



THE ROYAL
SOCIETY OF
TASMANIA

THE ADVANCEMENT OF KNOWLEDGE

NEWSLETTER

April – May 2026

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Message



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A scenic autumn garden with a pond, yellow trees, and a wooden fence. The background is filled with trees in various shades of yellow and green, suggesting a park or botanical garden setting. A wooden fence is visible in the lower left corner, and a pond with lily pads is in the middle ground. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and beautiful.

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President's Message



Dear Members,

You are receiving this Newsletter because you had the good sense to join the Royal Society of Tasmania AND because of the diligence and skill of the RST Newsletter Editor, Bernard Pryor OAM. Bernard has been generating the RST Newsletter for the past seven years, never missing or delaying a publication deadline. The RST Newsletter begins as a motley collection of contributions that are then moulded and enriched by Bernard into the informative and entertaining articles you've grown used to. This process is very time consuming, so much so that Bernard and his wife, Heather, organise their lives around the Newsletter publication schedule. I know you will join me in sincerely thanking Bernard for his dedication to this critical role in the Society.

At the last Council meeting (14 April), Ross Large AO reported on the *Hidden Treasures* regional exhibitions featuring the RST Art Collection. Ross and his team have delivered an outstanding series of events in Oatlands, Longford and Queenstown over a 6-month period. (See also pp. 8–11.) Through Ross's efforts, the RST Art Collection has received a lot of positive attention, a perfect prelude to the publication later this year of the collection catalogue, *A World Apart*.



The terms of the agreement between the RST and UTAS regarding management of the **RST Library Collections** has been settled. The next steps are approval by the RST Council and vetting of the agreement by legal experts on both sides, hopefully leading to signing off by mid-year.

Despite repeated requests made by RST Honorary Solicitor James Crotty, TMAG has not consented to mediation as a means of resolving the dispute over the **ownership of the Louisa Anne Meredith Fish Illustrations** (44 artworks). As a result, the litigious

process is continuing. With James' help, the Society has filed three affidavits in the Supreme Court of Tasmania, containing detailed evidence in support of RST's claim of ownership.

The **RST lecture program** for the year is well underway and more are on the list for April and May, including a reception at Government House (22 April), a lecture by Anne Clifton (26 April), a joint event with the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (29 April), an address by Aboriginal scholar Associate Professor Clair Andersen (3 May) and a lecture by Dr Rebecca Bradfield (24 May). I hope you will take advantage of the opportunities on offer to "advance knowledge".

Finally, welcome to **new members** who have recently joined the Society: Dr Aaron Oakley, Dr Bernard Cairns, Dr Claire Ellis, Mr Michael Jonas, Mrs Dawn Jonas (south) and Mr Ian Cummings.

Best regards,
Jocelyn McPhie
President



Above: Louisa Anne Meredith.
Image: RST Library Collection.

RST Certificates of Appreciation

RST Certificates of Appreciation are not presented lightly and are regarded as significant within the Society. It gave me considerable pleasure to present RST Certificates of Appreciation to both Marley Large and Distinguished Prof Ross Large AO for their remarkable work and contributions to the Society in their ongoing roles on the Art Committee and in the impressive success of the three recent *Hidden Treasures* exhibitions. (More information about these can be found in Ross' article on pp. 8–11).



Marley and Ross were each presented with a Certificate of Appreciation at the April 2026 Council meeting. I am sure that everyone in the Society will agree that these certificates were more than well-deserved by a couple who have shown outstanding dedication, invaluable contributions, and unwavering support for the RST for many years. Their commitment has enriched our community, advanced our mission, and inspired others across Tasmania to join in making a lasting difference.

Jocelyn McPhie
President



Upcoming Events

RST Lectures in Hobart

The Future of Tasmania's Crowded Ocean

This public forum is scheduled for Wednesday 29 April 2026, at 6 pm in the Stanley Burbury Theatre at UTas in Sandy Bay. All are welcome. If you intend to attend, please use the 'Register' button on this notice.

It is jointly organised by the Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering and the RST.

Tasmania's coastal future is arriving faster than we think. Warming seas, shifting ecosystems, and pressure on fisheries and coastal communities are reshaping our island's identity. The choices we make now will determine whether Tasmania adapts and thrives, or struggles in a rapidly changing ocean.

The future is already on our shores, and the conversation about what comes next has never been more urgent. The forum will be moderated by John Gunn (ATSE). It will feature short presentations followed by a panel discussion and question-and-answer session.

Speakers:

- **Climate change and extreme events in Tasmania's ocean:** Dr Alistair Hobday, FTSE
- **Coastal change – harmful algal blooms:** Prof Gustaaf Hallegraeff, FTSE
- **Evaluating trade-offs and choices in deciding a future:** Dr Beth Fulton, FTSE and FAAS

Date: Wednesday, 29 April 2026 at 6:00 pm

Venue: Stanley Burbury Theatre at UTas, Sandy Bay

[Register](#)



Progressing Aboriginal Education at UTas – Strategic Directions

Assoc Prof Clair Andersen (pictured right) will present the Society's Annual Tasmanian Aboriginal Lecture entitled **Celebrating Indigenous Knowledges and Excellence**.

All are welcome. The lecture will commence at 4:00 pm. Arrive at 3:30 pm for a glass of wine. RST members are free.

Assoc Prof Clair Andersen will focus on the UTas' new 2026–2030 strategy to enhance the participation and success of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at the University. The strategy is guided by the principles of respect, reciprocity, relationality, responsibility, relevance, and reconciliation – principles designed to allow the University to focus its work through impact and intent.

Clair will provide insights into the practical ways these core ideas are being realised at UTas: through working with others, understanding the impact, and ensuring that actions line up with intentions. Join us for this session to hear how UTas is translating ideals into practice.

Clair's people come from the Gulf country in the Northern Territory where she has Yanyuwa and Gunggalida clans connections. She grew up on Warumungu country and began her education in Tennant Creek, before being sent to Tasmania, where she completed high school and a Bachelor of Education at UTas.

Throughout her life, Clair has been involved in the development of teaching and learning programs and resources to enhance student learning, improve understanding of Australia's Indigenous peoples, and build better futures. In 2005, Clair was inducted onto Tasmania's Honour Roll of Women for her service to education and training.

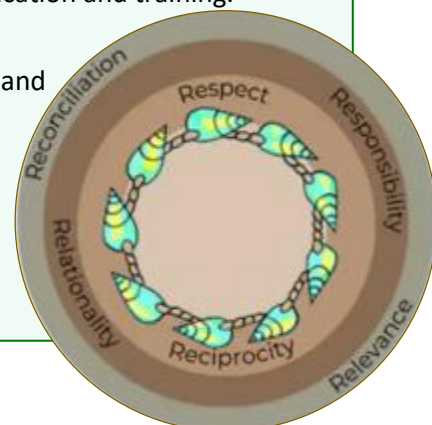
Whilst Clair has held several senior positions, she is currently the Indigenous Higher Education Advisor at UTas. Her research interests revolve around improving education and training pathways for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and the development of appropriate learning resources. If you intend to attend, please use the 'Register' button on this notice.

Speaker: Assoc Prof Clair Andersen

Date: Sunday, 3 May 2026 at 4:00 pm

Venue: Geology Lecture Theatre, UTas, Hobart

[Register](#)



The Northern Branch invites you to a public lecture by **Ms Anne Clifton**

Glass Manifesto: Method and Madness

When: 1:30 pm Sunday 26 April 2026

Where: Meeting Room, QVMAG at Inveresk

Admission: Free for members of the Royal Society of Tasmania and children under 12

\$7 general admission, QVMAG or TMAG Friends, and members of Launceston Historical Society

\$5 for students.



This presentation introduces Glass Manifesto, featuring the collaborative practice of Peter Bowles and Anne Clifton. Through PowerPoint, video, and a tactile box of show-and-tell objects by which audiences explore their studio gallery, creative processes, and material research. The lecture offers insight into how their partnership shapes contemporary glass art and exhibition making. It reveals the evolution of ideas from studio to audience.

Anne Clifton (pictured right) is an Australian glass artist, researcher, and presenter whose materially driven practice explores materiality, relationship, colour and form. She is the only Tasmanian maker represented in the permanent collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.

Working closely with Peter Bowles, Clifton co-founded [Glass Manifesto](#), which is internationally recognised for innovation in contemporary glass practice and research.

Generously supported by



Left and above: Images courtesy glassmanifesto.com.

Tasmanian Law Reform Institute's Role and Activities

Dr Rebecca Bradfield (pictured right) will present the Northern Branch monthly lecture for May entitled 'Tasmanian Law Reform Institute's Role and Activities'. More details will be published on the RST website at a later date.

Speaker: Dr Rebecca Bradfield

Date: Sunday, 24 May 2026 at 1:30 pm

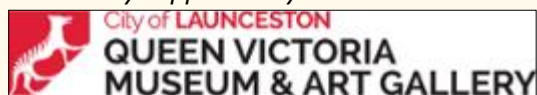
Venue: Meeting Room, QVMAG, Inveresk

- Free for members of the RST and children under 12.
- \$7 general admission, QVMAG or TMAG Friends, and members of Launceston Historical Society
- \$5 for students.



Above: Dr Rebecca Bradfield. Image: Courtesy themercury.com.au

Generously supported by



RST Membership Renewal

Thank you to everyone who has renewed their Royal Society of Tasmania membership for 2026.

If you are unsure if you have renewed your membership for 2026 you can check your membership card. The expiry date appears at the bottom of the card (see sample at right).

It's easy to renew your membership by [clicking here](#).

Take note: Regardless of the method you use to renew, *by renewing your membership and paying the required membership fees, you acknowledge that you have read and agree to abide by the [RST Code of Conduct](#) and accept the [RST Privacy Policy](#).*

When you let us know that you have paid your membership, please indicate if any of your personal details have changed (e.g., address, phone number, email address) so that we can update our database.

Roxanne Steenbergen
Membership Officer

MEMBERSHIP



Hidden Treasures Brought Back to Life

Over the past year, the Royal Society of Tasmania has quietly achieved something remarkable. Through the **Hidden Treasures Exhibition Series**, a collection that has largely remained out of public view for over a century has been brought back to life and shared with communities across regional Tasmania, where it was received with enthusiasm, curiosity, and genuine delight.

This ambitious volunteer-led initiative has taken selections from the Society's nationally significant Art Collection — comprising nearly 950 works — and presented them in Oatlands, Longford (Woolmers), and Queenstown. In doing so, it has reconnected Tasmanians with their own visual history and demonstrated that there is a strong appetite for this material when it is made accessible.

“Fantastic exhibition, so privileged to see it all.”
(written feedback; see Appendix below)

A Collection of National Significance

The Royal Society of Tasmania Art Collection is one of the country's most important holdings of nineteenth-century works on paper.

It includes watercolours, sketches, engravings and lithographs that document the early colonial landscape and life of Van Diemen's Land.

Artists such as Louisa Anne Meredith, WC Piguenit, John Skinner Prout and Simpkinson de Wesselow are well represented, alongside lesser-known but equally compelling contributors. The collection is particularly significant for its representation of Tasmanian women artists and early depictions of the First Peoples of Tasmania. Yet, despite its importance, much of this collection has remained largely unseen—until now.

“It's part of our history – I loved seeing how it was captured.” (written feedback; see Appendix below)

Three Exhibitions, One Strong Message

Oatlands – A Strong Beginning

The series began in August 2025 at Oatlands, coinciding with the Heritage and Bullock Festival. Over just two days, approximately 2,500 visitors passed through the exhibition spaces. Many had never encountered colonial Tasmanian art before.

The response was immediate and heartfelt—visitors lingered, asked questions, and frequently expressed surprise that such works had not been more widely displayed.

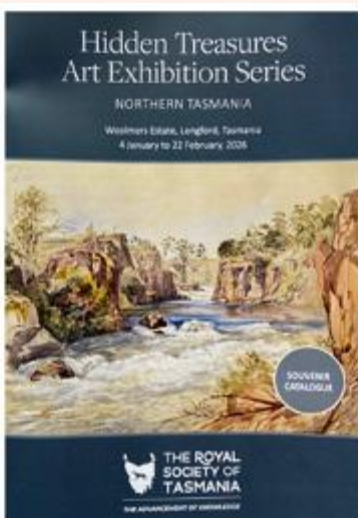
“Why haven't these been shown before? Absolutely wonderful.”
(written feedback; see Appendix below)

Early concerns that high-quality reproductions might not engage audiences were quickly dispelled. Visitors appreciated both the accessibility and the care taken in presentation.

Woolmers – Depth and Engagement

The second exhibition, held at Woolmers Estate, Longford over 35 days, offered a more extended and immersive experience. With around 950 visitors, it attracted strong weekend attendance and a steady stream of engaged participants.

A highlight was the *Art and Antiques Road Show*, which drew in the community with the promise —sometimes realised— of discovering valuable works hidden in homes. Accompanying talks,



demonstrations and lectures added further depth.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with visitors praising both the quality of the artworks and the informative panels that brought context and meaning to the images.

“Superbly selected and curated – informative and engaging.”

Queenstown – Community Connection

The final exhibition, *Walk to the West*, was held in Queenstown across two venues and attracted approximately 2,100 visitors. Here, the connection between art, landscape and lived experience was especially strong. The exhibition was complemented by local events, including a field excursion along the historic Linda Track in the footsteps of iconic artist WC Piguenit, and visits to local artists’ studios.

Community engagement was exceptional, with strong attendance at the opening and a sense of local ownership over the exhibition. Media coverage, including ABC radio and television, helped extend its reach beyond the West Coast.

“A wonderful way of understanding history and the environment.”

Powered by Volunteers

One of the most striking aspects of the *Hidden Treasures Series* has been the dedication of the RST’s volunteers. From selecting and preparing artworks, to transporting, hanging, staffing exhibitions, and engaging with visitors, the entire series has been driven by a committed group of individuals.

Visitors frequently commented on the knowledge and enthusiasm of those present—an important reminder that exhibitions are not just about objects, but about people and stories.

Without this extraordinary effort, the series simply would not have been possible.

A Near Break-Even Success

Financially, the series has been carefully managed. With total costs of approximately \$24,000 and sales and



“Wonderful knowledgeable volunteers who enhanced the experience.”

sponsorship covering around 90% of that amount, the initiative has come close to breaking even.

More importantly, it has delivered a significant return in terms of:

- Public engagement (~5,500 visitors)
- Increased awareness of the RST
- Renewed interest in Tasmania’s artistic heritage

Looking Ahead – Building on Success

The success of the first three exhibitions clearly demonstrates that there is strong demand for this type of regional cultural offering. However, it has also highlighted the need for a more sustainable model.

Future exhibitions will depend on:

- Securing sponsorship or grant funding
- Supporting key roles such as a dedicated exhibition leader



- Covering essential costs including printing, framing, travel and storage

Potential future venues include Hobart, Port Arthur and Swansea, with interest also expressed in a return to Woolmers.

With relatively modest funding—estimated at around \$30,000—the next phase of the *Hidden Treasures Series* could expand its reach and reduce the burden on volunteers.



Bringing the Past into the Present

The *Hidden Treasures Exhibition Series* has shown that Tasmania's colonial art is not simply of historical interest—it remains relevant, engaging and deeply connected to place.

Visitors recognised landscapes they knew, saw familiar names and places through new eyes, and gained a richer understanding of the island's cultural heritage. Perhaps most importantly, the series has demonstrated that when collections are shared—thoughtfully and accessibly—they can inspire, educate and connect communities.

The RST has taken an important step in bringing these hidden treasures back into the public eye. The challenge now is to ensure that this

momentum continues.

An important way of maintaining the momentum is currently in progress with the production of the complete 350-page RST catalogue which will be available in November this year, and will complement and enhance future RST exhibitions. Pre-publication orders can be made on the RST website at a special reduced price.

Acknowledgements

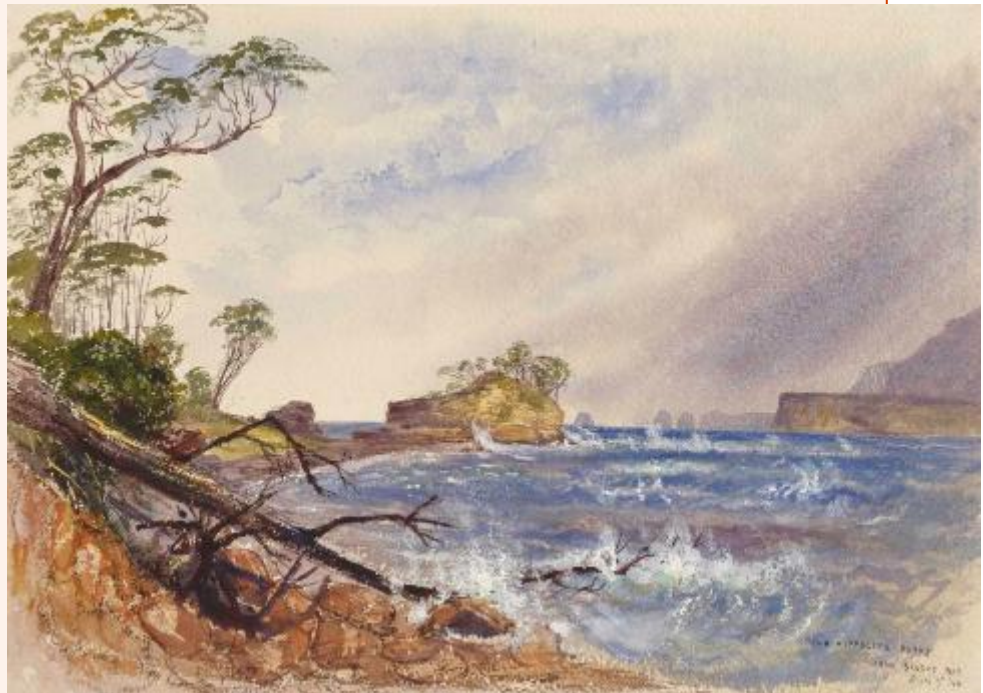
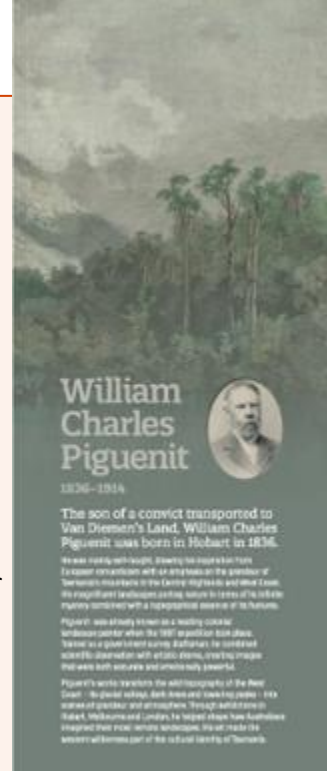
Without the exceptionally hardworking RST volunteers, this exhibition series would not be possible. Special thanks to all those listed below:

- John Carswell
- Pippa Cotton
- John Davidson
- Anita Hansen
- Mary & Grady Koolhof
- Marley Large
- Sue McKerracher
- Neil MacKinnon and Jacqui Nicholson
- Jocelyn McPhie
- Warwick Oakman
- Lorraine Polglase
- Julie Rimes
- Lynnette Ross
- Tony Sprent and Chris Sprent
- Lynne Uptin

Particular thanks also to Lea Walpole from the Soggy Brolly, Dianne, Ray and team from the Galley Museum, Raymond Arnold from LARQ, Jonathan Fisher and the Woolmers team, and Brad Williams and Michelle Webster from the Southern Midlands Council for their very strong support and assistance at the three exhibition sites.

To those who delivered lectures and art demonstrations the RST is very grateful: Marley Large, Darren Meader, Mary Koolhof, Malcolm Ward, Anita Hansen, Lynne Uptin, Jonathon Holmes, and John Carswell. Professional art quality printing and framing was done by Full Gamut, and Wagner Framemakers.

Ross Large AO, Chair, RST Art Committee



Above: *The Hippolyte Rocks from Brady's Bay (Van Diemen's Land)*, de Wesselow, Simpkinson, watercolour, date unknown.

APPENDIX

Written feedback by visitors to the RST *Hidden Treasures Exhibition Series*:

- I'm a mountain guy, so I loved the depiction of the mountains. I loved seeing how they were sketched and then painted.
- This is a wonderful exhibition for anyone with a sense of the living past in this northern area.
- Absolutely beautiful. Loved them all. Very interesting.
- Fantastic exhibition, so privileged to see it all.
- The reflecting of some of the drawings, the different perspectives – all of these I loved. It's part of our history.
- It is interesting and very delightful to see. I love WC Piguenit. I have a signed one at home.
- I thought it was wonderful. To think you've gathered all this up – especially the northern farms. It's marvellous.
- Very well presented. Historically valid.
- Staggering, very impressive. They covered a great deal of the state – well done.
- Really well done and very informative. There is so much to keep you interested.
- It's interesting. I have heard of Piguenit but now I know more about him and I enjoyed seeing his works here a good deal.
- It was fascinating to see early artwork of Tasmania and then learn more about the artists who were passionate about capturing the unique landscape.
- We enjoyed seeing all the different media used, ink and graphite. I loved looking at old Launceston and Hobart scenes. We are from Deloraine. They are very alive, and some of them are a bit quirky and interesting.
- I thought it was all wonderful. I loved working out what I could still recognise.
- Really enjoyed the exhibition. Love the history of Tasmania. Doesn't need improving.
- Exhibition has comprehensive coverage. Good representation of colonial art.
- Very informative and amazing exhibition. Thank you.
- Wonderful exhibition; very beautiful paintings.
- I enjoyed the juxtaposition of man and nature in this painting (e.g., de Graves Mill) – with nature being the overwhelming presence.
- This is a wonderful exhibition. Really enjoyed that it covered a lot of Tasmania. Wonderful knowledgeable volunteers who enhanced the experience.
- The landscapes were nicely connected to the current geography – so it is of great interest to the locals. We are from Melbourne and we learnt a lot from the exhibition.
- This is a good way of understanding history and the environment.
- Highly informative. A very broad and most comprehensive coverage of botanical art. Thank you.
- Excellent demonstration. Great information about technique and materials. Good step-by-step process for a painting.
- Yes, very enjoyable. The frames were really beautifully done, adding to the impact of the works. Information panels were excellent and visible, easy to read. The featured artists works were enjoyable.
- Fabulous exhibition. I enjoyed the geology lesson. Thank you. Will come back soon.
- Great exhibition. Enjoyed the lecture.
- Superbly selected and curated. The balance of appreciation and interpretation in the panels is good.
- Wonderful collection of quality artwork. I think the way it was laid out showcased VDL in a structured way that was easy to follow.
- Excellent collection, impressing me of the historical background of the area. Impressed by the exquisite detail shown in the works.

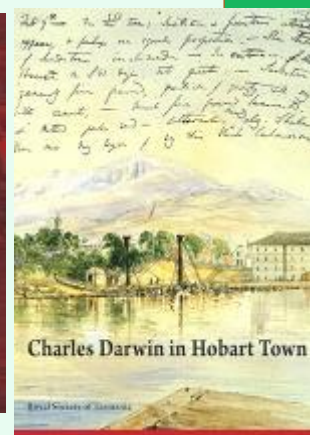
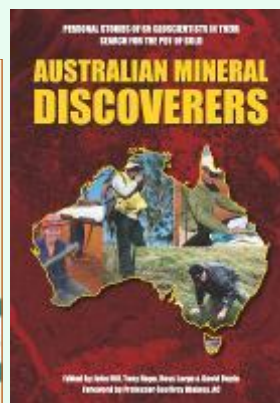
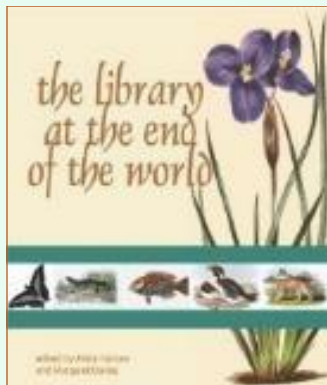
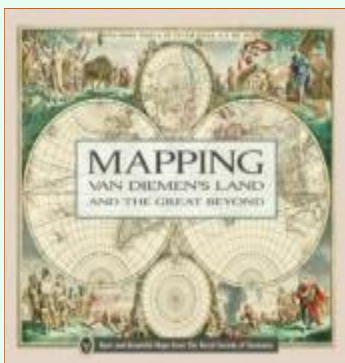
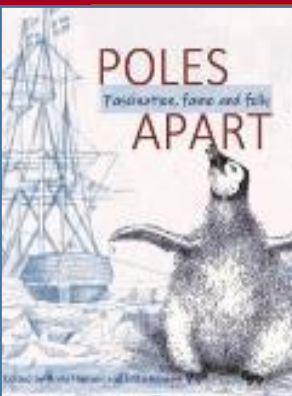


RST Contact Information

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Visit the [RST Shop now to view all publications and discounts.](#)



The Society's Library

The RST Library Collections are held at UTAS in the Special and Rare Reading Room, Level 5, Morris Miller Library, Sandy Bay Campus.

The Reading Room is open by appointment on Mondays and Wednesdays only between 10:00 am and 5:00 pm; closed for lunch from 12:30 – 1:30 pm.

Please email RSTLibrary.collections@utas.edu.au for appointments and enquiries about the collection.

Library Services | Academic Division, University of Tasmania



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