

# HOME IS OUR FISHERMAN. HOME FROM THE SEA.

*In memory of Bruce Haigh 17 May 1958 – 5 July 2020*

**Kevin Bruce Haigh, known as Bruce throughout his life, was born on 17 May 1958.**

He was the first child to Kevin, a cray fisherman, and Merlene. Two younger brothers, Phillip and Robert, would follow in quick succession. All three boys would go on to become cray fisherman.

Bruce's childhood was spent at the family home in Triabunna. From a young age, he had a strong association with the water and was a common sight at both the Triabunna wharf and on the deck of his father's new boat, the *Merlene H*.

A fishing career was in Bruce's blood, and as soon as he finished Year 10 he joined his father as a deckhand aboard the *Merlene H*, ready for the start of the new shellers season of 1973. This cray fishing career would last nearly 47 years.

Bruce worked with his father for several years, before Kevin made the decision to upgrade to a bigger boat, the *Charmaine J*, in 1975. Recognising an opportunity, Bruce decided to buy the *Merlene H* and at the age of 18 he began his own fishing operation. At such a young age, Bruce did not have his Skipper's ticket and he still required the help of an older experienced hand. So, he convinced family friend Mick Drake to come on board as his first deckhand.



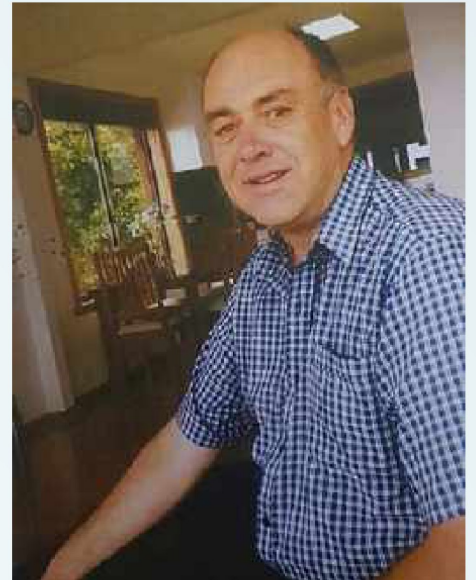
*Bruce aboard the Merlene H, mid-1960s*

Bruce met his wife, Christine, in 1978 when he was 19. They married just over two years later. Children soon followed, with Matthew born in 1982 and Scott the following year.

For Bruce, the 1980s was a period of hard work. There were no catch limits in place at that time, and fishermen would fish the various seasons in their full entirety, spending long periods at sea. The sight of Bruce fishing around Maria Island over the years was so common that there was a joke among his fellow fishermen, that every day, when the pots came up, the crays would file out of the pot and say, "Morning Bruce".

As the years progressed, Bruce would often say that he wanted a bigger boat. Something that was just a little more comfortable and that provided the ability to run more pots. That opportunity presented itself in 1995, when Triabunna fisherman, Gordon 'Ging' Castle, retired and placed his boat *Yimbala* up for sale. Bruce made the purchase, while the *Merlene H* was sold to Malcolm Fergusson after it had served the Haigh family so very well for nearly forty years.

Around this time, the cray fishing industry underwent a major change with the introduction of a quota system, which Bruce always supported. It allowed him to spend more time at home and, with more time on his hands, he was suddenly able to attend junior



*Bruce Haigh, 2020*

football matches, school events and to go on family holidays.

In more recent times, Bruce became a grandfather to Morgan, Mila and Jack. Despite the distance between Tasmania and Western Australia, he visited when he could and was a hands-on Pop.

The final words of Bruce's eulogy, which was presented by his son Matthew on behalf of the family, provides a perfect memory of Bruce:

*Bruce was a quiet man, and he would be mortified to know the fuss that has been caused in the last few weeks. The events of July 5 were just a tragic accident. We still struggle to believe that it's true. But, we do have a lot to be grateful for. We had Bruce in our lives for many, many years and the memories we have with him will last forever. Bruce was a gentleman; kind and gentle; loyal and generous. He brought no harm to anyone. He was a beautiful husband, father and friend.*

Rest in peace, Bruce. ■



*Merlene H off the woodchip plant in Orford. By Bill Walkers, 1972*