



# CHANNEL Museum



1755 Channel Highway, Margate TAS 7054 – Ph: 03 6267 2333.

[www.channelmuseum.org.au](http://www.channelmuseum.org.au) [secretary@channelmuseum.org.au](mailto:secretary@channelmuseum.org.au)

Museum – Research Room – Gallery – Camera Collection - Café

## October conference of the Huon and Kingborough History & Museum Network (HKHMN)



The HKHMN had a very successful exhibition and conference from Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October until Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> October 2025 at the Kingborough Hub. Network members hosted stalls promoting their organisation through the week, and on the Saturday there was a conference with a range of interesting topics and speakers. Michele Mason from the Channel Museum compered the conference. Fiona Campbell from Volunteering Tasmania (<https://volunteeringtas.org.au>) gave an interesting presentation, and noted that they are working with the State

Government to remove the fee for Working with Vulnerable People cards for volunteers. Warwick Lee talked about the project he was involved in between the Tasmanian Parliament and the Tasmanian Family History Society to digitise parliamentary papers. A “sacrificial” set of parliamentary papers had the spines cut off and the papers run through scanners. The scanned documents are available on the web, and can be searched by keywords. The Channel Museum’s Lara Colrain gave a very interesting talk about conservation and preservation of museum artefacts.

Dr Imogen Wegman from the University of Tasmania spoke about the family history program at UTAS (see also Andy Henebury’s notes on page 3). Richie Wooley spoke about his book *Amy Sherwin : the Tasmanian nightingale*, and Andrew Tomes talked about the use of eHive at the Channel Museum.



*Dr Imogen Wegman from UTAS*

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## President's Report

Where has the time gone?? We are almost at the end of another year and thinking of Christmas, hopefully time spent with family and friends. A little bit of Summer would also help.



Ever since I came to Tasmania, I have been keen to tiptoe through the tulips in bloom (No, I didn't have a ukelele). On a cold, wet and windy October weekend I finally had my chance to attend the Tulip Festival in Wynyard. Apart from the weather it was such a delight to see rows upon rows of these beautiful blooms, not to mention the vast variety of tulips and tree peonies for sale. Who knew there were so many colours and varieties. A little disappointed that not all paddocks had been planted, however those that were, created a lovely vista.

Much has been happening behind the scenes at the Museum, keeping our volunteers busy. Progress is being made within our storage facility, bringing the BIG move closer.

The Gift Shop has had an injection of new products just in time for Christmas. Local woodwork such as bowls, seed dippers, 40-year calendars, wooden pens, and pen

*Judi recently tiptoeing through the tulips...*

holders, spinning tops (great fun), BBQ caddy, wall art and more. We have also introduced a selection of ceramics made by an emerging local ceramicist. These include coffee beakers, bowls, and plates. Come and have a look!

The 'Night at the Museum' continues to draw visitors to the Museum on the second Wednesday of each month. December will highlight Neil Sorenson's adventures through Ireland and Scotland. This will be both informative and entertaining as is Neil's way. The next N@M will be held in February 2026. Once again thanking Sheila for her enthusiasm and significant efforts in organizing a wonderful variety of topics and speakers over the past couple of years. Next year Andy will be taking the reins for this program. If there is a topic you would like to know more about please contact Andy at [secretary@channelmuseum.org.au](mailto:secretary@channelmuseum.org.au).

School groups and coach tours have been constant and continue to educate, amuse, and entertain our visitors with many positive comments about the displays. Andrew has continued to increase our visitation through these activities – thankyou Andrew and the volunteer guides.

Andy has taken on the Web page and Facebook duties, so please check these regularly, as he adds new items as they emerge.

Web Page [www.channelmuseum.org.au](http://www.channelmuseum.org.au)

Facebook – Channel Museum, Margate

VALE – Harald Goetz and Roger McNeice, both will be sadly missed.

Finally, I would like to extend a sincere thankyou to all our volunteers for your commitment to the Museum and wish you and yours a very happy and safe Xmas.

Judi Castle

President

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One of the exhibitors at the HK Network conference at the hub last week was the University of Tasmania. In case you were not able to attend, the presentation subject was a UTAS diploma course in Family history. This is made up of four Foundation units:

- Introduction to family history
- Writing Family History
- Place, Image, Object
- Convict Ancestors

(If you don't have any convicts in your family, one will be provided)

Four of the following introductory units:

- The family Saga
- Oral History
- Families and War
- Migrant families
- The family photo essay

Each of the units lasts for 1 term, (4 terms per year). The course is entirely online and there are no exams to pass.

Course materials are video lectures, audio recordings, podcasts and short readings.

Course material becomes available on Monday morning and one could expect to spend 6 to 8 hours per week per unit.

I had to contact UTAS to find out the course costs, the indicative fee for 2025 is \$13,914. This may rise for 2026.

The next intake is for Term 1, commencing on 2 February 2026

For more information: [utas.edu.au/family-history](https://utas.edu.au/family-history)

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## John Midson (1820-1886) : from ratcatcher to land owner

Maree Da Costa

John Midson was born in 1820 at Helions Bumpstead, Essex which is near the Suffolk and Cambridgeshire borders. He married Rebecca Whiting (1823-1883) in 1841 at Helions Bumpstead. Rebecca was born in nearby Haverhill, Suffolk.

John appears with his parents and 7 siblings in the 1841 Census for Helions Bumpstead. His father Robert is a thatcher, and his mother was Harriet (nee Tilbrook).

The young Midson family appears in the 1851 Census with John and Rebecca and their three children (Eli, Emma & Enoch) all born in the parish. They are living at Wiggins Green, Helions Bumpstead and John's occupation is recorded as ratcatcher.

Eli was born around 1843. Emma was born in 1845 and baptised at St Andrews on 6th July 1845. Her father's occupation is given as labourer. Enoch was born about 1849.



***The Rat-Catcher and His Dogs, by Thomas Woodward, c. 1824.***

<https://www.laphamsquarterly.org/roundtable/her-majestys-rat-catcher>

In the mid-1800s, working as a ratcatcher in Essex was no easy feat. The role was marked by irregular employment, a lack of regulation, and a place on the outskirts of society. Those in the profession were often regarded with a combination of distaste and grudging acceptance, reflecting the uncomfortable balance between their necessity and their low social standing.

The unpleasant nature of the job meant that ratcatchers remained at the bottom of the social ladder. Nevertheless, the rapid urban growth in nineteenth-century England created ideal conditions for rats to thrive, exacerbating public health concerns.

As a result, rat-catchers became an essential—if unwelcome—presence amid the challenges of urban life... Even Queen Victoria needed a ratcatcher.

On 21st August 1852, John and Rebecca Midson, together with their three eldest children, departed from Plymouth aboard the 415-ton barque Australasia. John is recorded as a farm labourer, travelling with his wife and children. The ship carried a total of 221 immigrants and 14 additional passengers. Their journey concluded on 5th December 1852, when they arrived in Hobart Town, Tasmania.

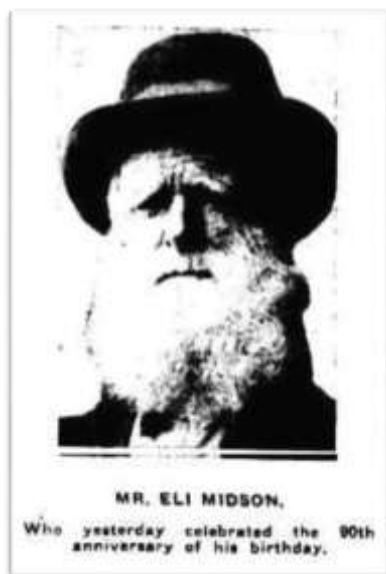
...On arrival the Midson family, after spending three nights in the barracks, went to O'Brien's Bridge (now Glenorchy) where John worked in a tannery and young Eli worked as a cow keeper. Three months later John went to the gold fields at Ballarat and Rebecca took up work as a nurse in Hobart. The visit to the gold fields was not lucrative with John only earning his keep and when he returned to Tasmania the family made the move to North West Bay where John selected 100 acres under the Native Youth Act and leased another 400 acres.

It is known that their three children born in England—Eli, Emma, and Enoch—would marry and establish themselves in Tasmania. Sadly, Enoch Midson died aged 26 at Margate after falling from his horse.

John and Rebecca soon welcomed several more children into their family. Some of these children died young, but among those who survived were Harriet, Albert, and Aaron Midson. The identification of some of these children is complicated by the fact that several were not named when their births were registered. However, it is probable that the male Midsons born in 1858 and 1862 were William and Robert, respectively. The female Midson born in 1860 is likely to have been Elizabeth 'Betsy' Midson, who later married Henry John Stewart in Kingston in 1877 and passed away on 18th January 1888, aged 27.

Rebecca Midson died in 1883 aged 60 of cancer. John died a few years later aged 66, also of cancer. Probate of £194 was granted to his eldest son Eli in 1887. In John's will it states that he leaves land of 62 acres and 23 acres to his son Eli, 101.5 acres of land situated 3 miles from Margate known as his 'old property' to his daughter Emma and requires £20 to be paid to his daughter Harriet (Mrs Walsh), within a month of this death. He also leaves money to his grandchildren Emily Jane and Rebecca Matilda Midson (daughters of Enoch) which they will receive when they are older.

John and Rebecca had at least twelve children, most of whom thrived, married, and eventually relocated throughout the colonies, including Tasmania, Victoria, and New Zealand.



Son Eli's 90th birthday was noted in the Mercury on Thursday 29th December 1932, p.7.

John Midson was a prominent early settler who made a lasting impact on the Margate community. In 1885, one of his most significant contributions was the donation of land adjacent to All Saints Anglican Church, which became the site of the local cemetery. This generous act not only provided a resting place for many community members but also cemented his legacy within the town.

In 1886, John Midson was laid to rest in the very cemetery he helped establish. Notably, he was the first burial there, and the only member of his family to be buried there,

further highlighting the unique connection between his legacy and the Margate community.



Headstone of John Midson "*The giver of this cemetery*", photo [http://www.ozgenonline.com/~riacaroline/Margate/MIDSON,%20John%20\(mar\).jpg](http://www.ozgenonline.com/~riacaroline/Margate/MIDSON,%20John%20(mar).jpg)

This article includes parts of Maree's full article which is available in the Library, with the family history folders at FHIST0118.

## Introducing — Andy Henebury

As you can tell whenever I speak, I was born in London and even though I have lived in Australia for fifty years my cockney accent is still present. For most of my young life I lived in Portobello Road, where the famous antique market is. My wife Jann and I watched a video on YouTube recently, where a person had filmed their journey walking down the street on a Saturday during the markets. Things had changed but I knew every inch of the journey even though in my mind I could see how it was in the 60s.

I once saw John Wayne walking down the markets, and if you saw the movie “Notting Hill”, the house where the main character lived had a bright blue door; I used to deliver the newspapers there.

After I had spent a year in Canada working as a draftsman, I returned home and married my Australian girlfriend on my 24<sup>th</sup> birthday; and I have never forgotten my anniversary from that day. That is how on the last day of 1976 I arrived in Australia as a souvenir my wife picked up on her European trip.

The next seven years I worked as a draftsman, while at the same time I attended what is now the University of Technology Sydney, and graduated with a degree in Mechanical Engineering. During this period, I worked on the tourist resort development at Uluru (Ayes Rock), which was interesting because of the unique environmental conditions.

In 1985, I joined the Commonwealth Government’s Department of Construction. I spent 11 years involved in the redevelopment on Garden Island dockyard in Sydney and was also involved in the building maintenance at Richmond and Williamstown Air Bases.

1996 saw a change in government policy and the department I worked for was disbanded and sold off to private enterprise. I had the foresight to see this coming and had gone back to tech and commenced a diploma course in electronics at TAFE, the idea being that when I was retrenched, I could spend my time finishing my course while looking for employment.

However the government took so long winding up the department, I had already completed the TAFE course. Thus when the time came and I was put on a period of one year of retraining with government assistance, I attended a Microsoft® course and became Certified by them.

“On my way” I thought, but I was overqualified for entry level work, and inexperienced for senior positions. An employment agency once asked me to stop applying for positions with them because of this, but mainly because I was too old at 47 to be making a move into IT work.

However, I had a bit of luck as an advert appeared in Wednesday’s Australian newspaper for a desktop support person at the University of New South Wales. I applied and got the job. I later found out how lucky I was, they already had someone in the position and only advertised outside the University for appearances sake, but the person was promoted to a different department whilst I was being interviewed.

I started at UNSW as desktop support with the intention of obtaining two years experience on my resumé and then going out into the world of IT. However, I was promoted into a senior administration position before the end of the two-year period, and I ended up staying in the IT department for 18 years.

In 2015 our lives changed dramatically. Our elder daughter Laura was married and living in Hobart; she collapsed at home and was rushed to Royal Hobart where brain cancer was diagnosed.

Jann and I supported Laura and Jason by staying with them on a relay basis whilst Laura recovered in hospital and at home. I was still working, and Jann was the sole carer for her elderly mother at the time.

2019 saw another change. Laura gave birth to our granddaughter, we came down to Hobart and stayed in an air BnB for a couple of weeks to see how things were going. One night we looked at each other and said, “what are we doing living in Gosford now?”. Laura could do with our help; Jann’s mum had by now passed away and our younger daughter had settled in Melbourne, thus we packed up and moved to Hobart.

For five years everything was settled, Laura and Jason and our granddaughter lived in Newtown and our younger daughter Kate and husband Chris lived in Melbourne. Then our grandson arrived in Melbourne last year. I will be able to continue exploring Tasmania’s past as our preference is to drive up to Devonport and catch the ferry to Geelong rather than flying to Melbourne.



I love life here in Tasmania, I am quite content to spend my time exploring places and history. Once when we were in Strahan, I was speaking to a young lady who worked on the restored railway, "I was born in London, I moved to Sydney and thought it small, then onto Hobart which was smaller still and I even think I could live in Strahan as it is smaller again. My wife thinks it's because I have become a grumpy old man."  
"Oh you'd get on alright down here then", she replied.

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## Farewell Melissa



One of our reception volunteers, Melissa Grabert finished up on 19 November 2025. Melissa started as a volunteer at the Channel Museum in December 2023 shortly after moving to Margate from Melbourne. Melissa provided a friendly welcome to museum visitors and will be missed.

Melissa also served on the committee and updated the Museum Facebook page.

Melissa has now set up her new business, *Coaching for Life*, and will be providing generalised coaching specialising in end-of-life literacy, running group programs and one on one sessions to assist people in getting their end-of-life affairs organised.

We wish Melissa all the best in her new business venture and thank her for her contribution to the Channel Museum.

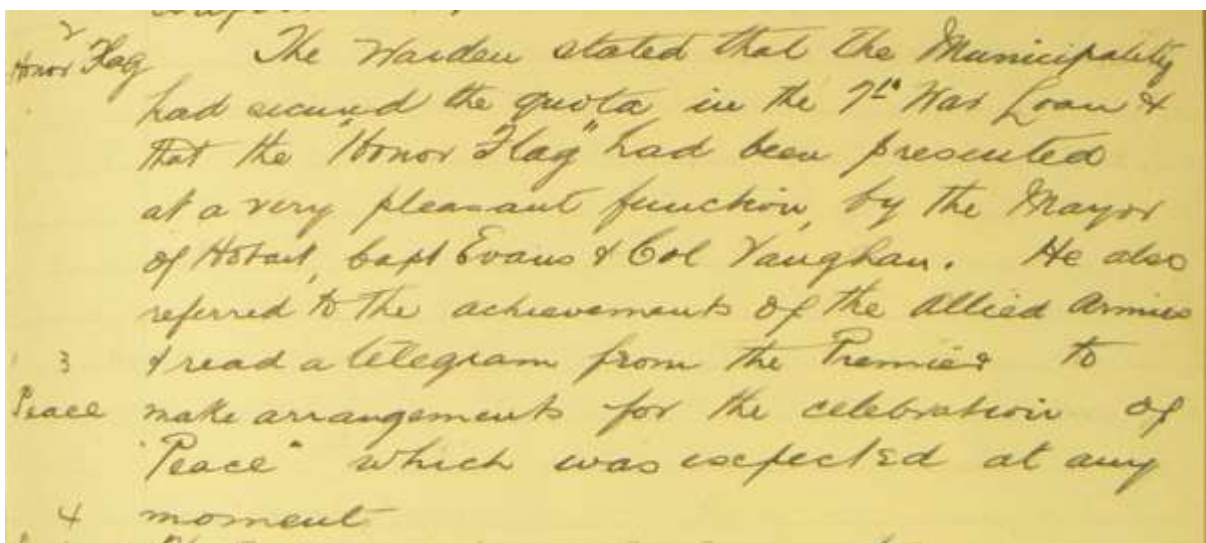
Andrew Tomes

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## Kees' Council snippets

During WWI, citizens were requested to put money into a "War Loan". (Some readers may know if that was ever repaid). Every municipality was assigned a quota, an amount they were expected to contribute. The 7th round of these collections was made in October 1918. For their sacrifice, the municipality was given an 'Honour flag'. (Do we have one in our collection?). Presentation of such a flag was a "very pleasant" event, of which the taxpayer probably knew very little.

The news of an armistice was noted quite matter-of-factly, as if the message hadn't quite been comprehended. This excerpt from the KMC meeting of 11 November 1918:



(The Warden stated that the Municipality has secured the quota in the 7th War Loan & that the "Honor Flag" had been presented at a very pleasant function, by the Mayor of Hobart, Capt. Evans and Col. Vaughan. He also referred to the achievements of the Allied Armies & read a telegram from the Premier to make arrangements for the celebration of "Peace" which was expected at any moment)

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# Temporary exhibitions

## Peter Foster Landscapes — September-October 2025

Peter was born in Sydney, and moved to Tasmania in his forties, searching for quiet, calm and a temperate climate. Peter began painting post retirement. He loves the depth and brightness of acrylic paints. The exhibition displayed both local and British landscapes.



## Ekaterina Rutledge — November 2025

Ekaterina is an emerging artist from Kingston, and is also a volunteer at the Channel Museum. Ekaterina's exhibition is inspired by Tasmania nature. She says "In my art practice I am experimenting with oil paints, using lots of bright colours and creating lots of texture." The exhibition also contained some of Ekaterina's drawings.



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## Nights at the Museum

Helen Lindsay—Brookfield — Wednesday 10th September 2025



Helen gave a very entertaining presentation on the resurrection of the Brookfield seed-drying shed. She covered the story of the shed from 1994 to 2014—the challenges of bringing the shed from tumble-down to a world renowned venue.

Helen is part owner of the Brookfield Shed with her husband Peter. She is a fifth generation Tasmanian, brought up in Sandfly. Helen attended Snug Primary School. She married Peter, a blowin from Western Australia, who loved the countryside and old buildings, especially the Brookfield Shed.

There were songs and poetry too.

***Helen with some bottles of wine grown at Brookfield.  
Some lucky attendees were given door prizes of wine***

Dave Collins—Rebuilding the Ida Bay Railway — Wednesday 8th October 2025



Dave discussed the tasks and challenges ahead in restoring the Ida Bay Railway to service. He spoke on behalf of the Ida Bay Preservation Society, the small but determined group taking on the challenge.

“The [Ida Bay Railway Preservation Society Inc](https://idabaytrain.org/) is a community-based, not-for-profit registered charity. It was formed to save this railway for the people of Tasmania and visitors to enjoy. The railway has stunning scenery and a rich history that deserves to be told. It is also heritage listed.

The Government and the Society have now signed a Licence that offers hope that the railway can be brought back into operation. At the same time the Government has given MONA/Dark Labs the go-ahead to plan for an art installation to the west of the rail/depot site. The site will need to provide visitor access and amenities for this as well as the railway. The Society has had productive discussions with the proponents and heritage architects about how this can be done while preserving heritage values and ensuring the railway can be brought back to life.”

(<https://idabaytrain.org/> accessed 25/22/25)

***Dave Collins (right) with an attendee***

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## Vale Roger McNeice

Roger McNeice passed away in early November 2025.

He was a volunteer at the Channel Museum up until about 2020, and served on the Committee for many years. He was actively involved in several projects including the setup of the Heritage Memorial Wall.

He was a well known numismatist (collector of coins, banknotes and medals), historian and author.

Roger was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 1984 "to study developments in the conservation and preservation of coins and medals", and he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in 1996.

He authored several books relating to Tasmania's fire fighting history (including *Flames of Fear*) and *Tasmanian and Australian coins and banknotes*.

He is survived by his wife Jill and three children, Andrew, Alison and Heather.

Roger was born and raised in South Hobart, but has links to the Channel through his wife Jill, whose mother was a Sproule.

Thank you Roger for all your contributions to the Museum.

**Mike Jackson**

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Harald was born at home in the village of Hamm am Rhein in south-west Germany. His father Jaakob was a 'Schiffer' – ie the captain of a barge that carried cargo – mostly coal – along the Rhine and Neckar rivers, sometimes as far as Amsterdam. By the time his brothers Erwin and Helmut and sister Gerlinde had joined the family, his mother Rosa had inherited a house in Ludwigshafen and his father had secured work at the huge BASF plant around which that city had developed. Like most young people at the time, Harald also secured work at 'unser Fabrik' (our factory) where he enjoyed learning about the processes involved in making plastics – really cutting edge stuff at the time (late 50s – early 60s). The company also provided many social and community services including hospitals and a concert hall.

In 1967, Harald signed up for what he thought would be a 2 year adventure, embarking on the Angelina Lauro bound for Australia. After spending some time at Bonegilla Migrant Camp, he secured work as a laboratory assistant at CSL (at that time still a government facility) in Melbourne.

He spent much of his leisure time bushwalking and ski-touring and enjoyed several summer holidays doing extended walks in Tasmania. He joined the Tasmanian Wilderness Society's Melbourne branch and was active in

fundraising activities. In January 1982 he rafted the Franklin River with a diverse group of Tasmanian Wilderness Society (TWS) members and while in Hobart met Felicity Hickman whom he would later marry.

Later that year, Harald resigned from his job and moved to Tasmania to support the TWS campaign to save the Franklin from being flooded by the building of a dam by the HEC. Working with many other volunteers, he helped lay the groundwork for what was ultimately a successful campaign.

For several years, Harald was a travelling salesman, providing Rawleighs products to customers in many country towns as well as through a stall at Salamanca Market, while at the same time studying at Elizabeth College to fulfill the entry requirements for Auxilliary Nurse training.



*Proud to be arrested to save the Franklin: 10 January 1983 — Harald, Andrew Lohrey and Jack Lohmax, accompanied by Police.*

**\*\* See page 10 for Andrew Lohrey's account of the arrests.**

Harald and Felicity were very involved as parents in the establishment of the Tarremah School in its current location at Huntingfield. In 1998 the family moved to the Adelaide hills to enable the children to complete their education at the Mt Barker Waldorf (Stiener) School. Harald continued nursing in the challenging field of psychiatric care and did further study to gain a Diploma.

Returning to Tasmania in 2015, Harald and Felicity built a new home in Electrona and in retirement once more committed to volunteering in the community: Harald at Channel Museum and Felicity at TMAG and Narryna House Museum. As a Channel Museum volunteer, Harald worked at the Reception desk, and also helped out in the Library, where he indexed documents and did a stocktake of library books. Harald will be sorely missed at the Museum.

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\*\* Colleagues of Harald in the photo on page 9 are ex-politician Andrew Lohrey and Jack Lomax.

Here is Andrew's account of the arrest:

"The date that Harald, Jack Lomax and I were arrested at the dam site on the Franklin River was 10th January 1983. We had camped overnight a little below the dam site on the opposite bank of the Franklin and then early in the morning of the 10th the three of us were taken upriver by Wildness Society people to the Junction of the Franklin and the Gordon rivers. There, we transferred into a very leaky rubber ducky to innocently float down to the dam site and get arrested. This was a narrative for publicity purposes. I asked Jack and Harald if they knew how to row a rubber ducky that went round and round. None of us did, but as it took about half an hour to float down to the dam site, the circles we created gradually got some direction. As we floated down this mighty river, the three of us were mesmerized by its beauty, size and stillness. Then suddenly, we came around a bend and there on the northern bank was the dam site, but we were in the middle of the river where the current was strong and we now had a real problem getting the circling rubber ducky to shore. Round and round we went but we did make some slow progress to where the police were stationed watching this comedy. We never made it to the dam site but did land about 100 meters downriver, where the scrub was very thick. It took another 20 minutes for the three of us to beat our way back up through the scrub to the police, exhausted but to be finally arrested. This arrest was such a trial. While I have not seen much of Harald since those days, this wonderful Franklin adventure shared with Harald and Jack created a bond that has linked us together over the years like brothers-in-arms."

## Nights at the Museum 2026

Andy Henebury

Sheila Shewry will be welcoming members of her family who will have moved to Tasmania next year; because of this she will have to reduce her involvement in organising events in 2026.

Andy Henebury has volunteered to take up the lead role and with the co-operation of both Sheila and Anthea, will be organising events in 2026.

We invite members to submit to us their suggestions for any topic they feel would be of general interest to the audiences who attend the evenings regularly.

If you have any suggestions please send them to me [andyhenebury@outlook.com](mailto:andyhenebury@outlook.com) or Sheila [Sheilasa1946@gmail.com](mailto:Sheilasa1946@gmail.com) or Anthea [antheawallhead@gmail.com](mailto:antheawallhead@gmail.com)

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# Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from the Channel Museum

### Office Bearers 2025-2026

President:	Judi Castle
Vice President:	Andrew Tomes
Secretary:	Cathy Fyfe
Treasurer:	Sarah Jackson
Curator:	Lara Colrain
Public Officer	Andrew Tomes

### Committee Members 2025-2026

David Tulip	Anthea Wallhead
Mike Jackson	Michele Mason
Andrew Wadsley	Mary Tomny
Colin Hocking	Andy Henebury
Newsletter editor: Diane Worth	