



*FoTI is part of the Wildcare network, the largest incorporated environmental volunteer organisation in Tasmania. We work in partnership with Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania, caring for the natural and cultural values of Tasman Island.*



*The Tasman Twins — Assistants' quarters No 3 & 2 were built to the same design. Now with their verandahs restored! Photo Chris Creese, November 2019*

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 **Want to know more about volunteering on Tasman Island?**  
**Go to:** <https://wildcaretas.org.au/branches/friends-of-tasman-island/>  
<https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTasmanIsland/>  
 or email [friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com)



John, Geoff & Chris enjoy a break from work to soak up the spectacular view across Tasman Passage to Cape Pillar & the Blade.  
*Photo Amanda Thomson, November 2019*

By now you will all be aware that, in collaboration with our partners, Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania, Wildcare Friends of Tasman Island has cancelled all our face-to-face activities for the time being due to the current Covid-19 Coronavirus outbreak.

This is not a decision that is taken lightly, but we feel that it is a necessary step to make sure we are keeping our volunteers safe and that we are acting responsibly within our community to limit the risk of spread of the virus. The official advice from government bodies and health professionals is changing so rapidly and we need to play it safe in this uncharted territory.

As a result, our March monthly meeting at the Derwent Sailing Squadron was cancelled and subsequently it was decided to also cancel our April working bee. In addition, our planned exhibition, the culmination of three years' work by Rachel Chesmer and other volunteers due to be opened by Tasmania's Governor at Mawson Place on Wednesday 22nd April, has also been postponed. Tasman Peninsula Rotary Club's annual visit to Tasman Island has also suffered the same fate.

In the meantime we are working to devise a means of keeping the group focussed. This will include a newsletter and perhaps e-meetings via Zoom. More on these plans as they come to hand..

Thank you to Pip, Erika & Carol (who was on holiday on Flinders Island at the time) for all your help.

Keep an eye on our Wildcare web page <https://wildcaretas.org.au/branches/friends-of-tasman-island/> and follow us on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/FriendsOfTasmanIsland/>

All the best to everyone as we weather the crisis. ....



A view to calm the soul  
*Photo Amanda Thomson*



FoTI volunteers, November 2019  
Photo Amanda Thomson

Text & photos: Amanda Thomson

After my first visit to Tasman Island in 2008 with Rotary I wanted to go back! I became a FoTI volunteer and November 2019 was my 3rd working bee on Tasman. What a privilege to be able to spend time on this wonderful rocky island!

I have been lucky to wear many hats during working bees - as cook, assistant cook, weeder, painter, blogger, official photographer and now field naturalist. The latter is something I am passionate about. Being able to explore different parts of the island while weeding and photographing has given me more opportunity to see the extensive range of plant, insect and bird life.

Each trip has its own focus. November 2019 was to rebuild the verandah on lightkeepers' Quarters No 3. However, the weather was extremely variable. It really didn't settle till about the fourth day. It was hot, cold, wet, windy (sometimes galeforce)! It made going outside quite difficult even for the insects and birds! Lack of rain also seems to have had an impact.

Observation lists from the Hamish Saunders 2005 survey report [https://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/Hamish\\_Saunders\\_Tasman\\_Island\\_Report.pdf](https://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/Documents/Hamish_Saunders_Tasman_Island_Report.pdf) was a good base indicator. This was a comprehensive study by a team of specialists using equipment, trapping and netting. My observations have simply been sight and photography where possible, and solo, apart from others contributing their finds.

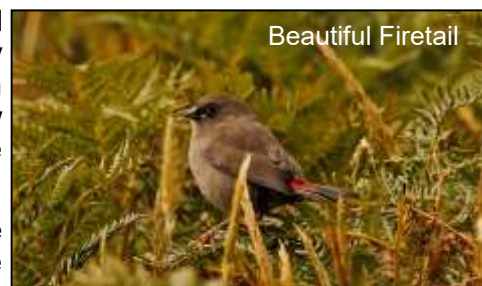
A notable bird find during this trip was a partial sighting of a male Satin flycatcher at the top of the Haulage, this a first recording to my knowledge. Made on a weeding foray, I was alerted by the amazing guttural, and varied song emanating from a Banksia.



Black Currawong

I was also very fortunate to see a Lewin's Rail on two occasions at close quarters - seeing the beautiful barred markings and stout beak during a very awkward flight, I likened to a 'brown football with wings'. This trip I saw many Tree Martins clustered in groups on buildings and in shrubs, normally seen in flight off the edge of a cliff and rarely landing. Also many Beautiful Firetails, including lots of funny fluffy juveniles. Nice to add the Black Currawong to the list of birds, not recorded in the Hamish Saunders report. All in all I saw 20 bird species.

The Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo numbers had noticeably decreased. In past visits we would observe daily flocks flying between the mainland and the island to feed on the Banksias. This time we saw none on some days and only one to three on other days. No evidence either of the Swamp Harrier which was frequently observed last year.



Beautiful Firetail

My daily routine included being up early for a round of the base of the lighthouse where, due to attraction to the night light, the white surface and sheltered nooks harboured all sorts of spiders and insects. Here I found a tiny undescribed Mimic wasp - *Eusandalum sp* not often seen or recorded. A number of spiders were found, an undescribed Jumping Spider (I've observed on every trip), a Wrap-around spider (*Dolophones*) and more unknowns. To escape the strong winds other good refuges for insects are inside windows (moths, spiders) and wood stacks outside for skinks, which also like protected areas to sunbake (when its out!)



Jumping Spider

Using the beautiful morning light, a constitutional down to the top of the Haulage enabled taking in the weather conditions, photographing plant species, observing birds foraging, and the possibility of seeing the elusive Lewin's Rail run out across the path. Following breakfast the day was dictated by first photographically recording the works happening, then perhaps weeding or painting (timbers) or assisting with cooking. Many of these activities afforded incidental observations as I went. If I felt able to get away I could check whether the sun orchids in bud were flowering yet, or whether the skinks were out. For safety reasons we all need our location known and preferably have a companion close-by, so wandering too far is not wise.



Mimic Wasp



Mammatus clouds

Clouds are perhaps something often overlooked as a 'naturalist' but to those on islands they are one of the observable and recordable events. I became very excited when uncommon Mammatus clouds appeared to the East. These are associated with unstable weather - cold descending air masses and upper air turbulence. They usually appear after a storm, but two hours later we had a weird rush of hot mist blow over the island!

Marine life was often observed from the amazing vantage point of our major work on the Q3 verandah. Someone would look up and shout '*there's a whale!*'. Sometimes there were dolphins. This trip, due to the choppy seas and inclement weather there were not so many observations. Some Humpbacks were seen and from the Landing we observed very relaxed Australian fur-seals at their haulout.

Botanical reporting was done comprehensively by the Hamish Saunders survey in 2005 where the island was mapped and individual specimens noted. On a weeding foray we did find a Forest raspwort (*Gonocarpus teucriodes*, *Haloragaceae*) identified with outside help and listed in the 2005 survey. Quite special when you find perhaps the only plant on a large, wild island. Since 2005 there has been considerable regrowth, particularly the emergence of Cheesewood 'trees'. Dry conditions have had an impact leaving many desiccated specimens. On the final morning waiting for the helicopter a last check of the orchids found a new one had seemingly popped up overnight. A single Leek orchid (*Prasophyllum*) possibly *lindleyanum*, which appears to be a new island recording. Due to safety, familiarisation walks around the island are conducted in groups where little time is afforded for detailed examination and only provide incidental finds, but are invaluable to see the less accessible areas.



Leek Orchid



Badge Huntsman spider

Weeding, too, provides exploration of different sections of the island, often covered with very deep bracken. To achieve our goal of eliminating the Californian Thistle we need to part the waist-high bracken to find the many emergent seedlings. In doing this, a rather spectacular Badge Huntsman (*Neosparassus diana*) was seen—very green when a juvenile. Lewin's Rail were observed in these areas towards the Haulage and to the sides of the track. Conducting weeding forays to north and north easterly areas of the island we came across shearwater colonies. Of concern was the late return

of these birds, but happily we saw and smelt evidence of their presence, numbers too difficult to discern. While keeping the appropriate distance as per Parks' 'wildlife viewing guidelines' we observed a sea eagle's nest which appeared to have one young chick. Good to know but not to disturb! It was also observed on our trip to the newly reconstructed landing that Silver gulls and Black-headed cormorants appear to have taken up nesting in this location.

One essential member of our team gets little recognition in all our reports. Glenda is the most important and amazing member who conjures up delicious and nutritious meals twice a day plus morning and afternoon teas to nine hungry volunteers! No mean feat with one fridge, only on when the generator is running, and freezer chests to keep (what wont fit) the rest fresh. She is always happy, unflappable and utterly dependable! We all contributed to washing and drying up, myself and others assisting in



Glenda—Cook &amp; Chef

preparation of meals cutting up, stirring etc when possible.



Sadly the working bee planned for April 2020 had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 Coronavirus. Tasman Island awaits patiently for our return getting on with what it does best – being wild!

Thanks to FoTI and all the hard working volunteers who care and organise these wonderful trips and to PWS for their assistance in getting us there.

References: <https://dpiwwe.tas.gov.au/conservation/publications-forms-and-permits/publications/nature-conservation-report-series/hamish-saunders-memorial-trust-island-survey-reports>

**[Post script: FoTI plans to have a dedicated field naturalist on each of our forthcoming working bees—when they start up again.]**

Blogger, photographer & field naturalist, Amanda, at work

Note: the new verandah viewed through the window; *Photo Chris Creese, 2019*



*Dave Davenport*

*Photos Amanda Thomson & Chris Creese*

- The major project undertaken on the November working bee was the reinstatement of the front veranda on Lightkeeper's Quarters No 3.
- Assessment of the works required to restore the back verandahs of both Quarters No 2 and 3 as well as the toilet and woodstore annexes of both buildings were also explored.

### **Quarters 3**

#### Restoration front verandah Quarters No 3

Dave & his team of volunteers did an amazing job to complete the front verandah & sunroom of lightkeepers Quarters No 3, given the inclement weather over the 10-day working bee.

Concrete plinths were removed and the steel reinforcing embedded in the concrete was cut to deck height, drilled to below finish level and sealed with Chemset. The existing posts, which had been stored in Quarters No 2 for a number of years, were scarfed to their original length. Two new Douglas Fir post were used to replace the posts beyond salvage. The original corner post and the original mid-span post were reinstated. These posts were scarfed with material from the discarded posts. The posts were then attached to the concrete with fabricated 316 stainless steel supports to hold the posts off the concrete to protect from rot. These brackets were concealed within the posts and bolted through with stainless steel bolts. The main original Douglas Fir beams were repaired with new sections patched in and reinstated. The northern end beam was replaced as the original wasn't salvaged. All the rafters' battens and the hip were replaced with Oak DAR (dressed all round) timber. The fascia was also replaced for the length of the veranda. The wall plate was attached to the brickwork with stainless steel rod through to stainless steel backing plates with nuts welded to them. The structure was painted and reroofed with new double-dipped 600z galvanized roofing. The fascias on the sunroom end were not replaced on this trip. These fascias are in short lengths and poor condition. It is our intention to replace these prior to guttering.



#### Back verandah

It is planned to replicate the original 1906 design of the rear veranda as closely as practicable. Detailed measurements and drawings were taken and drawn in Sketchup for off island reference. More work is required to finalize joinery designs.

Sounds like a good plan. Work will continue at a future date. Thanks to the building team for a great job!



Next restoration project: Back verandah, Q3

### **FUNDRAISING**

Help FoTI continue their restoration efforts on the heritage listed Tasman Island lightstation!

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.

Dear Dame Durden was a column in *The Weekly Courier*, a newspaper published by Henry Button in Launceston between 1901 & 1935. This letter, written on February 18th 1907 by Jessie Johnston, daughter of lighthouse superintendent George Johnston, sheds light on family life on Tasman Island.

In this letter, Jessie touches on muttonbirding - a valuable source of food for lightkeepers of the day.

Dear Dame,

I saw a letter signed "Quince" asking where several of the older writers were, my name being amongst the number. Well dame, I would like to have written more often but my parents thought it would be a trifle selfish on my part taking up your time and space.

My father went to Hobart on leave of absence, and took us all with him. We left here on December 16 in the *Matilda*, fishing boat, and had a fast trip as far as Cape Raoul. Thence to Hobart the wind was so light that we were until 3 o'clock on the morning of the 17th before we arrived. Day was just breaking; most of us had

been awake all night, and there we were, landed at an unusual hour to look for lodgings.

Oh, Dame, did you ever read "The Way-back"? To see us all trudging along would just put you in mind of them. Well, we went to our cousins, who made us comfortable until Hobart woke up. We had a splendid time in Hobart, Bruny Island and Geeveston. My brother and his wife live at Geeveston; they have such a dear little baby girl; its name is Brenda Millicent, and we are all so fond of it. I saw Edna Denne on Bruny Island during my stay there; she is quite well. Does your correspondent "Quince" live on Maria Island? It is hardly fair for her not to give her name and address. We had a smooth trip back to the island on February 2; it was quite smooth for landing on the new steps that have lately been made. The steps made it easy to get up to the platform. We all climbed up the haulage, but took plenty of time, and did not feel the effect so much.

The first thing we did was to look at our gardens, and the flowers and vegetables were beautiful. Every vegetable you could name was there, beautifully grown and ready for use, and the pansies, Dame! We picked two Pear's soap boxes full of flowers for two visitors, and you could not see where they were taken from. It is worth while getting away to come back and find everything so beautiful.

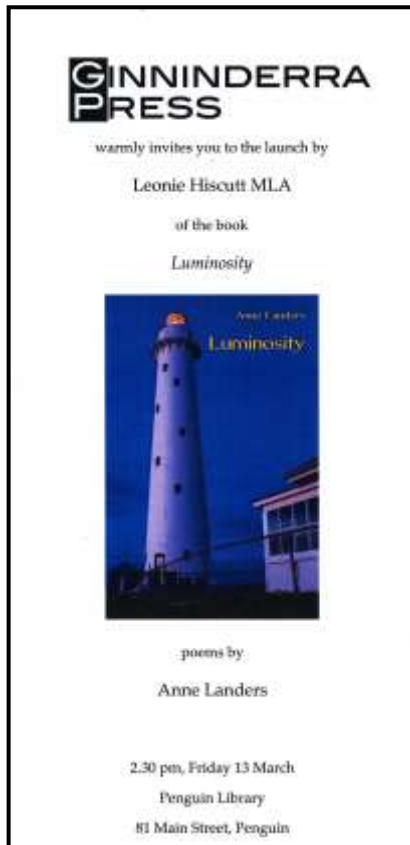
I must not forget our little feathered friends, the muttonbirds; they hatched their young during our absence, and the little ones are a nice size now; they will soon be large enough to be eatable - then the fun commences. I like going to the rookery and getting them out of the holes. If an old bird should chance to be in the hole it bites a piece out of the back of your hand and makes you a bit careful. We have a dog who is a great help to us; he digs the holes out, and what is better, lets us know what holes have birds in. We were to leave for home on January 26, three days before the regatta, but fortunately for us our steamer had a break-down of some sort, which put her back so much that she was not able to leave until the following week. This allowed us to see the regatta, which I enjoyed so much—not the boat sailing, but the sports and the mass of people. I never thought there were so many people in Tasmania as I saw there. We got tickets for the steam roundabout, but there were so many people waiting that we had to wait for two nights to get our ride. We enjoyed the ride very much.

Now, dear Dame, I hope my letter is not too long. With love and best wishes to yourself, I remain your little friend, Jessie Johnston.  
Tasman Island,, Southern Tasmania February 18.



The Johnston family, photographed by Bishop Montgomery in 1893 at Cape Wickham. Stella & George (at centre) were transferred to Tasman Island in 1905. Young Jessie, aged about 4 months, is shown on her mother's lap. Photo courtesy King Island Historical Museum, Currie & Elaine Bell

*[I will always be very pleased to receive a letter from you, Jessie, so do not hesitate to write whenever you feel inclined. I was glad to learn that your trip to Hobart had proved so enjoyable. I do not know "Quince's" real name; perhaps she will write to you and reveal her identity.  
Kindest wishes to all on Tasman Island -  
Dame Durden]*



FoTI volunteer, Anne Landers, has put pen to paper with a small volume of poems from her life's experiences. Included are verses of times spent living at remote lightstations in Tasmania. Front cover photo of Tasman Island lighthouse courtesy Erika Shankley.

The book is available from Ginninderra Press, PO Box 3461, Port Adelaide SA 5015, \$22 plus postage.  
<https://www.ginninderrapress.com.au/store.php?product/page/2068/Anne+Landers+%2F+Luminosity>

## *Tasman Island Revisited*

*Anne Landers*

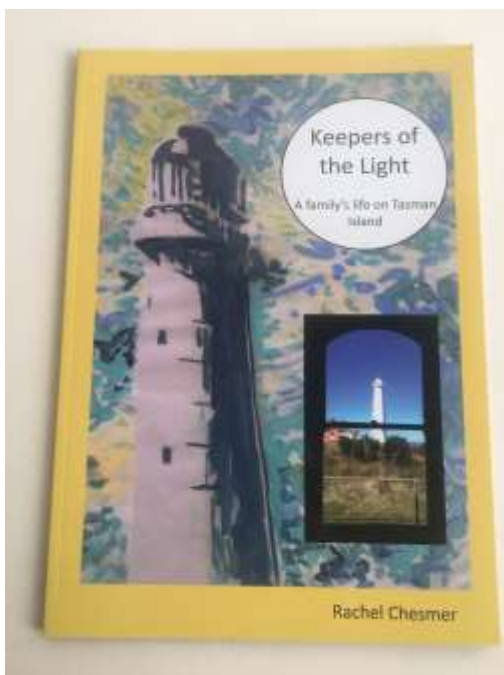
*Siren songs singing  
 In harmony humming  
 Whispering tales of silence and sea  
 Crying a love song  
 For cliff and for island  
 Calling, yes calling  
 To all that I be.*

*Turn back the dream clock,  
 Turn back to the mystery  
 Of all that I am and  
 Of all that I see.  
 Back in the yesteryear  
 From whence I have journeyed.  
 To Hear-Now-Beyond  
 A completeness in me.*

*Yesterday's sorrow grows  
 Through to tomorrow,  
 Tears in the winter  
 Bring growth in the spring.  
 How sad when we fail  
 To live by the promise  
 Of new birth and regrowth  
 That springtime will bring.*

*The song of the skylark  
 Circuitous singing;  
 The rake of the rail as it clutters below;  
 The mutter of muttonbirds  
 Mating and nesting,  
 Blends with the bark of the seal far below.*

*All these are sounds that  
 Belong on my island  
 Part of the being who carries away  
 All of the wonders, the sounds and the splendour  
 Of Tasman who sits on her guard in the bay.*



## **Keepers of the Light: A family's life on Tasman Island by Rachel Chesmer**

**\$20 including postage within Australia**

If like many, you have a love for Tasman Island and haven't had the opportunity to visit yet, you will feel the stories of the families who have lived there, the illustrations and photographs will inspire you and give a glimpse of what life was like for the lighthouse keepers' families, a life still living in these memories.

First 10 sold will be signed copies

# WILDCARE SHOP

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

<https://wildcaretas.org.au/product-category/tasman-island-collection/>



**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/](http://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.



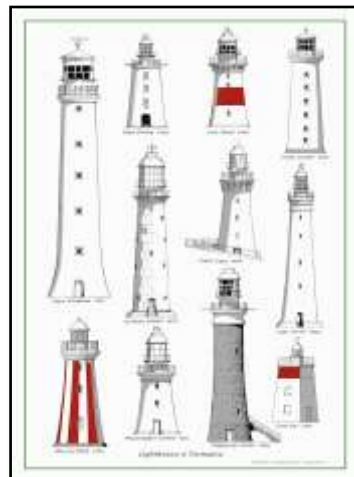
Image: Brett Hall

Assorted lighthouse timber cut-outs  
as Fridge magnets,  
\$ 8.50 each

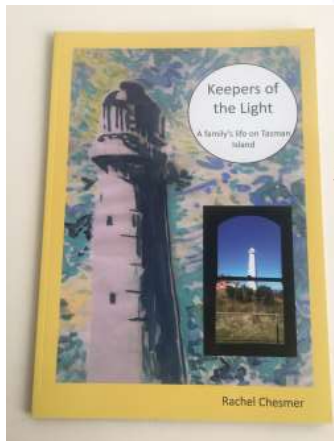
**Supporters Patch**  
Featuring FoTI's logo,  
designed by  
Gavin Reynolds  
\$15



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



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



**Keepers of the Light**  
by Rachel Chesmer  
\$20

Postage free within Australia



# Parting Shots

Glenda—FoTI's indefatigable cook & chef



Building team— John & Dave

FoTI's  
Fantastic volunteers at work & at play  
*Photos Amanda Thomson,  
November 2019*

Team leader—Chris celebrates  
the completion of the verandah on  
Quarters No 3 with some  
Lighthouse Blue!



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*

