

Maritime Times

Tasmania

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**POLAR GUIDES
WORKING AT THE
WATERLINE**

**'ACROSS THE RIVER':
TELLING HISTORIC
FERRY TALES**



Princess Melikoff's Tasmanian marine conservation legacy

Maritime Museum Tasmania

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Cover

The photo on our
cover is of the
Museum's recently
acquired portrait of
Princess Melikoff

Image: Emily Quintin



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 admin@maritimetas.org for further details on contribution requirements, guidelines and editorial standards.

from the president's log

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Maritime Museum of Tasmania, though its collection originally began with the Ship Lovers' Society of Tasmania. Formed in 1931, the Society brought together those working in a range of maritime industries and with an interest in Tasmanian history. It was probably Tasmania's first historical society, and amongst the earliest with a specific interest in maritime heritage in Australia.

Over almost a century the collections of the Society and Museum have developed largely through the generosity of the Tasmanian community and now constitute a collection of state significance. The community's generosity continues, and in this edition of the Maritime Times a number of recent significant donations are discussed, including the portrait of Princess Melikoff, Tasmania's first princess. In addition to the portrait, The Princess Melikoff Trust Marine Mammal Conservation Program has also donated a range of other material reflecting the Program's research and conservation activities.

It has become apparent that the scale and significance of material being offered as donations to the Museum has increased in recent years. In particular, members of the 'Baby Boomer' generation are actively considering the future of what may have once been considered important family heirlooms to be passed from generation-to-generation. Today's custodians of these family treasures are increasingly turning to the Museum to ensure that their families history remains accessible in the future for both their family and the wider community.

While the focus of the Museum's collecting always has been Tasmania's maritime heritage, the collections can and have been used for exhibition and research projects extending far beyond Tasmania. For this reason, the Museum is particularly pleased to have received a major grant from the Australian National Maritime Museum under their Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme. The grant will enable the Museum to rehouse our nationally significant photographic collection in archival standard storage material. Coupled with this project are the continuing digital scanning and photographic research projects which make the collection more accessible to the community at large.

In July, Louis Rodway's exhibition 'Across the River – a story of ferries and resilience' opened. This is a remarkable exhibition at once both accessible and thought provoking. Louis' long experiences of the Derwent, including much travelling on the ferries, informs these images which document particular moments in time. Profoundly, these almost naïve-style works with their so precisely and accurately depicted vessels sitting so well in the Derwent were also a means of Louis dealing with an intense period of personal grief. The Museum greatly appreciates Louis making his ferry works and models available for this exhibition.

In addition to 'Across the River' the Museum is presenting two new smaller displays. One focuses on the barque *Otago*, the only command of Joseph Conrad. Regarded as one of the leading authors of the early twentieth century, his works such as *Heart of Darkness* and *Lord Jim* drew on his experience at sea. The second is centred on the recently donated Richard von Marientreu portrait of Princess Melikoff. The next few months will also see further changes in both the Carnegie Gallery and the 'Writers in the Sea exhibition' as some items will be moved to be part of the new interpretative displays being developed at the Semaphore Cottage at Princes Park, Battery Point.

All of this activity at the Maritime Museum is only possible because of the immense support we receive from our volunteers. If you would like to become more involved with the Museum as a volunteer, whether helping to maintain the *Westward* as a living boat, welcoming visitors to the Museum at our reception desk or contributing to the myriad of tasks associated with the Museum's exhibition and collection management projects, I would encourage you to contact any member of the Museum's staff or management committee.

Finally, I would like to thank every member of the Museum who contributed to this year's annual appeal. Your generous support met the target required for the Museum to be able to commission a model of the *Aurora Australis*, the Antarctic research vessel so strongly associated with Hobart for more thirty years. The model has now been commissioned and we anticipate that it will arrive towards the middle of next year.

**CHRIS TASSELL,
MMT PRESIDENT**

Welcome

to the Museum's newest members...

- Timothy Wooley
- Angus Moore
- Gregory Muir
- Blair Bryant
- Stephanie Austin
- Brian Grundy

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 and photographic collection,
- Subscription to our member's magazine, the *Maritime Times*,
- Subscription to member's email newsletter,
- 10% discount at the Museum Shop.

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

Remembering Philip Fowler



image: Phillip at the Ten Years on the Waterfront celebration, 2010

Foundation and Life member Philip C. Fowler passed away recently in his 93rd year. Philip was involved with Maritime Museum Tasmania from the very beginning and with the planning that saw the Museum open at St. George's Church in 1974.

Philip served on the Museum committee for many years, including several terms as President and Vice-President, and again played an important role in the move from Secheron House to Carnegie, where the new Museum opened in March 2000.

Philip was a generous contributor to the Museum's collection and many items donated by him have featured amongst its exhibits over the years. One currently on display is the (radio controlled) model of German U-boat U862, near the entry to the HMAS Derwent cabin. He also restored the magnificent Otago hatchway, presently in the ground floor gallery.

Our condolences to Philip's wife Fay, and family.



image: Submarine U862 - full hull model donated by Philip (A_2008-026)

Museum news

Lunchtime Talks:

We welcomed Robert Clifford, Founder and Chairman of Incat Tasmania, to our Lunchtime Talk for August, and we were treated to an hour of fascinating industry insights. Robert focused on discussing the company's commitment to eco-friendly shipbuilding, and highlighted Incat's current project - the construction of the world's largest electric ferry.

Across the River:

We had a busy time in July packing up Rex Cox's 'Life of a Port' exhibition, and installing Louis Rodway's 'Across the River' show.



Tasmanian Maritime Heritage Network news

Maritime Museum Tasmania coordinates the Maritime Heritage Organisations of Tasmania (MaHOoT), a network of Tasmanian organisations involved in maritime heritage. Thanks to the support of Arts Tasmania and Tasports we're actively involved in outreach efforts to document, promote, and advocate for Tasmania's maritime heritage.

In June we resumed our annual MaHOot conference at Launceston's Peppers Silos Hotel. It was a great opportunity to get together for a day of networking and collaboration; we discussed ideas for exhibitions and talked about the challenges we all face in the maritime heritage sector.

We welcomed staff from the National Archives of Australia, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Dover History Group, Bass & Flinders Museum, the Cartela Trust, Arts Tasmania, Mainly Maritime St Helens, and other local maritime enthusiasts.

Thanks to everyone who attended, we're already looking forward to next year!

Right: Camille Reynes, Maritime Museum Tasmania curator, updating the conference on the latest from our shipwreck project



New Acquisitions

BY COLIN DENNY



The variety of artefacts arriving at the Museum over the last few months may surprise readers! Recently, two 1930s souvenir dolls from the P&O and Orient Line's UK to Australia passenger ships *SS Cathay* and *SS Oronsay* were purchased from Gowans Auctions. They will enhance our collection of children's maritime souvenirs.

Other donations include a rare first edition of Robert Falconer Scott's two volume *Voyage of Discovery*, and a full set of construction drawings of the Bass Strait trader *MV Tasmanian Achiever*. Other plans received include line drawings taken by Michael Desmarchelier from half models of four vessels built in the nineteenth century by John Wilson of Cygnet.

Another generous donor presented several pieces of colonial furniture to the Museum that will allow the recently secured Semaphore Cottage in Battery Point's Princes Park to be authentically furnished.

Admiral FitzRoy barometer

An Admiral FitzRoy barometer, donated in June by an elderly Hobart resident, came from his late father who purchased it many years ago when living on the Isle of Man.

The barometer includes panels with written weather predictions. In addition to the barometer, it is fitted with a chemical weather glass and thermometer. Admiral Robert FitzRoy developed the instrument and set up a gale warning system in the UK. He is remembered for coining the term 'weather forecasting' (previously known as 'weather telling').

In addition to FitzRoy's responsibility for the UK gale warning system, he provided the Times newspaper with forecasts. Later, when the Times fired FitzRoy for inaccuracy, he went into a mental decline taking his own life in 1865 at the early age of fifty-nine.

FitzRoy had a connection with Tasmania having commanded *HMS Beagle* when Charles Darwin visited Hobart Town for twelve days in 1835.

Naval dress sword

A nineteenth century naval dress sword in good condition that once belonged to Oatlands born Thomas Frederick Nelson (1859-1903) has been donated to the collection.

Thomas Nelson went to sea as an apprentice on the barque *Lufra* owned by Alexander McGregor of Hobart and gained his master mariner's certificate in London. Nelson eventually gave up the sea and worked ashore in Melbourne until his death.

The Admiralty approved the design of the standard naval dress sword, copied from the army artillery sword but with a different basket, in 1825.

The locking device seen on the donated sword was approved in 1827. It prevented the sword sticking into the wearer at sea.

All naval officers carried dress swords. Merchant marine officers usually had swords when sailing in regions where piracy was prevalent.

When curator Camille's young son visited the Museum the weapon excited him. Camille remarked that the sword was the only artefact her son had shown any interest in – typical of kids!



Muir's Boatyard tools and memorabilia



In June we visited the workshop at Muir's Boatyard following the Muir family's kind offer to donate historic tools and interesting objects to the Museum.

Renowned shipwright and designer Ernest John 'Jock' Muir established Muir's Boatyard in Battery Point in 1948. For seventy six years the boatyard remained with the Muir family until the last custodians, John and Wendy Muir, sold the property.

Arriving at the workshop we found a trove of fascinating memorabilia from years of busy operation. Of particular interest were the hand tools, plans, patterns, and old workshop instruction signs. We selected various objects that have been stored for us before choosing what to keep for the collection.



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

Across the River: Louis Rodway's ferry tales

BY CAMILLE REYNES

The first thing you might notice upon entering our newest temporary exhibition, 'Across the River – a story of ferries and resilience', is the abundance of boats.

However, you will soon realise that Louis Rodway's work is far from just another collection of marine paintings. The depth of feelings captured in his scenes transcends mere depictions of maritime vessels. His boats are indeed highly detailed, with historically accurate representations of iconic Tasmanian ferries, but there is much more beneath the surface.

In 2000, this Tasmanian artist faced a major life-changing event that left him devastated. He turned to painting as therapy, retreating to his shed to draw and paint ferries from his childhood. For Louis, as for many Tasmanians, ferries evoke happy memories. Over eighteen months, this therapeutic journey grew into a collection of more than seventy pieces. Immersing himself in these cherished moments, he gradually found a path through his grief.

At first glance, the figures in Louis' paintings might seem naïve and cartoonish. However, behind their apparent simplicity lies profound depth. These figures evoke emotions that can make you smile or feel a pinch in your heart, capturing a complex sense of nostalgia. This emotional resonance highlights Louis' ability to encapsulate the essence of human experience in his work. Louis Rodway's art is not merely about painting ships.

In this exhibition, ferries serve as symbols of transition and passage, reflecting the artist's journey through healing. His work captures transient moments of life, the emotions tied to those moments, and the surreal undertones that permeate our memories and experiences. He invites viewers to look beyond the realistic façade and explore the deeper, often hidden layers of meaning and emotion.



MARITIME MUSEUM Tasmania

Across the River

Louis Rodway

8 July 2024 — 24 November 2024

A story of ferries and resilience

Major conservation grant success

The Maritime Museum has been successful in gaining a major grant for the rehousing of our nationally significant photographic collection.

The \$15,000 funding will improve the protection of the collection by enabling it to be housed in archival quality storage materials. The grant is through the Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme (MMAPPS), an initiative of the Australian National Maritime Museum. This scheme is one of very few initiatives by any national cultural institutions to support in a practical and cost-effective way the concept of a truly national community-held collection.

The Maritime Museum's photographic collection, Australia's largest collection of photographs related to Tasmania's maritime heritage, includes more than 70,000 images. In practice this is only an estimate as in the past many albums of photographs were given only a single registration number, regardless of the number of photographs they contained.

Although having a clear maritime focus, the collection also evidences the history of photography in Tasmania, particularly since the development of the wet plate negative photographic process in the late 1850's. The collection holds the work of many of the photographers active in the state during the 1860's and includes views of Tasmanian ports and portraits of both people and ships.



The most striking of the collection are a pair of portraits of shipbuilder John Ross and his wife Margaret Ross by prominent colonial artist and photographer William Paul Dowling, made in about 1860.

The Museum's nineteenth century collection is dominated by the work of professional photographers such as Samuel Clifford, Henry Bailey, and John Watt Beattie, but the development of dry plate photography in about 1880 was to begin a revolution that made photography more widely accessible. Soon after George Eastman invented the Kodak box camera, and by the beginning of the twentieth century, photography had become a popular pastime and hobby.

The Museum's collection documents this popularisation and includes images from around the state, as well as those taken by Tasmanians on their voyages further afield—whether to the Pacific Islands, Gallipoli or whaling in the Southern Ocean or Bering Strait. It also marks the beginning of what has proved to be an extraordinary community documentation project, the recording of the many vessels visiting the port of Hobart. This entirely voluntary and informal project has now continued for more than a century and provides Hobart with a port record unmatched by any other in Australia.

The twentieth century has been notable for the rapid development of photographic technology including the widespread use of colour film and then more recently digital imagery. Many of these developments are represented in the Museum's collection and reflect how Tasmanian photographers have adopted and continue to take up these new technologies in recording Tasmania's maritime heritage.

As the principal Tasmanian maritime photographic collection, the Museum's collection is frequently used for research and in a wide range of publications. To make community access to the collection easier the Museum has placed more than 12,000 digitised images of photographs from the collection online. Freely available through the Museum's website, this is now one of the largest publicly accessible digital collections in Tasmania.

The digitisation project undertaken by Museum volunteers compliments the MMAPPS collection storage project as it reduces the need for the physical handling of the original photographs. Together, the MMAPPS grant and the digitisation project will greatly improve the long-term conservation of Tasmania's largest and most important maritime photographic collection while also enabling much improved and more convenient community access.

image: Mrs Margaret Ross by William Paul Dowling, pastel over albumen print on paper over canvas c1860

**MU
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image: Matthew Flinders's grave will be covered by this tonne of black marble featuring HMS Investigator and his cat Trim (via BBC News).

Matthew Flinders returns home to the UK

BY MARK HOSKING

The British newspaper *The Guardian* once described explorer Matthew Flinders as 'the greatest explorer you have probably never heard of'. Indeed, in terms of early European exploration of Australia, it is hard to think of many more significant than the man considered to have coined the name Australia itself, as well as completing the first in-shore circumnavigations of both Tasmania and the continent of Australia. But his legacy remained little-known in his home country, his achievements marked almost solely by a statue of Flinders and his faithful cat, Trim, outside Euston Station in London, not far from his original burial place in St James' cemetery.

The exact location of his grave was unknown but interest in Flinders in the UK was ignited when, among the 40,000 bodies exhumed from the cemetery during construction work for the HS2 rail line in 2019, a coffin was recovered bearing a lead plaque identifying the remains as those of the explorer.

Scroll forward five years to Saturday 13 July 2024, and Matthew Flinders was finally re-interred in the 12th century Church of St Mary and the Holy Rood in the Lincolnshire village of Donington where he was born in 1774.

Attendees included many of Flinders' descendants, Australians from Adelaide, Tasmania and Sydney and ten guests from Mauritius.

Ruth Taylor, author of *The Cat and the Captain*, the story of Flinders and his cat, Trim, reports that Flinders' new coffin was built by Robert Hartle, one of the archaeologists who discovered Flinders' grave in the old burial ground under Euston Railway Station. It was a handsome replica with a studded metal pattern on dark wood. Brought into the village in a hearse followed by Royal Navy and Merchant Navy flag bearers, it was then carried by Royal Navy sailors and officers to the church where an eighteen-gun salute sounded. The Bishop of Lincoln introduced the service followed by a welcome from the Governor of South Australia. The village spent the weekend celebrating the return of their most famous son, with a street fair and market, concluding with a service in Lincoln Cathedral.

So, after a journey of 250 years, one of the greatest navigators of the 'age of exploration' had finally found his way home.

If you're interested in taking a look at the SBS media coverage of the reinterment, [it can be found on here](#), or by searching: 'Explorer Matthew Flinders buried 210 years after his death' on YouTube.

Joseph Conrad's Tasmanian connection

BY MARK HOSKING

Along the East Derwent Highway below Mount Direction, at Otago Bay, lie the remains of the barque that gives the bay its name. *Otago* was built in Glasgow, Scotland in 1869 and is famous as the only sea-going command of the sailor turned writer Joseph Conrad.

Described as 'one of the greatest writers in the English Language', Conrad was actually Polish, born in what is now Ukraine. Following the death of his parents while he was still a boy, he lived with an uncle in Marseille, France, joining the French merchant navy at 16. He learnt English after transferring to the British merchant navy a few years later and spent close to twenty years at sea, rising from Steward to Captain.

Conrad commanded *Otago* for about a year and a half in 1888-89, voyaging from Singapore to Sydney, then via the Torres Strait to Mauritius and back to Australia. He returned to Britain from Port Adelaide by steamer, leaving *Otago* behind.

Back in England Conrad took to writing full-time and he became noted for *Heart of Darkness*, *Lord Jim* and *The Secret Agent*. Many of his novels drew on his experiences at sea and of the lands that he visited during his sailing career. His depictions of the challenges of living and working aboard sailing ships found him many fans among those who mourned the passing of the 'Great Age of Sail'.



image: the remains of *Otago* at Old Beach (MMT collection)

Conrad used his time aboard *Otago* as the basis of his novel *The Shadow-Line*, a story of the trials of a young sea captain's first command.

In 1903 *Otago* was brought to Hobart as a coal hulk. Over the years it attracted the attention of fans of Conrad, with commentators lamenting the ignominious decline of a ship once described by Conrad as a 'creature of high-breed – an Arab Steed'.

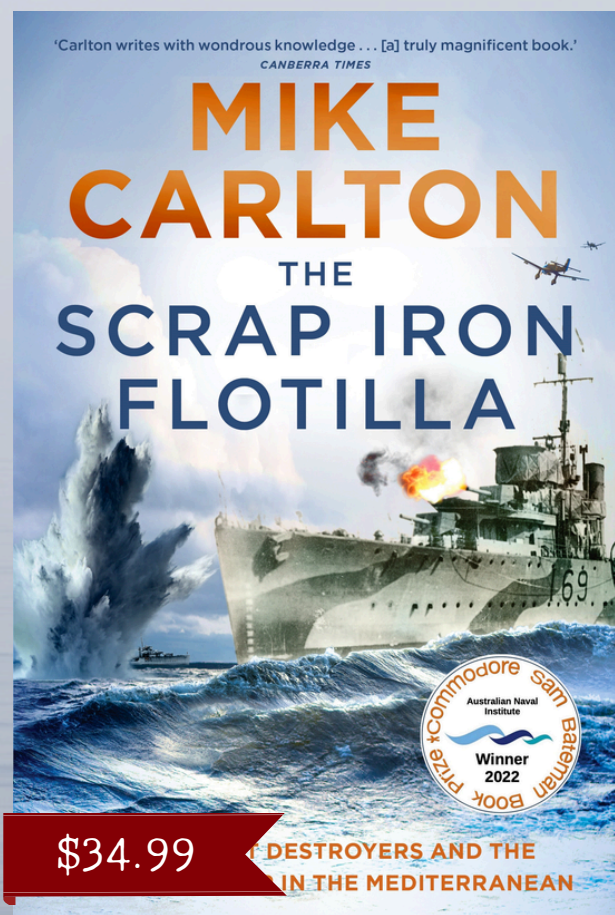
In 1931 Harry Dodge bought *Otago* at auction for one pound. He was the only bidder. The hulk was towed upriver to a bay below Mount Direction which, at that time, seems to have had no official name. There, in the company of other beached vessels, such as the steamers *Togo* and *Westralian*, Harry gradually demolished it. He sold most of the scrap metal to a Japanese buyer and sold off other pieces to souvenir hunters. A section of the stern was bought by a collector in the USA who intended to install it in a museum in San Francisco, and the ship's wheel eventually made its way to the headquarters of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners in London.

William Crowther acquired the companionway cover, which then spent many years in his garden until it was restored by the late Phillip Fowler and exhibited first at the State Library before becoming a centrepiece of the display at Maritime Museum Tasmania.

Our collection includes a number of other *Otago* relics, some of which are now on display, possibly for the first time, in a small exhibition to mark the centenary of Joseph Conrad's death in August 1924.

image: Joseph Conrad (MMT collection)

In the bookshop: Naval history



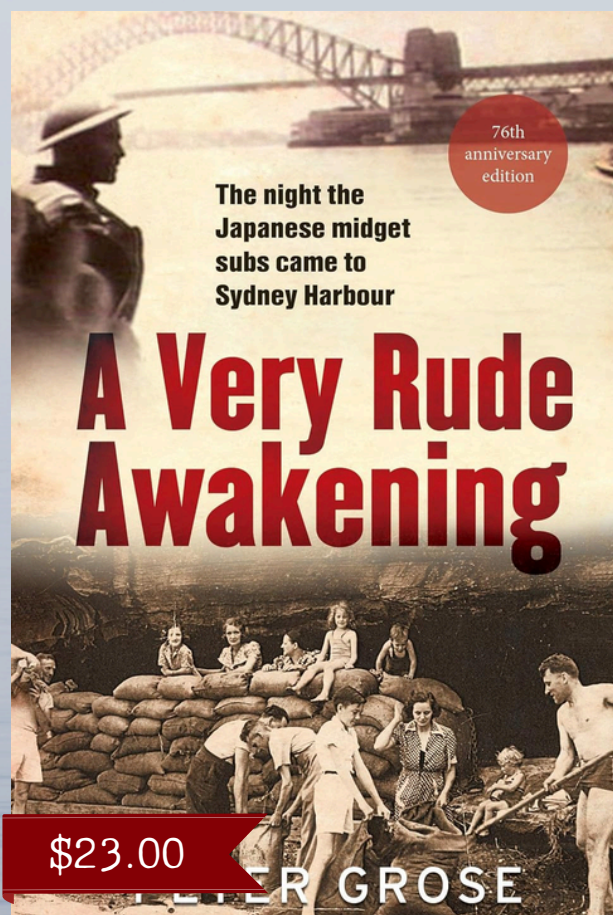
The Scrap Iron Flotilla, Mike Carlton

When the Second World War broke out in September 1939, Britain asked for help. With some misgivings, the Australian government sent five destroyers to beef up the British Royal Navy in the Mediterranean.

HMAS Vendetta, Vampire, Voyager, Stuart, and Waterhen were old ships, and Joseph Goebbels sneered that they were a load of scrap iron.

Yet by the middle of 1940 they were valiantly escorting troop and supply convoys, hunting submarines and bombarding enemy coasts. The destroyers ran the hazardous 'Tobruk Ferry, bringing supplies of food, medicine and ammunition into the shattered port by night, and taking off wounded soldiers.'

In late 1941 the ships were finally sent home. They adopted the Nazi insult as a badge of honour, and the Scrap Iron Flotilla is now an immortal part of Australian naval legend. This is its story.

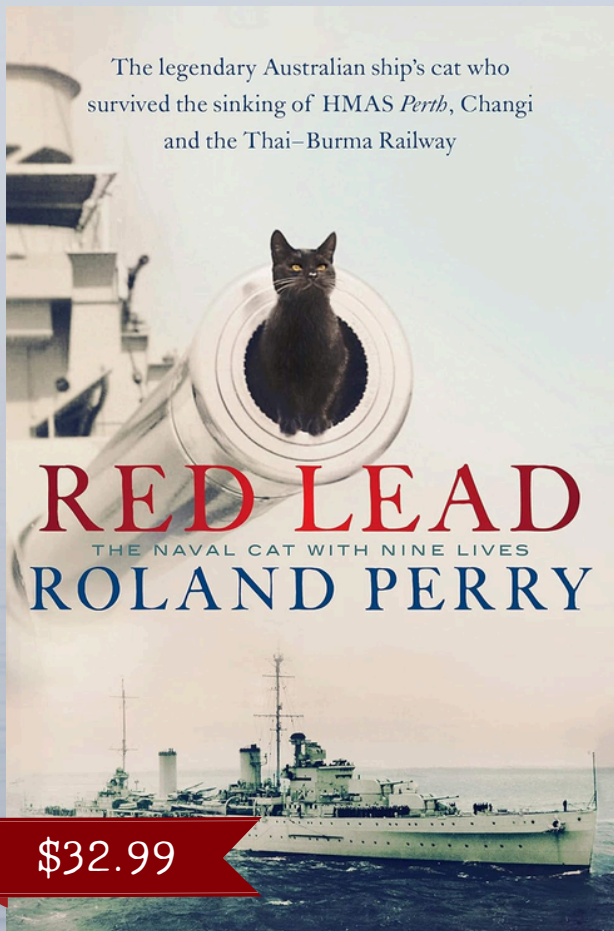


A Very Rude Awakening, Peter Grose

In May of 1942, the war seemed very far away to most Sydneysiders - until the night the three Japanese midget submarines crept into the harbour and caused an unforgettable night of mayhem, high farce, chaos and courage. A ground-breaking look at one of the most extraordinary stories of Australia at war.

On the night of 31 May 1942, Sydney was doing what it does best: partying. The war seemed far away. Newspapers devoted more pages to horse racing than to Hitler.

That Sunday night the party came to a shattering halt when three Japanese midget submarines crept into the harbour. Their arrival triggered a night of mayhem, courage, chaos and high farce which left 27 sailors dead and a city bewildered. The war, it seemed, was no longer confined to distant desert and jungle. It was right here at Australia's front door.

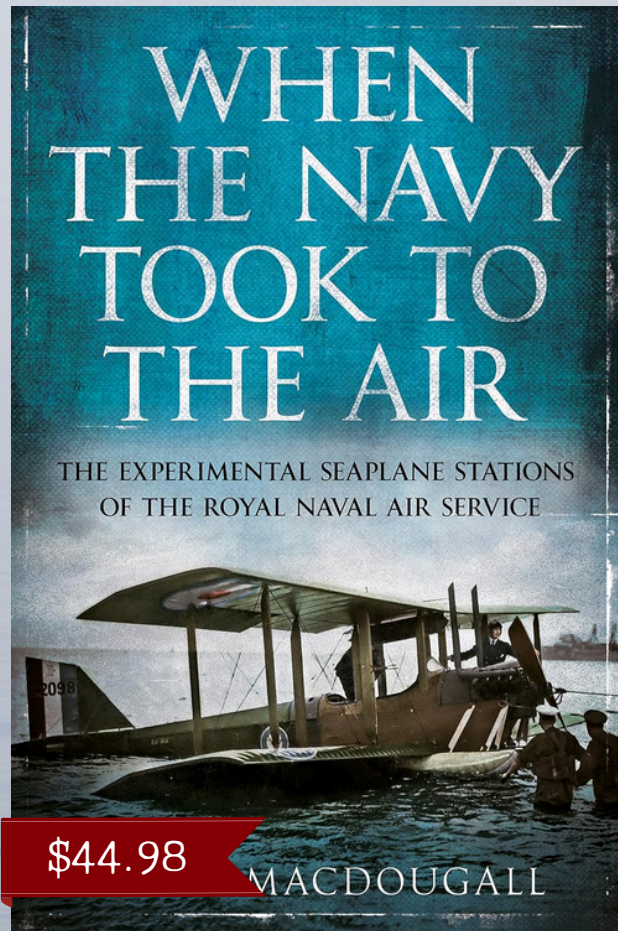


Red Lead, Roland Perry

Just after midnight on 1 March 1942, Australia's most renowned cruiser, HMAS *Perth*, was sunk by Japanese naval forces in the Sunda Strait off the coast of Java. Of the 681 men aboard, 328 survived the sinking and made it to shore—and one cat. Her name was Red Lead, and she was the ship's cat, beloved by the crew and by the *Perth*'s legendary captain Hector Waller.

But surviving shellfire, torpedoes and the fierce currents of the Sunda Strait was only the beginning of the terrible trials Red Lead and the surviving crew were to face over the next three-and-a-half years. From Java to Changi and then on the Thai-Burma Railway, Red Lead was to act as a companion, mascot and occasional protector for a small group of sailors who made it their mission to keep her alive in some of the most hellish prison camps on earth.

Red Lead's extraordinary story, of courage, loyalty and love amidst battle, imprisonment and death, is brought vividly to life in this book.



When the Navy Took to the Air, Philip Macdougall

Up to and during the First World War, the Royal Navy was at the forefront of developments in aviation: concerned not just with the use of military aircraft to defend the fleet, but also securing the homeland against Zeppelin raiders and undertaking tactical air strikes into enemy territory. With the airplane a totally new and revolutionary weapon, the work of several experimental airfields and seaplane stations became crucial to the success of these operations.

Taking the lead role were Felixstowe and the Isle of Grain, where work on the development of new aircraft and aerial weapons was handled, alongside groundbreaking advances in navigational systems, air-to-ground radio communication, and deck-board ship landings.

These two air stations (as well as others with a more minor role) witnessed a huge scale of expenditure and the assembly of an elite group of experts and hotshot pilots who, in pushing the envelope to the extreme, sometimes sacrificed their own lives.

Ship spotter

Sixty years since the Tasman Bridge opened
BY REX COX

Believe it or not, but 60 years have passed since the Tasman Bridge opened to road and sea traffic for the first time, replacing the floating pontoon bridge which had been in service since December 1943.

Road traffic was diverted to the new bridge on 17 August 1964 and dismantling of the old bridge began early the following day. Just before removal of the centre pin that held the two roadway arches formed of concrete pontoons together the lift span was raised for the very last time to allow the Marine Board barge B4 (now better known as TasPorts' *Kulanda*) to proceed upstream.

Later that day, with the eastern arch now safely moored in Geilston Bay, the British freighter *Galway* moved to Risdon for zinc and became the first large ship to pass through the Tasman Bridge.

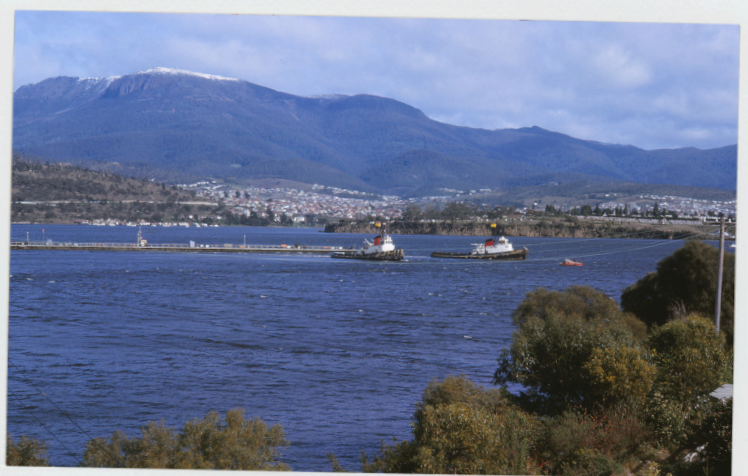
Two Melbourne tugs assisted local vessels with the pontoon removal. *Walumba* was notable as the last ship built for Huddart Parker, a company that had a long association with Tasmania until its takeover by McIlwraith, McEacharn in late 1961, while *Elton Griffin* had been built for the latter company.



Barge B4 at the Tasman Bridge site, August 1964
(photo: Rex Cox)



Galway passes under the Tasman Bridge, 18 August 1964
(photo: The Mercury)



Walumba & *Elton Griffin* towing the eastern bridge span to Geilston Bay, 18 August 1964 (photo: Noye Bridge)

The Wreck of the Neva:

the horrifying fate of a convict ship and the Irish women aboard

BOOK REVIEW BY COLIN DENNY

In their book, *The Wreck of the Neva*, Cal McCarthy and Kevin Todd tell more than the story of the tragic 1835 shipwreck of the *Neva*, the convict transport taking 150 convict women to New South Wales. The authors begin by portraying Ireland of the 1830s, where unfair land ownership practices were a primary cause of civil disobedience, poverty, and criminality.

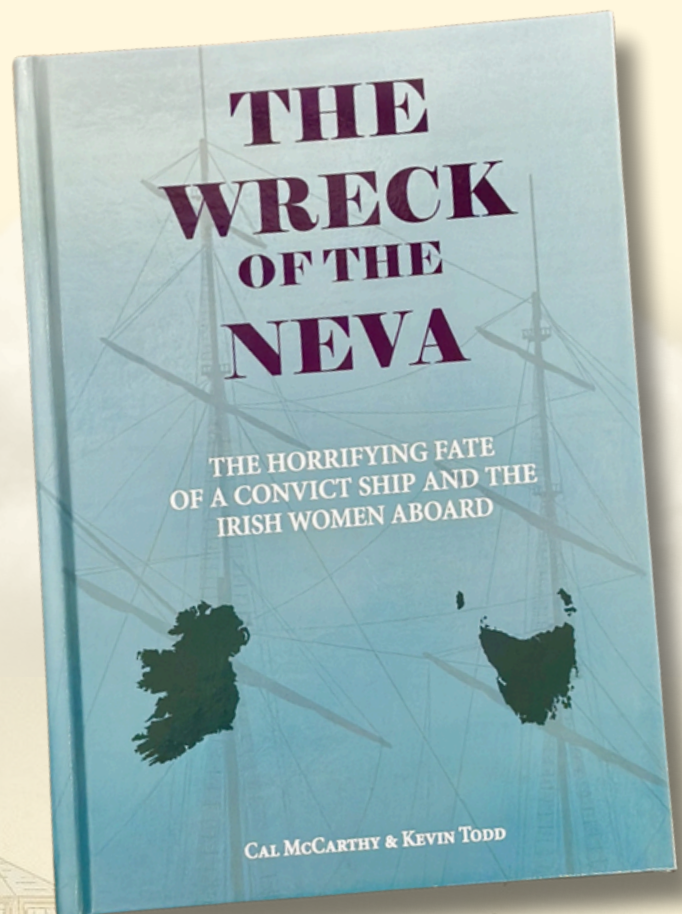
In recounting the circumstances of the women's convictions, the authors highlight the difficult conditions of the Irish poor. The narrative continues, telling the story of the convicted women's voyage aboard the *Neva* as revealed by survivors and from accounts of similar convict voyages to Australia.

Two hundred and forty one people embarked on the *Neva* in Cork. Most were women convicts; others were the wives and children of already deported convicts. Late in the voyage disaster struck when entering Bass Strait. *Neva* foundered on a reef north of King Island and sank.

Convict women had found *Neva's* rum, and several were drunk in the ship's cuddy, jeopardising any chance of survival. In the commotion that followed, the ship's boats were lost and just 22 souls drifted on floating wreckage to the hostile shore of King Island.

By next morning only 15 survivors were alive. Captain Benjamin Peck and first mate Joseph Bennett survived together with seven of the seamen. Six women convicts survived but seven more who reached shore perished of exposure, with a puncheon of rum nearby. In total, 224 people died in the tragedy.

After a very difficult month, the struggling survivors were rescued by Charles Friend when he sailed near the island in his sloop *Sarah Ann*. Subsequently, in the aftermath of the loss, several enquiries were held with conflicting conclusions. The Master believed they foundered on Harbinger Reef but it was more likely to have been Navarine Reef closer to King Island.



Life in Van Diemen's Land for the six convict survivors was difficult. The women had a sad ending, never rising above their criminal upbringing in Ireland, always in trouble with the authorities.

The Wreck of the Neva was first published in 2013 by Mercier Press in Ireland. Few know the story here, so Navarine Publishing and Mercier Press jointly produced this Australian edition. Graeme Broxam and Nicole Mays worked with the authors to redesign, add images, and edit the book.

The well-researched account of the tragedy adds to the history of life in nineteenth century Ireland, transportation, and early British settlement in Australia.

Cal McCarthy & Kevin Todd, *The Wreck of the Neva: the horrifying fate of a convict ship and the Irish women aboard*, Mercier Press, Ireland and Navarine Publishing, Australia, 2024

PRINCESS MELIKOFF

her lasting local legacy

BY EMILY QUINTIN

Before the modern-day headlines about our own Princess Mary of Denmark, we had another princess, one with a fascinating story of love, resilience, and dedication to conservation. Born Pauline Curran, she transformed from a middle-class girl into Princess Melikoff, leaving a legacy that continues to this day through the Princess Melikoff Trust.

Pauline was the youngest of ten children born to auctioneer and Tasmanian Turf Club secretary John Bury Curran and Elizabeth Prosser in 1893. It's said that Pauline was named after the horse that won the Hobart Cup in the days before her birth. The family's fortunes were greatly influenced by their connection with George Adams, the founder of Tattersall's lottery. Adams, a close family friend, bequeathed a portion of his wealth to the Currans upon his death in 1905 - securing their financial future.

Pauline was educated at St Michael's Collegiate School, where she developed a reputation for her vibrant personality and intellectual curiosity. Pauline enjoyed a friendship with the daughters of the Governor, attending society events and gracing the social pages. In 1918, Pauline was briefly engaged to Captain Patrick Fitzgerald, who was the aide-de-camp to the Governor of Tasmania. However, Fitzgerald left Tasmania to rejoin his regiment and did not honour the engagement.

During World War I, she and her family lived in Eaglehawk Neck on the Tasman Peninsula, where Pauline took on the responsibility of caring for her ailing father. After her father's death in 1921, the family estate was held in trust to support Pauline and her mother until they were both deceased, after which the estate was divided among the siblings.

In 1924, like many young Australians seeking adventure, Pauline travelled to England. At that time, societal norms considered her an aging spinster - in her 30s - but this did not deter her. She embraced London society and, in 1925, met Prince Maximilian Melikoff, an exiled Russian aristocrat who was working as a chauffeur.

Born in 1884, Maximilian served with distinction in the military before leaving Russia amidst the turmoil of the Bolshevik Revolution. Despite his aristocratic title, Maximilian lacked substantial wealth or property.

Their meeting was serendipitous: Pauline brought financial stability from her inheritance, while Maximilian offered a noble title. Their whirlwind romance led to an engagement within three months, culminating in a wedding at Hobart's St David's Cathedral on 20 January 1926. The event, celebrated as Tasmania's own 'Royal Wedding,' saw enormous crowds of enthusiastic locals lining the streets to witness the grand procession.

After their wedding, Pauline and Maximilian moved to Cannes, on the French Riviera, embracing a lifestyle of continental elegance. They frequently travelled between Australia and London, spending significant time in their Mayfair apartment, furnished with Princess Melikoff's carefully curated selection of antiques. Despite the looming shadows of World War II, during which little is documented about their activities, the couple maintained a prominent social presence in London, even mixing in the same social circles as the then Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh.

Eventually, Maximilian sank into alcoholism, ill health and premature death in 1950. Princess Melikoff retained her title and her wealth, and continued to cherish her connections to Tasmania, making numerous trips back to the state. Her affection for Tasmania never waned, and she left a significant philanthropic footprint through the establishment of the Princess Melikoff Trust.



image: Princess Melikoff and Prince Maximilian, Sydney, ca. 1934 (National Library of Australia)

Princess Melikoff passed away in 1988 in London, leaving behind two wills: one in Britain and one in Australia. Her British will left her London fortune to Greenpeace, reflecting her passion for environmental causes. Her Australian will established the Princess Melikoff Trust Fund, channelling proceeds to St Ann's Homes for the Aged and Tasmania's Wildlife Protection Services.

Under the stewardship of TPT Wealth, the Trust has contributed over \$7.55 million to the Princess Melikoff Trust Marine Mammal Conservation Program, averaging \$328,000 annually. Initially aimed at ending commercial whaling, the program has evolved to encompass a wide range of marine mammal rescue and conservation initiatives. It administers a 24-hour marine mammal stranding hotline and supports various conservation efforts, including recent whale rescue operations near Strahan.

During the Strahan incident, while around 40 whales were successfully refloated, rescuers faced the challenging task of towing many deceased whales out to sea. This massive operation, coordinated by Tasmania's Department of Natural Resources & Environment and supported by the Strahan community, was significantly funded by the Princess Melikoff Trust. The annual bequest from the Trust underpins the Department's marine mammal conservation efforts, demonstrating the enduring influence of Princess Melikoff's generosity.

Pauline Curran's transformation from a young woman in a middle-class family to European royalty reflects a remarkable journey of resilience and philanthropy. Her significant contributions to marine conservation underscore a profound commitment to preserving the natural world and supporting the community. Today, her legacy is celebrated through various public initiatives, including Hobart's '6 Storeys 6 Stories' art project in Argyle Street carpark, ensuring her story continues to inspire future generations.

In the chronicles of maritime history and Tasmanian heritage, Princess Melikoff stands as a luminous figure whose legacy of charity and conservation continues to resonate.

Maritime Museum Tasmania has recently acquired a stunning portrait of Princess Melikoff by Richard von Marientreu, painted with oil on canvas in 1956.

The Museum is now proudly displaying the portrait, alongside more detailed information about the marine conservation work the Princess Melikoff Trust is continuing to fund.



image: the wedding of the Prince and Princess, St David's Cathedral, Hobart, in 1926



image: the Museum's recently acquired portrait of Princess Melikoff by Richard von Marientreu, painted in 1956.



image: rescuing a long finned pilot whale, one of 230 stranded on Ocean Beach near Strahan, September 2022.

Police Vessel *Van Diemen* to start new life in New Guinea

BY BRENDON BOWES



image: PV *Van Dieman*, Victoria Dock, Hobart (Brendon Bowes)

After nearly three decades in Tasmania Police's fleet, the Police Vessel (PV) *Van Diemen* has been sold and departed Hobart on 6 May 2024.

Van Diemen has been a significant asset to Tasmania Police and was renowned Australia-wide.

With the capacity to patrol safely out to 200 nautical miles off the coast in a range of weather conditions, the vessel attained a highly successful patrol history and proved itself on the waters of Bass Strait, the Tasman Sea, and rugged Southern Ocean.

Van Diemen had travelled approximately 120,000nm in Tasmanian service (around 4000nm per year) – the equivalent of circumnavigating Australia 16 times, or Tasmania 150 times.

The entry into service of *Van Diemen* in 1995 represented a significant and crucial step forward in the maritime patrol capabilities for the Tasmanian Police. Previously they were limited in their ability to pursue and apprehend more powerful and advanced illegal vessels fishing in Tasmanian waters, or the detection and apprehension of drug smugglers.

Probably the most hazardous voyage undertaken by *Van Diemen* was to pursue the large North Korean drug smuggling vessel *Pong Su*. In April 2003, the 106m cargo vessel was spotted acting suspiciously off the Victorian coast. The vessel had to be intercepted at sea but there were few options available for the Australian Federal Police.

Help was requested from Tasmania Police and *Van Diemen* was dispatched from Beauty Point. Onboard were the standard four crew members, plus two AFP officers, a Customs Officer and five members of the Tasmania Police Force Special Operations Group — twelve in all.

Van Diemen made radar contact with *Pong Su* a few hours after putting to sea. The vessel was then proceeding south of the Bass Strait shipping lanes. The senior AFP officer decided not to board due to the possibility that the crew of 30 could overpower any boarding party *Van Diemen* could muster. It was unknown if the freighter's crew were armed, so shadowing continued in deteriorating weather.

Before a NSW police vessel took over the chase, *Van Diemen* had been at sea 24 hours and the crew were beginning to feel the effects of their extended duty time.

The North Korean freighter was later boarded by the Royal Australian Navy and taken to Sydney, where 125kg of heroin was found, worth \$14 million (some media estimate the street value at \$160 million).

The *Van Diemen* was also involved in numerous rescues at sea including responding to the distressed yacht *Scandia* during the 2004 Sydney-Hobart Yacht race.

Van Diemen was built by Geraldton Boat Builders in Western Australia and arrived in Tasmania in 1995. The 22.7m vessel was constructed from marine-grade aluminium with two powerful Caterpillar marine diesels and fixed pitch propellers for a top speed 27 knots. With fuel capacity of 12,600 litres, freshwater capacity of 1,000 litres and accommodation for a normal sea-going crew of five (and 20 passengers), the vessel was a very capable long-range patrol craft.

Van Diemen has been sold to the Australian Federal Police and is being relocated to Papua New Guinea.

Van Diemen is being replaced with a new offshore police vessel, scheduled to be delivered in the third quarter of 2024. The contract for the new 23.9m vessel was awarded to aluminium boat builder Fine Entry Marine of Western Australia.



Working at the waterline

BY AINA DAMBITIS

Have you ever wondered about the tour guides who show us new and wonderful things? Once we organised our own adventures and sight-seeing and strode out into the world in new boots and backpacks, but now it is so much easier to let someone else deal with the airlines and hotels and internet bookings. Just pay the money and arrive at the correct time. Someone else has checked the tickets. But what about the people who are responsible for us when we arrive? Who are they, how do they live and work and how have they chosen to do this work?

Hobart is home to a surprisingly large number of guides who work in the polar regions. Dr Robyn Mundy and Dr Gary Miller have settled here after more than thirty years travelling to the Arctic and Antarctic. They used to work away from home at much the same time, often working on the same ship, but these days they try to avoid leaving the house empty for too long. There is a dog to consider.

Robyn grew up in Tasmania, "mucking around with boats" at the family shack and was always comfortable in quiet, isolated places. She was fascinated by the idea of the polar regions. She started travelling to them as a passenger, then worked as crew and then expeditioner guide and leader. The ice fascinates her still.

Gary came to the ice as a scientist, studying wildlife, particularly the emperor penguins. When the research grants dried up, the tourist industry provided a way to keep on travelling to the Arctic and Antarctic. He loves the birds and animals that can live in these inhospitable places.

The ships they worked on were small Soviet built ships, refurbished to be reasonably comfortable but not luxurious. At the end of the Cold War these ships were no longer needed by the Soviet state and many of them were repurposed for the tourist industry. The crews were Russian, experienced sailors, experts in the Arctic waters. They carried a minimum of fifty passengers. There was no internet. Passengers had often spent their working lives saving to have enough money to pay for a trip to the Antarctic. They were enthusiastic and knowledgeable and ready to enjoy every moment. It was an enclosed world, isolated, self-reliant by necessity.

And yes, there was seasickness across the infamous Drake Passage, gateway to the Antarctic Peninsula.

image: Cruising the Antarctic Peninsula



These days the ships are larger and more comfortable. The tour companies want a minimum of 120 paying passengers. These people are usually well-travelled, looking for a new experience, interested rather than passionate about their surroundings. The feeling of isolation, of being away from the world, has lessened with the coming of onboard internet, smart phones and now some passengers even come equipped with their own satellite phones.

The crew is housed at the lower levels of the ship. The expedition team's cabins are at the waterline, which suits them very well, and the passengers are above. The most stable part of the ship is at the water line, not at the expensive upper levels. The more you pay the more you sway. Crew and expedition guides have different responsibilities. Crew keep the ship functioning, obviously, the expedition team provides the information and specialist knowledge for the passengers. They drive the zodiacs and take the tours.

Weather conditions decide the itinerary on any given day. Crew help to launch the zodiac and retrieve it again. In rough seas, crew help to catch the disembarking passengers and get them safely back on board. It is the team leader who decides if the zodiacs are going out that day, how many of them and who is driving.

Only the most experienced people are chosen if the conditions look unreliable and that allows "spare" guides to come in the zodiacs to make sure passengers are safe. The driver judges the swell and distance from the ship and orders the passenger to "go now" and jump. No hesitation. Women often confess they are afraid, says Robyn, men tend not to and cover their fear with bluster and bravado.

So, the expedition team has specialist knowledge, can communicate it and can drive a zodiac. Basic first aid is part of the necessary skills (there is also a doctor on board). So is a gun license for the north, where one person with a rifle keeps watch for polar bears. Above all else, the guides need to like people and understand why we behave in certain ways. They look after us when we are excited and exhilarated and also when we are frightened and unwell. One of Robyn's ships struck rocks and tore a hole in the hull and she had to explain what had happened and keep everyone calm. They have both had to deal with scuba diving fatalities in the northern waters. Most voyages, however, proceed according to plan without high drama.



image: Dr Garry Miller in the Arctic

image: Subantarctic royal penguins, Macquarie Island, Tasmania



image: Dr Robyn Mundy driving a zodiac



image: Southern royal albatross, Campbell Island, New Zealand

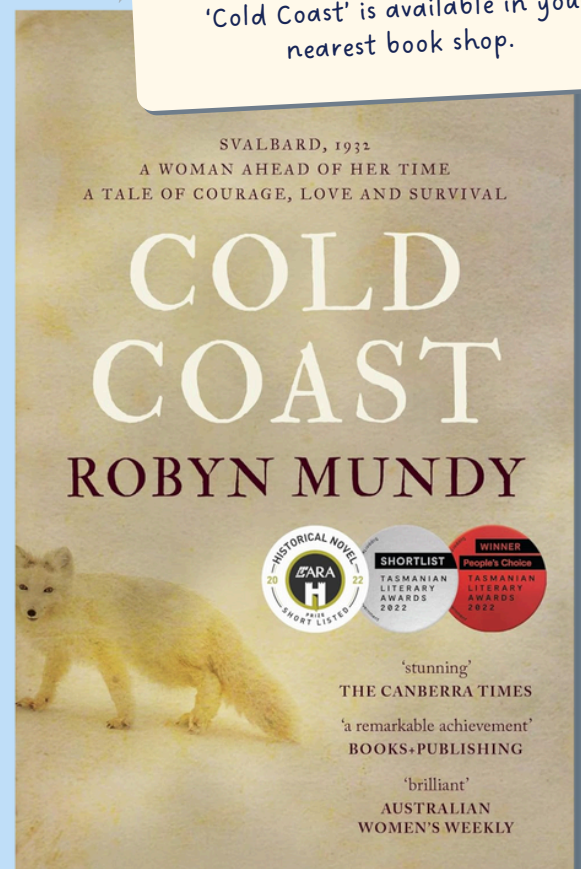


COVID-19 did upset the best laid plans. Both were working when the world started to shut down at the beginning of the pandemic. Gary's ship returned to Montevideo and he eventually came home after several episodes of quarantine along the way. Robyn's ship was the last to leave port and continued to travel south. They were the only ones on the tourist route so had the spectacular Antarctic to themselves. It was an awesome experience, if slightly eerie. Then people started to cough and get worried. The ship returned to Montevideo and the long, complicated, slow journey home began, sometimes with a military escort, and lots of strict quarantine protocols at every place. "If I ever get home I'm going to get a dog and plant garlic," she promised herself. During the pandemic they had no work. There was a garden, however, and a dog.

These days they are working again. It is a well regulated industry. Polar guides have an association, various international polar codes and conventions regulate activity in these areas and protect them. An example of this working well was a recent trip to the sub-Antarctic islands of New Zealand. Some of the islands are untouched by human incursions and are teeming with bird life. The richness of the flora and fauna is extraordinary. More and more people are interested in seeing this so the entire journey was strictly managed. A New Zealand official even joined the trip to make sure the standards were abided by.

And that, of course, is an idea we all have to think about. By travelling, are we helping to destroy the precious places we want to see?

author Robyn Mundy's latest novel, 'Cold Coast' is available in your nearest book shop.



Red Decker's Official Sightseeing Tour of Hobart now stopping at the Maritime Museum!

In a fantastic development for local culture enthusiasts and visiting tourists alike, the Red Decker Company has introduced a new bus stop in Argyle Street's 'Museum precinct'. Perfectly positioned outside our front door at the Maritime Museum, this stop is also handy for the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery across the road, and Mawsons Huts Replica Museum just around the corner!

This addition to the city's hop-on-hop-off tour enhances accessibility to Hobart's cultural treasures and provides an enriched travel experience.

The new Museum stop is just one feature of Red Decker's popular 90-minute bus loop, which offers a thorough exploration of Hobart's CBD, the scenic foothills of kunanyi, and the historic waterfront.

The Red Decker tour is a brilliant way to spend the day, connecting passengers to several other iconic destinations. Here's our favourite stops:

✓ Visit Cascades Female Factory
Located in South Hobart, this UNESCO World Heritage-listed site is a compelling historical landmark that provides insights into the lives of female convicts in the 19th century. The stop provides a sobering yet essential exploration of Tasmania's convict past.

✓ Grab a cold one at Cascade Brewery
Worth it for the exquisite gardens and historic setting alone, you can plan to hop off the bus at Australia's oldest brewery at lunchtime to enjoy a hearty pub-style meal and sample Cascade's extensive range of beverages.

✓ Wander Princes Park
Take a look at the oldest surviving building in Battery Point - Semaphore Cottage - a site the Maritime Museum will soon be developing into an interpretive centre, telling important stories of what once was the largest semaphore communication system in Australia.



RED DECKER

Sail HMB Endeavour in 2024!

Get on board HMB *Endeavour* for an eighteenth-century historic replica sailing experience. Positions are available for active crew and a further four for supernumeraries (non-working passengers) on each voyage. Participation will ensure you can enjoy the world-famous Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

Register your interest by
November 15 2024
sail.endeavour@sea.museum

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AWBF 2025: New Zealand & The Pacific

Have you heard? The 2025 Australian Wooden Boat Festival is celebrating vessels with a connection to New Zealand or The Pacific, and the stories of boats interested in participating are already flooding in! Here's just a selection:

***Sidecar* – a Paulownia Pacific Proa**

Although it doesn't exactly look like it's made out of wood, Robert Zabukovec's sailing proa *Sidecar* is built from Paulownia, a hardwood timber native to east Asia. *Sidecar* was built in 2017 by Rob, who had previously built some dinghies, but when he retired and was looking for a second hand yacht, he couldn't find what he wanted. So decided, bugger it, why not build a proa! At 31ft in length and 18ft 9in in beam it was a considerable project, not only to build, but to manage on water. *Sidecar* can do double-figure boat speeds upwind, and excels in lighter winds.

***Tiare II* – A NZ Kauri/Spotted Gum cutter ketch**

Roghan Anderson's 38ft LOA vessel was built in 1955 in Auckland, designed by Bert Woollacott, and built by Allan Williams. *Tiare II* has previously cruised the Pacific extensively, with her interior laden with traditional carvings (thought to have been done in Tahiti). The vessel has journeyed through the North Pacific, to remote Asian islands and as far west as Reunion Island, but now resides on the Mornington Peninsula in Victoria where it has been undergoing maintenance work. If offered a berth, Roghan will be travelling to Tasmania with *Tiare II*'s previous owners onboard.

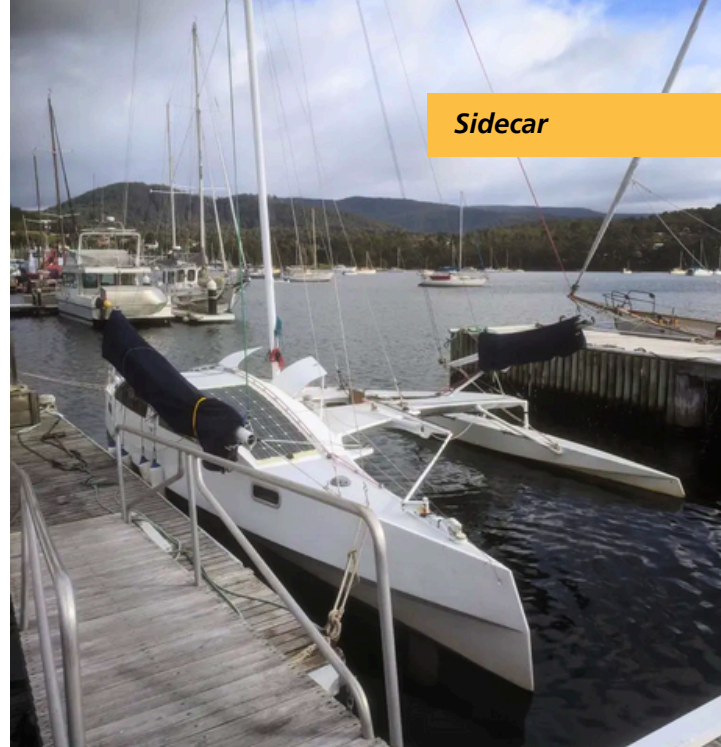
***Kurura* – Relaunched in May 2024**

Launched in 1949 as a motor sailor, it didn't take long for *Kurura* to be transformed into a racing yacht. After years of sailing around the East Coast of Australia, *Kurura* was moved to Tasmania in the 1980s. Many years later, the Roberts family took ownership and cruised her to Kempy's old shed at Woodbridge for works to be carried out by Odin Thom. Now that *Kurura* has undergone a significant restoration, the new owners are confident they can one day recreate the journey of previous owners – Laurie Gubb and girlfriend Hilda Clarke, who spent some time in the 1970s in New Zealand.

AUSTRALIAN
WOODEN
BOAT FESTIVAL

Does your boat have a connection to New Zealand and The Pacific? Why not bring it to the AWBF? All you have to do is enter an expression of interest, [here!](#)

Sidecar



Tiare II



Kurura



Pacific Adventurers join the AWBF line-up

The Australian Wooden Boat Festival is excited to confirm the first additions to the AWBF 2025 Wooden Boat Symposium line-up, with Thor F. Jensen and Tom Robinson joining the festivities for 2025.

Thor Jensen

Thor Jensen is a documentary filmmaker who circumnavigated Papua New Guinea in a traditional sailing vessel with local sailors and boatbuilders.



Tom Robinson

Australian adventurer Tom Robinson will be joining AWBF as a guest speaker at the Wooden Boat Symposium in 2025, to share his ambitious story of rowing across the Pacific Ocean in a wooden whaleboat.

Tom has recently spent time in France at the Brest and Douarnenez festivals. He's also been speaking at various events across the country since returning from his adventure.



SV *May Queen*: Australia's oldest sail trading vessel undergoes maintenance at Domain Slip

SV *May Queen*'s ongoing maintenance schedule has highlighted the dedication of its volunteer crew and TasPorts' significant role in preserving Tasmania's maritime history.

SV *May Queen*, built in 1867, holds the title of Australia's oldest sail trading vessel and is one of the few remaining wooden ships of its era still afloat worldwide. This historic vessel is currently undergoing essential maintenance at the Domain Slip to ensure its continued preservation and conservation.

Transporting *May Queen*, a vessel without a motor, from its home at Constitution Dock to the Domain Slip was no small feat. It required the vessel to be towed and then carefully maneuvered into place by punts. The vessel will be on the slip for two weeks, during which a dedicated team of four volunteers will carry out the necessary work, underscoring the unique challenges of maintaining such a historic vessel.

At the heart of *May Queen*'s preservation efforts are the dedicated volunteers, some of whom have been working on the vessel for decades. Graham Roberts and Phillip Calvert, both in their 80s, have been steadfast in their commitment to the vessel's upkeep for 20 and 10 years, respectively. Their dedication is a testament to the importance of *May Queen*'s preservation.

Graham shared, "With two new young guns volunteering on the crew, we hope to repaint the 21.5m Tasmanian blue gum and stringy bark hull with anti-foul paint from the rubbing strip to the keel after using a high-pressure wash to blast mussels and other debris off the hull and sealing any identified leaks."

Once *May Queen* returns to Constitution Dock, the volunteer crew will sand the Celery Top Pine deck floor before sealing it to protect against rain and wear, followed by caulking with a bitumen product. Additionally, a new canvas cover has been specially ordered to replace the existing hold cover that has been in place for over 30 years.



Phillip Calvert, a member of the volunteer crew, expressed the team's need for more 'hands on deck'. "We would greatly appreciate more volunteers to assist with the May Queen's preservation – if anyone is interested, please come and visit us when we're back at Constitution Dock! Your support can make a significant difference in our preservation efforts."

TasPorts' partnership with the *May Queen* Trust, providing berthing facilities for *SV May Queen* at Constitution Dock and contributing to its annual maintenance, underscores the importance of preserving Tasmania's rich maritime history. TasPorts, along with its predecessors, the Marine Board of Hobart and Hobart Ports Corporation, has a long-standing relationship with the *May Queen*, offering similar support for nearly 50 years.





MARITIME MUSEUM Tasmania

Across the River

Louis Rodway

8 July 2024 — 24 November 2024

A story of ferries and resilience