



NEWSLETTER NO. 21

Edited by Erika Shankley



Photos
Erika Shankley, Ian Ross &
Stefan Sroelich

It's been a long time since I've put pen to paper, so to speak. But FoTI has not been idle. Read all about what our wonderful volunteers have been doing over the last six months.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Never a Dull Moment for FoTI 2
- Tasman Island on the (M)App 2
- FoTI's 30th Working bee 3
- Planning weekend at Low Head..... 5
- Dear Dame Darden: Through Jessie's eyes 6
- Did you know? 7
- Wildcare Shop 8
- Parting Shot 9



You are welcome to come along to FoTI's meetings, held at the Derwent Sailing Squadron at 5pm on the third Thursday of each month. Check out our Facebook page for more details <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTasmanIsland/>



There's never a dull moment for FoTI volunteers.

Thanks to financial assistance from Wildcare – the three island groups, Friends of Deal, Maatsuyker and Tasman Islands once again had a presence at the biennial Australian Wooden Boat Festival in February this year.

Volunteers worked in shifts with representatives of all three groups stationed inside and outside the tent. Some were spruiking the raffle, others talking to interested bystanders. Still more volunteers were handling the sales, squeezed in behind a table with its array of merchandise.

Sales were brisk. FoTI's Lighthouses of Tasmania tea towels were the best sellers by a country mile – 146 being sold over the four day event. Wooden lighthouse fridge magnets, designed by Dave Davenport, were also popular and all three groups had an array of other merchandise with island or lighthouse themes.

It's thanks to the donors of the fabulous prizes – Pennicott Wilderness Journeys, Osborne Aviation, John Ibbotson, Paul Richardson & Amanda Walker, Marlene Levings, David & Trauti Reynolds, Delamere Vinyard, Tintenbar & Lark Distilleries, Grandview, Woodbridge Smokehouse and the Wildcare groups themselves – that the raffle was an outstanding success with all books sold. Winners were drawn by Wildcare CEO, Sharon Smith. Then The Shank, a book donated by Ian Johnston, was auctioned, with a brisk run of bids.



Bob Tyson (FoDI, Derek Inglis (FoMI)) & Annette Sansom (FoTI)



Drawing the raffle

The festival was a great success for all three island lighthouse groups with a combined sales total of \$4562 plus proceeds from the raffle of \$3569 (before expenses) added to their respective coffers. FoMI's Ailsa Fergusson did a magnificent job with the organisation and liaising with the AWBF as did the 32 volunteers who helped over the weekend. A big thank you to you all.

The Australian Wooden Boat Festival remains a worthwhile event, raising the profile of Wildcare and our lighthouse islands.

Photos: Erika Shankley

TASMAN ISLAND ON THE (M)APP

An exciting new digital interpretive experience of Tasman Island and its history is the brain-child of Rosemary Bailey. A staff member at the New Town High School, Rosemary has invited students at the school to work with FoTI on the creation of a Smartphone App to provide an historic and environmental digital interpretive experience for real and virtual visitors to Tasman Island.

Rosemary headed out for a quick visit to Tasman at the start of the April working bee to gather information for the project.

Using a simple QR Code, historical information and photographs will enhance visitors' experience of this spectacular island and provide links to further information about the island. This could bring Tasman Island and the work of FoTI volunteers to the wider world.



Photo Ian Ross

FoTI looks forward to this collaborative project, seeing opportunities for broadening community engagement through the App. Thank you, Rosemary.



Lightkeepers' Quarters No 3, 2005

Erika Shankley

Volunteers at FoTI's 30th working bee restored the sunroom of Lightkeepers' Quarters No 3 to its former glory.



Lightkeepers' Quarters No 3, 2019

Ian Ross

Some FoTI members may remember, on a visit to Tasman Island 14 years ago, the sad spectacle of the light station keepers' quarters - abandoned since 1977. This was the catalyst for the formation of the Wildcare group Friends of Tasman Island. Much has happened in the intervening years with FoTI now celebrating its 30th working bee on the island.

Wild weather in late autumn unfortunately delayed helicopter flights and, having arrived, there was a sense of urgency. There were only nine days left in which to complete the planned works - restoration of the sunroom and verandah of Lightkeepers' Quarters No 3; the replacement of rotten floor boards and rusted lintels at Quarters No 2 and a weeding programme, this time planning to concentrate on infestations of Californian thistle.



Restoration work meant an almost complete rebuild of the sunroom, first removing flooring and parts of the framework. Ryan proved an expert concrete mixer for new footings. Rotten bedding plates were replaced and new floor joists were then fitted while Ian set up a paint station to prime the underside of the floor boards. However, sea mist blowing in from the north east obscured Cape Pillar and made for slow drying.

Jane commandeered the ride-on mower and soon turned the grass into lawn. There was no need to rake either – the wind just blew it away! Elaine put the 40 year old "heritage" Electrolux vacuum cleaner donated by Ian to good use, getting Q3 ready for the multitudes who were due to arrive on the Rotary Club of Tasman Peninsula's visit on Saturday.

After the wind had blown itself out there was an eerie silence. No sound could be heard – no birds, insects or rumbling surf breaking on the cliffs below. In the interval of calm weather, another a dose of spray was applied to the Californian thistles, reinforcing previous sprayings of over 2500 plants.

The decrease in the wind strength meant that the planned change-over of volunteers at the mid-point of the working bee went well. Three of the team were returning home, while five more volunteers arrived to continue the work.

The adage "Red sky in the morning, the sailor's warning" at sunrise on Day 7 brought more than a hint of a return to windy conditions. Work focussed on getting the sunroom roof completed with all flashings and fixings, and the external cladding finished.



Jane turns the grass into lawn

New arrival, David (fresh from a 6-month stint on Maatsuyker Island) together with Jane and Greg settled into various tasks while bricklayer, Mike, worked his magic, removing rusted steel lintels from above the windows at Quarters No 2.

Tasman Island's notorious weather continued. *"The Wind is back"* proclaimed the blog on Day 8. The forecast weather change meant that this could be the last day for outside work. After breakfast it was back to work in the sunroom for Dave, Ryan and Stefan, while Tim and Ian painted the external cladding. Measurements were also taken in the back verandah for a future rebuild.

"All four seasons in one day" - the wind didn't look like it would ease any time soon. Unfortunately, plans for Rotary's visit on Saturday had to be cancelled and FoTI volunteers found that, like the story in Joan Wise's book, they were "Trapped on Tasman".

Day 10: *"The Wind Roars!"* It was a day for inside work with the decaying ends of floor joists in Quarters No 2 needing attention plus there was time to complete the interior paint work in the sunroom at Quarters No 3. Round the morning tea table, discussions centred around plans to continue the restoration effort at the next working bee in November.

Food, as usual, was uppermost in the volunteers' minds, but supplies were running low. A couple more loaves were baked and Rachel devised magnificent meals using left-overs. Meanwhile, Dave and Greg ventured outside to complete the external trim on the sunroom and reinforced one of the windows which was flexing in the wind gusts.

The dates of the working bee, so late in April, had been timed to coincide with Easter. This brought with it the inherent danger of early wintry weather.



Yum!



Mike, our bricklayer and poet, summed it up ...

*The winter time is not so good
The wind it blows more than it should
It seems to howl both night and day
It's telling us to "Go Away"
With long dark nights
Our memories roam
This is the time to think of home.
But now the sun is shining
The wildflowers are on show
We pack our bags, and tools and things
It's time for us to go.*

Finally, on the 12th day of what was supposed to be a 10-day working bee, the sounds of an approaching helicopter had volunteers making rapid preparations for departure and home.

FoTI's heritage builder, Dave Davenport (Paradigm Constructions) said it had been a successful trip and there were already plans to finish the job in November this year. Forward planning was also under way to restore the back verandahs of Quarters No 2 and 3.



Elaine donated a portrait of her grandmother to Tasman Island's museum. Stella Johnston, wife of lightkeeper Leslie Babington Johnston, lived on Tasman on 3 separate occasions between 1917 and 1940.

Friends of Tasman Island volunteers can be justifiable proud of what they have achieved, in partnership with the Parks & Wildlife Service, over the past 14 years. A big thank you everyone for a very successful 30th working bee.

Poem: Mike Manning; Photos Ian Ross



Left: Ryan licks the bowl clean!
2nd left: On-island co-ordinator, Ian Ross, takes a well-earned rest.
Right: An inspirational sunrise





Following on from FoTI's successful 30th working bee, core members headed to Low Head to discuss plans for the continued restoration of the lightstation on Tasman Island.

The ambience of the Head Lightkeepers' quarters adjacent to the Low Head lighthouse, first lit in 1888, set the mood.

FoTI's 31st working bee will be held, on a date to be fixed, in November this year. Programmed works will include the continuation of the restoration of the front verandah at Quarters No 3 and future projects to restore the back verandah of both Quarters 2 & 3.

Expressions of interest for the November working bee will be called soon.

Fundraising was also high on the agenda. Look out for a Crowd-funding campaign later in the year!



The comfortable chairs made light work of the serious discussions!

Fundraising towards the cost of our future restoration work at Tasman Island was hungry business. Thanks, Amanda, for the yummy cake.



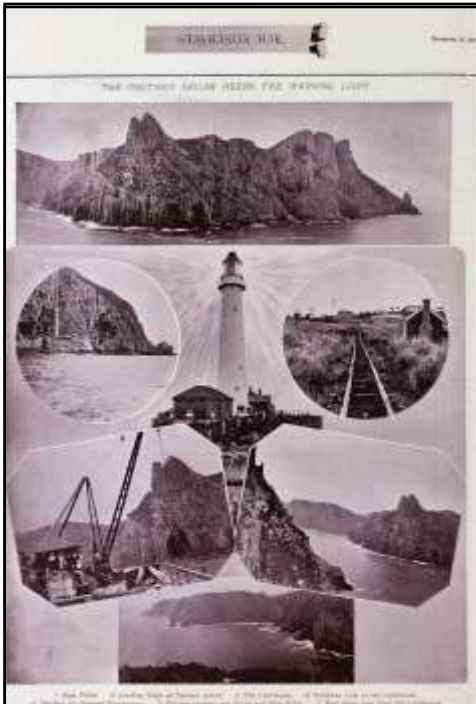
We paid our respects to Tasman Island lightkeeper, Edward Nilsen & others remembered in the memorial garden at Low Head



A new hat for FoTI's President



The lighthouse at Low Head is the 2nd one to be built on this site. The first tower, built in 1833, was of poor construction & had to be replaced.



Research sometimes comes up trumps! On a visit to the Burnie Library recently, FoTI member, Jo Ainslie, came across a series of letters from children who lived at lightstations. Thanks to Geoff Dean, from the Burnie Historical Society, this fascinating collection of memories from the Weekly Courier is now readily available to the public.

Dear Dame Durden was a column in The Weekly Courier, published by Henry Button in Launceston between 1901 & 1935. This letter, written on 12 April by Jessie Johnston on her way to Tasman Island, was published on 12 May 1906. Spelling is as published.

Added photos were sourced from the Elaine Bell collection, the Tasmanian Archives & Heritage Office, Tasmanian Mail, Maritime Museum of Tasmania & National Library of Australia.

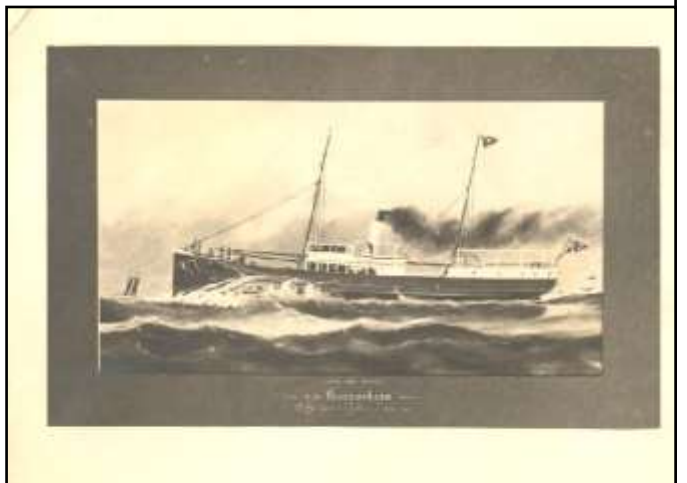
Dear Dame

You must have thought that I had forgotten you, but not so. The reason you have not had a letter from me for so long is because we have been too unsettled for writing. You will see that we are not living at Cape Wickham now: we have been moved to the new lighthouse on Tasman Island. We did not like leaving dear old Wickham; this does not seem

like home a bit. My mother calls it "Siberia." Perhaps we will like the place better as we get more used to it. I will tell you of our trip to Tasman Island.

We left Hobart at 10 o'clock at night on December 20, and got here at daylight the next morning. We found there was too much sea on to allow of our landing, so went into Port Arthur, and left again the next morning. The wind was still blowing strongly, so the captain went on to Swansea, Bicheno and St Helen's. We had lovely weather up the East Coast and enjoyed the trip. We came straight back from St Helen's and reached our island on the 23rd.

After landing the cargo, the Koonookarra left for Hobart at 6 o'clock in the evening. We had to get some of our things up, and the process did take a long time. The oil engine would not work, and the loaded truck was stuck half way up the cliff for hours. At last they got it to go, and my father got home with our bedding at half past 12. We were all so glad to get to bed. The next day (Sunday) all worked and got many more things up to the top and Monday was Christmas Day. It was the worst Christmas we had ever spent.



You will wonder what sort of a place this is. Well, Dame, Tasman Island is a terrible place to look at, for it is all cliffs. We landed in a basket, which was hauled up 60ft. by a steam crane, and landed on a platform; then we walked up the haulage which extended 600ft. above us. In places the way was very steep, and if one slipped one would have fallen to the bottom. I do not think we will go down again until we leave here. We miss the beaches so much, for there are none here. We were all so fond of going round the beaches.

On the top of this island there are plenty of trees – she-oaks and honeysuckles. The ground is good. My brother put in some potatoes to see how they would grow. He set them on January 9, and we are eating them now.

After that he made another garden, and has some nice turnips ready for use, as well as other vegetables. There are lots of mutton birds here; they make such a noise at night when in their holes. It is funny to see birds dig holes in the ground to lay their eggs in. We have scalded and salted such a lot of them to use through the winter. Nearly all of us like them. We can see Bruny Island from here, also the Hippolites and Maria Island. Do any of the M'Raes write to you, Dame? I would like to know if they can see this light from Maria Island. We see many large steamers pass; some of them come very close in, so that we can look right down on them. We sometimes see a large one at night with such a lot of lights, looking like an illuminated street. Now, dear Dame, I hope my letter is not too long. I must say good-bye. I will write again if you wish.

From your little friend, Jessie Johnston, Tasman Island, Southern Tasmania, April 12

[I enjoyed reading your letter very much, Jessie, and I am sure my many readers, young and old, will be interested in its contents. I love to get letters which describe out of the way places, for they usually contain information which is instructive.] No doubt you will like your wave-beaten island home more when you grow used to it. Several pictures of Tasman Island were published in the "Courier" last month, so many readers will have an idea of its rugged character. I doubt one of my Maria Island friends will answer your query. I will always be pleased at receiving a letter from you – Dame Durden.]



Jessie was named after her mother, photographed above left;. Her father, George Johnston is pictured above 2nd from right. Photos from the Elaine Bell collection.

DID YOU KNOW?



Left: John Cook's photo of the Tasman Island lighthouse in 1971
Right: Erika Shankley photographed John standing at the door of the lighthouse on Rotary Day, 2007

Last year Rachel Chesmer was granted a MMAPSS Internship at the Australian National Maritime Museum. Following on from this, she applied for funding to create a travelling exhibition, dedicated to Tasman Island, its history, natural and cultural heritage. Rachel, together with a few FoTI members are now working on the exhibits which will feature a series of banners.

FUNDRAISING

Did you know that the Friends of Tasman Island page of the Wildcare web site now has a 'donate' button. Copy and paste <https://wildcaretas.org.au/product/branch-fundraising-friends-of-tasman-island/> into your browser and follow the prompts. Help FoTI continue their restoration efforts on the heritage listed Tasman Island lightstation!



Thanks to **Wildcare's** CEO, Sharon Smith and the Member Services Co-ordinator, Kim Willing, members of Wildcare groups have been able to learn more about how to get better outcomes for our work through Wildcare. For the last few months Sharon and Kim have been conducting Zoom video conference calls in which participants can participate either by computer or mobile phone and hear what's going on in the Wildcare world, and also ask questions. Modern technology has brought us all together!

WILDCARE SHOP

**CHECK OUT OUR MERCHANDISE
NOW AVAILABLE IN THE WILDCARE SHOP**

<https://wildcaretas.org.au/product-category/tasman-island-collection/> or email friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com



FOTI ARTISTS' CARDS: This Tasman Island series now includes 11 different images by Tasmanian artists. Each card tells a story about the island. Thank you to David Edgar, Ailsa Fergusson, Peter Gouldthorpe, Kate Hansford, Veronica Steane, Luke Wagner, Amanda Thomson, David Davenport & Helen Gee who donated the art work for FoTI's Artists' Tasman Island Series of cards. Also included is an archival print of Tasman Island, circa 1840, by John Skinner Prout from the Tasmanian Archives & Heritage Office. Luke Wagner (archivalink.com.au/) has printed the cards for us on fine archival paper.

Purchase any 6 cards for \$35 or the whole set for \$55. Postage included.

12 of Tasmania's iconic lighthouses!
Timber cut-outs as Fridge magnets,
Christmas tree decorations etc
\$ 8.50 each

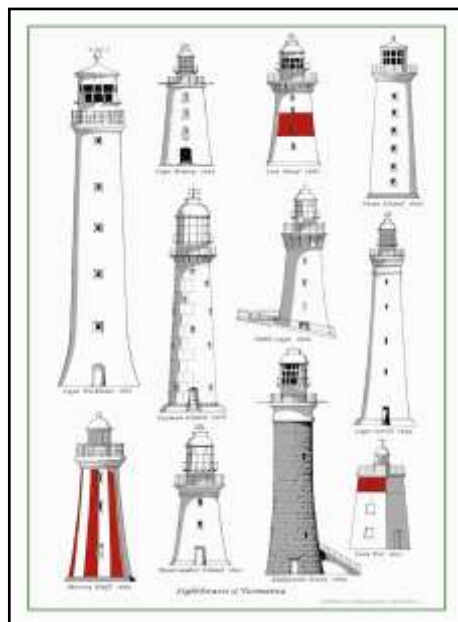
Exclusive to FoTI
Lighthouses of Tasmania tea towel
Designed by Peter Gouldthorpe
\$20



Supporters Patch
Featuring FoTI's logo,
designed by
Gavin Reynolds
\$15



Stubby holder
\$15



Postage free within Australia



Supporter's Pack includes:
Lighthouses of Tasmania tea towel,
Cardboard Lighthouse kit,
Tasman Island pocket book,
FoTI supporters patch,
Tasman Island bookmarks & cards
\$50

Parting Shot

WORLD MARINE AIDS TO NAVIGATION DAY



1st July 2019 marked the first World Marine Aids to Navigation Day. Established by the International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation & Lighthouse Authorities (IALA), it aims to promote greater awareness to mariners and the wider public regarding the crucial role of Aids to Navigation to ensure safe and efficient navigation.

In Australia, the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) maintains 428 lighthouse along 37,600 kilometres of coastline, 52 offshore buoys, and a multitude of other aids to navigation.

Tasman Island's lighthouse has been an aid to navigation since 2nd April 1906 and is the highest operating lighthouse (above sea level) in Australia.

Photo Peter Marmion

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

