



Lakes Log

Volume 5 Issue 10

The Newsletter of Lakes Entrance Historical Society Inc.

A Voyage of No Return ... Shipwrecks on the East Gippsland Coast

The Society's exhibition 'A Voyage of No Return: Shipwrecks on the East Gippsland Coast' was a huge success.

The exhibition was open to the public from 10—27 January and attracted around 700 visitors.

While the stories covered wrecks right up the east coast to Cape Howe, the local vessels created a lot of interest.

Cr Arthur Allen officially opened the exhibition, pointing out the personal impact on his family when the ketch *Orme* disappeared in 1909.

The *Despatch* was the first of the larger steamers to pass through the new Entrance when it opened. A regular on the Melbourne to Lakes trading run, the *Despatch* had crossed the bar more than 2000 times before being wrecked in the entrance channel on 29 September 1911.



*The ill-fated Despatch loading at the wharf
Image: John Derbyshire Collection*

Over a hundred years later, the wreck is still visible and is monitored by Gippsland Ports.

65

Summer 2025

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The exhibition has now moved on to Orbest, with plans for Mallacoota to be the next port of call.

One of the earliest Lakes Entrance landmarks, the Lookout Tree on Jemmy's Point, has succumbed to the passage of time.

The Lookout Tree

by Marion Holding

Jemmy's Point, officially Mt Barkly, was named in 1860 to commemorate the visit of Sir Henry Barkly, Governor of Victoria.

This 61 metre hill appeared more like 71 metres high due to the timber on the summit and would have been a significant landmark for ships approaching the natural entrance to the Gippsland Lakes.

In 1875, as work on the artificial entrance was progressing, a Lighthouse Reserve was surveyed and marked off on Mt Barkly. It surrounded the old dead coast grey box (*eucalyptus bosisteanus*) and others still living — the leaves, buds and fruit enabling identification of the species.

When the new entrance was opened in 1889, the southern slope of Mt Barkly Lighthouse Reserve was cleared, leaving the Lookout Tree like a sentinel.

A platform with a triangular beacon was built on top of the dead tree. This 'tertiary survey station' lined up with other survey points at the Entrance and the approach to Cunninghame Arm, and all points west to Metung.

Early postcards show the Lookout Tree with a dangerous lean and huge poles propping up one side. The beacon on the top was accessed by a very long ladder with 34 rungs.

Intrepid tourists risked their lives to climb to the top and have their photographs taken by their wiser companions below.

A postcard taken in 1910 shows three men, two in dark suits and bowler hats on top of the tree.

These well-dressed young men were Mormon missionaries from America, taking time out to visit relatives in Lakes Entrance and Metung. While the triangulation beacon on top doesn't appear in this photo, it reappears in later images.

The white Mt Barkly Navigation Light was established on the true survey point in March 1923. It was mounted on a nine metre iron-framed tower, also accessed by a long ladder. It was positioned a few metres west of the Lookout Tree, which

Mormon missionaries at the top of the Lookout Tree in 1910

Image: Lakes Entrance Historical Society



Last days of a Lakes Entrance icon—this photo was taken on 17 October 2024—just three weeks before the old Lookout Tree crashed to the ground.

Image: Judy Davies

lost its initial purpose.

The timber lookout was built around 1927, with a very long ladder to the viewing platform, then steps halfway up the side of the structure to a small landing, then more steps to the deck.

By 1962 the timber lookout was considered to be unsafe and demolished, but the tree was spared, with signage attached to explain its significance. Sadly, this did not save it from the ravages of

Fortunately, this historic site was included in the East Gippsland Shire's plans to make the western entry to Lakes Entrance more welcoming.

On Friday 8 November 2024 at about 2.40pm, the Lookout Tree lost its fragile hold on earth and toppled to the ground.



Marion's memories

When I was told that the Lookout Tree on Jemmy's Point had fallen down I felt disbelief and regret.

That old tree was always standing there, part of the background of my childhood playtime around the lookout and the big logs on Jemmy's Point.

My grandparents Fred and Marion Legg lived in the last house on Lookout Road, calling their house 'Kalimna Gardens'.

My grandmother provided refreshments on the verandah to visitors. Grandfather attached a simple sign 'TEAS' on the old tree, with an enormous arrow pointing towards their home.

There were other signs attached to the tree from time to time.

The initials 'WTD' were those of William Thomas Doyle, employed by the Shire of Tambo to keep the area in good order.

His wife Alice was first cousin to Marion Legg, while the mother of Dan Laker (one of the Mormon boys up the tree in 1910) was another cousin.

All very tenuous connections to the tree, but such stories survive in family folklore. The Leggs and the Doyles have many descendants living and working in the Lakes Entrance area.

From a very early age I spent time with my grandparents, my playmate being my cousin Jimmy who lived with them. Our extensive playground near the Lookout was guarded by the old tree.

I learned to be very careful climbing up the timber lookout, particularly because the 'handrails' beside the step were just wire rope.

We'd look for the best wild cherry trees to eat the bitter fruit and chew wattle gum. We were warned of the dangers to our health, but that did not stop the habit—the hazards adding to the enjoyment.

During World War II a branch of the Volunteer Air Observers Corps was formed at Kalimna. An observation hut was built beside the Lookout with a clear view of the Entrance. The key to the hut was kept in a secret place (that everyone knew) hanging under the middle rail of Legg's front fence!

Jimmy, who did duty with an adult so he could show me how important he was, took the key and opened up the hut and also the timber cover on the viewing window.

Around the walls were pictures and silhouettes of enemy planes. It all seemed a bit creepy and I was not impressed.

In late 1944 Fred and Marion Legg's youngest son George lost both hands in a training accident at Canungra in Queensland. After rehabilitation, his first business interest at home on Kalimna was raising chickens for egg production.

Owing to marketing difficulties, he moved to Bairnsdale and his parents sold up their Lookout Road property and moved with him.

So my idyllic Jemmy's Point holidays ended. I am content today that I can recall so much of my childhood at the Lookout with the old tree looking on.

Mary Lydia Laughton married master mariner George Thomas Hegarty, and although they continued to live in Sydney, she never forgot the Kalimna Hotel and Lakes Entrance.

From the elegant residence in Cremorne and later at Cronulla, her property was always proudly named 'Kalimna'.

Mary lived in Nicholson Parade overlooking Gunnamatta Bay until the early 1960s, when she went to live with her son Tom. She died at Cronulla on 25 October 1969 at the age of 93.

Hegarty, George Thomas, Kalimna, Nicholson pde., C., master mariner, M
Hegarty, Mary Lydia, Kalimna, Nicholson pde., Cronulla, home duties, F

Electoral Rolls have Mary Hegarty nee Laughton living at 'Kalimna' in Cronulla from the 1930s

Mariners and ships in Australian Waters

CORINGLE

OF MELBOURNE, GEORGE T. HEGARTY, MASTER, BURTHEN 95.96/75.99 TONS
FROM THE PORT OF LAKES ENTRANCE, VIC. TO SYDNEY, NEW SOUTH WALES, 15TH JUNE 1915

Surname	Given name	Station	Age	Of what Nation	Status	Comments
HEGARTY	GEORGE T.	MASTER			CREW	
DOUGHTY	C.	MATE	32	GLOSTER	CREW	
LEE	E.J.	ENGINE DRIVER & DECK HAND	27	GIPPSLAND	CREW	
BRENNAN	G.F.	COOK & DECK HAND	25	GIPPSLAND	CREW	
MARTENEZ	F.	DECK HAND	26	SPAIN	CREW	
GEONIE	V.	DECK HAND	27	ITALY	CREW	

It is no wonder we are confused about how Kalimna was named.

Among the many theories to put us off the scent is a statement in 'The Story of Metung'

1977 by Gay Halstead that a journalist writing under the name The Vagabond coined the name.

This is incorrect, in fact The Vagabond (aka Julian Thomas) far from coming up with Kalimna himself, was 'surprised that the aborigines had chosen such an appropriate name'—which may be how the name Kalimna was thought to be aboriginal.

In 'The Entrance to the Gippsland Lakes' 1973 by ECG Bird and Jane Lemon, there is a reference (page 9) which states that, during McMillan's expedition to the Gippsland lakes, Jemmy's Point and Kalimna were named.

In 'Names around the Gippsland lakes' 1991 by Peter Gardner, the author refers

to many of the features of the lakes being named during the 1842-43 McMillan boat

trip. He explains that, in Greek, *kalus* means 'good' and *limini* means 'lake'.

Kalymnos is an island in the Dodecanese group of the South Aegean Islands of Greece. It is known for its sunshine and limestone rock climbing cliffs.

So we can be pretty certain that Kalimna was named in the early to mid-1880s during an expedition which included McMillan, other interested pastoralists, surveyors etc — and a sheep.

But who actually chose the name Kalimna? It's all Greek to me!

Marion Holding

The Magic of Kalimna

RAAF veteran crash boat to be restored

It's three years now since Harry Bowman donated his beloved WW2 vintage boat to the RAAF Museum at Point Cook.

Harry and his sister Jacinta bought the vessel back in 1986 after they found it moored on the Yarra River. A bit of a backwater then, this stretch of the river near the *Polly Woodside* is now a part of the bustling South Wharf tourist precinct.

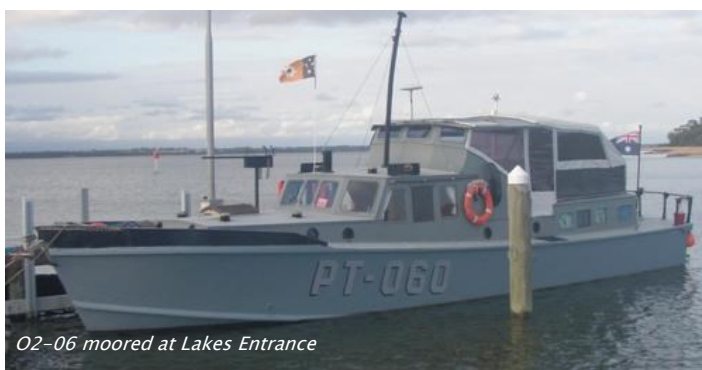
After getting the thumbs-up from his father, a WW2 Army veteran, Harry, his dad and lots of helpers sailed the vessel across Port Phillip Bay to the Mordialloc Creek. There a crane loaded it onto a huge boat trailer and it travelled along the Princes Highway to Sale.

Harry remembers this road trip as a major logistical exercise, followed by a scary launch into the Port of Sale using two cranes.

Harry and his family divide their time between Gippsland and Darwin, so the plan was that the vessel would be moored at Sale during the winter while they were up north, then they would take it down to Lakes Entrance for the summer where it generated a lot of interest from holiday-makers of all ages.

Although rescue launch O206 was built for the RAAF in 1941, Harry had it painted up as an American PT Boat.

Over some 35 years, the unusual vessel was a familiar sight around the Gippsland Lakes and waterways.



O2-06 moored at Lakes Entrance

The boat was always a major attraction at the Paynesville wooden boat show—never missing a year.

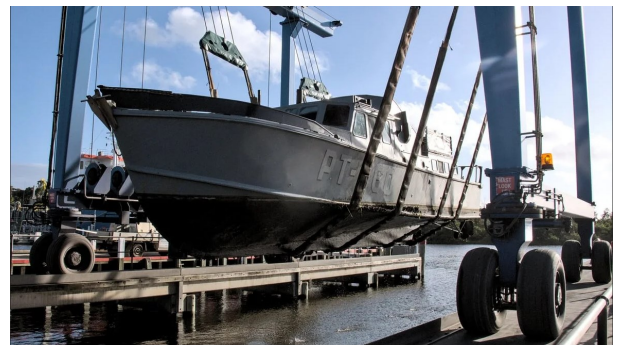
Harry kept the vessel in as original condition as possible, while also being their home and family cruiser in the summer.

Harry is obsessed with the boat's history and advises that O206 was one of 15 separate O2 class vessels and is now the only remaining one with the original superstructure.

Originally in service in the Gippsland Lakes, East Sale and Point Cook performing search and rescue duties, Harry believes it once travelled to Papua New Guinea with the RAAF, before being declared for disposal in 1954.

The RAAF operated boats until 1995, with the fleet peaking at 1300 during WW2.

Harry hoped his beloved O206 could join him in retirement in East Gippsland, but after many phone calls and letters he couldn't generate the interest and/or funding to turn the boat into a tourist attraction on the lakes.



O2-06 being pulled from the water at Lakes Entrance for transport to an Air Force History & Heritage Branch facility in Spotswood.

Image: Christopher Moon, <http://images.defence.gov.au/S20220341>

Eventually he made contact with David Gardner, who is the RAAF History and Heritage Branch curator at the Air Force Headquarters in Melbourne.

The RAAF Museum was excited to acquire the boat which will be restored to 1941 condition and its original livery.

Sources: 'Gippsland Times' 31 January 2022

Momentum Media Group

Australian Defence Department Images

Harry Bowman



Left: Harold (Harry) Bowman bids farewell to O206 as it leaves Lakes Entrance for the long drive to the RAAF History and Heritage facility.

Above: O206 at Point Cook where restoration of the WW2 search and rescue vessel to its original condition will be undertaken.

Lakes Entrance Historical Society is hoping to get Harry Bowman to come along and make a presentation to our members on the history of O206 and the RAAF crash boats in the next few months. Further details as soon as possible.

O206 is not an American vessel.

The PT boats used by the US Navy during WW2 were better known to the public, due to the PT 109 being commanded by Lieutenant (later President) John Kennedy when it was rammed and sunk by a Japanese warship in the Solomon Islands.

The PT boats were valued for their maneuverability and speed, and being wooden-hulled, low cost of construction.

There are only a handful of these vessels left now and the pressure is on in the US to restore them for posterity.



Marie Fish Milestone

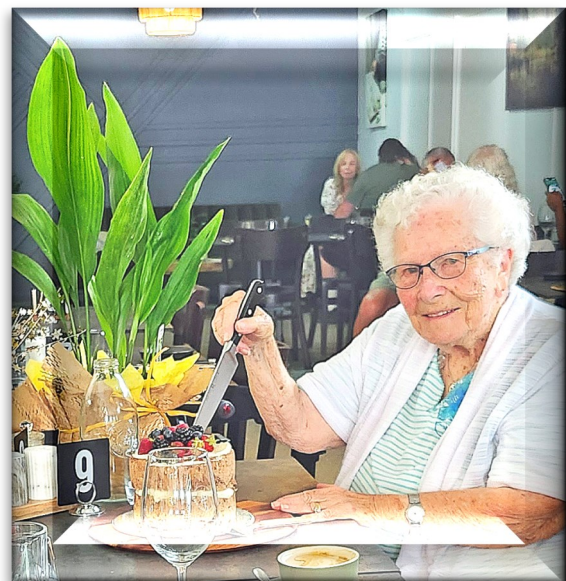
On 29 January, local legend Marie Fish was 95 years old.

Marie came to Lakes Entrance in the 1960s with her husband Rex and established Water's Edge caravan park on the Esplanade.

After selling the park, Marie was able to devote more of her time to her interests of art, history and gardening. She even found time to write a couple of local history books.

Since Rex's death in 2009, she has continued to take an active part in the Society's activities and is a much-valued life member.

Happy 95th Marie—here's to a good year!



Bon Voyage to HMS Bristol

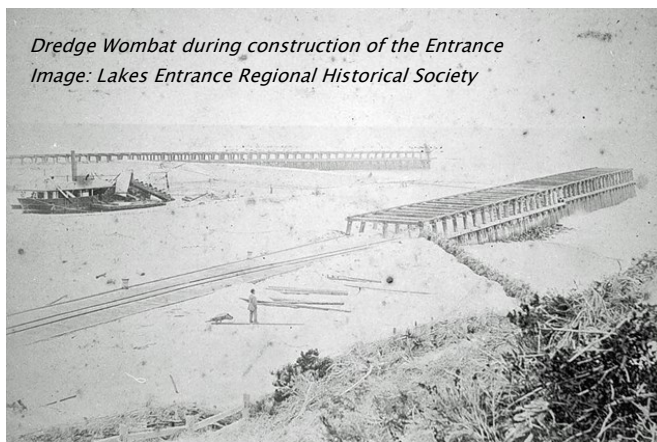
Many of our members were sad to see the de-accessioning of the intricately assembled model of *HMS Bristol*—made from the deck planking of the wrecked fishing boat *Maramingo* by the late Alan Rutherford.

With such a tenuous link to Lakes Entrance history and nowhere to display it, the Society made the decision to let it go.

The model is now in the not insignificant collection of Robert Ferguson—the successful bidder in our blind auction.



Rob Ferguson with *HMS Bristol*
Image: Jenny Mays



Dredge Wombat during construction of the Entrance
Image: Lakes Entrance Regional Historical Society

Probus Presentation

We are looking forward to a visit from the Burwood East Probus Club on 24 March.

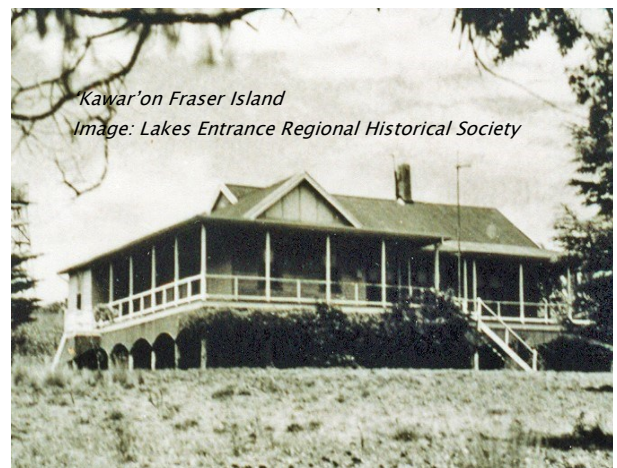
Jenny Mays has prepared a fantastic presentation featuring images that highlight aspects of the town's history and some of the points of interest that should be explored. Construction of the Entrance will definitely be on her list.

Fraser Island? Yes, please!

Steeped in local history, with many colourful owners, the gracious and charming 'Kawar' homestead on Fraser Island overlooks the grounds ready to receive guests.

The 30 hectare island is a peaceful home to a range of wildlife, including a happy mob of kangaroos.

Just a 30-minute boat trip across the lake, a visit by Lakes Historical Society members is currently being planned for early May.



Kawar' on Fraser Island
Image: Lakes Entrance Regional Historical Society

Reminder ... we are now on Victorian Collections.

It's a great collection and we invite members and readers to check it out.

Search by category or go to:

<https://victoriancollections.net.au/organisations/lakes-entrance-regional-history-centre-museum>

