

Deal Island Working Bee Oct 24 – 5th Nov 2023 Report.

Participants

Jon Marsden-Smedley, Stuart and Georgie Dudgeon, Rose Grant, Steve Greig, Cassie Strain.

Summary

I was again pleasantly surprised by the level of knowledge, experience, and enthusiasm of our volunteers, and the amazing meals that were created...Thanks all for your commitment and input into our efforts on the island. I left the island with the feeling that our strategies for limiting ragwort impact, and weed searching methodology for sea spurge and ragwort are quite sound.

The working bee group spent a total of twelve nights on the island and two three quarter day's travelling, packing and unpacking gear. 10 days were spent on weeding, house and heritage maintenance, and encouraging wallabies to relocate from the East Cove rehabilitation enclosure. Two free choice days resulted in isolated pockets of weeds being found and treated as well as some contribution to finishing tasks.

Key outcomes were 60 hectares of the island's grassland searched and weeded (See Appendix 1), the enclosure fencing repaired with an estimated 80% of the wallaby population relocated, completion of internal painting in the bathroom, pantry and lounge of the visitors' house, and whim recoating of timber and steel work.

The group estimates it contributed 450 hours of work protecting and enhancing the natural and cultural values of the island.

Sea spurge searching and removal was again extensive, with 2630 plants removed from East (See appendix 3), Garden (see appendix 4) and Winter Coves, and Little and Big Squally. Outliers were again found outside previously recorded areas at Garden Cove, 370 plants were removed at Winter Cove, and 7 plants from Big Squally Cove (see appendix 1) with several showing they had previously seeded.

Ragwort was treated with both physical removal and some spraying of high density seedling areas. Approximately 100 hours was spent on Ragwort mapping searching and removal. Two new infestations were found above Garden Cove and some isolated plants found on the East Cove embankment.

Four of the participants had been on working bees and two new starters. We were fortunate to have Jon's mapping expertise and long experience with sea spurge control to draw from, as well as Steve's extensive experience spraying, working at heights and

other experience. Cassie provided valuable input into the ragwort biocontrol project from her previous Weed Officer experience as well as quickly identifying many plant species for the group, and Rose' media nous was put to good use on regular quirky Facebook posts. Georgie and I made it all happen seamlessly again (we believe).

The group was greeted and supported by the caretakers. John and Carole who were there when we needed them, particularly when it came to a couple of food items that appeared not to make it to the island. Thanks so much for sharing the island for so long.

Logistics were made much easier with the majority of the supplies being ordered through Walkers supermarket and packed and weighed by Chrisitne Bowman on Flinders. Flight weights remain a challenge to take what is required as well as six personnel. Luckily, some of the Team members didn't challenge the scales too much...

Thanks all...

Weeding Results

Sea spurge

150+ hours were spent on searching and removing sea spurge.

A concerted effort was made again to do a thorough search above East Cove. It was estimated only two plants had previously seeded which is a great reflection on previous weeding efforts. These were both from an outlying population originally discovered by Jon when caretaking. This one site had 197 plants. Approximately 1400 plants in total were removed.

A day and a half were spent at Garden Cove removing of 806 plants. A large portion of these were again higher up on the elevated dune on the west of the cove. One new site was recorded with 15 plants some of which had previously seeded.

Winter Cove again surprised us with 370 individuals removed. No seeding plants were recorded. I remain amazed that after 25 years of monitoring, this cove's number of plants is increasing (possibly from seeds washing from elsewhere).

Little Squally Cove despite its limited area, had another plant, and Big Squally had occurrences on both cobbled foreshore areas, with the majority (6) being on the eastern end of the bay.

Arum Lillies

A more thorough search of old sites previously recorded resulted in the removal of 70 bulbs. One unexpected find was about 10 small plants on the side of the Barn Hill track just outside the Compound.

Horehound

The two known sites at East Cove and the next smaller bay to the west were checked. 14 hours were spent in total removing 341 plants from the East Cove area with none being detected in the bay to the west. A number of plants were setting seed.

Ragwort

The areas previously searched and weeded were repeated, with the main focus being on the area between the Compound and Little Squally Cove. The search area was extended to ensure no plants had been missed higher up the bank towards Barn Hill.

The level of infestation was beyond counting with a number of sites being sprayed to kill a large population of small rosettes.

The area at Garden Cove was repeated with several more populations found against the casuarina line to the west of the bay. These were all removed or sprayed depending on the level of infestation.

The walk to Winter Cove was used to assess the area for potential release sites. Cassie is undertaking writing a summary of the site to run by John Ireson to ensure it meets the basic criteria of level of infestation, and suitable slope and drainage.

Great Mullien

Several flowering plants were removed and sealed into the weed storage facility created on the last working bee.

Slender and other thistle species

The majority of our time on the island was windy, and therefore spraying of infestations was not undertaken. The caretakers however had sprayed several areas of slender thistle and were planning to spray the East Cove embankment as weather conditions allow.

A number of Scotch thistles were removed on searches for ragwort around Garden Cove and outside the compound fence toward Little Squally.

These were not mapped.

Weed mapping and documentation

Two GPS units were again borrowed from the SPRATS group, set up with the latest weeding data from the March working bee. The group were mostly conversant with GPS use which meant that most of our weeding efforts were track logged and areas of new or extensive infestations were mapped. See attached maps.

Superintendent's cottage maintenance

The scaffolding was set up in anticipation of undertaking some further painting and to investigate a number of increasingly rusty joins on the roof. Gutters were also cleaned.

The scaffolding components were cleaned before putting away which freed up many of the attachment clamps.

Several portions of walls on the fuel and paint stores were prepared for painting however the specified type of limewash paint previously used wasn't able to be located

The Whim

Parts of the whim that were nearing collapse have been supported since our previous working bee. The team again oiled the timbers and applied kill rust to the steel components. The timbers absorbed considerably less oil which showed that the previous oiling was still largely on the timber.

Visitors House

Work continued on making the visitors house more presentable and a healthier environment in which to stay. The lounge room was fully washed and walls painted. One panel of the ceiling that had flaking paint was also painted. The large bedroom was washed and the toilet walls and ceiling and pantry ceiling painted.

Most of the paint available has now been used with around 2 litres of wall paint and 1 litre of ceiling paint remaining. Some surfaces would benefit with an undercoat/prep coat if further paint is being supplied

Bank Stabilisation East Cove.

The area enclosed with fencing appeared to be a lot drier than the two previous working bees. The efforts made last working bee to apply some brush parallel to the slope provided some protection from erosion, but was only placed in a very small portion of the slope. It continues to appear obvious that the area would stabilize more quickly without the level of browsing from wallabies that is currently occurring.

With this in mind the group repaired all the breaches in the fence and spent an hour each morning and evening for three days guiding wallabies to an opening. In total 68 wallabies were moved outside the enclosure, and an estimated 15 remain inside. A gate was installed adjacent to the east cove track in the fence line to allow wallabies out should they be hanging around there looking for water. Two ramps were also placed for wallabies to escape over the fence however none were seen using these.

Caretakers were asked to occasionally observe where the remaining wallabies were congregating for them to release them should they be near either of the gates.

Update on the last future work recommendations

In Progress

- Planning for the ragwort Flea Beetle is complete with mid-January providing the optimal time for collection and release. Funding has been sort from two sources to provide for this. To maximise the chance of successful relocation the timing of collection through to the release needs to be minimized. As far as is practicable the collection needs to occur during a good flying weather window when the pilot is available to make delivery. At this stage our specialist and two FoDI members are available to assist with collection and delivery.
- Continue with repainting the interior of the visitor's house.

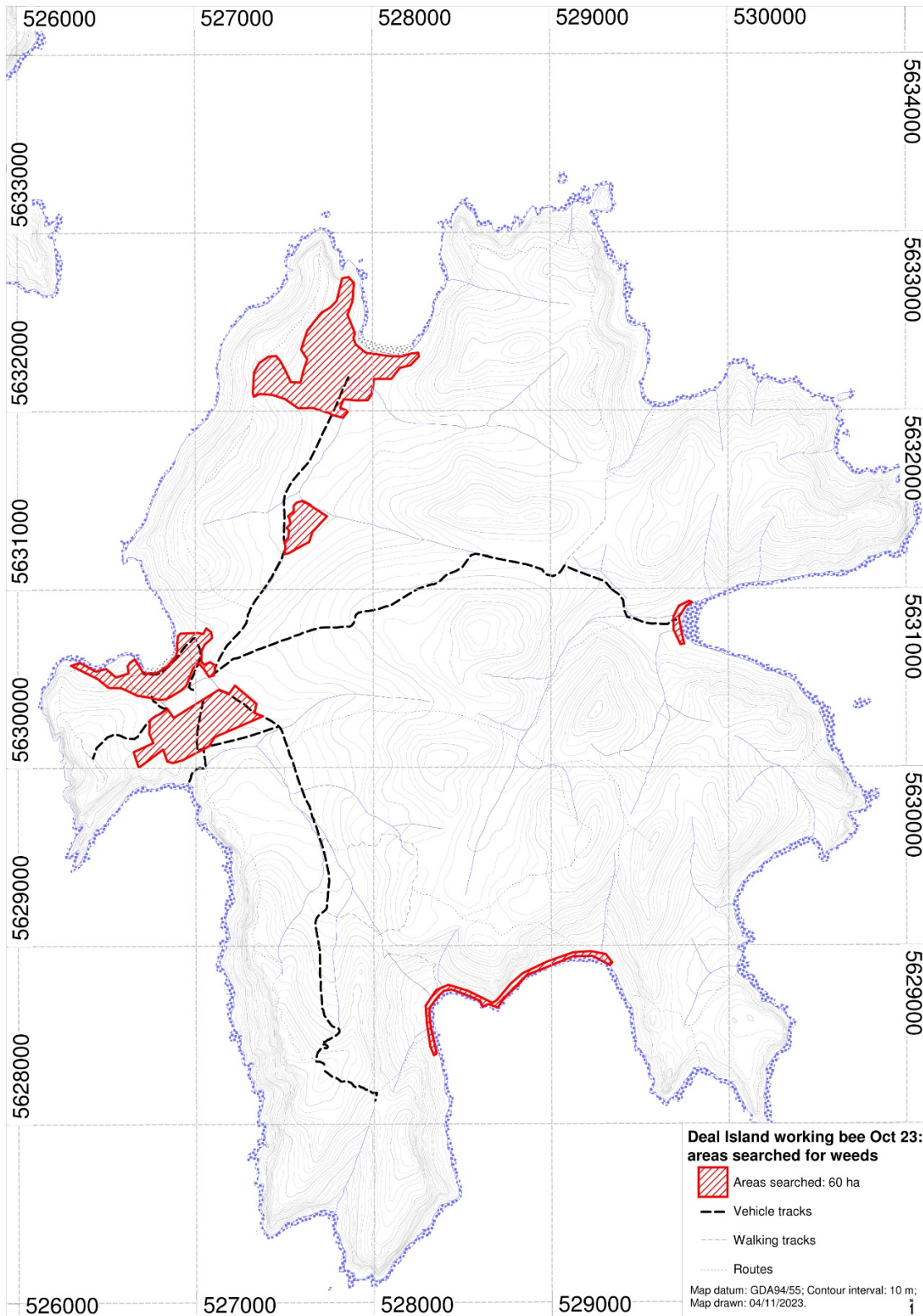
Not yet acted upon

- The repair or replacement of the roof on the museum house will continue to be a priority.
- The exterior of the radio room, jetty shed, generator shed, lighthouse generator shed, and the visitors house require painting in the next few years.
- Vegetation management around the lighthouse precinct and ruins needs to be reviewed in light of increasing vegetation height and fuel loads that are likely to increase the chances of damage should a wildfire occur.

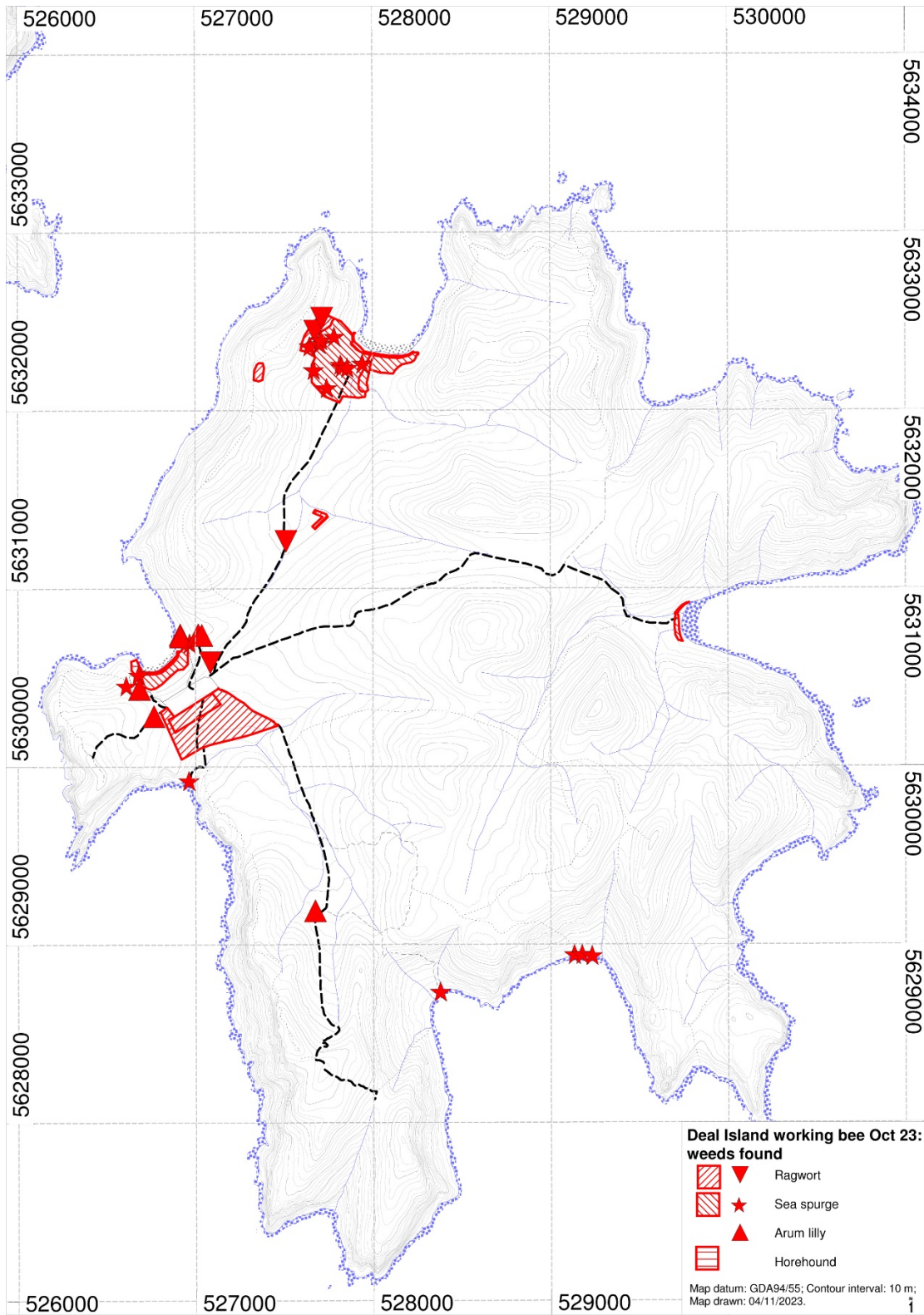
FoDI owned supplies/ Equipment on Island

- Equipment held on the island was reviewed and checked.
- Some small kitchen purchases were requested.

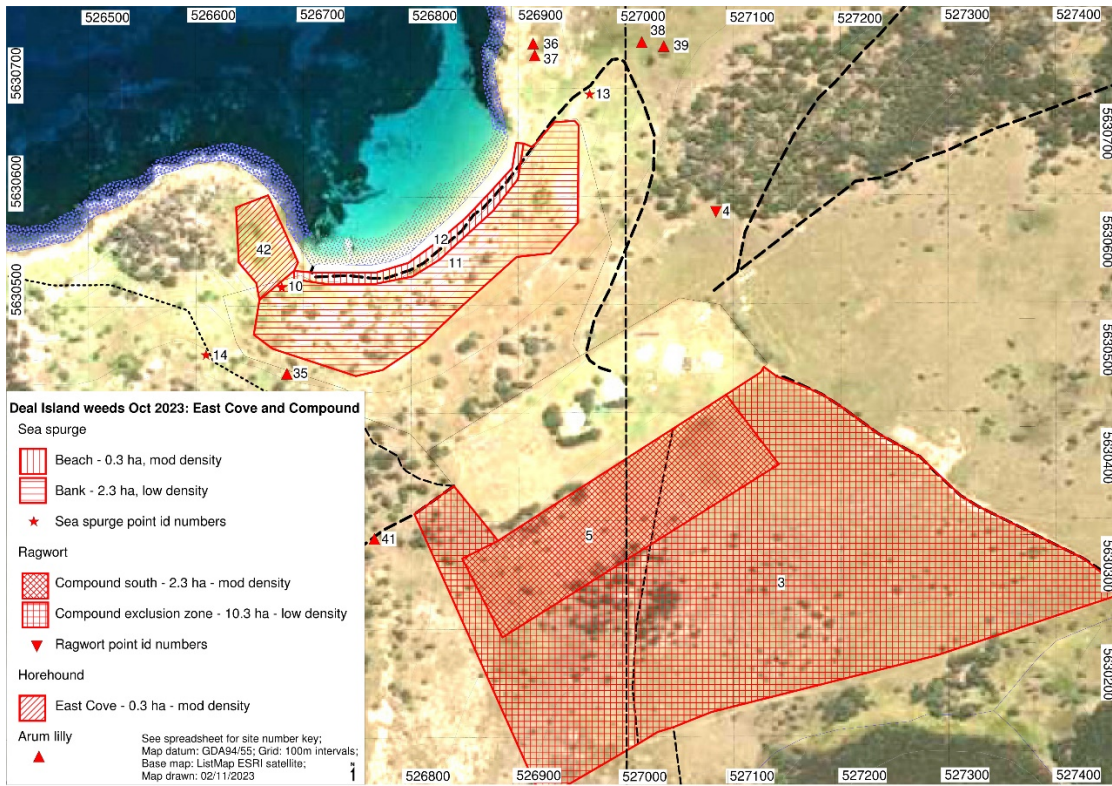
Appendix 1 Areas searched for weeds Map



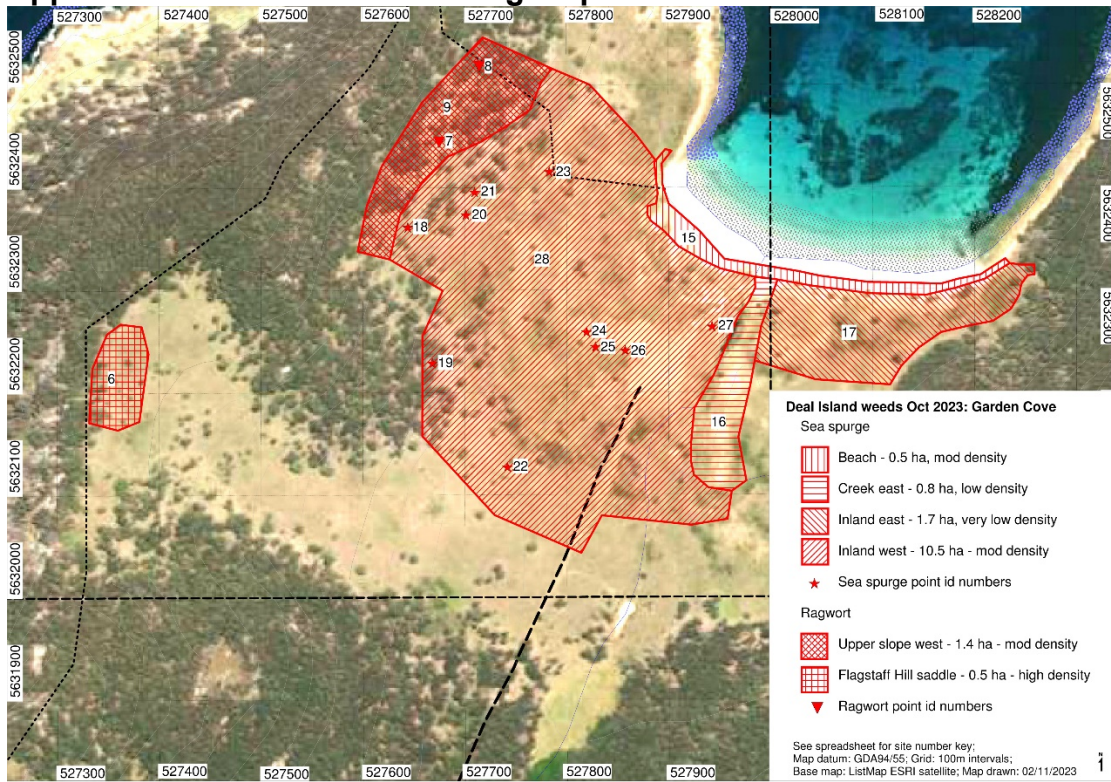
Appendix 2 Map Weeded Areas



Appendix 3 East Cove – Little Squally weeding map



Appendix 4 Garden Cove weeding map



As well as multiple games of Cards some took to penning some treasures to remember our time on the special island

There was a team leader called Cheesus,
 Christ Almighty! He's better than cheezels.
 His gluten free flour
 Enhances his power,
 And endless attempts to please us.

There was a sea spurger called Shank
 Who's ingenious wallaby plank,
 Intrigued all the roos,
 But it's use they refused,
 Preferring a gate on the bank.

A living treasure called hori-crumbs'
 fruit cake tastes better than my mum's!
 Her sticky date pud
 Is so good it could
 Win the Deal Island 'bake-off'. Yum, yum!

The youngest wild weeder is Butter Bean
 With a seaweed tiara like a real queen.
 She suggested we eat it

Saying sushi can't beat it.
Until the seaweed smelled totally unclean.

There was a dark horse called Q
With nick names - more than a few!
His skill with the scaffold
Had Shank momentarily baffled.
Superior knowledge - who knew?

There once was a lass called Mow Mow
Who when playing cards was like ka-pow
But when curled up in the sun
Contented, as one
She'd give you a look that said, what now?

There once was a wild group of FODI's
Who zig-zagged Deal Island like roadies (aka Roadrunners)
The sea spurge they slammed
Stinging nettle be dammed!
So well fed, they left the Island feeling like toadies!