

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 A Lighthouse Christmas
- 2 Cape Sorell lens project
- 3 Whalers Point Light
- 5 Visit to South Solitary
- 6 Lighthouses of Tasmania Calendar
- 7 FOR SALE
- 8 **What's on the Agenda**
- 9 AWBF & Raffle
- 10 Do you Know?
- 11 Bits & Pieces

*Christmas comes but once a year, now its here, now its here, bringing lots of joy and cheer – or so the jingle goes. These days, commercialism has somewhat smothered many of those joys, but in earlier times, and for those in remote locations such as lightstations, the celebration of Christmas was an important event.*

An article about *Lonely Christmases* appeared in *Launceston's Daily Telegraph* in December 1911. It remarked that for the lightkeeper, *his duties go on just the same. As compensation, plum-duff appears on the menu, but beyond that there is little change in the day's routine of those lonely watchers on lighthouse towers.*



READ ALL ABOUT IT!

In 1846, Swan Island's lightkeeper, Robert Wettenhall, wrote in his journal: *Christmas Day. The Children dressed the Cottage windows with flowers etc; we had a large plum pudding and salt mutton (could not afford to kill a sheep) cauliflower, peas, beans, kidney & broad do, potatoes, had drawn new potatoes upwards of a fortnight. Drank tea on Signal Hill & had cake, Mother read some tracts, children afterwards played at Kangaroo & hounds I smoked my Meerschaum and we returned home about 8 P.M. Light House had been lit about half an hour.*

A Tasman Island Christmas.



In the 1940s, to make sure that the Christmas didn't by-pass those lonely outposts, Miss Esme Allee of Elsternwick in Melbourne, collected presents to be forwarded to lighthouse families. *For weeks beforehand the children were asking "is the Santa Claus ship in range yet, Daddy?" Santa's sledge arrived by ship!*

On Tasman Island, too, the family of keeper Les Johnston, celebrated Christmas in 1930 with a picnic, complete with party hats and a bottle of wine!

We look forward to the day when FoTI volunteers can also celebrate a Tasman Island Christmas as caretakers on an extended working bee.

In the meantime we can look back with satisfaction at our year's activities, both on Tasman Island and at home. Thank you to you all.

A very peaceful Christmas season to everyone.

Erika

CHECK OUT OUR FACEBOOK PAGE AT <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTasmanIsland>





Back in 2008, FoTI became aware of some lighthouse components stored in a disused building next to the Mt Canopus observatory. Here we found a mish-mash of bits and pieces from various lighthouses amid the detritus of years of neglect.

Then in 2010 we again inspected the collection—which was not much different than it had been two years before. However, there was one item which now interested us—the Chance Brothers 2nd Order lens from the Cape Sorell lighthouse. AMSA had indicated that they were prepared for us to become custodians of this magnificent piece of engineering—all we had to do was repack the fragile pieces and find a more permanent storage facility until such time as a venue could

be found to display it.

While of course most of us are certainly keen, many are time-poor. However, FoTI's works supervisor on Tasman, Chris Creese, together with Gary Gay and Greg Bell, made an initial inspection to see what was required. Chris then did the planning and purchased the materials, in between going to work, moving house and his many other activities.

A couple of working bees were then organised. Accuracy was all important, and to make the precise construction of the crates less time-consuming, Chris had the forethought to devise a jig. Work then progressed smoothly and soon, twenty-four boxes of different sizes were ready and waiting.



The next step will be to pack the fragile polished glass components in a cushioned bed of foam. Watch this space for more details as they come to hand!



Photos: Erika Shankley



Extract from the book 'Win & Clyde - side by side in Tasmania's far South West' by Janet Fenton

In Chapter 16, Janet writes about her uncle, fisherman Clyde Clayton, who installed the navigation light at Whalers Point, Port Davey, on Tasmania's remote south west coast. ...

"Coming into Davey at night can be tricky, or indeed in daylight if landmarks disappear in a white-out of rain or fog. A calm sea, too, can be a hazard, with no tell-tale white breaks to show the location of submerged rocks. 'No radar in them days.' Approaching Port Davey from the south, a group of islands and rocks, the East Pyramids heralds the crumpled cliffs of Hilliard Head. Turning into Port Davey requires concentration even on a clear day. Swanson Island and the Big Caroline present towering flanks of fissured grey quartzite to the full force of the ocean's swells; anything that can be prised loose is scoured away. Further into Davey, Nares Rock is one to watch out for, awash at low water. Then the cluster of jutting rocks, the Shanks group in the South Passage, or Boil Rock, not quite submerged in the middle of the North Passage between Breaksea and the mainland.

The fishing fleet and yachtsmen, and of course my parents, were relieved when, in 1959, Clyde was contracted to install a navigation light on the northern shore of Port Davey. The fleet had been lobbying for years. The Commonwealth, in charge of lights for coastal shipping, wanted no responsibility. The state Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries tried to interest the Marine Board in Strahan, who claimed not to have the appropriate facilities to install and maintain such a light. After eight years of negotiations, and with money at last made available through the Public Works Department, the lantern, its associated hardware and set of four acetylene cylinders, arrived in Hobart from Sweden.

As usual, the lighthouse job began with loading and unloading gear. Just as well *Stormalong* was a strongly built boat. [However, Janet later said, the structure proved too heavy and \$90 was allocated for alterations. They must have forgotten that all this stuff had to be taken ashore by dinghy and winched up a cliff! Not a lot was done by helicopter those days.] This time, her load consisted of a new Lister engine to put in Clyde's cray dinghy; supplies for the Clayton, Edwardsen and King households; and curved sheets of roofing iron for a bushwalkers' hut at Melaleuca that Den planned to build in memory of his father. In addition were the materials for the lighthouse:

Cement, 8 bags; bolts and spikes, 1cwt; Dawn winch, 1; wire rope, 100ft; timber for boxing, 100ft; stand for light, 2 sections; stays, 2 sections, bolts and crews and box; gas cylinders, 4 charged; paint, silver, 1 gal.; base for cylinders, 4."

The first job was to gather some poles, then land gear at the site chosen for the lighthouse. Clyde selected the best site for navigation purposes, rather than for ease of access. The cliff appalled Win. Gear had to be lifted out of the dinghy, over slippery jagged rocks, and then dragged up a 'billy-goat track', as Clyde called it – a scramble up a twenty-six-metre high cliff out of a narrow gulch where the swells heaved in and out. Clyde secured the dinghy fore and aft across the gulch to keep her off the rocks. They rigged a Dawn hand-winch on a post at the lighthouse site. 'Seventy feet of wire rope' down to the waters' edge in the gulch was used to haul up gas bottles and bags of sand and gravel for the concrete base. They even needed to cart fresh water for the concrete. Clyde suggested using local sand, 'but Deny said no, it would have too much salt in it for the concrete.' Further trips were needed, to collect sand and gravel from a small beach near Mount McKenzie where the water was not so salty.

Charlie Vaughan & Clyde Clayton, with firewatchers C. Ikin, R. Gibbons



Charlie Vaughan, (behind) with Clyde Clayton & firewatchers C. Ikin & R. Gibbons



Rupert Denne, Clyde Clayton, Lou Shooobridge

Photo C. Vaughan



Photo: J. Poynter

Janet continues ...

‘Sea rather big. Landed sand, carried it all up, dug hole for foundations,’ Den wrote in his diary. Then they returned to Melaleuca for Mary’s ninth birthday and to collect more gravel for the next onslaught, Clyde showing off *Stormalong’s* new echo sounder on the way up the Channel. Three days later Freddy, Den and Clyde laid the concrete pad, setting in bolts for attaching the lighthouse tower. The tower, a prefabricated steel structure [built in the PWD workshops in Hobart] about four metres high, was soon erected.

The lantern itself arrived in Port Davey a few weeks later via the Fisheries vessel *Fiona*, and was installed by Fisheries and PWD technical personnel. On Monday 16 November, 1959, the blink of this little lighthouse welcomed sailors into Port Davey. ‘This light will be known as the JJ Dwyer Light’, the department optimistically announced in a press release honouring their Minister for Fisheries. However, to the fishing folk it was always known as Whalers. ‘Light on Whalers very comforting,’ Den wrote in Melaleuca’s log after his next night trip home in August 1960. To facilitate handling the ninety-five kilogram cylinders up the ‘billy-goat track’, Clyde later rigged an ingenious flying fox from wire rope, shackles and a snatch block. He maintained the light and exchanged the gas cylinders every two to three months – Win often working the winch handle – for the next ten years.

Den sometimes helped Clyde service the lighthouse. They would endeavour to leave an extra pair of gas cylinders at the light in case the swell was too big to land new ones in the gulch. If the light went out at times like this they would take a dinghy into Kelly’s and walk overland to the lighthouse to change the cylinders using the emergency pair left on site.”



Clyde Clayton at the Whalers Point Light, October 1959

Photo Clayton collection

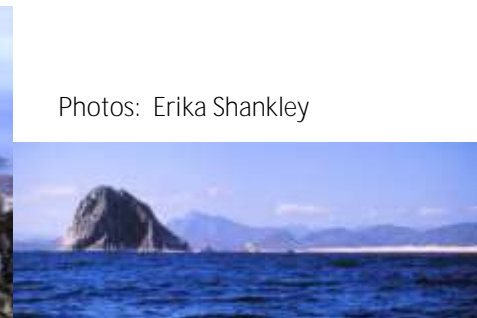
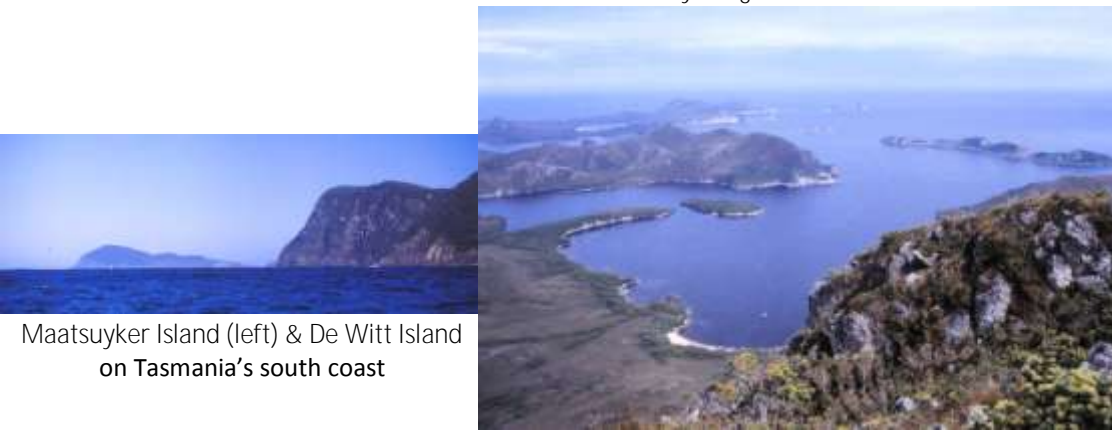
Notes:

1. When Janet researched this in the archives she found it such a fascinating paper trail that she forgot an important appointment!
2. Clyde was paid \$200 annually as supervisor of the Port Davey light. Nigel King on *FV Granada* took over the job in November 1969, for \$300 annually. A rapid turnover of supervisors followed, and by the mid-1970s the PWD was attempting to foist responsibility onto the Marine Board.
3. On completion, an unsigned letter in October 1959 indicates that *“The completion of work in the time available represents a considerable achievement ...”*.

References:

King and Clayton personal archives  
AOT AC814/1/242]

The Breaksea Islands (right) shelter the entrance to Port Davey—Big Caroline in the distance



Photos: Erika Shankley

Big Caroline at the entrance

Maatsuyker Island (left) & De Witt Island on Tasmania’s south coast



Former lightkeeper Robert Tresize visited South Solitary Island recently on a trip, much similar to the one conducted by the Tasman Peninsular Rotary Club. Deidre emailed: "Robert had a day out on Solitary on the 19th – not the best of weather, very strong winds, but managed to get some decent "stormy seas" photos ..... With only four trips altogether, the "guest" ex-keeper seat on the helicopter is quite sought after. The others who went were Shirley Northam's son Ian who lived out there as a child as did Jim Smith whose father was a keeper there. NPWS seek feed back after the tours and seem to be coming around to the idea that perhaps it would be a good idea to get a team of tradesmen out there to do some work like the FOTI volunteers, so it is good to use FOTI as a role model of a successful friends group. Unfortunately it is Precision Helicopters who make the money out of it and many of the public think one hour tours are too rushed and felt the two hour tours much better value."



Rob Tresize, left with Deidre on Tasman Island

Rob & Deidre visited Tasman last April and are now members of FoTI—we all wish them well with future plans for the Friends of South Solitary Island (FoSSI). See <http://www.southsolitaryisland.com.au/>

North Solitary has a light too!

Photos: Rob Tresize & Erika Shankley



The wall at the left protected the keepers from the ocean swell



All that remains of the jetty & landing stage

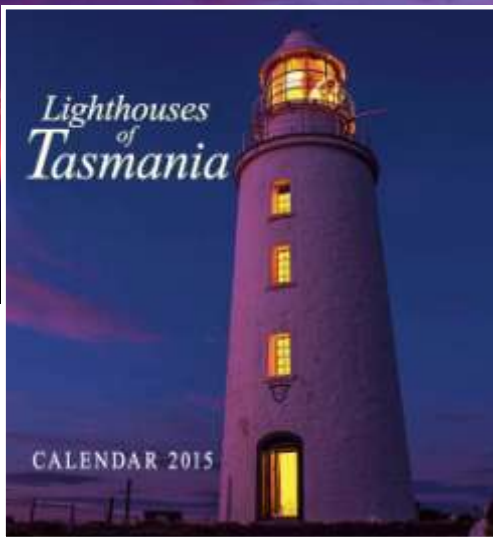


Keepers Quarters South Solitary



South Solitary Lighthouse designed by Colonial Architect James Barnet

South Solitary's rocky landscape covers only 13 acres and rises to 136 feet



## A FANTASTIC XMAS PRESENT

Building lighthouses around Tasmania's precipitous and isolated coastline must have been a daunting prospect. One newspaper correspondent wrote that *"the person who had suggested the construction of a light on the top [of Tasman Island] was not altogether compos mentis..."*

The difficulty of access to Tasman Island continued to cause comment when two members of the Hobart Marine Board ... *slipped and got a good ducking* ... when attempting to make a site inspection. Later that year, prospective building contractors also discovered the problems they might encounter when *"Some members of the party were unable to land, while those who succeeded ... were most forcibly impressed by the natural difficulties to be overcome in carrying out the contract."*

Modern-day occupational health and safety legislators would, no doubt, cringe at some of the conditions workers endured.

These unique and spectacular structures are once again celebrated along with those who built them. The latest edition of the *Lighthouses of Tasmania* calendar features stunning photographs of some of our iconic lighthouses. Images include lighthouses at Maatsuyker and Tasman Islands, Cape Bruny, Iron Pot, Eddystone Point, Low Head, Table Cape, Bluff Hill Point, Rocky Cape, Highfield Point and Cape Sorell. The historic lighthouse at Blinking Billy Point in Hobart and its replacement, the John Garrow light, are also featured.

Working in partnership with the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, the dedicated Friends of Tasman Island volunteers carry out many hundreds of hours of work each year towards conservation and preservation of the natural and cultural heritage of Tasman Island.

The 2015 calendar, the 9<sup>th</sup> in the series produced by the Friends of Tasman Island, is an all Tasmanian production. Thanks to sponsorship from the Cascade Brewery Company, Australian Maritime Systems and Wildcare Inc the *Lighthouses of Tasmania* calendar is a major fundraiser.

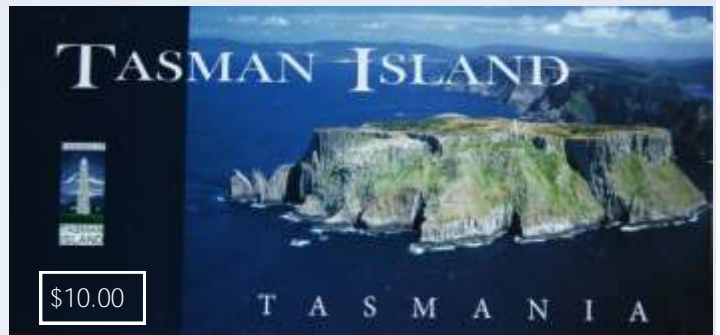
Now a collectors' item, the 2015 calendar will soon be available in selected book shops, newsagents and other local stores round the State. Or you can secure your copy of this unique limited-edition by emailing [friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com). For only \$20 + postage you will be helping to support ongoing work on Tasman Island.



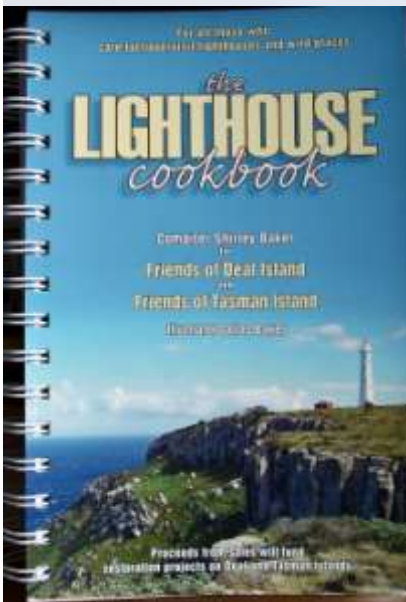
**DON'T MISS OUT**

**SUPPORT FoTI'S FUNDRAISING EFFORTS!**

- Tasman Island beanies \$15.00
- Gift cards \$3.00 each
- Tasman Island hand book \$10.00
- Lighthouse Cookbook \$20.00
- Calendar (See Page 4) \$20.00 + postage
- Cardboard model kit of Tasman Island lighthouse \$5.00



Cookbook \$20.00



Build your own Tasman Island Lighthouse Cardboard model kits \$5.00



Beanies \$15.00

Selection of cards \$3.00 each



*Have you been to a FoTI meeting lately? Bring along your ideas, and hear what other FoTI members are doing, in the informal atmosphere of the committee room at the Derwent Sailing Squadron. A number of projects have been underway over the winter months ....*

### Lighthouses of Tasmania Calendar

**This 9th edition has a collection of stunning photographs of Tasmania's lighthouses. Congratulations to the those who took the fantastic images, and Erika for the informed introduction and captions. Thank you also to the team who spent many hours getting this unique publication to press—Carol, Erika, Ron—and of course a special thank you to Tim for all the time he spent behind the scenes. Thanks also to the volunteers who delivered the calendars to the shops and Dee who oversaw the financial matters. Hopefully we'll soon have a healthy bank balance to put towards future works on Tasman. We should be proud of such a professional publication! **Don't miss out on this collectors item—get your copy now. \* See Page 6 for more details.****

### Cape Sorell Lens project

This ongoing project has kept Chris Creese, together with offsidiers Gary Gay and Greg Bell, busy. Thank you to AMSA for the opportunity to become custodians of this magnificent Chance Brothers lens. 24 boxes of various sizes have **been made to repack the lens which was removed from the Cape Sorell lighthouse in 1988. Hopefully we'll be able to find somewhere to display this spectacular piece of engineering. Any ideas?**

**\*See Page 2 for more details.**

### Do You Know Tasmania (DYKT)

Thank you to everyone, particularly Carol, for the huge amount of effort **put into FoTI's collaboration with the Launceston Walking Club with their 46th Do You Know Tasmania Show. FoTI's share of profits from ticket sales was \$810, with profits from bar sales and FoTI merchandise/ raffle tickets bringing in a further \$988 making a total of \$1798 going directly towards our work on Tasman Island.**



Photo Erika Shankley

Melva Truchanas wins the lucky door prize Elaine Bell (left) Carol Jackson & Ian Ross (back)

### Miniature lighthouses

FoTI has placed an order with *L.A. Marvells Australia* for a consignment of miniature models of the Tasman Island lighthouse. These should be on sale early next year at the Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

Tasman island Lighthouse Cardboard cut-out model kits  
AMSA has produced a cardboard model kit of the Tasman Island lighthouse to **celebrate the centenary of Commonwealth's involvement in the administration of lighthouses in Australia—1915-2015. Make your own model Tasman Island lighthouse for only \$5! Thank you to AMSA, particularly Heritage Officer Lyndon O'Grady, for donating these kits to FoTI. Money from sales will be a welcome addition to our fund-raising efforts.**



At a working bee ...  
First job—mow that grass!

### 2015 Working bees

In conjunction with the 2015 Tasman Peninsular Rotary fund-raising trip to Tasman Island, FoTI is planning a working bee 2—11th April 2015. Let Carol know [friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com) if you're interested in volunteering. More details later.

### Facebook page

A fantastic collection of anecdotes, photos, historical and up-to-date information **about Tasman and other lighthouses around the world. It's worth having a look!** Have you got something to contribute? Add a comment or just click to like us!

<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTasmanIsland>

Photo Karl Rowbottom



# AWBF AWBF

The three island voluntary groups will have a presence at the Australian Wooden Boat Festival. This will be a great chance for volunteers to meet like-minded people and raise funds to further our work. Help will be needed over the 4-day event — please contact [friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com).

**RAFFLE**

FoTI/FoMI & FoDI are also combining to run a raffle with some fantastic prizes. Tickets are on sale now. Only \$2.00 each!

**You've got to be in it to win it !**



Chris Creese & Bob Tyson at the AWBF 2011

- 1st Prize Helicopter trip & lighthouse tour for 2 to Tasman Island with the Rotary Club of Tasman Peninsula's fundraising trip. Includes lunch & guided tour of the lighthouse keepers' quarters and parts of the island. Departs Safety Cove Saturday 11 April 2015
- 2nd Prize Peppermint Bay Cruise for 2 in the Captain's Upper Deck with lunch supplied. Cruise the Derwent River and D'Entrecasteaux Channel on the way to Peppermint Bay for a banquet-style lunch of local produce at the Peppermint Bay Restaurant.  
 Plus: A Tasmanian Gourmet Basket & John Ibbotson's book *Lighthouses of Australia—Images from the end of an Era*
- 3rd Prize 3 hour Wilderness Cruise for 2 with Pennicott Wilderness Journeys, either Bruny Island or Tasman Island Cruises
- 4th Prize Lunch at Willie Smith's Apple Shed  
 In the rustic surrounds of an original apple shed built in 1942. A range of delicious ciders and the cafe serves a simple menu of the finest regional products.

GET A BOOK OF TICKETS NOW!  
 BUY SOME FOR YOURSELF OR SELL THEM TO YOUR FRIENDS  
 Contact [friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com)

Some specy photos from the March working bee this year taken by Karl Rowbottom



Do you know where the tallest lighthouse is located? And which lighthouse is the highest in the world?

Jeddah



According to Wikipedia, the Jeddah Light in Saudi Arabia which rises 436 feet (132 metres) has a credible claim as the tallest lighthouse in the world. In comparison **Australia's tallest lighthouse, Cape Wickham on King Island, is just 48 metres, one metre taller than the Gabo Island lighthouse in Victoria.**

The elevation, or height above sea level, of a lighthouse is an important tool for navigators to find their position.



Cape Wickham

At 305 metres above sea level Deal Island lighthouse has the distinction of being the highest in Australia. However, because it was frequently obscured by cloud the light was deactivated in 1992. Standing atop some of the highest sea cliffs in Australia, **Tasman Island Lighthouse now has the honour of being Australia's highest operating lighthouse—276 metres above sea level.**

Compare that with Barra Head, in the Hebrides, the highest lighthouse in the UK, with an elevation of 208 metres and El Faro lighthouse in Mazatlan, Mexico at 159 metres. Then there's the Rubicon Point lighthouse on Lake Tahoe in California at 1900 metres, and topping them all must be the faux-lighthouse built at Oberalp Pass in Switzerland - 2046 metres above sea level though, technically in either case, the elevation from the height of eye of the navigator would be much less than that.



Oberalp Pass

**SO MAYBE TASMAN ISLAND'S LIGHTHOUSE IS THE HIGHEST IN THE WORLD? SEE IF YOU CAN FIND OUT & LET US KNOW!**



El Faro



Deal Island

Photo: Bob Tyson



Barra Head

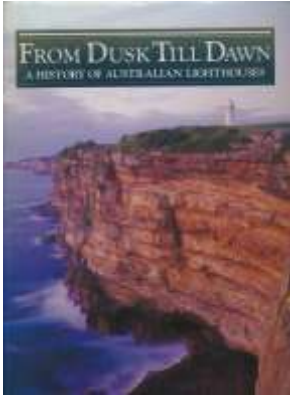


Rubicon Point



Tasman Island

Photo: Erika Shankley



**THANK YOU** to the family of the late Max Jones for the donation of the book *From Dusk till Dawn* for the Tasman Island library. Max worked with the maintenance section of the lighthouse service in Tasmania between 1969 and 1988.

The book will be a great addition to the library—volunteers at working bees will be able to relax over coffee and read the amazing stories behind the history of Australia's lighthouses.

John Cook, who was a light keeper at both Tasman and Maatsuyker, remembers Max as a *really nice bloke*.

As storeman with the Commonwealth Department of Transport he serviced and delivered provisions for all the light stations in Tasmania (imagine the roads driving to Eddystone, Port Sorell or driving to Dover for boat to Maatsuyker etc, plus ensuring orders for each of the 3 keepers at each station were all there!

A marvellous man, John said, who went out of his way, he saw his position as a 'call of duty'; (Must have had an excellent work ethic)



Would pick up orders from Websters etc - had a bin (size of a tea chest) for each lighthouse in the warehouse (initially in Liverpool Street and then out to Glenorchy)



**THANK YOU** also to Bob & Phyl Wyatt for their continuing support. Their generous donation of \$100 towards FoTI's work on Tasman Island is much appreciated. Bob & Phyl are photographed here with FoTI's president, Carol Jackson, at the DYKT show.

I asked former keeper Mike Jenner for a photo of Kerryn with a hat—and this is what came back! Must have a sense of humour!

**A BIG THANK YOU** to both Kerryn and Mike, who have stepped up to fill the Secretary's shoes.



Watch the video about the lighthouses found along the Great Barrier Reef — helping to tell the story of the Reef's navigational history. Check out:

<http://www.sail-world.com/index.cfm?Nid=126468&refre=y&ntid=39&rid=1&subid=209289&NLID=463994>



*One volunteer is worth ten pressed men  
(It's a naval expression used again and again)  
So here's to the Friends and their mission bold  
And time well spent in Tasman's fold!  
Helen Gee, March, 2010*