

## **Deal Island Working Bee Nov 5 - 18th 2022 Report.**

### **Participants**

Don and Lee Cameron, Mike Comfort, Jane Davis, Sandra James, Stuart Dudgeon.

### **Summary**

The working bee provided a great opportunity for myself to rediscover the island and its management issues after 7 years since I last participated in a working bee.

The experience was all the more memorable for having Sandra James as part of the team, and sharing her connection to the works of her great great great grandfather who was responsible for the building of the original lightstation.

Having repeat participants in Don and Lee was invaluable for maintaining some continuity with previous efforts, and introducing Mike and Jane to the FoDI working bees and the island, was rewarding getting caught up in their enthusiasm and excitement.

We were also fortunate in having Sterling and Jo as Caretakers. Their willingness to help and share their island time was appreciated.

The priority for the working bee was achieved after 4 days with the majority of the Museum receiving two coats of a specialised breathable paint product suitable for use on historic stone building exteriors.

After completion of this task we were able to focus on weeding and helping the caretakers with cleaning out and reestablishing the lighthouse road drainage.

A highlight was having an evening meal in the superintendants cottage where Sandra had the opportunity to dine where her forebare Charles Watson would possibly have eaten...

Overall my impressions were that the volunteer programme and FoDI's efforts, continue to make an amazing contribution to presenting the lightstation, and the island in good order for visitors to enjoy.

The arrival by plane has changed the experience somewhat, compared to the longer boat trip, and the multiple handling of all the gear, as well as the slow build up to arriving in East Cove...The crumbling remains of the jetty was sad to see.

### **Planning**

The expressions of interest resulted in 8 applicants with one withdrawing when offered a position. Our final group consisted of 3 repeat members and three new to the working bees although Mike Comfort had visited the island in an official capacity to report on the slope rehabilitation project at east cove...

The group members complimented each other well, with a great range of skills, interests and much enthusiasm.

Our programmed tasks were to wash and paint the exterior of the Museum, and do followups on sea spurge, arum Lillies and Horehound and assess and prioritise controls on ragwort outlying populations.

### **Logistics**

The working bee got off to a late start, flying to the island 3 days after our start date, but equally the return was delayed by four days giving us 13 nights on the island. with Sandra arriving on Flinders from Melbourne the weights on the flight from Barnbougale were easily managed, with personal gear and non perishable foods being delivered three days before the flight.

Our departure flight worked out well other than for Sandra, who was unsuccessful in rescheduling a flinders to Melbourne flight for the Friday and had to fly back via Launceston. Still we were able to take all our rubbish off island to flinders and the six of us and personal gear to Barnbougale.

The catering was arranged so that participants nominated two evening meals to cook and stated preferences for breakfast with lunches being a range of sandwich/ wrap fillings.

Purchasing combined food stuffs as one worked well as there was little duplication or over supply, and all foodstuffs that couldn't be left on Island were used.

### **Weeding Results**

#### **Sea spurge**

Around 115 hours was spent searching and removing plants from East Cove Garden Cove, Little Squally and Winter Cove. Searches were also conducted at big squally, pegleg and the bay between winter cove and big squally cove by some intrepid explorers.

The results were over 1400 sea spurge plants, with 370 found on the elevated dune to the west of Garden Cove.

#### **Arum Lillies**

Eight plants were removed from 3 different sites, three just west of the whim outside the enclosure, 5 in the gully toward the airstrip from east cove, and two at the halfway house.

The old tank that has previously been used for sealing the bulbs was cleaned up and some growing from under the plastic were pulled and resealed.

Approximately 10 hours was spent on searching and removing these

#### **Horehound**

Three sites yielded over 700 plants. a mass of seedlings had shot just to the west of east cove, and two individual plants were found at Garden Cove and a marked site in the little bay to the west of east cove.

removal and searching took approximately 15 hours.

#### **Ragwort**

It was good to get a first hand look at the extent of ragwort and the plant densities in certain areas.

The goals set were

1. to establish the extent and density of plants in the little squally area from the lighthouse track onto the slopes of Barn Hill
2. establish the extent and density of plants in the garden cove area from the end of the airstrip to the beach and up onto the infestation at the saddle on flagstaff hill.
3. establish densities in the winter cove/ pegleg area, the site just north of the airstrip and the eastern edge of the grasslands west of the lighthouse track, all of which had been previously worked by FoDI working bees.

In undertaking the first two goals volunteers, including the caretakers mapped and treated in excess of 5000 plants, removing all those that were found.

the sites that had previously been worked (listed in 3) were as suspected very dense and as such deemed good locations for initially establishing biocontrol populations. Entertaining any expectation of controlling ragwort in any areas of grassland on Deal island seems futile without biocontrol its interesting to speculate why there are still areas relatively free of populations.

Given large parts of garden cove areas searched had no ragwort and similarly the little squally area its possible that these areas have some topographic or vegetative protection from being inundated with seed.

The group concluded that while populations in those areas remain localised it is worthwhile to:

1. search and spray or handweed these areas on November working bees , and
2. have caretakers look for flowering plants that have been missed by the working bee on these to reduce local seeding..

Approximate maps attached

At this stage the aim of the Friends of Deal island is to transfer, release and monitor the spread of populations of Ragwort Beetle in Jan 2024

the group spent approximately 140 hours on Ragwort with additional time put in by caretakers

### **Great Mullien**

while some work was put into this on other search and destroy missions it became clear quite early that it is so widespread on tracks around the compound and the airstrip that little impact could be made on this. Consequently it was given a lower priority

### **Slender and other thistle species**

The slender thistles are also have a good year, no doubt resulting from the wet season. Large populations were present in the fenced enclosure and the eastern side of the east cove track outside the compound. unfortunately the weather window for spraying these was missed and it was evident later on in the working bee that many had already set seed.

Several isolated variegated thistles were removed.

### **Weed mapping and documentation**

Two mapping methodologies were taken to the island to workout which best suited the participants...

A Wildcare tablet which was set up with the fulcrum app was referenced.

Four gps's were borrowed from the SPRAT's group, set up with the latest weeding data recorded by the last two lots of caretakers for the users to reference and for recording and rerecording sites. We were very fortunate to have Don Cameron on the working bee who has a background in surveying.

Sites were recorded on the gps units, with details of the numbers, and then any notes relating to that site written down and then the points being downloaded to add notes. As we became more familiar with the units notes were added in the field.

The benefits of transferring the data to a spreadsheet and being able to edit it meant that information was clarified and checked during the working bee rather than afterward. The benefits of the gps were that we had all weed species showing if we were navigating to spots, we were able to map tracklogs to not just see where we removed weeds but also to then see where we had searched.

The limitations found were

1. that the data took considerable time on the working bee compared to the fulcrum programme
2. the interface for data entry is time consuming.

The aim is to make the data available to be loaded onto the fulcrum programme as well as supply to Jon Marsden Smedley for continuity with his recording.

Time spent on familiarization with the gps function and data downloading and editing was in the order of 60 -80 hours....Thanks again Don.

### **Marker posts**

Historical weed markers were removed including bouys and other visual aids. Post locations were gps'd and checked

Even though data is all electronically recorded the group thought there was benefit in replacing markers with colour coded plastic droppers for at least sea spurge, horehound and Arum Lillies, particularly outlying sites. These species are generally only reoccurring in and around previously recorded sites. This is seen as acting as an aid to future groups or caretakers in helping examine the full extent of an original infestation until we are more confident that everyone is able to use electronic mapping devices

### **Superintendants cottage maintenance**

Another task allotted to the working bee was painting the exterior of the museum. A perfect weather window for the first 5 days allowed the group to complete this task as far as the provided paint would go.

40 litres was applied covering all the exterior in two coats except for part of the wall facing the vegetable enclosure.

soft brooms were provided to clean the wall surfaces prior to painting.

The resulting look of the museum was much improved as a lot of colour and runs had appeared and considerable mould/lichen was covering the southern facing walls. Using the scaffolding that was supplied by earlier FoDI fund raising efforts, the task was made much easier and safer. It also gave me a chance to look at the guttering, roof condition, dormer window woodwork etc.

Findings were:

1. all the woodwork on the dormer windows and the fascia boards is deteriorating, and in need of patching/painting/replacing in sections
2. The roofing iron is showing signs of failing through rust around roof fixings and some joins
3. the guttering on three sides of the houseflow through one 40mm outlet into a larger downpipe. this was blocked leading to water draining down the back of the gutter in places and running down the outside stone work
4. the new skylight windows both leak. Several small frames were made and lined with forticon to catch roof leaks in the upstairs section of the museum.

Approximately 75 hours was spent on preparation and painting and 10 hours on cleaning gutters and setting up drip catchers.

### **Other completed tasks**

The caretakers were spending time on cleaning road drains and culverts on the lighthouse track. We were able to contribute on three days that were either forecast to be too windy or wet for undertaking other tasks.

Results were that a number of previously inoperable culverts were able to be cleared, and table drains on all the steeper sections were cleaned from fallen timber, and a thick bed of casuarina needles. approximately 70 hours were spent by the group

The usual spring tasks of cleaning the visitors house and inventoring FoDI gear and supplies was done.

### **Future work recommendations**

The release of the ragwort beetle needs to be given priority to help manage the density of ragwort and hopefully reduce seeding potential

The weed mapping, and sharing of information methodology needs to be resolved so that caretakers who aren't familiar with weed identification and treatment can easily contribute to control programmes, particularly in spring. (update and simplify the weed folder for caretakers and provide electronic mapping function that is easily learnt for recording and searching)

The painting of the museum (superintendants cottage) needs to be extended to the fuel and paint store and adjoining walls

The repair or replacement of the roof on the museum house will need to be programmed with the next couple of years

The exterior of the radio room, jetty shed, generator shed, lighthouse generator shed, and the visitors house require painting in the next few years.

Window sashes and sills, barge and fascia boards on all outbuildings also need checking with some repairs needed to the generator shed windows

the interior of the visitors house was mouldy and and paintwork is deteriorating.

Progressive repainting could be scheduled on future working bees

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.

The fall arrest system including harnesses and ropes were inspected and although in perfect order are beyond expiry date and so are being removed from the island.

Shackles remain useable legally.

The Karcher gets limited use from FoDI and i believe could be combined with PWS equipment so that it is of more use, particularly with cleaning down the mower deck to prevent it spreading weed seed from one track/location to another..

Other suggested purchases to add to the collection are

New extension leads(in test), Baymix, plastic baskets for cleaning up casuarina needles in drains, ratproof storage container (maybe a metal toolbox) scrubbing brush, Bed lamps, new pillows, spare bedding, cannisters for open packets not removed.

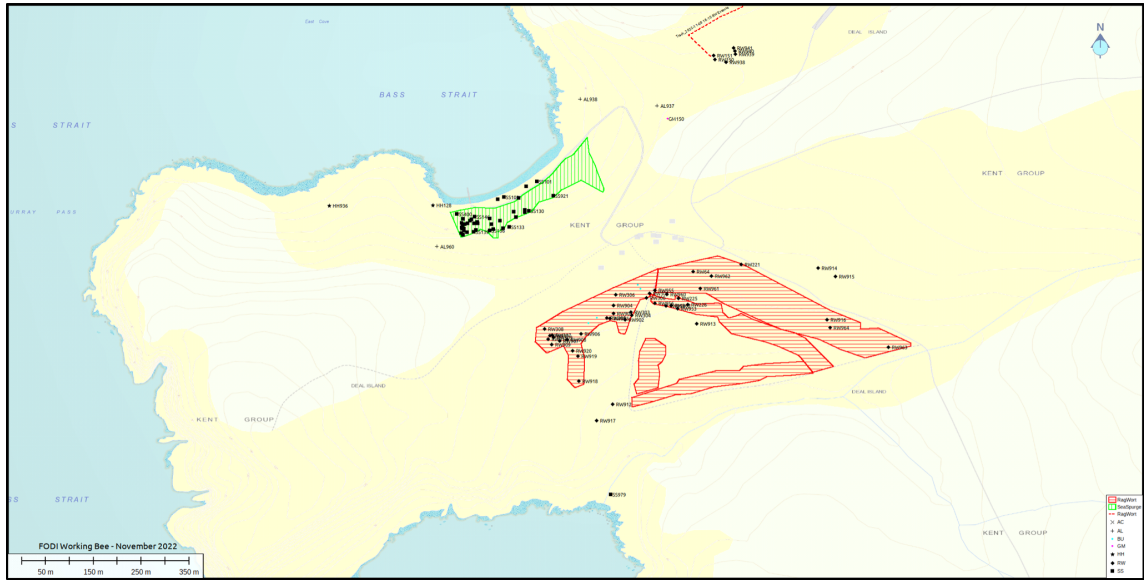
### **consumeables required**

Sugar soap, dishwashing liquid, air freshener

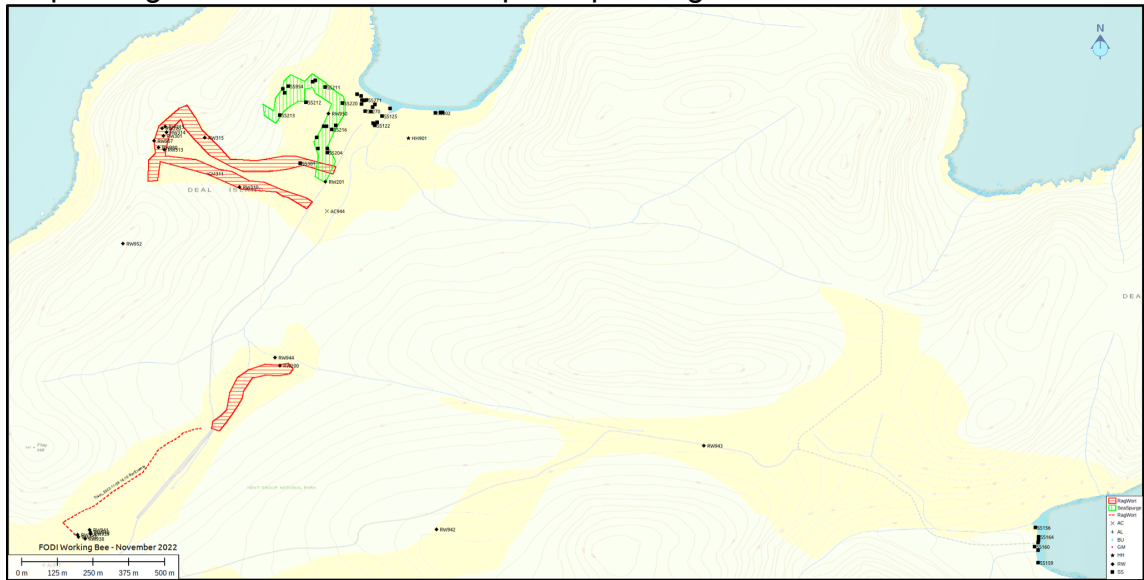
### **Consumeables not required**

Exit mould, washing machine powder.

Map 1 Ragwort little squally cove to compound



Map 2 Ragwort Garden cove airstrip to top of flagstaff hill



mapping courtesy of Don Cameron