


Maritime Times

Tasmania



WINTER 2026
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New acquisitions: treasures from a migrant travel case



THE TINDERBOX BAY TINDERBOX

A NEW WHARF & HOME BERTH FOR RSV NUYINA

Maritime Museum Tasmania

Carnegie Building
16 Argyle Street, Hobart
Postal address: GPO Box 1118
Hobart, Tasmania 7001

Phone: 03 6234 1427
Email: office@maritimetas.org
Open daily 9am - 5pm
(except Christmas Day)

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cover image:
detail of
illustrated
dinner menu
from Orient Line
steamer *Orontes*
dinner menu



City of **HOBART**



TasPorts



Events
Tasmania



MURDOCH CLARKE
LAWYERS

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 for further details on contribution requirements, guidelines and editorial standards.

Maritime Museum Tasmania acknowledges and respects the palawa/pakana peoples as the traditional and ongoing owners and custodians of the skies, lands, and waters of Lutruwita. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

from the president's log

Recent events both internationally and within Tasmania continue to demonstrate how the sea is an ever-present part of contemporary daily life in our island state. The supply of petroleum products, the construction of new wharves for *Spirits of Tasmania IV & V* and RSV *Nuyina*, and Incat's launch of the world's largest battery-electric ferry for service in South America all speak to this. So too do the challenges of supplying fresh fish for Easter — the sea's influence is never far away.

For museums, documenting contemporary life is a continuing challenge. To tease out what is significant, what is transitory, which objects best capture this and which objects can be realistically managed as part of a collection is not easy. In many ways it is easier to allow time, events, and chance to shape a collection. But the consequence is that significant elements of our history more often than not go unrepresented in collections, so that museums are continually playing catch-up.

The Maritime Museum is actively involved in collecting Tasmania's contemporary maritime life. Recent editions of the *Maritime Times* have discussed new acquisitions including artworks, Tasmanian-made products, and items such as those from the now-demolished Bridgewater lifting bridge, which document significant changes in our lives. In this edition there is an account of the recent acquisition of an Argo oceanographic research float extensively used by the CSIRO and now on display in the new *Hobart: Port City* exhibition.

The development of the Maritime Museum's collection since its origins with the Ship Lovers' Society of Tasmania more than ninety years ago has been almost entirely the result of the generosity of the community.

This edition of the *Maritime Times* also highlights the importance of community generosity in enabling so many aspects of Tasmania's maritime life and heritage to continue. Community volunteers play an important role in the work of the St Helens History Room, which began more than forty years ago as a community-based initiative.

Similar stories can be told of the achievements of the Hobart Mission for Seamen in operating the Flying Angel Centre on Hobart's waterfront, the efforts of the Australian Wooden Boat Festival to promote Tasmania's maritime heritage at the recent Auckland Wooden Boat Festival, and of course our own volunteers who ensure that the *Westward* remains a living, active part of Tasmania's maritime heritage.

Volunteers are key to the Maritime Museum's ability to remain as active as it is in ensuring that Tasmania's maritime heritage is maintained for the community today and into the future. If you are reading this copy of the *Maritime Times* and would like to be part of this enjoyable adventure, I would encourage you to consider volunteering. Similarly, if you know of others who might also consider volunteering, please encourage them to contact the Maritime Museum to find out how they might become involved.

As well as reports on volunteering initiatives, this *Maritime Times* has many stories on other aspects of Tasmania's maritime heritage. It makes for engrossing reading as winter approaches and the nights grow longer.

This year the Museum will again be hosting its annual Endowment Fund donation campaign, which has enabled the acquisition of a number of significant items for the collection in recent years. Your support in growing this fund is an important way for the Museum to respond to unexpected opportunities for the benefit of the community at large.

**CHRIS TASSELL,
MMT PRESIDENT**

Welcome

to the Museum's newest members...

Peter Scannell
Melissa Mathieson
Shianna Wise
Patrick Burke

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

Celebrating our volunteers

On Friday 10 April we took a moment to recognise the people who make everything possible — our volunteers.

The event brought together long-serving volunteers and new recruits alike, for an afternoon of conversation and good cheer. Special recognition went to Rex Cox, who has given more than 50 years of service to the Museum, a contribution that speaks for itself.

The Maritime Museum is a volunteer-run organisation, and without the dedication of people like Rex and the rest of our team, the stories of Tasmania's maritime heritage simply would not get told.

To everyone who has ever given their time to this special place: thank you!



New life for St Helens historic walk

BY KYM MATTHEWS

The St Helens History Room is celebrating 40 years as a public collecting institution. One of its major projects for 2026 has been the upgrade of the historic walk bollards dotted along the main street of St Helens.

A revamped booklet has been produced, along with the installation of QR codes, allowing visitors to access further information about the images and the past streetscape of St Helens.

The first historic walk booklet was produced in 1980. A second version followed in 2006, and this third version has been produced in 2026. All images associated with the project were sourced from the extensive photographic archive held at the St Helens History Room.

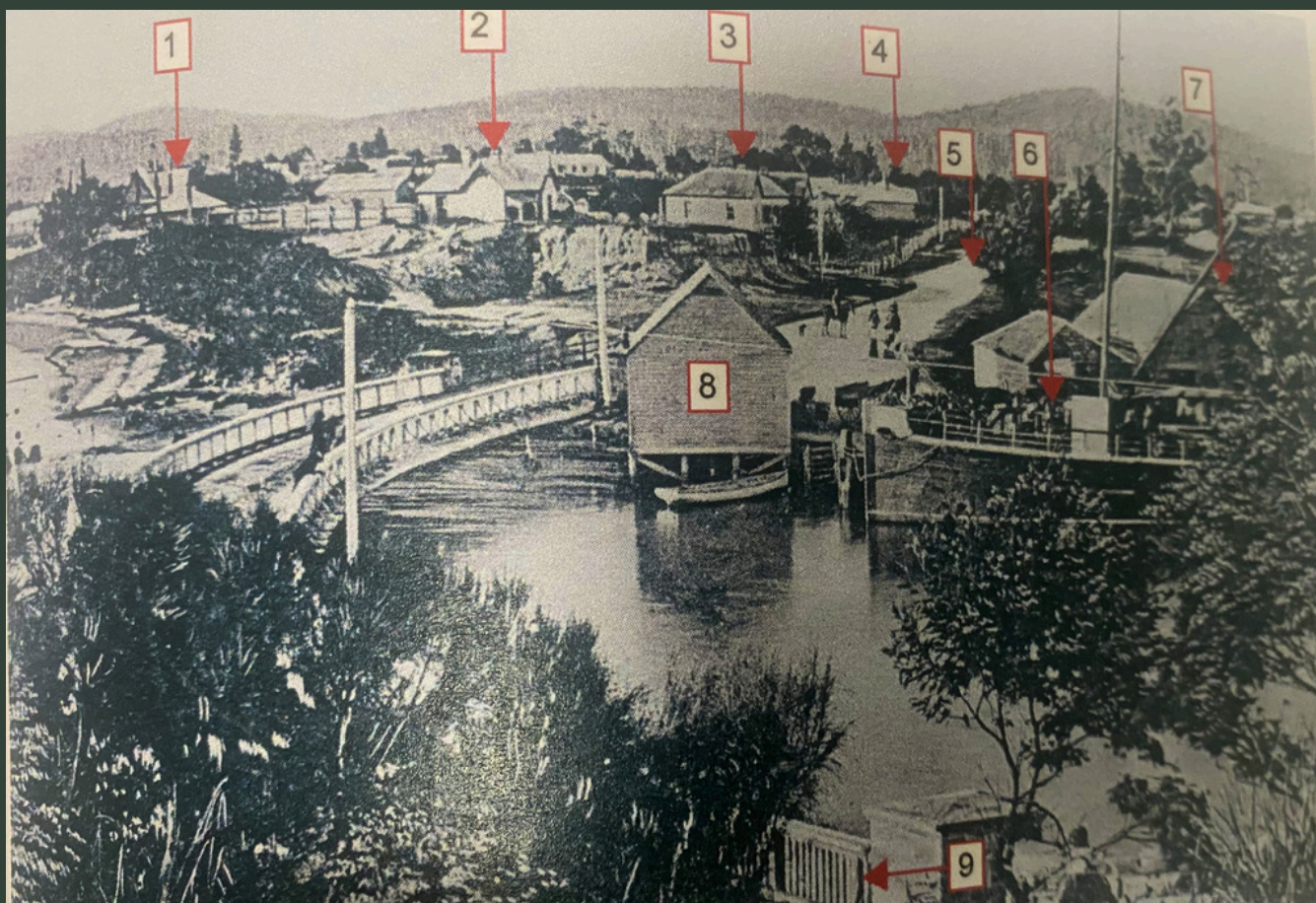
Images of the original shoreline around Georges Bay show the town's development over time, with photographs taken in 1881, 1910 and 1940. Compared with the 1881 photograph, the town in 1910 is substantially larger. The road is still unpaved, but there are more buildings, traffic and pedestrians visible.

The arrows indicate significant features of St Helens at that time:

1. The Schoolhouse, built in 1874. It is still in use today.
2. The Siamese Tin Mine office.
3. The old Government residence, now the site of the courthouse.
4. The original St Helens Hotel.
5. Cecilia Street, with horse traffic.
6. The ship *Koomeela*, which serviced St Helens on a regular basis.
7. Warehouses for storing tin before it was shipped to Hobart or Launceston.
8. The Shell Oil depot.
9. The sandstone rampart from the original bridge, which can still be seen.

The changing shoreline is particularly interesting when compared with the reclamation work undertaken in the early 1980s and the foreshore as it appears today.

The St Helens History Room is part of the St Helens History and Visitor Information Centre and is a Break O'Day Council facility. Volunteers and staff are grateful for Council's support in completing this project. We look forward to finalising the refurbishment before the next summer season.



A commemorative sail aboard *Westward*

Maritime Museum Tasmania marked ANZAC Day with a commemorative sail aboard *Westward*, joining communities across the country in pausing to reflect on the day's significance.

Conditions on the Derwent were clear and calm. At 11am, those on board stopped to acknowledge the service and sacrifice of the men and women who have served Australia, and those who continue to do so.

The tribute was led by museum volunteer Malcolm Ashe, who spoke thoughtfully and with care. Set against the backdrop of the harbour, it was a simple and considered moment of remembrance.

Westward has been part of Tasmania's maritime story for generations, and occasions like this are a reminder that our waterways and historic vessels are also places of memory. The sail offered those on board a chance to come together, reflect quietly, and pay their respects.

Thank you to Malcolm for leading the tribute, and to everyone who joined us.

Lest we forget.



Raymond Arnold's *Shipwreck*

Recently Raymond Arnold donated to the Maritime Museum his work *Shipwreck* which consists of four large, powerful hard ground etchings. Emerging from a workshop held on King Island in 2019 the work is a vision of the wreck site of *Cataraqui* on the west coast of the island.

The wreck of the emigrant ship *Cataraqui* in 1845 in which four hundred people died is Australia's largest civilian maritime disaster. There were only nine survivors from the tragedy, one passenger and eight crew members. Three hundred and forty bodies were recovered and over two hundred were buried in a single mass grave in the sand dunes behind the beach and wreck site.

In 1854 Bishop Nixon visited King Island and sketched the main grave which was then enclosed with a wooden rail and the wreck site. Nixon's image became a starting point for Raymond's work with the picket fence providing a point of reference in the first three states of his work.

Shipwreck consists of four states of the etching printed from the same reworked copper printing plate. Each state involves engraving the copper plate in reverse with a sharp tool, a technically demanding and time-consuming process. The Museum is particularly fortunate that Raymond has also donated the copper plate used to print this work so that it is possible for us to better understand the etching and printing process used in this evolving work.

Anna Johnson, writer and lecturer, has said that "of all Australian artists, he is the one who has brought landscape closest to the intimacy and rich sentience of portraiture. His intensity is sustained by a natural sense of scale the daring to break etching out of the single frame format."

The four states of *Shipwreck* by Raymond Arnold, one of Australia's most important printmakers, are now on display in the Maritime Museum.



GRAVE OF 243 BODIES FROM THE
WRECK OF THE CATARAQUI ON KING'S
ISLAND - AUGUST 14 - 1845

New acquisitions

BY COLIN DENNY

Objects offered to the Maritime Museum are often from personal collections of people sorting out their affairs or, at times, as executors of estates. Anecdotes uncovered from the personal collections are important so the Museum keeps the artefacts together to preserve the stories they tell. Recent acquisitions include two personal collections.

A master mariner's memories

A collection of objects and ephemera from the late master mariner Captain Digby Longhurst (1941 – 2020) has been donated by his widow Judith Longhurst. Digby had been a ships' pilot and Assistant Harbour Master with the Marine Board of Hobart. On his retirement he became a volunteer researcher and acquisition committee member at the Maritime Museum.

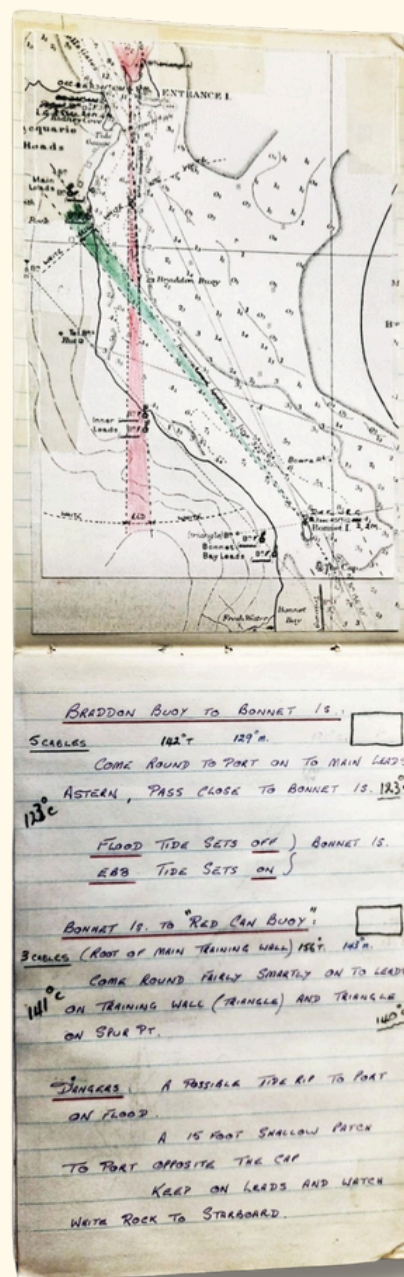
The records donated include Digby's personal piloting instructions and charts prepared for seven Tasmanian ports. He considered instructions he prepared to be essential for the safe passage of ships he piloted. Today sophisticated electronic aids have overtaken much of the manual plotting.

The collection includes interesting early shipboard menus and historic printed material. Also donated is an interesting short, narrated movie of Digby piloting the bulk ship *Zincmaster* through the Tasman Bridge. It is a reminder of the sometimes controversial operating regulations in place following the 1975 Lake Illawarra bridge accident.

The Longhurst Collection provides a master mariner's personal record of the ports controlled by the Marine Board of Hobart prior to the transfer of all Tasmanian ports to TasPorts, a government business enterprise company.

image (right): Notes on Macquarie Harbour, from the Longhurst Collection.

image (below): CSIRO's Dr Steve Rintoul with the Argo float.



CSIRO's Argo robotic float

The Maritime Museum values and exhibits much about Tasmania's early maritime history. Current maritime activity however, encompassing manufacturing, fishing, research, and leisure should be represented too. Consequently, the donation of an Argo Robotic Float from the CSIRO is a welcome addition to the Museum's modern artefact collection.

The CSIRO is part of an international effort to improve understanding of the ocean by using a global array of Argo floats. An explanation of the floats is on the CSIRO website: Argo robotic floats are the only means to collect the subsurface observations needed to provide year-round, near real-time information on ocean conditions.

The floats drift at depths of between 1 and 2 km, before ascending to the surface every ten days, measuring temperature and salinity as they rise. The data are then transmitted to satellites before the float dives and starts a new cycle.

Some of the floats also measure additional quantities that inform us about the ocean's role in the CO₂ uptake and its impacts, including: pH, dissolved oxygen, dissolved nitrate, chlorophyll, and incoming solar radiation.

Argo robotic floats can be deployed from research or commercial ships, and also from aircraft.



Migrant voyage travel case

Recently a small 1950s travel case arrived at the Maritime Museum with labels attached addressing it from Oxfordshire to the Orient Line steamer *Orontes* at Tilbury Docks in Essex. The case's owner, Sheila Mary Helliwell, boarded *Orontes* with her parents on a voyage to Australia in July 1957.

The 20,000GRT SS *Orontes*, launched in 1929 for the Orient Steam Navigation Company, became a one class liner on the Australian immigration run in 1953.

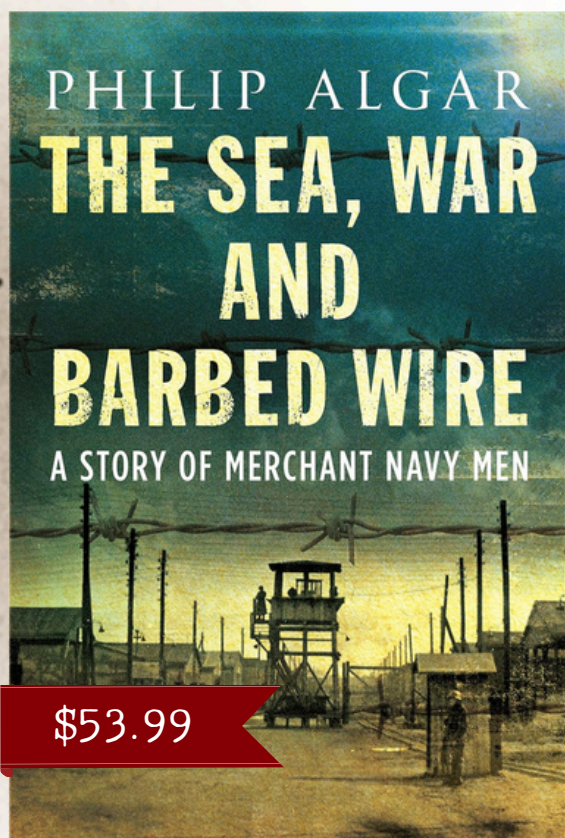
Sheila Marrison (nee Helliwell) had kept the travel case and contents and her son donated it to the Museum. The contents include a photograph album and various documents recording his mother's voyage. Six colourful dinner menus depict racecourses and another menu series portrays queens of England. Printed items include port guides and useful information for passengers.

A newspaper cutting tells the story of 21-year-old Delice Duffield who fell overboard eight miles south of Point Hillier (near Albany, WA). A rowing lifeboat lowered with a crew managed to find and rescue the passenger and the ship's motorboat arrived to tow it back to *Orontes*. The newspaper reported, "The Orient line issued a bottle of whisky and two bottles of rum to the rescuers"!

On arrival in Melbourne, the Helliwells disembarked *Orontes* – Sheila's travel case holds a berthing slip for SS *Taroona*, the link to the family's final destination, Tasmania.



IN THE MUSEUM BOOKSHOP: NEW ARRIVALS



***The Sea, War and Barbed Wire* by Philip Algar**

This book tells the remarkable story of Captain Stanley Algar, an oil tanker master captured in the Atlantic during the Second World War. Held behind barbed wire for four years, Algar and his fellow prisoners endured starvation, uncertainty and the pressures of camp life.

Partly based on diaries Algar kept hidden from the Germans, the book offers a vivid account of survival, resistance and morale in captivity. It includes a first-hand description of liberation, written as events unfolded, along with discussion of the U-boats, merchant raiders and commanders who shaped the war at sea.

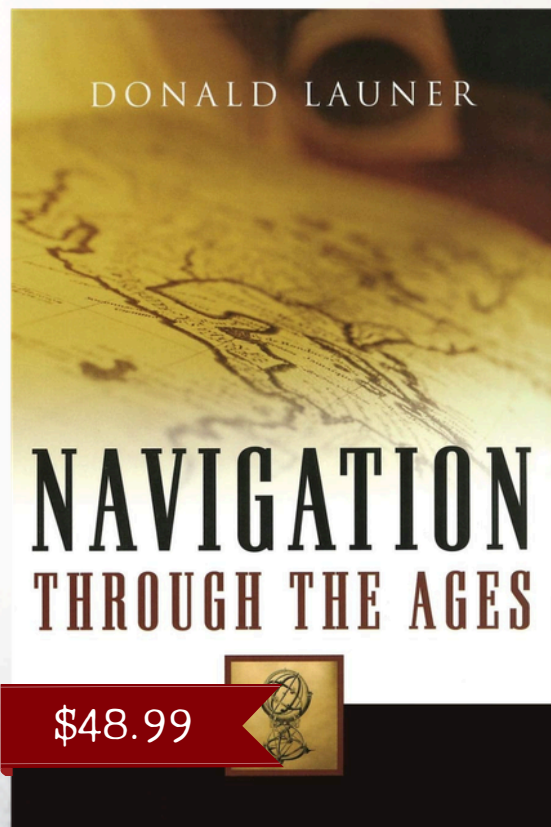
The book also explores wider wartime questions: why were German naval forces initially so successful? How did prisoners obtain such accurate news of the war? What role did the BBC play? How did propaganda operate inside the camps, and what attempts were made to persuade prisoners to change sides? It also considers prisoners' relationships with their guards, the correspondence allowed with home, the Nuremberg trials and the devastating cost of the war.

***Navigation Through the Ages*, by Donald Launer**

Sailors have been navigating the seas for thousands of years, and navigational technology has progressed exponentially during that time. This concise yet comprehensive volume from popular Sheridan House author Donald Launer begins with the impressive developments in navigation undertaken by early seafarers, and follows the art and science of navigation through the ages to their culmination in the huge advances made by our contemporaries.

Launer explores the navigational tools invented by each civilization, and includes generous illustrations to help readers envision the tools used.

Written in an accessible, conversational style, with no unexplained jargon or terminology, *Navigation Through the Ages* will appeal especially to sailors and to anyone with an interest in the history of science and the exploration of our world.





Too Many Tigers, by Monica Reeve

Most people know of the Tasmanian Tiger. But do you know how they became extinct? And were there ever "too many tigers"?

In Monica Reeve's fifth book with Forty South Publishing, she once again uses cut-paper collage and colour pencil to great effect. In this book she has created a vivid pictorial guideline to tell the story of the extinction of the thylacine. The book concludes with an information page where children can learn about Tasmania's threatened species and how to learn from our past to better care for our precious wildlife.

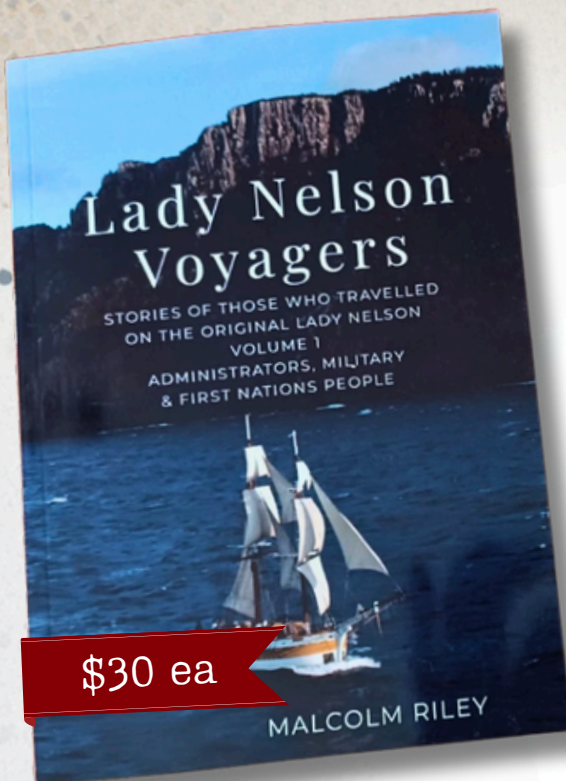
Lady Nelson Voyagers, by Malcolm Riley

The *Lady Nelson* arrived in Port Jackson in late 1800. Over its working life, this small vessel proved remarkably versatile, serving in exploration, surveying, settlement, transport and even the capture of pirates.

It played a pivotal role in the early European settlement of Hobart, northern Tasmania, Victoria, Newcastle, Port Macquarie and the Northern Territory. Those on board explored and charted much of Bass Strait, Port Phillip, Newcastle and Port Macquarie, as well as parts of the northern New South Wales and southern Queensland coasts with HMS *Investigator*.

It is estimated that more than two million Australians have an ancestor who travelled on the *Lady Nelson*. Surveyors James Meehan, George Harris and George Evans all travelled aboard the vessel, while William Collins and Evans later recommended the present site of Hobart as a settlement.

Noted explorers who sailed on the *Lady Nelson* included Matthew Flinders, John Oxley and William Lawson. Many Aboriginal adventurers and explorers also sailed aboard, including Bungaree, Budgerie Dick, John Salamander, Young Bundle, Nanbarry, Yeranabie and Worogan.



The Tinderbox Bay Tinderbox

BY MICHAEL STODDART

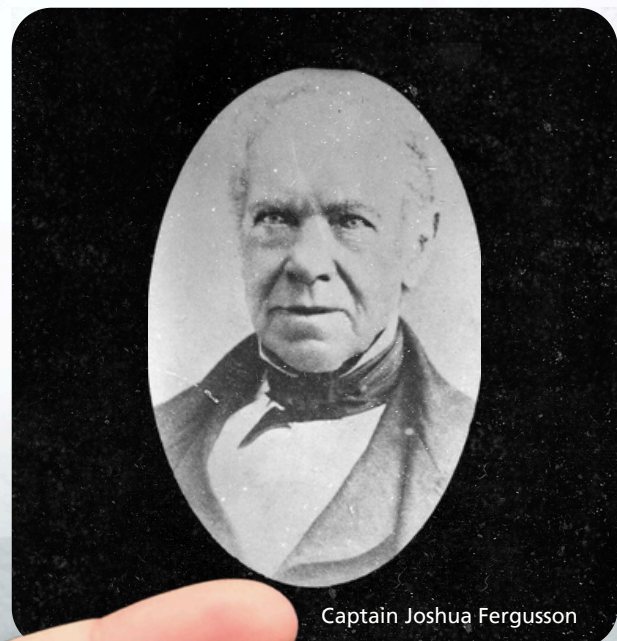
In the Maritime Museum Tasmania collection there is a tiny silver tinderbox, measuring 34mm x 20mm x 8mm, with a hinged lid and a hardened steel striker plate along one side. It was found on the beach at Tinderbox, south of Hobart, by Captain Joshua Fergusson a short while after his 1817 arrival in Van Diemen's Land. He named his house, his farm and the bay where he made his discovery 'Tinderbox'.

The first historical documentation of the name being established was in a newspaper dated May 1822 when a farmer reported the loss of a cow 'last seen at Tinderbox Bay and is supposed to be in the region of Brown's River...' This record supports the claimed date of discovery. In 1966 the Tasmanian Nomenclature Board officially named all the land on the peninsula south of Howden, including Tinderbox Farm and Tinderbox Bay at its tip, as Tinderbox.

The story passed down through generations of Fergusson's descendants was that the box was lost by a member of either Bruni d'Entrecasteaux's 1792 expedition or Nicolas Baudin's 1802 expedition to North West Bay. If the story is true, the little box links us directly with France's great voyages of discovery. So, what do we know about the box?

The box is not made of pure silver, as it lacks the mandatory assay stamp of a lion passant (UK) or the head of the goddess Minerva (France). Neither is it made of electro-plated nickel silver because EPNS is magnetic and our box is not attracted to a magnet. It is likely made of copper sandwiched between two sheets of silver, a material known as Old Sheffield Plate.

Silversmiths widely used OSP from 1750 until 1840, when it was replaced with the cheaper EPNS. OSP produced in France, where it is known as métal argenté, is subject to assay regulations requiring an official stamp on the metal indicating the thickness of the silver. Our box does not display any assay mark.



Captain Joshua Fergusson

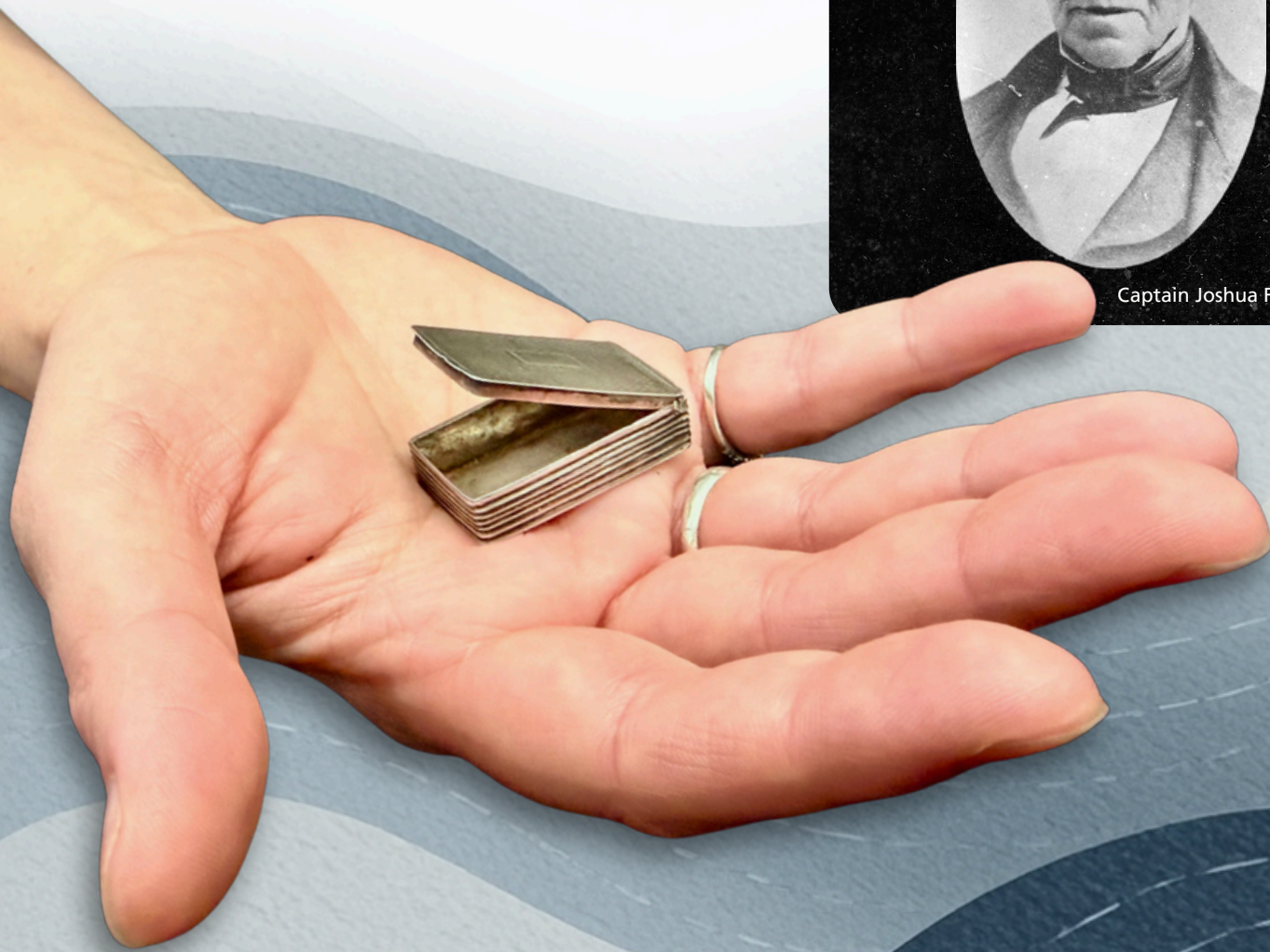




image: the tinderbox is marked 'TC&Co', photo via MMT

The only mark on our box is the initials 'TC&Co' in a rectangular cartouche stamped into both the lid and base, something you might think should lead us to its origin. But not so. There is no TC&Co recorded maker's mark on silver and silverplate from England or France that fits with the box's discovery date. Its British origin is indicated by the moniker '&Co' in the mark; French companies would have used the letters 'et Cie'. A maker's mark TC&Co was registered to Birmingham silversmiths Thomas Chetland & Co, which might seem to be the answer, but as Chetland's started production only in 1890, their mark could not have been hammered into an object we can reliably date to having been made before 1822.

Let's imagine for a moment that the box in our collection might not be the one found by Joshua Fergusson but a later box made by Chetland's, clearly stamped with their mark. That does not work either, because 'Lucifer' (or 'strike anywhere') matches were imported into Tasmania in the 1830s. Tinderboxes, with their fiddly flint-and-steel method of fire-lighting, went out of fashion overnight and were already antiques by the time Chetland's started up. Our box was most likely made in Sheffield by a small company that did not register its mark, producing a box that found its way to Australia around the turn of the 19th century. Like it or not, we have to conclude that the box is unconnected with the French voyages.

Are we missing something? Although Captain Fergusson was an early beachcomber, he was not the first European to set foot on Tinderbox beach -- other than, perhaps, members of the French expeditions. There is a single newspaper reference in 1826 to 'two fine whales' having been caught at Tinderbox Bay. Archaeological work in the littoral zone at Tinderbox Bay reveals pieces of brick, shards of glass, ceramics and stoneware dating from the early 19th century along with pieces of whalebone, confirming some level of whaling activity at the site.

Shore-based whaling in southern Tasmania started in 1805 at Droughty Point, but there is no record of when it started at Tinderbox Bay; all we can say is that some whaling activity occurred there in 1826. Tinderbox Bay was never a major whaling station, but whether major or not it would have housed a dozen or so men for months of each year it was in use. And any one of them could have lost a little tinderbox.

We may never know the real story. While it is tempting to link the box to the famous French voyages of discovery, the supporting evidence does not stack up. But whatever its story, our little box has secured its place in the history of southern Tasmania.

image: Tinderbox Beach, via tasbeach.com.au



The hunt for I-124

BY BRENDON BOWES

In 1973, Melbourne accountant Laurence Bowes was astonished by an unusual business proposal that had just arrived on his desk. An Australian salvage company intended to raise a Japanese navy submarine, sunk off Darwin in January 1942, and sell off its contents. A press release distributed globally caused a media sensation, hinting that the wreck contained hidden treasures worth millions, valuable war relics, and secret documents in a locked safe.

For Mr Bowes, it was a sudden reminder of his war service in the top end aboard the corvette HMAS *Katoomba*. Recalling events of 31 years earlier, he penned his recollections of that submarine's sinking and its aftermath.

"In January 1942, I was Acting Leading Signalman in Katoomba. After working up exercises we departed Sydney in early January 1942, bound for Darwin in company with HMAS *Lithgow*."

Off Thursday Island, the two corvettes met three US transports - *Meigs* (12,568 tons), *Mauna Loa* (5,436 tons), and *Port Mar* (5,551 tons). To escort them through the shallow Torres Strait they streamed their minesweeping gear. The convoy continued uneventfully and entered Darwin harbour on 19 January 1942. A third corvette, HMAS *Deloraine*, was guardship at the anti-submarine boom.

"While proceeding up the harbour, a message was received from Darwin Naval HQ that a Dutch tanker in Clarence Strait had reported that it had been attacked by torpedoes fired by a submarine, which had missed their target."

Deloraine immediately left to search for the submarine, closely pursued by *Lithgow*. *Katoomba* followed after an oil-line emergency repair. Upon entering Clarence Strait, *Deloraine's* Asdic (sonar) operator found a submerged submarine contact, which was attacked with a devastating pattern of depth charges. The sub was blown to the surface before disappearing again into the depths.

The 85-metre submarine was heavily armed and twice the size of the Australian corvettes. This was the Imperial Japanese Navy's I-124, intending to lay minefields to block Darwin's port.

"When *Katoomba* arrived on the scene early on 20 January, *Deloraine* and *Lithgow* were still carrying out depth charge attacks on a contact that the Asdic equipment indicated was definitely a submarine. *Katoomba* immediately joined in the attacks."

In his account, Bowes noted that two US navy destroyers were also hovering in the area. They were of First World War vintage, and he believed their anti-submarine detection equipment to be inferior to the Australian corvettes. He did not recall seeing these vessels performing attacks that morning.

Soon, *Lithgow* signalled to Darwin HQ: "Have expended all my depth charges. Consider submarine sunk."

Katoomba was advised to wait until HMAS *Swan* arrived, as the crew had considerable anti-submarine experience. However, the sloop could not detect a submarine. Later, while the Australian ships patrolled, a US destroyer a couple of miles away dropped depth charges, then signalled: "Sorry, my mistake." On investigation by *Katoomba*, oil appeared on the surface.



image: Laurence Bowes in uniform in Hobart 1939



image (above): Lawrence Bowes in uniform in Hobart 1939
image (below): Lawrence Bowes on leave 1942
Image (below, right): HMAS *Deloraine* in action 1942, painting by Phil Belbin



"The opinion on *Katoomba* was that a second submarine was releasing oil as a ruse to fool the surface ships into believing that it had been sunk. Asdic indicated that there was in fact a submarine in the position of the oil slick, and depth charge attacks were then made on it by *Katoomba* and *Deloraine*."

Deloraine returned to Darwin, and that night *Katoomba* and *Lithgow* patrolled the Clarence Strait where the attack on the first submarine had occurred.

They were still patrolling the following night when a near disaster struck. At 2:00am in the pitch dark they steamed into the path of an allied convoy, not due for another six hours. *Katoomba* realised a collision was unavoidable, and the bow of the replenishment oiler USS *Pecos* slammed into it, wrecking the starboard boiler room and coming to rest embedded in the corvette. Fortunately, there were no casualties, and *Lithgow* towed *Katoomba* to Darwin's floating dock for emergency repairs.

From this grandstand position on 19 February 1942, the crew of the immobile corvette witnessed the overwhelming Japanese aerial attack on the town. A bomb narrowly missed the ship and dock; it was then showered with debris when the merchant vessel *Neptuna* exploded. *Katoomba* came through unscathed and sailed to Brisbane for permanent repairs.

Afterword

Of the contacts attacked that day, only *I-124* was confirmed lost -- sunk with all 80 crew, and the first Japanese warship destroyed by the RAN. The second contact, identified by oil on the surface, was never conclusively confirmed. The submarine was not salvaged and is now a war grave.

Yeoman of Signals Laurence Bowes was demobbed in 1949. He moved from Hobart to Melbourne, where he practised accountancy until his death aged 89 in 2010. This article draws on his unpublished recollections and correspondence. He was an uncle of Brendon Bowes.

Further reading: Dr Tom Lewis, *Darwin's Submarine I-124*. Avonmore Books, 2011.



SAFE HARBOUR:

Mission to Seafarers supporting seafarers in Hobart

BY PRU BONHAM

We rely on seafarers to provide the bulk of the goods that we need and enjoy, but who cares for them whilst they are away from home, carrying out this vital work?

The Hobart Mission to Seafarers Centre is one of over 290 centres around the world, 28 of which are in Australia, that help to support our seafarers. In Tasmania, we have centres in Hobart, Burnie/Port Latta, Devonport and Bell Bay. Mission to Seafarers offers practical, emotional, and spiritual support to 1.9 million male and female seafarers through ship visits, drop-in seafarers' centres and other welfare support services. The Mission is affiliated with the Anglican Church and is open to all seafarers.

What challenges do seafarers face?

Seafarers are often away from home for months at a time, so isolation from family and friends can be a major problem. This was highlighted during COVID where many seafarers were unable to leave their vessels for months and even years at a time, often with significantly reduced pay and living conditions. Seafarers' lives are often at risk in areas where piracy and conflict occur, as seen in recent conflicts in the Middle East.

Shortened port visits and limited access to shore-time can also impact negatively on seafarer wellbeing, reducing opportunities for rest and recreation. In some ports, increasing security and regulation — while necessary — can restrict access for ship visitors, compounding the problem.

How do we help seafarers?

At our Flying Angel Centre on the Hobart waterfront, we provide a safe, comfortable space for seafarers to recharge mentally and emotionally, and our chaplains are on hand to provide listening ears and pastoral care. We also provide support with access to medical and welfare services if required. Seafarers can use our free Wi-Fi, play eight-ball, table tennis and table soccer, and relax in our comfortable TV lounge. We also have a chapel.

We offer hot drinks and biscuits, sell snacks like noodles, chocolate, chips and soft drinks, and have a range of souvenirs at attractive prices. We provide foreign exchange (USD, Euros, GBP, NZD) and EFTPOS is available for purchases.

To help bring some festive cheer, we make up and deliver packages to seafarers on merchant ships in port during the Christmas period. These contain donated items such as a mug, a beanie knitted by volunteers, toiletries, sweets, and games or puzzles. They are consistently well received.

We are very grateful for all our supporters: TasPorts, Impact Fertilisers, many small Tasmanian businesses, our beanie knitters and the Anglican Diocese of Tasmania.



Who comes to our Centre?

We are visited by seafarers from a variety of vessels from all around the world, the majority coming from the Philippines, India, Indonesia, Vietnam, China and Myanmar. The seafaring industry has traditionally been male dominated, but there is an increasing number of women who are now taking on seafaring careers.

The Centre operates year-round, opening on demand when vessels are in port at Risdon, Selfs Point and Macquarie Point. From October to April we also welcome crew on cruise ships visiting Hobart.

In the words of a visiting seafarer: "I like and love this place coz it's so nice. They have the amenities for relaxing. The area is clean and [they] have a big space. The staff were very friendly and nice."

In 2025 we welcomed 537 crew members from 237 ships, including 82 cruise ships, 140 merchant ships and 12 research, training or navy ships.

In addition to our Centre, we operate a 12-seater bus (donated by the International Transport Federation), which enables us to transport seafarers from their vessels to go shopping, visit tourist spots and relax at our Centre.

We are involved in best practice for seafarer welfare.

Australia supports global conventions such as the Maritime Labour Convention (2006), which seek to raise employment standards for seafarers. The Mission fully supports these, and we work closely with government agencies and other port organisations and users to improve the treatment of seafarers in Australian waters.

Where did we come from?

The Bristol Channel Mission began in 1836 and became The Mission to Seafarers in 1856 with its headquarters in London.

In Hobart, the old red brick church in Campbell Street was the home of the first Mission. There was a second site in Hunter Street which was demolished to make way for the Grand Chancellor Hotel. Our current Centre, opened in 1985, is at 31 Morrison Street. Further information on our history may be found in *Centenary 1915–2015: A Brief History of the Hobart Station of Mission to Seafarers*, published by Maritime Museum Tasmania in 2015.

Where are we going?

Seafarers face many challenges in their work, and so we continually reassess how we might care for them in the best way. Given seafarers' limited time ashore, efficient access to support is currently a high priority, along with increased capacity to undertake shipboard visits. We are also seeking ways to attract and retain more volunteers.

How can you help?

We are always looking for volunteers. The most important requirement is that you are a good listener and enjoy helping people. If that sounds like you, please contact us at hobart@mts.org.au and we will get in touch. For more information, see www.mts.org.au/hobart



Birds of a feather: a tale of three unusual vessels

BY REX COX

Looking through some old Hobart port records, I noticed three vessels which called into Hobart between June 1918 and June 1919. The connection was their bird names - *Pelican*, *Albatross* and *Swallow*. Subsequent checking of Lloyd's Register and contemporary newspaper reports revealed that all were quite interesting, and that the circumstances in which the last named visited Hobart were, to say the least, unusual.

Pelican turned out to be a new wooden vessel owned by the Pelican Motorship Company, USA, and carrying case oil for the Vacuum Oil Company. It had already undergone a couple of name changes (Lloyd's Register listing it as ex *May*, ex *Pelican*) since being built at Astoria, Oregon in 1917 as an auxiliary schooner. Arriving at Hobart on 6 April 1919 from San Francisco, *Pelican* discharged 12,000 cases of benzine, 7,500 cases of kerosene and 125 cases of turpentine before departing for Melbourne. One imagines that smoking cigarettes on the wharf was definitely discouraged!

By contrast, *Albatross* was over 40 years old - built at Glasgow by Barclay, Curle & Company in 1875 as an iron-hulled paddle tug of 190 gross tons and owned for many years by James Paterson and Co., Melbourne, where it arrived under sail on 30 July 1876.

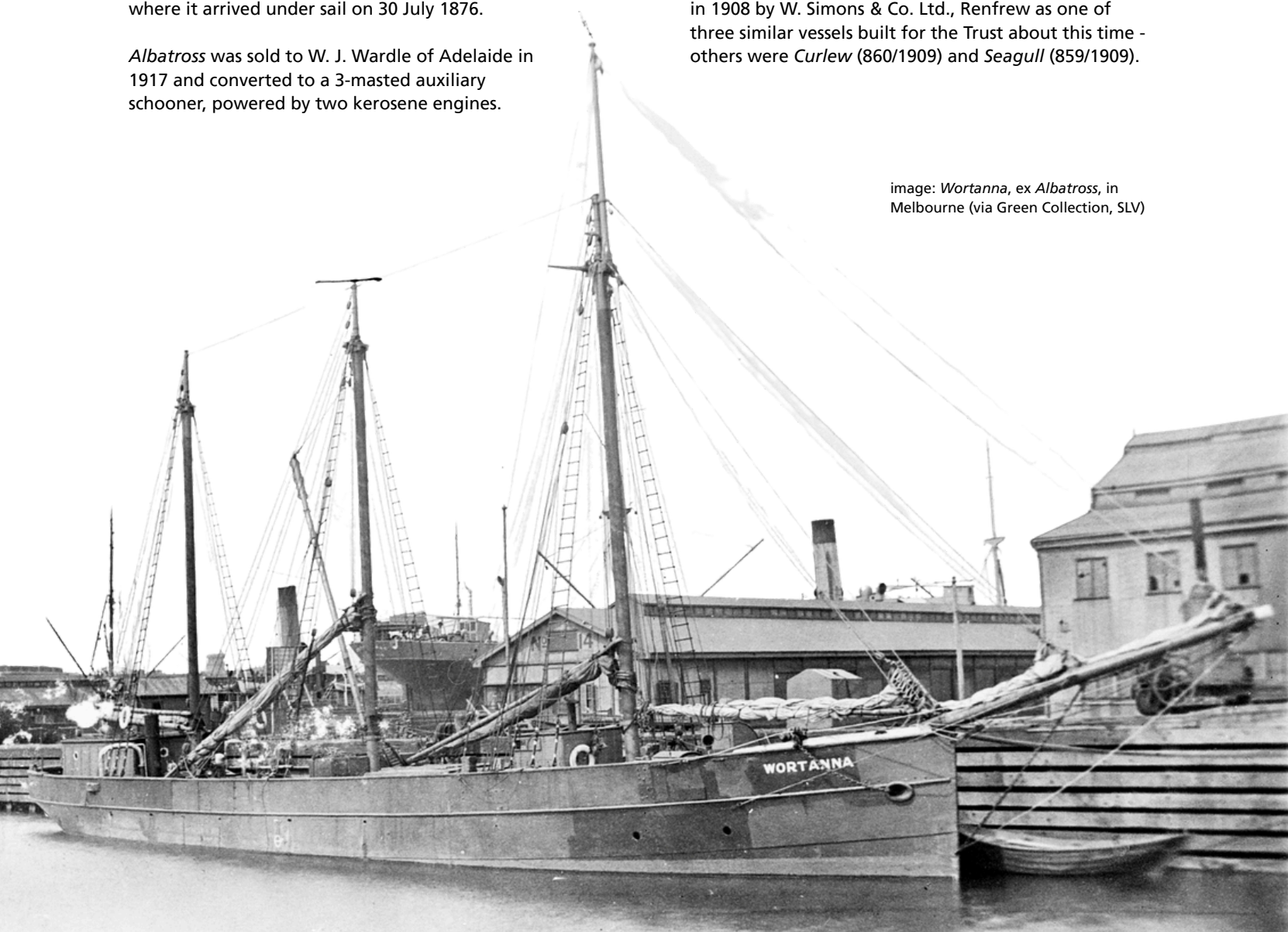
Albatross was sold to W. J. Wardle of Adelaide in 1917 and converted to a 3-masted auxiliary schooner, powered by two kerosene engines.

The first voyage after conversion was from Adelaide to Hobart with general cargo. Forced into Portland on 20 May 1918 by bad weather, *Albatross* eventually arrived in Hobart eight days later. The return trip was via Port Esperance to load timber for Port Pirie, before returning to Hobart two months later with wheat from that port. *Albatross* carried another two cargoes between South Australia and Hobart before being renamed *Wortanna*. As such, it made six more trips to Hobart in 1919 and was purchased in April 1920 by a Hobart syndicate called Commercial Shipping and Trading Company Ltd., with Messrs. Reeves and Evans as managing agents.

This local ownership didn't last very long, as *Wortanna* was sold to Cairns in 1921 and employed in carrying Queensland sugar for many years. It was requisitioned in November 1942 for service with the US Army and fitted with new diesel engines, returning to the sugar trade postwar until it was abandoned and sold in February 1958 to a waterside worker (who paid £5 at auction!). We can only guess about intended use, but the 80-year old veteran was subsequently dismantled.

Swallow proved to be an 859-ton (self-propelled) hopper barge, completed for the Sydney Harbour Trust in 1908 by W. Simons & Co. Ltd., Renfrew as one of three similar vessels built for the Trust about this time - others were *Curlew* (860/1909) and *Seagull* (859/1909).

image: *Wortanna*, ex *Albatross*, in Melbourne (via Green Collection, SLV)



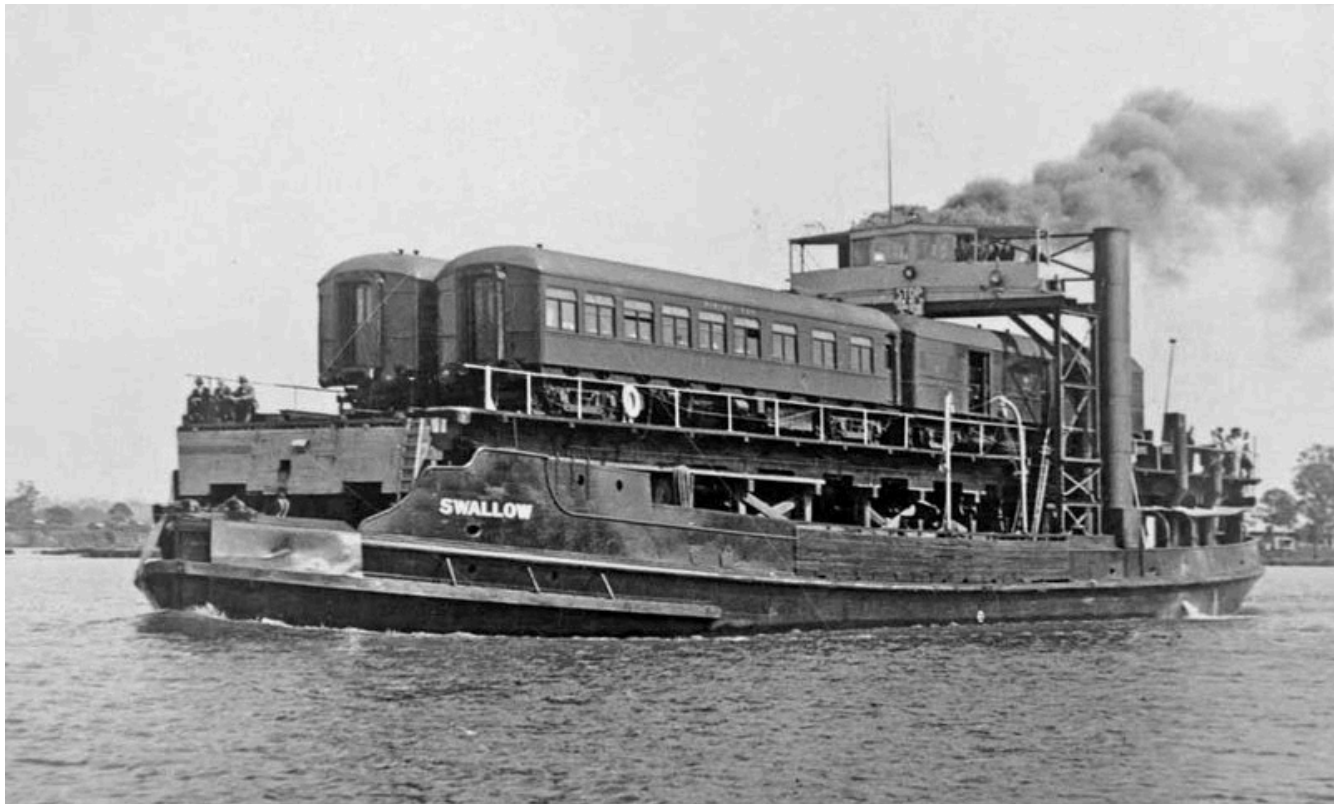


image (above): Swallow as a train ferry (via Rex Cox collection). image (below): Swallow as a dredger, Sydney (Dufty Collection, NLA)



The reason for such a vessel coming to Hobart was a mystery quickly solved by reference to newspapers of the time. Australian coastal shipping was halted in 1919 by a seamen's strike, and some unorthodox vessels were being pressed into service to maintain supplies to Tasmanian ports.

The situation was further complicated by a world-wide influenza epidemic, which meant that troops returning from the Great War had to be quarantined on arrival in Australia. A quarantine station was located at Barnes Bay on Bruny Island, south of Hobart, and troopships bringing Tasmanian soldiers back home were directed there.

As the epidemic worsened, other ships - including those in the coastal trades - also had to go to the Barnes Bay anchorage. Thus, *Swallow* was reported as arriving in the Bay on 11 June 1919 from Brisbane via Sydney with 250 tons of sugar for H. Jones & Co.'s IXL jam factory in Hobart. The sugar was unloaded into local craft, then fruit and general cargo loaded for Brisbane before departure on 18 June. Unfortunately, this was a rough trip which resulted in many cases of apples being washed overboard, while others were damaged by salt water. The Brisbane agent reported that some cases had been placed close to the engine room to prevent them being swept over the side, and the heat had literally baked the contents!

Swallow obviously did a bit of coastal trading about this time as Sydney's *Daily Telegraph* recorded it departing that port for Brisbane on 25 July 1919, and for Newcastle on 8 August. Lloyd's of London reflected this commercial activity with a notation "now carrying cargo" against its entry in the Register from at least the mid-1920s.

Swallow was chartered, along with Patrick's *Induna* (703/1891), by the NSW Government Railways in the 1920s to carry railway carriages across the Clarence River between Grafton and South Grafton, pending completion of a road and rail bridge; three rail tracks were fitted for the purpose. Made redundant by the opening of the bridge on 7 May 1932, it later traded on the coast, to New Zealand, and around the Dutch East Indies. *Swallow* continued to appear in Lloyd's Register under the ownership of the Sydney Harbour Trust until the 1936-37 edition, when owners were shown as R.W. Miller & Co. Ltd. It was absent from the 1938-39 edition. It was scuttled off Sydney Heads on 22 August 1946.

Incidentally, Admiral Jellicoe, who commanded the British Grand Fleet at the Battle of Jutland in 1916, also got caught up in the restrictions imposed by the 'flu epidemic. Jellicoe arrived at Hobart on 16 June 1919 aboard the battlecruiser HMS *New Zealand* (18,800/1912) during an 18-month tour of India and the Dominions to advise on Imperial naval defence.

Health authorities required the battlecruiser to remain at anchor in the Derwent, and even such an illustrious personage as the Admiral was not allowed ashore. He had to forgo the usual civic reception and round of social engagements and content himself with examining the harbour foreshore by naval launch. However, during his brief stay he did lend support to a fundraising effort on behalf of the Hobart Sailors' Home - 17 June 1919 was dubbed 'Jellicoe Day' and the Governor launched the appeal at the Town Hall by reading a letter from Admiral Jellicoe to the citizens of Hobart. HMS *New Zealand* departed via the Channel for an inspection of North West Bay and the Huon River.

The shipping crisis of 1919 also saw two local river steamers venturing into unfamiliar territory, though not for the first or last time. *Maweena* (86/1913) departed on 19 June for Melbourne, returning to Barnes Bay with general cargo and mail. *Cartela* (194/1912) followed on 9 July with 4,000 cases of apples for Melbourne, a trip that took 21 days due to bad weather and the need to replenish coal supplies.



image (above): Admiral Jellicoe (via Wikipedia)
image (middle): *Pelican* at Hobart, April 1919 (Rex Cox collection)
image (bottom): *Curlew* at Margate 6 October 2024



Footnote: Mention of the dredger *Curlew* above reminds me that another vessel of that name is presently located at the Margate Marina, south of Hobart. Built for the Royal Navy as the wooden-hulled minesweeper HMS *Chediston* (366/1952), it was sold to the RAN along with five sisters and renamed HMAS *Curlew* in 1961. Maritime Museum Tasmania Life Member, the late Dugald McDougall, was involved in the delivery voyage of these vessels in his role as a Naval Reserve officer. HMAS *Curlew* visited Hobart on numerous occasions until decommissioning in 1990 and arrival at Triabunna under private ownership ten years later. Then followed a familiar pattern. Various proposals for future use came and went, and the vessel later moved to Port Huon, then to Margate where a marina was gradually built around it – and there it remains, landlocked and awaiting demolition if a safe way can be found to deal with all the asbestos aboard.

Ship spotter

BY REX COX

A recent visit to Sydney reminded me that many ferries and cruise vessels operating on the famous harbour have come from Tasmanian builders Incat and Richardson Devine Marine (RDM). Here are a few examples that I photographed on 20-21 March this year...

Violet McKenzie (110/2014) is one of five 24m low-wash ferries built by RDM for Captain Cook Cruises' sightseeing trips around Sydney Harbour. (Florence Violet McKenzie OBE was the first woman in Australia to graduate in electrical engineering. She became an instructor in Morse code and formed the Women's Emergency Signallers Corps during WWII.)

Ocean Adventurer (220/2018) is Incat No. 92, one of five similar 33m vessels built for Manly Fast Ferries and operated by My Fast Ferry (NRMA) between the ocean suburb and Circular Quay.

Martin Green (90/2025) is one of seven 25m Parramatta River-class vessels ordered from RDM by the NSW Government for operation by Transdev Sydney Ferries. (Martin Andrew Green AM FRS FAA is an Australian engineer and Scientia Professor of Photovoltaic and Renewable Energy Engineering at the University of NSW.)

Pemulwuy (260/2017) is the fourth of six 35m Emerald-class ferries delivered by Incat for Transdev's harbour services. (Pemulwuy was a Bidjigal warrior of the Dharug Nation who led resistance to British colonisation in the Botany Bay area until he was killed and beheaded in June 1802. His skull is still held by a British museum.)



image: *Violet McKenzie* departs Circular Quay, 20 March 2026 (Rex Cox photo).



image: *Martin Green* & *Ocean Adventurer* at Circular Quay, 20 March 2026 (Rex Cox photo).



image: *Pemulwuy* passes the Thai warship *Naresuan* off Bradley's Head, 21 March 2026 (Rex Cox photo).

----- **BOOK REVIEW** -----

Joseph Conrad's Eastern Voyages: Tales of Singapore and an East Borneo River

BY COLIN DENNY

Travelling north on the East Derwent Highway beyond the Bowen Bridge it is easy to miss the turn onto the old road now called Otago Bay Road. The road leads to shipbreaker Henry Dodge's ship's graveyard. Here on the shore of Otago Bay rusty wreckage is all that remains of the barque *Otago*, the ship that links Tasmania to its former master, the great Polish novelist Joseph Conrad.

In *Joseph Conrad's Eastern Voyages* Australian author Ian Burnet melds a biography of Conrad with a narrative of the early trading history of Singapore and Borneo. Burnet uses Conrad's Malayan novels to tell the story. They are often authentic memoirs of Conrad's seagoing life.

In 1857 Conrad was born Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski of Polish parents in Russian occupied Ukraine. Following the death of his parents Conrad escaped to avoid Russian military conscription and joined his uncle in Paris as an undocumented foreign national aged just sixteen. Conrad wanted to go to sea so he went to Marseille where he lived what he called his 'wild years'.

Conrad struggled for four years in the French maritime service unable to progress while stateless. But the British, "needed seamen in large and growing numbers. As long as these could be found conscious and preferably sober, nobody really cared where they came from and what documents they had or didn't have." Consequently, he joined the British Merchant Marine in 1878 as an ordinary seaman.

On arrival in England, Conrad had no knowledge of the English language. It became his fourth language behind Polish, Russian, and French and, as his English improved, he succeeded in passing his examinations for second and first mate. Then, on November 11 1886, the Board of Trade awarded Conrad Korzeniowski his master's certificate just three months after he became a naturalised British subject.



The book tells of Conrad's adventures as a ship's officer until he finally gets his first and only significant command, the barque *Otago*. He joined the barque in Bangkok following the death of the master in 1888. Conrad writes of the command in his novel *The Shadow-Line* published in 1916. (The *Otago* eventually became a coal hulk in Hobart for Huddart Parker before being scrapped).

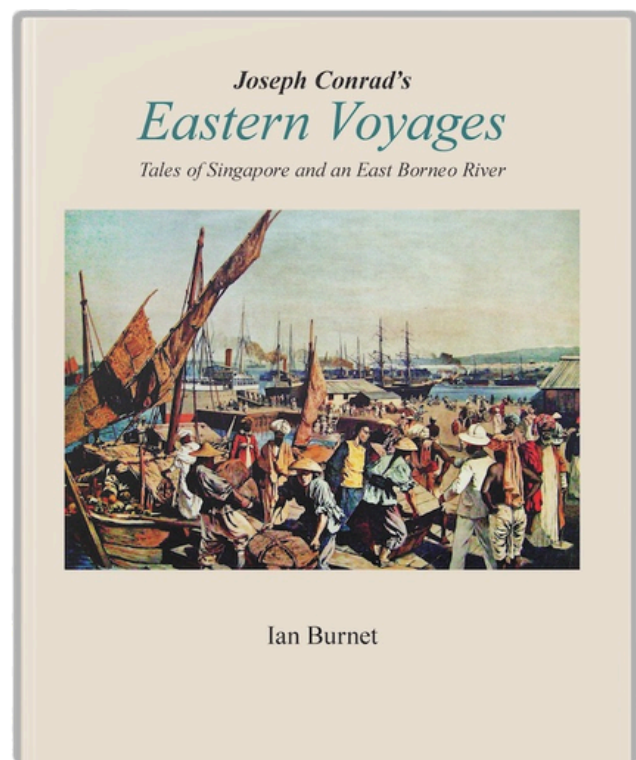
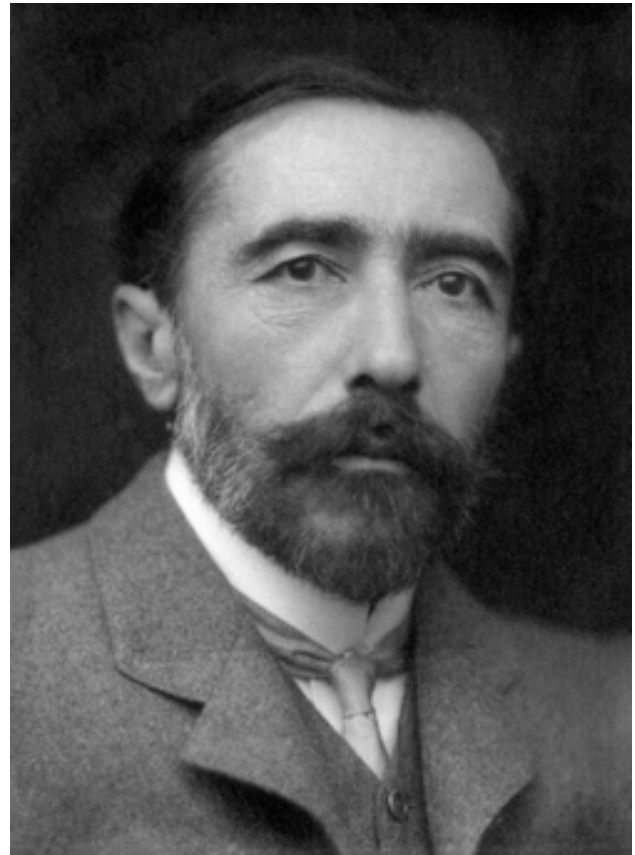
Burnet writes of the English establishment of a trading port in the Singapore River benefitting not only the English but also their Asian counterparts. The Chinese, Arab, Malay and Bugis each set up their settlements and trading specialities. Conrad never used the name Singapore in his novels but it was clearly the 'Eastern port' of *Lord Jim*, *The End of the Tether* and *The Shadow-Line*.

In 1811 the British East India Company seized control of Java from the Dutch. British trade expanded and Stamford Raffles appointed merchant Alexander Hare to set up a post in Maluka, Borneo. Hare became infamous for establishing a harem. When the Dutch returned to the East Indies in 1814 following a treaty with the British they expelled Hare.

Hare moved with his harem to Cocos Island and hired John Clunies Ross to oversee the settlement. Burnet notes that the descendants of intermarriage between the harem and passing sailors, many of them Scottish, are the present-day Cocos-Keeling islanders, who wear Malay dress and perform traditional Scottish reels.

Conrad commanded *Otago* in Asian and Australian waters until his resignation in September 1889 to return to England. He married Jessie George in London in 1893 and the following year he left the sea forever. His first book *Almayer's Folly* received good reviews when published in 1895. It was the beginning of his recognition as a great novelist and master of the English language.

In *Joseph Conrad's Eastern Voyages*, Ian Burnet reveals Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski's life and the history surrounding his Asian voyages. It may encourage readers to re-visit Joseph Conrad's novels. (NOTE: the companionway scuttle to the officers' cuddy of the *Otago* can be seen on display at the Maritime Museum).



Vale John Sargent

Bellerive historian and author John Raymond Sargent, a long-time Maritime Museum member and supporter died on 15 May 2026 aged 82 years.

A sixth-generation Bellerive resident and family man, John said it was important to maintain historic values for future generations so he set up the Moorings Museum at his family home on Victoria Esplanade. Now known as the Eastern Shore Education and Research Centre, it provides a space for visitors to learn about the history of Clarence.

John had a special interest in maritime history and his collection included many photographs and objects relating to crossing the Derwent and vessels that plied the estuary.

He was a prolific author, publishing many books reflecting this interest and showing how the river trade advanced the Eastern Shore settlement.

The Bellerive Primary School was indebted to John for his volunteer work that preserved and presented local history for the school community. His association with the school lasted nearly 80 years from his first attendance as a student.

John Sargent was patron of the Bellerive Historical Society and his legacy will live on in for generations to come. Our condolences go out to his family and friends.



A new wharf and home berth for RSV *Nuyina*

The Australian Antarctic Division's flagship ice breaker RSV *Nuyina*, will soon have a purpose-built berth at Macquarie Wharf in Hobart, securing Australia's gateway to the Antarctic and Southern Ocean.

The Macquarie Wharf Redevelopment is the largest infrastructure project in the Port of Hobart since TasPorts' inception, marking a major milestone in the modernisation of Tasmania's port network.

This multistage project will see Macquarie wharves 4, 5 and 6 redeveloped with the first stage at Macquarie Wharf 6 now underway.

This innovative project, which lies close to the iconic Hobart waterfront, will modernise wharf infrastructure at Macquarie Wharf 6 improving efficiency, safety and sustainability.

The project will see a complete rebuild of Macquarie Wharf 6, providing Australia's flagship Antarctic research vessel, RSV *Nuyina*, with a long-term home supporting Southern Ocean and Antarctic exploration and research for decades to come.

This project reflects Tasmania's enduring maritime spirit - practical, forward-looking and deeply connected to the environment. By combining modern engineering with sustainable design, TasPorts is preparing Hobart's port for the next 50 years of exploration, trade and discovery.

A Tasmanian first for a multi-user berth, shore power will also be introduced, allowing RSV *Nuyina* to sustainably operate on grid power, rather than diesel. Shore power allows docked vessels to "plug into" Tasmania's hydroelectric supplied grids instead of running off the vessel's diesel auxiliary engines while in port. Cables attach the vessel to a shore power connection delivering AC electricity to run systems like lights, heating, cooling, and appliances while reducing emissions.

The redevelopment of Macquarie Wharf 6 will soon enter its next construction phase with the demolition of the existing wharf. Specialised marine equipment will be used to demolish the wharf infrastructure across a four-month period.

TasPorts has engaged design and construction partner Hazell Brady Joint Venture to deliver this complex work which is on track for practical completion in August 2028. Stage two of the redevelopment will see the modernisation of Macquarie wharves 4 and 5, expanding Tasmania's export and cruise capacity. The project will be delivered in stages to maintain Hobart's critical port operations.

Once complete, Macquarie Wharf will stand as a nationally significant maritime asset, supporting Antarctic research, global shipping links and Tasmania's reputation as a leader in sustainable port operations.

The redevelopment of Macquarie Wharf 6 is underpinned by an Australian Government investment of \$188 million supporting Antarctic researchers and expeditioners with modern and reliable port infrastructure.

image: digital render of the redeveloped Macquarie Wharf 6 with RSV *Nuyina* in berth (via TasPorts)



TASSIE'S MARITIME STORIES CROSS OVER THE TASMAN

Our friends at the Australian Wooden Boat Festival have been busy in NZ!

Earlier this month, a 20-foot shipping container packed with boats, stories and Tasmanian craftsmanship made its way to Auckland for the Auckland Wooden Boat Festival, held 14 to 16 March on the Waitematā Harbour. It was a long way to travel, but then, the story inside the container was worth telling.

AWBF sent a proper delegation: staff, volunteers, shipwrights and supporters who made the trip to help present the exhibition, connect with Auckland audiences and spend time with industry peers. The kind of gathering that reminds you how tight-knit the wooden boat world really is, and how much it runs on shared passion rather than formal structure.

At the heart of the exhibition was something that will resonate with anyone who has spent time on the Derwent: the revival of the iconic Derwent Class yachts.

Developed in partnership with the Tasmanian Derwent Class Association, the exhibition told the story of a locally designed one-design racing fleet that has been sailing our river for over a century. These are not museum pieces. They are actively loved, actively sailed, and now actively being restored by some of Tasmania's best boatbuilders.

Those builders featured prominently. The Wooden Boat Centre, Cygnet Wooden Boats, Tasmanian Shipwrights and Co., Jonathan Minnebo Design and Blue Boat Shipwright Services all had a place in the exhibition, alongside the locally sourced timbers used in their construction. Emerging builders Shippies Shipwright Services and A Boat by the River were also represented, a nod to the next generation of Tasmanian craftsmanship that is keeping the tradition alive. Rounding it out were Tasmanian First Nations watercraft, historic piners' punts presented by the Wooden Boat Guild of Tasmania, and the rich, layered story of the west coast timber and hydro industry. A lot to fit in a container.



AUSTRALIAN WOODEN BOAT FESTIVAL

THE SOUTHERN HEMISPHERE'S PREMIER CELEBRATION OF WOODEN BOATS AND MARITIME CULTURE

The Australian Wooden Boat Festival (AWBF) is the southern hemisphere's premier celebration of wooden boats and maritime culture — a four-day, not-for-profit festival that transforms nipaluna/Hobart's historic waterfront into a salt-kissed stage for maritime storytelling. Founded in 1994 by three friends with a shared love of wooden boats, the AWBF has grown from a small gathering into Tasmania's largest free festival.

Every two years, more than 400 wooden vessels — tall ships, classic yachts, river craft, fishing boats and home-built dinghies — gather in the harbour, creating a spectacle found nowhere else in Australia. The AWBF opens with the spectacular Parade of Sail and closes with the regal Admiral's Sail, bookending four days alive with sea shanties echoing along the docks, vintage diving demonstrations, nautical storytelling, hands-on workshops, talks, theatre, film, exhibitions, and a vibrant showcase of local food, drink and makers.

The AWBF is big — 56,000+ visitations, 370+ volunteers, 350+ performers, speakers, exhibitors and vendors, with 100+ activations across more than 37 venues — yet it retains its community vibe, connecting boats and people in a way that's spirited, unpretentious, and fun. The AWBF transforms Hobart into a living, breathing museum of maritime culture. It celebrates both the old and the new, bridging heritage and innovation through a festival that is profoundly human and deeply communal.

Next festival: 5-8 February 2027



TASMANIAN BOATBUILDERS AND TIMBERS

On an island ringed by rivers and deep harbours, boats are a way of life. They have carried people and to celebration for how communities connect and the place they call home.

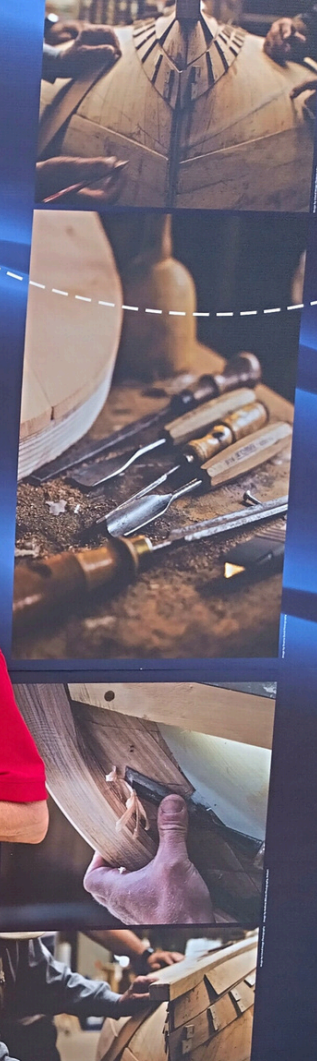
Building boats and timber is a family business. It's a craft that has been passed down through generations. It's a way of life that has shaped the island's identity.

Learned to make boats and timber. It's a craft that has been passed down through generations. It's a way of life that has shaped the island's identity.

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THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS



The Auckland trip was not a one-off. It is part of a deliberate reciprocal exchange between the two festivals. In 2025, the Auckland Wooden Boat Festival brought their own container exhibition to Hobart as part of AWBF's Pacific theme. Now the favour has been returned, and the relationship is becoming something more than a friendly gesture between kindred organisations.

The Auckland Wooden Boat Festival has moved quickly. Founded by Tony Stevenson and Michelle Khan, in partnership with the New Zealand Maritime Museum, it has established itself as a genuine presence in the region, with its second event drawing strong participation and showcasing maritime culture, craftsmanship and community on the Waitemata.



AWBF, now in its 32nd year, brings decades of experience to the friendship. Together, the two biennial festivals, alternating years, form a complementary cycle that sustains wooden boat heritage on both sides of the Tasman while encouraging people to travel between the two cities.

AWBF General Manager Paul Stephanus summed up what is at stake: "These festivals are not just events, they are platforms for knowledge transfer. They connect boatbuilders, materials, skills and stories across generations and across borders. What we are seeing between Hobart and Auckland is a continuation of something much older, the way maritime cultures have always shared knowledge, adapted and evolved. By working together in alternate years, we are creating continuity for that exchange, supporting both the cultural and industry future of wooden boats, while also encouraging people to travel between the two."

The container exhibition will return to Hobart for the next Australian Wooden Boat Festival, 5-8 February 2027. Mark your calendars!



Maritime Times Tasmania AUD\$10.00

