

Mal Thorpe



Mal has lived and worked most of his life in Stanthorpe (QLD), but has always had a love of the sea. While serving his apprenticeship as a carpenter, Mal built a small sailing dinghy. Later serving with the regular army, he spent time on an icebreaker in Antarctica, so he knew something about boats. After an accident in the 90s where he broke his pelvis in six places, as well as his neck, back and left arm, Mal retired as a builder. Making model boats was part of his rehabilitation.

The most surprising thing about Mal is his lack of woodworking tools. He sold most of his large machinery after he retired, and now uses some unconventional methods to achieve the same results. For parts such as the cannons, he uses a pencil shaped timber in the end of a drill and as it revolves uses a rasp, file or Stanley knife for shaping.

His first model was the 'Virginia', the first steam-powered ironclad warship of the Confederate States Navy, built during the first year of the American Civil War. This model is on display at the Museum.

'HMS Victory' was a project of 3,500 hours. Red cedar timber was used for the hull of the ship and English Oak for the decks and mast. The model was presented to the Museum in April 2009.

The 'HMS Victory' is the only surviving warship that fought in the American War of Independence, the French Revolutionary War and the Napoleonic wars. In the latter she served as Lord Nelson's flagship at the decisive Battle of Trafalgar in 1805.

In February 2012, Mal's model of the 'Cutty Sark' arrived for display. The ribs are made from silky oak and the hull from French oak out of old wine barrels. Mal's wife Nancy makes all the sails on her sewing machine.

The Cutty Sark was once the most famous of the great clippers, the name 'clipper' referring to the fast sailing ships of the nineteenth century that traversed the world's major trading routes. In the 1870s she transported tea from China to Britain and later became famous for setting speed records between London and Australia with cargos of wool.

In 1954, she was placed in dry dock in Greenwich, London. She became the memorial to the Merchant Navy and its losses in two world wars. The ship was badly damaged by fire on 21st May, 2007 while undergoing conservation. The vessel has been restored and was reopened to the public on 25th April 2012.

'HMS Victory' and the 'Cutty Sark' stand in their glass cases just inside the front entrance of the Museum.

Mal's grandfather was Fred Thorpe #44 3rd Field Ambulance who served on Gallipoli. Interestingly Joseph Loth, whose Red Cross flag is featured on the Gallipoli page, would have known Fred as he was in same unit and also at Gallipoli.

Mal's father, Frederick Stanley Thorpe served in the 25th Bn in WWII. His three children are either ex-service or service personal; Katrina Maree Blazely - 18 years in Air Force and 4 years in Navy. Now a civilian with Australian Army; Troy Thorpe - 25 years in the Navy and still serving. CPOATV; Andrew Thorpe - 20 years in Navy and still serving. Lieutenant. (ex POATV)