



FRIENDS OF TASMAN ISLAND

# NEWSLETTER 29



December, 2023

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*



The mesmerising view towards Tasman Island lighthouse

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Photos/illustrations: Erika Shankley, De Deegan, Chris Creese, Mieka Tabart, Brett Hall, Annabel Carle, ANMM, Amanda Thomson, Ange Anderson, Els Wakefield, Skeat Andrews

**Want to learn more about volunteering on Tasman Island?**

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

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

email [friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com](mailto:friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com)

[www.tasmanisland.org.au](http://www.tasmanisland.org.au)

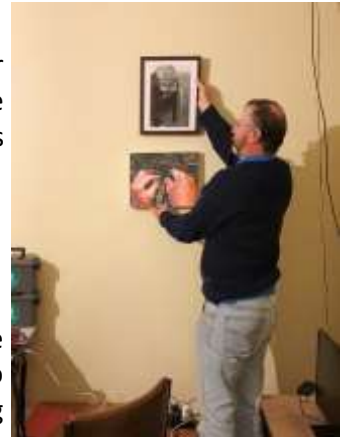
**PRIZE WINNING PHOTOS**

“When Col Rowe told me he’d been volunteering for 25 years ... , I knew I’d found my inspiration,” said Mieka Tabart. She entered a couple of photographs in the 2016 National Volunteer Week Caring for the Environment photo competition.



Mieka and Col were both volunteering with Wildcare Friends of Tasman Island. “These hard working hands,” she continued, still working “... well into retirement, locating the weed *Achillea millefolium* also known as Yarrow, on Tasman Island.”

At a recent FoTI meeting, Mieka presented her winning photographs to the group and they have pride of place in the sitting room of Lightkeeper’s Quarters No 3 on Tasman Island (photo at right). Thank you, Mieka!



**TRAVELLING EXHIBITION**

**Free Family Exhibition**  
Tasman Island & Lighthouse  
Keepers’ Family life

In 2018, FoTI volunteer Rachel Chesmer applied for a Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme (MMAPSS) grant to produce a travelling exhibition with a series of banners featuring aspects of life on Tasman Island.



Waterside Pavilion, Mawson Place  
Opens 2pm Wednesday 22 April,  
daily until 4pm Tuesday 28 April 2020

Completed late in 2019, plans were on track for an official opening by Tasmania’s Governor at Mawson Place on 22 April 2020. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic struck, and any plans in the pipeline were immediately put on hold.

Fast forward to 2023 and the banners were dusted off for their first exhibition and were put on display at the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney for International Lighthouse Day on 7 August. The Tasman Island lighthouse lens and pedestal, also

on display, are a reminder of the past and the continuing role of lighthouses in the safety of shipping in the present day. Congratulations Rachel!

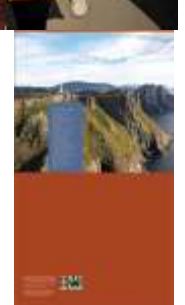


Opening of the exhibition  
at the ANMM in Sydney

Rachel cooks for  
volunteers on Tasman  
April 2017



Tasman Island Banners





**LEOPOLD BENCH**

The Leopold Bench was designed by Aldo Leopold who is considered by many as the father of wildlife management and of the United States' wilderness system. He was a conservationist, forester, philosopher, educator, writer, and outdoor enthusiast.



One of these benches, made by FoTI volunteer Ian (Wally) Webster and sponsored by former lightkeepers and their descendants, was delivered to Tasman Island as part of our November working bee. It made a very popular rest spot between jobs for the volunteers.

More benches, made from recycled timber from Tasman Island, will be constructed for future fundraising.

**FUNDRAISING MERCHANDISE REVAMP**

A revamp of FoTI's greeting card collection is underway. Here are a few of the images under consideration. Let us know what you think.



Green Rosella



Black faced Cormorant



Yellow tailed black cockatoo



White bellied sea eagle



Shy Albatross



Boobook



Forest Raven



Silvereye



Shy Albatross



Yellow tailed black cockatoo



Lewins Rail



Firetail finch



Shearwater



# Wanted Secretary & Treasurer

We are certainly a dedicated group. To my recollection, there have been only three volunteers holding the position of secretary and three as treasurers since FoTI was first formed nearly 20 years ago. Volunteers for secretary have included Peter MHugh, Erika Shankley & Kerry Jenner; and Treasurer, David Reynolds, Dee Webb & Mike Jenner. Our current team—Secretary, Kerry & Treasurer Mike— are about to retire. Both these roles are vital to the running of our volunteer group and its work programme, both on and off the island.



Please consider volunteering for these vital roles. Contact President, Carol, Jackson [friendsodtasmanisland@gmail.com](mailto:friendsodtasmanisland@gmail.com) for more details.



L-R Treasurer David Reynolds (centre) & Secretary Peter McHugh (partially obscured at right); Secretary Erika Shankley in her usual pose behind the lens of a camera; President Carol Jackson & Treasurer Dee Webb (both lighthouse kids); & Mike & Kerry Jenner (current Treasurer & Secretary)



**Seasons Greetings** were shared at a BBQ get-together of FoTI members & supporters.

Rosa, the Border Collie/Springer Spaniel cross, had her eyes on Master Chef, Rob while we all tucked into drinks and nibbles, delicious salads & magnificent desserts.

A safe and happy holiday season to every one.





**PLANNING WORKSHOP AT LARAPUNA/EDDYSTONE POINT**



Eddystone Point Lighthouse

On 8 October 1887 a “Mercury Occasional Correspondent” reported that “There are employed on the works [at Eddystone Point] 4 builders, 18 cutters, 25 quarrymen, 10 labourers, 3 smiths, 3 strikers, 1 carpenter, 2 horse-drivers, 3 boys, 1 clerk, Mr. Duffy (the foreman), and Mr. Galloway (the Government inspector of masonry), in all 73 men and boys.” The correspondent and two friends had ridden 28 miles on horseback from Georges Bay, commenting that the road, which was “a morass of black clay of unknown depth”, left much to be desired!

He continued “The lighthouse ... is of massive granite blocks [quarried on site] ... The walls at the bottom are 7ft. in thickness, and will be 3ft. at the top. The tower at present is about 20ft. high, and will be when finished about 80ft. high.” First lit on 1 May 1889 the lighthouse and its environs were a perfect place to plan future works on Tasman Island.



The winding road to Eddystone Point  
Allen Levings, 1976



Assistant's Quarters, Eddystone Point

FoTI volunteers were driving up to larapuna/Eddystone Point for four days of planning over the Show Day holiday weekend. Interestingly, we had learned of a previous trip to Eddystone Point lightstation in April 1933 by the Valentine family, driving their Morris Oxford 4-seat tourer. Comparative statistics show that including taking on petrol at Newstead, traveling time from their home at Bellerive to Eddystone Point took 11 hours 40 minutes. By comparison, the same journey took us 5 hours 45 minutes. The road from Gladstone to the lighthouse, the bane of many a lightkeeper's life, must have improved over the years. It took us only 33 minutes from the local shop to reach the lightstation, whereas the Morris Oxford took two hours in 1933. And there had been a steep rise in the cost of living with the total cost of petrol and oil for our journey being \$220 as opposed to an expenditure of £2 6/- (~ \$4.60) in 1933 despite the fact that petrol consumption was about the same.



Alternate Landing

The roar of the wind and waves kept us company as we settled in to the Assistant Keeper's Quarters. The main subject of discussion was fundraising, in particular our collection of greeting cards in the Wildcare Shop. A selection of superb photos and illustrations of birds of Tasman Island had been sourced thanks to Amanda, Ange, Skeat and Els. Finding suitable card stock was quickly solved by Ingrid and FoTi volunteer Ian was raring to go with his printer.



Cast-iron spiral stair-

In between discussions we scheduled walks to different areas around the lightstation. We had a peep through the vent in the lighthouse door to see the cast-iron staircase manufactured by Kennedy & Sons Foundry at Battery Point; we visited the Gulch and the alternate Landing; and looked at the display in the store shed recently reclad by PWS. We paid our respects at the grave of Walter McFarlane Kirkwood (son of WM Kirkwood who was later keeper on Tasman Island) who died, aged 18 months, in 1898. There were glorious beaches to explore, and rocks with their orange lichen, typical of Tasmania's East Coast.



Kirkwood Grave site

Thanks to the Aboriginal Land Council Tasmania for our comfy quarters in *Pama*, the Assistant Lightkeepers Quarters. We had talked through a few of FoTI's fundraising ideas and were refreshed after our sojourn at this historic spot — ready for the long winding road home.



Marks of the stone mason



**FRIENDS OF TASMAN ISLAND  
WORKING BEE, November 2023**

40th

Tasman Island light station: Oil Store, lighthouse, & Q 3, 2 & 1

FoTI's 40th working bee began with heli lifts from Simmonds Hill — much activity getting gear into bulker bags and transporting a new fridge over to the island. Once settled it was full steam ahead - with volunteers working on a multitude of different tasks to conserve, maintain and restore the heritage-listed light station buildings and the natural environment.

The list of work programmed seemed endless—there was always something to do whatever the weather.

- First up, the new fridge was put in place—the extra space was much appreciated. The old one is now relocated in Q2 where it will serve as an overflow.



Reading the instructions



- The grass, it seemed, had grown as high as an elephant's eye! It was hard to find the boot-wash amid the swathes of grass that the ride-on mower struggled to cope with. Brushcutters were called in for assistance.

- The weather wasn't all that conducive to painting but De tackled the Oil Store windows & Martin painted stakes for the weeders.



Overgrown track below Q1



Mowing mountains of grass

- Weeding, as usual, included the ubiquitous Californian thistle. In addition, the brassicas in the old garden were in abundance with the bright yellow flowers making them easy to locate. There was a splash of colour down by the waterhole, too, where a clump of bright red gladioli had raised their heads.



Invasive gladioli



& brassicas



Carex hirta in flower

- Carex hirta*, an invasive weed, had been identified on Tasman. In order to prevent its spread, the affected area was marked out with white painted stakes.

- Tasman's strong winds made it necessary to have roof tie-downs. Three needed replacement due to corrosion and eight new ones, together with assorted straps, were installed

- Plenty of work for Mark, the brickie, as he replaced 40 eroded bricks at Q3.



Top 2 photos : Repairing the brickwork, outside & in;  
Bottom 2 photos; Replacing the roof tie downs

- Internal wall cracks also need repairing at both Q2 and Q3.
- the Leopold bench, sponsored by former lightkeepers and their families, was assembled.

- And, of course, with all this work there were hungry volunteers to feed. Suzie did a fantastic job feeding the horde with lots of delicious fresh food.

But it wasn't all work and no play—group walks gave the team a chance to see more of this fabulous island. A very successful working bee. Grateful thanks to our PWS Ranger, Sam Lennox for his support.



Suzie cooks up a storm!





Wild radish in garden

## Weeding Report, November 2023

*Brett Hall & Martin O'Bryan*

It has been a much drier Winter this year on Tasman Island compared to the previous three years when it has been extremely wet with a 'La Nina' weather pattern experienced across Australia. Although drier, the rain that has fallen this Spring has been well timed to maximise grass growth. Indeed, more grass has grown than the previous three years because the soil became so waterlogged that the Spring growth was delayed.

Good news on the Californian Thistle population, where the plants found were sparse and in the immature stage. The numbers continued to decline, with a record low of 220 treated. This continued downward trend means the likelihood of eradicating them from the island is promising.

Not so good were the numbers of Wild Radish and Wild Turnip, with 300 plants removed. Mature plants numbered 148, and seedlings were just ahead with another 152. Three bags of seedheads were removed from the island.

A further surprise was the discovery of more Gladioli down near the pond area. Thanks to Amanda, Annabel & De for helping with the removal of these plants. It's slow painstaking work that requires careful sifting through the soil to find all the tiny corms and cormlets. We found that each mature plant could have four to ten of these corms underneath them depending on the age of the clump of Gladioli. So, the 220 mature plants had 1,255 corms below the ground.

Hairy Sedge or *Carex hirta* which has characteristic hairy leaves and inflorescences was found on Tasman Island in the low-lying area south of the Relief Keepers Quarters (RKQ) and north of Quarter's one. This is the **first and only** record for this species in Tasmania and Australia and is in the early stage of invasion and therefore should be regarded as an eradication target. **FoTI considers this weed of high priority for eradication.**

There are also a number of other active lower priority species still on the island such as Barley grass, Dock, Garlic, Jonquils, Daffodils, Grape hyacinth, Naked Ladies, Nerines, Rough dog's tail and Milk/Sow thistles.

As mentioned, the numbers of Californian Thistles continue to trend downwards. Although it was anticipated that they may have been even lower, as the Spring working bee has always had lower numbers treated than the Autumn working bees. Back in March this year 230 Thistles were treated and 220 were treated this time around. There has been a lot of traffic through the Thistle zones this year (e.g., the 'Bio Blitz' in Autumn). People moving through these zones break through the vegetation canopy, which allows the sunlight in, which in turn encourages more thistles to grow. Our Weeders take care to walk in the same footsteps when they transverse the zones to minimise this effect.

Several other priority weed type sites will need to be checked in the summer Californian Thistle Weeding Working Bee including, Wild Radish, Gladioli, and the Hairy Sedge/*Carex hirta* trials.



Thanks to Annabel Carle for her work in establishing the boundaries of the Hairy Sedge/*Carex hirta*, setting up the trial sites and providing the written material and photographs about such for this report. Annabel has written a more detailed report specifically about her work on this weed and a copy of that will also be stored with the other weeding material in Quarters three.

Thanks also to Amanda Thompson for assisting with digging out Yarrow and Gladioli plants and keeping an eye out for weeds all over the island whilst looking at flora and fauna.

Gladioli near the dam

*Carex hirta* in flower*Carex hirta*

## FIELD NATURALIST OBSERVATIONS, TASMAN ISLAND, November 2003

Amanda Thomson

White bellied sea eagle



The weather a mixed bag as usual. No really warm weather, which I think affected much of what we didn't see!

Little action on the base of the lighthouse, usually a treasure trove of specimens and indicator of what's around. It was my first visit where I haven't seen an unnamed Salticid spider (affectionately known as Amanda's spider!). Skinks, when they did come out, disappeared rapidly.

My task this trip was to try to find a Tasman Island endemic cricket. Despite locating Elliott traps around the island in what were thought to be ideal spots I had no luck. These were reportedly what they found these crickets in, when the Hamish Saunders survey was done in 2005. Will try something else next time!

Not a lot of birds, those we saw were the usual, Yellow-tailed black cockatoos (only around 4 at a time), Green rosellas (pair), Sea eagles (pair), Forest ravens (including a nest seen in the Lost World), Beautiful firetails, Silvereyes, Tree martins and numerous Welcome swallows. Justin observed a Wedge-tailed eagle on three occasions, and Chris finally saw a Lewin's Rail on the last day. Seabirds – Gannets, Albatross, the occasional Tern, Sooty oyster catcher, and Silver gulls all seen from a distance. Large flocks of Black-faced cormorants moving around the island. Most exciting was the arrival of a Boobook owl, in the dark, calling, just above our heads (while observing a bioluminescent fungi!). We had heard one there before and was reassured to know they are still there. A number of bird remains were found all over the island. These appeared to be Fairy Prions and Shearwaters, we assume raptor kills. Another exciting observation was a dog-fight between a White-bellied sea eagle and two Peregrine falcons. Possibly both responsible for the dead bird remains.

For me this trip was a great chance to learn more about the island's plants, being accompanied by Annabel Carle who was investigating the extent of *Carex hirta* – a weed known only to Tasman Island within Australia! Annabel and Anna McEldowney have created a data base of plants now able to be added to when necessary. Thank you both!! It was a pleasure to have Annabel there imparting her wisdom.



Lewins Rail habitat

Brett was privileged to observe and record an extraordinary scene off the east and south coasts of a whale being attacked by a pack of Orcas. Notably, the whale could be heard bellowing – something rarely seen or heard. We later observed a juvenile humpback continually breaching, with parent behind, and assumed to be being pursued. We had Justin Marshall, a Marine Biologist with us able to interpret these events. Dramatic scenes, which bring the realities of the natural world into focus!

A number of interesting spiders found this time, many due to the movement of an old pile of building materials, tin sheeting and wood, to another location, uncovering things we don't usually see. I was also lucky to find a live specimen of the '*Nat vanderbergae*' beetle, which I previously photographed as a 'first photograph of a living specimen'! Now off to TMAG as it has rarely been seen or collected.

Thank you to all the team who alerted me to things they saw or found. Nice to have everyone involved. Another wonderful trip to this very special place. Protect the wild places!

Forest Raven



Black faced cormorants





**THE 40TH TASMAN ISLAND WORKING BEE**

**A First-timer's eye view**

*De Deegan*

All nine volunteers gathered at Seven Mile Beach for our pack up and safety briefing on a glorious day; it had to be a good sign. Chris, our fearless leader, with Brett, Amanda and Annabel as return volunteers. Suzie, Mark, Martin, Justin and myself as all first timers. It was already obvious we had an interesting and jovial group.

The weather held and we had a perfect day for our flights to the island, which was very lucky as there needed to be two passenger flights and two sling loads. One included a new refrigerator.

I have been lucky enough to sail around Tasman Island a few times and view the island from the Blade but the thrill of seeing the island from the air on a beautiful clear day was just magnificent. I have been so excited to look around the island and contribute in a small way to the preservation of this special place.

Once Chris gave us a quick tour of the area surrounding the lighthouse, Q2 and Q3 and we all selected our rooms it was time to unpack, settle in and get to work. Suzie had a huge job on the first day to unpack all the stores, fill the new fridge and learn a new kitchen in time to make dinner. She did all this with the grace and talent of a true chef. In the meantime, Chris and Brett were getting the island functioning and organising us newbies. Amanda and Annabel were already setting up their field work.

My main job while here has been brush cutting and a small amount of painting and weeding. Everyone has done amazing things to improve both the buildings and environment while we have been here. All the work here is made enjoyable because we are surrounded by the most magnificent scenery. The lighthouse keeps a watchful eye over all activities, and the views of the Blade and the cliffs of the Tasman Peninsula are the anchor; with the sea and sky constantly changing. And how could I forget to mention the wonderful array of birds.

Each day we have also taken time off to walk a different part of the island. This has been fantastic and a great way to learn more about Tasman Island and what has gone before us.

I am so grateful to have been a part of the 40th working bee; and for the generous knowledge that Chris, Annabel, Amanda, and Brett have shared with us. I only wish I could retain it all. I hope to be part of another working bee in the future.



De paints the Oil Store window



Thank goodness for the guide-rope on the Haulage track!



Flowers in abundance along the newly mown track



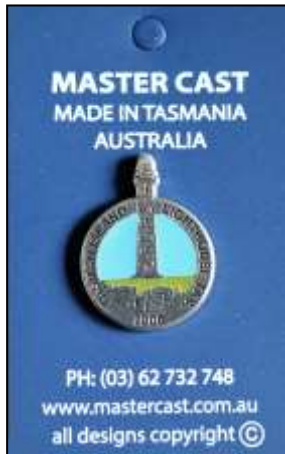
That magnificent view



De brushcutting at Q1

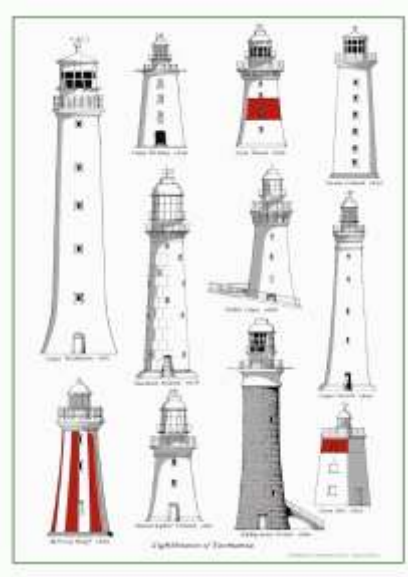


Supporters Patch  
Featuring FoTI's logo  
designed by Gavin Reynolds



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



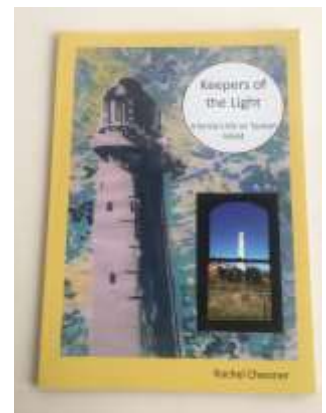
EXCLUSIVE TO FoTI  
Lighthouses of Tasmania tea towel  
Designed by Peter Gouldthorpe  
\$15

Available at the Wildcare shop  
<https://wildcaretas.org.au/shop/>

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



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

FoTI's page in the Wildcare shop looks a bit sparse at the moment. We have sold out of many of our greeting cards and with the retirement of Luke Wagner, who printed the cards for us—free of charge (thanks very much Luke) - we are now taking the opportunity to reorganise the collection. Some of the old faithfuls will reappear but there will also be some new images. And we are also looking for a new printer.



**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 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.





The sunny East Coast was a bit chilly!

## A 'BUSMAN'S HOLIDAY' AT LARAPUNA/EDDYSTONE POINT

A pause from forward planning:  
FoTI volunteers at Deep Creek



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*

