



MEDIA RELEASE

Gippsland Ports

For release from 29 August 2016

'Tommy Norton' returns to Lakes

The earliest history of shipping on the Gippsland Lakes will be commemorated in the name of Gippsland Ports' new dredge, currently under construction and planned for delivery in 2017.

The new arrival to Lakes Entrance will be named the 'Tommy Norton', after a paddle steamer that pioneered the shipping industry in the Gippsland Lakes region over 150 years ago.

But other than serving the important role of maintaining navigable passage for vessels and goods in the Lakes, that's where the similarity ends!

The paddle steamer 'Thomas Norton' was brought to the Gippsland Lakes by the newly formed Gippsland Lakes Navigation Company in 1864. The vessel worked as a tug at the bar of the natural entrance to the Gippsland Lakes, towing schooners and steamers through the tricky and forever varying entrance.

When the natural entrance was sealed or too shallow to navigate, the vessel, affectionately known as 'Tommy Norton' would take passengers and cargo on the twice-weekly Sale to Bairnsdale run.

Gippsland Ports' new Trailing Suction Hopper Dredge, the 'Tommy Norton', will apply the latest maritime and sand management technology to achieve the same result; safe navigation and movement of vessels and goods through the entrance.

Built in 1859 by W & G White in Williamstown, the carvel built paddle steamer hull, consisted of one deck, one mast, with a rounded stern and powered by a 20 horsepower single cylinder steam engine.

Just over 150 years later the Minister for Ports, Luke Donellan, last year announced the State Government's investment in a new Trailing Suction Hopper Dredge to provide safe and reliable ocean access to commercial fishing and shipping operators, tourism operators and recreational boaters and fishers.

The name 'Tommy Norton' was chosen by an advisory panel of government, Gippsland Ports and community representatives and endorsed by the Minister.

Gippsland Ports' Chief Executive Officer, Nick Murray, said the construction of a new dredge to maintain navigable ocean access at Lakes Entrance is a major commitment to the long term future of maritime activity.

"As home to Victoria's biggest fishing fleet and a base for substantial commercial and recreational boating activity, the maintenance of ocean access to the Gippsland Lakes is vital for the region", Mr Murray said.

"Dredging to maintain the ocean entrance has been undertaken for the last 125 years and this new dredge establishes an exciting new phase in that history".

At 60 metres long and propelled by two 447 Kw Caterpillar engines, the new 'Tommy Norton' will be about three times longer and sixty times more powerful than its historic namesake.

Following an exhaustive tender process, Damen Shipyards from The Netherlands was selected as the preferred supplier and the vessel is now under construction at Damen Yichang Shipyards in China. The company has a global reputation in shipbuilding and operates all over the world.

The dredge has been adapted from a standard design and configured for operation in the conditions of the Lakes Entrance bar and inner channels. It will replace a chartered vessel, the 'Pelican' from New Zealand that has been contracted for the past 8 years.

To acknowledge aboriginal history of the Lakes, the two support vessels appended to the dredge, the SOLAS rescue craft and the work boat will be given names yet to be decided by the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation.

The new dredge is expected to be operating in Lakes Entrance by September 2017.

END

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Paddle Steamer 'Thomas Norton':

- Built in 1859
- Powered by a 20hp single cylinder steam engine
- Length: 62.9 ft (19.2 m)
- Beam: 12.5 ft (3.8 m)
- Draught: 5.5 ft (1.7 m)



The Trailing Suction Hopper Dredge 'Tommy Norton':

- Built in 2016/17
- Length: 60m
- Beam: 12.0m
- Draught (unladen) 3.18m
- Hopper volume: 650m³
- Gross tonnage: 1035t
- Max speed 9.6 knots
- 2 x 447kw Caterpillar propulsion engines
- 254kw Caterpillar bow thruster engine
- 254kw Caterpillar dredge pump engine
- 224kw Caterpillar Jet water pump engine
- 2 x 164kw Caterpillar electrical power generating engines
- Pump ashore capability: 850m



As reported in 'The Argus' 1877

The demise of P.S. 'Thomas Norton': A night of drama and bravery

On the 26th October 1877, between 6 and 7pm, the P.S. 'Tommy Norton' lost the battle with the sea as reported in "The Argus" on the 3rd November 1877:

"Between 6 and 7 o'clock on Friday evening last, after piloting the steamer "Murray" and schooner "Nowra" safely outside the entrance to the Gipps Land Lakes, the Thomas Norton returned to recross the bar, and in the attempt was caught broadside on by the wind and heavy sea running there and driven on to the western spit..."

The Bairnsdale Courier and the Gippsland Times also reported the demise of the vessel and the brave fight for survival by its stricken crew and one passenger:

"In this condition of excitement, terror, and anxiety, all hands, consisting of the captain and four of a crew, with Mrs Rigney, a lady on a visit to Bairnsdale, who had brought from Sale by the "Murray" and-transhipped by her into the "T. Norton", remained on board until daylight.

Without a murmur of complaint, the lady continued in that position the whole night through, and when asked to go below 'for fear of being washed overboard she begged to be allowed to remain on deck, stating that while she could see her fellow sufferers still alive it gave her hope. Serious as was the position of each man on board, it was materially saddened by the appearance of the lady companion, who, though evidently terrified, still suffered nobly in silence.

As day-light broke, Captain MacAlpine and Brown, the engineer, succeeded in getting ashore and securing the boat of the "Maffra", which was, lying in Reeves River, by which they rescued the remainder of the crew from the wreck.

They at once abandoned the vessel, which was fast breaking up, and after leaving the lady at Mrs Roadnight's, where she was most kindly treated, at once proceeded to row up to Bairnsdale, where they arrived, between three and four o'clock pm to tell the sad tale of the loss of the "T. Norton". Nothing was saved' belonging to the company or the crew, except the clothes the latter wore at the time the vessel struck."