



Tomaree Museum Association



NEWSLETTER August 2026

Members and Friends of TMA 2026 has been a busy and productive year for the Tomaree Museum Association

As you will read in the following pages, we have kicked many goals so far this year and have more in store before Santa arrives! This latest newsletter includes updates on our exhibitions beginning with the ANZAC Exhibition, held for the fourth consecutive year at the Visitor Centre Nelson Bay (VIC). As always, this display was very well attended, particularly on 25 April when large numbers of people headed into the VIC after the march & commemorative service. The articles on pages 3 & 4 in the newsletter will give you a good overview of the local heroes honoured and some of the artifacts on display. Our second 2026 exhibition, *Valerie Taylor: An Underwater Life* is described on pages 5 & 6 in the newsletter and details much of the work involved behind the scenes. This remarkable exhibition, held at Tomaree Lodge Main Hall during March & April was ideally timed to take advantage of the Easter long weekend and NSW school holidays. The exhibition was open every day and I am excited to advise you that we received nearly 5000 visitors over the four weeks!

I take this opportunity to thank all our amazing volunteers who manned the exhibition during the full four weeks. Everyone did a wonderful job, including signing new members, keeping a record of visitor postcodes/countries of origin etc whilst answering a multitude of enquires about the display.

Volunteer feedback after the exhibition was enthusiastic and I believe those involved enjoyed the experience, so if you would like to join our team and assist with manning our exhibitions, keep an eye out for our emails announcing future exhibitions and calling for volunteers.

We are currently working hard on planning for our next exhibition titled *Shipwrecked*, which you will read more about on page 7 of the newsletter.

TMA press releases have already elicited offers of images, artefacts, audio-visual productions, memoirs and model ships to enhance and complement the visitors' experience. Additionally, we will once again be supported by the Australian National Maritime Museum which is lending us their *Submerged travelling Expo* - nine large banners detailing famous wrecks around the entire Australian coast.

Atlantis Port Stephens will again support our displays with their incredible collection of sea-creature models and interactive machines which are always a hit with younger visitors.

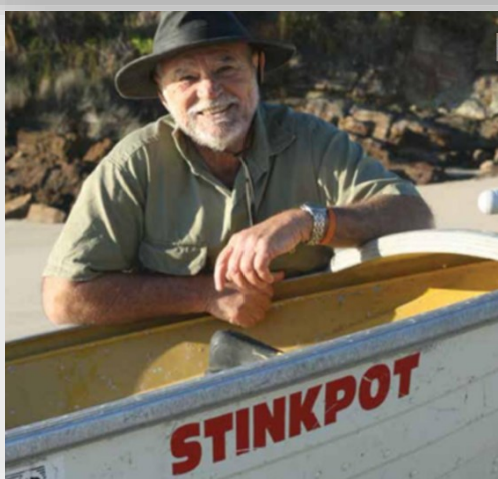
John Stinker Clarke

By the time you read this, you will be aware of our number-one ticket holder, John (Stinker) Clarke's very own shipwreck when his beloved tinny *Stinkpot* was swamped by a large wave while he was fishing off Fingal Lighthouse and smashed against the rocks. Luckily Stinker was wearing a life jacket and that, combined with a wooden oar and an upturned plastic bucket, helped to keep him afloat for several hours before he was located.

He was conscious throughout his ordeal and rescued by the Port Stephens Water Police, assisted by Marine Rescue NSW.

He told me that, due to severe hypothermia, he probably only had another ten minutes to live if he hadn't been rescued when he was. He asked me to pass on to our members this very important advice when fishing offshore - to always tell someone where you are going and when you will be back, to always log on and off with Marine Rescue and most importantly, always wear a life jacket.

You will be able to see the badly damaged *Stinkpot* at our *Shipwrecked* exhibition and Stinker has agreed to give a talk on local shipwrecks and his (nearly fatal) ordeal.



Future of Tomaree Lodge site

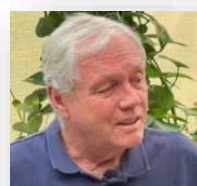
I represent TMA on the Tomaree Headland Heritage Group (THHG) which has worked tirelessly with the Department of Community and Justice (DCJ) to ensure the Tomaree Lodge site remains in public hands and is re-purposed for community use.

DCJ issued the Concept Plan last year and promised a Master Plan for the site would be issued by Xmas 2025. I can advise you that, although late, the Master Plan has been released and you can access it at the THHG website at

www.tomareeheadlandportstephesn.com.au

Unfortunately, the Master Plan is generic and high level and does not provide clear options for either use of the site or a plan of management. It does, however, mention the word 'museum' a couple of times, albeit not until page 47!

We are always looking for new members, so spread the word around your friends and neighbours that all new members receive one of our free calico tote bags, featuring an endangered Goulds Petrel - very stylish! I hope you enjoy reading our newsletter as much as we enjoy putting it together for you.



Doug Cross,
Chairman



2026 marked our 4th ANZAC Exhibition at the Visitor Centre Nelson Bay

TMA paid tribute to a further three local heroes -

- ♦ WW1 veteran James Dalton of Nelson Bay and
- ♦ Ruby and Pearl Hyde from Anna Bay who served in the Women's Land Army during WWII



T/SGT James Dalton R2468

James Dalton joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) in August 1914. This select group was later known as 'the originals'.

Because of his rural background, James was initially placed into the Divisional Ammunition Column and was later attached to the 2nd Brigade Ammunition Column as a gunner.

On 18th October 1914, he sailed from Sydney onboard the transport ship *HMAT Argyllshire* bound for Egypt.



James landed in Gallipoli in mid-July 1915, and shortly afterwards was wounded during the Battle of Lone Pine. He was evacuated from Gallipoli to Egypt in December 1915.

In March 1916, Dalton was sent to France with the 2nd Field Artillery Brigade (4th Battery) and promoted to Bombardier. During the Battle of the Somme on 22 June 1916, he was wounded in the chest and back, after which he spent six months in England recuperating from his wounds.

On his return to the Western Front early in 1917, James was promoted to Corporal and fought at Lagnicourt (March-April 1917). During action near Cambrai on 25 June 1917, he was again wounded in the arm. After recuperating for a month, he rejoined the 4th Battery in Belgium on his promotion to temporary Sergeant.

On 11 October 1917 at Oosthoek (near Ypres), during the early stages of the Battle of Passchendaele, **SGT Dalton was killed** by a direct shell hit as he was setting up a field gun for action.



SGT James Dalton was awarded these medals for service in the Great War

1914 – 1915
Star



British War Medal

Victory Medal
Gallipoli



ANZAC Commemorative Medal



World War 1 Victory
Memorial Plaque
'Dead Man's Penny'



The 1914-1918 Memorial Plaque was presented to the next-of-kin of the men and women who died during World War I. The bronze medallion features an image of Lady Britannia surrounded by two dolphins (*representing Britain's sea power*) and a lion (*representing Britain*) standing over a defeated eagle (*symbolising Germany*). Around the outer edge are the words 'He died for freedom and honour'. The shape and appearance of the plaque earned it nicknames such as the 'Dead Man's Penny', the 'Death Penny', and the 'Widow's Penny'



Female Relative Badge

On the home front, this Badge was issued to the nearest female relative (usually wives or mothers) of men & women who engaged in active service overseas during the First World War.

The number of bars below the badge represent each serving family member.

SGT James Dalton is buried at The Huts Cemetery, Dickibusch near Leper, Belgium, in Plot 9, Row D, Grave 13

Lest We Forget

2026 ANZAC Exhibition

Australian Women's Land Army

Ruby Joyce and Pearl Grace Hyde

Background and formation of the Australian Women's Land Army

The AWLA was established as a national organisation in July 1942. Its role was to replace the male workers on rural properties who had enlisted or were engaged in other essential work such as manufacturing munitions.

The AWLA was not an enlisted service but a voluntary group who were paid directly by the owners of the properties where they worked.

Membership of the AWLA was open to women who were British subjects aged 18-50, although younger woman could only join with their parents' permission. Land Armies were established in each State - whilst most volunteers worked within the State where they enlisted, some chose to travel Interstate when seasonal work required all hands on deck e.g. fruit picking, seeding or ploughing fields for new crops.

Living and learning on the job

The majority of the Land Girls were housed in hostels in farming areas where volunteers received formal training, which varied depending on the work required on individual properties. They were initially supplied with uniforms, bedding and other essentials (depending on the location), but were not involved with domestic duties. These 'Girls with Grit' undertook manual labour, animal husbandry and in fact most of the work involved with primary industry.

Many local women volunteered

Ruby and Pearl Hyde lived with their parents and three other siblings on Marsh Road at Salt Ash. Once the AWLA was established, they were keen to volunteer but, as they were both under 18, they required special consent from their parents to join.

During their service, the girls were deployed to farms in south-western NSW near Griffith, Leeton, Mirrool and Ballingall. Ruby and Pearl were mainly employed in picking fruit, growing vegetables and gardening. As they were a long way from home, it was a great comfort for both to have been assigned to the Riverina.

Saluting their Service

Ruby married Thomas Davis in 1949 with whom she had three children. She died at Bulahdelah in 1992, aged 66.

Pearl married Victor Thomlinson in 1950 and also had three children. She lived at Anna Bay until her death in 1994, aged 67.



The Civilian Service Medal above was finally awarded to members of the AWLA in 1995, sadly, far too late for the many who received it posthumously



(left) studio portrait of Pearl Hyde in AWLA dress uniform

(below) Pearl & Ruby volunteered for an extension of their service. In mid 1944 they were classified as 'permanent'



AWLA banner at ANZAC exhibition Nelson Bay Visitor Centre

we WILL remember them





REVIEW

Stunning new Exhibition at the Main Hall Tomaree Headland *Valerie Taylor - an Underwater Life* March - April 2026

For the very first time, this celebrated exhibition travelled beyond the Australian National Maritime Museum, giving locals and visitors a rare opportunity right here in Port Stephens to discover the life and legacy of Valerie Taylor, one of Australia's most extraordinary underwater pioneers.

The exhibition ticked many firsts for TMA:-

- ◆ First exhibition at Tomaree Headland Hall
- ◆ First time the refurbished hall was our venue
- ◆ First time a TMA exhibition was open 7 days a week
- ◆ First time many of our volunteers had the opportunity to interact with visitors and add to our membership



Tomaree Headland Main Hall is a beautiful venue for TMA exhibitions

Thank you from volunteers manager Jodie Reid



Much of the success of the Valerie Taylor exhibition was due to the dedication and support of our volunteer guides.

A total of 27 volunteer guides assisted visitors throughout the exhibition which was open for six hours each day, with guides working 2 x three-hour shifts. Volunteers worked in teams of two or three to ensure we could comfortably accommodate the visitor numbers, particularly during the busy school holidays and Easter weekend.

The guides welcomed visitors, recorded attendance numbers, directed visitors through the exhibition, answered questions, assisted with signing up new TMA members and accepting donations.

They also provided valuable support to visitors of all ages, ensuring those with limited mobility could fully access the exhibition, while also keeping the children's colouring-in and activity tables well stocked.

The TMA committee extends our sincere thanks to all the volunteers who generously gave their time to support the exhibition. Your enthusiasm and commitment made a significant contribution to its success and we hope you and others will be able to assist again in future exhibitions.

This exhibition was timed to cover the Easter long weekend and the April school holidays which allowed us maximum exposure to visitors as well as people who discovered TMA during their walks around the headland.



Official opening ceremony was well attended

Once again, TMA was fortunate to be supported by the amazing sculptures created by Atlantis Port Stephens! Their sea creatures were perfect additions to the Val Taylor story and, as always, were a major hit with all our younger visitors



Shipwrecked!

New TMA exciting exhibition on the way

As you read in our previous newsletter, we are planning a fascinating exhibition about shipwrecks which happened along the NSW coast between Newcastle and Seal Rocks, as well as some of the vessels wrecked inside Port Stephens.

The exhibition will profile a selection from over 600 vessels, chosen to cover a range of dates, different types of the ships known to have been wrecked, the history behind them and the number of lives lost.

Visitors will learn from (*at least*) 12 pull-up banners designed by TMA, profiling individual vessels:-

- **Pappinbarra** – ran aground in 1929 on rocks below the Outer light – no lives lost
- **Maitland** – sunk by Maitland Gale in Pittwater 1898 – only 24 survivors
- **Sygna** - ran aground Stockton Bight 1974 – everyone walked ashore but ship split in 2 – forward section towed to Japan for repairs
- **Lady Nelson** – beached on Barbar Island in 1826 to take on supplies – all crew murdered by locals & vessel burned
- **Pasha Bulker** – ran aground on Nobbys Beach Newcastle in 2007 – all hands survived
- **Macleay** – sunk off Boondelbah Island in 1911 - 17 men and 3 horses drowned - only 2 men survived
- **Oakland** – sunk at the entrance to Port Stephens in 1901 - 11 lives lost - wreck is now a popular diving spot
- **Cawarra** – sank in 1866 off Stockton Oyster Bank - 60 lives lost
- **Berbice** – sunk near Stockton Surf Club June 1888 - all rescued by the Rocket Brigade
- **Durisdeer** - hit Stockton Beach 1895 in a storm – Rocket Brigade saved all 17 crew
- **Catterthun** – ran aground on Seal Rocks 1895 - 60 lives lost. She was carrying 9000 gold sovereigns in the cargo
- **Psyche** – sunk off Corlette 1924 - was used by the RAN in the 1914-1918 War
- **Cutty Sark** – the famous Clipper Ship now a tourist attraction in Greenwich UK - she made many visits to Newcastle
- Newcastle Rocket Brigade - operated between 1866 & 1974, saving many lives



The Australian National Maritime Museum is once again collaborating with TMA by lending us nine fascinating banners profiling several of the shipwrecks which occurred in other Australian States.

But wait - there's more!

In addition to the information panels, the exhibition will display a selection of wooden model ships and other artefacts, many of which are generously on loan from the Newcastle Maritime Museum collection.

And even more....

Following their recent successful sculpture show at the Nelson Bay Visitor Centre, *Atlantis* Port Stephens are supporting the Shipwrecked Exhibition with models of their sea creatures, as well as many interactive screens which are always a big part of the experience for younger family members.

And a BIG surprise!

An exciting new Atlantis sculpture designed specifically for TMA....

psststill under wraps so you will have to visit the exhibition to see it for yourself!



OPEN EVERY DAY 9am—3pm

Main Hall

Tomaree Lodge Precinct

Tomaree Headland Shoal Bay

FREE ENTRY

TMA continues fund-raising through Bunnings BBQs



next BBQ Saturday 19 September

Can you help?

TMA needs volunteers for two shifts:
8.30am - 12 noon and 12.30 - 3pm
We supply aprons, gloves & cooking utensils
- and each volunteer gets a free sandwich!
Please let us know if you are available -
just call or email Warwick 0418 635095
matho44@bigpond.com
to let him know which shift you would prefer

TMA is always updating!

keep in touch with us via our website:
<https://tomareemuseum.org.au/>

follow us on Facebook
[https://www.facebook.com/search/top?
q=tomaree%20museum](https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=tomaree%20museum)

Shipwrecked Exhibition opens 26/09

2026 Committee

Chairman - Doug Cross
Vice Chairman & IT Manager
- Noel Shang
Secretary - Ally Clough
Treasurer - Jennifer Gray
Historian - Mary Sillince
Publicity Officer -
Kevin McGuiness
Volunteers Manager -
Jodie Reid
Grants Manager - Chris Peters
Researcher -
Grenville Stevens
General - Warwick Mathieson

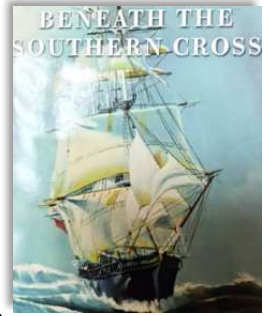


Research rooms – Salamander Library

TMA regularly receives enquiries about the history of our area - we hold a comprehensive collection of documents, maps and images in our research rooms within the Tomaree Library where visitors are welcome to browse or seek specific information. If you can spare a few hours occasionally, our rooms are open 10am - 1pm Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

Interested?

Contact IT Manager Noel Shang
noel@tomareemuseum.org.au



2026 AGM was a huge success!

TMA 2026 Annual General Meeting was held at Salamander Library on 7 August. Chairman Doug Cross presented an overview of the 2025/26 financial year, followed by the activities and events which contributed to our busiest year to date. The meeting unanimously voted for Members of the Committee due for re-election and welcomed newcomers to their roles. The Chairman warmly congratulated the many volunteers who made our first event at Tomaree Headland Hall (*Val Taylor exhibition*) such a resounding success, particularly as it signalled a new milestone for TMA i.e. the first exhibition to be fully manned and opened to the public seven days a week - *read the full story on pages 6 and 7.*



**surprise guest Daisy Hammond was shipwrecked as a baby on the PS Maitland in 1898*