

## Notes on the Torrens Island and Environs map

### Peter Carter

The new Torrens Island and Environs map came about through the efforts of a number of people, particularly Anthea Shem (Office for Rec and Sport), Robyn Hartell (Heritage Branch of Dept for Environment and Resources), other members of the New Canoe Guides Committee, and Anthony Stephens (The Map Shop). I gave myself the job of surveying with GPS to provide fixes on key points, and made a number of expeditions into the area. (In the pic below, that's the GPS unit on the mast of the sea kayak)





The area has not been mapped in detail in recent years. The 1:50 000 topographic map is lacking in detail, the 1982 DMH Small Boat Chart does not cover much of the mangrove areas (and is out of print), and other charts such as AUS 137 cover shipping channels only.

We originally intended to cover a greater area, from Bower Road to St Kilda, but decided to concentrate on the smaller area at a larger scale. The base map comes from the Fullers street directory, with mangrove and creek detail traced by Anthony Stephens from aerial photographs into the GIS. My GPS data was used to resolve some ambiguities, in fact one creek section is drawn entirely from GPS track data.

These notes are intended to supplement the text on the back of the map, which is necessarily generalised and limited.



## Precautions

Make sure you have the tide times and a weather forecast before setting out. The tidal range at springs is over 2 metres, and at low water

springs much of the area dries or is too shallow to paddle. Tides in Barker inlet are about 30 minutes later than at Outer Harbor, and in the creeks as much as an hour later.

Weather conditions can affect the tides, as noted on page 7 of the tide book. If you run out of water you will find the sand and mud very soft (and in many places very black and smelly).

You will also find it much easier to paddle with the tide than against it. The flood tide is southwards, the ebb northwards in the Port River and Barker Inlet. In North Arm and Eastern Passage the flow is to the east at the flood, to the west at ebb, and quite strong in Eastern Passage. The picture shows the isolated danger mark in North Arm about two hours after high tide: note the wake. (*Santiago* is visible in the background)

The flow in creeks can create some hazards. If you find yourself being swept on to a log or branches **lean toward the obstacle**. Push yourself clear. Lean away, into the current, when you're up against something and you may well be swept under.

The open areas are susceptible to the wind, and can develop a nasty chop: I have seen one metre waves in Lipson Reach in a strong north-westerly. If you're not accustomed to paddling in wind and chop choose a day with a better forecast.

If you want to land for a break, do so only on sandy beaches or the sandbars which appear at low tide. Avoid areas with mangrove pneumatophores.

On all occasions make sure you have food and water, extra clothing in case it's colder than you expected, first aid gear, towline, mobile phone and/or marine radio, etc. SA regulations do not require us to carry flares, EPIRBs, and so on, so you can spend your money on other gear.

Much of the area is inaccessible by land, so don't plan on walking out if things go wrong. You should make sure you have the ability to get yourself out of those situations. If it really is life threatening, use mobile phone, marine VHF or marine 27MHz to call for aid. In a channel, use beacon numbers, otherwise grid references or GPS coordinates to locate your position. You will have left details of your plans with someone at home (the [Float Plan](#) is designed for this)

## The creeks

### Creek south of *Dorothy H Sterling*

This short creek is navigable only as far as the embankment: the remains of the ship are more interesting

### North Arm Creek

A wide and shallow creek, really navigable only near high tide. Landing at the embankment at the end is possible, if awkward, and there are views of the artificial Barker Inlet Wetlands whose outflow is into this creek, the salt pans, and Wingfield dump.



### **Unnamed creek**

Access to this creek is through the trees south of the pylon at 758 455. At first it follows the pylon embankment and then turns south. Unlike most creeks, this one opens out to a samphire flat, and at high tide it's possible to paddle to the boundary embankment, where the picture was taken

### **Broad Creek**



Follow the beacons into Broad Creek to avoid running aground. At the end there are the remains of a wharf and railway line, once used to unload explosives: the magazine is still

there to the south across the salt pans. Vessels came to here through The Cutting at the northern end of Torrens Island so as to be well away from other shipping.

There is a steep ramp up to the embankment (with very soft mud at the bottom), from where the remains of an iron hulk can be seen.



It was once a floating explosives store.



The remains of the *Dorothy S* are in the nearby side creek, Bream Creek. All that can be seen are the sternpost and a line of ribs and planking

Both Bream Creek and the creek to its west are navigable for short distances. The creek running more or less parallel to the power line embankment is navigable, but can be entered only at mid-tide (I went in at neap tide), otherwise the



entrance through the mangroves and around the embankment is blocked by branches and rocks. The stump is near the upstream end



The remains of a launch lie on the sandbar to the north of the Broad Creek entrance, and are exposed at low tide (grid reference

is 758 464)

The remains of another vessel lie close to the mangroves to the east at 764 465, and are also visible only at low tide.



### **Swan Alley Creek**

The southern branch is navigable, but its eastern end is blocked. The main channel leads, under a bridge with salt flume, into Dry Creek, a boring manmade channel with suburbia alongside. The straight channel alongside the St Kilda embankment eventually peters out, although the Little Para River flows into it somewhere. (The swan was, appropriately, in the upper part of the main creek, and I followed it slowly. Eventually it decided the only way out was to take off past me)



### **Shooting Creek**

This creek is navigable for some distance. At low tide there are sandbars near the first real bends, and there is another area at the intersection with Swan Alley Creek that also dries at low tide

### **St Kilda embankment channel**

The St Kilda embankment was built in the late 19th century, and much of it can still be seen on the western side of the channel alongside. The channel is navigable from Swan Alley Creek as far as Garnets Creek. The section between Garnets and Barque Creek can be entered from the Barque Creek end, but the southern end disappears into overgrown trickles. From Barque Creek the channel can be used with difficulty to gain access to the creek to its north

### **Creek between Shooting and Burrows**

There is a creek leading off the embankment channel at 767 477. It goes in some 200 metres and branches. The branches eventually peter out, so you'd need to backtrack

### **Burrows Creek**

A long creek, navigable most of the way to the boundary embankment. The creek meandering westward from Burrows almost to Post Creek is not navigable after a hundred metres or so



### **Post Creek**

Post Creek is similar to, but smaller than, Burrows Creek. In the open area at the intersection with the St Kilda embankment channel lie the remains of a launch, most easily visible at low tide, when there are exposed sandbars nearby

### **Garnets Creek**

The easiest access to Garnets Creek is via the St Kilda embankment channel, and there is a prominent sandbar at the intersection. It is navigable for some distance

### **Barque Creek**

To approach at anything other than high tide, come through the channel. Much of the area surrounding the entrances dries at low tide. The creek can be paddled for much of the way to the boundary embankment



### **Unnamed creek north of Barque**

#### **Creek**

The only reliable access is through the St Kilda embankment channel, and then only with difficulty. A pleasant enough little creek, it can be paddled for some distance. The picture shows the boat after struggling out of the supposed 'main' channel: covered in seaweed and other debris. Not recommended

Creeks from this point to St Kilda are all small, and the waters in front of them very shallow. There are more interesting places

## Torrens Island

As the map notes suggest, a circumnavigation makes a good day trip. You want a reasonably high tide to use The Cutting (once maintained to allow passage of explosives vessels) or high tide to pass around Point Grey. For lunch breaks, there is a stretch of sandy beach north of the Quarantine Station, and two small beaches are on the eastern side, as noted on the reverse of the map.

The Quarantine Station and power station are closed to the public, and you should not land near them except in emergency. If you do have trouble along this stretch of water there is easier access if you land on the Lefevre Peninsula side



(Pic is of the Middle Ground Inner beacon. Fluffy clouds and lack of waves show a good day)

### French Tom Creek

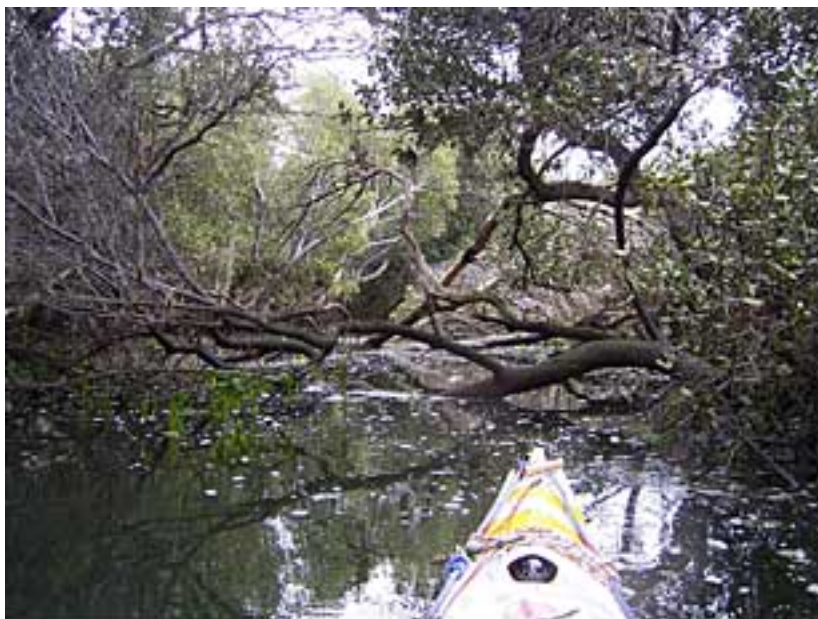
Named for a fisherman of long ago, this creek leads to the interior of the island. At its upstream end there is a fork. The left branch almost turns back on itself and the right branch also turns left and disappears into mangroves. The creek on the northern side at 738 478 is navigable for a short distance

### Three creeks off Angas Inlet

The western and middle creeks off Angas Inlet are easily accessible and are often paddled. The entrance to the eastern creek is behind a sandbar directly opposite beacon 30R. The entrance is shallow and narrow, but the creek widens into a pool. Progress from there is blocked



At low tide the remains of a launch are exposed near the westernmost creek entrance



### **Others**

Several other creeks exist on the island, one having an entrance near the Middle Ground Inner beacon. Like many other creeks in Barker Inlet, it is blocked by mangroves and is not navigable

### **Mutton Cove**

This area has been closed off for many years, but there are plans to breach the embankment, making the creek navigable again and allowing water access to the two wrecks within

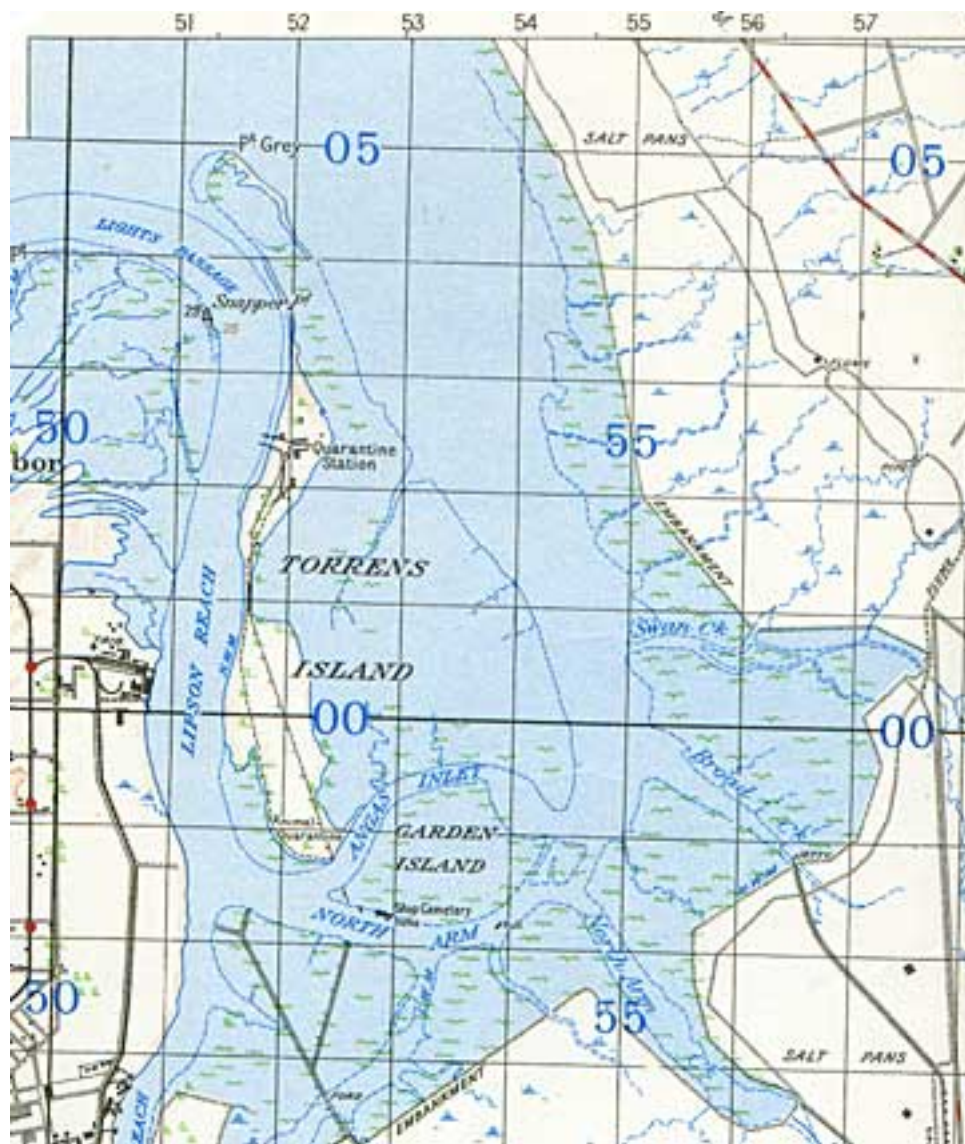
## **Ships' Graveyard**

Wrecks are all shown on the map, with an inset for the main area in North Arm. For details of the ships, see the [Ships' Graveyards Web site](#). The pic is of the remains of the *Glaucus*, and *everybody* paddles through where the propeller once was



## As it was

I have in my collection a copy of a map surveyed in 1937. Here's a portion of it, approximately the area covered by the new map. The ships' graveyard (or cemetery) is visible, as is the *Dorothy H Sterling*. The St Kilda embankment is prominent. Note also the track from Broad Creek to the magazine in the south east corner.



This is well before the Torrens Island power station, which was not built until the 1960s, and there are many other interesting differences. Don't attempt to reconcile the grid on this map with the current Zone 54H metric grid.

## Future plans

We plan to reprint the map every couple of years, incorporating corrections and new features as required. As it is, some creeks are not shown in their correct colours, and the latitude and longitude scales and nautical mile scale bar that I had put on the first drafts are missing.

If you have comments, suggestions, or corrections please contact us at Canoe SA so that the next edition can be improved.



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SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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