



*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*



Best wishes to everyone for a very happy & peaceful Christmas season



A photographer's eye-view of Tasman Island lightstation, November 2021

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Thanks to contributors: Erika Shankley, Janet Fenton & Brett Hall

Photos: Erika Shankley, Dave Davenport, Diane Masters, Brett Hall, Rob Banfield, Amos Cox, Rosemary Bailey, Chris Creese, Chris Ames & AMSA

Want to know more about volunteering on Tasman Island?

<https://wildcaretas.org.au/branches/friends-of-tasman-island/>

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

email friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com

www.tasmanisland.org.au



Barry Crosswell at the back of Q2, 1952



Q2 rear view: circa 1980s



Q2, back verandah 2010

After all the bad weather of the last few months, at last the team of Wildcare Friends of Tasman Island volunteers were heading out to Tasman Island. Our project on this occasion was the restoration of the back verandah of Lighthouse Keeper's Quarters No 2. Built in 1905 the house, once a family home for lightkeepers serving on Tasman Island, it had been abandoned for over 40 years. FoTI had restored the sunroom and front verandah in 2017 and on this, our 34th working bee, the back verandah was getting a new lease of life.

Planning had started months in advance, with FoTI volunteers David Davenport with Rosemary Bailey preparing a heritage exemption plan for work on the listed lightstation building. That completed, there was timber to order and prepare. Thanks to Paradigm Construction, Dave and his staff, together with other volunteers, helped prepare the timber before transport by helicopter to Tasman Island.



Thanks to Paradigm Construction & volunteers who prepared timber for the restoration work.



The first contingent—Parks staff and Paradigm Construction workers—headed out in advance to commence work on the demolition of the dilapidated remains of the back verandah. The 2nd contingent - the FoTI's volunteers - packed up their gear, ready for a flight to the island a couple of days later ..

Luckily there was a short break in the weather and, as we flew overhead, we were amazed to see how far work on the back verandah had progressed.

As visitors for the day, Wildcare CEO, Sharon Smith and Member Services Officer, Kim Willing



Q2 back verandah demolition



Sharon & Kim at the top of the haulage

were able to have a quick tour of the island and see the work which Wildcare supports, financially, from time to time.

The rain held off until lunch time but by afternoon, all outside work was suspended. Plenty to do inside though – with the eleven volunteers settling into every room in both Quarters 3 and 2. It was a huge job unpacking all the supplies with our cook/chef for the 10 days, Di Masters, making sure that she could find everything. In the meantime an unexpected water leak needed fixing a good job for a rainy day with 13.2mm recorded by 9am the next morning and wind gusts of 80 kph !



The weather, as usual on Tasman Island, was constantly on our lips—wind, rain, mist, fog and some welcome days of sunshine. However, temperatures remained persistently cool, and we recalled the comment made by the wife of Tasman's first Lighthouse Superintendent, Jessie Johnston, who described the island as being like 'Siberia of the South'.

Nevertheless, what ever the weather, work continued —the priority being to get the back verandah of Quarters 2 weather-tight in 10 days! Mowing was restricted to the main tracks but the island's weeding programme continued unabated with Brett and his offsider, Janet, disappearing for hours before returning with sacks full of weeds to be laid under black plastic in an old tank to rot down. Janet, as our Field Naturalist representative, also took an interest in the island's fauna and flora.

During the demolition of the back verandah there had been some interesting finds beneath the floor boards—children's toys, a comic and some children's drawings, all now in Tasman's small museum.



Some finds from under the floor



Half way through the working bee we swapped volunteers - five members of the team returned home and the 3rd contingent of three volunteers quickly threw themselves into work.

Restoration was progressing well and some of the team took time off for a walk across the island to the Haulage and down to Tasman Landing. The day was conducive to just sit and stare—the blue sky with its cotton-wool clouds and, below, the sea surging against the highest sea cliffs in Australia. The 'Secret Garden' was also spectacular—a blaze of colour amid groves of casuarinas. The sun orchids finally made their appearance, although only on sunny days.



Above:
Kennedia prostrata
Thelymitra aristate ?

Reading an article in the *Tasmanian Tramp* published in 2006 following a trip with the Rotary Club of the Tasman Peninsula the previous year, I realised the full extent of FoTI's work on Tasman Island. The article described treading carefully "through shards of broken glass" and picking our way "across rotting floor boards to the window, the view obscured by years of neglect."

Sixteen years and 34 working bees on the island later, the houses are looking more like they did when the keepers and their families were living there —comfortable and welcoming — their verandahs resplendent in fresh coats of white paint.

Q2's verandah was finally weather-tight with a few finishing touches like glazing and floor to complete at our next working bee. The *pièce de résistance* was the four-panel back door, purchased 2nd-hand, together with its refurbished heritage door lock with striker plate made by volunteer, Chris Creese..

A celebratory al fresco meal in the evening capped off an excellent 10 days on the island. Our team worked well together and a huge debt of thanks must go to volunteers David Davenport (Paradigm Construction), Diane Masters who kept everyone well fed, weeding guru Brett Hall and On-Island Coordinator, Rob Banfield, as well as all the other members of the team. Thank you also to PWS, particularly Sam Lennox and Mike Copping for their assistance with organisation and helicopter marshalling.

We had a smooth flight off the island (Thanks Osborne Aviation) followed by copious amounts of gear lifted off by helicopter. We said our goodbyes at the Simmonds Hill base and headed for home. Until next time!



Construction at Q2 underway ...



4-panel door & restored lock/
door knob mechanism



Aerial view of Q2 with its restored
back verandah



Back: David, Janet, Geoff, David, Amos
Front: Erika, Rosemary, Diane, Rob, Brett, Jason



L-R: Georgie, Mick, David, Brett, Erika,
Diane, David, David, Rob

FoTI volunteers gathered to celebrate the success of their November working bee with a get-together with a difference. After storm damage to Tasman Landing in 2016, the landing was partially restored by a team from PWS & AJR Construct. Rather than throw the materials away, the historic timbers, some dating from 1904-1906, have been saved and some have now been repurposed into Christmas gifts for FoTI's volunteers. There was even a Christmas present for Q3—a knife block for the kitchen—made by Rob Banfield from one of the old verandah posts! Thanks to Dave Davenport for the use of his workshop at Paradigm Construction & Wally, Rob and other volunteers for their ideas and machining skills.



Barometer hung on repurposed Tasman Landing timber

Candle featuring a Tasman Island transfer & holder.

Knife block



CELEBRATING FOTI'S ACHIEVEMENTS
 Wildcare group Friends of Tasman Island has been presented, electronically, with a Certificate of Achievement in the 2021 Community Achievement Awards. It's thanks to you, the volunteers, that we've achieved so much in the 17 years since the group was formed.

FoTI has now had 34, 10-day working bees on Tasman Island—as well as a number off-island - with well over 360 volunteers participating, working in partnership with the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service. At 10 days per working bee, volunteers have worked for nigh on a year, in total ! Quite a feat—thanks to you, the volunteers who donate your time, energy and skills to make a difference; and also thanks to those who have donated funds to the cause. And a big thank you to PWS staff for their support..



L-R March 2006, August 2012 & November 2021



Following the wet spring, plant growth was rampant on Tasman Island. The island had experienced very high 324mm rainfall for this spring compared with an average of 195mm! (BoM). Water was lying on low parts of the tracks. With no browsers on the island the numerous pasture grasses were growing thickly and knee high or above—more growth than long-time island volunteers had noticed in recent years. Veteran Tasman Islanders told us first-timers that the top of the island is usually dry!

Grassy farmland is now returning to shrubs and Poa grass, a plethora flowering in profusion. *Ozothamnus (ferruginous?)* was particularly attractive, mostly at the pink-bud stage with a few white flowers beginning to come out, and intermingled with *Olearea phlogopappa* and *Cassinea aculeata* also flowering, a lovely contrast to the pinkberry *Leptecophylla parvifolia* (Ericaceae). Native pelargonium and geranium wove among the ferns in the understorey. *Pittosporum bicolor* was fruiting profusely, and a few flowers seen.



Relatively open areas were covered with *Viola hederacea* in flower. Where dolerite rock was exposed in sheltered areas such as south of the fuel store and north of Q2 on a slope above the main track, robust clumps of *Thelymitra* (sun orchids) grew on the margins of the exposed rock. Most flowers were over and some still in bud. Also seen south of the fuel store were a few *Microtis* (onion orchids) most spent and one seen in bud.



Ozothamnus & Olearea



Tracks to the western cliffs and north of the island took us through *Allocasuarina*, *Banksia marginata*, *Correa alba*, *Pittosporum bicolor*, *Acacia verticillata* scrublands. Small plants in flower amongst this thick shrubland included *Stackhousia monogyma* (candles), Pea flower *Comesperma volubile* and the delicate white flowers of *Drymophila cyanocarpa* (native Solomon's seal) usually noticed for its cyan coloured berries.

The western coastal dolerite cliffs are windswept and exposed supporting an assemblage of succulents. Wind-pruned *Leptospermum*, *Calytrix* and robust Trigger plant *Stylidium armeria?* were gorgeously in flower. *Kennedia prostrata* (running postman) was seen in flower on the northern cliffs near the "Tip" site.

Carpobrotus rossii
 Spring shoots on Banksia

Skinks, mostly Metallic, a few Oscillated, were seen on sunny days on concrete steps, piles of timber and warm rocks. No She-oak skinks were recorded on this trip.

Invertebrates

Bumble bees, moths, butterflies and hover flies were frequent among shrubby flowering vegetation. Observed on *Olearea phlogopappa*, Green shield bug (Pentatomidae), and Long-legged fly, *Senostoma sp.* (Tachinidae) and in a small rotting log, Ants (black sugar ants?), eggs, and a dead weevil (Curculionidae). An active millipede was photographed on steps of Q2. The elusive Tasman Island cricket was not found this trip in spite of a moonlight 2am foray to Q1. The building team venturing into the ceiling space of Q2 were probably focussing on the task in hand rather than crickets. Besides, Q2 was a highly disturbed building site at the time. An intensive search, including pre-dawn forays, may be worthwhile.



Noted around the base of the lighthouse, 20-21 Nov:



Isopod and amphipods;
 Beetles: Click beetle (Elateridae), Scarab beetle;
 Hemipteran True bug, insufficient detail to identify;
 Small house-fly sized fly, unidentified;
 Spiders, including Lace-web (Desidae); Crab spiders *Tmarus* and *Stephanopsis sp* (Thomisidae), Huntsman *Delena cancerides* (Sparassidae), as well as several unidentified.



While grubbing out multiplying garden bulbs in the valley east of Q2, south of the eastern track, worms were seen in the peaty, sandy soil. Brett said that this is unusual. When digging on previous occasions he found the soil quite dry and worms would therefore be deeper. According to a study by Tim Kingston (Queen Victoria Museum) there is a high degree of endemism among Tasmanian native earthworms and species have limited distributions. Identification requires expertise, a



Above & right: Crab Spider; Isopod; Lace Web spider; Worms ; Green Shield bug; Millipede (Paradoxosomatidae)



Forest Raven

Birds

A group of Beautiful Firetails was frequently seen around the main track, as was a flock of three Green Rosellas. Common Blackbird and Tree Martins were very prevalent. Other birds seen and heard: Forest Raven, New Holland Honeyeater, Silveryeye, Skylark, Goldfinch. A flock of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos was heard. Shearwaters could be heard crying at night, and a Southern Boobook Owl was heard on two nights. The Lewin Rail was not seen but a small moist open patch of ground east of Q1 showed signs of digging that could be caused by Lewin Rail foraging for invertebrates. An audacious Forest Raven often stalked around the various Quarters, questing for invertebrates in recently disturbed or mown areas.

Raptors were seen flying low over the grassland: Peregrine Falcon and Brown Falcon? On an excursion down the haulage, we saw a pair of Sooty Oyster Catchers on Anchor Rock. A Silver Gull rookery has established itself on the rocks next to the flying-fox winch-shed near the Landing.

Seals were basking on the rocks below and young males play-fighting. Several dolphins passed by only 100m beyond Anchor Rock and a Humpback whale surfaced with them, all travelling south. Around the cliffs at the haulage, Welcome Swallows were noted as well as the Tree Martins. From the cliff tops at the north of the island we looked down to a projecting rock stack where there was a White-breasted Sea-eagle's nest. It appeared unoccupied.

Thank you to the FOTI team for the opportunity to visit this special island.



Kennedia prostrata



Tasman Island's undulating grassland plateau



Senecio

Firstly, a big thank you to the Friends of Maatsuyker Island for loaning us their two iPads for the duration of the working bee. They were essential to gain access to the Tasman Island historic weed identification and location records data that is stored on the Wildcare Fulcrum app.

For the first five days we had Janet Fenton wearing the two hats of 'Weeder & Field Naturalist'. These roles work quite well together, and it is quite an efficient use of time. Janet's knowledge of many native species common and scientific names was very beneficial to the field work but also to everyone participating in our group walks.

Priority Weeds:

The main weed was again the 'California Thistles'. A total of 3,982 were sprayed over the working bee. This was significantly less than the last working bee in April when 8,772 were treated. With ideal growing conditions on the island, it is reasonable to expect that many more will emerge in the next two months. Another treatment in January by Parks & Wildlife may be necessary in addition to the next FOTI working bee in March.



California Thistle

The 'Wild Radish' in the old garden area are quite active. One mature plant was pulled, and 778 seedlings were also removed. It was pleasing to note that no 'Wild Rape' or 'Yarrow' was identified this working bee.

Monitoring:

Known Blackberry, Mint, Hebe, Pinwheel Succulent, & Montbretia sites were checked, and no plants were found. Some Gladioli plants were identified at an old site and will need further treatment and monitoring in future.



Weeding co-ordinator, Brett Hall, at the 'compost bin'

A total of 516 bulbs (mostly Jonquils & Daffodils) were dug up and removed from the old garden area. These were all on the South side of the Eastern track and are considered a risk of spreading down over the cliff face below Quarters Three.

Other Weeds:

Other weeds such as Docks, Milk Thistles, Garlic & Spear Thistles were treated/removed on our travels around the island.



Weeder & Field Naturalist, Janet Fenton, pulls Spear grass

We also maintained our focus on two annual grasses, Spear Grass & Rough Dogs Tail. Previous work over the last two working bees has reduced their presence around Quarters Two and Three. Ten bags of Spear grass were removed and composted. The Rough Dogs Tail was sprayed down at the top of the Haulage (2M X 40M). Both species were present down along the Haulage track. Both these species were pulled and composted.

So, it was a very busy time weeding on the island but to see the wonderful growth and health of all the native plants from this super spring was sufficient reward. Thanks, Janet, for your efforts on this working bee, particularly the Spear Grass removal. Thanks also to Rose who helped us master the Fulcrum App and dig out bulbs and Georgie who helped remove the annual grasses from the Haulage during our walk down to the Landing.



Janet Fenton & Brett Hall in the 'garden' now full of bracken & weeds

Many of us, given the opportunity, would love to be a lightkeeper. Unfortunately, the march of automation has curtailed job opportunities in this field. However, many former keepers are currently employed as Attendant Keepers by Trinity House (England, Wales) and the Irish Lights) while in Scotland the equivalent is Retained Lighthouse Keeper (RLKs).

Due to Covid restrictions, the face-to-face AGM of the UK lighthouse group, Association of Light Keepers, which was to have been held in Belfast, was instead held virtually, via Zoom. Their planned guided tour of the Galley Head lighthouse in Ireland's County Cork was also conducted using Zoom by Attendant Keeper, Gerald Butler, allowing members from all around the world to participate.



Galley Head Lighthouse, first lit in 1878, is one of 70 lighthouses operated by the Commissioners of Irish Lights around the coast of Ireland. Lit by coal gas, it was at that time, the most powerful light in the world.

Of course, since automation lighthouses in the UK are now unmanned but are regularly maintained by engineers and technicians visiting according to a well-planned schedule. However, there are also Attendants or RLK's who are invariably locals living nearby who are assigned to look after lighthouses. Many are former keepers like Gerald Butler but many aren't. They have three main functions:

- To visit regularly - once a month is the most common timetable - to keep an eye on anything that might need attention between the major engineering/technician maintenance visits—like broken windows, faulty kit, oil leaks and so on. Also to ensure it's clean and tidy
- To go in as the first contact if the lighthouse authority is concerned, either because someone - a resident, a mariner - has reported something amiss, eg light not working, signs of a break-in etc. In the UK all lighthouse operations are monitored 24/7 by computer from Trinity House in Harwich and that includes intruder alarms. A call to the local Attendant or RLK would be made as the first person to check what's going on unless it was a clear case for emergency services such as fire or police.
- To be the local key-holder for the lighthouse property in order to give access to local trades people when contracted, to visitor groups where approved by the Authority and sometimes to allow for filming to take place for documentaries or dramas

Basically, they keep an eye on 'their' lighthouse and look after it and report anything they can't deal with to the relevant Authority. Some like Gerald Butler have a particular sense of pride about 'their' lighthouse, and in Scotland RLK's often look after more than one lighthouse, depending on location and distance.

I'm sure there would be many in Australia who would just love to be able to act as an Attendant or Retained Light Keeper for one of Australia's lighthouses!

Thanks to the ALK, for enabling their world-wide membership to participate in these events and thank you to ALK Secretary, David Taylor, for answering my questions about AKs & RLKs.



FOTI MEETINGS:

FoTI volunteers meet at 5.30 pm on the third Thursday of each month at the Bellerive Yacht Club, 64 Cambridge Road, Bellerive. Zoom sessions are still held from time to time with special presentations of interest. All welcome. We look forward to seeing you there.

WILDCARE BRANCH PAGE:

FoTI is one of the many volunteer groups which make up Wildcare in Tasmania, currently with 164 active members. Check out our Branch page & photos of our activities in the Gallery. Go to <https://wildcaretas.org.au/branches/friends-of-tasman-island/> to read all about us and click on *Gallery* to see the photos.

Two new books for pharophiles:

***Lighthouse Girl* by Dianne Wolfer, illustrated by Brian Simmonds, Fremantle Press, 2009**

Pharophiles would, no doubt, have heard the story of the Lighthouse Girl - Fay Catherine Howe. In 1914 Fay lived on Breaksea Island with her lighthouse keeper father and became the last contact in Australia for volunteers heading for the battle-grounds of WWI.

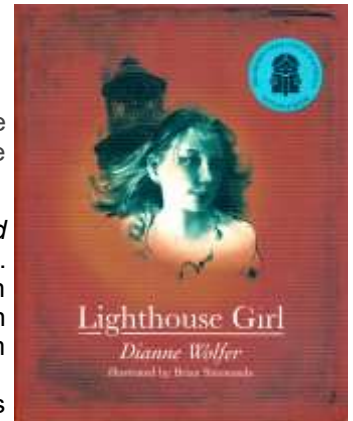


Photo courtesy Fay's son, Don Watson

Sparked by the article "The Long Goodbye" in the *Weekend Australian* on 23 April 2005, the book memorializes Fay's story. Although written for children, adults will also enjoy the story which is set on Breaksea Island, off the coast of Albany in Western Australia, and is illustrated with historical photos and snippets from newspapers of that time.

The book was the winner of the Western Australian Young Readers Book Awards and is evocative of life in a remote lighthouse setting and well worth a read.

More information and photos of Breaksea Island can be seen on the author's web site <https://diannewolfer.com/>



***For the Safety of All, a Story of Scotland's Lighthouses* by Donald S. Murray, Published in partnership between Historic Environment Scotland & the Northern Lighthouse Board**

"There have always been lighthouses in my life," writes Donald Murray.

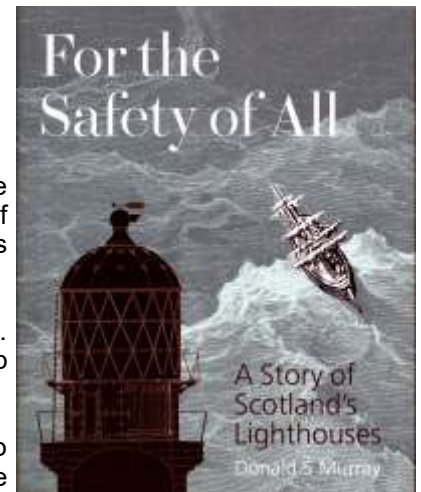
Lighthouses punctuate Scotland's rugged coastline. Since the earliest of these structures were built, they have been a lifeline for seafarers at the mercy of treacherous weather and uncertain navigation. Today, over 100 of Scotland's lighthouses are heritage listed buildings.

Lighthouses remain one of many maritime resources which act 'for the safety of all'. We are still drawn to the solitary life of the keeper, the beauty of the lens, the lamp and the calm reassurance of a flashing light on a distant shore.

This book explores Scotland's lighthouses through history. From ancient beacons to the work of the Stevensons and the Northern Lighthouse Board, and from wartime strife to automation and preservation, lighthouses stand as a testament to the nation's close connection with the sea.

Published in partnership between Historic Environment Scotland and the Northern Lighthouse Board (Scotland's equivalent of Australia's AMSA) it is dedicated to the men and women of the Northern Lighthouse Board, past and present.

Although published in the UK, this book is available from a number of online outlets, including Amazon, Bookdepository, Goodreads etc. Well worth having in any pharophile's collection.



CHECK OUT OUR MERCHANDISE NOW AVAILABLE IN THE WILDCARE SHOP

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

FLORA & FAUNA OF TASMAN ISLAND

Five large high quality cards with envelopes. Each card tells a story about the flora & fauna of Tasman Island. Thank you to Ailsa Fergusson, David Edgar, Veronica Steane, Amanda Thomson & Skeat Andrews who donated the art work for this series.

Thanks to Luke Wagner (archivalink.com.au/) the cards are printed on fine archival paper.



This pack of 5 cards \$35
Postage included within Australia

FOTI ARTISTS' CARDS

This series includes 5 different images by Tasmanian artists. Each card captures a story about the bygone days of lighthouse keeping. Thank you to FoTI volunteers Peter Gouldthorpe, David Davenport, Kate Hansford, Amanda Thomson & Luke Wagner, who donated the art work for FoTI's Tasman Island Artists' Series of cards.

Thanks to Luke Wagner (archivalink.com.au/), the cards are printed on fine archival paper.



This pack of 5 cards \$35
Includes postage in Australia

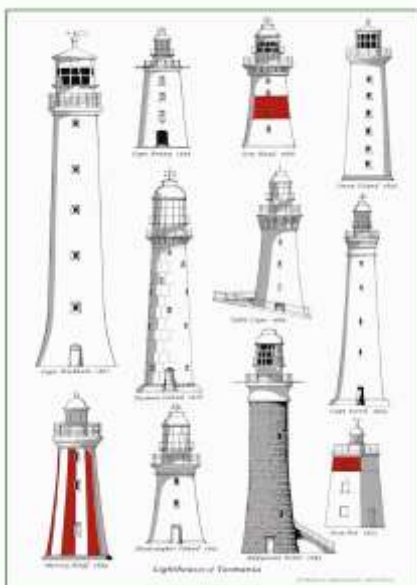
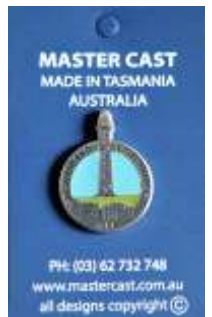
Supporters Patch
Featuring FoTI's logo
designed by Gavin Reynolds
\$15



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

For all lighthouse lovers & collectors of lighthouse memorabilia, this is for you: A cast of the original Tasman Island tower, custom made in Tasmania

Lapel Pin: \$13 within Australia



EXCLUSIVE TO FOTI
Lighthouses of Tasmania tea towel
Designed by Peter Gouldthorpe
\$15



TASSIE'S SOUTHERN LIGHTS:
For all lighthouse-lovers.

Four cut-outs of Tassie's Southern Lights – Tasman Island, Maatsuyker Island, Cape Bruny and the Iron Pot. Made in Tasmanian Oak or Myrtle, 13 cm to 16 cm in height, they can double as Christmas Tree decorations or Fridge Magnets – coloured ribbons and magnetic strips supplied.

Only \$40, including postage and packaging.
From the Wildcare Shop

Postage free within Australia



Keepers of the Light:
A family's life on Tasman Island by Rachel Chesmer
\$20 including postage within Australia



The stunning beauty of Tasman Island never fails to have an effect on volunteers and visitors to Tasman Island.

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

