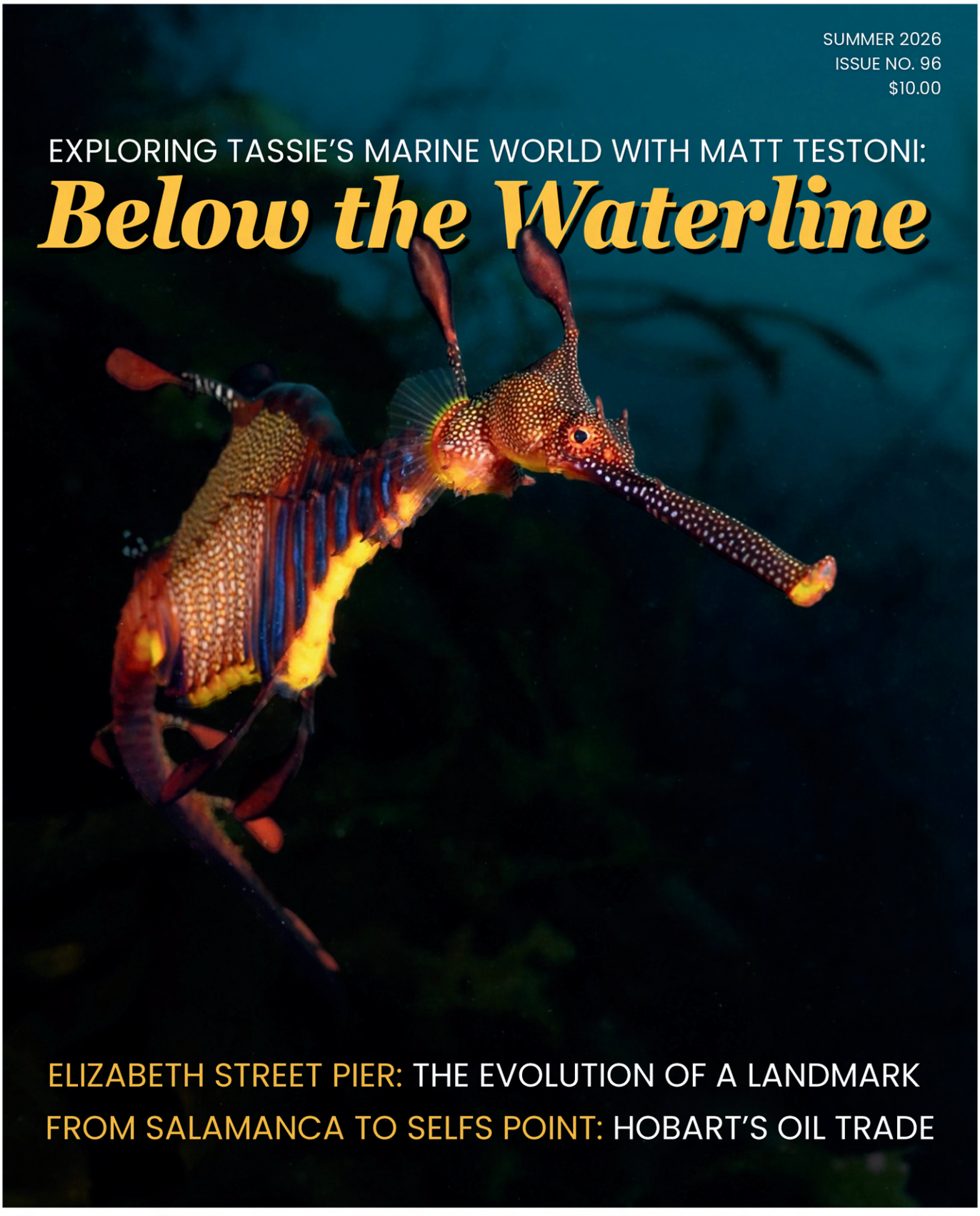
Maritime Times
Tasmania

SUMMER 2026
ISSUE NO. 96
$10.00

EXPLORING TASSIE'S MARINE WORLD WITH MATT TESTONI:

Below the Waterline



ELIZABETH STREET PIER: THE EVOLUTION OF A LANDMARK

FROM SALAMANCA TO SELFS POINT: HOBART'S OIL TRADE

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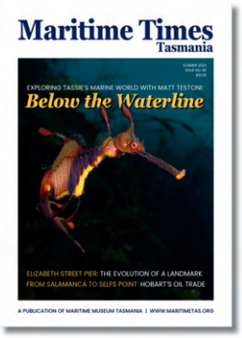
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Maritime Times Tasmania is the quarterly magazine produced by Maritime Museum Tasmania
ISSN 2652-1393 print
ISSN 2652-1342 digital



cover image: photographer Matt Testoni's *Weedy Seadragon*, Bicheno, Tasmania from his exhibition *Below the Waterline.*

Acknowledgements

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

Maritime Museum Tasmania is pleased to acknowledge the support of its Patron, The Governor of Tasmania, Her Excellency the Honourable Caroline Wells.

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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 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

Unexpectedly, I find myself writing another President's column as the Maritime Museum enters its busiest time of the year. Already, the first of the season's cruise ships have arrived in port, bringing visitors from across the globe to the Museum. On these days, the Museum is alive with visitors and, wherever possible, we have additional volunteers on hand to welcome them and assist in our shop. If you would like to help our front-of-house volunteers on these busy days, please contact the Museum. Your support would be greatly appreciated.

Recently opened is our new exhibition, *Below the Waterline*, featuring the stunning underwater photography of Matt Testoni. The exhibition brings together a selection of Matt's work on a large scale, creating an immersive look at the waters surrounding southern Tasmania and the life within them. For many of our interstate and international visitors, the extraordinary colour and diversity of life in our temperate waters will come as a revelation.

February will see the return of the Australian Wooden Boat Festival, the national celebration of our maritime heritage. The theme for this festival is Working Boats, and the Maritime Museum will be supporting the Festival in a number of ways. *Tasmanian Boats at Work*, a selection of images from the Museum's photographic collection depicting Tasmanian working boats, will be presented in a new installation in the Museum laneway. Once again, the Museum will be strongly represented in the Classic Dinghy Display at the City Hall, while we will also have a presence in the Maritime Museum Mashup alongside other Australian maritime museums.

While this summer promises to be an exciting one for the Maritime Museum, recent events in Tasmania have placed museums, and the important role they play in preserving and promoting our state's heritage, at risk. The proposed budget cuts and consequent reductions in staffing and programs at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and other cultural agencies, such as Arts Tasmania, reveal a poorly advised Tasmanian Government. All too often, the profligate expenditure of major agencies, regularly highlighted by the Tasmanian Auditor-General's Office, involves levels of funding far exceeding the savings sought from our cultural institutions.

Beyond poorly advised is the wilful proposal to end the highly successful Roving Curator program operated by Arts Tasmania. This program is the only Tasmanian Government initiative that provides support, albeit at a very modest level, to the hundreds of small, volunteer-run, community-operated museums and heritage sites across the state.

The program has supported small museums from Melaleuca in the south-west to Flinders Island, King Island and Dover. No other state cultural initiative has had such a profound and widespread impact. Over the decades that the program has been running, there has been a dramatic increase in the professionalism of our small museums, reflected in greatly improved collection care, presentation and management.

Although these budget cuts may not immediately affect the Maritime Museum, they will inevitably have an impact, as we work closely with the staff of the institutions, agencies and community museums so unwisely targeted. The Museum's independence is founded on our volunteer-based operation, and we are continually looking for new volunteers to sustain our activities, not only in the Museum itself but also in the operation of Westward and Semaphore Cottage at Battery Point. Volunteers are the essence of the Museum's operations, so if you can help, or know of others who might enjoy making a real difference in our community, please contact us.

The wide range of the Museum's activities is once again reflected in this edition of *Maritime Times*, which also continues to explore and document aspects of Tasmania's maritime heritage. Brendon Bowes looks at how Elizabeth Street Pier has changed over almost a century as an integral part of Hobart's port, while Rex Cox provides an insightful overview of the evolution of petroleum imports to Tasmania, from five-gallon tins in the late nineteenth century to the bulk tankers of today.

This will be Emily Quintin's last edition of *Maritime Times* as editor, a role in which she has overseen the move to digital publication and a much larger readership. The Museum wishes Emily every success in her future endeavours.

On behalf of the Maritime Museum, I would like to thank all our volunteers, members and supporters, and wish everyone a very happy and successful 2027 as the Museum looks forward to another exciting year.

CHRIS TASSELL,
MMT PRESIDENT

Welcome

to the Museum's newest members...

Keith Logan
Matthew Firth
Paul Kerrison
Kim Ellis
Bruce Finlay
Robert Vincent
Peter Smithies
Anthony Mumford
Robin Coffey
Jennifer Ives

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:
maritimetas.org/support/membership

David Neilson's Antarctica leaves a lasting impression

David Neilson's exhibition, *Antarctica is Melting*, has been a wonderful addition to the Maritime Museum's exhibition program, captivating visitors with its striking photography and powerful portrayal of Antarctica's changing landscape.

Through David's images, visitors have been transported to the deep south, gaining an appreciation of its beauty, fragility and the environmental challenges it faces.

The exhibition has attracted considerable interest among visitors, highlighting the important role photography can play in connecting people with places they may never have the opportunity to experience firsthand.

We extend our sincere thanks to David for his generosity, enthusiasm and dedication throughout the exhibition. His willingness to share his knowledge, experiences and passion for Antarctica has made the exhibition particularly special.

We are also grateful to Arts Tasmania for supporting two weekends of free admission during August, helping introduce the exhibition and the Museum to a wider audience.

Thank you, David, for sharing your extraordinary work with us and for making *Antarctica is Melting* such a memorable exhibition.



Reunited after a century: *Svenor*'s bell & figurehead

In September we took delivery of the ship's bell from *Svenor*, generously transferrred by the Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority for its ongoing care.

The bell still carries the vessel's original name, *CORRYVRECHAN.* Built at Port Glasgow in 1885 as a three-masted steel barque, *Corryvrechan* was later sold to Norwegian owners and renamed *Svenor.*

In 1914, while sailing from Fremantle to Newcastle, *Svenor* ran into heavy weather off Tasmania. Its ballast shifted, leaving the vessel badly disabled. The crew cut away the masts, but the ship continued to drift until the crew was eventually rescued by the steamer *Wainui* and taken safely to Strahan.

Attempts to scuttle and burn *Svenor* failed, and the vessel later grounded north of Port Davey at what became known as Wreck Bay.

Two years later, the crew of the motor yacht Rondon recovered the bell from the wreck and took it to Nubeena. It later became part of the Radcliffe Collection at Port Arthur Historic Site.

There's another reason this acquisition is particularly significant for us. The Museum already cares for the head, torso and arm of *Svenor*'s figurehead, also salvaged from the wreck.

More than a century after *Svenor* came ashore on Tasmania's west coast, two surviving pieces of the vessel are now being cared for together at the Maritime Museum.



above: Michael Smith from Port Arthur Historic Site with Maritime Museum president Chris Tassell and the *Corryvrechan* bell



right: the head from the *Svenor*'s figurehead, (MMT collection A_1984-475)

New acquisitions

BY COLIN DENNY

Donations of maritime memorabilia often prompts memories of significant stories of Tasmania's maritime past. Recently, Peter and Roseann Johnstone donated a lifebuoy, barometer and compass from their former yacht *Melaleuca* that took us to the story of the life of a former owner, the self-sufficient tin miner Deny King who lived in the remote south-west near Bathurst Harbour.

Hobart boat builder Bernie Berkshire built the 12.2 metre *Melaleuca* based on a design by the well-known American naval architect John Alden. The yacht was launched from his yard at Prince of Wales Bay in 1943 during World War II. The Bermudan rigged ketch was planked in celery top pine over blue gum frames and built as a cruising and racing yacht.

In 1949 the ketch, then named *Colleen II*, was sold to Deny King who renamed the yacht *Melaleuca*, the name of the Bathurst Harbour inlet where he had settled. He purchased the vessel despite his crayfishing brother-in-law Clyde Clayton suggesting that a fishing boat would be far more suitable for work on the south-west coast.

Nevertheless, *Melaleuca* became the primary means of communication and transport serving King and his family safely in a region frequented by rough sea conditions. King found that the deep keel, heavy displacement vessel was well-suited to the conditions and transported cargoes of tin and stores up until his death in 1991.



above: Barometer ex SY *Melaleuca*.

below: *Eggs at Sea*, Janet Fenton, pastel.





above: *Melaleuca,* 1970s via Geoff Blundell.
right: Life ring ex SY *Melaleuca.*



When other family members were away in Hobart, King lived alone and self-sufficient. He had become something of a Tasmanian legend. On one occasion visiting reporters took the opportunity to travel back to Hobart aboard *Melaleuca*. They described the 23-hour trip and noted, "The yacht also carried a load of tin, mined and bagged (worth around a dollar a pound) and the five family chooks, which produced three fresh eggs on the voyage".

King's daughter Janet Fenton told me that bags of tin were loaded on the cabin sole for delivery to Hobart. In addition, if her father was home alone he had to put his chickens in a coop on deck because they wouldn't survive if left unattended in the south-west. She remarked that on the voyage from Hobart he preferred to leave for Port Davey at night to avoid the strong sea breezes.

Janet recalled her memories of the compass and barometer recently donated to the Museum. She remembers that her father didn't refer to the compass much at all but he did regularly check the barometer to help with weather predictions.

When Peter and Roseann Johnstone bought *Melaleuca* from the King family they undertook a lot of work on the cruising yacht. They enjoyed sailing it for many years before selling to the current owner who keeps *Melaleuca* in Prince of Wales Bay.

The Maritime Museum is fortunate to have been given the three artefacts and documentation that help tell the story of the historic ketch and one former owner. More details can be found on the Australian Register of Historic Vessels, where *Melaleuca* is listed (number HV000643).

A JOURNEY BELOW THE WATERLINE

BY CAMILLE REYNES

Tasmania is an island shaped by the sea, yet for most of us the world beneath the surface remains largely unseen. We know our coastlines, beaches, bays and waterways intimately, but only a relatively small number of people ever have the opportunity to experience what lies below them.

I first came across Matt Testoni's underwater photography when he spoke about the endangered Maugean skate at a Maritime Museum lunchtime talk a few years ago, and his vibrant underwater images caught my attention. They were beautiful, certainly, but what interested me most was the world they revealed: vast kelp forests, extraordinary marine animals, brilliant colour and intricate forms that seemed both familiar and completely alien.

That discovery became the starting point for *Below the Waterline*, which opened at the Maritime Museum of Tasmania at the end of November.

The exhibition brings together photographs taken by Matt in waters around Tasmania, with many of the works drawn from his book *Beneath Tasmania: Life in the island's underwater world.* Like the book, the exhibition takes visitors on a journey through a series of very different marine environments.

We begin close to the surface, among Tasmania's sunlit reefs.

Here, giant kelp rises through the water column, creating complex habitats for fish and countless smaller species. Matt's photographs capture their scale particularly effectively. At times they resemble terrestrial forests, with towering forms extending upwards towards the light.

From these brighter waters, the exhibition gradually draws visitors down deeper.

These reefs are different again, rich with sponges, corals, sea whips and other marine life. Matt's photographs of these environments are densely layered, filled with schools of fish moving above reefs covered with colour and texture.

Then our attention shifts.

Rather than looking across an entire underwater landscape, Matt asks us to notice the small lives within it. His photographs reveal tiny nudibranchs, skeleton shrimp, sea spiders and other creatures occupying what he calls "small worlds".

It is one of the pleasures of Matt's work that scale is constantly changing. A towering kelp forest can be followed by an animal only a few centimetres long. A vast school of fish gives way to the strange details of an individual seahorse, handfish or octopus. The closer we look, the more there seems to be.

From there, *Below the Waterline* moves towards the sandy seafloor...









At first, these environments might appear relatively empty compared with the colour and density of a reef. Matt's photographs demonstrate otherwise. Octopuses, rays, handfish and other animals live within, move across or disguise themselves against these apparently sparse landscapes.

Finally, the exhibition descends into darkness.

This is perhaps where Matt's photography becomes most uncanny. Animals emerge from black water under artificial light, isolated against the darkness surrounding them. Seahorses, squid, basket stars, fish and crustaceans appear almost suspended in space. Some are recognisable. Others look like creatures imagined rather than species living in Tasmanian waters.

Matt describes night diving as presenting a different challenge for the photographer. Without daylight, the diver sees only what the torch illuminates. His images embrace that limitation. Rather than revealing everything, they offer glimpses. This sense of discovery runs throughout Matt's work.

He came to underwater photography through diving, having spent years exploring underwater environments before becoming serious about photographing them. He later worked as a SCUBA instructor and completed a Master's degree in Marine and Antarctic Studies. Science, diving and photography have become closely connected ways of understanding the marine environment.

That background is important because these photographs are not simply about finding spectacular subjects. Matt observes animal behaviour, understands the habitats he is entering and spends considerable time in the water. His work combines personal observation with marine science and photography, encouraging us not only to admire what we see, but to understand something about the animals and environments being photographed.

There is also a strong conservation thread running through his work. Giant kelp forests, seadragons and threatened species such as the red handfish appear alongside discussion of the pressures facing Tasmania's marine ecosystems. Matt also emphasises what he calls "wildlife first", an approach based on respecting the animal and avoiding disturbance in pursuit of a photograph.

For the Maritime Museum, *Below the Waterline* provides an opportunity to broaden the way we think about Tasmania's relationship with the sea. Maritime history is often told from the surface, through ships, ports, industries, navigation and the communities that have depended upon the ocean. Matt's photographs encourage us to look in the other direction.

Below the surface is another Tasmania altogether: colourful, strange, fragile and remarkably diverse.

Below the Waterline invites visitors to descend into that world, beginning in sunlight and gradually travelling towards deeper, darker and less familiar waters.

The exhibition continues at the Maritime Museum of Tasmania until 18 April 2027.

All hands on deck!

Spend a little time at the Maritime Museum and you'll quickly discover that one of its greatest treasures isn't found in a display case. It's the wonderful group of volunteers who bring their knowledge, enthusiasm and generosity to the Museum each week.



Our volunteers are an extraordinary bunch. They come from all walks of life, bringing with them a wealth of experience, an impressive range of skills and, perhaps most importantly, a genuine enjoyment of being part of the Museum community.

Some have spent their working lives at sea or in maritime industries, while others have backgrounds in education, research, administration, trades and countless other fields. Some have a lifelong passion for maritime history; others have discovered that interest through volunteering. What they all share is a willingness to give their time to something they believe is worthwhile.

On any given day, you'll find volunteers welcoming visitors, sharing stories, answering questions, researching historical records, caring for collections or helping with the many projects that keep the Museum busy. Much of this work happens quietly behind the scenes, but its value is felt throughout the organisation.



One of the great pleasures of visiting our Museum is the opportunity to speak with people who know and love the stories they're telling. Our volunteers have a remarkable ability to bring history to life, whether recalling an experience from their own maritime career, explaining the workings of an unfamiliar object or helping a visitor uncover a connection to Tasmania's seafaring past.

Of course, volunteering is about much more than the work. Over the years, the Museum has become a place where friendships are formed, stories are exchanged and people with different backgrounds and interests find common ground. There is plenty of conversation, shared curiosity and good humour, along with the satisfaction of knowing that the time spent here is making a difference.

For many of our volunteers, the Museum has become an important part of their weekly routine, offering opportunities to stay active, learn new things and enjoy the company of others. For the Museum, their contribution is simply invaluable.

We are fortunate to have such a dedicated team, and enormously grateful for the time and energy they give so generously. Their efforts allow us to welcome visitors, care for Tasmania's maritime heritage and share the stories that make our island's history so fascinating - and we'd love to see a few more faces joining them!

As the Museum continues to develop new exhibitions, events and projects, there are always opportunities for more people to become involved. Whether you're recently retired, looking to meet new people, hoping to put your existing skills to good use or simply curious about what goes on behind the scenes at a museum, volunteering could be a wonderful fit.

You don't need any particular maritime knowledge or museum experience. There's a wide variety of work to be done, and we welcome people with different interests, skills and experiences. A friendly manner, a little curiosity and a willingness to get involved are often all that's needed.

Even a few hours of your time can make a real difference, and you might be surprised by just how much you get out of the experience yourself.

To our current volunteers, thank you. Thank you for the warm welcomes, the fascinating conversations, the practical help, the countless hours of research and all the little things you do that might otherwise go unnoticed. Most of all, thank you for making our Maritime Museum such a welcoming, interesting and enjoyable place to be.

If you've ever thought about volunteering, we'd encourage you to come and have a chat. There is always more to discover, plenty to get involved in and a wonderful group of people ready to welcome you.

We'd love to have you on board!









The changing face of Elizabeth Street Pier

BY BRENDON BOWES

Elizabeth Street Pier, the last finger wharf in Sullivans Cove, has served the port for more than 92 years and is a reminder of the busy shipping activity of the past.

Steamers plying the fruit trade moored there, along with every type of ship, from sleek destroyers and submarines to grimy tramp steamers. Made redundant by modern cargo handling, the port's other piers were demolished at the end of their working lives, leaving Elizabeth Street Pier as the sole survivor.

Rebuilt 30 years ago as a tourist development, it has recently begun another chapter.

In 1900, seven piers projected into Sullivans Cove: the first Elizabeth Street Pier (1866), Argyle Street Pier (1875), Dunn Street Pier (1875), Brooke Street Pier (1876), Franklin Pier (1890), Fishmarket Pier (1893) and Kangaroo Pier (1893), which was used by the Kangaroo vehicular ferry. By 1931, they had been joined by Ocean Pier, Murray Street Pier and Queens Pier (formerly Alexandra Pier), while Kings Pier had replaced Dunn Street Pier.

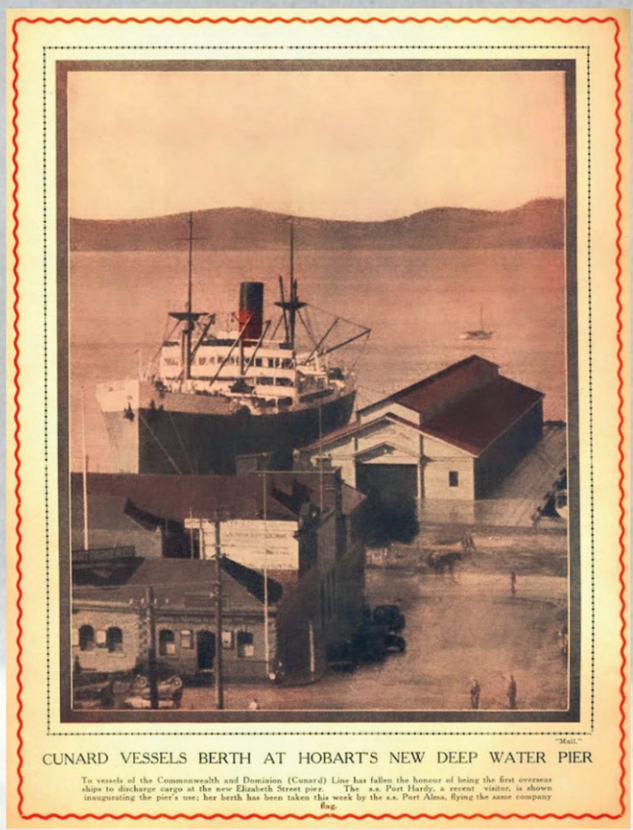
By the 1930s, the wooden Argyle Street Pier and Elizabeth Street Pier had reached the end of their lives. The Marine Board of Hobart decided to demolish both and construct a modern berth capable of serving interstate vessels and smaller overseas ships. It was to be the only wharf and shed in Australia built entirely of reinforced concrete.

The new Elizabeth Street Pier, measuring 152.6 m by 36.6 m, was built between September 1932 and June 1934, with the first pile driven by Warden J G Turner on 31 January 1933. Concrete piles were cast on site or at a reclamation area at Ocean Pier in Hunter Street, then brought to the site by barge.

The total weight of Elizabeth Street Pier and its shed was 15,666 tonnes, comprising 2,200 tonnes of Tasmanian Goliath cement, 1,066 tonnes of Australian-made steel reinforcing and 12,400 tonnes of local stone and sand.

A total of 397 precast concrete piles were used, ranging from 18 m to nearly 33 m. The longest was 32.6 m long, weighed 27 tonnes and was driven 15.8 m into the seabed. The pier's shed, measuring 132.6 m by 19.8 m, consisted of concrete walls, steel trusses and a corrugated asbestos-cement roof.

The new Elizabeth Street Pier, costing £75,000, was opened by Governor Sir Ernest Clark on 26 June 1934. Unfortunately, a large number of piles were cracked due to poor handling. Reinforced concrete sleeves were placed around the damaged portions of 206 piles, with the £5,470 repair cost shared by the Board and the contractors.



CUNARD VESSELS BERTH AT HOBART'S NEW DEEP WATER PIER

To vessels of the Commonwealth and Dominion (Cunard) Line has fallen the honour of being the first overseas ships to discharge cargo at the new Elizabeth Street pier. The s.s. Port Hardy, a recent visitor, is shown inaugurating the pier's use; her berth has been taken this week by the s.s. Port Alma, flying the same company flag.



image (top): *Port Hardy* at Elizabeth Street Pier, August 1934, via Libraries Tasmania
image (bottom): Frank Hammond's lorry load of Cadbury chocolate bound for Elizabeth Street Pier shed, circa 1957, via Libraries Tasmania



image: Elizabeth Street Pier rebuilding, 1997,
photo via Brendon Bowes

The shed was brilliantly lit by globes with a combined power of 34,150 candles. Its 2,600 m² of floor space made it ideal for exhibitions, including an HEC electrical and radio show in 1938.

An unusual visitor was the French Antarctic vessel Commandant Charcot, which called in 1949 on its way back from Antarctica. A Stinson floatplane was promptly hoisted onto Elizabeth Street Pier for essential maintenance. There were also 37 dogs aboard the vessel, including nine pups born during the voyage or while in Hobart.

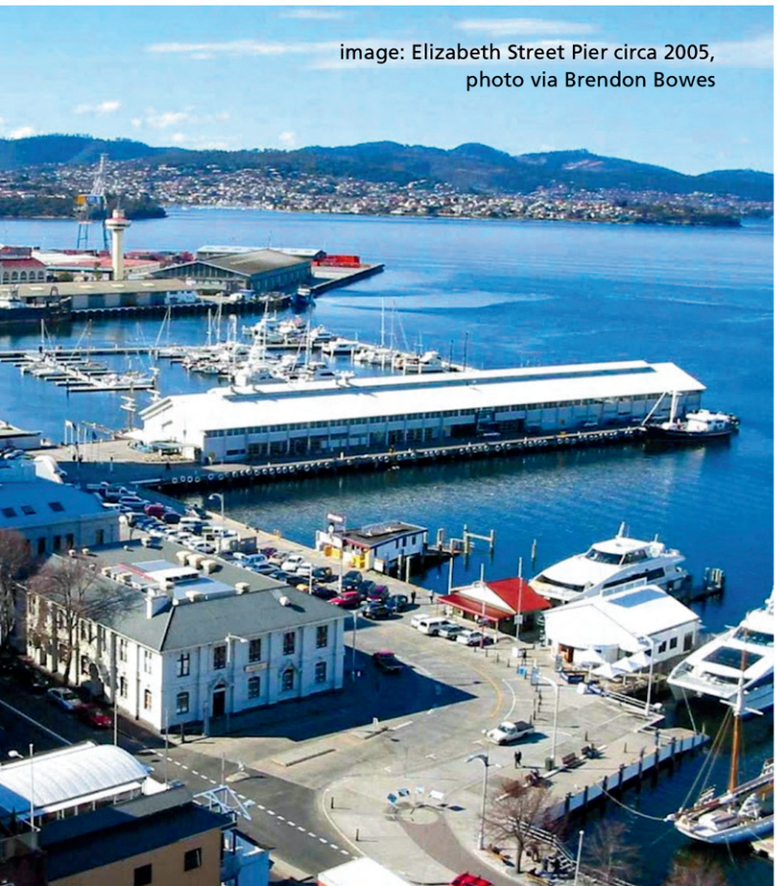


image: Elizabeth Street Pier circa 2005,
photo via Brendon Bowes

In 1958, plans were made to extend the southern side of Elizabeth Street Pier to increase shed space, but these were later cancelled. Following the 1975 Tasman Bridge disaster, Hobartians turned to ferries and Elizabeth Street Pier became a commuter terminal. Four pontoons were moored around the pier, with Bellerive ferries berthing to the south and Lindisfarne ferries to the north.

For decades, larger competitors in the Sydney to Hobart and Melbourne to Hobart yacht races moored at Elizabeth Street Pier, while stalls in the shed sold souvenirs. In 1988 and again in 1994, the Board sought expressions of interest in developing the pier, which by then was obsolete.

In 1997, a major reconstruction for commercial use involved removing the shed while retaining the distinctive end walls, some columns and side panels, and creating a new structure sympathetic to the original industrial style. It comprised 56 serviced apartments on the upper level, restaurants and a function centre on the lower level, with Kings Pier Marina to the north. Popular restaurants included Fish Frenzy, Billy's Burgers and T42, while Somerset Apartments provided accommodation.

Proposed changes in 2023 included a net increase of 42 rooms. Part of the existing function centre would be converted into 17 ground-floor hotel rooms, while a new third level within the existing structure would accommodate another 27 rooms. The number of rooms on the second level would be reduced from 56 to 54 to provide access to the new upper level, bringing the total number of rooms to 98. The plans also included a new restaurant and upgrades to the exterior facade and ground-level areas.

Redevelopment work began in 2025, with Citadines Elizabeth Street Pier Hobart opening in August 2026. The property now has 98 rooms and operates as Citadines' flagship Australian property. Each room offers harbour views and a private balcony or outdoor terrace.

Picking flowers to save the red handfish

BY JEMINA STUART-SMITH, LIZ ANDREWS, BETH STRAIN, MADDIE TRESSELT & ANDREW TROTTER



In the shallow waters of Frederick Henry Bay lives one of the world's rarest and most endangered marine fish.

The Critically Endangered red handfish (Thymichthys politus) is now found in only one small area of the bay. The species grows to around 6-8 cm, can vary in colour from shades of red to beige, and has distinctive features including modified fins that look like human hands and a fluffy lure on its head, characteristic of the anglerfish family.

Red handfish live for 8-10 years, spawn once a year and display a high level of maternal care. Females guard their eggs, which are attached to a seagrass or seaweed stem, for several weeks until they hatch. The species is on the brink of extinction, with key threats including its small population size, limited distribution, and habitat loss and degradation, particularly the loss of seagrass meadows.

The Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) at the University of Tasmania has been working to recover the red handfish for several years. We've focused on two core areas: restoring habitat and increasing the number of individuals in the wild. We have a purpose-built Handfish Conservation Facility at IMAS Taroona for captive breeding, and a smaller facility with our partners at Seahorse World, with both focused on breeding handfish for release into the wild.

Of course, it's more complicated than that. We're constantly feeding growing fish, cleaning tanks, undertaking routine maintenance and monitoring fish health daily. We're also concerned with maintaining genetic diversity in both captive and wild populations. Recently, we collected additional fish from the wild to increase the gene pool of our captive population, giving future generations a better chance of survival.

We're constantly redefining the bounds of what we thought we'd be doing. A few years ago, we wouldn't have imagined we'd be running a seagrass nursery to restore seagrass meadows for the red handfish. But conservation rarely goes where you expect it to.

Recently, we designed and built our first seagrass nursery at IMAS Taroona, alongside the captive red handfish population. The nursery gives us the capacity to test and refine methods for producing seagrass seeds and plants, providing essential groundwork for restoring the habitat these fish depend on. It also allows us to investigate how best to germinate seeds and grow plants at the scale required for future restoration efforts.

But the first step in the process involves picking seagrass flowers so we can harvest their seeds. The flowers are not what you might expect: there are no bright petals, sweet scents or obvious blooms. Much like the handfish, they're somewhat understated and difficult to find.

Flower picking is a slow and methodical process that involves wading or snorkelling in shallow water at low tide. Crouching within the seagrass meadow, you gently look and feel your way through the seagrass blades, searching for the spathe, the pod-like modified leaf structure that encases the flowers and seeds of the seagrass plant. The flowers release pollen and, once pollinated, the seeds ripen and eventually drop to the seafloor.

The trick is timing. Seeds ripen and drop quickly, so we need to collect the flowers before that happens. The trouble is, we don't know exactly when that will be, and the timing seems to change each year depending on environmental conditions.

When the time is right, we gather bouquets of flowers from across a meadow, being careful to spread the effort so we don't take too much from any one spot. The flowers are brought to the nursery and stored in seawater while we wait for the seeds to mature and drop. Once released, the black seeds, about the size of a sesame seed, are gathered and stored until they're ready for outplanting. We're still figuring out how best to store the seeds and which outplanting methods work best for restoring seagrass meadows, but we're making progress.

None of this happens in isolation, and community is at the heart of the red handfish conservation effort. Our plan from here is to refine and optimise seagrass outplanting methods and look for opportunities to work more closely with the community. Picking flowers for handfish just might be one way to do that.

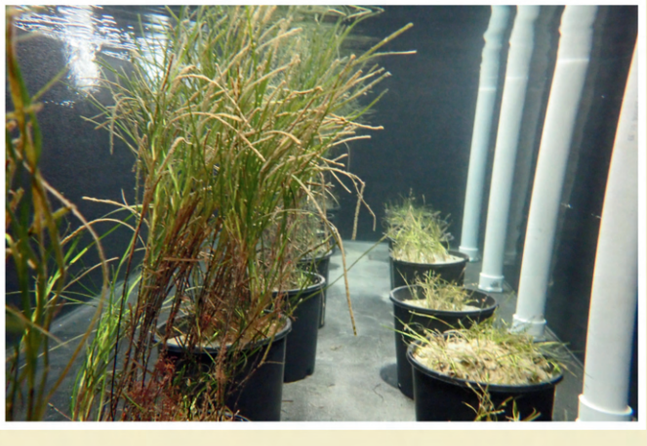
We're fortunate to have strong connections within the Southern Beaches community, including groups committed to recovering and protecting their local marine environment. These include Friends of the Red Handfish, Friends of the Bays, Protect Our Water Ways, Sorell Council and the Sea Rescue team at Dodges Ferry.

We'll be attending the inaugural Handfish Festival on 5 December at Okines House, Dodges Ferry, from 2-6 pm, with the Friends of Seagrass team leading a seagrass flower collection demonstration. The event has been organised by a dedicated group of locals from Protect Our Water Ways and reflects the community's commitment to saving the red handfish from extinction.

This work is supported by the Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species, the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and the Handfish Conservation Project.







THE GOOD OIL:

a brief history of the oil tanker and its contribution to our modern lifestyle

BY REX COX



image: *China,* the first tanker to discharge at Devonport, via Rex Cox collection

Maritime trade has again been disrupted by conflict during 2026, with fuel supply becoming a concern for many countries. While Australia has generally fared well due to strong government action at both federal and state levels, this situation highlights the important role played by oil tankers in bringing vital supplies into our ports. It has also prompted me to look at how they developed as a distinct ship type and at the role they have played in the history of Tasmanian ports, particularly Hobart.

Petroleum, derived from the Greek *petra* (rock) and Latin *oleum* (oil), was known in ancient times, but it was the development of a reliable refining process in the 1840s that led to the industry we know today. Canadian geologist Abraham Gesner discovered that crude oil could be distilled into kerosene for lighting lamps, providing a brighter and cleaner flame than whale oil (and thus contributing to the decline of Tasmania's whaling industry). Other derivatives developed over time included benzine (petrol/motor spirit), aviation fuels, diesel, lubricating oils, petrochemicals and bitumen.

Product was initially shipped along traditional lines, in wooden barrels stowed in the cargo holds of sailing ships and early steamers. Leakage and the danger of fires and explosions led to the adoption of metal drums packed in wooden crates, known as 'case oil', and to the development of bulk handling, with oil pumped into and out of large tanks well separated from the vessel's machinery spaces, which were placed aft. The prototype of the modern oil tanker was *Glückauf* (2,307/1886), specially designed and built on the Tyne for German owners.

Though wrecked in 1893, its success prompted the building of similar vessels capable of operating worldwide, carrying crude oil from the point of production to the refinery and distributing the refined products. Further improvements included the introduction of the Isherwood system of longitudinal framing in 1908 for hull strengthening, and the subdivision of the cargo space into numerous tanks for the carriage of different grades of cargo.

Case oil (refined oil in five-gallon/23-litre drums or tins, generally packed two to a wooden case and handled by the ship's gear) was imported into Hobart from the late 19th or early 20th century. It was certainly one of the cargoes carried by the French Bounty vessels that began calling in 1901. Though they generally only came in for orders and provisions and didn't unload anything here, *Bougainville* (2,248/1902) is recorded as delivering a part cargo of case oil in March 1903. As demand grew, transhipment via Melbourne was replaced by direct importations from North America. The British cargo vessel *Valdura* (5,507/1910) brought the first large cargo from New York, berthing at Prince's Wharf on 10 August 1912 to unload 40,000 cases, which were then moved into the Vacuum Oil Company's new store in Salamanca Place. Requirements for Tasmania's West Coast were also handled in Hobart during the 1920s, and case oil became a major component of cargoes from the United States between the wars. *Port Campbell* (8,308/1922) landed the last consignment as late as April 1950.

Two well-known shipwrecks in Tasmanian waters have involved case oil cargoes. Shell Company's *Nord* (1,892/1900) was carrying 12,000 cases of benzine from Melbourne to Hobart when it was holed while passing between the Hippolytes on 7 November 1915 and sank the next day in Munroe Bight. The barquentine *Southern Cross* (291/1891) sailed from Melbourne for Hobart on 12 September 1920 with a general cargo and 1,000 cases of benzine on deck. It failed to arrive, and wreckage found around King Island showed signs of a fire and explosion.

Handling case oil was time-consuming, labour-intensive and potentially dangerous, as illustrated by the American auxiliary schooner *Pelican* (1,745/1918), which arrived at Hobart from San Francisco on 6 April 1919 and took 10 days to land 12,000 cases of benzine, plus 7,500 of kerosene and 125 of turpentine, for Vacuum. One imagines that the importer would have been looking at the benefits of bulk handling into large storage tanks, but it was to be a few years before this facility became available.

Meanwhile, Hobart had seen its first 'modern' oil tanker nearly five years earlier. Shell's *Murex* (3,564/1892) was in port from 7 to 10 October 1914 and again from 18 to 24 October, a lack of press coverage implying a connection with troop transports and warships using the port around that time. Indeed, *Murex* was torpedoed and sunk on 21 December 1916 while serving as the Royal Navy oiler No. 111.

Bulk imports increased rapidly during the 1920s and storage facilities were built on Hobart's Macquarie Point, with a pipeline connection to the discharge point at Ocean Pier. Berthing on 9 November 1927, the Shell tanker *Saxicava* (5,693/1922) brought the first bulk cargo to Hobart, from Singapore and Balikpapan.

Vacuum Oil opened a new depot adjacent to the Regatta Ground on 24 February 1930, and a report in *The Mercury* featured photos of one of the company's trucks, to be used for distributing its products around southern Tasmania, and a railway tank wagon designed to transport them further afield to Launceston and the North-West Coast.

The Advocate of 17 February 1931 publicised concerns in Devonport about the impact of the Inflammable Liquids Act 1929 on small vessels bringing benzine, kerosene, etc. to north-west ports. The Act imposed fees on such vessels, raising the price to the consumer, and the Mersey Marine Board considered that it was killing off the trade in favour of bulk supply. Perhaps, then, it was no coincidence that Devonport was the next Tasmanian port to have an oil terminal. The Texas Co. (Texaco/Caltex) built storage tanks at South Devonport in 1940, with an underground pipeline to the wharves further downriver. The first shipment of petrol and kerosene arrived on 28 October 1940 aboard the German-built *China* (10,781/1938), owned by Balboa Transport Corp., Panama (a Texaco subsidiary). By 1951, tankers were calling on a monthly basis and there was talk of building a new berth at East Devonport.

However, Shell opened another western shore depot on 2 February 1954, *Sofie Maersk* (10,643/1953) having discharged into the new tanks on 26 January. Devonport nowadays receives shipments on a regular basis at No. 4 Berth West. Managed by Viva Energy, they generally come via Hobart in order to reduce the ship's draught for entry into the Mersey.

The Vacuum Oil Co. proposed installing storage tanks at Bell Bay in May 1949, with a berth to be constructed by the Launceston Marine Board. This proved a somewhat lengthy process, with the first cargo being delivered by the Norwegian tanker *Ternoy* (8,218/1950) on 29 August 1952. The present facility at Berth 4, adjacent to the Bell Bay Power Station, dates from the 1960s and receives regular calls from tankers on a Hobart–Bell Bay–Burnie schedule managed by United Petroleum.

image: S.S. *Murex,* showing the arrangement of its oil tanks, machinery spaces & coal bunkers. via Royal Dutch/Shell Group.

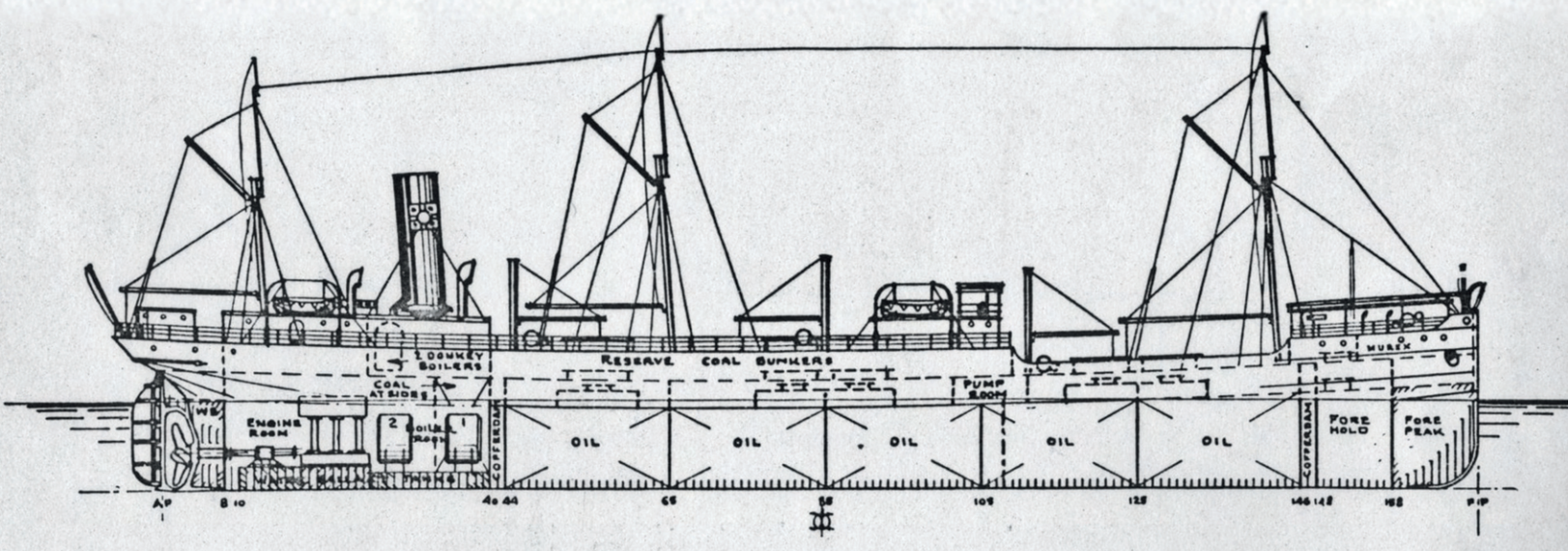




image: *Charles F. Meyer* at the new Macquarie Point oil berth, 23-24 October 1939 (Beattie/R Cox Collection)

As for Burnie, Shell publicised plans for storage tanks and a wharf pipeline as early as September 1927, but tankers didn't begin calling until 1965, following completion of a berth on the new breakwater. They now use Berths 4 or 5 in the main port area.

Multinational oil companies built large fleets of tankers after World War One, and also chartered many more from private shipowners, initially British, but from about 1925 Scandinavian companies were prominent in the charter market and shipyards in Norway, Sweden and Denmark began turning out fairly standard motor vessels of around 10,000 gross tons.

Hobart certainly saw its fair share of them, the very first being the Danish *Jane Maersk* (7,691/1928) from Balikpapan on 2 December 1929, with bulk and cased motor spirit for Shell. Intermittent calls by similar tankers occurred over the next couple of years, that of the Swedish tanker *Laurel* (9,716/1930) being typical.

It arrived direct from San Francisco on 27 May 1931, with motor spirit for Vacuum, and went from here to Melbourne and Dunedin. Such vessels became a familiar sight from the 1930s to the 1960s.



image: *Ranella* at Selfs Point, Hobart, 1-2 January 1964, via N Brown

An unusual double arrival in Hobart occurred on 23 October 1939. Shell's *Simnia* (6,197/1936) berthed at Ocean Pier and Standard Oil's *Charles F. Meyer* (10,516/1938) at the new Macquarie Point Oil Wharf, situated in close proximity to the storage tanks. This now became the principal tanker berth, though Ocean Pier continued in use throughout the war years.

More than 500 turbo-electric-powered tankers of the T2 design were built in American yards during 1942–45 as part of the wartime emergency shipbuilding program, initially to provide the US Navy with fast fleet oilers. A number called at Hobart during hostilities and *Forbes Road* (10,427/1944) has a dubious claim to fame. While departing on 15 December 1944, it was a potential victim of the German submarine *U 862* (1,616/1943), then patrolling around the south of Tasmania. The presence of an aircraft in the area forced the German commander to submerge his vessel to escape detection, and the tanker sailed on, its crew blissfully unaware of their escape. Many T2s were sold to commercial interests after the war and often visited Tasmanian ports until the early 1960s.

For safety reasons, the oil tanks in Hobart were gradually shifted further upriver to Selfs Point post-war, and a new T-shaped jetty was completed there in 1953. Modified several times since, it now handles coastal tankers and gas carriers and provides bunkering facilities for a variety of vessels. Macquarie Wharf No. 2, opened in 1958, had an oil pipeline connection to the nearby gas works, which was used periodically until they closed in the mid-1970s. The EZ works also had their own bulk storage at that time, so tankers would sometimes be seen at the Risdon wharf.

The 1950s saw development of the 'supertanker' for operation on the world's principal supply routes. *Tina Onassis* (27,853/1953) was one of the first and the type grew rapidly over the next couple of decades, reaching its apex with ships like *Batillus* (275,550/1976). These huge vessels introduced new terms to the industry, VLCC (Very Large Crude Carrier) and ULCC (Ultra Large Crude Carrier), which are still used today, though economics have dictated a return to slightly more modest dimensions.

Development of domestic refineries after World War II (most of which are now closed), combined with a total lack of Australian tankers, meant that our motor spirit, aviation gasoline, heating oil and the like were carried around the coast by British and foreign vessels. This situation was well illustrated by the presence in Hobart of three tankers on 12–13 October 1963. Shell's *Aulica* (12,321/1960) discharged at Macquarie Point, the Swedish *Camilla* (11,261/1953) at Selfs, and the Norwegian *Ranella* (9,864/1950) at both Risdon and Macquarie No. 2.

This scene changed dramatically the following year with the introduction of Australian-flag tankers by Sydney owner R.W. Miller (whose company had traditionally been involved with coal). The major oil companies quickly followed suit, and few overseas tankers were seen here over the next 30 years.

There was a precedent. *Phasianella* (866/1929), registered in Melbourne to Shell Co. of Australia Ltd., operated from Port Adelaide to South Australian outports, Victoria and Tasmania with case and bulk oils for about five years in the 1930s. It called monthly at Hobart from June 1930 to May 1931 and was reported as arriving in Launceston on 27 October 1930, having come upriver to Kings Wharf for publicity purposes. *Phasianella* left the coastal trade in 1935.

Recently, the wheel has turned full circle and there are now no Australian-registered tankers, with all our oil shipments, coastal and overseas, being carried by vessels flying other flags. Tasmanian ports are served by medium-sized carriers, with *Grand Winner 2* (29,707/2021, POS Maritime SA, Panama) a typical example.



image: *Haminea* discharging at Macquarie 2 for the Hobart Gas Works, 20 July 1959, via A Botten

below: *Grand Winner 2* arriving in Hobart. 18 July 2026 (R Cox)



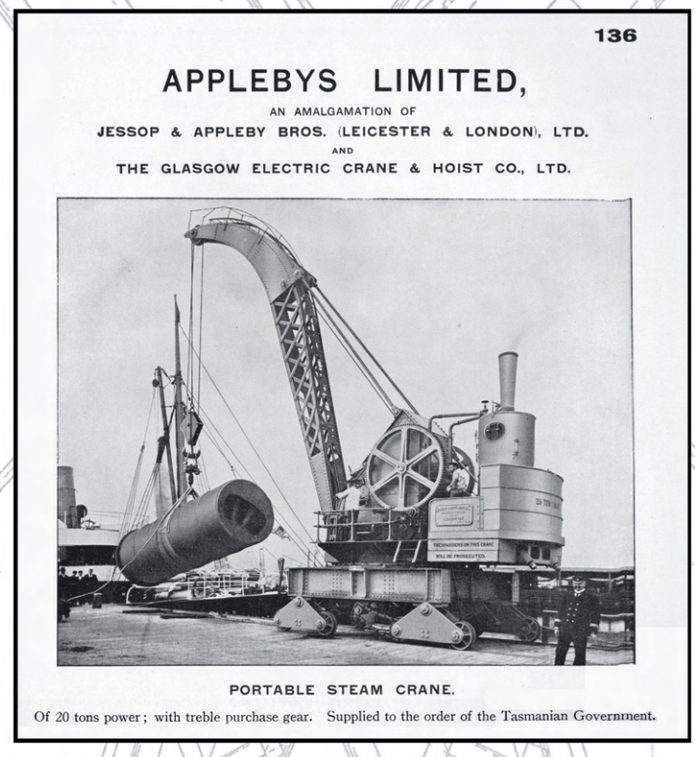
The Crane That Built a Port:
Recreating Hobart's Jessop & Appleby Steam Crane

BY DR TONY SPRENT AM

Standing beside the entrance to Constitution Dock is one of the distinctive survivors of Hobart's working waterfront: the travelling steam crane built by Jessop & Appleby Brothers of Leicester, England. For many people passing it today, it is simply a familiar part of the waterfront landscape. Look more closely, however, and it becomes an impressive piece of late-Victorian engineering. Crane historian Bruce Ward described it as unique, with no other example of its type known to have been preserved elsewhere.

By the late 19th century, the Marine Board of Hobart needed a crane capable of unloading increasingly heavy machinery from ships. In December 1897, it placed an order with Jessop & Appleby for a 25-ton travelling steam crane. Built in 1898, the crane arrived in Hobart in 1899 and was erected and working by January 1900.

It was a substantial machine. Weighing about 85 tons, the crane could lift 25 tons at a radius of 30 feet, or just over 9 metres, slew through a full circle and travel along rails laid on the wharf. Steam from its boiler powered a twin-cylinder, double-acting engine. A complex arrangement of shafts, gears, chains, drums and clutches provided the motions required for lifting, slewing and travelling.



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For decades, the crane was part of the machinery of Hobart's busy port. It initially operated at Dunn Street Pier, which had to be strengthened to carry its considerable weight. When Dunn Street Pier was replaced by Kings Pier in 1910, the crane was able to travel along the new pier, handling loads that could not readily be managed by other cargo-handling equipment. It was used extensively for loading apples for export, as well as lifting boilers, engines and other heavy machinery.

The crane remained useful well into the 20th century. In June 1947 it was used to remove a 21-tonne boiler from the ferry *Cartela*. In July 1969, it was called upon to assist the cargo vessel *Warwickshire* when the ship experienced problems with its own lifting gear. The crane ceased operating shortly afterwards.

The crane itself later came close to being lost. Accounts of its preservation credit ABC journalist Judy Tierney with taking up the cause when it was threatened with scrapping. A public petition called for the crane to be saved and the campaign succeeded. Without the efforts of those who argued for its preservation, this important piece of Hobart's industrial and maritime heritage might have disappeared.

Today the crane no longer travels the wharves, but its survival provides something photographs and drawings cannot: the opportunity to stand beside a complete Victorian machine and examine how its designers solved complex mechanical problems more than 125 years ago.

Building the model

My interest in the crane eventually led to the rather rash decision to reproduce it as a working model. The model is built at a scale of 1:12.7, or 2 mm to 1 inch, making it large enough for individual mechanical components to be reproduced in considerable detail.

Original drawings and measurements from the surviving crane provided the basis for the project. Thanks to TasPorts, I was given permission to access the working level of the crane and take extensive photographs.

For a working steam model, the boiler has to comply with strict specifications. While searching for a suitable design, I came across the work of Julius de Waal, a New Zealand model-engineering designer. I contacted him to ask whether one of his boiler designs might be suitable and sent him copies of the original crane plans and photographs.

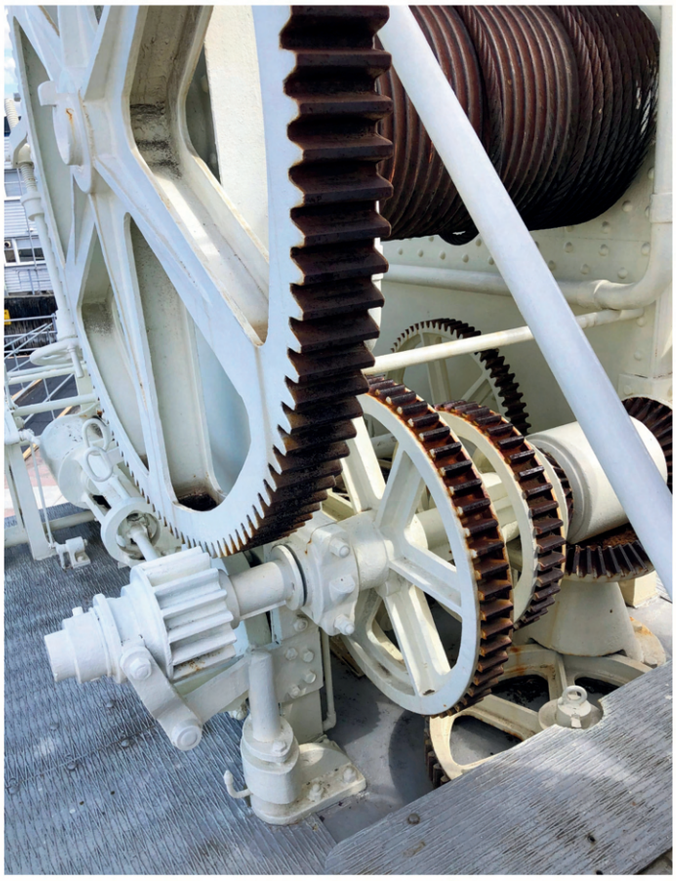
Not only did Julius design a suitable boiler, he also produced a detailed set of scale drawings for the crane's individual components. Those drawings made construction of the model possible. Members of the Hobart Miniature Steam Locomotive Society also provided considerable assistance and expertise in building the boiler to the required specifications.

From the beginning, my intention was not simply to make something that looked like the crane. Wherever practicable, I wanted to reproduce the way the original machine actually worked. This made the project considerably more complicated. Every component had to be considered individually, including the gears, shafts, bearings, drums, chains and operating mechanisms.

The components were made principally from brass, steel and aluminium using conventional engineering workshop techniques. Many parts that could easily have been represented by simplified shapes were instead individually machined.

The surviving crane itself proved invaluable. Drawings can tell only part of the story, and on numerous occasions I returned to the original to measure a component, photograph an obscure detail or work out exactly how one part interacted with another.

Construction of the model occupied roughly five years and more than 3,000 hours of workshop time. Inevitably, there were occasions when a component made after several hours' work proved unsatisfactory and went into the scrap box. There were also many small mysteries to solve. With machinery of this age, it is not always immediately obvious why something was designed in a particular way. Usually, closer examination reveals a very practical reason.







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The completed model includes a section of wharf so that the crane can be seen in something approaching its original working environment. Details of the waterfront setting help explain that this was not an isolated machine, but part of a much larger system for moving cargo between ships, wharves and Hobart.

For me, building the model has provided an unusually intimate way of understanding the original crane. Making a component forces you to understand not merely its shape, but its purpose, how it was assembled and how it moved.

The Jessop & Appleby crane is much more than a familiar survivor on Hobart's waterfront. It represents the engineering that helped the port function during an important period of Tasmania's maritime history. The original has survived for more than 125 years. I hope the model will help tell its story, and perhaps encourage people who have walked past the crane many times to stop, look more closely and appreciate the engineering behind it.

Dr Tony Sprent's scale model of the Jessop & Appleby crane is now on display in the Maritime Museum's ground floor gallery as part of the new *Hobart: Port City* exhibition.

Ship spotter

BY REX COX

Perfect weather brought out the crowds on 31 July to watch Incat 096/*China Zorilla* being loaded aboard the semi-submersible *Black Marlin* (37,938/1999) for its delivery voyage to South America.

There were traffic jams along Tranmere Road and any enterprising coffee van operator could have made a small fortune! I avoided the chaos by going further up the hill to Oceana Drive, which proved to be the perfect vantage point for a camera with long lens.

Departing Hobart on 5 August, *Black Marlin* initially sailed north of New Zealand, then headed south to the Straits of Magellan and up the coast to the Plate estuary, where *China Zorilla* will operate a ferry service between Buenos Aires and Colonia del Sacramento, Uruguay.







AUSTRALIAN WOODEN BOAT FESTIVAL 5-8 FEB 2027 · HOBART

Hobart's waterfront will once again come alive with wooden vessels, boatbuilders, sailors and maritime enthusiasts when the Australian Wooden Boat Festival returns from 5 to 8 February 2027.

The program for the four-day Festival was officially launched on 29 October, revealing a broad range of vessels, exhibitions, demonstrations, talks and activities centred on the 2027 theme, 'Working Boats'.

The theme celebrates the wooden vessels that have carried passengers and cargo, supported industries and connected communities for generations.

Hundreds of vessels are expected to gather along Hobart's waterfront, from historic fishing boats and trading vessels to elegant yachts and tall ships. Visiting vessels from Bali, Sulawesi, Taiwan, Japan and New Zealand will bring an international dimension to the event.

"Our Working Boats theme celebrates the wooden boats that earn their keep, carry people and cargo, and connect communities," said Festival Director Paul Stephanus. "Every vessel has a story, and we're looking forward to bringing those stories together on Hobart's waterfront."

Popular attractions including the Shipwrights Village, Noisy Boatyard, Wooden Boat Symposium, Little Sailors Village and Maritime Marketplace will return, alongside traditional boatbuilding demonstrations, heritage exhibitions, workshops and entertainment.

One of Tasmania's best-known working vessels, *May Queen*, has been chosen as the face of the 2027 Festival. Australia's oldest trading vessel still afloat features on the official poster in a painting by New Zealand marine artist A.D. Blake, depicting the vessel heavily laden and sailing past Tasman Island towards Hobart.

Now maintained by dedicated volunteers in Constitution Dock, *May Queen* spent more than a century carrying timber, apples and quarried stone along Tasmania's waterways.

First held in 1994, the Australian Wooden Boat Festival has grown into the Southern Hemisphere's largest celebration of wooden boats and maritime culture. The 2025 event attracted more than 56,000 visits over four days.

The 2027 Australian Wooden Boat Festival runs from 5 to 8 February, with free entry. The program is available at www.awbf2027.org.au, with further announcements and the full Festival Boat Directory to follow in January.



TasPorts helps preserve the story of *George III* for future generations

A TasPorts Community Grant was recently awarded to the Dover Museum and Gallery and the Dover History Group to support the preservation of Tasmania's rich maritime heritage through the creation of a new booklet documenting relics from the wreck of *George III*.

The project builds on the success of the 2025 exhibition, *Wreck of the George the Third*, which marked 190 years since the ship was wrecked off the coast near Southport. Curated by volunteers from the Dover History Group, the exhibition combined historical research, interpretive displays and recovered artefacts to tell the story of one of Tasmania's most significant maritime disasters.



During and after the exhibition, additional artefacts were donated to the museum and new stories about their recovery emerged from the local community. These stories are now being captured and preserved through the booklet project.

For TasPorts, the grant is particularly significant as it represents the first project supported in Tasmania's far south, extending the program's reach to a new region and audience while helping to safeguard an important chapter of the state's maritime history.

TasPorts Deputy Harbour Master Andrew Shelverton said projects such as this play an important role in keeping Tasmania's maritime stories alive.

"Our ports have played an important role in Tasmania's history for generations, and projects like this help preserve and share those stories. We're pleased to support the Dover History Group and Dover Museum and Gallery in bringing the story of the George III to life and ensuring this important piece of maritime heritage is not forgotten."

George III was carrying 220 male convicts, military personnel, crew and their families from England to Van Diemen's Land when it struck an uncharted rock near Southport on 13 April 1835. The disaster claimed 133 lives, making it one of the worst maritime tragedies in Australian colonial history.







The shipwreck's legacy helped drive improvements in nautical charting and navigation, ultimately contributing to the construction of the Cape Bruny Lighthouse.

Many of the relics have only recently been placed on public display, providing tangible links to this important chapter in Tasmania's maritime history. Equally important are the stories behind them. Local fishers and community members played a key role in recovering and preserving artefacts from the wreck over many decades, and the booklet will ensure these personal recollections are documented while those involved are still able to share them.

Produced by volunteers from the Dover History Group, the booklet will serve as both a documentary record and an educational resource for museum visitors, local residents and history enthusiasts. Copies will also be available for purchase through the museum, helping to extend the reach of the project beyond the exhibition itself. The booklet is currently in production, with a launch event planned for 2027.

Through its Community Grant Program, TasPorts continues to support initiatives that celebrate local history, strengthen community connections and preserve Tasmania's unique maritime heritage for future generations.



Maritime Times Tasmania AUD$10.00

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