



# Newcastles News

Christmas 2020  
New Year 2021

The Newsletter of the "Newcastles of the World" Alliance

[www.newcastlesoftheworld.com](http://www.newcastlesoftheworld.com)



## MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR !

### Bienále Zámky opens on December 17th

The Newcastles of the World digital art exhibition in **Nové Zámky**, our Newcastle in **Slovakia**, features 18 different artists from 13 "Newcastles" The exhibition of film, video and photography will open online on December 17th via Facebook page Vzdušné ZÁMKY 2020

(<https://www.facebook.com/vzdušnezamky2020/>) at 17.00 CET (UTC+1) and runs until 31 January. We thank curator Magdalena Klobočníková for her work in creating this exhibition, in difficult circumstances caused by Covid-19. The Facebook page also contains information about other events that form part of Nové Zámky's year as Slovakia's City of Culture. See also <http://www.vzdušnezamky.sk/>



### In this edition .....

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic, Christmas this year is going to be a very different experience - but around the world, our "Newcastles" are doing their best to brighten up their towns and cities and bring a smile to the faces of local residents. On pages 2, 3 and 4 we help you get into a Christmas mood - but there's lots of other news and features as usual for you to enjoy. We hope that 2021 will be a better year for us all. Meanwhile - have a merry and safe Christmas!



# IT'S CHRISTMAS TIME !

## PREPARATIONS FOR CHRISTMAS AROUND THE NEWCASTLES -

To cheer us all up during the pandemic, our “Newcastles” have been keen to continue their traditions of Christmas lighting. The seasonal lights are a highlight in **Neuchâtel** life and this year in no exception in the Swiss city.



Every year there's a special Christmas tree bauble designed and sold in **Nyborg**, our Newcastle in Denmark. The idea is that that you can take a little bit of local history home and hang it on your Christmas tree. The bauble giftbox also contains a small card with a historical text about the graphics. The motifs for the 2020 Christmas bauble were created by local artist Jens Bohr for the reinterpretation of the square in Nyborg.

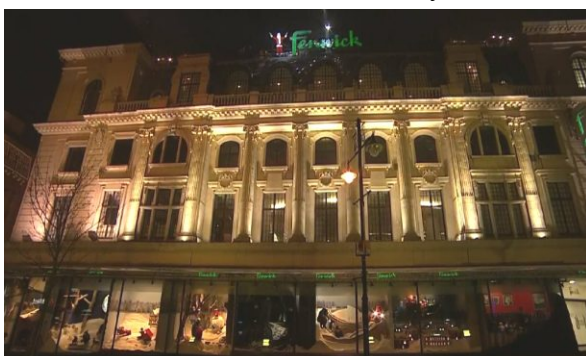
In the 1550s King Christian III organised a tournament place in front of his royal castle in Nyborg. Ever since, the square has served as Nyborg's main focal point. Refurbished as a new square in the city, it is now a beautiful and multifunctional space for jousting tournaments (of course) but also many other events and activities. Jens Bohr has created eleven relief stones for the square with motifs of knights and knight's helmets. The stones are part of the new pavement of the square and remind the square's users of the original function of the space. Designed initially as woodcuts, it is these pictures that adorn this year's Christmas bauble.



Despite the cancellation of the village's famous “Santa Parade” caused by Covid-19, the residents of **Newcastle, Ontario, Canada** were determined to have a drive-through parade as these photos show. And local people and businesses have played their part on the route.



Fenwick department store in **Newcastle upon Tyne** is famous across **England** for its annual Christmas window, with its seasonal themes, detailed sets and sophisticated moving figures, popular with children and adults alike. This year the “reveal” had to be online to avoid the big crowds. 250,000 tuned in to see the children's book “The Wind in the Willows”, with the story of its great characters Mole, Ratty, Badger and Toad told across the store's windows. And Santa Claus was on hand on the store roof! These Christmas themes are taken mainly from fairy tales and children's stories, accompanied by music.



Previous years have seen Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Paddington Bear and Alice in Wonderland. Next year is the 50th anniversary of the windows. Fenwick operate a chain of nine department stores in England from its headquarters in Newcastle; others include York, Canterbury and London Bond Street.



# SHARING MORE OF THE CHRISTMAS EXPERIENCE



**New Castle Pennsylvania** is known as the “Fireworks Capital of America” Every Fourth of July, and on other celebration occasions, millions of Americans watch fireworks shows designed in and shipped from New Castle. And with so many restrictions on community activities events caused by the pandemic time it was great to see hundreds of people in New Castle still able to enjoy a wonderful holiday fireworks and light display by Pyrotecnico from the warmth and safety of their cars this December.

Italian immigrants began moving to New Castle in the late 1800s and early 1900s, working in tin factories by day and lighting up the skies at night with their innovative fireworks. At the town's economic peak, nine fireworks-related companies ran their operations from New Castle. Despite fierce competition from China and elsewhere, the city remains home to two of the largest and oldest fireworks companies in America: Pyrotecnico and Zambelli Fireworks. Pyrotecnico coordinates fireworks displays in over 750 cities over a normal July 4th holiday.

**Jaunpils** (“Newcastle” in **Latvia**) tells us about how Christmas is a little different in their country. If you visited a Latvian house a week before December 25th, you would see little that points to it being Christmas time. Maybe an Advent wreath, but probably no signs of a Christmas tree or other decorations. You see, Latvians decorate their trees and houses only a few days before Christmas, many not before the morning of 24th December. Latvian children get their presents from Father Christmas (*Ziemassvētku vecītis*) on Christmas eve not Christmas day.



But there's a catch: if you want to receive your presents you have to do something in return! For each gift you'll have to stand by the Christmas tree and recite a rhyme or sing a song. Fortunately, Latvian folk rhymes are only four lines long and fairly easy to keep in mind.

As opposed to many other countries where the main Christmas family meal is on the 25th December (and where Christmas Eve is a simple affair), Latvians go all out on the 24th December. In fact, traditionally a proper Christmas dinner is supposed to consist of 9 dishes. Some sources even claim 12 dishes! A Latvian favourite at Christmas time and for other special occasions is *pirāgi* – a delicious crescent-shaped baked pastry filled with onions, bacon, and sometimes other meats. Traditionally, *pirāgi* are made only for special occasions and in very large quantities. Why not make your own *Pīrāgi* this Christmas? - <https://latvianeats.com/archives/146>

## Lighting up everyone's Christmas!

**ORGEKO**, a company based in **Nové Zámky, Slovakia** is one of the most important companies in Europe for the production of display lighting decors for Christmas interior and exterior lighting. As well as for homes and gardens it specialises in decorations for parks, shopping centres, squares and entire town and village displays. 98% of the company's production has been realised abroad and they have participated in creating the Christmas ceremonies in many major cities, such as Paris, Monaco, London, Vienna, Madrid, Dublin, Prague and Rome.



Some (mainly European) countries mark December 5th/6th as the memorial day of Saint Nicolas, third century bishop of Myra. It's in the appearance of his helpers that the local traditions differ. In Central Europe, the helpers are devil-like figures and their origins go back to pre-Christian Nordic and Greek mythology. Dressed in animal hides, with horns, and a tail, they look like satyrs and fauns. Large masks or make-up are used to strengthen the scary impression. They carry chains indicating they had been tamed and are now helping their Saint. They also often carry bells, large jute sacks, and rods of birch branches.

In the **Czech Republic**, on Mikulas' eve, groups consisting of one saint, often one angel, and several devils roam the streets and visit the houses to find out which children have been good and which have not, and chase away bad spirits.



This dressing tradition has survived to this day, and is still very pronounced and purposely scary. However, this has not been possible in the year of Covid-19 - but the town of **Nové Hradky** has created a special fairytale about the work of the devils to share online -

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctiRzF5N2\\_I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctiRzF5N2_I)

Now you know the story, you can enjoy the excellent visuals that accompany the tale !

# SEASONAL GREETINGS FROM OUR NEWCASTLES



<https://newcastlesoftheworld.com/2020/12/15/festive-season-wishes-from-newcastle-australia-from-the-beach/>

<https://newcastlesoftheworld.com/2020/12/05/seasons-greeting-from-shinshiro/>

<https://newcastlesoftheworld.com/2020/12/13/best-wishes-for-the-festive-season-from-mayor-adrian-foster/>

<https://newcastlesoftheworld.com/2020/12/12/seasons-greetings-from-mayor-chris-frye-of-newcastle-pennsylvania-and-city-light-up/>

<https://newcastlesoftheworld.com/2020/12/15/greetings-and-best-wishes-for-christmas-and-the-new-year-from-newcastle-upon-tyne/>



# PEOPLE

The new enlarged municipality of **Neuchâtel, Switzerland** has chosen Violaine Blétry-de Montmollin (pictured left below) to become the first president of the merged municipality, while Thomas Facchinetti and Didier Boillat will assume the role of vice-presidents.

Sylvie Hofer-Carbonnier will chair the city's General Council. The executive members will have the following responsibilities:

*Family, Training, Health & Sports (Nicole Baur)*

*Sustainable Development, Mobility, Infrastructure and Energy (Mauro Moruzzi)*

*Urban development, economy and built heritage (Violaine Blétry-de Montmollin)*

*Culture, integration and social cohesion (Thomas Facchinetti)*

*Technological development, agglomeration, security and finance (Didier Boillat)*

The city says goodbye to Fabio Bongiovanni (right) who did not seek re-election as a councillor and has chaired the Executive Board of Newcastles of the World - thank you Fabio! We're delighted that the city's Chargé de Missions, our good friend Daniel Veuve (below right) will become the new chancellor (chief executive) of the city council, succeeding Rémy Voirol.



We are delighted to congratulate Simonida Kordić of **Herceg Novi, our Newcastle in Montenegro**, who was elected to the Parliament of her country in the recent national elections. Simonida has been Head of the Office of International Cooperation in the municipality, our main contact in Herceg Novi and was a delegate to the 2018 Newcastles of the World conference in Shinshiro, Japan. She is a lawyer by training and has the qualification of MBA (Master of Business Administration) from the University of Sheffield in England. In the Parliament, Simonida represents the New Serb Democracy Party which was a part of a new coalition "For the Future of Montenegro" created for the election. Together with the elected members of other parties they form a new grand coalition that is now the country's government. Best wishes for your new role, Simonida!



International Newcastle Inc, in Newcastle, **New South Wales, Australia**, whose remit includes Newcastles of the World, is proud to announce that two of its committee members have been recognised by the Newcastle Business Club. Committee member, Marty Adnum, Founder and Managing Director of Out Of The Square Media, has been recognised as Individual Achiever of 2020. Deputy of International Newcastle Inc, Irini Kassas, was recognised as Youth Achiever for 2020. They were both acknowledged for their work through and for Newcastles of the World. Warm congratulations to Irini and Marty!



Hari Shukla, a retired teacher and race relations campaigner in **Newcastle upon Tyne**, was among the very first people to get the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid-19 in early December, which marked the beginning of the UK's largest mass vaccination programme in history. Hari and his wife Ranju received the first of the two-dose vaccine at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle. They are among the over-80-year-olds prioritised for the first of the 800,000 doses in 50 hospitals across the United Kingdom. The vaccine is administered in two doses, 21 days apart. Awarded the royal honours of MBE, OBE and CBE for his work in race relations, the Uganda-born Shukla said: "I am delighted to be doing my bit by having the vaccine, I feel it is my duty to do so and to promote safe vaccination to others. I feel very comfortable and happy to be the first one".



With so many events and activities cancelled in all our Newcastles because of the virus, it has at least been a pleasure to enjoy the countryside and take fresh air. In **New Castle, Indiana** a popular place for visitors is the 2600 acre (1000 hectares) Summit Lake Country Park, with an excellent bird watching and wildlife observation area. It's an important site for waterfowl because of the many low-lying wet meadows and prairies. Migratory species have included rare species like the black tern, bald eagle, sandhill crane, American bittern, least bittern, king rail and osprey. Zeigler Woods, in the southwest corner of the park, is Henry County's first nature preserve with its rich flora and fauna with little evidence of human disturbance.



Thanks to photographer Joey Cooper for us being able to share his photos of hundreds of sandhill cranes. He says “

I watched the dance of cranes congregate in one of the ponds in the low light of dawn, then experienced one amazing moment when they took flight.



“They circled the area and spoke loudly to each other, making an almost deafening chorus of bugle calls. Before long, every one of the strikingly beautiful birds had departed in the mass migration, leaving the area so very quiet”. At the Park there's also a large lake (with good fishing), many campsites, three boat ramps, a beach bathhouse and two large open shelters that can be reserved for family picnics and other events.”

An Electricity Infrastructure Investment Bill recently passed by the Parliament of New South Wales, **Australia**, paves the way for the creation of the Hunter Renewable Energy Zone in the **Newcastle** area. This has the potential to unlock \$30 billion of investment and create thousands of local, well paid jobs in manufacturing to emerge in Newcastle and the Hunter.

This could see Newcastle set to become a renewable energy hub of the Asia-Pacific region.

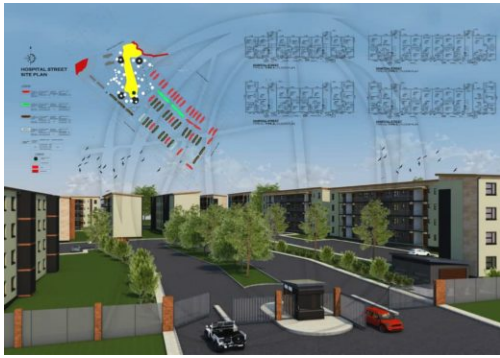
Of the many attractions of astonishing natural beauty in **Shinshiro, Japan**, among the most interesting are the Atera-no-nanataki waterfall, which consists of consists of seven interlinked waterfalls with a total is 62 metres; and the terraced rice growing fields of Yotsuya Senmaida at the foot of 883m high Mt. Kurakake. “Senmaida” means “1000 paddies” (there are actually more than that) and the walls of the various levels of terracing are created using rocks, in the same way that castle walls were constructed. It is an incredible feat of engineering from 400 years ago. Tending to the fields, planting, reaping and maintenance is all done in the traditional manner, by hand, a time-consuming and laborious job. Rice farming on the terraces is no longer economical at current world markets but around 20 farmers continue to till the land, with state support, to produce high quality rice.



**ABOUT NEWCASTLES OF THE WORLD:** In 1998 the Mayor of Shinshiro in Japan took the initiative to invite representatives of seven Newcastles to his city. They have continued to meet every two years – in Neuchâtel, Switzerland in 2000, USA (Indiana and Pennsylvania) in 2002, South Africa 2004 & 2010, Newcastle-under-Lyme (UK) in 2006, Neuburg an der Donau, Germany in 2008, Newcastle upon Tyne (UK) in 2012, Nové Hradý, Czech Republic (2014), Newcastle Ontario, Canada (2016) and Shinshiro in 2018. The aim of the Newcastles Alliance is to foster friendship and collaboration, and to share and enjoy each other's heritage and culture. Each gathering takes one or more discussion themes to ensure practical, usable outcomes, also involving our young people.

# CHANGING THE FACE OF NEWCASTLE SOUTH AFRICA

A 623 million rand (35 million euros) housing project in **Newcastle South Africa** is set to change the city's housing landscape. Breaking ground for the first time, Newcastle Mayor Dr Ntuthuko Mahlaba said that the mammoth project, which will create hundreds of new homes, is the first black owned business venture of this



magnitude in the province of KwaZulu-Natal. Over 1200 jobs are expected to be created, whilst all building equipment and material will be sourced from local businesses. The Newcastle Municipality will also ensure that all subcontractors are locally sourced. Meanwhile the municipality, through a fruitful relationship with the University of South Africa (UNISA), has leased office space to the institution adjacent to the new developments.



A “ground-breaking” partnership which has prevented thousands of people in **Newcastle upon Tyne** from becoming homeless has won a top international award and praise from the United Nations. Newcastle City Council's Active Inclusion Newcastle partnership brings together more than 100 local organisations, supporting residents to have a more stable life, identifying people at risk of homelessness, and providing the help they need before they reach crisis point, rather than responding afterwards. The World Habitat Awards were established in 1985 to “recognise and highlight innovative, outstanding and sometimes revolutionary housing ideas, projects and programmes from across the world” and are presented in conjunction with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat.



In 2020 over 125 international projects applied, with 40 shortlisted, ten finalists chosen, and then just four receiving a comprehensive evaluation visit, which included online meetings, presentations, discussions, and independent interviews with residents. From that just two gold award winners - Homelessness prevention in Newcastle and Integrating indigenous knowledge and technology for safer habitat in Pakistan.

In winning, Newcastle becomes only the 15th European project to receive a gold rating in the awards 35 year history and one of only three from the **United Kingdom**.



A youth club set up as part of the European Union's EU4Youth programme organised “Your Board Game”, a one-day event in the town of **Akhaltshikhe, Georgia** involving more than 80 young people from the Samtskhe-Javakheti region. The purpose of the event was to increase the involvement of young people aged 14-29, including people with disabilities, in cognitive and entertaining activities, build skills and make new friends. The event was organised by the World Vision Georgia youth club “Skye New Possibility”, with the support of Akhaltshikhe Municipality and the State University.

The Historical Association **Neuburg an der Donau** was founded in 1833 and is one of the oldest historical associations in Germany. It collects and preserve testimonies of history, art and culture from throughout the Neuburg area. The association present the results in its yearbook, the Neuburg Collector's Journal, and through lectures and excursions. The archive is available to all interested parties. The most important exhibits of the collections can be visited in the Stadtmuseum Neuburg an der Donau and in the Schlossmuseum Neuburg an der Donau. Treasures of the Historical Association are also presented in the portal "Bavarikon".

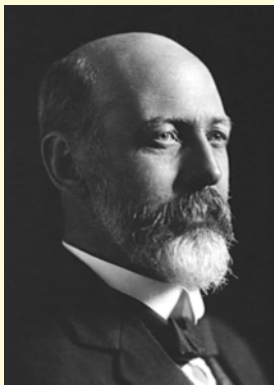
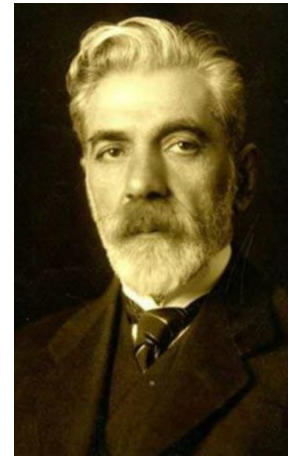


# HISTORY - TWO IMPORTANT FIGURES FROM DIFFERENT "NEWCASTLES" WHO CAME TO LEAD THEIR NATIONS

**Hovhannes Kajaznuni**, born in 1868 in **Akhaltsike** (then part of the Russian empire, now the Republic of Georgia) was one of the founding fathers of the Republic of Armenia and its first Prime Minister. He was a professional architect, designing many hospitals and other public buildings in Batumi and Tiflis (now the Georgian capital Tbilisi) and, most notably, the Saint Thaddeus and Bartholomew Cathedral in Baku (now Azerbaijan). After 1906 he devoted himself to political and social activities. He had joined the Armenian Revolutionary Federation when working in St Petersburg, eventually becoming one of the Federation's most important figures.

Kajaznuni became a member of the Armenian National Council in 1917 and a representative in the Seym (the Transcaucasian Parliament) until 1918. He was on the Armenian delegation that conducted peace talks with the Ottoman Empire and after the dissolution of the Transcaucasian Federation, he was elected by the Armenian National Council as the first Prime Minister of the independent Armenian state.

He was Prime Minister during a very difficult period of 1918/19, when Armenia was struggling to cope with famine, refugees and the threat of annihilation by outside invaders. A proponent of multi-party government and ties with Western powers, he was then sent as a government envoy to the United States. With the Bolsheviks' advent to power, he took refuge initially in Romania, but later returned to Armenia to continue his work as an architect, teaching at Yerevan State University. Kajaznuni was arrested in 1937, during Stalin's Great Terror, and he subsequently died in prison.



**Sir Joseph Cook**, born 160 years ago in Silverdale, **Newcastle-under-Lyme** was an Englishman who became the sixth Prime Minister of Australia. He was the leader of the Commonwealth Liberal Party from 1913 to 1917.

Cook began working in the local coal mines of Staffordshire at the age of nine but emigrated to Australia in 1885, settling in Lithgow, New South Wales. He continued to work as a miner, becoming involved with the local labour movement as a union official. In 1891, Cook was elected to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly, initially as a representative of the Labor Party, but later for the new Commonwealth Liberal Party, of which he became Leader just before the 1913 election. Without a majority in the Senate and only a one seat majority in the Assembly, a second election followed in September 1914 and Cook's Party lost its majority.

In 1917, Cook was involved in a party merger, joining the Liberals with the National Labor Party to form the Nationalist Party. He became the de facto deputy prime minister serving as Minister for the Navy (1917–1920) and Treasurer (1920–1921). He was a delegate to the 1919 Paris Peace Conference, where he was a member of the committee that determined the borders of Czechoslovakia, and was one of two Australians to sign the Treaty of Versailles.

After leaving politics, Cook served as High Commissioner to the United Kingdom from 1921 to 1927.

## THE WONDERFUL CRAFT SKILLS OF KOTA BHARU

The city of **Kota Bharu**, our "Newcastle" in **Malaysia** is known for its highly skilled artisans and its diverse cottage industries. Small cottage industries generate a substantial revenue and contribute highly to the Malaysian economy. Kota Bharu, the capital of Kelantan State is a perfect location to explore the strength and secret of the Malaysian small scale industries. Places worth visiting are the local batik factory, the kite factory and the silver craft centre. Kota Bharu is famous for the 'songket', a cloth which requires high skill and artistry to weave gold or silver threads in it.



Also known as "Balai Getam Guri", the city's Handicraft Village and Craft Museum is located in the heart of Kota Bharu's cultural zone. The Craft Museum houses many fine examples of Kelantanese craftsmanship. A restaurant called "Balai Sulur Gadung" is located on the ground floor of the building, where visitors can savour some of Kelantan's famous dishes. The adjacent Handicraft Village provides visitors the chance to see just how these crafts are made. Demonstrations of traditional embroidery, songket weaving, batik printing, silver work and wood carving are carried out by skilled artisans. Their products are also on sale at the centre.



Congratulations to Newcastle upon Tyne resident Lee Westwood who has just become the Race to Dubai Champion golfer to head the season's European Tour Order Of Merit for the third time in his career. He has 44 career victories of which 25 are European Tour wins.

He is one of the few golfers who has won tournaments on five continents and has also won tournaments in four decades. He has been runner-up three times in Majors and has represented Europe in ten Ryder Cups. In October 2010, he became the World number one golfer, ending the reign of Tiger Woods, becoming the first British golfer since Nick Faldo in 1994 to hold that position. He held the number one position for a total of 22 weeks.



## Bringing international partnership and sport together

As with other members of Newcastles of the World, the city of **Neuburg an de Donau (Germany)** has a number of other much-valued international connections, including “twin cities” or “sister cities”. One such “twin” is Jesenik in the Czech Republic. This year should have seen celebrations to mark the 20th anniversary of the connection, but Covid-19 put a stop to the plans.

Members of the Stadtrat (City Council) Dr. Gabriele Kaps and Sabine Schneider proposed that the occasion should instead be celebrated by a “virtual” run of 596km which is the distance between the two cities. This turned into a major challenge event that brought sport and partnership working together, and the clubs whose activities had also been severely curtailed by the virus rose to the challenge.

A total of 36 runners from the sports clubs TSV Neuburg and the Neuburg flight group volunteered – and in fact several thousand kilometres were run - equivalent to Neuburg to Jesenik and back several times. Mayor Dr. Bernhard Gmehling presented prizes of 500 euros, 300 euros and 100 euros from the council to the fastest teams – this was valuable assistance to the clubs during this difficult time. The photo shows Mayor Bernhard Gmehling(second from the right) with the two council members and representatives of the winning groups. The idea actually came from an earlier event in May, when pupils and teachers from the Neuburg Descartes grammar school virtually ran or cycled to three partner schools in France, the Czech Republic and Norway.



Supercars will return to **Newcastle Australia** in February 2022 when the city will host the season opener of the Repco Supercars Championship series, it has been confirmed. The major motorsport event, the biggest in Newcastle’s sporting calendar, will be back on the Newcastle street circuit after a two-year hiatus caused by COVID-19, shifting from its previous position as the final race of the series to become the much-anticipated season opener.

The renowned British yachtsman David Scott Cowper from **Newcastle upon Tyne**, regarded as the greatest living single handed navigator, has celebrated two significant anniversaries this year. It’s 40 years since he completed the fastest solo circumnavigation of the globe via Cape Horn, Cape of Good Hope and

Cape Leeuwin in the sloop Ocean Bound, and 30 years since he arrived home from the first ever solo circumnavigation of the world via the Northwest Passage. He was the first man to sail solo round the world in both directions, and in 1980 the city of Newcastle awarded him honorary Freedom of the City.



In later years he was the first person to sail around the world single-handed in a motor boat. In his 70s, he was still sailing and breaking records in the most dangerous and difficult of voyages, and in his 80th year he has been setting sail again.

