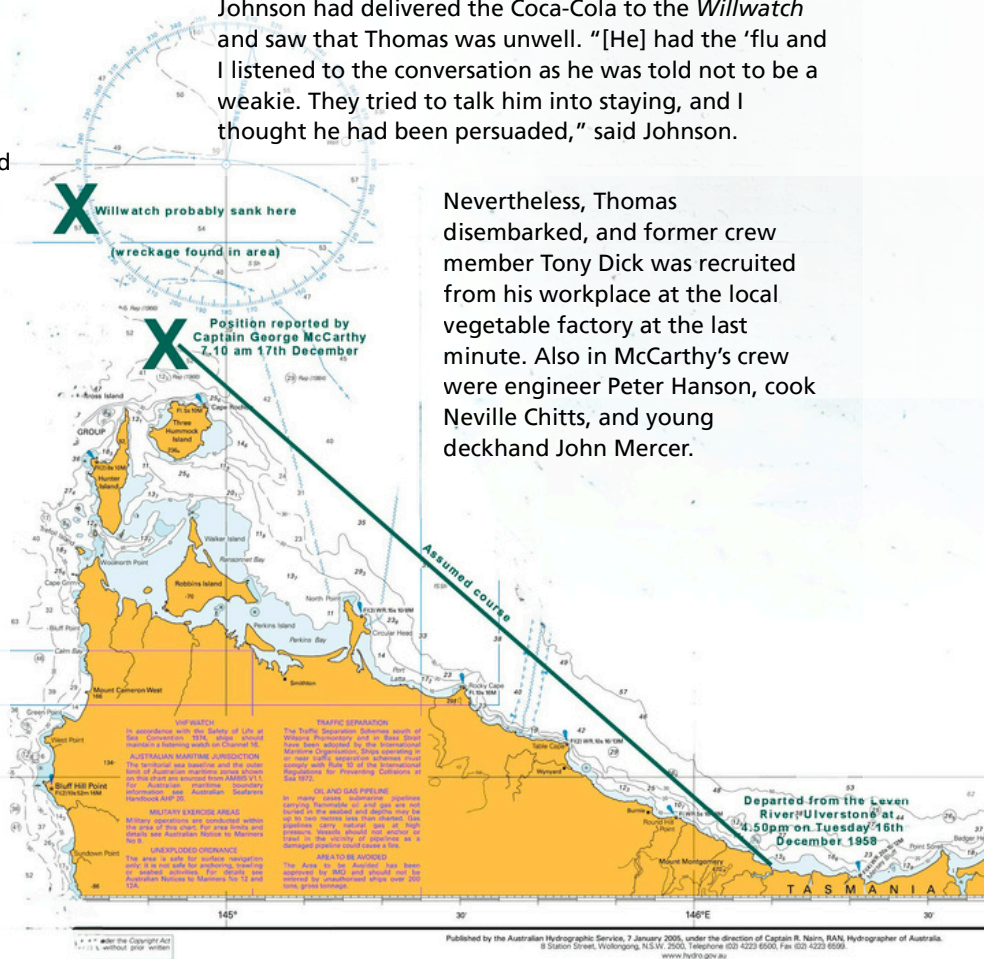
*Willwatch* would be used to ship cargo from his Tasmanian base to King Island, where he had a major contract building houses and barns on soldier-settler properties.

The new owner lacked maritime experience, but spent a considerable sum on the *Willwatch's* repair and maintenance. In 1956 the ketch sprang a plank in the for'd sections and nearly sank when rounding Stokes Point, King Island. Captain McCarthy discharged the cargo at Naracoopa, borrowed emergency pumps and sailed to Devonport for more hull repairs. In a further attempt to extend *Willwatch's* working life, Kimberley installed a new marine engine. Consequently, the sails were seldom set.

Before the fateful 1958 voyage, Captain McCarthy supervised the loading of cargo from the Leven River wharf at Ulverstone. Seventy-five drums of diesel fuel were stowed in the hold, together with a quantity of fencing droppers, 400 cases of Coca-Cola, and some general cargo. On deck were 50 drums of petrol, more fencing droppers, and a few bales of hay. Last of the cargo were two draught horses and a cob—all in individual horse floats—that were loaded on to the hatch covers.

Seaman Graeme Thomas helped load the cargo, but was sick, so McCarthy ordered him from the hold. Bill Johnson had delivered the Coca-Cola to the *Willwatch* and saw that Thomas was unwell. “[He] had the ‘flu and I listened to the conversation as he was told not to be a weakie. They tried to talk him into staying, and I thought he had been persuaded,” said Johnson.

Nevertheless, Thomas disembarked, and former crew member Tony Dick was recruited from his workplace at the local vegetable factory at the last minute. Also in McCarthy's crew were engineer Peter Hanson, cook Neville Chitts, and young deckhand John Mercer.



Local farmer, Warren Barker, stepped from the stern as the *Willwatch's* bow swung into the stream. He was the last to leave. "It was a light run, and *Willwatch* was not overloaded. They had decided to do a final run to King Island before Christmas without a full load", said Barker, who had travelled on earlier voyages. He noted that the plywood lifeboat stowed athwartships under the mizzen boom was in poor condition.

Kimberley first heard that *Willwatch* was in difficulty when his King Island manager relayed McCarthy's message on Wednesday morning. In the meantime, Captain McCarthy was trying to contact Melbourne Coastal Radio. Eventually, at 8:16am, Melbourne received its first clear message from *Willwatch*. McCarthy said their position was 24 miles north-west of Cape Rochon, the northern tip of Three Hummock Island. *Willwatch* was in open seas more than 20 miles from the nearest shelter and McCarthy said they were taking water and out of control. He asked that a vessel stand by, and added that they were running in a northerly direction. It was not a distress call, and not made on the distress frequency.

Melbourne Radio called for help. A response came from James Warren's fishing boat *Olympic*, three hours steaming from *Willwatch's* position. Warren weighed anchor immediately to support the small ship in trouble.

At 9:15am McCarthy radioed that things were getting worse. The bulkhead aft of the forecastle was holding, and the limber holes had been plugged with blankets. Cargo in the hold was being moved aft to counteract the weight of water in the fo'c'sle. The bow down trim was making *Willwatch* uncontrollable.

Vic Hardy, who was aboard *VSP*, turned his radio on for the first time at 9:30am to listen to the regular small ship schedule and heard *Olympic* trying to reach *Willwatch*. Hardy knew McCarthy well, so called him by radio.

"I then asked McCarthy was there anything we could do to help. Mac replied, 'Well I wouldn't say no at a time like this, I have my crew to think of'. He gave us his position or as near as he could, 27 miles north by west of our position...we got under way straight away, it was round about ten o'clock.

"We left the radio on, and Mac came on again at about 10:20am and said that his position had deteriorated very badly. He said he had let 50 drums go off the deck, and he also put a rocket up to see if we could get his position. We didn't see the rocket, and neither did *Olympic*."

At 10:30am McCarthy radioed that the vessel was awash and they were unable to launch the lifeboat. He gave no reason, but said he hoped it would float off the deck as the ship sunk.

By 10:37am, the ship was foundering. He called, 'I've ordered the crew over the side in their life jackets'. His final words were, 'Well, cheerio, we'll see you later'.

*Olympic* and *VSP* continued the search in difficult conditions. At 7:30pm, a Lincoln bomber from RAAF Laverton dropped a smoke flare directing *VSP* to some wreckage. Vic Hardy picked up a life jacket, mattress, cases of apples, a gas bottle and a wooden stanchion. Nearby were several bales of straw, a 44-gallon drum and the deckhouse door. There were no traces of survivors.

The master, 29-year-old Captain George McCarthy, left behind a wife and three children, the youngest only 17 days old. Engineer Peter Hanson was married with four children. Three crew members were unmarried, including the unlucky replacement crew, Tony Dick, and cook Neville Chitts from King Island. Particularly poignant was the story of the 16-year-old deckhand, John Mercer, whose mother abandoned him as a child. He had just landed his first job after a troubled adolescence and believed that at last his life was changing.

The loss of the *Willwatch* with all hands had devastated Archibald Kimberley. The builder who had done so much for Ulverstone was unable to cope. He started drinking heavily, and died in 1964, aged just fifty.

A Court of Marine Inquiry concluded that much of the blame for the disaster lay with the master. He should have been aware of problems with the old and much-repaired *Willwatch* and taken earlier steps to seek shelter or assistance. The inquiry criticised survey procedures in Tasmania, a conclusion that eventually led to the removal of this function from Marine Boards when the Navigation and Survey Authority of Tasmania was formed in 1963.

NOTE: This article was first published in *Tasmania: 40<sup>o</sup> South*, Issue 59, Summer 2011.





image: *Tanda's* maiden crew.

Left to right:  
Mr A.C. Jephson,  
Commander  
C.E. Lowther,  
Messrs R.A.  
Prevost (owner),  
E. Yarrow, and  
D.J. McRobertson  
(engineer).

Photo via  
*Illustrated*  
*Tasmanian Mail*,  
31 August 1927.

# *Tanda*: a Tassie launch with many lives

BY REX COX

While working on the Museum desk quite some years ago I received a telephone call from a lady in Sydney, enquiring about a wooden motor launch that had been built in Hobart for her father during the late 1920s. The only clues were that it was named *Tanda*, that it had been taken to Sydney on completion and "conscripted" in World War II. She wanted to compile a history of the vessel for her family, so I agreed to find out what I could.

As luck would have it, our curator Rona had asked me to sort through a heap of newspaper cuttings in the Museum's collection, to determine their relevance and need for retention. I had taken the pile home to work on, and that same evening settled down to continue the project.

Unbelievably, the first item I picked up from the pile was an extract from the *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail* of 31 August 1927, detailing *Tanda's* Sydney arrival, with photos of the vessel, its owner and crew. Now provided with a firm date I could check *The Mercury* through Trove for more details, and found an account of the launch's construction in the newspaper of 1 August 1927.

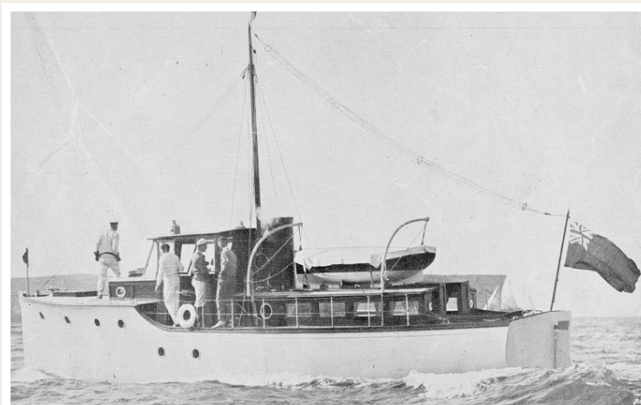
Designed by Alfred Blore and built by Percy Coverdale at Battery Point for Sydney architect Reginald A. de Teissier-Prevost, *Tanda* had a Huon Pine hull (45.6 feet/13.9 metres), blackwood cabin fittings and twin Parsons engines and was regarded in both the Tasmanian and NSW press as "a magnificent craft", "a credit to Tasmania" and "equal to the best on Sydney Harbour".

Having arrived in Hobart aboard the Sydney steamer *Zealandia*, Mr. de T. Prevost advised *The Mercury* that he wanted "the best motor boat south of the Line" and had originally intended to order a vessel 60 feet in length, but reduced the dimensions to allow for shipment by coastal steamer. When this proved impossible it was decided to take *Tanda* to Sydney under its own power and he was to be accompanied on the trip by Commander C. E. Lowther RN (ADC to NSW Governor Sir Dudley de Chair) and Messrs. E. Yarrow, D. J. McRobertson and A. C. Jephson.

*Tanda* left Hobart on 12 August 1927 (having been inspected the previous day by the Tasmanian Governor, Sir James O'Grady) and arrived in Sydney on 18 August. Its seaworthiness was tested when gales were experienced between Schouten and Gabo Islands.

Reginald and his bride chose *Tanda* as the venue for their wedding on Sydney Harbour in late November 1934, the launch being dressed for the occasion with a floral garland and a white satin pennant at the masthead. Sixteen guests were aboard for the ceremony, then 300 attended the reception ashore at Royal Sydney Yacht Squadron, Kirribilli.

The launch was sold and renamed *Esmeralda* in 1935, with new engines being fitted in 1938. Requisitioned by the RAN on 25 September 1941 and commissioned for patrol duties on 20 November, HMAS *Esmeralda* became the smallest and oldest of the "Hollywood Fleet" (a group of 13 erstwhile luxury motor cruisers built for wealthy Sydney owners and pressed into wartime naval service).



images: *Tanda* approaching Sydney Heads on its delivery voyage, 18 August 1927 (via *Illustrated Tasmanian Mail*)

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HMAS *Esmeralda* left Sydney on 13 August 1944 to take up air/sea rescue duties at Darwin, but persistent engine problems saw it diverted to Cairns for repairs and then to Brisbane until paid off in January 1946. Advertised for sale without engines but partially restored to pre-war condition, it was purchased by Laurie Coleman who installed two Ford Thornycroft V8 engines and made other changes to suit the tourist trade between Mackay and the Whitsundays.

A succession of owners followed and by the late 1980s the launch (now named *Ralda*) was at Hamilton Island. It later moved back to Sydney and was advertised for sale there in 1992 as *Lady Margaret*. New owner Simon Kyle-Little sailed it to Brisbane, from where it was trucked to Darwin, and for the next five years operated as part of his safari business along the coast of Arnhem Land.

The next move was to Victoria in 1997 when purchased by Mal Howarth of Sale and trucked to Paynesville on the Gippsland Lakes.

Extensive repairs followed and current owners Bill and Yvonne Maxwell of Perth (Tasmania) purchased *Lady Margaret* after seeing it at the 2018 Paynesville Classic Boat Rally. They have restored the name *Tanda* and are reported as planning to bring it back to Tasmania.

*Tanda* is a town in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh and one could speculate as to why this launch received that name. There was, at the time, a cargo-passenger liner of the same name – the Eastern & Australian Line's *Tanda* (6,956/1914), which had been acquired from the British India Line in 1924, having also served as the hospital ship and transport HMHS *Madras* during WWI. It's possible that there was some connection with this ship, as Reginald had served in the British Army from 1915 to 1922.

References:  
[www.lolitaandthehollywoodfleet.com](http://www.lolitaandthehollywoodfleet.com), 19. HMAS *Esmeralda*.



image, above: HMAS *Esmeralda* on Sydney Harbour in WW2

image, left: (*Lady Margaret* in recent times on the Gippsland Lakes



# Bridging the gap

## a short history of the Bridgewater causeway and bridges

BY PAUL ARMSTRONG

Located fourteen kilometres upstream from Hobart, between Granton and Bridgewater, stands one of Tasmania's most significant feats of modern engineering. The new Bridgewater Bridge, opened on 2 June this year, has a projected design life of one hundred years and represents the largest transport infrastructure project ever undertaken in the state. The curved structure extends 1.2 kilometres across the River Derwent, linking the Brooker Highway with the Midland Highway and providing a vital connection between southern and northern Tasmania.

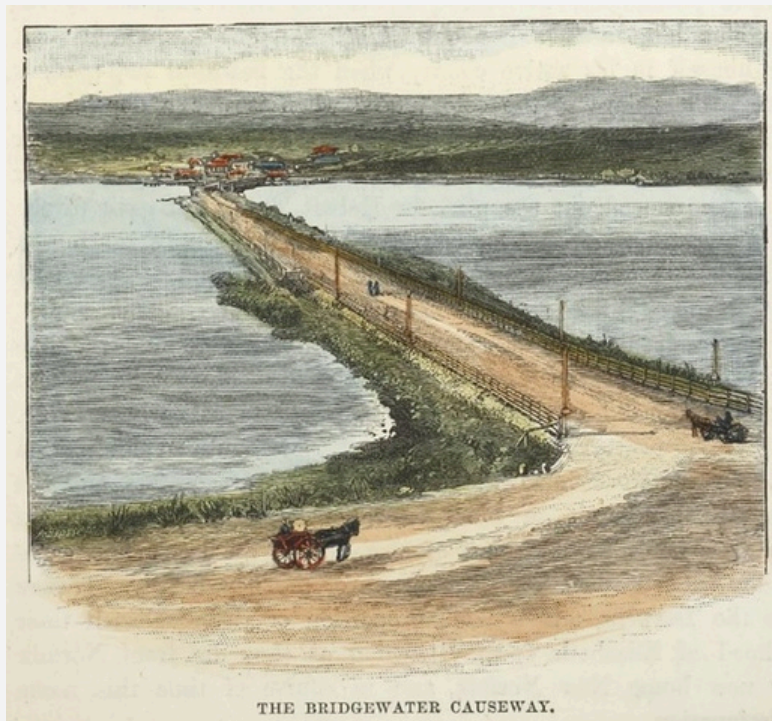
The new bridge is the fifth to span this section of the river. Built at a cost of 786 million dollars, it consists of 1,082 precast concrete and steel segments, supported on twenty-one pairs of piers. These piers sit between eight and sixteen metres above the river, with pile depths ranging from thirty to almost ninety metres below the surface. One of the last piles poured reached a depth of eighty-eight metres and is believed to be the longest single pile ever cast in Australia. More than 120,000 tonnes of concrete were used in the bridge and the associated civil works. Every concrete segment was precast at a dedicated facility on the Bridgewater side of the river, and each pier required between 190 and 310 tonnes of concrete along with up to 35 tonnes of steel. On average, 150 concrete truckloads were needed for each of the forty-two piers.

Although the new structure represents the latest stage in nearly two centuries of development, the history of bridging the river at this location reaches back to the earliest years of European settlement. The first Europeans to explore the upper Derwent were Lieutenant John Hayes of the British Bombay Marine and the crew of the Duke of Clarence in 1793. They travelled upriver as far as the site of present-day New Norfolk. The idea of a crossing near Black Snake, the early name for Granton, emerged in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Lieutenant Governor George Arthur eventually approved the construction of a causeway, and in 1829 the project began.

Some two hundred convicts, working in chains with only picks, shovels and wheelbarrows, quarried and transported roughly two million tonnes of rock and other fill to the site. Their task was to create a solid link across the marshland that stretched from the southern shore well into the river. The soft and unstable ground presented a major engineering obstacle. Traditional bridge construction was impossible until the ground could be stabilised. Detailed surveys were undertaken, and an innovative solution was chosen. Engineers laid down large quantities of tea tree branches and foliage to form a mat across the marshy bed.

View of the causeway in the 1840s with Mount Dromedary in the background.  
image: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery





left: Bridgewater causeway and Bridgewater Bridge from Granton looking across to Bridgewater. image via Wikimedia Commons

below: view of the rolling truss bridge from downstream showing tower and timber towpath for vessels. The iron wheels are visible on the right side of the tower. image via Tasmanian Heritage & Archive Office



This mat distributed weight evenly, provided flexibility and allowed water to move through the structure, preventing uneven sinking as tides and water levels shifted. Once the mat was in place, layers of earth, clay and stone were built up to form a raised, stable platform.

Completed in 1834, the causeway extended about 700 metres from the southern shore to deeper water, leaving a 340 metre gap to the northern side. Engineers considered three options for crossing this remaining distance: a suspension bridge, a pontoon bridge or a punt. The punt was chosen. Powered by cable and hand winches, it transported people and goods while allowing vessels to continue navigating the river.

The punt soon struggled to keep up with rising demand, and in 1848 work began on the first permanent bridge across the gap. The design was the work of James Blackburn, a former convict and talented architect, and James Alexander Thomson, also a former convict. Planning had begun in 1840 and continued through years of negotiation and an Act of Parliament in 1846. In November 1847 the contract was awarded and construction commenced the following January.

The first bridge used timber from Mount Dromedary, transported several kilometres to the site. Three hundred and sixty-three piles, many between eighteen and twenty-seven metres long, were driven into the riverbed. The bridge had a movable truss section twenty-three metres long, supported on iron wheels and rails, and operated by hand winches. A central tower with chains provided additional support. The design allowed an eleven metre clear opening for masted and steam vessels. Bridge tolls were collected from 1849 until 1880, and a tollhouse survived until the 1940s. Though considered unsafe by 1888, the bridge remained in service until a replacement was completed in the mid 1890s. The old bridge was demolished in 1899.

The introduction of rail travel in the 1870s increased the need for improved river crossings. To accommodate a rail line, the causeway was widened on the downstream side and construction of a rail bridge began in 1869. The rail line ran parallel to the road bridge and ended slightly downstream on the northern bank. The movable section of the new rail bridge was a steel lattice swing span sourced from England and operated manually. Completed in 1874, this bridge also required a towpath to help guide vessels safely between the road and rail bridges.

Growing road traffic placed pressure on the original timber road bridge, yet government approval for a new road bridge was slow. In 1892, contracts were finally awarded for a new swing span road bridge designed for future conversion to rail use. Completed in 1893, this structure extended straight from the causeway, unlike the earlier eastward angled alignment. Its steel and concrete filled caissons and turntable can still be seen today. For several years, both bridges operated simultaneously because the new bridge could not immediately carry both road and rail.

By 1905, the 1874 rail bridge had deteriorated. Engineers decided to convert the 1893 road bridge to carry both road and rail traffic. The causeway was further widened, tracks were set into the roadway, and gates were installed to manage traffic. Trains began using the bridge in 1908. This arrangement was unpopular and inefficient. Delays were compounded by the opening of the bridge for river traffic. Public pressure led to the conversion of the older 1874 bridge for lighter road use. It served for nearly seventy years before demolition in 1942. The 1893 bridge remained in service until the lift span was completed in 1946. Remarkably, the 1893 swing span girders, then 122 years old, survive today on a disused rail bridge at Derwent Park.

Construction of the fourth Bridgewater Bridge began in 1938, though progress paused during the Second World War. Limited road access opened in 1942, the full deck was completed in 1944, and the lift span opened in August 1946. Rail began using the new crossing in October that same year. The misaligned spans of the various bridges created navigation difficulties, and two older structures were removed to improve passage for vessels.

The 1940s bridge is an all welded steel structure supported by reinforced concrete piers set on concrete encased timber piles. Eleven welded plate girders carry the concrete deck. The lift span and its flanking spans are built of trusses, which today limit the height of road and rail vehicles. The lift span, 42.9 metres long with a clear waterway opening of 36.5 metres, is balanced by massive concrete counterweights, each supported by six steel wire ropes. Originally powered by a petrol engine with manual rail locks, the lifting mechanism was later updated to twin electric motors with diesel backup.

This bridge carried roughly 20,000 vehicles per day, ten percent of them heavy vehicles. Over the last forty years, the structure underwent significant strengthening, including enhancements to the piers and operating machinery. Daily inspections ensured safety of the counterweights, cables and mechanical systems.

With the completion of the new bridge, the 1940s lift span will be demolished. The historic causeway, however, will remain. It stands as a powerful reminder of the ingenuity, skill and determination of those who built it almost two centuries ago. From convict labourers laying down tea tree matting with picks and shovels, to today's engineers constructing deep water foundations with advanced machinery, the Bridgewater crossing tells a remarkable story of adaptation and persistence. It is a story shaped by geography, technology, growing communities and changing transport needs. The new bridge continues this legacy, carrying Tasmanians forward while standing firmly on the foundations laid by those who came before.



left: SS *Taranna* heading upstream past swing bridge to New Norfolk in 1910.

below: the new Bridgewater Bridge.  
image via State Growth Tasmania



# Ship spotter

BY REX COX

Tasmanian ports see a regular procession of oil tankers, calling every few weeks to discharge fuels and lubricants. Once upon a time many were owned by the large oil companies and proudly carried their colours (see *Conus*), but those companies now charter vessels from various owners/managers and 'flags of convenience', such as Liberia, Panama or the Marshall Islands, are the order of the day.

One such visitor to Hobart in mid-April was the South Korean built *STI San Telmo* (29,804/2017). Registered owners are, appropriately, STI San Telmo Shipping Co. Ltd and POR is Majuro in the Marshall Islands. The prefix indicates a connection with ScorpioTankers Inc., based in Monaco and closely associated with the Lauro family (who used to operate passenger liners between Italy and Australia, amongst other shipping activities). Scorpio has around 100 tankers in world-wide trading.



image (above): Shell tanker *Conus* departing Hobart, 10 September 1985 (Rex Cox photo)

But who was San (Saint) Telmo? He was either Saint Peter Gonzalez Telmo (1190 -1246), a Dominican friar who established a mission for Spanish and Portuguese seamen (and is sometimes depicted holding a model sailing ship), or Saint Erasmus of Formia (martyred c303), also known as Saint Elmo (or Telmo), the patron saint of sailors – and abdominal pain!

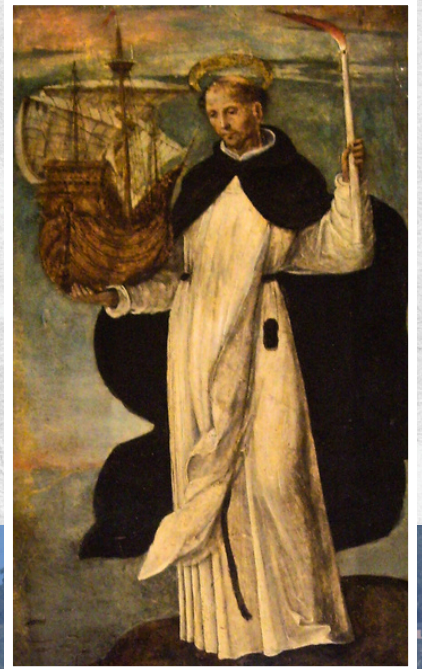


image (below): *STI San Telmo* at the Hobart anchorage, 12 April 2025 (Rex Cox photo)



# STRAIT LINES

## the curious case of our maritime border

BY COLIN DENNY

Tasmanians may be unaware that the state's accepted border with Victoria in northern Bass Strait lies just four nautical miles south of Wilsons Promontory at 39° 12' S latitude. Tasmania's rugged Redondo Island's peak and cliffs can readily be seen from the Promontory.

Boundary Islet in the Hogan Group, east of Redondo Island, is bisected by 39° 12' S creating a short 85-metre land border with Victoria. How did this tiny two-hectare rocky islet, occupied by fur seals and seabirds, become the border? And is it really the border?

To discover more we need to understand the historical context...

In August 1770 Lieutenant James Cook anchored *Endeavour* in Torres Strait. He stepped ashore, raised the Union Flag, and claimed the entire east coast of the continent for the British Crown. Cook named the land New South Wales and the island on which he landed Possession Island.

Governor Arthur Phillip arrived in New South Wales in 1788 to establish a British penal colony. His Commission gave him power by Royal prerogative over the area claimed by Cook stretching from Torres Strait to South Cape in Van Diemens Land (VDL) and west to 135° E longitude.

At the time VDL was thought to be connected to the mainland. But in 1798 George Bass and Matthew Flinders confirmed the existence of a strait separating VDL from New Holland. Flinders named the strait Bass Strait. The discovery enabled a far shorter voyage to Sydney from the west.

Lieutenant James Grant RN of the brig *Lady Nelson* on a voyage from London became the first to complete the westerly passage in December 1800.

Later that month, Captain John Black of the brig *Harbinger* entered the strait.

Black, a 21-year-old privateer and trader, had invested his share of the prize from disposal of a captured Spanish brig in a cargo of 13,000l of spirits and 14,000l of wine for the Sydney market.

*Harbinger* stood to the southward in Bass Strait approaching an island lying in the centre of the western entrance. Black sheltered near two small islands which he named the New Year Isles and named a larger island King Island after Governor Philip Gidley King. A reef to the north was called Harbinger Reef. Black sailed east surveying the Hogan Group named for his vessel's owner.

Governor King referred to Black as 'a person of good abilities as a surveyor and navigator' and later drew a chart from Black's surveys. It may have been this chart that determined Governor Darling's flawed explanation of the VDL border (see below).

John Black was lost at sea in 1802 and is not well known as a hydrographer. This may explain why the Bass Strait surveys of Mathew Flinders, George Bass and French explorers Freycinet and Lesueur of the Baudin Expedition are better known today.

In 1803, fear of foreign rivals prompted the first British settlement in VDL at Risdon Cove followed by Sullivans Cove and Port Dalrymple. Settlers and convicts soon spread throughout the colony and their population grew to about 7,000 in the 1820s. Colonial Secretary Henry Bathurst agreed on the need for a colonial administration separate from that in Sydney.

In London an 1825 Order in Council decreed that the Governor of NSW, 'constitute and erect the Island of VDL and certain Islands, Territories and places thereto adjacent into a Separate Colony independent of the Government of New South Wales'. A defined border recognising the administrative territory of VDL including the islands of Bass Strait became necessary.





## VICTORIA TASMANIA

However, the Order in Council lacked a precise border so NSW Governor Ralph Darling defined it at latitude 39° 12' S. He planned for the border to be at Wilsons Promontory but 39° 12' S was too far south. His oversight may have arisen from of an error in charts from Captain James Black's 1801 survey. As a result, the border with NSW bisected a rocky islet then known as North East Islet in the Hogan Group.

In 1851 the Port Phillip District of NSW separated from NSW and VDL's northern border became a border with the new colony of Victoria. The new colonial administration appears to have accepted without question the 39° 12' S border as previously described by Darling.

VDL also administered Norfolk Island as part of its territory for 14 years from 1844 until 1856 when the colony became Tasmania and secured self-government.

Dr Garry Moore in his 2012 doctoral thesis\* suggested that a misreading of NSW governor Ralph Darling's 1825 Commission led to the northern boundary of Tasmania being perceived as lying on latitude 39° 12' S rather than on the line touching Wilsons Promontory as intended.

Moore also noted that the boundary defined by the s46 of Constitution Act 1855 (NSW) vested all the territory lying between the southern extremity of Wilsons Promontory and latitude 40° south in New South Wales.

Under the Act, Tasmania would only administer southern Bass Strait. Despite its legal authority, the legislated border does not appear to have been applied in practice.

In 1990 Placenames Tasmania, the RAN Hydrographer, and the Victorian Government agreed to change the name of the former North East Islet in the Hogan Group to Boundary Islet. This action eliminated a duplication of names and is not legal confirmation of the border.

For some years Tasmania leased the 232ha Hogan Island for grazing, but it has become a nature reserve. It is an example of Tasmanian administration of Bass Strait islands south of 39° 12' S. The administrative process is accepted despite the lack of formal determination of the border.

The cadastral section of Land Tasmania doesn't hold a map defining the border. When questioned, they added to the uncertainty saying, 'Unfortunately there is no simple answer as to the location of the Victorian and Tasmanian border, and so whether we indeed share a small section of border that passes through an islet of the Hogan Group at South 39 degrees 12 minutes latitude has not been formally determined.'

So, the mystery of Tasmania's maritime boundary with Victoria remains a mystery!

\* MOORE, Garry, State Limits: the Boundaries of Victoria and the Resolution of Boundary Uncertainties, Monash University, Melbourne 2012

# MINIATURE MARINERS MODEL BOAT EXHIBITION

BY MARGIE BROPHY

We are excited to be hosting a model boat exhibition at the Bass and Flinders Maritime Museum in George Town, Tasmania. The exhibition opened on Friday 7 November and will run throughout the summer season until the end of May 2026.

When we began planning this exhibition, I already had a fascination with model boats, particularly boats in bottles, but the process opened up a whole new world. I have discovered the many backgrounds and purposes behind model boat making. Some models were created for work, helping shipbuilders plan the layout of larger vessels. Others were made for play, as souvenirs, or to represent different cultural styles.

Our exhibition includes models of a New Zealand Waka canoe, PNG Kuna, Spanish galleon, Japanese junk, Singapore dragon boat and Greek trireme. We are extremely fortunate to feature a model and art piece by Dean Greeno, inspired by a traditional Tasmanian Aboriginal (Palawa) paperbark canoe.

In this display, a traditional paperbark canoe is framed within a driftwood dinghy. This piece will remain on display until the end of January before it moves to QVMAG for the Rise exhibition. Dean will then replace it with other examples of his work for the remainder of the exhibition period.

As we gathered the different models, I found myself wondering what drives people to make model boats. Is it the satisfaction of creating something in miniature, a love of woodcraft, or the thrill of sailing a motorised model across the water.

When I asked our volunteer Craig Dixon, I learned there is even more to it. His first model, the HMS *Endeavour*, was built before his involvement in constructing and sailing the HMS *Norfolk* replica. For Craig, it comes from a deep love of maritime history and a desire to understand the workings of a large sailing vessel. He described the sense of accomplishment that comes after tackling a difficult section and the importance of knowing when to step away. One of his key techniques is using crimping pliers to bend long timbers, and he has even attached a tube to his model steam engine to create a functioning mini steamer.



Carrowdale working boat model.  
Image via Vince Brophy



As the exhibition took shape, we spoke with many different model-making groups. Members of the Launceston Learning Centre for Seniors shared their inspirations. Coordinator Ian Green said his interest began with his great-great-grandfather, who was a convict and shipwright. He also values the companionship of the group and the collaborative way they solve building challenges. Other participants were inspired by many different sources. John was encouraged by friends. Kevin's interest grew from his love of history. Paul began after visiting *Cutty Sark* in Greenock, then went on to build his own model and later developed a passion for creating dioramas to accompany his work.

Throughout the exhibition period we will host special guests and activities. Dean Greeno will join us for a yarn. Mal Riley will share stories about *Lady Nelson*. The Lego Club will create designs inspired by the model boats.

In April and May *Julie Burgess* will visit from Devonport, offering sailings to Beauty Point and Low Head along with information sessions and children's workshops at the museum. *Julie Burgess* was built by Ned Jack, who also created the half-hull with rigging of the local yacht *Pueta*, which features in our exhibition. Keep an eye on our social media channels as we confirm dates and details.

This exhibition would not have been possible without support from an Arts Tasmania grant, the guidance of Roving Curator Melissa Smith and the dedication of our wonderful volunteers. We are also grateful for the support of the Low Head Pilot Station Maritime Museum and Maritime Museum Tasmania, as well as the generosity of local makers and collectors Wendy and James Harrap, Gary Maurer, Alan Conn and Peter Hale. We look forward to sharing the exhibition with you.

above: ship in a bottle.  
image via  
Vince Brophy

right: Dean Greeno.  
image via  
Museum and  
Art Gallery of  
the Northern  
Territory  
(MAGNT)



# Remembering *Iron Baron*



On 10 July 1995, *Iron Baron*, a 35,557 gross tonne BHP-chartered bulk carrier, ran aground at the approach to the Tamar River enroute to the Port of Bell Bay, carrying 24,000 tonnes of manganese ore for TEMCO.

With heavy north-westerly winds and two-metre seas, the vessel grounded on Hebe Reef, releasing approximately 350 tonnes of bunker fuel oil. The resulting oil spill devastated marine ecosystems along Tasmania's north-east coast and remains our state's worst maritime environmental disaster.

Among those who supported the response was TasPorts' own Harbour Master, Mick Wall. Then a BHP Transport Deck Officer on leave in Tasmania, Mick joined the effort in the days after the grounding and this week shared some of his reflections.

Providing some context as to the technology available at the time *Iron Baron* grounded, Mick said that 30 years ago, Vessel Traffic Services (VTS) didn't exist and the various Port Control Officers around the state relied only on a landline phone and a single standalone marine radio to communicate with ships. There were also no electronic means of detection or monitoring to provide an early warning for a vessel running into danger.

Within hours of the grounding, *Iron Baron's* crew had been successfully rescued and the assessment of damage to the ship commenced. With this came the realisation of the magnitude of the resulting pollution and environmental damage.

Despite these limitations, the response effort was swift and deeply collaborative.



Port of Launceston Harbour Master Captain Charles Black led efforts, alongside pilots, tug crews, pilot vessels, line boats, and industry participants; supported by AMSA, MAST, EPA Tasmania and local surveyors. Low Head Pilot Station became a hive of coordinated activity within hours.

Hundreds of volunteers joined the clean-up, with significant efforts focused on wildlife rescue—particularly oiled seabirds and little penguins.

With *Iron Baron* continuing to break up and leak oil, following approvals from AMSA the decision was made to scuttle her east of Flinders Island on 30 July.

VTS as it stands today is the result of the progression of risk mitigation through lessons learned both locally, nationally, and internationally, and constantly working to meet the requirements of the International Maritime Organisation and associated agencies to maintain a workplace that is as safe as possible for all involved in shipping in Tasmania.

While reflecting on *Iron Baron* this week, Mick says all TasPorts employees, together with all mariners and local community members involved in the *Iron Baron* response, can be proud of the contribution that was made and the lessons learnt from this significant Tasmanian maritime event.



all images of *Iron Baron* and rescue response efforts by Rob Burnett, via TasPorts



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