

**MARITIME MUSEUM OF TASMANIA 50TH ANNIVERSARY
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
DRAWING ROOM, THURSDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2024**

Good evening and a very warm welcome to Government House to this reception to mark the 50th anniversary of the Maritime Museum of Tasmania.

I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather, who flourished on Country as part of the South-East Nation of Aboriginal people. We honour them, and today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community, as ongoing custodians of Country. I recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and waters.

The Shiplovers' Society of Tasmania was founded in 1931. Over the next four decades the Society existed in various locations until becoming the Maritime Museum of Tasmania. It was initially housed in Battery Point, before the move to your permanent home, the Carnegie Building. It was officially opened by the Her Majesty The Queen in 2000.¹ Today, you are the custodian of over 70,000 items relating to our maritime heritage, and your collections are of great historic and cultural value. It is most fitting that we celebrate your anniversary here.

On that Vice-Regal link, it seems opportune to dip into some reference to these buildings and some maritime reference. This estate was first occupied in the late 1850s, and two important features were the Governor's Jetty and Bathing House.

You will be able to see them on the 1858 plan of the Estate, on the easel near the window. *[HE gestures]*.

The draughtsman was William Charles Piguenit, one of the earliest professional Australian artists. Born in Hobart in 1836, he was the son of a convict and as an

¹ [Our History | Maritime Museum Tasmania \(maritimetas.org\)](https://maritimetas.org/our-history), accessed 26 February 2024.

adult he worked in the Tasmanian Lands and Survey Department as a draughtsman and mapmaker.²

That is one of Piquenit's works [*HE gestures*] on the far wall. Painted in 1893, it is called "Cynthia Bay, Lake St Clair with Mt Ida in the distance."

May I return to the Bathing House and Jetty – which are prominent in that circa 1870s photograph [*HE gestures, near the Piquenit plan*]. The Shed and Jetty were built near what is today's small eastern carpark of the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. Incidentally, in those times the Government House Estate included most of the riverside land of the Botanical Gardens, and there was a roadway from this building over the paddocks to the Bathing House and Jetty.

When Prince Alfred, the then Duke of Edinburgh, visited Tasmania in 1868 there is a reference to him landing at the Bathing House (off an *HMS Galatea* pilot boat) before dinner with the Governor.³

During the term of the next Governor, Sir Charles Du Cane, in the early 1870s, the Jetty was regularly used as a point of embarkation for the Governor, his family and guests, for instance, when visiting British ships in the harbour.⁴

The opening of the railway line in 1876 separated the Government House grounds from the riverfront. Also, this exposed the Bathing House and Jetty to train passengers. This proved an immediate deterrent to bathing by Governors and their families.

Although they remained private Government House property, the story of their inevitable demise is worth recording. Newspaper articles and letters to newspapers provide a chronological montage:

1911, quote: "It is curious the feeling of some workingmen anglers whom I have met about fishing from the Government House jetty. They resent and object to

² [WC Piquenit | Art Gallery of NSW](#)

³ 'The Duke of Edinburgh in Tasmania', *The Mercury*, 31 January 1868, page 3.

⁴ For example, *Cornwall Chronicle*, Wednesday 15 January 1873, page 2.

asking permission to fish therefrom, looking upon it as a public jetty available to one and all ..." End quote.

1919, a letter to *The Mercury*, quote: "Sir,— Permit me to ask who is responsible for the disgraceful condition into which the jetty and baths have been allowed to get? If I remember rightly, the bathing house and the jetty [were] used by Governors up to Sir Robert Hamilton's time. Since then... the baths and jetty have nearly been washed away by the action of the waves, and the dressing-rooms have been turned into W.C.'s by the class of people who frequent the place. Filthy pictures and obscene verse, etc., have been freely scribbled on the walls ..." End of quote!

Later in 1923, quote: "The Harbor Master wrote stating that he had again visited the site of the old Government House jetty and after inspecting the old stumps of piles adhered to his previous report that they should be removed, as they were a danger to rowing boats frequenting the locality.⁵
End quote.

Even today, though, if you walk there, you can see the remnant footings and parts of the wall. So that is a bit of a snippet of maritime history relating to Government House.

In conclusion, many congratulations on your 50th anniversary and my best wishes for your next 50 years.

Thank you. David ...

[invites Chris Tassell, MMT President to respond briefly]

⁵ *Mercury*, Thursday 9 November 1911, page 8, *Mercury*, Thursday 6 March 1919, page 2, *Mercury*, Wednesday 21 February 1923, page 11, *World (Hobart)*, Wednesday 21 February 1923, page 3.