

**NATIONAL MARITIME MUSEUM
INTERNATIONAL WOODEN BOAT SYMPOSIUM
OPENING SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE
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DECHAINEUX THEATRE, HOBART
SATURDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2019**

Good morning and welcome to the Australian National Maritime Museum International Wooden Boat Symposium for 2019.

I begin by paying my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land – to pay respect to those that have passed before us and to acknowledge today’s Tasmanian Aboriginal community who are the custodians of this land.

The idea of the Symposium is to lend serious academic credibility and intellectual stimulation to a broadly popular festival and to allow an exchange of ideas and meeting of minds. Following the success of symposia in 2015 and 2017, we again have a fabulous and diverse line-up of international, interstate and Tasmanian speakers on topics related to wooden boats.

So this is my third opportunity to open the Wooden Boat Festival’s symposium. In 2017 I spoke about the *Egeria*, ‘the Governor’s launch’ and its history. The *Egeria* was launched in 1941 and has been used by Governors intermittently since then including for events such as the opening of the yachting season, the Regatta and the Parade of Sail for the Wooden Boat Festival.

For this morning’s opening, I thought I would take this further by doing some research on early Van Diemen’s Land Governors, their boats and their use of boats. To what extent did those Governors use boats to get around the colony? They had a responsibility to travel around the island to gain an understanding of it and its settlers.

And we know that the Governors had other residences in addition to Government House in Hobart. There was a Government House, or ‘Retreat’ at New Norfolk between about 1815 and 1849, when it was sold.

The Government Cottage at Port Arthur was used by Governors from 1854. And of course given the importance of Port Arthur from its establishment in 1830, it would have been visited by Governors well before the Government Cottage was built in 1854. So how did they get to New Norfolk and Port Arthur?

Travelling to New Norfolk

Lieutenant-Governor David Collins arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1804. One of his early explorations was of the Derwent River. In January 1806 he took the Governor's 6-oar-boat up the river to the 'The Falls' (today's 'Falls Rapids'), a distance of about 40 miles from Sullivan's Cove, leaving at 7am in the morning and arriving by about 5.30 pm.ⁱ

A year later, in 1807, what is now New Norfolk was settled and by about 1815 a Government House was built there and used by Lieutenant-Governors Davey to Denison, the latter having stayed there for three months in 1847, using it as his head-quarters for that time.ⁱⁱ So how did Governors Davey, Sorell, Arthur, Franklin, Eardley-Wilmot and Denison reach New Norfolk with their families to stay at the Government Cottage?

The first road between New Norfolk and Hobart was completed in 1819 but was 'not regarded as satisfactory,'ⁱⁱⁱ so using the river would have been more comfortable, at least until the road improved.

By 1830 there was a good coach service between New Norfolk and Hobart, and so by then coach was an option. In the early days, 6-oared rowing boats, such as the one used by Governor Collins in 1806, are likely to have been used. Typically these boats were primarily rowing boats with a demountable mast and sail for use if winds were favourable.

From 1810 regular ferry services crossed the Derwent and these scheduled ferry services were supplemented by the more *ad hoc* 'available for hire' services of watermen with their rowboats with a demountable mast. By the mid-1850s over 200 watermen licences were issued.^{iv} The watermen's boats varied from small dinghies for hire to larger sailing-rowing excursion boats of around 28 feet. The 8-oared, 28 foot 'Admiral', exhibited here at the Wooden Boat Festival again this year, is the last known surviving Tasmanian waterman's boat.^v

It seems unlikely that the watermen regularly transported the Lieutenant-Governors to New Norfolk, as their trade seemed to be more locally based.

Visiting Port Arthur

Port Arthur was established as a penal colony in 1830 during Lieutenant-Governor Arthur's term and in 1833 the first major vessel built at Port Arthur was launched. Sir John and Lady Franklin paid their first visit to Port Arthur in March 1837, early in that Governor's term (1837- 1843). So how did they get there? They crossed the Derwent by 'steamer' to Kangaroo Point^{vi} (now Bellerive) possibly with Urias Allender's steam ferry the *Surprise*, which operated from 1832.^{vii} From Kangaroo Point to Richmond and then to Sorell, they travelled by carriage and from there by the Government brig, the *Tamar*, to Port Arthur, where they stayed at the Commandant's House.^{viii}

The *Tamar* was a two-masted brig, carvel built with a single deck and a square stern. She was built at the Sarah Island dockyard, the notorious penal station at Macquarie Harbort on the west coast, completed in 1827 and in government service until 1842.^{ix}

Ten years later, in 1847, Lieutenant-Governor Denison took a different route. In a 6-oared whale boat he went down the harbour to what is now Lauderdale. There he travelled on a railway in a small carriage or wagon pushed by convicts the three-quarters of a mile to Frederick Henry Bay, where another whale boat was waiting to transfer the party to a schooner. The schooner visited a number of convict stations before reaching another convict-powered railway at Norfolk Bay (now Taranna) which ran the 7 kilometres or so to Long Bay where a boat took them the remaining short distance to Port Arthur.^x Both routes described were designed to avoid Storm Bay and inevitable delays caused by westerly weather.

The Governors' Boats

There were many boats in government service from very early days. But to what extent did early Governors have their own personal boats?

Early Governors did have 'barges'. Governor Arthur's barge is mentioned at the beginning of his term in 1824^{xi} – and in 1833 the 'Governor's barge', in good repair, was advertised for sale.^{xii} Clearly it was replaced and later Governors used barges. Sir John Franklin's barge took part in a procession of boats at the Regatta in 1840,^{xiii} and Lady Denison reported the Governor took his barge out to await

the arrival the New South Wales's Governor's ship in 1849 and that he did a spot of fishing while waiting.^{xiv}

There is an 1857 report of the Governor's barge (by then the Governor was Sir Henry Fox-Young) being moored at the water's edge in what is now Morrison Street.^{xv}

In the 1860s boats were hired to serve as the 'Governor's barge' in the annual Regattas, notably the eight-oared *Admiral* I mentioned earlier, which was launched in 1865 and hired for picnics and other excursions.^{xvi} So it seems that a barge was merely another name for boats which were primarily rowing boats rather than permanently rigged sailing boats.

And the Governors' barges, including the much-admired *Admiral* were considerably more modest boats than the royal row barges used on the Thames (until 1858 when the pollution of the river made use of them too unpleasant). The *Gloriana*, the Royal Row Barge which was built to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee and modelled on early royal barges is a highly decorated 16-oared boat with a significant cabin.^{xvii}

By the early 1870s the Flotilla at the Regatta was led by a steam launch such as David Lewis's *Eclipse* with boats of the Royal Navy vessels then in port carrying the official parties.^{xviii}

Lieutenant-Governor Sir John and Lady Franklin (1837-1843)

The Franklins were great travellers. They visited Flinders Island; Lady Franklin made annual trips to the Huon from 1838; she sailed to Recherche Bay and twice visited Betsey Island at the mouth of the Derwent, purchasing the island where she planned to build a country retreat.

But their most famous Van Diemen's Land expedition is probably their overland expedition to the West Coast in 1842 in which they walked 106 kilometres from Lake St Clair to the Gordon River on a track that had been previously cut by James Calder, the surveyor. They walked through 18 days of rain which meant that one of the convicts in the party had to make a dug-out canoe so they could cross the swollen Franklin River. But it is their return journey which is of greater relevance to boating.

Waiting for them on the Gordon River was their tiny vessel, *Breeze*. After ‘towing’ down the river to Macquarie harbour, they explored the penal station at Sarah Island which, along with the ship building dockyards, had been closed nine years earlier.

Stuck in Macquarie Harbour by gales, they ran out of provisions and were forced on one day to have a dinner of seagull pie.^{xix} Finally, they were able to sail through Hell’s Gates to be met by a larger vessel, the *Eliza*. The Franklins took the opportunity to explore Port Davey and Bathurst Harbour and established the exact location of the South West Cape before sailing for home and arriving weeks later than expected.^{xx}

The *Eliza* was a two-masted schooner, carvel built with a square stern, launched in May 1835 at the Port Arthur dockyard, one of the 15 or so major vessels to have been built at the Port Arthur Dockyard — 18 were built at Sarah Island. The *Eliza* was armed with two guns and described as remarkably fast. She was sold out of Government service in October 1848. It is likely that she was used by the Franklins on other occasions.^{xxi}

Steam boats

Steam boat services began in the mid-1850s and from 1854 for some thirty years the paddle steamer *Monarch* took pleasure trips to New Norfolk and carried passengers such as hop pickers.^{xxii}

Later Governors did use steam boats, to get to Tasmania from Melbourne and on occasions to travel around the state. Sir Frederick Weld arrived in Tasmania in 1875 at Launceston, having travelled by steam boat from Fremantle via Albany and Melbourne. From Launceston he travelled by train to Campbell Town and from there by coach-and-four to Hobart.

His wife and children came directly from Fremantle some months later in a rather frightening voyage on the *Mary Herbert*, a 100-ton schooner, which was wrecked on its return journey with all hands drowned.^{xxiii} Before his family arrived, the Governor visited the North West Coast from Launceston and to do so travelled with the steamer *Derwent* to Circular Head. It was reported to be a rough trip, with a strong easterly and long rolling sea, which – and I quote: ‘very soon caused many of the passengers to minutely inspect the colour of the sea’.^{xxiv}

It seems Governor Weld travelled widely to acquaint himself with the country and its people. Much of this travel to out-of-the-way places was done on horseback with just one member of 'his suite'.^{xxv}

So boats of all kinds were vital for the journeys of early Governors around the island. Much of their travel was done on horseback, particularly to visit out-of-the-way places, even as late as the late 1870s as Governor Weld's letters indicate. They also travelled by coach and, as the Franklins demonstrate, some even walked long distances. But boats, row-boats, sailing boats and steamers were an enormously important means of transport as I have endeavoured to show.

I now have much pleasure in declaring open the proceedings of the 2019 International Wooden Boat Symposium.

Thank you.

ⁱ *The Diary of the Rev Robert Knopwood 1805-1808*, Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society Tasmania, 1946, p 88; <https://eprints.utas.edu.au/13550/1/1946-knopwood-diaries%5B1%5D.pdf> accessed 19 February 2019.

ⁱⁱ Sir William and Lady Denison, *Varieties of a Vice-Regal Life*, Richard Davis and Stefan Petrow, eds, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart, 2004, p 66.

ⁱⁱⁱ 'First road in the colony', *The Examiner*, 14 November 1939, p 7.

^{iv} Graeme Broxam, *Pride of the Port, The Watermen of Hobart Town*, Navarine Publishing, 2009, p 3.

^v Broxam, n iv, p 77.

^{vi} 'Sir John Franklin's Progress to Richmond and Port Arthur' *True Colonist*, 24 March 1837, p 512.

^{vii} Margaret Ball, *Towards Bellerive, The Development of the Kangaroo Bay/Kangaroo Point Area 1806-1830*, 1996 p 2, https://eprints.utas.edu.au/19005/1/whole_BallMargaret1997_thesis.pdf accessed 19 February 2019; Broxam, n iv, p 17.

^{viii} Bent's News, 25 March 1837, p 4.

^{ix} Mike Nash, *Convict Shipbuilding and the Port Arthur Dockyard*, Port Arthur Historic Site Management Authority, 2001.

^x Richard Davis and Stefan Petrow (eds) *Varieties of Vice-Regal Life*, THRA, 2004, pp 48-51.

^{xi} Jane Sorell, *Governor, William and Julia Sorell*, 1986, p 83 quoting Knopwood.

^{xii} Colonial Times (Hobart) Tuesday 5th February, 1833, p 4.

^{xiii} Courier (Hobart) 27 November 1840, p 3.

^{xiv} Davis and Petrow, n x, p 108. The barge is referred to as being moored near Gibson's Flour Mill

^{xv} Derwentside, 'Hobart, 70 years old this month. The old town gone' *The Mercury* 6 December 1927, p 3.

^{xvi} Davis and Petrow, n x, p 77.

^{xvii} See <https://www.glorianaqrb.org.uk/qrb/>

^{xviii} Broxam n iv.

^{xix} Alison Alexander, *The Ambitions of Lady Franklin*, Allen and Unwin, 2013, 154-157.

^{xx} 'The overland Journey of Sir John Franklin and his party to Macquarie Harbour', *The Courier*, 27 May 1842, p 2.

^{xxi} Mike Nash, *Convict Shipbuilding and the Port Arthur Dockyard*, 2001.

^{xxii} 'PS Monarch', *The Mercury* 28 February 1882, p 2.

^{xxiii} Alice Mary Lovat, *The Life of Sir Frederick Weld, a Pioneer of Empire*, John Murray, London, 1914, 239-245.

^{xxiv} *The Tasmanian* (Launceston) 6 March 1875, p 6.

^{xxv} Lovat, n xxiii, p 261.