



FRIENDS OF TASMAN ISLAND NEWSLETTER No. 16 December, 2016



Written & Compiled by Erika Shankley

November has been a busy month for FoTI - read all about it in the following pages!

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We wish everyone a happy and safe holiday season and look forward to a productive year on Tasman Island in 2017.

Erika ☆

AWBF 2017

FoTI, FoMI & FoDI will have a **presence at next year's Australian Wooden Boat Festival: 10–13 February 2017.** Keep these dates free—more details as they come to hand.

SEE US ON THE WILDCARE WEB SITE

<http://wildcaretas.org.au/>

Check out the latest news on the Home page or click on Branches to **see FoTI's Tasman Island web page.**

FACEBOOK

A fantastic collection of anecdotes, historical and up-to-date information and photos about Tasman and other lighthouses around the world. Have you got something to contribute, add a comment or just click to like us!



FoTI shares with David & Trauti Reynolds & their son Mark, much sadness in the death of their son Gavin after a long illness. **Gavin's memory is perpetuated in the design of FoTI's logo.**



Early in November a few FoTI supporters joined members of the public at the State Cinema for the Hobart launch of the film *Light between Oceans*, a dramatisation of the book of the same name by ML Steadman.

Tasman Island was once touted as a possible location for this period drama based at a lighthouse on Janus Rock off the West Australian coast. However the director, Derek Cianfrance, finally chose Cape Campbell on the north eastern side of the south island of New Zealand for the lighthouse scenes. To be authentic, the former lens was reassembled for the production, but unfortunately dismantled again when filming was complete, see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BhLqoamM5k8&sns=fb> . Tasmania 'got a guernsey'

when Stanley was completely transformed for mainland scenes.



Photo: Circular Head Chronicle



Cape Campbell Lighthouse in the Marlborough region marks the southern approaches to Cook Strait and is owned and operated by Maritime New Zealand.

The original lighthouse, built of timber, was first lit on 1 August 1870. However, in 1898 it was found that these timbers were decaying and this

led to the construction of the current cast iron tower which began operating in October 1905. To make the lighthouse stand out from the surrounding white hills, the tower was painted with black and white stripes.

The light was originally fuelled by Colza oil but in 1938 the oil lamp was converted to electricity, powered by diesel generators before being connected to the mains grid in the 1960s. The light was fully automated in 1986 and the original light apparatus replaced in 2003 with a modern rotating beacon. The lighthouse is now managed from a control room in Wellington.

The film is a co-production between the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom and New Zealand and had its world premier on 1 September 2016 at the 73rd Venice International Film Festival.

The interplay between life in isolation and the 'real' world can be a tear-jerker, but for pharophiles, it's a 'must see' film!

As reported in the last edition of this newsletter, the landing at Tasman Island sustained considerable damage during stormy weather on June 6 this year. About a month later, Chris Creese and Erika Shankley went out on one of Rob Pennicott's Tasman Island cruises to have a closer look. The sight of the landing, its spindly 25 foot supporting legs all askew, was somewhat disconcerting (Fig 1). This structure, built some 80 feet above the sea, has stood defiant for over 110 years, surviving storms, rock falls and fire. The original crane, too, which had served keepers at this remote lightstation since 1906, before being dismantled in 1927 (Fig 2), has finally been claimed by the sea.



The news finally reached the ears of our partners, the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service and a team led by Ranger, Eric Tierney, inspected the teetering structure, finding the uprights about 7° out of plumb. On a second visit, Eric and his team were able to do some stabilisation work in an effort to save it before it became a hazard to navigation.



During the recent working bee, Eric led a team of FoTI volunteers down the steep Haulage track to the landing where they were able to see the devastation at first hand.

Latest news is that PWS expect to be able to do further restoration work early in 2017. Thank you Eric.

Photos: Erika Shankley, Chris Creese, Ian Ross & Eric Tierney

Despite some initial misgivings, FoTI's November working bee was a great success. The team of 10 was reduced to only eight by the time they took off by helicopter from Simmonds Hill, near Fortescue Bay, with Osborne Aviation.



Team Leader, Carol Jackson (working from home) did a great job with all the initial organisation and paperwork with stalwart Works Coordinator, Chris Creese, taking over once on the island. Glenda (cook) and plumber and gas fitter, Ron Fehlberg, were also old hands, while the rest of the team were

'newbies' - Josephine Castillo, Annette Sansom, David Davenport, Rod Banfield & Rodney Ziesch. Four Parks personnel—Eric, Jessica, Joss & Donnalee - also arrived to spend the first two days on the island— their assistance with the mowing and brushcutting was much appreciated.

As luck would have it, Rod and Sid from Australian Maritime Systems, the maintenance contractors for AMSA, were working on the tower so everyone was able to climb to the top of the lighthouse to see the view — the highest operating lighthouse in Australia.



Later that day a tour of the Haulage and Landing, led by Ranger Eric Tierney, gave the FoTI volunteers a first-hand look at the devastating storm damage which occurred in early June. Everyone was also excited to see dolphins, seals and five Southern Right whales close under the Landing.



But down to work! Over the next nine days, come rain or shine, volunteers could be found somewhere around the lightstation.





The jobs were many and varied, including a safety railing, floor and door for the entrance to Q2, weeding, pattern making and of course the usual mowing and brushcutting.

In a joint effort between Fitter/Works Co-ordinator, Chris Creese and plumber, Ron Fehlberg, two new toilet vents for Q3 and Q2 were manufactured in copper – less likely to corrode.



But it wasn't all work and no

play—wildflowers enhanced the walks to many parts of the island.



Thanks to the daily blog, those of us at home could share the volunteers' adventures through Facebook.

www.facebook.com/FriendsofTasmanIsland

Photos on pages 4 & 5 by Annette Sansom, Chris Creese, Ron Fehlberg, Jessica Hancock & Rodney Ziersch



On Saturday 26 November the long-awaited Tasmanian Lighthouse Conference, organised by Thomas Gunn, drew about 50 lighthouse enthusiasts to the Lindisfarne Rowing Club.

There was a full programme:

- Bruce Kay outlined the information which was available on the National Archives of Australia web site www.naa.gov.au. Their office, on the 2nd floor of the State Library building at 91 Murray Street Hobart, is open from Wednesday to Friday each week and houses a large collection of lighthouse memorabilia;
- **Australia's oldest lighthouse**— Derwent Light on the Iron Pot—was the subject of author, Suzanne Smythe;
- Karl Rowbottom, gave an insight into the daily life of a lightkeeper on Tasman Island;
- Lighthouse kid, Carol Jackson, talked about her childhood on lightstations at Tasman Island, Eddystone Point and Low Head;
- Kathy Gatenby also spoke about her childhood—at the **Cape Sorell lightstation on Tasmania's west coast**;
- Marina Campbell gave an impassioned talk about Maatsuyker Island and the recent restoration of the historic lighthouse;
- Then Maatsuyker Island Volunteer Caretaker, Paul Richardson, outlined the processes involved in applying for the position and the six months he and Amanda Walker spent there.
- Finally, Dallas Baker talked about the history of Deal Island and the Kent Group.

It was thanks to Thomas Gunn who organised the conference that we were able to hear stories about the days when lightkeepers and their families lived and worked in these remote locations. We look forward to a repeat performance next year!

Both Carol and Karl have continued their association with lighthouses through the Friends of Tasman Island.

CAROL'S STORY



"I was born on Tasman Island", Carol likes to say but she admits, "... Three weeks before I was born, Mum finally managed to leave the island ... heavily pregnant, she had a wild ride in the basket with her small son down the flying fox into the mail boat." Just in time! Carol, the eldest daughter, was born three weeks prematurely.



Tasman Island was her father, Jack Sydney Jackson's first posting in a career as a lightkeeper which spanned 22 years: 1954—1976.

There were many dangers for young children on Tasman with sink holes on top and a 250 metre vertical drop to the sea. Carol and her brother Allen were constrained by a chicken wire fence around the verandah of Quarters 2.



The chest on which she was sitting at the conference had once been used for their personal possessions—clothing, bedding, etc. But there were very few pieces of personal furniture—all these household items were supplied. ***“When you transferred from one station to another everything was the same – the same table, the same chairs, fridges, stoves, beds, dressing tables and wardrobes; and the same mustard-coloured lounge chairs and couches”*** This same furniture is still in use on Tasman Island today — used by FoTI volunteers!



The family was then transferred to Eddystone Point where ***“The towering cliffs of Tasman Island were ... replaced by colourfully attractive large rocks ... white beaches and often raging sea, plus numerous snakes during the summer months.”*** Here, Carol’s parents, in attempt to stop her continually wandering off, chained her to the long clothes line. Even this ***didn’t curb Carol’s independent spirit when she found she could climb up one of the posts to unclip herself before taking off to explore,*** dutifully re-clipping herself when she returned!



“Lightkeeper Jackson, family and effects arrived station 2300 hours.” is entered in the

lightstation log book at Low Head on Saturday 9 August 1959. Here, the delights of civilisation could be found nearby — a shop—***“lollies and icecreams virtually on tap”*** - a post office and school. A big change from getting your supplies, 3-monthly, by mail boat! Despite the proximity of the shop, lightkeepers’ families still kept chooks, sheep, a milking cow, cattle and a huge veggie garden.

All lightstations were immaculately maintained, and Carol’s father was no different.

“We seemed to spend countless hours every week polishing ...” However, the lightkeepers’ children still found time to ***“endlessly play on the rocky shorelines, cliffs, beaches and large paddocks around the constantly windy Low Head ... We often called it Blow Head,”*** Carol said. They built cubby houses amid the wood heap or amongst the rocks and once bowled an empty tank down the slope—treadmill fashion - before it, luckily, came to a halt, wedged among the rocks, before it could plunged into the sea. Her mother put their wildness down to ***“there being too much wind in our heads.”***



Visitors were a rarity at Tasman Island and Eddystone Point - where visits were often postponed or cancelled because of bad weather — but at Low Head the hordes of tourists were fair game for lighthouse kids — valuable pocket money being earned by charging a fee for a guided tour of the lighthouse!

In 1972, the Jackson’s left Low Head to return to Tasman Island. Her father was now Head Keeper and they lived in the much grander bottom house— Number 1 Quarters—but by then Carol was at University and only went home at Christmas.

“Like most lighthouse kids, I now cherish my childhood ... Life was, daily chores aside, wild and free! ...” and, Carol remarked, ***“don’t ever let the weather stop you dancing!”***



KARL'S STORY

"Weren't you lonely being a Lighthouse Keeper?" This question was often asked but for Karl, the answer was always the same, *"I have been more lonely walking down a busy street in Hobart."*

At the age of four, Karl announced to his Dad that he was going to be a lightkeeper. *"Ah, don't be stupid boy,"* remarked Dad, *"it would be a lonely life, no life for any man."*



This comment didn't deter Karl, when aged 24, he answered an advertisement and was interviewed for a position on the lights. He would have liked to have gone to Cape Sorell, but that light had recently been automated – so he chose Tasman Island instead.



His father's response was still the same. *"What kind of a man would take his family to that windswept, godforsaken Alcatraz of a place. ..."* and *"... when I first saw Tasman, and with the old man's words ringing in my ears, I indeed wondered what I'd brought my family to."*

Karl learned the ropes from John Cook and settled into a lightkeepers' life. The lighthouse, itself, was master - nothing else mattered - even your own wife and family, illness or death, the light was god, and could sometimes be a hard taskmaster.

There were also other duties such as slashing the grass, chasing sheep, maintaining the generator and batteries, whim, and flying fox equipment. Weather observations and logging shipping movement were also routine.

The three keepers worked in shifts. The Head Keeper would always do the first watch in the evening, finishing about 10pm. The two assistant keepers would share the remaining night hours with a middle watch from 10pm till 3am, and the last from 3am till sunrise.

Keepers worked in all kinds of weather. The cast-iron tower had a reputation for shuddering and swaying in strong winds. This was exciting while sitting in the lantern room 30 metres up from the ground and 276 metres above the sea! Keepers were also responsible for winding up the weights which made the light revolve and to maintain pressure in the kero tanks to keep the light burning — on Tasman this was done



about every 30 minutes. At sunrise the light was extinguished and the curtains drawn to prevent fires caused by the magnification of the sun's rays through the lens.

Children had an idyllic life, always happy and smiling. The women's domain was the house and they took great pride in their shiny floors and pity help any keeper who walked inside with his boots on! They were exceptional cooks—they had to be— there was no running to the shop for a cake or takeaway. Life on the lights for a family was a team effort.



However, life in isolation wasn't easy. One of the many rules which governed lightkeeping was that a keeper had to be married, so when life on the island became too much for Karl's wife, Christine, the job had to go. It broke Karl's heart in more ways than one.

However, life has many twists and turns and, for the last three years, Karl has been a tour guide at the Table Cape Lighthouse near Wynyard.

Unfortunately, lightkeeping as a way of life has now stepped into the pages of history, a history which Karl is proud to have been part of. *"Always remember ..."* he said, *"... we will always be keepers of the light."*



IRON POT CRUISE

After the conference a group joined Pennicott Wilderness Journeys for a twilight cruise to Derwent Light on the Iron Pot.

Two boat-loads left the wharf at the Lindisfarne Rowing Club, passing under the Tasman Bridge span which was knocked down by the *Lake Illawarra* in 1975. The image of the wreck could be clearly seen on the echo sounder.



Heading down the River Derwent, we investigated a pod of dolphins, before continuing along the western shore, past John Garrow light and the beacon off Cartwright Point. At Piersons Point we saw the steps down the hill from the pilot station which was established in the early 19th century. Crossing Storm Bay we had a look at the oldest lighthouse in Australia on the Iron Pot (1832) before circumnavigating Betsy Island and past Black Jack Reef before a final run up the river saw us back at the Rowing Club in time to go home for tea.

Congratulations to Carlene Nillsen who won the free seat and thank you, Carlene, for donating the money to FoTI. Thanks also to the crews of both boats for a terrific journey.



More recent FoTI members may not be aware that we have been actively preserving lighthouse memorabilia. Through our close relationship with **AMSA**, particularly heritage officer **Lyndon O’Grady**, FoTI have become custodians of various bits of lighthouse apparatus.



One of our first acquisitions were sections of the original lantern room from Tasman Island, removed in 1976 and located in 2008 at the Hobart Cat Centre at Macquarie Point. Unfortunately many pieces were missing but there was enough to **assemble in Chris’s workshop in Mole Street**, where it is now in storage.

It’s a pity that when Tasman Island lighthouse was automated, the original 1st order lens was sent to the mainland and is now on display at the Australian National Maritime Museum. FoTI have since become custodians of a 2nd Order lens from Cape Sorell, once languishing in storage at the Mt Canopus Observatory. Chris, Gary and Greg have constructed 24 padded crates and will repack the lens prior to re-storage—until such time as a location is found to put it on display.



More recently, AMSA advised that it was disposing of a number of items stored at the Inveresk facility of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. These items have now been shared between FoTI, FoMI and Chance Brothers Engineers, Melbourne.



Thank you to Lyndon and volunteers, Chris Creese, Gary Gay, Greg Bell, Ian Ross and Andrew Boon for all your hard work.

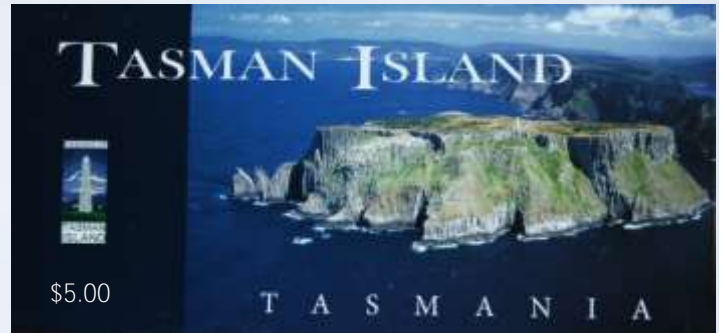
FoTI is looking for ideas as to where we should display these items. Any ideas?

Photos Ian Ross & Erika Shankley

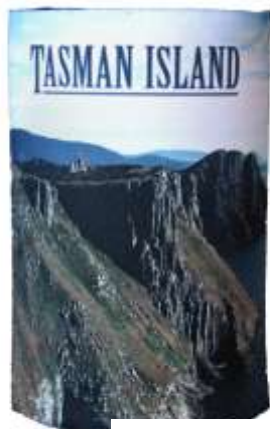
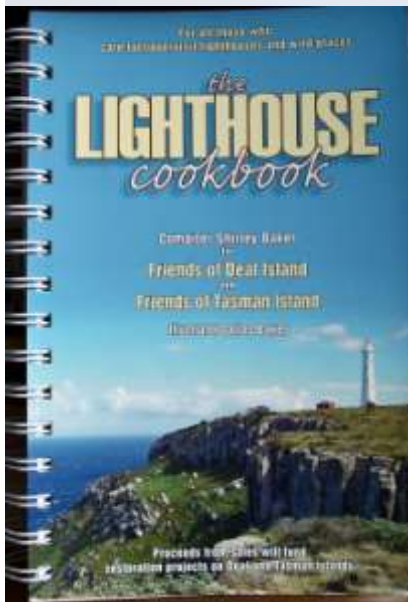


SUPPORT FoTI'S FUNDRAISING EFFORTS!

- Tasman Island beanies \$15.00
 - Gift cards \$3.00 each
 - Tasman Island hand book \$5.00
 - Lighthouse Cookbook \$20.00
 - Cardboard model kit of Tasman Island lighthouse \$5.00
 - Stubby holder \$10.00
- All items + postage*



\$20.00



Stubby holder \$10

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



NEW!
Beanies \$15



Selection of
cards \$3.00 ea





Sheoaks (*Allocasuarina verticillata*) are the only trees of any size which grow on Tasman Island. Thick stands can be found on the south-east & north-western corners of the plateau with isolated clumps along the eastern cliffs. One particular tree, on the cliff edge below Quarters 3, must be the most photographed tree on the island.

See https://www.facebook.com/pg/FriendsOfTasmanIsland/photos/?tab=album&album_id=489407004534301

Unfortunately that tree has finally succumbed to the elements—blown down in recent gales



Photos Chris Creese,
Ian Ross & Erika Shankley



*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*