



FRIENDS OF TASMAN ISLAND NEWSLETTER



JUNE 2012

No 9

A few words from the President

As the Friends of Tasman Island's 2012 AGM draws near a few very special thank yous are overdue:

To David Reynolds – Treasurer for FoTI since its inception in 2006, David is retiring from the position this year, his commitment and professionalism is acknowledged and has been much appreciated;

To Chris Creese – Core member Chris has spearheaded nearly all the major and minor works projects since our very first working bee. Our list of achievements on the island is long because of FoTI's honorary lightkeeper and the 100s of hours he has dedicated to organising and undertaking work both on and off the island;

To Erika Shankley - Not only our Secretary for the past 3 years, Erika's contributions to FoTI include being a regular author of the foreword and captions for our annual major fund raiser, Lighthouses of Tasmania Calendars, FoTI's photographer and writer of heaps of articles for our newsletters, handbook, Wildcare, Prism, Forty Degrees South and the Mercury as well as promoting FoTI and Tasman Island with her presentation to many community groups....as well as organising and leading many successful working bees on the island!!

To the Tasman Peninsula Branch of Rotary – Core members of Rotary and FoTI look forward to our annual pilgrimage to Safety Cove for the major fundraising event for Rotary when up to 70 paying guests visit the island for 2 hours including a guided tour up the lighthouse. Its a great collaborative partnership that we truly value.

There are others that I will acknowledge in my AGM Report including Lyndon O'Grady and AMSA, Stuart Dudgeon and other PWS staff, Heli resources, Forty Degrees South and our corporate sponsors, Cascade Brewery and Australian Maritime Systems. But a big thanks in this newsletter to all our core members and volunteers.

I hope you enjoy reading this edition; thanks to Dee for her layout and design, contributors: former Tasman Island keepers John Cook and Karl Rowbottom, Erika Shankley and the April Working bee reporters Mike Emery, Sue Lovegrove and Chris Creese.

Please pass our newsletter onto family, friends and work colleagues who may be interested. People can contact me on friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com or 03 6265 9785 (home) if you want to join FoTI, volunteer for one of our memorable working bees or have a story about Tasman you wish to share- I would love to hear from you.

Carol Jackson
FoTI President

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Tasman Island Rotary Trip 2012

The weather could not have been better had it been planned, both for flying and sightseeing on Tasman Island. Good visibility blue skies and hardly any wind.

I boarded the helicopter along with 4 others at Cambridge Airport at 8 am on Saturday, for the 20 minute trip to the Island. We disembarked on top of the Island beside the Lighthouse. What a vast difference from the hour and a half road trip to Port Arthur, followed by another hour and a quarter sea voyage to the island, often sea sick, then into the basket and hoisted up onto the landing followed by the trolley trip to the top and a long walk up to the Lighthouse, carrying your possessions in all weathers.

On arriving on the Island I was welcomed by Karl Rowbottom who was there as part of the Friends of Tasman Island current working bee, who were just about to leave.

It was in 1971, when I was the Acting Head Keeper, that I welcomed Karl as a new light keeper to the Island, under far different circumstances. When he and his family had arrived by boat in strong winds and pouring rain, the weather was far too bad for us to take his effects up the haulage and onto the quarters. So the family had to rough it till the weather improved with the aid of stuff we lent them. A day or two later we went down and got his effects.

So, 41 years later; it is Karl who is greeting me onto Tasman, under far different circumstances.

After disembarking, the helicopter departed for Safety Cove, just south of Port Arthur, to start bringing out to the Island the 64 paying visitors in lots of 5.

From now the helicopter would bring out 5 people at a time and take back 5, tho the first couple of trips it took the working bees' affects, then the volunteers themselves. The visitors were allowed 2 hours on the Island, to visit the old quarters, go up the tower and have a wander around the top of the Island taking photos etc.

When inspecting the Tower, usually in groups of 5 or 6, they were given a safety talk by an Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) representative in the base of the Tower prior to climbing the stairs.

For safety and security reasons there has to be an AMSA representative in the Tower, who also takes them up, in this case he was assisted by Karl.

I was stationed in the base of the Tower telling of its history, the life and duties of a light house keeper and endeavouring to answer a thousand and one questions. I noticed that after the visitors had been thru the Tower they would have a chat with me, and then go for a wander around the island, then return to me with many more questions and to look at my photos etc that I always take out, as I know they are



John Cook and Karl Rowbottom



of great interest to these people who visit.

Of all the 64 visitors to whom I spoke, not one was sorry they came to visit the island. They all enjoyed the experience; some have been before and some were even planning next year's trip.

Unfortunately due to leg problems I am now unable to climb the stairs and basically it was these stairs that caused my problems; having climbed them so many times over the years. They got their revenge!!!!

In between groups I managed to grab a sandwich or two to keep the pangs of hunger down.

The thing most visitors do not realise when they come out to Tasman and I try to instil in them is that on this day of their visit they cannot get the real sense of isolation that we had. There are people walking everywhere. It has only taken them approximately 8 minutes flying time in a comfortable helicopter, they are returning to their cars in approximately 2 hours and going home! Also here was the helicopter buzzing around all day. What is more they can put their hand in their pocket, pull out a mobile phone and talk to anyone, anywhere!

Before, when a new light keeper arrived on the island there only the other 2 keepers to greet him, no one wandering around, the only sound was the wind, bleating of sheep and once a day the sound of the Lister engine running. The only communication we had was a radio link to Cape Bruny and was not for personal use. Nor would he be seeing civilisation again for at least 12 months, when his annual leave fell due, that is if he managed to stay that long.

Many commented on the ruggedness of the coast line that is seen well from Tasman. I imagine that there are hundreds of photos taken, lucky we now have digital cameras.

After the last visitor had left I got a chance to visit Number 2 Quarters by myself and reminisce of days gone by when I lived there, of the wild weather that the house had protected me from, this house and Island are all a part of my life.

All credit must go to the members of FoTI for the hard work they have done in the renovation of the quarters.

On the last trip returning to the island to collect us, it brought some NPWS people to check the island for feral cats that once roamed it in large numbers, these being brought here by the Light keepers.

So ended a very pleasant day and thoroughly worthwhile for Rotary of Tasman Peninsula.

I wish to sincerely thank Alex Von Brandenstien (the AMSA Rep) and his brother Andrew for their assistance to me in the helicopter.

by John Cook, Head Light Keeper - retired

Adieu to an Island

Leaving Tasman Island is always a wrench - the clean air, the fabulous view from the kitchen window, the grass waving in the breeze, and of course the camaraderie of our fellow volunteers with whom we'd shared the last ten days.

I'm sure Peter Wilson, this year's organiser of Tasman Peninsular Rotary Club's fund-raiser, breathed a sigh of relief when the day of our departure dawned fine and sunny. This was the day when, each year, they run a constant helicopter shuttle, bringing up to 60 visitors for a brief visit to Tasman Island. It was thanks to Rotary, that FoTI was able to back-load members of our group off the island.

The 'official' party had arrived – AMSA's Alex von Brandenstein and former Keeper, John Cook. The door to the lighthouse was opened and we had a quick sprint to the top before, all too soon, we were boarding the helicopter and lifting off. In hardly a blink of an eye, it seemed, we were landing at Safety Cove.



Karl Rowbottom, Chris Creese and Alex Von Brandenstein



Nikki Verver and her boys

Even after such a short time on Tasman, being thrust into a crowd could be somewhat daunting. However, we were welcomed into a group of Rotarians, Park rangers, and visitors clustered around the food van. Light keeper's daughter, Nikki Verver, was waiting in the throng, eager to show her family some of the places of her youth.

Nearby, Dee swapped stories about life on a light station as visitors snapped up FoTI's Tasman Island booklets and gift cards.

Groups of five visitors took off with eager anticipation every twenty minutes or so as we wiled away the time chatting and munching apples from Don Clark's Koonya orchard. In the meantime, Parks arranged transport for Sue, Derek & Col to pick up cars at Taranna. It was late morning before they arrived back and still our luggage hadn't appeared.

At the far end of the landing field, almost out of sight, stood Parks' trailer. At last, over the top of the dunes, the helicopter appeared, a net bulging with an assortment of packages dangling below on an umbilical cord. Those waiting for their flight watched in amazement as, with infinite precision, the sling-load was placed directly into the trailer. After the next group had departed, it was simple for a Parks ranger to hitch up the trailer and drive it to our waiting cars.

Squeezing eight people and ten people's luggage into three cars proved a challenge. That it was successfully achieved and everyone arrived home safely, is thanks to Sue and Col and to Mike and Karl, who came off the island later.

To ease our entry into 'civilisation' we stopped at the Eaglehawk Neck cafe for coffee, before wending our way home, tired but happy after a successful working bee and Rotary day.

by Erika Shankley



Table Cape Tower Facelift

This year the Table Cape Lighthouse has undergone a few cosmetic changes. In January of this year the entry steps to the tower were replaced, this has certainly made easier access for people with knee or hip complaints to enter the building.

The rise of the old steps consisted of three very high lifts of the legs with most people getting the first two only to be caught on the third, I think mainly they were inquisitive as to what is in the tower and not watching their feet. The work was done by a local contractor and during the removal of the old steps the workmen came across the original steps, unfortunately I didn't see those, they may have been better than their successors.

The new steps consist of four easy rises and are highlighted with yellow stripes for extra safety. The only person that had a problem with the new ones was me. Being use to the old steps I had to come to terms with one extra step and so far I'm the only person to fall up them and down them, they say familiarity breeds contempt. The only problem the guides have is now asking people to watch themselves as they come through the door, people nearly always tend to look up to see where the stairway goes and there is a small step down to the floor-well of the tower, why it was left this way I don't know but it's only a minor issue.



Old Steps at Table Cape



New Steps at Table Cape

In early April this year the tower had a paint down on the outside which has really brightened things up. The base of the tower had become very discoloured and mouldy with bits of moss growing here and there due to the lack of sun on the southern side.



Base of tower before and after





Under the balcony and several of the tower windows were showing advancing signs of rust and full credit to the men from Maritime Systems for the job they did in tarting the old girl up.



I was on a working bee on Tasman Island when the paint job happened and I was informed by tour manager, David Roberts-Thomson, how resplendent the tower looked and when I returned to work the brightness of the paint nearly knocked my eyes out.

The Table Cape Lighthouse has, in my opinion, a close connection with the Low Head Lighthouse. The original Low Head tower was built in 1833 and was the only lighthouse on the northern coast line of Tasmania for fifty five years. This tower was poorly built and soon began to crumble, the present tower was built and was opened in 1888 the same year as Table Cape. The Table Cape Lighthouse was automated in 1920 due to its accessibility as the old bush track finally was developed into a road. Low Head, on the other hand, which was known as an electric light and not fully automatic, survived because keepers were needed to monitor the fog horn until it was rendered obsolete by new technology, the fog horn was decommissioned in 1973 and the light is now fully automated. After a big restoration effort by volunteers the fog horn is again operational as a tourist attraction. The Table Cape and Low Head stations are about 90km apart and can't be seen with the naked eye in daylight hours but at night the flashes from these two towers are quite visible.

The Table Cape Lighthouse Experience, as the tour is named, operates from September through to sometime in May and closing date for winter is decided by the amount of people and vagaries of the weather for this time of year. The tours are pretty well able to be done by anyone who can walk, the oldest woman to climb the tower is ninety one and the oldest man is ninety, everyone is cared for by highly trained guides who pack the fifteen minute tour full of history and facts about the operations of the light from 1888 through to present times . School groups and service organisation are welcome and by calling the office at Van Dieman Quality Bulbs on 03 64 423241 you can arrange a tour suitable for your group or check out the Table Cape Lighthouse Experience website. Tourists and locals from one to ten persons can just drive straight to the lighthouse to enjoy something unique in Tasmanian tourism.

by Karl Rowbottom (Guide)



April Working Bee 2012

Ten members of Friends of Tasman Island recently spent nine days on Tasman Island for the annual April working bee with the last day coinciding with the Rotary Tasman Peninsula's Open Day : - Colin Rowe, Helene Bogut, Chris Creese, Sue Lovegrove, Erika Shankley, Derek Inglis, Karl Rowbottom, David Edgar Jo Ainslie and Mike Emery. All except Colin and Helene have been on one or more previous FOTI working bees. Karl Rowbottom is a former Tasman Island Lightkeeper.



*Back Row: Derek Inglis, Chris Creese, Mike Emery, David Edgar
Front Row: Karl Rowbottom, Jo Ainslie, Colin Rowe, Helene Bogut, Sue Lovegrove, Erika Shankley*

The following article is compiled from the team coordinator's report (Mike Emery) the works report (Chris Creese) and the weeding report (Sue Lovegrove)

For several days bad weather and strong wind stopped most outside work and prevented the use of scaffolding and ladders. This curtailed the intended works programme. On Monday we found hail banked up on the back porch on Q3.



After that the weather improved, but we did not once have our traditional pre-dinner snack watching a sunset from the courtyard behind Q3.

In spite of the slow start, we accomplished much. Jo and Erika catered at a level which can only be described as magnificent. Everyone helped with minor tasks.



Each evening, we made an estimate of the time spent on the main tasks. For the nine days, these totalled at:

	Hours
Weeding	44
Q1 fascia boards, painting and installing	59
Guttering, installing on Q1	29
De-nailing Q2 timber	15
Mowing, brushcutting	86
Brick replacement, Q3	36
Preparing, painting Q3 verandah windows	25
Other (machine maintenance, stocktaking, forward planning)	21
Total Volunteer Hours	315

Work Included:

Mowing: Grass was cut in all the usual areas and raked where required. Areas cut include the helipad, around all houses and other buildings, weather station and tracks between buildings and to the top of the haulage.

Machinery: Generator, mower and brush cutters were inspected prior to starting work and were serviced at the completion of works.

BOM Weather Station: It had been noted by FOTI members that the wind speed and direction had not been available from the BOM weather station

for some time. After contacting the Bureau of Meteorology they requested that we investigate and repair the instruments if possible. It was anticipated to be an electronics fault but on investigation it was found to be a broken anemometer at the top of the mast. As BOM had not supplied those parts there was nothing we could do but report the situation to them. BOM subsequently arranged to fly to the island on the 14th utilising the same helicopter being used for the rotary club trips and carried out repairs.



Works carried out:

Quarters 1

- Continued replacement of fascia and repairs and painting to adjacent woodwork. 95% complete.
- Started installing gutters. 25% complete.
- Swept out house.



Quarters 2

- Stored timber components for Q2 and Q3 verandahs sorted and old nails removed.
- Stored bagged lino removed
- Sweep out house

Quarters 3

- A large number of eroded bricks were replaced on the north and east facing walls.
- Repairs to window frame
- Painting of window
- Painting of west veranda windows both inside and outside.
- Clean windows



Time capsule in the wall in Q3

And for all you weed lovers:

Yarrow: The yarrow around Q3 seems to be increasing. This is partly because we are better at spotting it but also the grass area between Q3 and the light house has mostly been slashed on the first day of the working bees making it hard to see the plants. On the last 2 or 3 trips the slashing has been postponed so that the yarrow can be painted with glyphosate on the first day. This seems to be working as there was a decrease in the number of plants this time.



Lillium There was no evidence of it regrowing at the original spot in the old vegie garden.

Brassicas Bagged the seed heads and buried under plastic in the weed tank

California Thistle There are about 20 plants growing along the track north of Q1. Cut and pasted with 100% glyphosate and bagged seed heads before the slashing/mowing. One found between Q3 and Q2 at the back of Q2 near the rubbish pile. Sprayed with Lontrel mix.



Further to the north past the winch and west of the relief keeper's cottage ruins is a large dense infestation. This is where the grasses are densest and hard to move through and where there are holes beneath the grass. This area clearly has had less attention.

Area East of track was searched thoroughly and sprayed with Lontrel mix. There seemed to be evidence of a decrease in the density of thistles.

Dock: Found around the back of Q1 and amongst the grasses north of Q1 and along the track. Bagged

the seed heads and sprayed with glyphosate before the slashing. Again this appears to be spreading because in the past the grass cuttings containing seed heads have been thrown into the native grass areas.

Tidy up around houses

- Bagged brassicas from around Q2. Left in weed tank.
- Cleared path at the back of Q1 and old laundry- found young blackberry in the wood pile- cut and pasted
- Sprayed a few weeds around the edge of the houses.

To finish up – comments from Mike Emery – Team Coordinator

I would like to thank Parks and Wildlife Service, Stuart Dudgeon and Mike Copping in particular, for all the help and support they provide – in transport, in fuel, in administration and paper work. We get the enjoyment of staying on the island, but we acknowledge the amount of time they spend so that we can go, and that much of that time is spent behind a desk. Thank you.

I would like to thank the Tasman branch of Rotary, for flying us (and our rubbish) out. The cost saving to us is considerable, and we appreciate it.

I would like to thank Chris for his part in organising the works programme and all the materials. I suspect he spends as many hours at home preparing for these trips as he spends on the island. His experience and detailed knowledge of the infrastructure on the island is invaluable.

I would like to thank Erika, whose experience in running many past working bees was invaluable.

I would like to thank Karl for the many evenings in which he recounted tales and talked about keeper's lives.

I would like to thank all the other participants for a particularly happy working bee. You were a great group.

Interested in joining one of our memorable working bees? – Please contact our Secretary Erika Shankley for more information: email erika.shankley@gmail.com phone 62233510 mobile 0437 452 704



April Working Bee 2012



In the tower's shadow, dark and tall
Stands the old Keeper, listens to bird's sweet call
The day is calm, in the still warm air
Days such as these, on a lighthouse are so rare
The old Keeper wonders long
When the winds returns, quadruple strong
He thinks of days and night
When he fought the elements with all his might
He thinks of being on watch in freezing tower
Content in his lot, and lonely hour
Now he is back in present time
As the years do pass, and clock does chime
And now high tech man and clever ways
Have robbed the Keeper of his days
Clever man will fool himself
Ideas explode, gather dust upon the shelf
History, so they say, in itself repeats
Making small, man's puny feats
When clever ideas have had full play
Again shall rise the Keeper and have his day
The Keeper in the shadow, the day is nearly done
The sun dipping to the west, and night about begun

Karl Rowbottom
Former Tasman Island Lightkeeper

We are appreciated!

To celebrate National Volunteer Week, NRM South hosted a lunch-time BBQ to thank all volunteers working in natural resource management, including landcare, bushcare and coastcare.

About 40 people, members of various care groups and representatives from Conservation Volunteers Australia, Huon Valley and Kingborough Councils, Tasmanian Conservation Trust and Tasmanian Land Conservancy, gathered at the Kingston Beach Sailing Club.

After being welcomed by NRM's executive officer, Dr Kathleen Broderick, speakers included Ian Marmion and Pip Gowen from PWS and SCAT's Leah Page. Then followed an impassioned speech by Graeme Rainbow of the Bellerive Bluff Land and Coastcare group who, with some help from the Clarence Council, have worked to try and reverse the degradation of this area since 2000. Marie Giblin spoke about the work by the Tramway Hill Landcare Group in Kingborough, and Chris Johns followed, outlining some of the work done by SCAT.

FoTI was well represented by Erika Shankley, Sally Salier, David & Trauti Reynolds, Ian Marmion, Christian Bell and Ron & Glenda Fehlberg.

Copious barbecued sausages and hamburgers were accompanied by an array of delicious salads, fruit juices, tea and coffee.

Thank you to NRM South, particularly Ruth Osborne. It's nice to feel appreciated.

Erika Shankley



Ian Marmion, Erika Shankley and Sally Salier

LIGHTHOUSES OF TASMANIA

CALENDAR

Friends of Tasman Island (Wildcare Inc) is a group of volunteers who work, in partnership with the Parks & Wildlife Service, to restore the natural heritage and light station buildings on Tasman Island

Being such a remote location, transport expenses are high - helicopter transport for just one 10 day working bee alone is in the order of \$6000 - and all this money is raised by core members of our group

In order to do so we publish, each year, a Lighthouses of Tasmania calendar. The calendar has become a collector's item much sought after. We have been lucky enough to have sponsorship from Cascade Brewery and Australian Maritime Systems over the last few years, so all the money raised goes towards restoration of the lighthouse buildings.

We are always on the lookout for photographs for the calendars. As an incentive to get your cameras out, FoTI is offering a prize - a donation of \$50 will be made to the volunteer group of your choice for each photo selected for publishing! So get your cameras out & start snapping!

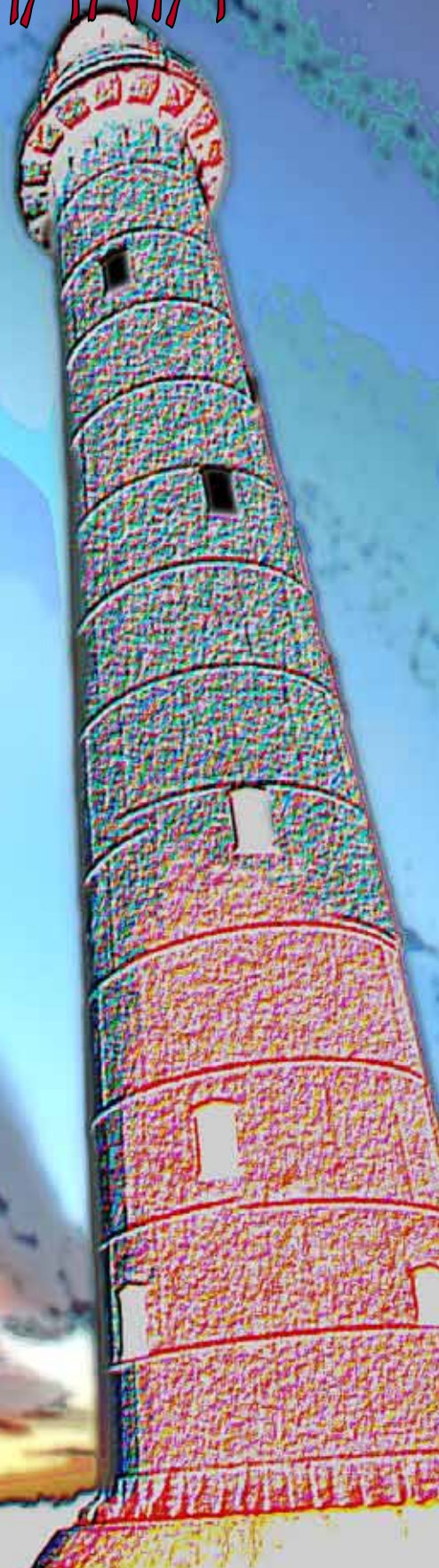
Points to consider:

Set your camera at the **largest** possible image size and highest resolution. This is important to get the best possible image for publication

Images could include

- A lighthouse
- Part of a lighthouse ie lantern room
- Something related to a particular lighthouse - ie grave, ruined building, or other relics
- Artwork (paintings or drawings) relating to lighthouses
- Archival images of lighthouses

As we are a non-profit organisation, we hope that you will consider donating an image for the calendars. Of course, the appropriate acknowledgement would be included.



Annual General Meeting

Friends of Tasman Island's AGM
will be held at
5pm Tuesday 10 July
at the Derwent Sailing Squadron,
Marieville Esplanade Sandy Bay

Following the AGM there will be 2 presentations to entertain us

Schedule for the night

5:00 – 5.30	Pre meeting drinks and nibbles, order and pay for meals
5.30 – 6:00	AGM
6:00 – 6.30	Life as a keeper and now as a tour guide – Karl Rowbottom
6.30 – 7:00	Dinner
7:00 – 7.30	Life as a lighthouse kid at Low Head in the 1960's - Carol Jackson
	Dessert

