

# Marie Lauré

## A lady of the sea.

Her first incarnation started well before mine and her last is with me now, and has been since the day I was born. The original of this fine old lady, solid and stout, started life in the Seychelles, an island group far from here. She came to Tasmania in 1849 and from here travelled far and wide across the world's oceans. A whaler, one of many that chased the huge marine mammals across the world's oceans until they were hunted almost to extinction. This fine old whaler returned to Hobart to become a Bass Strait trader until exhausted, rendered obsolete by steam powered ships, she ended her days as a hulk in the docks of Melbourne.

But Marie Lauré did not die there. When the old lady was refitted in 1870, Lachlan Macquarie, boat builder of Battery Point, made a captain's boat for her. The whale boat, used for travelling ashore rather than pursuing whales, was light and fast when pulled (rowed) or under sail. But alas, she was the wrong size—too long for the davits—and was sold to my great grandfather, Tom Dunbabin, when he lived on Maria Island. For six years she plied the waters between the island and Cockle Bay on the mainland, ferrying people and supplies. When he left the island, Tom sold her, but the new owner was careless, and the whaleboat was lost in a storm.

Some years later Tom had a new whale boat built to travel the quiet waters of Blackman Bay and she inherited the name, Marie Lauré. She was also a farm-transport, travelling between Bream Creek and his property Blackman's, a sheep run at East Bay Neck that is now part of **Bangor**. Tom's son William (my grandfather) acquired her after his father death. He continued using her as a farm transport and also as a fishing boat. She ventured outside the narrows for crayfish, trumpeter, and flathead, and she ferried his family on trips and picnics, excursions loved by the children. She continued in service for quite a few years, until a decision was made to upgrade to a bigger, sturdier boat that could travel further offshore. The whaleboat was retired, sold on to the care of a new owner, and the latest epitome built in her place.

The fourth Marie Lauré was built by Jock Muir at Battery Point, from Huon Pine, Celery Pine and Blue Gum. She was launched the year before I was born, in 1951, and is the Marie Lauré I have known all my life. My grandfather and Uncle Bob (his son) took me on trips, teaching me to fish and sail. Marion Bay, Eagles, Lagoon Bay, The Monument, Watsons, Gardner's, The Goat Hills, and South East Shore are places I came to know well. We also went to Maria Island, stopping at Green Point, Robey's, Chinamans Bay, Long Point, Haunted Bay, the Boy-in-the-Boat, the Hole-in-The-Wall and Fisheries. On

the western shore (of Mercury Passage) we went to Cockle Bay, Boot Bay, Hellfire and The Lookout. We spent many hours sailing the coast and catching fish in our favourite spots.

Marie Lauré served us well and we in our turn, cared for her. Once a year I helped slip her, clean off her bottom and put on new paint. I scraped out the well, where the fish we caught were held and painted that too. This was a job for the youngest—me. Grandfather and I sanded her topsides and painted them too. The sails and the rigging needed care as well; a new shackle here and some lashing there. There are always things to be done on a boat and for me it was a labour of love, returning the favour for the pleasure she afforded us.

Time moved on. Grandfather grew old and Uncle moved away and I alone became responsible to care for Marie Lauré. I took her for trips, but not as often as I would have liked. She was a bit cramped for long voyages, and the deck provided little shelter, so I put her on land and rebuilt her cabin. She was no longer used as a fishing boat so the well was removed and her cabin made larger. She sails just the same and I now take her on trips, revisiting the places I went to as a boy, and look forward to the time when my grandsons will join me. They too will explore the bays and waterways around the coast and we can sail and have fun, just as I did with my Pa, all those years ago.

**Written by Tom Dunbabin**