



FRIENDS OF TASMAN ISLAND

NEWSLETTER 26



April, 2022

Edited by Erika Shankley

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.



A photographer's eye-view of Tasman Island lightstation taken from the lighthouse balcony, March 2022
Photo: Amanda Thomson

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Thanks to contributors: Erika Shankley, Chris Creese, Lee & Don Cameron, Amanda Thomson & Tony Osmond

Photos: Erika Shankley, Amanda Thomson, Tony Osmond, Chis Creese, Brett Hall, Ange Anderson & Chris Ames

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

It's amazing to think that, since the first working bee in 2006, FoTI volunteers have spent nearly a year, in total, working towards the restoration of the natural and cultural heritage of Tasman Island.

Over preceding working bees the group has progressively restored the front verandah and sunroom of Quarters No 3 and 2 and then in November 2021 the back verandah of Quarters 2. The planned programme of weeding has also been ongoing since 2009.



Tasman Island emerging from the mist

For our 35th working bee in March 2022 there were a multitude of tasks to keep volunteers busy —maintenance, repairs, weeding, painting, and, of course, mowing and brushcutting etc.

Mowing: Grass cutting had not been a priority at the previous working bee and, as a result, Chris remarked in his report that, *“Both the Greenfield and Deutscher mowers were used as well as both brushcutters. Some areas were so thick that it was found better to mow first at the highest setting, leave the grass to dry and then mow a second time at a lower setting.”* A handy blade-straightening tool, manufactured on site by Chris, helped repair the occasional confrontation with rocks lurking in the grass.

Another perennial job was removing spiders which had, once again, made their nest in the cosy confines of the hot water heater.



Mower's blade fixer



Repairs to the ride-on



Mowing down at Q1

Painting: Some of the Fascias and Soffits at Q3 and Q2 were scraped, sanded, prep coated and given top coats. The door to the back verandah at Q2 also needed repair, having been affected by damp, and was planed to fit, sanded and repainted before being refitted.

Other jobs done included:

- Decant and oil and fuel into 20 litre jerry cans for disposal off the island.
- Repaired workshop vice.
- Dismantled and freed seized brush cutter clutch.
- Repairs to Mower.
- Repairs to brush cutter head (built 1 out of 2 old ones, new one needed.)
- Checked mower, brush cutters, generator etc before starting and serviced at finish.
- Window putty replaced and painted where require on all buildings.
- Wash down walls in a number of rooms in Q2 and Q3.
- Chipped weeds from path edges.
- Fitted draught excluder to Q2 back door and modified back step to prevent water. blowing under door.
- Inventories of tools, building materials, food and weeding supplies.
- Prune trees overhanging track to whim.
- Repair tyre puncture on Deutscher mower.
- Replace temporary water pipe repair at Q2 with permanent replacement.
- Cleared up accumulated building materials rubbish etc behind Q2 and placed in appropriate areas.
- Large disused concrete pipes on mowed area near generator room rolled into nearby scrub to make manoeuvring of mower easier.
- Cleared grass in and around boot wash station, topped up tank with sanitizer solution.
- Modified method of holding in temporary window blanks in Q2 back verandah, were held in at the base by quad screwed into the sills however the screws broke when being removed. Blank panels now held in by timber cleats overlapping the sill on the inside.
- Recovered phone from disintegrating phone box at landing and put in museum room for safe keeping.
- Measured mantle pieces to source future replacements.



Q2's Fascia repaint



Gymnastics while painting the



Rehanging Q2's back door



Finished the painting



Painting Q2 sunroom

And not forgetting fitting the donated original-pattern coat hooks in Q2 and Q3 front halls and of course the weeding team was kept busy with the infestation of Californian thistles.

Bits of Tasman's history pop up from time to time. On this occasion an eagle eye spotted some pencil inscriptions on the face of the shelves in the Oil Store, dating from 1914 and a battered metal sign with an unreadable message (see below) —any ideas anyone?

But it was not all work and no play. Organised walks to different parts of the island gave volunteers an overview of the history of Tasman and its spectacular scenery.

The ten days on the island finished up with a very successful fund-raising day for the Rotary Club of Tasman Peninsula which enabled FoTI volunteers to inspect the lighthouse before leaving the island.

The success of the working bee is due to a number of people: the volunteer team who did such a great job in their respective fields - in particular Diane who took on the role of keeping the team well fed; Chris and Carol for organisation both on and off-island; PWS Rangers and other staff; Osborne Aviation and the Rotary Club of Tasman Peninsula who provided transport off the island for the team as part of their annual fund-raiser. A huge vote of thanks to everyone!



Digging in to lunch



1



2



3



4

A bit of Tasman Island history:

1. Pencil markings from 1914
2. Footprint in the concrete circa 1960s
3. Keepers left their mark
4. Sign in Oil Store



Spectacular Tasman Island L-R

- Tasman Island cliffs
- More cliffs on the eastern circuit
- Down at the Landing



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.

Tony Osmond

Excitement was certainly building up, especially for a 1st-timer to Tasman Island like myself. After a short delay due to low sea mist over the island, Steve, our helicopter pilot, gave the all clear to go. An hour or so later we were all safely on the island, starting to get all our gear and supplies sorted. After a late lunch, Chris took us on a familiarisation walk down to the Whim to see just how much work we had ahead of us – especially the mowing, brush cutting and weed management teams, and to gasp at the views of The Blade and Cape Pillar, not too far away.



Nearly there!

When the next day dawned, Don and Lee headed out for the first of eight days of weeding and at times were gratefully assisted by Amanda and Eleanor (between their field nats activities). Steve and Mick got to work on finishing off some work on the back verandah of Q2. Chris and myself got started on the huge job of mowing and brush cutting around Q3, Q2, Oil Store and the lighthouse. All the while Di was keeping us well fed with her delicious cooking.



Mowing at Q1

Our few afternoon wanders around various parts of the island were breathtaking. We realised just how harsh the weather and environment could be at times. The views were astonishing – the ever-changing colours of the landscape and, on a clear day, we could see north to Freycinet and Maria Island, south to The Friars off the southern tip of Bruny Island and The Blade rearing above the skyline in the foreground.

The bird life included a daily visit by a White-bellied sea eagle, a Wedge-tailed eagle and a pair of Peregrine falcons one afternoon, right in front of Q3. There were countless numbers of Yellow-tailed black cockatoos and various other birds that seem to call Tasman Island home.

The walk down the Haulage-way to the Landing was truly a highlight, even though exhausting scrambling back up again. To be able to see how the Keepers, their families, their provisions and all the supplies to keep the light burning arrived on the island is nothing short of staggering. How tough it must have been, let alone working all night keeping the lighthouse operating. Whilst we were there two Pennicott boats came in below the Landing with tourists on board and it very much put into perspective what it must have been like prior to the decommissioning in 1976.



And the views!

Also, the stunning architecture of Q1 - this beautiful home would not look out of place in the leafy suburbs of Hobart. We can only hope that we can find and raise the funding required to restore this piece of history back to its original condition in such an amazing location with the highest sea cliffs in Australia in the background.

The end of our time came around too soon and it was time to start the pack up and welcome the Rotary visitors to the island. One last treat was to be able to climb the lighthouse and look out at those amazing 360 degree views and really feel part of the history of this beautiful place – Tasman Island.

Many thanks to Wildcare, PWS, the Helicopter teams, the Rotary Club of Tasman Peninsula and my fellow FoTI members for having the same passion and dedication for keeping Tasman Island maintained, not only for ourselves but for everyone who, in the future, is lucky enough to spend time there. Thanks also to my fellow volunteers for such a memorable time on Tasman Island and especially to Di for her wonderful catering – we certainly didn't go hungry!

It truly is a privilege and an honour to feel like I'm part of the Tasman Island story and history. I can't wait for my next visit already!!



California Thistle and I have become acquainted on many occasions**Lee & Don**

Don and I arrived on Tasman Island to participate in the March working bee as part of the "weeding team". We spent the following nine days spraying thistles in waist high grass. There was often a shout of triumph when a missed 8cm plant was discovered along a track supposedly already covered. It was war and we were determined to win. We gratefully accepted the assistance of Eleanor and Amanda who spent some of their precious spare time "spotting" thistles so we could follow behind and spray. Turning hard work into a game means



I enjoy the activity and my competitive streak raised its ugly head. Brett had previously recorded massive amounts of thistles sprayed and our paltry 180 on the first day just wasn't going to cut it (although at the time we were rather pleased). It took a few days and directions to the prolific sites before we were earning our keep. We sprayed over 6000 plants, had a wonderful time, ate like horses and thoroughly enjoyed the company of other volunteers. We are grateful for the opportunity to see this pretty island and play a tiny part in helping preserve the flora and fauna

**Eleanor**

First-timer, Eleanor's first impression of Tasman Island was one of colour. There is colour in every every direction you look, she said, from golden lichens to orange grasses, turquoise ocean to a lime green baby spider. There are berries everywhere, and they immediately captured my attention - pink, red, blue, yellow, and purple. We have managed to identify them all except the purple one. I am full of questions, including "what bird is that?!", "is that a thistle over there?!", "how do you use this cordless drill?", and "will the skink that vanished under the fridge be tempted out with a bit of banana...?" Fortunately, I am sharing this beautiful island with people who are as patient as they are knowledgeable, so I am learning everything I can. I feel so privileged to be here, and to be helping to preserve this remarkable wild place. The colours of the last day's sunrise were a fitting farewell to the island.



At the rock-climbing wall

Congratulations to the Clarence Sea Scouts, who together with Scouts from Lindisfarne and Sandford, were the 2nd highest fund-raiser in last year's Virtual Lighthouse Climb, raising over \$2000. On behalf of FoTI, Chris Creese, thanked the group as they were presented with their certificates.

Their activities included

- Rock Climbing (this was the hardest way to gain the 29meters)
- A night hike by head torch up the Truganini Track;
- Team Relays - Walking up a grassy slope in a park and descending either by a long slide OR sitting on a very cold but fast ice-block!
- Day hike up Mt Direction
- Zig Zag track ascent of Natone Hill followed by a crazy cake decoration competition - building a lighthouse out of cake.

A big vote of thanks to the Scouts!

The weeding 'team' consisted of Lee & Don Cameron with guidance and assistance from Field Naturalists Amanda Thomson & Eleanor MacMorran. The plan was based on previous weeding campaigns in April & November 2021 as documented in the Weed Reports by Brett Hall who also gave us helpful advice and encouragement.

Their main focus was on:

- Californian Thistle
- Yarrow
- Wild Radish
- Milk Thistle

On the first day the areas to be mowed around Q1 Q2 & Q3 and the path to the haulage were inspected for weeds and where present treated with herbicide. As with previous working bees this was mainly confined to the areas North of Q1. The mowing and brushcutting in this area was then delayed for 2 days to allow herbicide to be absorbed.

Californian Thistle

This weed continues to be abundant and widespread. Fortunately it still appears to be generally contained in the same areas as previously identified. The white painted stakes in the field were very helpful in defining the boundaries.

It was not practical to record the maturity of each plant we found but estimate - seedlings or juvenile plants - 50% mature in flower - 30% mature in seed - 20% . The treatment applied to both Californian and Milk thistles was removing and bagging seed / flower heads then spraying stems and leaves with Lontrel Advanced herbicide.



As there was mostly just the 2 of us in the weeding team we adopted the method whereby 1 person would act as spotter and bagger while the other applied herbicide with the backpack sprayer. We found this to be efficient as it was very arduous tramping through the long and very thick grass which at times was shoulder height. We limited the quantity of spray liquid to a maximum of 6 litres in the backpack in these conditions. It is expected that many immature plants near ground level were not detected due to the thick covering of grasses and bracken ferns.

The Fulcrum App on the Wildcare Ipads was used to help identify the areas of Californian thistles setting seed infestation. However we did feel that the Fulcrum App is not particularly well suited in the case of Californian Thistles on Tasman Island. It is impractical to record thousands of individual plants and it is not possible to map by polygon or area features with this app. It is also not helpful to navigate over an area - it would be good to be able to record your path to ensure an area is methodically searched.

New records were created in Fulcrum within the areas we covered. A total number of plants treated and an estimate of their extent eg. area of infestation greater than 30 square metres.

Yarrow

Only a small number of Yarrow plants were found, however as these were mature plants and already seeded it can be expected there will be more plants detected in future visits.

A total of 16 plants were found in the same vicinity as recorded in November 2019 about half way along the path between Q1 and Q2. The existing Fulcrum records were updated. These plants were removed and bagged being careful to remove as much of the root system as possible. No Yarrow plants were detected in the area south of Q3 where they had been recorded as present in April 2021 and November 2019.



Wild Radish

This weed was found to be still active in the old garden area. A total of 216 seedlings were removed and bagged.

Milk Thistle

Isolated instances of this weed were found at various locations during walks around the island. This weed is likely to be widespread though not abundant. The plants found were either pulled and bagged or sprayed with herbicide. A total of 20 plants were treated.

As the song says "The grass is as high as an elephant's eye!"



The weeding team

Other Weeds

As most of the time and effort was put into dealing with Californian Thistle the other known weeds on Tasman Island did not receive much attention on this working bee. Also the inexperience of the two weeders in identifying the other weeds did not allow an assessment to be made.

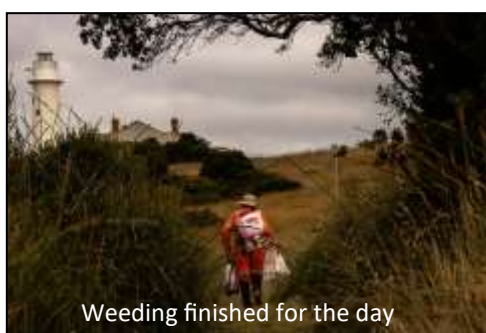
Conclusion

The weeding component of the working bee went smoothly, the weather conditions were excellent for spraying with light winds prevalent and only one morning with light drizzle. The Californian Thistle is still the most prevalent and persistent weed and will need continuing monitoring and treatment to

contain and hopefully reduce the numbers. All the cut seed heads from weeds were compressed and double bagged and were removed from the island at the conclusion of the working bee.



How many bags



Weeding finished for the day

BOOK REVIEW:

SEASHAKEN HOUSES: A Lighthouse History from Eddystone to Fastnet

by Tom Nancollas, Penguin Books, 2019

Lighthouses in Tasmania dot the coastline with a number built on remote offshore islands. Australia's most southerly lighthouse was built on Maatsuyker Island in 1891; precipitous Tasman Island's lighthouse is the highest operating lighthouse in Australia and the lighthouse on Deal Island was eventually discontinued because it was so high above sea level that it was frequently obscured by cloud. However, unlike the United Kingdom, manned lighthouses in Tasmania were not built on offshore rocks which were submerged at high tide.



Author Tom Nancollas, a building conservationist, chose as the subject for his university MSc dissertation, a study of rock lighthouses in Britain and Ireland. The book follows his meticulous research of nine of these 27 rock lighthouses, 20 of which still exist today. Some, like Eddystone, were rebuilt several times after damage from tempestuous seas but some are, apart from modern equipment, still reminiscent of the days when they were still manned. He saw for himself some of these amazing structures, including a 5-day visit to the Fastnet lighthouse off the southern coast of Ireland in which he marvels at how former keepers managed their remote lifestyle.

Seashaken Houses is an exploration of these remarkable sea-swept towers, the people who risked their lives building and rebuilding them and those that inhabited their circular rooms.

You can borrow *Seashaken Houses* from Libraries Tasmania. It's on the shelf (387.1550941 NAN) at both the Burnie and Whitemark libraries (place a hold to get the book delivered to your nearest library); and also available for purchase online at Penguin Books <https://www.penguin.com.au/books/seashaken-houses-9781846149382>. A must read for all pharophiles.

Amanda Thomson

The 2022 Tasman Island Working Bee was held in March (3/3/22 – 12/3/22) instead of the usual Easter, April time slot. This should have meant warmer weather, though it didn't feel like it. Our first few days were quite clagged-in. In fact a recci was sent to see if we would fly at all!

March meant different stages of plant flowerings and seeds, plus different insects and birds. All very exciting!

I confess to having shared my Field Naturalist's role with weed spotting with the Weeders - weeding Yarrow and Brassicas, plus much needed cleaning in Q2! Eleanor, the other (first time) Field Naturalist also shared her role as builder's apprentice, cleaning and weed spotting too. Despite this, significant observations were made, including a number of new and undescribed species - spiders, bugs, beetles, moths and birds.

A new sighting - of the Grey Goshawk made by Eleanor - was a first to my knowledge for Tasman Island. She was also lucky to have three sightings of the Lewins Rail. We saw a Wedge-tailed Eagle glide across the island, the first sighting for me in all my trips. Flocks of Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were seen regularly crossing in the mornings and afternoons to the island to feed on the banksias. Seventeen species of birds were seen and three heard (Boobook owl and Shearwaters) or found (evidence of predation). A number of dead (wings only) of what were thought to be Fairy Prions found, (apparently a large number of dead found this year)



White-bellied sea eagle

Spiders: A Tree Trapdoor spider *Migas sp.* was seen again, first seen by Keith Martin-Smith last November. I found a Trapdoor spider (*Idiopidae*) in Q1 while looking for the elusive, endemic Tasman Island Cricket - which remained elusive! Trapdoors are Mygalomorphs and are an ancient group of spiders little changed. This one remained in its burrow with legs protruding waiting for prey, but was not aggressive. I don't know of any previous findings on Tasman Island. Over 17 species observed.



Sheoak skink

The rarely seen Sheoak Skink was found during mowing around the Lighthouse and Metallic and Ocellated skinks were regularly seen on warm days, not so the White's skink.

Many changes were evident. Tree Martens and Silvereyes, Swallows and Beautiful Firetails were congregated further down the main track above the Haulage. In April many of these are found closer to Q2 and over the cliff edges. No Crescent Honey Eaters, Swamp Harriers, Goldfinches, Sparrows were seen and very few Blackbirds.



Silvereye

What I missed most was the presence of Soldier flies – everywhere in April on windows (males) and outside laying their eggs (females). For me an interesting observation was a Tree Damsel bug, never seen before.

Most conspicuous of the moths was the *Spilosoma glatignyi* or *Ardices glatignyi* (now named). Found on all the verandah windows. The orange-striped Tiger moth *Phaeophlebosia furcifera* was also common all over the island. One I hadn't seen there before. Other common bugs were a variety of Stink and Shield bugs seen mostly in the grass heads. Around 13 species of moth were seen, mostly at night drawn to the outdoor light in the verandah.



Ennamelled spider

Crickets, Grasshoppers, and Katydid were not seen or recorded in the 2005 Hamish Saunders Report. A few have been seen over the past few years, including Grasshoppers, Bush crickets and a Camel cricket found at night in Q1 this trip.



Yellow-tailed black cockatoo



Longicorn beetle

A possibly new species of Longicorn beetle from the Genus *Disterna*, (*Lamiinae*) was found on the base of the Lighthouse as soon as we arrived. A beautiful beetle. Eleanor found what looks like a similar but different species days later. Thirteen species of Beetle were recorded.

Flora - not many flowers evident. Banksia cones were mostly new, but many berries out - Pinkberry in all its colours, Pepperberry and the Cheesewood seedpods bursting with colour and seeds.

Lists of species and photos will follow. Tasman Island beasts shows some of the quirkiest inhabitants.

It would be wonderful if we could have caretakers year-round on the island to witness and record the changing flora and fauna with the seasons. Tasman Island is special because of its remoteness, its lack of recent interference from man and introduced species and because of its amazing geology. This makes it a very special subject for scientific research. I have to thank all those who support this - Parks and Wildlife, and particularly Carol Jackson for her encouragement and vision in pursuing this.

Have a look at the following link to *iNaturalist* and see what amazing finds have been made on Tasman Island ...

[https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/observations?](https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/observations?month=3&place_id=172087&project_id=105773&user_id=pavonis&verifiable=any)

[month=3&place_id=172087&project_id=105773&user_id=pavonis&verifiable=any](https://inaturalist.ala.org.au/observations?month=3&place_id=172087&project_id=105773&user_id=pavonis&verifiable=any)

1. Pink berries
2. *Dianella tasmanica*
3. *Drymophila cyanocarpa*
4. *Billiardiera longiflora*



1



2



3



Green Rosella



Strawberry weevil



Wild Garlic



4



Tasman Island sunrise

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.



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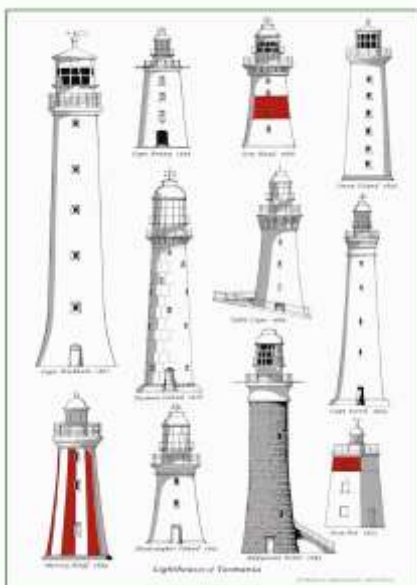
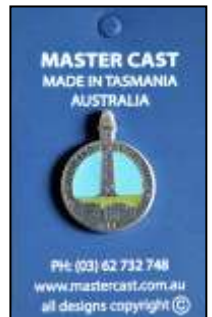
Supporters Patch
Featuring FoTI's logo
designed by Gavin Reynolds
\$15



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 wonders of modern technology!

Through FoTI's Facebook page we have been able to source coat hooks to replace the blank spaces on the walls of all three keepers' quarters. Thank you Neil, Jillianne & William
And thank you Rob for the finishing touches.



"You guys have one of THE best organized groups I've ever had the privilege to know. Stay strong and keep up the great work. People like me will always support you. If I ever get to one of these meetings, the drinks are on me. I know Tasmanians love to hear that. Please be proud of yourselves for a job well done."

William Evans
Posting on FoTI's Facebook page

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

