



HISTORY AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

TASMANIA IS WHERE YOU TURN WHEN YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AN INTIMATE AUSTRALIAN ESCAPE – AND THE QUIETLY HISTORIC HARBOUR TOWN OF STANLEY IS WHERE YOU GO WHEN GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL ISN'T QUITE FAR ENOUGH. GISELLE WHITEAKER ESCAPES TO THE EDGE OF THE WORLD.

Tasmania is pretty far off the beaten path. The historic town of Stanley in the state's northwest is even further. Standing at the viewpoint at the top of The Nut – the remains of an ancient volcanic plug that is the defining feature of this coastal enclave – I am buffeted by gusts of wind that feel like they have swept up from Antarctica. Below, there is a perfect arc of white-sand beach fringing rippled turquoise water but the chill in the air has stolen my will to swim. Instead, I give my calves a workout on the steep path down, crossing the route of the chairlift, today dangling static overhead, to explore the small town that wraps around the base of this geological formation.

Stanley has a long history by Australian standards. Its story began in the 1820s, when the Van Diemen's Land Company was established in London by a group of merchants and manufacturers planning to produce merino wool for the English textile industry. Granted 250,000 acres in Tasmania's remote northwest, the company chose this area for its natural deep-water harbour and sheltered anchorage, building their headquarters, Highfield, atop a hill overlooking what is now Stanley. The Highfield Historic Site endures as a visitor attraction and a stunning example of early colonial architecture from the Regency period. From the large French

windows of the homestead, visitors are treated to dramatic views of the rugged coastline and Bass Strait beyond.

Highfield is not the only remaining historic site in Stanley. A number of structures, from private homes to churches, inns and a hotel, date back to the 1850s, anchoring Stanley firmly to its past. The Stanley Heritage Walk links 15 of these sites together in a self-guided walking tour that brings the town's heritage to life. There's the snug row of shops in Church Street that appeared in photographs in 1860 and still serve the town; the birthplace and childhood home of Joseph Lyons,



St James Presbyterian Church

a former Premier of Tasmania and Tasmania's First Prime Minister of Australia, now a museum; and a bluestone cottage known as the Captain's Cottage, which was originally purchased by Captain Frederick Burgess, in the 1920s, and passed into the hands of other seafarers and their families. There's even a red phone box that rather unusually still houses a phone; this was the first telephone to Tasmania when a submarine cable linked it with mainland Australia in 1936.

Suffice to say, there's history at every turn. Down by the old wharf that was once the heartbeat of the town sits another gem. The Bond Store has been part of Stanley's story for more than 160 years. Built in 1861 from locally quarried stone and blocks of bluestone ballast, it was where the supplies suitable for a gentleman's country estate were unloaded and stored before being carted to Highfield House. Naturally for a building of this vintage, it has had several lives. After serving as a store for many years, it was subsequently used as a bacon factory, a grain store, and then a restaurant. Now, thanks to Julian and Tracey Jacobs, sixth-generation descendants of two families who arrived here when the settlement was little more than a frontier, The Bond Store has been thoughtfully restored, refurbished and reimagined as upscale apartment-style accommodation.

A wooden gate leads to a shared courtyard for the one-bedroom and two-bedroom apartment within The Bond Store's walls. Greenery frames a wooden dome in the far corner that houses The Bond Store's private two-person cedar sauna, serviced by a discreetly positioned outdoor shower. Vowing to make use of this hot box later, I enter Bond Store Two, curious to see how the Jacobs have drawn the threads of history together.



Stanley streetscape. Photo by Ryan Farrington



The private sauna at The Bond Store. Photo by Renee Thurston





Looking towards The Bond Store and The Nut. Photo by Aaron Jones

Soft daylight floods the lounge room through windows cut into the stone walls that look out to sea, where the wind is whipping the water into gentle whitecaps, the occasional seabird gliding on the breeze before plummeting into the water in search of a snack. In this warm, inviting space, a 1950s Scandinavian-style sideboard rests by the locally milled blackwood feature wall. There's a wood-fired stove, ready to warm the cockles when night rolls in, and plush sofas sit comfortably around a circular coffee table, cosy throws casually draped over the armrests.

A staircase that leads to two generously proportioned en-suite bedrooms divides the downstairs, separating the lounge from the dining area and full kitchen. On this side of the stairs, old farming implements hang on one wall, while the other features artwork by Brooke van Ruiswyk, who grew up in Stanley. The artworks across The Bond Store all reflect the location, created by artists with strong ties to the town. A basket of Tasmanian goodies, including locally baked bread, jams and sweet treats, sits on the kitchen counter along from the coffee machine, with further supplies in the pantry and fridge.

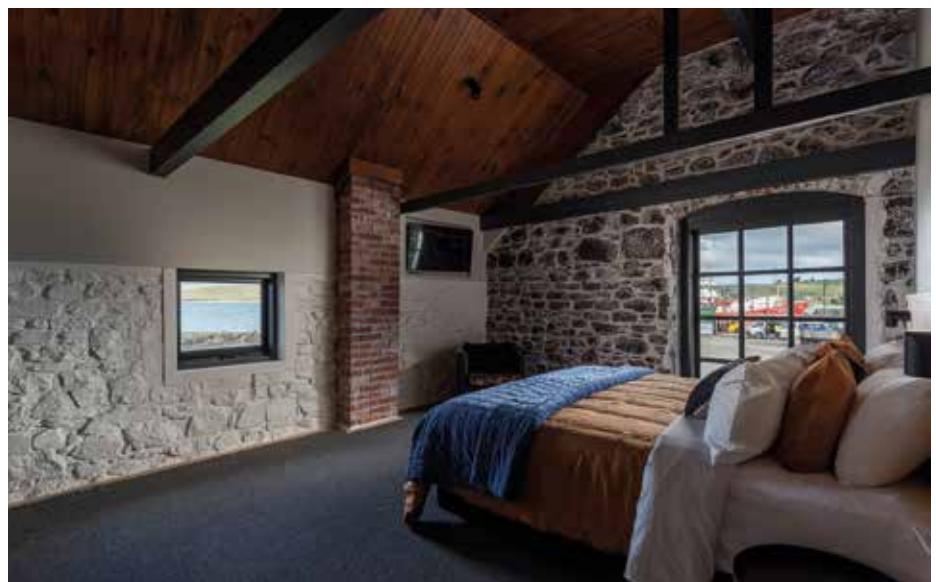
It's all convincingly 'of the place', but it's more than that. A glass cloche in the kitchen contains sheet music tied with Ferguson tartan, Tracey's family tartan. It is paired with postcards sent home by Owen Jacobs while serving in the Australian Navy during the First World War. There's a black and brass clock belonging to Joseph Jacobs, a decorative plate from Great Aunt Elvie, a brass candlestick from the Steel family. These objects, gathered over generations, are part of a bigger narrative; one that weaves Tracey and Julian's family stories together with the history – and future – of Stanley.



The dining area. Photo by Renee Thurston



Old farming implements. Photo by Renee Thurston



One of the bedrooms in Bond Store Two. Photo by Aaron Jones



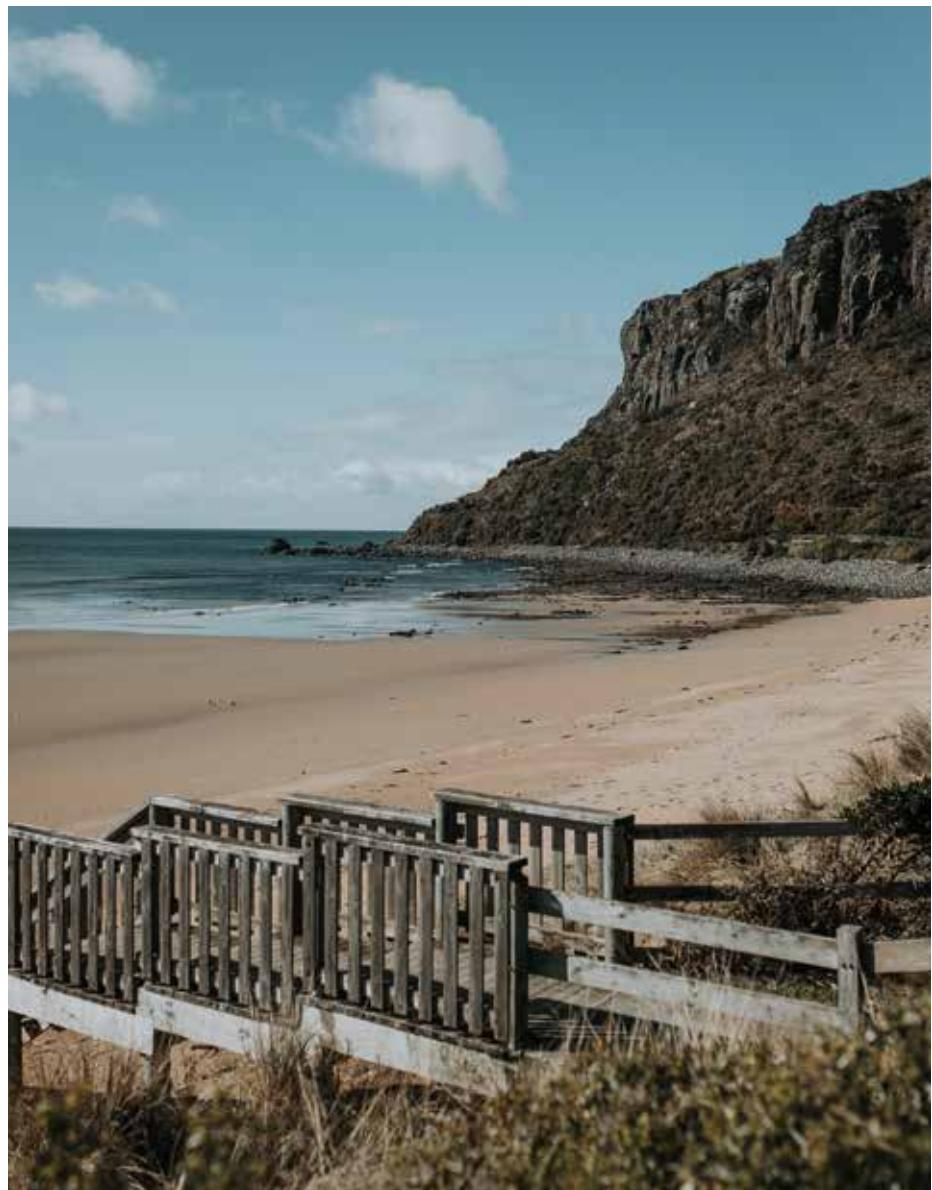
The Bond Store Two's comfortable lounge. Photo by Aaron Jones



The Bond Store. Photo by Aaron Jones

In the early evening, I stroll to the popular bistro at the Stanley Hotel, another historic edifice owned and operated by Tracey and Julian. I dine on abalone and fresh crayfish, pulled straight from the waters around Stanley, likely by one of the fishermen propped up at the hotel bar next door. Sipping on a delectable Tasmanian cool-climate pinot gris, I am struck by the dichotomy of past and future that defines this town. Much like The Bond Store, Stanley wears its history lightly – not as a museum piece, but as something lived in and lovingly reworked, its story growing by a sentence every day.

The Bond Store has been part of Stanley's story for more than 160 years. Lovingly restored by the Jacobs family, the building is once again a hub of life on Stanley's waterfront. For more information on The Bond Store, Stanley, see www.stanleybondstore.com.au



One of Stanley's beaches. Photo by Renee Thurston