

JACOB FRY  
- A LIFE SAVER

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BENEATH?

EAT, PLAY AND STAY  
- A QUICK GUIDE

# THE ISLAND

PEOPLE AND PLACES OF PHILLIP ISLAND AND SAN REMO

## A FAMILY BUILDING

TOM NEIL'S HEMPCRETE HOUSE IS ABOUT  
FINDING A MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY  
FRIENDLY WAY TO BUILD ... IT IS ALSO  
ABOUT THE FAMILY TIES THAT BIND HIM.



# *In a field of their own*

*Mitch Burrows and illustrator Tegan Carter have created a guide to native plants of Phillip Island.  
The labour of love, exquisitely illustrated, is sure to delight nature lovers from all walks of life.*





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From where  
I'm sitting

For the last month or so, I've been on holidays. No computers, no interviews, no breaking news. I had a vague idea what day it was and occasionally caught snippets of world news, but mostly it was a shut down, an exhale, a reset.

Most of the things I fret about in a normal day just faded away. It reminded me of just how good holidays are, and how important it is to tune out and sign off, even when you can't get away.

On Phillip Island, we are lucky to live in a place that is synonymous with holidays for many. There are our incredible beaches, breathtaking cliff-top walks, and of course, the penguins. When you're surrounded by the sound of the ocean and nature, even not being on holiday can feel like a giant escape if you let it.

It's a place to free your mind and build your dreams – some physical and some metaphorical. In this edition we meet some islanders who are doing just that – building an enviro-friendly home, photographing beauty below the surface, cataloguing local native plants or finding a way to balance their careers with a beachside retreat.

With spring in the air, I'm determined to hold onto that holiday feeling for as long as I can, to get out in the sunshine and enjoy island life to the full.

Phillip Island really is a wonderful place ... we hope you love it as much as we do.

*Eleanor*

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– first Saturday of each month. 8am – 1pm.

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### COWES ISLAND CRAFT MARKET

– second Saturday of each month. 9am – 2pm, St Philip's Parish Hall, 102 Thompson Avenue, Cowes.

The market's theme is Make, Bake and Grow. You will find a large range of products from local producers and crafts people. Profits from the market are returned for local community needs.

### COWES MARKET ON CHURCH

– fourth Saturday of each month. 9am – 2pm, St Philip's Parish Hall, 102 Thompson Avenue, Cowes.

Plants, produce, clothing, crafts and the famous "trash and treasure" shed, as well as hot drinks and food.



Shelley Pauls, Unsplash

### ISLAND FORESHORE MARKET

– November 4, 2pm – 9pm. Cowes Foreshore.

Against the spectacular backdrop of the Cowes foreshore, enjoy a great line up of stalls – local and beyond, as well as food, live music and kids' entertainment. This November date kicks off the market's summer season which runs through until the end of January.

### NEWHAVEN MARKET

– third Saturday of each month. 9am – 2pm, Newhaven Primary School, 22 School Ave, Newhaven.

Hosted by the local primary school, the Newhaven market features a range of fresh produce, food, crafts and goods.

with everything from honey, vegetables and fruit to candles or baked treats, as well as live entertainment.

There are regular markets at Archies Creek, Corinella, Grantville, Inverloch, Kongwak, Jumbunna, Loch, Leongatha, Wonthaggi and Koonwarra. Details at [www.visitbasscoast.com.au/events/markets](http://www.visitbasscoast.com.au/events/markets)

For the latest local news and events, check the Phillip Island & San Remo Advertiser, out Wednesdays, or online at [pisra.com.au](http://pisra.com.au)

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# LOCAL LEGEND

Phillip Island would not look as it does today but for the leadership and commitment of Margaret Hancock, who retired this year after 55 years with the Phillip Island Conservation Society (PICS).

PICS members are fierce campaigners for the preservation of the environment, and Margaret has been a driving force for five decades.

Margaret – now 92 – was a foundation PICS member when it formed in May 1968, taking over as president in 1982, serving in that role for 30 years.

During these years she took part in more than 60 planning issues, including mediation sessions, written submissions, and VCAT.

PICS support for the government buy-back of the Summerland Estate, which commenced in 1985 and was finalised in 2007, is rated in Margaret's mind as being among the organisation's most notable achievements.

"PICS could see development coming at Summerlands and we knew it would be disastrous for the penguins and the wildlife," she said.

"We supported the closure of the road at night because of the number of penguin road kills nightly.

"As volunteers, we would go out on the road at night and do counting surveys of the traffic and animal sightings in the area."

She admitted she initially didn't think the buyback would ever eventuate.

"But full credit goes to the government of the day and to those that have followed, in seeing this issue through."

Margaret's active involvement in PICS began by chance when she was still living in Ballarat but was a regular holiday maker here.

"When I first joined the conservation group in 1968, there was a lot happening on the island. I remember reading an article in the Herald newspaper about an aspiring Phillip Island Shire councillor who was proposing the planting of palm trees all along the Tourist Road, from Newhaven to the Cowes jetty.

"That got me really incensed and spurred me into action."

This proposal, as well as those being put forward for the subdivisions of land across the island resonated with many others as well.

"It resulted in a public meeting being convened by an enthusiastic and diligent conservationist, local resident Ken Pound.



"I came to the island specially to attend the meeting."

The 33 people who attended voted to form a conservation committee and adopt a constitution. This was the start of a concerted effort by members of PICS to add their voice and clout to issues that mattered on Phillip Island.

In maintaining the balance between progress and the natural environment, Margaret sees the role of the conservation society as being one of educators.

"We try to educate those involved in development planning to the big picture – to take into consideration the natural environment they are working with," she said.

"It is important that we all continue to work together to conserve Phillip Island into the future. I hope the island will learn to balance the demands of tourism and the natural attraction, as it seems we can't have one without the other."

## Collected recollections



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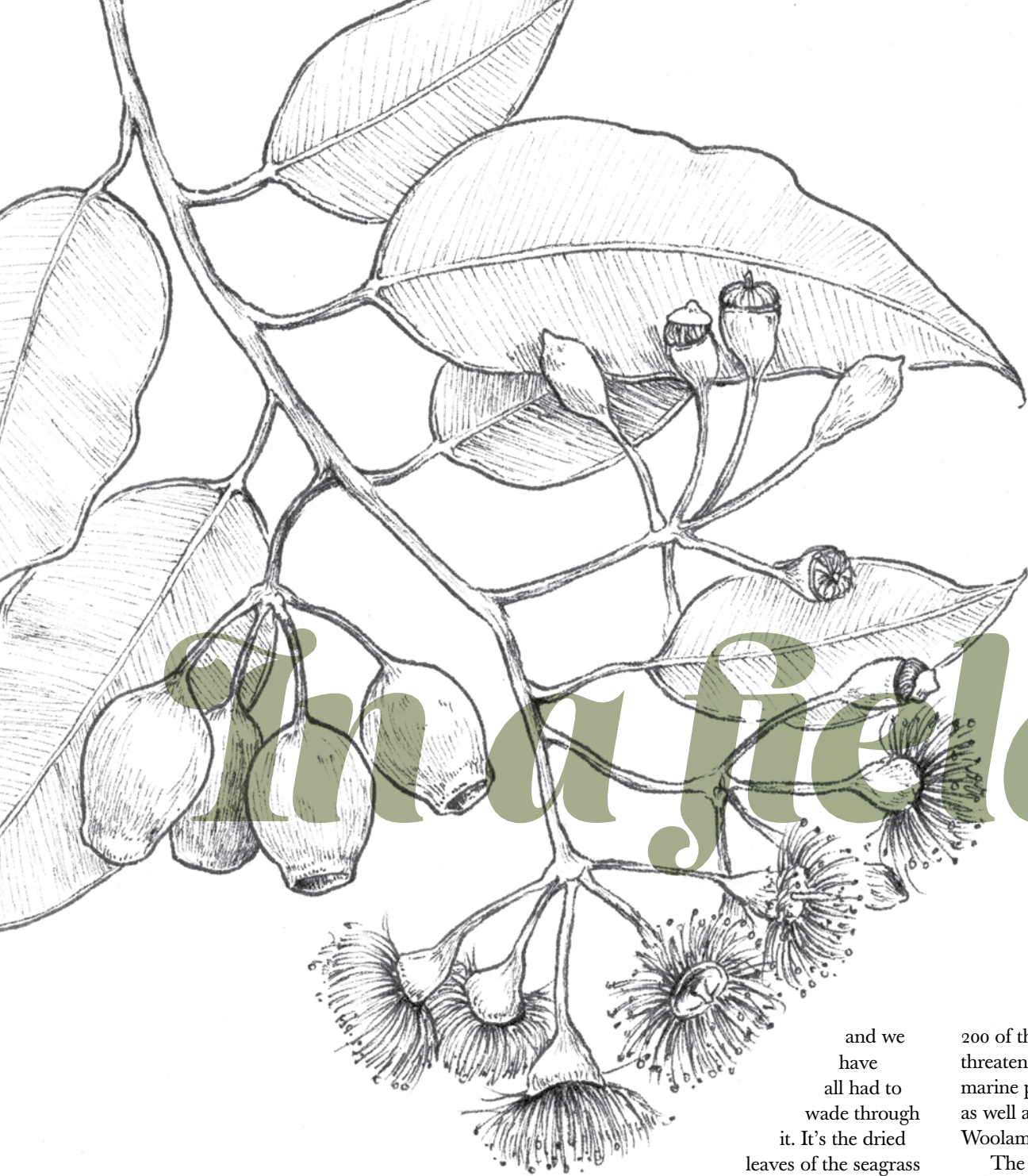


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BY SARAH HUDSON  
PHOTOS: STEPH THORNBURROW  
ILLUSTRATIONS: TEGAN CARTER



MITCH BURROWS AND  
ILLUSTRATOR TEGAN CARTER  
HAVE CREATED A GUIDE TO NATIVE  
PLANTS OF PHILLIP ISLAND.  
THE LABOUR OF LOVE, EXQUISITELY  
ILLUSTRATED, IS SURE TO DELIGHT  
NATURE LOVERS FROM ALL  
WALKS OF LIFE.

**H**ave you ever walked on a Phillip Island beach only to find a giant mound of crunchy, silvery-black seaweed that you need to trudge through up to your knees? Mitch Burrows says it's a particularly Bass Coast kind of experience, with the seagrass – enticingly known as Sea Nymph – rarely found further north.

“Kids grow up with it in kiddie pools

and we have all had to wade through it. It's the dried leaves of the seagrass and Kitty Miller Bay, for example, has forests full of it,” Mitch says. “It's a fascinating species that has separate male and female plants. The male releases pollen in the water and by chance it floats past the female's flower, with the offspring taking nine months to grow while still attached to its mum.”

Sea Nymph is one of about 600 Phillip Island-specific plants to feature in Mitch's new book, “A Field Guide to the Native Flora of Millowl (Phillip Island).” The 32-year-old, who works for the Nature Parks and lives at Cape Woolamai, first started writing it in 2019, after receiving a \$10,000 environment grant, and after countless hours finished it in time for a launch later this year.

The non-profit guide focuses on about

200 of the most common, significant and threatened of the island's terrestrial and marine plants, with full page descriptions, as well as pencil illustrations by Cape Woolamai artist and friend Tegan Carter.

The Barb Martin Bushbank has a species list of about 100 plants for sale, all native to the island, so for Mitch to boost that list to about 600 was no mean feat, although he adds the guide also includes

mosses, ferns and seagrasses. Mitch says to write each plant's description, he has waded through the Royal Botanic Gardens online database, VicFlora, as well as seeking first-hand accounts and cross-referencing with ecologists and local enthusiasts at the Barb Martin

Bushbank and Phillip Island Conservation Society (PICS).

“A few community members have written stories about their experiences with plants, which adds a human element,” says Mitch. “One of the stories I have is of a person's experience watching the life cycle of coastal hairy spinifex – the beauty

of its natural geometric patterns.”

The guide has also been endorsed by the Bunurong Land Council and features first-person accounts of plants by First Nations people.

Mitch, a keen surfer, admits most of his age-group don't share his passion for plants. “A lot of people I get along with in the plant world are aged in their 60s or 70s.” And while Mitch has worked countless hours to compile the guide, he has done it for the love, with all profits from the book going to PICS to preserve native flora. “For two and a half months this year I even cut down my hours to three days a week, just so I could finish the book.”

Mitch grew up in Newcastle and studied a science degree, followed by honours in marine science, finishing in 2013. It was while studying the oyster farming industry that he first became interested in seagrasses, then for two years volunteered on whale research projects in Queensland and even later had a stint working on one of Australia's first medicinal cannabis farms.



He moved to Phillip Island in 2015, initially working as a surf instructor for Ash Belsar's Outthere Outdoor Activities and then in 2016 was employed by the Phillip Island Nature Parks initially as a field services officer – working with nesting shorebirds and weed management – and now as an environment ranger. In this job, he manages revegetation projects around Phillip Island, with the book and his career bouncing off each other, admitting several

of his colleagues are “jazzed” about the guide.

“It's important to care about these plants because if these systems are healthy, there's a flow on. Monocultures reduce biodiversity and effect other species, even through to migratory birds. It's important the links in the chain aren't broken.”

While he doesn't “hate” any plant, nonetheless his least favourite is agapanthus, a common flower in

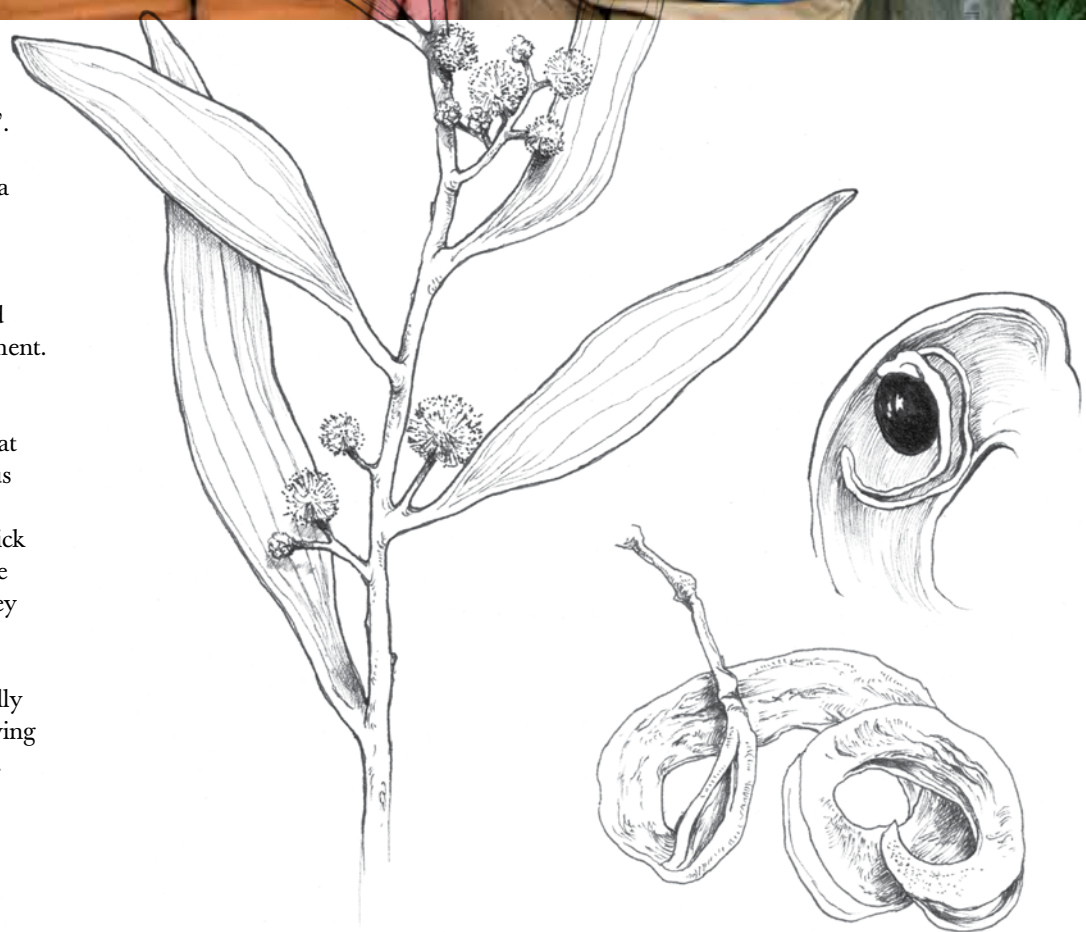
**“I HOPE IT WILL  
HELP PEOPLE BE  
MORE AWARE  
OF THE PLANTS  
AROUND THEM  
SO THEY CAN  
HELP THOSE  
PLANTS THRIVE.”**



“IT HAS MADE  
ME OBSERVE  
AND APPRECIATE  
THE ENVIRONMENT  
MORE ... ”



local gardens because they form “huge monocultures that reduce biodiversity”. Mitch says the idea for the book initially sprang from his own need for a guide to Phillip Island native plants. “I realised there wasn’t one, so I decided to write one myself. A lot of people aren’t engaged with – or have a limited relationship with – their local environment. The island’s plants have drastically changed since European settlement. There is also currently a bit of a wave at the moment, a movement to indigenous knowledge. I hope people who don’t necessarily have an interest in plants pick it up. I hope it will help people be more aware of the plants around them so they can help those plants thrive.” It is, he admits, a labour of love to compile the list, adding that he is equally happy surfing, bird watching or observing plants. “I’d do it all again, no question.



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I'm insatiable in learning and this whole book was a constant learning curve. I like to learn more and more but also create and apply that knowledge. Bring other people along for the ride."

Mitch has even decided his next book will be about ducks – "because they are awesome" – with about 10 species native to Phillip Island but 24 across Australia. But for now, plants are his happy place.

"Plants offer a lot of wisdom and there's a lot to learn from them, which is more of a traditional approach rather than a western way of seeing the world. They indicate the transition between seasons, whether they're in flower or fruit, and can even tell us about climate change. It's when you are able to interpret them that you can share their language. They are more like our peers. We're all linked, one planet."

Working alongside Mitch is friend and illustrator Tegan Carter. Tegan has come face-to-face with a copperhead snake, navigated treacherous clifftops and criss-crossed Phillip Island. All for one selfless purpose: to capture images of rare and threatened plants, or those common to Phillip Island for the new book.

The 33-year-old illustrator has drawn about 200 images for the guide. "Both Mitch and I knew doing the book was not about financial gain," Tegan says. "We are both committed to it because we want to give back. Neither of us will probably live on Phillip Island forever so it's something I'd like to leave behind."

Starting in 2020, it has taken Tegan about three years to research each species and complete detailed black pen on paper drawings. She first got to know Mitch when they were both working as Phillip Island Nature Parks rangers and had a shared love of the local flora. Tegan then went on to work as a vet nurse at the Cowes vet clinic.

Like Mitch, she has dedicated countless hours to intimately understanding her subject, firstly researching images and descriptions online and in books, before taking to the field to hunt out specimens for photos. "Some of them are simple to identify but some are harder to find and

identify and I have to speak to the experts, like John Eddie (at the Phillip Island Conservation Society) or James (at the Barb Martin Bushbank). Doing this work has led me to all corners of the island. It has made me observe and appreciate the environment more than just going for a walk. There's so much diversity here, even in a patch of grass."

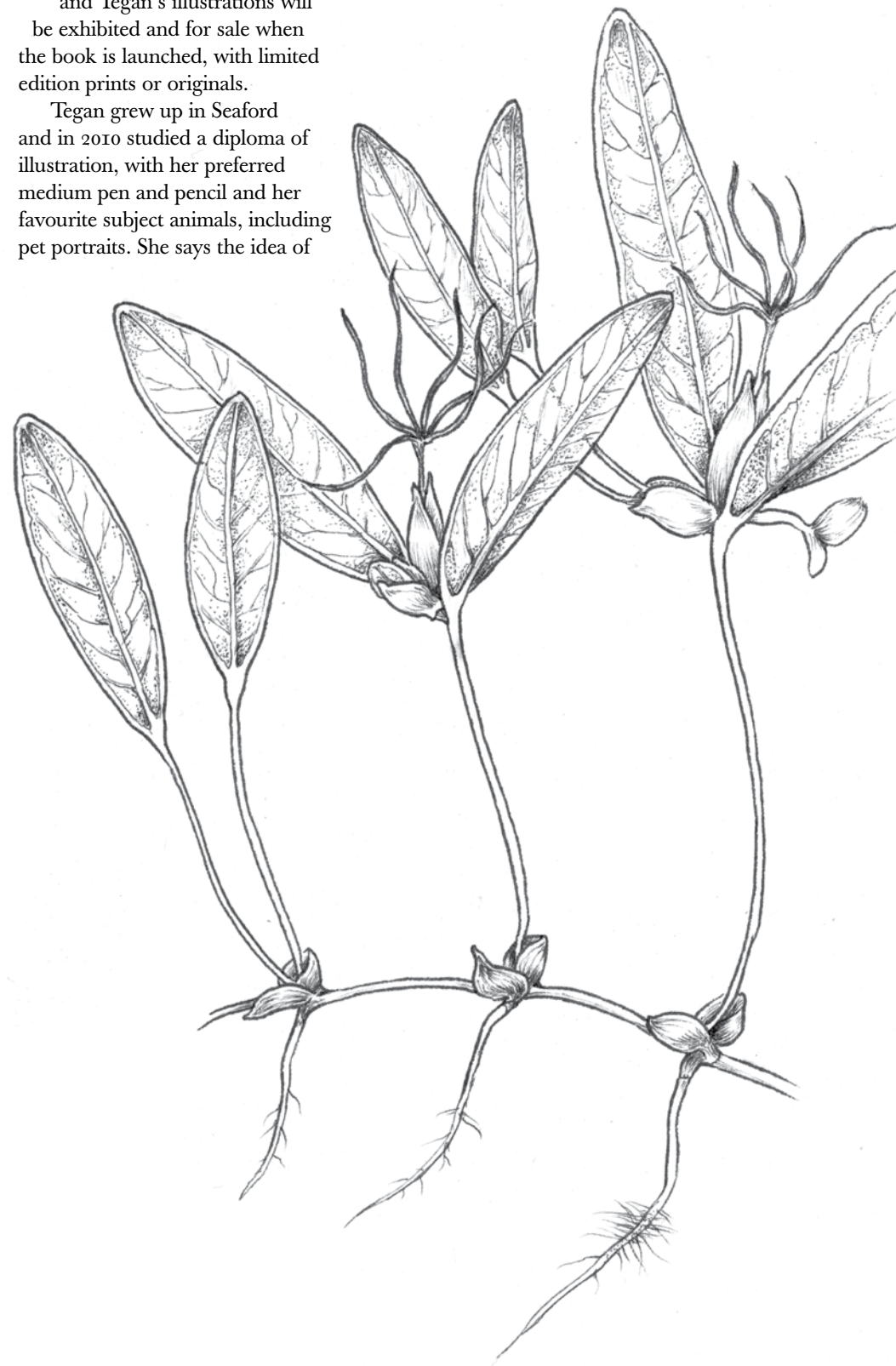
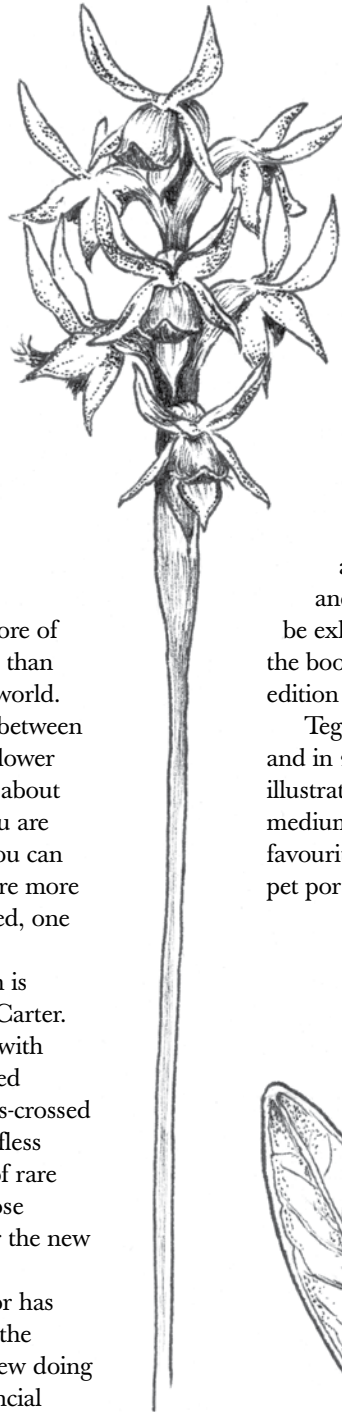
Illustrations take about a day to complete and Tegan's illustrations will be exhibited and for sale when the book is launched, with limited edition prints or originals.

Tegan grew up in Seaford and in 2010 studied a diploma of illustration, with her preferred medium pen and pencil and her favourite subject animals, including pet portraits. She says the idea of

Mitch's book appealed because all funds will go to protect vegetation on the island, through the conservation society. "I'd love for this book at some point to maybe get me work in the field of drawing for conservation projects. I'd prefer to create art that has a purpose."

Tegan encourages all local residents to plant more native species. "It's important because if we don't care about these plants they may not be here. In a short period of time they could disappear if we don't look after them."

"There are already so many species rare and threatened on the island and if people aren't aware of them or don't protect them then we'll lose this precious vegetation."



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# Flash dance delight

Thanks to Surf Beach resident Helen Bellino, Phillip Island has its first official flashmob.

For those unfortunate not to have ever witnessed the phenomenon, a flashmob is a group of people who give a surprise, choreographed dance in public to the delight of unsuspecting passers-by.

Helen is a ceramic and mosaic artist, running Artopia studio and workshop at her home, who sells items at Island Marketplace on Thompson Avenue.

The inspiration for getting the mob together was originally to entertain customers at the island markets, but Helen and her team of dancers hope to surprise audiences all across the island.

A former primary teacher who had taught dance to kids in the past, Helen was the obvious person to get our local flashmob happening.

But it's not just her teaching skills that made her the ideal candidate.

"But I'm also the one first up to have a dance. I don't even need a few drinks and I'm up on the dance floor. I just love it."

Although she's the nominal leader of the team, Helen said everyone contributes ideas, moves and musical suggestions.

So far, the repertoire ranges from the Nutbush, to Footloose and Flashdance and for their first public flashmob dance, they chose a song from the Blues Brothers' movie.

The group get together once a week to



BY SARAH HUDSON PHOTO: SARAH HUDSON

practice at the YMCA in Cowes.

"We all go crazy on the squash courts. Everyone throws themselves into it."

"Rather than learning a particular style the group is relaxed. We just get together and have a dance."

"We all just absolutely love it and can't wait for the following Monday."

All participants are currently women of varying ages, but men are encouraged and even older participants who can dance sitting in a chair.

"We want it to be as inclusive as possible," Helen said.

"The energy and excitement around it means it will definitely be a long-term thing."

"Who doesn't like having a dance without having to go to a bar."

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BY ELEANOR MCKAY  
PHOTOS: STEPH THORNBORROW

# A FAMILY BUILDING

EVERY HOUSE HAS A STORY ABOUT MORE THAN CONSTRUCTION. AS MUCH AS TOM NEIL'S HEMPCRETE HOUSE ON THE EDGE OF COWES IS ABOUT FINDING A MORE ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY WAY TO BUILD, IT IS ALSO ABOUT THE FAMILY TIES THAT BIND HIM.

There's a lot that is outside the ordinary in builder Tom Neil's latest project. Nestled into the trees just metres from the ocean, Tom is constructing a house made from hempcrete and it's not just the choice of material that sets it apart.

For starters, it's a family affair, with Tom collaborating with his twin sister Sally on the house, while his mum Norma

financed the build.

"Mum wanted to do a project with me, and I wanted to build a hempcrete house," Tom explained. "I wanted to show it was a viable building material, with sustainable credentials, that was healthy to live in, and good for the environment."

But once the project started, Norma's health deteriorated. Although the original

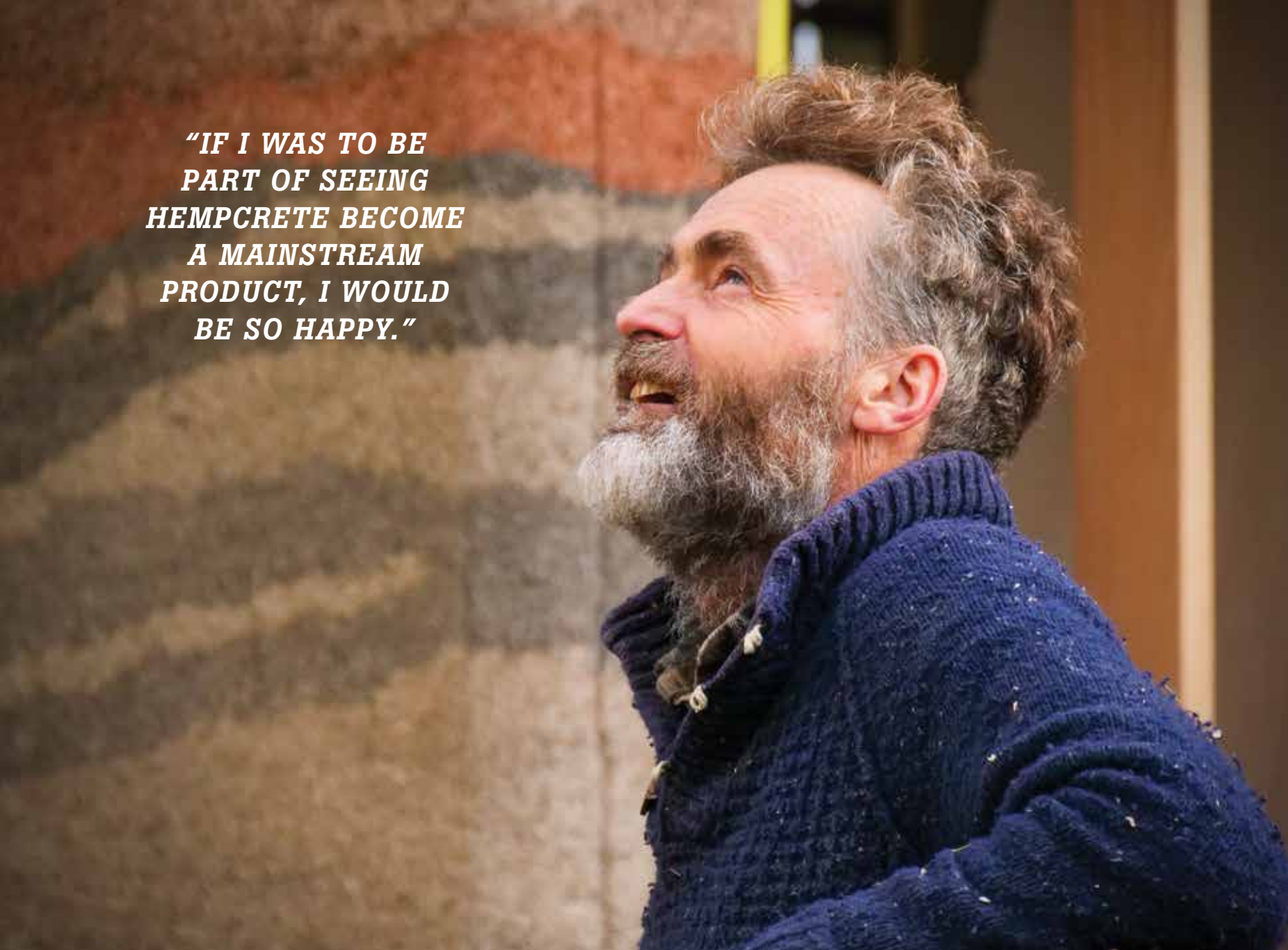
plan had been for Tom to commute between his home in the Yarra Valley, spending a few nights with his mother in Ventnor, Tom took on a carer's role, basing himself on the island and juggling his mother's health needs with the construction timetable. Unfortunately, Norma never got to see the house completed, passing away aged 93 in early June.

Tom said it was clear from the start that his mother's health was failing, and the building has become a legacy to her drive and vision. "The project gave her an interest, and gave us something to talk about," Tom said. Always a savvy investor, with a good eye for real estate, he said Norma chose the block, because of its bush setting and proximity to the beach.

His sister Sally, a nurse and surf instructor who lives on Phillip Island is the owner/builder for the project, which has helped forge an even stronger bond







**“IF I WAS TO BE  
PART OF SEEING  
HEMPCRETE BECOME  
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PRODUCT, I WOULD  
BE SO HAPPY.”**

between the siblings. She’s a regular visitor to the site, and in the early days of the build drove their mother down to inspect the progress. “It’s been good for me and my sister to have this on the go,” said

Tom. “She’s always laughing and comes and does odd jobs. I reckon she put in hundreds of nails in the frame. She brings us down coffee and shows up with beer at the end of the day. I describe her as the person who always comes in the nick of time.”

The bulk of the work is being done by a core team of just two – Tom and Joey Davidson, who has moved from the Yarra Valley to Phillip Island to work on the project. But at times the site is teaming with people, including Tom’s children and other family members, casual labourers and other trades. When the 30cm hempcrete

walls of the house were installed, it took a team of six just on three weeks to install 55 cubic metres of hempcrete, including packing, mixing and the formwork.

Hempcrete has attracted the attention

of environmentally conscious builders for its thermal properties, great acoustic performance, health benefits and pest resistance status. Plus, it sequesters carbon. For Tom, it was all this, added to hempcrete’s ability to integrate with more conventional building practices, that was key to its appeal.

Although originally trained as a teacher, Tom has decades of experience in the building industry. As a cabinet maker, Tom has worked on many projects using standard materials. But he was drawn to finding a better, more sustainable way,

and this house is the sixth time he’s built with hempcrete. “I wanted to build with something natural and sustainable,” he explained. “I heard about someone building with hempcrete in Violet Town. I went up there and did a workshop and totally fell in love with it.”

Tom says the ability to use formwork with hempcrete gives you “more freedom with form and shape”. Developed by a French woman about 50 years ago, hempcrete was originally designed to help with the restoration of old buildings. “There were problems with cement-based products that sealed the moisture in,” Tom explained. “But hempcrete is hygroscopic, and transfers moisture out, which makes for a healthier home.” It’s also pest resistant – termites don’t like it and between the Hebel floors and the hempcrete walls, rodents won’t be making themselves at home in Tom’s new house.

Not surprisingly, the building’s usual construction method and striking round windows have been attracting the attention of neighbours and passers-by. “Every second car slows down to have a look. It’s great that people ask questions,” Tom said.

The circular windows are a nod to the original house design, by Tom’s long-time collaborator, German designer Stephan Klemm. “Stephan did a lot of concept designs, and one was a beautiful round house, but it was just too expensive. My sister loved it, so in this design, we put in a lot of curves ... on the deck, the wall edges and the windows.”

Surrounding neighbours, interested in the unusual build, have added their expertise. One neighbour in Ventnor built the aluminium doors and windows for the home’s middle deck, practically constructing them on site. Another was recruited in the ocean. “I was down swimming at the beach when I met a neighbour, who asked me what we were doing,” Tom said. “He’s semi-retired but said he’d be keen to give me a hand. I offered him a job right there in the water.”

While the house is creating new connections and collaborations, it is also tying together the strands of a family, across the generations.

Tom grew up in St Andrews and remembers building mud bricks as a kid. “It’s in my bones,” he said. While his

mother Norma was a talented artist who loves aesthetics, Tom described his father Don as “entrepreneurial”. “He gave me the feeling that you don’t have to go with the status quo.” When he was 11, his parents divorced. Both went on to new relationships, his mother having another daughter, and his father having a boy and a girl with his new partner, with the blended family now spread across several states.

After finishing school, Tom headed overseas, studying to be a teacher in the UK, where he met his wife Tania at Exeter University in Devon. The couple lived in Totnes in Devon “a very historic and arty town”, but after 13 years away, Tom and Tania, who have three children (Anna, Tom and Sophie) returned to Australia and settled in the Yarra Valley in 2002.

The return home also brought a career change. Looking for a new challenge away from the classroom, he started building furniture. “I couldn’t make any money, but people started asking me to install things in houses.” That led to work as a cabinet maker and a decades long career in the construction industry.

His mother made no secret of the fact she wanted Tom and his family to move to the island. As well as being home to his twin sister, the island’s ties are strong. His daughter Anna is a frequent visitor, in recent months sharing the carer duties for her grandmother, while Tom’s son Asher from a previous relationship lives at Cape Woolamai. Tom and Tania’s son (Tom junior) is close not just with Asher, but also with Asher’s brother Finn and although technically not related, tells people Finn is his brother.

For Tom, having them all involved in the construction of the house has provided even stronger bonds, giving them a shared goal and a common interest. Between preparing for her own exhibition and getting ready to head overseas, daughter Anna, an artist, joined the work crew. While she nominated wheeling around barrows full of hempcrete and being the “lackey sorting out the rubbish on site” as the worst parts of the job, it was “very satisfying to be involved in a family project”. When completed, the house design also means it could easily accommodate more than one generation,





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These results are immediately pre and post one session, examples of what to expect with redness during these combination of treatments. Three sessions as a minimum are recommended 4 weeks apart.

with the U-shaped design including a self-contained parents' retreat.

Tom is hoping his hempcrete house will inspire others to look at a sustainable and environmental alternative to concrete. He's welcomed the recent push by the Legalise Cannabis Victoria party for a boost to the Victorian hemp industry. The party said with the imminent closure of the Victorian native timber logging industry, hemp will guarantee more jobs in the regions, increase export earnings and help reduce state-wide carbon emissions.

When it comes to jokes about building with hemp, Tom has heard them all, but he's happy to take the jokes, as long as people keep asking questions. "If I was

to be part of seeing hempcrete become a mainstream product, I would be so happy," he said. "It could revolutionise the building industry."

Currently, one of the big downsides is the cost. "We don't have the industrial scale to bring prices down, we don't have the logistics. Shipping is expensive, and unlike other materials, there's no big depot in Dandenong where you can go and get your hempcrete."



Even if hemp production in Victoria is boosted, there is another hurdle the industry needs to overcome. The lime binder for the hempcrete is imported from France. "We need an Australian product and I'm now starting a geology course

to explore that. I really don't like the travel miles involved in importing it from France."

At a cost of around one and a half times that of a conventional home, being this green is not a cheap option, but the benefits in terms of health and long-term energy savings are worth it, say Tom. "I want to show that hempcrete is a viable building material, with sustainable credentials. And I want to build a house that will last for centuries."

Closer to home, thanks to Norma's vision and support, hopefully the house will be a haven and a gathering place for all the members of Tom's extended family.

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A self-described motorsports fanatic, any time there's action at the GP track, you're sure to find local photographer Alia Schonberg. Don't let her youthfulness fool you, she's an expert photographer and an old hand when it comes to capturing the excitement of race day.

"I love this shot because it encapsulates the insanely quick movement of a MotoGP bike that happens in less than a second in an 'out of the box' way.

"Utilising motion blur in my motorsport work has become one of my favourite ways to shoot as it feels reminiscent of painting – but with a camera rather than a brush.

"You can get such varied images and colour palettes depending not only on the subject, but how slow you have your shutter and how you choose to physically move the camera while shooting the image.

"Photographing at the Circuit is always special for me. I grew up pretty involved in the motorsport industry so it's a given that it's my favourite place to shoot on the island.

"Getting to cover such a variety of events, from bikes to cars, international events through to local club weekends – it's versatility that I don't think you can really find anywhere else."

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BY ELEANOR MCKAY  
PHOTOS: CAROL RATCLIFF

# Creating footy history

We all know September is a time when footy fever runs hot. While the big guns battle it out for the AFL premiership at the MCG, it's on local footy fields across the country where the AFL stars are born. Phillip Island has had its share of AFL achievers. Carlton star Sam Docherty was the first Phillip Island player to be drafted into the AFL, while back in the 1950s the club captain was Bob Watson, uncle of Essendon star Tim Watson.

In recent years, the Phillip Island Bulldogs have enjoyed a sterling run, winning back-to-back premierships in 2018 and 2019. Covid thwarted a potential premiership in 2020, and again in 2021, when the Island Seniors were declared the minor premiers after the season and finals were abandoned. In 2022 they made it through to the Grand Final and this year again battled it out for the premiership. There's no doubt Phillip Islanders take their footy seriously, but premierships are not their only record-breaking achievements. Taking to the field is a generational obsession and this year, the Niven family entered the history books.

When Tom Niven ran out on to the ground with the Phillip Island Football Seniors team in May, he became the fourth generation of his family to pull on the boots for the Bulldogs. In line with club tradition, the 19-year-old was presented with the #31 jumper in honour of local footy legend Keith DeLooze (Whale) by his cousin and club coach, Andrew Walton. His very proud grandmother Pat Niven said Tom was following in his father Steven's footsteps, as well as generations of the Niven family, in representing the island. The family connection to the Phillip Island Bulldogs dates back over 70 years. Club records show Tom's great uncle Colin played and coached for the club in the 1950s. Tom's son Colin junior played in the 60s, alongside cousins Ray and John,



with John captain and coach when the club won two premierships in 1962 and 1964. They were followed by another cousin Bob Niven, then by the 1980s, Colin's sons David and Stuart were on the seniors' list, playing alongside John's son Graeme and Ray's son Steven – Tom's dad. That's quite a family roll call, and the contribution of the Niven family hasn't just been on the field, with family members on club committees and taking on other volunteer roles. Pat said she's been going to games for decades and has watched young Tom since he started in the club juniors. With another grandson, Tim, currently playing in the thirds, Pat predicts he will be the next Niven to join the Bulldogs' senior side. It seems certain the Niven legacy with the Phillip Island footy club is set to continue.

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BY SARAH HUDSON  
PHOTOS:STEPH THORNBORROW AND SUPPLIED

# A life saver

*“I realise I do have a powerful story so I want to use it as much as possible to give back, to motivate others to give, but also to encourage people to enrich the lives of others,” says surf beach resident Jacob Fry.*

Phillip Island's Jacob Fry can't exactly be sure how many lives he has helped save. But since he came close to death in a head-on car accident on the Phillip Island Road – revived only by being given massive quantities of blood – the 35-year-old has gone on to be one of Victoria's most generous blood donors, and also a rare plasma donor, saving the lives of pregnant women and babies.

“I don't know exactly the number,” Jacob says, “the anti D blood alone probably helps thousands of women and babies around Australia and New Zealand each year. I realise I do have a powerful story so I want to use it as much as possible to give back, to motivate others to

give blood, but also to encourage people to enrich the lives of others and so enrich their own lives.”

Jacob's story – which he recounts through the year in voluntary public speaking events – is unquestionably an extraordinary one. After first trying for his pilot's licence as a teenager – delayed by 33 surgeries and immeasurable pain – he finally gained his licence in 2021. That's after completing more than 160 skydive jumps, as well as learning to paraglide and paramotor (harness on a powered paraglider).

“I still want to live my dreams and am very, very grateful for every day I have here,” says the father of two-year-

old Adele. And if he wasn't already busy enough, just this year he has launched his non-profit Skies Unlimited, which will offer drone workshops, classes and camps teaching people to use drones for cinematography. The more adrenaline-packed arm of Skies Unlimited will see indoor drone racing, which Jacob says is becoming a hot trend globally.

He also offers his services for free to the Phillip Island Boardriders' Club for surf competition cinematography. “I grew up surfing but because I don't surf very well now I still wanted to be part of the surf culture. When I'd be recovering from surgeries, I'd be able to sit in the van or on the clifftop and fly a drone over them





surfing and feel like I was catching that wave. It gave me a sensation that I'm out there with them. Even though at the time I was in pain recovering and in struggle town, I could still enjoy surfing."

Jacob grew up on Phillip Island, moving back here last year (2022) with his childhood sweetheart, Sharnee Taylor, who grew up in Wimbledon Heights. He now works as the communications coordinator for the CYC at the Adventure Resort on the Phillip Island Road, overseeing the organisation's five state-wide camps.

His parents Paul and Linda also work at the CYC and live at San Remo, while his sister Sarah is a hairdresser in Cape Woolamai. After attending Wonthaggi Secondary College Jacob worked at the Cowes cycle shop, Ride On Bikes, also travelling up to Moorabbin to train for his pilot's licence.

It was in June 2009 that he was driving alone back to the island at 8am that he "lost concentration for a split second" at Surf Beach and veered into the path of an oncoming truck. While he has no memory

of the five days around the accident, he was told that he was jammed in the car for 45 minutes before being airlifted to the Alfred Hospital.

He was given a less than five per cent chance of survival and even then he was told he would lose his right leg.

Jacob's injuries were extensive: severe fractures of the skull, half his liver needed removing, ruptured spleen and colon, punctured lung, bruised kidneys, compound fracture of the right femur, broken fibula and tibia, his little toe was torn off and his body and face were severely lacerated.

The average human body holds five to six litres of blood. To save Jacob's life, he was given 36 litres in nine hours.

"When I arrived by chopper I had one minute left before I was completely dry of blood. I had so many severe wounds they had to patch me up to stop me leaking blood. I used up the hospital's entire supply of my blood type, A-, and so they had to put in A+ to compensate."

More astonishing is that Jacob was meant to be in intensive care for six weeks.

Instead he left hospital after two and a half weeks and was in rehab for a further five and a half weeks.

"There's no medical explanation for why I healed so rapidly," says Jacob. "Having said that it has been a painful 14 years. The last surgery I had was early 2021. I think surgeries will always be ongoing, although the amount of times I've thought 'this has to be my last surgery'. My next surgery will be on my toes.

"I'll probably always be in pain, mainly my right leg and foot, every step hurts and I walk with a limp. I thank the locals who were first on scene and our local emergency services who did an incredible job in getting me into the chopper so fast."

Jacob first became a blood donor before the accident at the age of 18 because "I thought it's a good thing to do". One year after the accident he once again gave blood and subsequently organised huge blood drives with his mates. That led him to start giving talks on behalf of the Alfred Hospital and Red Cross Lifeblood (formerly the blood bank).

"Every three weeks I give a talk at HMAS Cerberus (on Western Port bay) to more than 100 navy recruits. After the talk a lot of them sign up to give blood. Even though it's so many years later, it's still such an impactful story. It gives my everyday pain worth, if that makes sense."

Jacob's story took a more extraordinary

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turn when doctors realised that in giving such high doses of foreign A+ blood, his body created high quantities of the life-giving substance anti-D. About 17 per cent of mothers in Australia need anti-D injections during each of their pregnancies to ensure their babies avoid potentially fatal illness. “There are only 35 anti-D donors in Victoria and all our plasma is pooled, which means that literally every injection has my DNA in it.”

So every second Monday not only Jacob, but his whole family and mates, travel to Ringwood to sit for an hour and donate plasma (blood takes 10 minutes to give). “Red Cross calls it Fry Monday and afterwards we all go out for dinner.”

In order to ensure he has enough anti-D in his system, once a year Jacob is given a booster of foreign blood, only compatible with three other people in Australia. “There’s this bloke in NSW and when he donates his blood they take all his red blood cells and within 24 hours they need to go into me. When it happens, a group of scientists all hang around me and study me.”

Jacob says having accomplished his

personal goals of being able to walk again and also to fly a plane, he is now having fun with his drone company, which also includes Christian presentations from guest speakers such as pilots and flight instructors, showing how “faith helped

them in their work”. “More than anything I want people to understand the choices we make in life are important. It can impact a lot more people than just yourself. What I put my family through from the accident was brutal.”

#### What is anti-D?

Anti-D is a plasma product produced from the blood of selected Rh (D) negative donors. The product is given to pregnant women who are Rh (D) negative to prevent their babies from developing Haemolytic Disease, which can be fatal.

#### Who needs anti-D?

About 17 per cent of mothers in Australia will need anti-D injections during each of their pregnancies and after the birth of an Rh (D) positive baby.

#### How is anti-D made?

Anti-D can only be produced from

the blood of a select group of donors. These donors all have the Rh (D) negative blood type but they also have an antibody called anti-D. Very few people, and even fewer donors, have anti-D.

#### The Anti-D program

The program relies on donors who already have anti-D, but Red Cross Lifeblood can also stimulate development of anti-D in specially selected donors who initially do not have it. If you are a male or a female past child-bearing years, you may be eligible to join the Anti-D program.



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# Getting together

The new Cowes Cultural Centre is due to open later this year and will officially be known as Berninneit. The First Nations name means “gather together” and symbolises the hopes for the new building, which will house a new library, art gallery, 250 seat theatre, museum and function spaces.

The building is only the second public

building in Australia to have Passive House (PassivHaus) certification and was designed by award-winning Melbourne architectural group Jackson Clements Burrows.

The first major event for the new centre will be the Phillip Island Festival of Stories which has so far confirmed guest speakers Daniel Church, Darug artist; Aunty Fay Stewart-Muir, Boonwurrung Elder, author,

linguist and prison support worker; Lorin Clarke, writer, columnist, radio regular; Sam Drummond, discrimination lawyer and author; Uncle Steve Ulula Parker, artist, traditional Boonwurrung custodian, musician, youth mentor; and Sue Hines, publisher.

More details at: [pifestivalofstories.com](http://pifestivalofstories.com)



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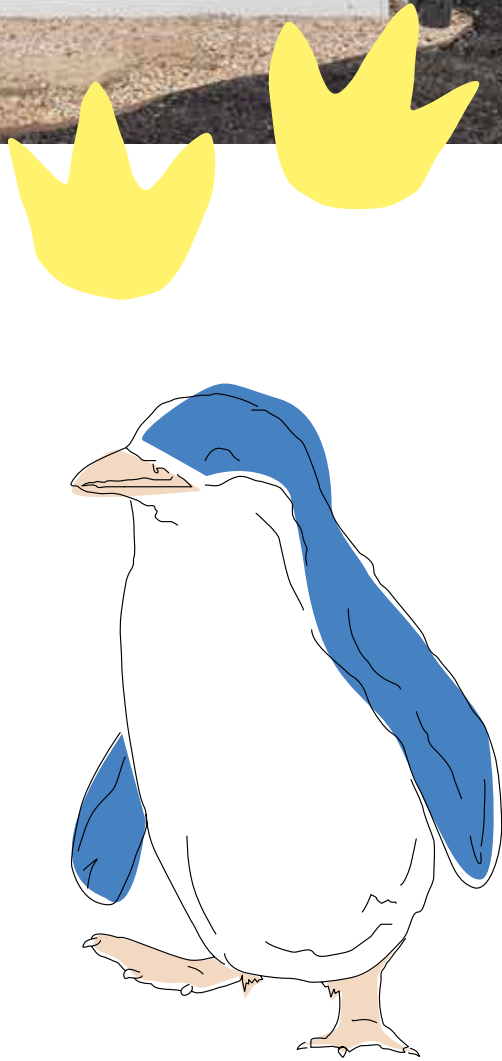
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BY SARAH HUDSON  
PHOTO: SUPPLIED

# Perfect pitch

Word's spreading there's a new gang in town. A group of men have been gathering to spend an hour or two pitching their voices in song.

As with many musical compositions, this group came about through an idea. It began as a casual conversation between two mates, Simon Moule and Liam Jury, sharing their love of music and the fact that it seemed to be missing from their lives.

It struck a chord with these two who decided to do something about it. "We watched a few videos of groups like pub choirs and thought we'd ask a few friends if they'd be interested in getting together, to sing," explained self-appointed song master, Simon.

In no time at all, this interest grew to a small group, all men, who found themselves meeting in a few different locations every couple of weeks or so. Such has been the response the Island Men's

Song Gang, as it's now known, meets every second Wednesday evening at their new home, the upstairs room of the Wooli Tavern in Cape Woolamai.

"We didn't want to call it a choir," said Simon, "as it sounds formal and structured, so we went for gang as that sounds more fun." The group is ever expanding and includes men of all ages and from all walks of life. There's a plumber, a vet, several teachers, a chippy, a surfing coach, an accountant and a retiree. It's a way for men to do something for themselves, to connect with people they hadn't met before and to simply enjoy the challenge of trying something new.

"I just came along for the hell of it," said Michael Sorensen, who fronted up on his own and is now a regular singer, admitting he was somewhat sceptical in the beginning. "It's more fun than you think." It's a perception Simon explains is common to most people who have never sung in

public before. "There's a lot of nervous tension at first, but after five minutes or so you just get into it," Simon said.

The evening concludes with a drink from the bar and conversation shared with like-minded songsters.

To be part of the fun, simply turn up at the Wooli Tavern on a Wednesday evening at 7.30pm and make your way upstairs. Simon says he has had considerable interest from women wanting to join so he's planning an event for October 4 and if it proves popular, it will be called Island People's Song Gang.

Details can be found by joining the Island Men's Song Gang WhatsApp group; or message Simon on 0479 134 130.

## Just like a Local

The brainchild of couple Mark and Pharrah Underwood, in four short years Local Clothing has certainly made its mark. More than a clothing range, its unique fundraising model sees the company partner with a local community group each month, donating 10 per cent of its monthly turnover to the group.

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# The bikes are back

Phillip Island is getting ready to pull on the leathers and strap on its helmet, as the world's best motorcycle riders return this October for the Australian Motorcycle Grand Prix. From October 20 to 22, the island will be buzzing with the roar of

motorcycle engines, with eager fans keen to catch all the action. Last year, the GP returned after a three-year hiatus due to Covid, with fans flocking to Phillip Island. The estimated crowd of 91,000 saw a record weekend.

Even the wet weather – which saw trackside parking and camping abandoned and forced the cancellation of the Barry Sheene Ride – couldn't dampen spirits. Don't miss your chance to be part of this year's action. [www.motogp.com.au](http://www.motogp.com.au)

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BY SARAH HUDSON  
PHOTOS: SUPPLIED

# WHAT LIES BENEATH?

*IF YOU KNOW WHERE TO GO, PHILLIP ISLAND AND SAN REMO OFFER SOME OF THE BEST DEEP DIVING SPOTS IN THE COUNTRY, ACCORDING TO ONE OF THE ISLAND'S LONG-TERM DIVERS.*

When Peter Mosse tells people Phillip Island and San Remo have some of the best diving spots in Australia, possibly even the world, initially they are disbelieving.

"Honestly, I rate them extremely highly," says the 59-year-old, who has a house at Sunderland Bay.

"It's definitely a top diving site in Australia, especially the Pinnacles off Cape Woolamai and the San Remo channel.

"Just seeing the photos people believe it. There's kelp down to 25 metres, gorgonia (Venus fans) in red and orange, dusky sea ferns and fish in all colours, pink

and black and blue."

Given Peter's lifelong diving experience, he speaks with credibility. He first started snorkelling as a child off Victoria's west coast, and gained his scuba certificate while studying zoology at Melbourne University (he later went on to get a PhD in fish research).

He has scuba dived in Mexico cenotes or sinkholes (which he admits, is not for the faint-hearted diver), the Great Barrier Reef, Lord Howe Island to a large chunk of the Australian coast.

Each week, sometimes twice a week, he ventures on extensive scuba trips, and in

the "thousands and thousands" of hours he has spent underwater he still maintains this area has among the best dive spots.

Top of his list is the San Remo jetty and the San Remo channel. "It's awkward to get out there but once there there's a vertical wall or drop off with so many colours and types of organisms. I can be underwater about 24 metres and the Kasey Lee or tourist boats will be overhead and I think to myself the tourists have no idea what is down here, how beautiful it is."

Peter says the Pinnacles is a "mystical" dive site about 1.5km off the Cape Woolamai coastal cliffs, also confusingly





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be taken care of.*

known as the Pinnacles. “Like there is on land, there are huge granite rock fingers that are underwater and come out of the water, measuring about 35 metres high,” he says, adding that he dives up to 43 metres deep in this spot.

“The fish there may not be as colourful as the Great Barrier Reef but there’s lots of fish, black and white, pink and blue, and leatherjackets with a horseshoe on their side that are blue, black and yellow and I’ve seen common sea dragons in the area too.”

Peter admits like the channel, diving at the Pinnacles is not for the novice. “Diving in Victoria, conditions can be challenging, and the water there can be dirty. About three weeks ago I dived at the Pinnacles and it was like night, just black. But a month ago it was gin clear, blue water. Even when it’s dirty you’ll always see something. For less experienced divers the lack of clarity at times can be scary and there are strong currents and bottom surge from the swell.”

Peter has dived in Victoria’s shipwreck graveyard near Barwon Heads, as well as scuttled old ships along Australia’s eastern seaboard. But third on his list of top dives is the wreck of the George Kermode, which

was scuttled near Pyramid Rock about one nautical mile off the southern coast by the government as an artificial reef in 1976.

The ship was built in Scotland in 1914, as a single deck, twin screwed steam bucket dredge and it lies upside down on the sand. Peter says along with the Pinnacles, the George Kermode has a reputation among divers, and is one of the best wrecks in Victoria, with divers saying a visit is the “equivalent of finding a golden ticket in a Wonka Bar”.

Despite diving to great depths, Peter has only ever suffered mild joint bends (the rapid release of nitrogen gas from the bloodstream when a diver ascends to the surface too rapidly). “Some people say 40

metre depths are too deep but to me it’s second nature.”

He has never suffered hypothermia, but admits he often emerges from the blue himself quite blue, adding he is a “hard core diver”. For divers here the temperature can be challenging. In summer the channel can be 25C but in winter it’s 11C, although diving in Tasmania is colder (7C). And if diving in freezing, murky waters dissuades most people from taking to the deep, then Peter happily admits he

frequently encounters sharks.

“You’re lucky if you see a great white. I’ve seen a few, not a lot. At the Great Barrier Reef there were grey nurse sharks and here I’ve seen wobbegongs.”

Peter lives in the Latrobe Valley, where he is self-employed working in the water industry. “Drinking water,” he clarifies, including working with our local Westernport Water. He has had a colourful career, from working as a research scientist in heart disease to a university tutor. He says even though he studied swimming muscles in fish for his PhD, there were limited career prospects.

While diving is his passion, he also wants to send non-divers a clear message: respect the oceans. “Too often they are used as a dumping ground, particularly overseas, but even here you find fishing waste and quite a bit of rubbish. The Great Barrier Reef is threatened by climate change, no doubt about that. The southern reefs in Victoria are threatened to a certain extent. The biggest tell-tale is the kelp forests are gone, including in Tasmania and Port Phillip bay.

“Both the George Kermode and Cape Woolamai used to have thousands and thousands of fish but they have disappeared, as have the crayfish and even the couta and shark industry out of San Remo.”

## “DIVING IN VICTORIA, CONDITIONS CAN BE CHALLENGING”

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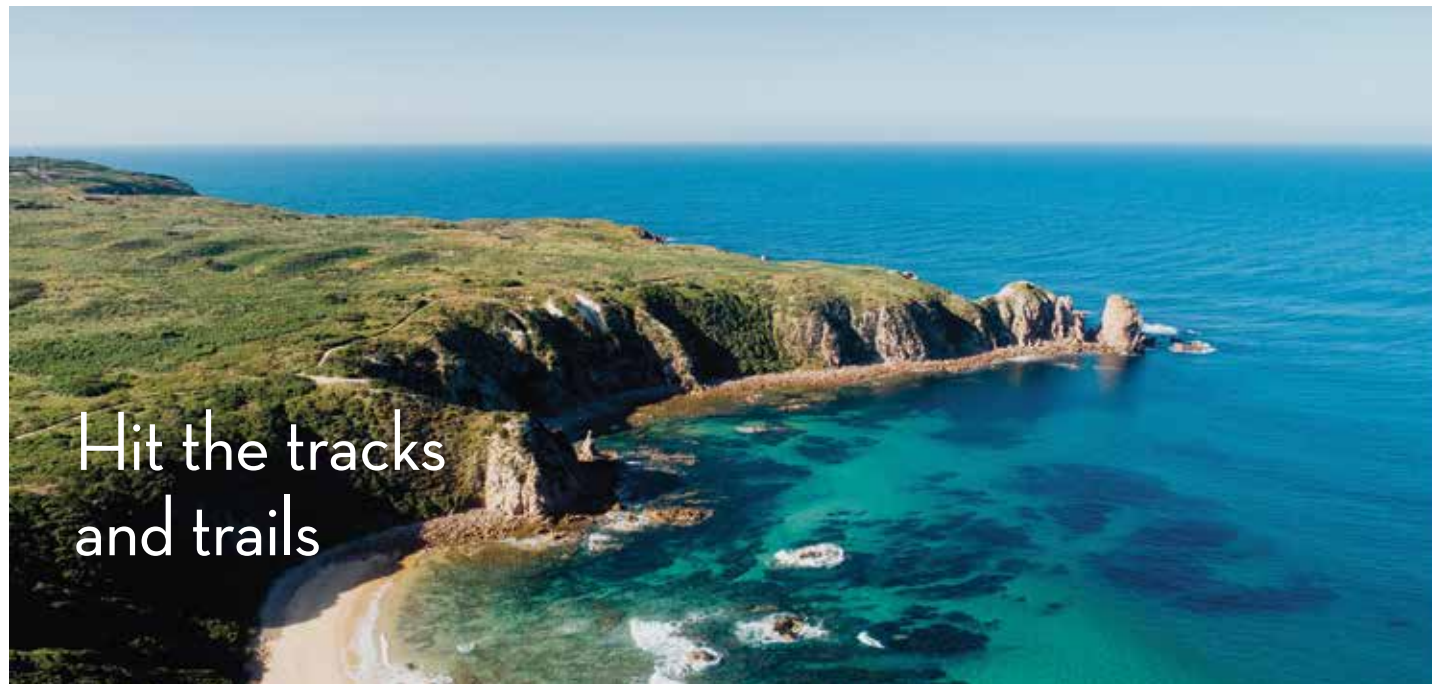
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## Hit the tracks and trails

Enjoy the fresh coastal air in a range of coastal walks across the island, including Cape Woolamai, Pyramid Rock, The Nobbies, Swan Lake and Rhyll Inlet. Or cross over the bridge to San Remo and set off on the stunning George Bass Coastal Walk.

As the highest point on the island, the Cape Woolamai hike offers spectacular views of Phillip Island, Woolamai's famous surf beach and the surrounding coastline. The Pinnacles provide a stunning opportunity for photographers and Instagrammers and the walk through the coastal scrub allows ample opportunity to come face to face with some of the native inhabitants, including wallabies, echidnas and blue tongue lizards. There are three hiking options, ranging in distance from around four to seven kilometres.

The George Bass Coastal Walk stretches from Punch Bowl in San Remo to Kilcunda, where it meets up with the Bass Coast Rail Trail. The seven-kilometre hike to Kilcunda winds between rugged coastline, farmlands and rolling hills, following the route of the explorer George Bass over 200 years ago. Enjoy incredible ocean views and stop off at hidden, secluded beaches along the way.

Take a walk along the southern coastline of the island, from Pyramid Rock to Berrys Beach. A mix of boardwalks and sandy paths, on the way you're likely to encounter local wildlife and experience some breathtaking views. Approximately five kilometres return trip, the route includes several viewing platforms.

The Nobbies Centre overlooks Bass

Strait and offers an absorbing insight into the lives of the local seals and other marine animals. The clifftop boardwalk (500 metres) gets you close to the elements and those incredible ocean views, overlooking the 25,000-strong fur seal population.

Just before the entrance to the Penguin Parade is Swan Lake. This freshwater lake surrounded by boardwalks is ideal for bird watching. Don't miss the signets (baby swans) in spring. Over at Rhyll, Conservation Hill and Rhyll Inlet offers another paradise for bird lovers – keep your eyes peeled for spoonbills, oystercatchers, herons, egrets and cormorants. A mix of boardwalks and sandy tracks loop through coastal scrub and Ramsar listed wetlands and mangroves.



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## UNESCO site on our doorstep

Last month, UNESCO reconfirmed Western Port's status as the only south-eastern Australian member of the international network.

UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) congratulated and commended the actions that have taken place to ensure the future of the bay, including the campaign to prevent the AGL installation of a gas port terminal.

The bay, with its internationally acclaimed Ramsar wetlands attracts thousands of migratory birds each year. Local groups are calling for a strategic plan to protect the marine environment, particularly in the face of increasing challenges and pressures, including the impacts of mining, agriculture and residential development.



## A poet for the people

Something of a local legend, surfer Dogga Luke has published a book of poetry, capturing the heart and soul of island life. A wizard of prose with a heart of gold, his mates describe him as "a relic" from the early days of island surfing ... before leg ropes and board wax.

"Some of Life's Selected Ramblings" offers Dogga's unique insights into travel, love, family, nature and life. You can get your own slice of this island magic for just \$20 at The Anchorage Store, Bill's Book Shop and the Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser.



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# Tour Local



# The transformer

FROM AN EARLY AGE, SUE HUNT KNEW SHE WANTED  
A LIFE ON THE STAGE ... OR MORE ACCURATELY, SIDE OF STAGE,  
HELPING OTHERS REALISE THEIR CREATIVE DREAMS.

A conversation with Sue Hunt covers a lot of territory, weaving from artistic creativity to social responsibility and scientific studies.

The CEO of the Royal Children's Hospital Foundation has had a stellar career in the arts and slips easily between the two worlds, both in practice and in conversation.

After buying a holiday house in Ventnor in 2014, Sue and her partner Rob moved to the island in 2017. These days she commutes regularly to Melbourne, but also works remotely – a practice that was bedded in during Covid lockdowns.

Across the course of her impressive career, Sue has been the founding CEO of Carriageworks (a contemporary multi-arts centre in Sydney), General Manager of both the Geelong Performing Arts Centre and Queensland Theatre Company, as well as Director of Performing Arts at the Sydney Opera House.

She sees her current role working for the not-for-profit organisation as a natural progression from her time in theatre and

performing arts.

"The arts transform people on an individual basis," she said. "It's a transformational thing when you sit in that room and watch it, whether it's music, theatre, dance. Now, I'm transforming people's lives on a broader scale, through the generosity of others."

She's been the CEO of the Royal Children's Hospital foundation since 2010. "All Melburnians love and respect the Royal Children's Hospital – in terms of the fund-raising and charitable world – it's right up there. It's been an absolute gift, an extraordinary job."

A background in arts production and administration might not have seemed an obvious fit for the state's favourite charity. But eager to return to Melbourne after years of working in Queensland and Sydney, Sue decided to throw her hat in the ring for the CEO role.

"I had started to ask myself, are you making enough of a contribution in the world Sue? I decided I wasn't. I thought if I'm going to move industries, I'd

better do it now and see if my skill set is transferrable. I was not a fundraiser. I was a CEO. I had run businesses and aligned structures," she said. "Professional management needed to be put in place, and that's what I had to offer. I just happened to have what the board wanted at the time."

But most likely, the board saw a passionate and determined person, who had built organisations from the ground up, with a strong commitment to social issues and giving back to the community. A leader who was also prepared to roll up her sleeves and work alongside her team.

Thirteen years after stepping into the role, Sue still seems just as excited about changing lives through the work of the foundation, and equally as passionate about the arts and its importance in the community.

Describing herself as curious, rather than ambitious, she's carved a career by following her heart. Even before she started school, she knew she wanted to be in the performing arts, after an epiphany during



an amateur theatre production at her local church.

“I was an angel in a performance at the age of three. I remember thinking, this is what I am going to do with my life,” she laughs, quickly clarifying that even then, it was the production side, rather than acting, that appealed to her. “If you ask my family, they’ll tell you I made that decision very early.”

Sue has fond memories of family time spent time around the piano, and her mother and aunt singing. Her aunt’s partner John, a musician who played piano, piano accordion and the violin got Sue playing the clarinet, which she studied at school, and she continued working with the church’s amateur theatre group.

But the theatre really became her world once she went to university to study politics and philosophy. “While I was a uni, I did a year of acting lessons at the National Theatre in St Kilda. This is where I met my network.” That network included the production manager at Playbox Theatre, who suggested she could stage manage a production, to help out a colleague who was overloaded.

Up until this point, all Sue’s experience had all been with amateur productions. When she came in for the meeting, the stage manager, who was working 80 hours a week on two productions, was taken aback when he realised she had no professional experience.

“I said, I can either stay and you can train me in the show and I can take it on, or you can do 80 hours, and I will go. It wasn’t like me to be so demonstrative, but it paid off,” she said. The stage manager decided to give her a shot. “He ran me through all the cues on the first night, sat somewhere else on the second night while I ran it. By night three, he was gone, leaving me in charge. And it was just professional work from then on.”

Next Sue moved to the Arts Centre in Melbourne, working in a stage manager slash client service role, before deciding she wanted more. “It’s not ambition, I just wanted something with a bigger perspective,” she explained.

Her next move was to the small Church Theatre company as production manager, on what she now describes as the start of her leadership journey, although she wasn’t conscious of it at the time. “That’s going from being in the corner and running the show on the night, to working with the directors and designers, building the sets,” she said. “It’s helping create the show, then leaving it for others to run.”

From there, Sue moved to the Victorian State Opera, with a traineeship from the Australia Council, to shadow the opera company’s production manager. She then took on that role, before becoming Technical Director. She stayed with the

company for six years, running the whole season, before opportunity beckoned down the highway in Geelong, as the general manager of the performing arts centre.

“Without thinking it through, I made some very sensible choices, which allowed me to be successful,” she explained. “I had a pretty good sense of where my skill set was although I hadn’t run a venue before, but it was a wonderful opportunity.”

While it was a steady rise up the career ladder, the passage wasn’t always easy. Part of her love of the arts was the opportunity to work in a team, to create and produce work together. “I absolutely remember when the leadership challenge took me from being one of the team to their boss. I was the technical director; they were my crew. They were out on tour and behaved very badly. They got turfed out of the

**“NOW, I’M  
TRANSFORMING  
PEOPLE’S LIVES ON  
A BROADER SCALE,  
THROUGH THE  
GENEROSITY OF  
OTHERS.”**

hotel they were staying in. I drove up to see if they were okay and to put them back on track.

“We had a drink around the bar and driving back down the highway, I thought that is the last time that I will ever drink with them around the bar. Because I had to tell them that was unacceptable behaviour. I’d been sitting on the fence around leadership for quite some time, and now I was on the other side from them. It was painful and emotionally challenging. They were my peers, and I was leaving them behind.”

Sue’s next move was another way of stretching her professional wings, as general manager of the Queensland Theatre Company. Keen to get back into the artistic side of theatre life, she also wanted to work alongside the company’s Artistic Director Michael Gow, after working on one of his plays during her early days at Playbox Theatre. “That was the production where I knew I was not going to be a director. I thought, I don’t have that skill. I am going to be assisting in that creative practice.” She worked alongside director Neil Armfield and had a distinct memory of Michael as “a young, surly playwright”. “It was a magnificent play, but it was very important for me in realising where I sat and what I wanted to

be,” she explained.

When she heard about the Queensland job, she knew she had to go. “It was a watershed moment in many respects. That was the job of my life, the most important one ... and I wish I stayed longer,” she confessed, getting emotional at the memory. “My relationship with Michael was so strong. It was just the most incredible time in my life.”

As well as helping construct a new building for the company, Sue said the theatre committed to developing local talent. “It started and developed the careers of a great many actors, designers and technicians,” she said, and over her four-year term, built up the organisation’s audience and reputation.

When the Sydney Opera House came calling, Sue listened to her head over her heart and took on the challenge of Director of Performing Arts. “The Opera House is a very big institution and hard to move,” she said. Still, she’s proud of creating an artistic vision for the iconic venue in her three-year term.

From the country’s best know arts institution, Sue returned to ground zero, taking up the offer from the NSW government to build a new arts facility near Redfern, Carriageworks. She said the opportunity to start from scratch – “it was just a big shed when we started” and be back working with the artists, was “irresistible”.

Given its location, Sue knew they needed to make the space a destination. It wasn’t all plain sailing, including one attempt – a hilarious tale of a project involving huge, oversized coffee cups that drove themselves around – which attracted no audience. “Of course, nobody came. There was no context around why we had these self-driving coffee cups. That’s when we realised, we have to create a reason, or multiple reasons for people to come.” Sue and her team set about creating hip hop festivals, children’s festivals, and Underbelly (no, not the crime series) – filled with spaces for artists to create work in.

The decision to leave Carriageworks, triggered by a yearning to return to Melbourne with her partner Rob (“something was calling us home”), saw her arrive at the Royal Children’s Hospital, where she’s now been for 13 years – a first in a career that was categorised by four-to-six-year tenures.

“A mentor told me – at a certain point of your career – you build an organisation. Then you reach that point where you either take it on its next growth or you let someone else take over. Four-to-six-years is going to take it to the next stage. He said, one day you’ll get to a job, stretch your legs under the desk and stay. That’s what this job at the Royal Children’s Hospital is.



I’ve had four or more cycles in the 13 years here.

But she still has a keen eye on the arts, holding voluntary board positions, including most recently Deputy Chair of Rising Festival, and current Chair of Auspicious Arts Projects and Regional Arts Victoria. Closer to home, she is on the board of the Penguin Foundation.

Like many on Phillip Island, she’s excited about the upcoming opening of the new cultural centre in Cowes and sees some parallels between Carriageworks and the potential impact of the new centre. “When you put artists into a space, it transforms the place. Carriageworks absolutely transformed Darlington,” she said. “The more arts practice you can have, the richer the community is. We have great things here on the island, and I hope the new centre, as well as bringing artists here, is also home for local artists and practitioners. You do have to invest in it. That’s partly about the work that is made here, and also about what tours here. You want the mix.”

The investment needs to be a creative, as well as a financial one. “Arts at this level,

has to be subsidised, but you have to see the building as part of your community. Of course, you bring touring productions, but what does the community need? When you’re building a new space, people are vital. There’s a saying, dark nights are an anathema to a theatre. So are empty houses. People are vital to it – whether it’s the artists or the audience. It’s the interaction between creatives and audiences that makes the artwork. You need these two things to come together.”

She’s excited for the centre’s opening and thrilled that the community has been able to vote on a name for the new building. “I love the fact that we have all voted on the name. It’s terrific. It gets people thinking that it’s part of who we are, part of our community. The name will be the right one. It will sit beautifully and have a sense of community. It will be opened by an elder and that will ground it on country, and that’s really important.”

She’s also hoping a resolution can be found for the National Vietnam Veterans Museum. “A new museum will be extraordinary for Phillip Island and the veterans. It has the potential to right

a wrong and to be an amazing piece of cultural infrastructure. There’s the capacity to rebirth it and rebuild it, to tell a story that brings in the human side of things. It’s important to me, because it’s about humanity.”

Meanwhile, on a personal level, Sue continues to be excited and curious about the arts. “It goes right back to watching my mother sing, or watching John play, sitting around the piano. Art enriches the soul, whether you are doing it, or watching it.

“I look at the artists putting themselves out there, taking the risk to make a message happen. On one hand it’s personal, because I’ve watched it happen and been part of that. On the other hand, it’s communal – because you see people change when they’re in a group. And it’s also political. It can invite people to change their view about something.

“It doesn’t have to all be serious stuff. Stand up comedy can change you. That’s what you’re invited to explore, to play with, have fun with, be challenge by. I haven’t lost sight of that capacity to change people.”



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The Island Market Food Van offers quick affordable breakfast and lunch options alongside Mamacittas Coffee. Both venues open from 7am M-F and 7am S-S till around 2pm. See you there!



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Focusing on fresh and healthy food, locally-loved café on the Phillip Island block, Mon Dieu brings a taste of the country to locals and visitors seeking farm-to-plate fare. This eatery presents a family-friendly vibe.



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25 Veterans Drive,  
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**NUI DAT CAFÉ**

A place to relax, chat and reflect while enjoying amazing food and coffee. The Nui Dat cafe is located in the foyer of the National Vietnam Veterans Museum and is open from 10am, 7 days a week through to around 3pm.



Shop 4, 22 Thompson Avenue,  
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One of the island's best-known Italian restaurants, Pino's was established in 1991 and serves authentic Italian food made from the heart. Known for the best pizza, pasta and cocktails in town, gather with family and friends in a warm and welcoming atmosphere.



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225-243 Thompson Avenue  
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www.pirsl.com.au

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Located at the gateway to Cowes on beautiful Phillip Island, features modern comfortable surrounds with a great range of food and beverage options. The family friendly Lone Pine Bistro has a 220 seat dining area and features an alfresco balcony called The Terrace.



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Step into a world of hand-crafted ales, beer and wine sampling and fine food! Rusty Water Brewery Restaurant & Bar is home to Phillip Island Brewing Co.

A hand-crafted beer is not like your standard lager. Unique flavours are created with the use of specialty malts, yeasts, hops and the addition of things like oak, orange, vanilla and spices.

Our beer is small batch hand-crafted so visitors will experience colour, aroma and flavours of the highest quality on tasting.

Try all of our ales from a current range on tap and watch for our new specials then enjoy them matched with our great food and hospitality.

**FEATURES**

- Home to Phillip Island Brewing Co.
- Boutique specialty and seasonal ales on tap, Contemporary European and Australian cuisine
- Rustic bush setting, 5 minutes from Cowes

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The Store is a must visit, one-stop shop for all your gourmet staples with high-quality, locally sourced and made products in Ventnor, Phillip Island and offers dine in or takeaway. Opening hours: Everyday 7am-3pm.

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www.thewesternport.com.au



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Situated right next to San Remo Jetty, "The Co-op" sources fresh seafood from its own fleet of fish and crayfish boats. Their fresh seafood selection is updated daily and their scrumptious fish and chips feature seafood from the latest catch.

170 Marine Parade, San Remo  
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srfco.com.au



**THE WATERBOY CAFE**

Fantastic coffee and great food make this the perfect place to catch up with friends. Enjoy a coffee with a house-made cake or a delicious lunch or breakfast. Licensed, with ocean views and good vibes.

58 Chapel Street, Cowes  
03 5952 5765



**YOUKI'S**

Youki's has been operating on Phillip Island for 15 years and is located on the corner of Thompson Avenue and Chapel Street in Cowes. Providing a range of authentic Japanese cuisine with the freshest sushi made onsite everyday and a selection of many other traditional Japanese favourites.

Shop 1, 68-80 Thompson Avenue, Cowes  
03 5952 6444



**BEACH HQ RESTAURANT & BAR**

An expansive terrace that provides unsurpassed water views over the Cowes foreshore beach, Westernport Bay, French Island and the Mornington Peninsula.

The team at Beach HQ, use local produce wherever possible. The menu offers something for everyone, seafood dishes, local Gippsland Beef or traditional Australian style dishes, along with vegan, vegetarian and gluten free offerings. Group menus are available by request.

Choose from their extensive range of Phillip Island / Gippsland wines as well as varietals from some of Australia's leading wine regions. For the beer lovers, the island's best range of local ales are on tap and also available by bottle or can.

**FEATURES**

- Spectacular water views
- Contemporary European and Australian cuisine, local produce
- Features local Gippsland / Phillip Island wines and local handcrafted ales



5/17 The Esplanade, Cowes, Phillip Island VIC 3922  
T: +61 3 5952 1717 E: info@beachhq.com.au W: beachhq.com.au



JON1781AA



**Ocean Sounds returns**

Xavier Rudd will headline the 2024 Ocean Sounds Festival at Churchill Island on January 6.

He'll be joined by a stellar lineup that includes Spiderbait, Melbourne Ska Orchestra, Felipe Baldomir, Sunfruits, Janie Gordon and Fonzie.

Ocean Sounds is a family-friendly, music-lovers' all-day sunset concert, so get your picnic rugs and friends together to enjoy stunning local wines, gourmet food, the summer-sun softly setting over the ocean and some of Australia's most amazing live music.

An all-ages event. More details and tickets at [www.oceansoundsfestival.com.au](http://www.oceansoundsfestival.com.au)



**Change for Sam**

Change for Sam was developed in response to the tragic death of Samantha Fraser in 2018. Its aim is to develop a comprehensive, coordinated prevention and response program to family violence in the community.

In May this year, Change for Sam held a Candlelight Vigil to remember Sam and other victims of family violence, as part of the Safe Steps annual campaign. It was the first of what is planned to be an annual event.

To learn more about Change for Sam or to donate, go to [www.changeforsam.com.au](http://www.changeforsam.com.au)



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BY ELEANOR MCKAY

# Tall tales and true

Have you ever wondered why the main street of Cowes is called Thompson Avenue, or just when motorsport became part of the local culture?

The answers to these questions and more can be found in *Once upon an island*, a collection of 39 stories that chart the history of Phillip Island from 1868.

The stories were originally conceived and published by the Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser in 2018 as part of the celebrations to mark 150 years of European settlement.

Many were based on articles and interviews in the paper over the years. Some were first person accounts of local events; others were put together from historical records and documented key events.

The response to the series at the time was overwhelming and so it was decided to compile the stories into a book.

“Rather than a traditional, chronological history book, *Once upon an island* is a collation of accounts told by others, highlighting some of the events, places and people that have shaped the island as we now know it,” explained the Advertiser’s owner Anne Oswin, who was the driving force behind the publication.

“It’s not a complete history, in fact it’s not even a complete collection of the stories run in the original series. But hopefully it goes some way to capturing the spirit of this very special place.”

From the land ballot in 1868, to chicory farming, the hardships of war, the start of motorsports, pet koalas, maritime disasters and the local shipbuilding industry, *Once upon an island* takes you on a journey through time.

“Those early settlers were hardy folks – there were no houses, no roads, no ferry, no jetty, no schools, no doctor nor a hospital,” said Anne.

“These are the stories of their perseverance, triumphs and tribulations, and of those that followed them.”

Stories in the book include: Keeping connected: the bridges of Phillip Island – covers the islanders’ relentless campaign for a bridge, which saw a suspension bridge opened in 1940, and then replaced in 1969 by the current bridge.

The Wreck of the Speke – the ship crashed into the rocks at Kitty Miller Bay in 1906 and parts of the “noble ship of graceful lines” are still visible today.

A shark hunter’s tale – the controversial catch by shark hunter Vic Hislop, who hooked a six metre, 2.4 tonne great white



off Seal Rocks in 1987.

The origins of the Penguin Parade – how one man’s passion and obsession with the little penguins was the start of the world-famous tourist attraction.



*Once upon an island* is the second book produced by Chicory Publishing, the publishing arm of the Phillip Island and San Remo Advertiser. It follows on from the sold-out success of “Over the Bridge” – a coffee table cookbook that celebrated the farmers and chefs of Phillip Island and Bass Coast, released in 2021.



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**Kym Bowring, Pharmacist**  
Kym joined our Pharmacy team in 2017 and now leads the Pharmacy service as Director of Pharmacy, providing an integrated, safe and patient-focused service.



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MY  
OBSESSION

# Mead hits the sweet spot



BY ELEANOR MCKAY | PHOTO: SUPPLIED

When Paul Toovey had an excess of honey from his beehives, he went searching for ways to utilise the sweet precious product.

After watching a video on YouTube, Paul, who runs Chill House Mini Farm on Phillip Island, decided to try his hand at making mead.

Mead, or honey wine, is the oldest alcoholic beverage known to man, and dates back to Ancient Greek and Egyptian times. Paul said his first attempt was “extraordinarily good”. He shared it with friends, who gave it a thumbs up, and so he kept going.

He has since brewed hundreds of bottles of mead and his faith in this “nectar of the gods” has proved well placed, after he won three medals (two bronze and one silver) at the Red Hill Mead Show this year.

“My long-term goal is to get a licence

to produce it commercially, so it can be on sale through local outlets and at local markets,” Paul explained.

He is hoping to start a small-scale meadery at the Island Market Place in Cowes.

“I’ve been making 50 litres every few months. That stocks up pretty quickly.”

His recent win at the Red Hill Mead Show provided a confidence boost for the amateur mead maker, who cheerfully admits he had never brewed anything before. “There was no plan involved. I just thought I’d give it a bash because I had the honey ... and it went from there.”

His recent medal hauls were in the traditional and Melomel categories. Melomel is made by fermenting honey with fruit and Paul admits, this is where his heart is. “I wouldn’t say I’ve mastered

it, but I am doing fairly good meads and getting fairly consistent success.”

Although making mead is very simple (add honey, water and yeast and you will make mead), there are a number of factors to getting it right. The quantity of honey, type of yeast, managing pH levels, temperature, measuring gravity and the racking process are all important.

To create a Melomel, fruit is added to the mix, however adding fruits also makes the mead behave differently. The fermentation process can take between two to four months and like a good wine, it gets better with age.

Paul is hoping to run some tasting events and perhaps mead making workshops soon. Keep an eye on Paul’s Instagram page for updates. Instagram: chillhouseminifarm



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