



The guest speaker at our meeting held on February 9, 2020 at the Hastings Western Port Historical Society was John Woolley, who spoke on the *Myrtle Burgess*.
(talk summarised by Heather Arnold)

The Hastings Western Port Historical Society has a model of the *Myrtle Burgess* made by John Woolley and Ron Bryant. The original *Myrtle Burgess*, a wooden, copper sheathed two masted ketch of 71 feet 6 inches, was built in Hobart in 1917 for Bernie Burgess, a member of a cray fishing family of Tasmania who also worked on the Victorian coast. Bernie died in tragic circumstances in November 1920 having been shot by the police for allegedly sailing to avoid arrest for illegal cray fishing. You can read a report of the Inquest in the *Burnie Advocate* of November 6, 1920, [here](#).

The boat was then purchased by John Ray and skippered by Jimmy Wilson and worked out of Port Welshpool and Stony Point. In July 1934 it was involved in a mercy rescue of Mrs Gledhill, the lighthouse keeper's wife on Clifly Island. Mrs Gledhill was very ill with an abscess on the kidney. A message was relayed and Dr Rutter set out from Yarram in the *Myrtle Burgess* and arrived, but it was too rough to land - this was a Tuesday and it wasn't until the Thursday that Dr Rutter could get onto the island to see Mrs Gledhill. Access to Clifly Light is via a basket, the cliffs are 150 feet high and Dr Rutter and Mrs Gledhill had to be lowered down the cliff in the basket to the *Myrtle Burgess* which took the patient to Port Welshpool. She then went by road to the Yarram Hospital where an operation was performed. There were a few reports in the newspapers of this event, this one is from the *Hobart Mercury* of July 13, 1934, [here](#). I found a report that said Mrs Gledhill is out of danger and that her husband would be transferred in the October to the Portland Lighthouse at Cape Nelson. (*Weekly Times* July 21, 1934)

The boat was requisitioned by the Navy in June 1943 and worked in New Guinea where it remained after the War and was last seen in the 1950s eaten out by the Toredoworm.



The model of the *Myrtle Burgess* on display at the Hastings Western Port Historical Society, made by John Woolley and Ron Bryant, 1987-1989. Rigging and final touches by Arthur Woodley, 2005.