



FRIENDS OF TASMAN ISLAND NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 2012

No 10

A few words from the President

Thinking of Xmas presents? It's that time of the year already! The 2013 *Lighthouses of Tasmania* calendar is now on sale. This year stunning images of lighthouses at the Iron Pot, Tasman and Deal Islands, Eddystone Point, Low Head, Mersey Bluff, Table Cape, Cape Sorell, Cape Tourville and Rocky Cape.

Thanks to sponsorship from the Cascade Brewery Company, Australian Maritime Systems and *Tasmania 40° South*, the *Lighthouses of Tasmania* calendar is our major annual fundraiser. For only \$20 + postage you can purchase this magnificent, limited edition calendar and know that you are helping to support ongoing work on Tasman Island!

Special mention also to our hardworking Calendar Committee, particularly Erika Shankley for another captivating foreword and interesting captions and the many hours she spent along with Tim Kingston and Pat Murray in the selection of the images.

If you can assist with the promotion, distribution and sale of the calendars please contact us by emailing friendsoftasmanisland@gmail.com.

Thanks to Christian Bell who passed on the link from the Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office. *Tasmanian Story* was made in 1954 by the Postmasters General Department

to commemorate the Sesqui centenary of Tasmania. Delivering the mail to Tasman Island footage is about 17 minutes in.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=Ds0HCTNxI4w

I hope you enjoy the last FoTI newsletter for 2012 which also features some history of the island, albeit on slightly less serious notes but equally informative! As always thanks to Dee for design and layout. And thanks to our contributors: Mike Jenner, Leslie Johnston (courtesy Elaine Bell), Karl Rowbottom, Bob and Penny Tyson, Chris Creese and Erika. Please contact FoTI if you have a story you would like to share about Tasman Island.

Have a safe and happy summer break and may 2013 shine for all of us.

Carol Jackson
FoTI President

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FOTI'S FIRST WINTER WORKING BEE

The August 2012 Working Bee was particularly logistically complex so we were lucky experienced Tasman Island Team Coordinator, Erika Shankley, was once again at the helm. Although as Erika says "Thank you to everyone on the team. The success of this working bee was due to your support and enthusiasm."

The following article is compiled from the working bee reports we send to Parks after each working bee.

From Erika, Team Coordinator

The team was split into three groups:

Group 1

This group were in for the long haul 18-25 August - Erika and works supervisor, Chris Creese together with Ron and Glenda Fehlberg, Keith Darke, Anne Landers and Mike Jenner;

Group 2

Tim Kingston, Lyndon O'Grady (AMSA) and PWS Heritage Officer, Peter Rigozzi travelled to the island with Group 1, but departed on Monday 20th

Group 3

Bob and Penny Tyson arrived on Monday 20th and left on 25th with Group 1

As usual, we appreciated the assistance of our partners, PWS, particularly Stuart Dudgeon, as well as Mike Copping and Luke Gadd who supervised operations at Safety Cove. Thanks, especially, to Mike Copping for providing accommodation for Keith on the night before our departure.

And thanks also to Helicopter Resources pilot, Dave Pullinger, for his efficient and friendly manner as he flew us to and from Tasman Island. With over 40 years' experience, we knew we were in safe hands! And to AMSA's Lyndon O'Grady for allowing us access to the lighthouse for International Lighthouse and Lightship weekend.

Early planning was difficult because proposed protocols concerning a sea eagle's nest on the island had not



Peter Rigozzi, Keith Dark & Chris Creese discuss the Catch Up Maintenance Plan



Spring has sprung

been made known. Until a few days before departure we were unsure as to what jobs we could do, where on the island we could work or even if we could go at all. Thankfully, all was resolved in time.

After a false start on Saturday, due to bad weather, we finally arrived on Tasman on Sunday. The weather for the ensuing week couldn't have been better with sunny skies and mostly light winds. Spring had sprung! The after-lunch familiarization tour revealed the light station precinct



Camerman Tim Kingstom at work

bright with spring bulbs – yellow daffodils, white jonquils and deep blue grape hyacinth.

PWS Heritage Officer, Peter Rigozzi, reviewed work done so far by FoTI and was most complimentary. Tasman Island's Catch Up Maintenance Plan will be updated following his visit.

Tim Kingstom filmed activities on Sunday and Monday and returned again on Saturday 25th. The resulting footage will be made into a DVD to raise funds for FoTI's work.

The preparations needed to feed a large group can be daunting, especially when our cook, Glenda, was volunteering down at Cape Bruny until the week before our departure! However with Erika's help, the shopping was done and Hooter's Restaurant again proved popular with Glenda turning out some delicious dishes. Thank you Glenda and also to Anne and everyone who helped as galley slaves!

While the weather was fine everyone put in long hours in an effort to get outside jobs done. Total hours worked by the group - approximately 450 - equated to \$15,000 - \$20,000 in dollar-value terms.



Cook Glenda prepares lunch

Visitors

Liz Znidersic **A study of Lewin's rail** - named for English-born artist John William Lewin (1770-1819) - is being made by Liz Znidersic for her Master's degree at Sturt University. Liz and her offsider utilised our flight from Safety Cove on Saturday, arriving on the island as we left. We were able to report seeing the rail and hearing its call on a number of occasions.

Glass artist, Bec Coote, took advantage of a spare seat in the helicopter on Monday 20th. Her work reflects her fascination with lighthouses. Bec has generously offered one of her pieces as a prize in our forthcoming fundraising raffle (with Friends of Maatsuyker and Deal Islands) at the next Australian Wooden Boat Festival.

UFOs?

It was positively balmy on Thursday 23rd, the temperature for the 24 hours ranging from 10.3° to 15.6°. The loud rumble heard from inside the house could have been confused for thunder if the moonless night sky had not been spangled with stars. The source of the noise - lit by red, green and white lights - flew in from the west at roof-top height, moving at an angle in front of the houses and out to sea. Returning on the same track, its bright headlamp flooded the island with light as it moved slowly along. Hovering just a few feet off the ground, it positioned itself above the helipad before coming in to land. A red-clad figure with a torch at its waist approached. It wasn't a UFO or little green men after all! "Not to worry," he said, "it's the Westpac Search & Rescue helicopter on a night exercise!"

FOTI's FIRST WINTER WORKING BEE

Our fine weather continued but we were lucky to get off the island early on Sat 25th. By 6pm winds on Tasman were recorded as gusting to 85kph from the NW. Back at home, snow fell overnight.

FoTI team August 2012



Back Row: Peter Rigozzi, Penny Tyson, Tim Kingston, Ron Fehlberg, Mike Jenner, Bob Tyson, Keith Darke, Glenda Fehlberg, Ann Landers,
Front Row: Chris Creese, Erika Shankley, Lyndon O'Grady
 Thanks to Bec Coote for taking the photo

From Chris, Works Supervisor

The comprehensive works program included forward planning for future works.

The grass had grown very little since our last visit. Grass was cut around the helipad, houses, weather station and tracks between buildings. A broken solar panel bracket was noticed on the BOM weather station. The Bureau of Meteorology was contacted and spare parts delivered on the first flight on the 25th and FoTI effected repairs.



Keith Darke & Ron Fehlberg installing new gutters at Q1

Time was spent with Peter Rigozzi going through works done and updating the CUMP and also with registered builder and FOTI member Keith Darke putting together a list of future works including materials required and costings.

Besides painting and minor repair work at all houses the replacement of fascia and repairs to adjacent woodwork at Quarters One was finished! The working bee also completed the installation of gutters on the main roof of the headkeeper's quarters

From Bob and Penny Tyson – the Weeding Team's Report

(this is not just any old weeding report, read on!)



The green orchid is a new record for Tasman. Pterostylis williamsonii, common name for brownlip greenhood

However, winter isn't the ideal time to look for yarrow and Californian thistle, but is good for early spring bulbs. Weedy material such as montbretia corms, scrambling groundsel, pelargonium and the succulents which could re-sprout were bagged up and taken off the island. Blackberry canes, Hebe and wild turnip and radish, were left to dry and rot.

Jonquils and wild daffodils were in full flower in the gardens of Q1 and Q2. As well, several clumps were found between and around Q3 and Q2, a few clumps in the rank grass east of Q1 and towards the waterhole. Dozens of clumps were in the bracken patch, all within the original fenceline. All clumps found outside the fenced gardens were dug and transplanted to the front gardens of the closest house.



Bob & Penny Tyson blackberry weeding above main track

Boobialla Myoporum insulare on Tasman Island

In 2008 we collected a specimen of Myoporum insulare from a tree on Tasman Island (the only one we have seen on the island) and lodged it with the Herbarium. It was growing beside the overgrown wheel tracks -the remains of the tractor track which ran from the rear of Quarters 1 to the rear of Quarters 2.

On this working bee Anne Landers who had spent a year on the island in 1969 as a light-keeper's wife recollected planting out some native trees along the tractor track in December 1969. They had been delivered to the island for planting out two years previously.

On hearing Anne's recollection, Bob revisited the site and found the remains of a tree guard around the specimen tree – which appears to confirm that it had been planted. Coincidentally, Nigel Brothers and Stephen Harris (from the Parks and Wildlife Service) visited the island in 1982 and recorded M. insulare on the island. Was this the same plant?



Boobialla Myoporum insulare planted by Anne Landers 1969

to confirm that it had been planted. Coincidentally, Nigel Brothers and Stephen Harris (from the Parks and Wildlife Service) visited the island in 1982 and recorded M. insulare on the island. Was this the same plant?

Native Plants in flower

Native pigface	Carpobrotus rossii
Bower spinach	Tetragonia implexicoma
Hairy pennywort	Hydrocotyle hirta
Columnar everlastingbush	Ozothamnus purpurascens (just a few in flower)
Bushy peppergrass	Lepidium desvauxii (just a few in flower)
Cape Pillar sheoak	Allocasuarina crassa
Drooping sheoak	Allocasuarina verticillata
Coastal saltbush	Rhagodia candolleana
Stonecrop	Crassula sieberiana
Pinkberry	Leptecophylla juniperina (both flowers and berries)
Coast beardheath	Leucopogon parviflorus
Forest raspwort	Gonocarpus teucroides
Blackwood	Acacia melanoxylon
Prickly moses	Acacia verticillata
Common boobialla	Myoporum insulare (in bud)
Seaspray appleberry	Billardiera ovalis (berries)
Cheesewood	Pittosporum bicolor
Blue lovecreeper	Comesperma volubile
Silver banksia	Banksia marginata
White correa	Correa alba
Forest candles	Stackhousia monogyna (in bud)
Ivyleaf violet	Viola hederacea
Mountain pepper	Tasmania lanceolata
Turquoise berry	Drymophila cyanocarpa (berries)
Blackstripe greenhood	Pterostylis melagramma
Maroon hood	Pterostylis pedunculata

Introduced garden plants and weeds in flower

Common dandelion	Taraxacum officinale
Narrowleaf vetch	Vicia sativa
Fumitory	Fumaria muralis
Garden pelargonium	Pelargonium Xdomesticum
Fuchsia	Fuchsia magellanica
Bent woodsorrel	Oxalis articulata
Grape hyacinth	Muscari armeniacum
Wild daffodil	Narcissus pseudonarcissus
Jonquil	Narcissus tazetta

Bird species recorded this working bee

Fairy prion	Wings of 3 probably taken by raptors or owls; some prions heard in rock crevices
Australasian gannet	Lots seen diving below the cliffs
Wedge-tailed eagle	3 seen soaring over the island on 3 separate days
White-bellied sea eagle	Single bird or pair seen soaring over the island several times
Swamp harrier	Single bird hunting over the island several times
Lewin's rail	One flushed west of winch, and one seen crossing track near winch. Often heard near helipad, near bottom house, and in scrub above top of landing (new blackberry patch)
Kelp gull	Heard north of island and one seen on rocks near Monkeys
Yellow-tailed black-cockatoo	Flock of 4 spent most of one day in scrub east of lower house
Green rosella	Several around most days
Crescent honeyeater	One in bushes near lower house
New holland honeyeater	Large noisy flock around most of the time
Little wattlebird	One in scrub southwest of top house
Flame robin	Female outside middle house devouring caterpillar
Welcome swallow	One flying low along track north of lower house
Tree martin	Small flock flying north of lower quarters on one occasion
Silvereye	Flock in pittosporums near top house and along track
Forest raven	Several about each day – chasing eagles
Black currawong	Several around most days
Common blackbird	Common on the island

A Poem - Giuseppe and David

Karl Rowbottom, former Tasman Island Light-keeper, current FoTI member and dedicated working bee volunteer, will delight you with another of his poems inspired by his past and current times on Tasman.

A word of explanation from Karl first:

The poem Giuseppe and David is based on the two tractors that lived on Tasman Island. It is often asked how the tractors made their way to the top; the answer is in the poem. Some of the poem is true and some of it is just guess work and imagination. The wreck of the Fiat is still on Tasman and the David Brown was taken off and I have been unable to find out where it really ended up. The name David Brown is correct but the name Giuseppe sounded just right for the Fiat. Giovanni Agnelli was one of the chief founders of the Fiat company, he was educated at the Collegio San Giuseppe. Fiat is not a family name, it stands for Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino. I have also drawn on some of the characters that I have worked with on the lights, some old hands may be able to pick them out.

Giuseppe and David

G'day, I'm David Brown

I once lived on Tasman Island's rocky windswept crown
And my story holds very different factors
Because I was one of the island's working tractors

When I arrived I didn't look much chop
Until I was reassembled, when they me got me way up on top
My engine started and away I went
Under my big tyres the grasses bent

I arrived at the lighthouse I was to serve
Gee, its high up there, old Lofty's really got some nerve
So there I stood so new and clean
And saw the sights, not many tractors seen

Then a noise from around the back
A little old tractor with smoking stack
Pulled up along my side, and said with glee
"G'day mate, I'm-a- Giuseppe, I'm-a- from Italy."

Giuseppe Fiat was a dear old bloke
Orange paint and rust, and a burbling throat
There was not too much of him, just worn out tyres, bolts and 'bones'
He rattled, squeaked, squawked and shook, over the grass and stones

Giuseppe said, "They don't-a-want-a- me no more
If-a- I were a human they would-a kick-a-me out-a-da door.
They no longer-a-look after me, treat-a-me like a toy.
The work is now all-a- for you, good-a-luck, you work-a-well my boy."

I didn't take all work from old Giusep
 He had a bit of yakka left in him yet
 So we set about all sorts of work and toil
 And dear old Giusep hobbled over grass and soil

Giuseppe's tyres were so low on tread, his cursing could be heard
 His wheels would start to spin, even on an old sheep's turd
 Some days old Giusep, the trailer he couldn't pull
 "Look out ol' boy" I would say. "It's time for the younger bull."
 I would pull as old Giuseppe, bobbed along the grassy track
 All things on him rattled clicked and clacked
 "Get out of the way you slow old goat." He would hear me say
 "Ah what-a-da hurry boy, find-a- da flowers, and sniff-a-dem on-a-da way."

One day old Giuseppe said, "David, I'm-a-not-a-feelin' good."
 And a rattle erupted, way down beneath his hood
 And he stopped just where he stood
 Take a rest old mate, even though it's not your style
 And rest he did, he rested for a long, long while

Then one day a new keeper came and looked at old Giusep
 And said, "I think you will go again, still got life in this old dog yet"
 The keeper worked away at old Giusep, then put him on full choke
 The old bloke roared into life, and he really cleared his throat

When the MV Cape Pillar came, I worked, I worked real hard
 Haulin' kero to old Lofty, and briquettes to the keeper's yard
 With all that heavy yakka done
 We would just sit about, and have a little fun
 Tellin' yarns 'bout this 'n' that, and just loafin' in the sun

One day I was luggin' a drum of kero on me back
 And just like that, it slipped off and went rollin' down the track
 The keeper started to chase the drum, oh, I thought it the greatest fun
 To sit there and watch that keeper, and could that bugger run

On a day, when old Giusep, was down beside the waterhole
 He rattled coughed and shook, and he looked a sorry soul
 "David boy I'm-a-feelin' crook, I'm-a-not-a-feelin' well
 If I die will I-a-go heaven, or-a- maybe bloody hell
 And-a- when I go, David boy, You serve-a-those keepers well."

And with a rattle, clank and a great cloud of smoke
 Old Giuseppe coughed once more, then gave up his ghost
 The keepers stood there dumbfounded in their disbelief
 And no one saw my tears that day, or shared with me in me grief
 I stayed beside old Giusep all night, until dawn next day
 A keeper came and looked at Giusep, farted, then just walked away

I worked alone for a few more years
 Then a chopper made noises in me ears
 And poor old Lofty's dome, was about to meet its end
 When men and machines began climbin' all over him
 Man that day, way back then, committed a black and mortal sin
 The day they decapitated him
 Now there is a feeble light, burning way up there
 Now dear old noble Lofty's dome, is replaced by "Tupperware"

With warning not, I was in some slings, and hoisted in the air
 No goodbyes to the wreck of old Giusep, they didn't even care
 Now high above the sea, Oh shit, what an awful scare
 Though in a little while I did enjoy the view, it was far beyond all compare
 Like a clumsy bird I glided over sea, then beaches of golden sand
 And I'm plonked gently down, on a mysterious damp green land
 Then I'm loaded, and chained down on a truck
 And off to a farm with cows and chooks, and yards of mud and muck

The farmer works me hard, and I could do me share
 The boss is a tough old bloke, though he's firm and fair
 As time rolls on, and rust is creepin' through me, every bloody where
 I'm gettin' old and feel the strain, and I'm feelin' the jars and jolts
 Pull the plough, grub the stump, I'm feelin' age, in all me nuts and bolts

Then one day in me gearbox came, a nasty grindin' crunch, then CRASH
 The farmer scratched his head and said, "David boy, I think yer 've done yer dash."

Then a muddy truck towed me under a nice old tree
 Now lizards, snakes, grass and ferns twine their way in and out of me

Now I know I shall not be fixed, I've been here too many years
 No one comes to look at me, and there is never any tears
 Nothin's permanent on this earth, and I know me time has come
 And the way this night is goin', I'll be lucky to see the new day's sun

I lay there in the soft night dew, my luck is in, I see the first rays of light
 Though things are not as they seem, it still the middle of the night
 And I feel at peace, as I depart towards that light

I no longer care what the hour is, or if it's day or night
 As I move closer, ever closer, softly drawn toward light
 And I drift along a peaceful path, and wow, ... its like floatin' in the air
 I dream of Tasman Island andold Giuseppe, and... the times we used to share
 I....dream of Tasman Island..... I dream of.....dear old Giusep..... I know....they are just
 over there.

Karl Rowbottom © October 2012

Editor's note: Would love to hear from anyone who knows what happened to David Brown!

John's comments when he kindly forwarded photos of the tractors: "Only the driver had a seat. No shelter for any one or goods, you had to be tough. THEN we got our new David Brown AND then the driver was out of the weather but bugger the passengers!"

"This was taken after we had reassembled the new tractor on top of the Island.

The L/Ks were L/K Archie Stewart, Myself A/HK and R/LK John Davis.



Mechanic Bill Mayne and the chaps from David Brown Factory came for publicity photos."

© John Cook

With FoTI Works Program Manager Chris Creese in 2007 (photo by Erika Shankley)



After a fish oil during the March 2010 working bee – (photo by Erika Shankley)



International Lighthouses and Lightship Weekend

Our first winter working bee, 18 – 25 August 2012, was timed to run in conjunction with International Lighthouses and Lightship Weekend (ILLW).

This annual amateur event, first conducted in 1998, is sponsored by the Ayr Amateur Radio Group in Scotland. During this weekend amateur radio operators converge on lighthouses all around the world and try to make contact with as many other stations as possible. Over the years the numbers have continued to grow with about 450 lighthouses and lightships in some 50 countries participating each year.

The event also promotes public awareness of lighthouses and lightships and their need for preservation and restoration, and at the same time promotes amateur radio and fosters international goodwill.

Soon after we arrived our amateur radio operators and former light keepers, Mike Jenner and Anne Landers, set up their equipment and over the next 24 hours made over 90 contacts with other stations including lighthouses on the Australian mainland and overseas.

Following is Mike and Anne's report:

With the generosity of FoTI we were given the opportunity to operate from Tasman Island for the ILLW this year.....Our bedding, most of the radio gear and other items were deposited at the 5 Mile Beach Depot of Parks and Wildlife on Thursday 16 August for transport to the helicopter pick-up point at Safety Cove near the Remarkable Cave.

We were due to fly out on Saturday morning, 18th August. Out of bed at 0500 and a rendezvous with Anne, VK7BYL at 0700 at Midway Point was arranged to enable our arrival at the Taranna depot of Parks and Wildlife at 0815. The morning was wet, windy and murky with very low cloud, and as we were departing Midway, we received word that the mission was aborted and would be re-appraised at midday.

Back home and a morning of watching the skies but it was still a no-go. Try again Sunday.

This time there was no problem. We duly arrived

at Taranna at 0800 and parked the cars. We were transported, together with the trailer load of gear, to the pick-up point by Parks and Wild Life personnel. In the meantime 5 of our crew had left Cambridge airport in the chopper for the half hour flight to Tasman Island.

After dropping off the first load, Hotel Romeo Delta, a Squirrel, alighted at Safety Cove and Dave, the pilot, supervised the loading of the sling net of gear. Then Anne hopped in the front seat and the remaining four of us crammed into the back seat, complete with life jackets for the ten minute over-water trip to Tasman Island, where we arrived at 1010.

Dave returned to Safety Cove and half an hour later arrived back at Tasman with the sling load, which he neatly deposited right at the back door of the number 3 quarters where we were to be housed.

Unpacking the gear, we climbed the light house to rig one end of the half wave on 80, the other end being tied to the back fence of number 3. The TV ribbon J Pole for 2 metres was hung on a convenient tank stand and the IC 7000 was plugged in and tested prior to having lunch.



The aerial rigged up from the lighthouse to Quarters 3

International Lighthouse Weekend

We notified the local southern amateur community on R2/5 that we were firing up on 40 and at 0305 UTC we contacted Bill, VK7WR, the first of a string of VK7s. From then on it was like a contest! Five or six at a time were calling us and by 0842 UTC we had contacted most of the 92 stations we spoke to. This included a contact with Spain on 20. Contacts were made with 17 Australian lights and two New Zealand lights. Operation was shared between Anne and Mike, one speaking and the other logging, taking turn about as voices and brains gave out!

We took a break for the evening meal, and to thaw out. It was freezing at our end of the house! The intention was to operate all night if conditions and activity warranted it but by the time we got back to the shack, the bands were very quiet activity wise. We had one further contact with the Cape Capricorn light house in Queensland at around 0700 local time Monday morning but there was virtually no ILLW activity and the bands were fairly dead.



Anne and Mike manning the radio

During the remainder of our stay we had several contacts on HF and 2 metres, and packed up all the gear on Friday afternoon ready to fly out Saturday morning. It was a great week. The camaraderie was great. The food was fabulous. The weather was very kind to us. The planned works program was completed and everyone was very happy with the outcomes of the expedition.

Mike would like to take this opportunity to thank Winston, VK7EM for providing coax, and a squid pole antenna as a replacement for the dipole if it came to

grief in the weather. He also recorded some of our contacts. Thanks to Bill, VK7WR who lent us his nice little lightweight power supply and the two metre J pole antenna.



Anne and Mike enjoying a well deserved break

Huge thanks to FoTI for providing the means to activate Tasman Island for the first time since 1969 when Anne and Mike were light keepers on the island.

Mike Jenner, VK7FB and on behalf of Anne Landers, VK7BYL

You can also view their photos of the trip:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/1z32bx0mkgkeetg/QLcy30b001> (Anne's Photos)

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/14mugwaub6ejdby/l0p5zck8FD> (Mike's Photos)

The following is an extract from an article in the **Walkabout Magazine June 1st, 1935**, one of several articles on Tasman kindly forwarded by a satisfied customer after receiving his copy of the Tasman Island Handbook.

Cliff- climbers of Tasman Isle – Men who dared the Southern Ocean in boats of bark

by Thomas Dunbabin

"Sheer from a stormy sea the cliffs of Tasman Island rise black against the sky. To this islet far better than to Norfolk Island applies the saying that it is fit to be the home only of eagles and angels.

Tasman Island is indeed accessible to birds alone, except at one point on the northern side. There a ledge of rock offers a precarious landing, though even this is often swept by the great rollers of the Southern Ocean as they crash and boil around the islet.

From this ledge a goat, or a sure footed climber, may climb to the top of the cliffs up a ridge not quite so steep as the side of a house. And so one comes to the few acres of nearly level land on top of the island, 800 feet above the sea.

Half a mile of deep water, a channel through which small sailing craft sometimes venture when the wind is steady, parts Tasman Island from the great cliffs that line Cape Pillar....

Tasman Island lies right off the extreme end of Cape pillar. On the one side the cliff lined shores stretches northward without a break to the inlet of Fortescue Bay, opening between black rocks eight miles away. To the north-westward an equally unbroken line of cliffs runs away to Stewart Bay, at the head of which lies Port Arthur. Here it is nearly ten miles before you reach a break in the cliffs, where the shore can be reached at the head of a little bay. Here at least, one would say, is an island that never felt the tread of man till the white man came with his superior boats and his seafaring skill. Yet when the lighthouse was built, a skeleton was found on the summit of the island as mute testimony that some Tasmanian Aboriginal had climbed the cliffs before the white man ever thought of planting a light on Tasman Island.....

Stone implements found on the island have shown that the skeleton was not that of some castaway, but that the Tasmanian Aborigines regularly visited the island. They came no doubt to search for the mutton birds that made their nesting holes in the patch of soil on top of the island and the other birds that frequented it.

Writers have pictured the Tasmanian Aborigines as lacking even the elementary art of navigation. All that they could do, it has been asserted, was to float on crude crafts across narrow sheltered channels. The skeleton and worked stones of Tasman Island are mute witnesses against such a belief. To reach Tasman Island, Aborigines had to come out of either Fortescue Bay or Stewart Bay and to navigate for eight to ten miles over one of the stormiest seas in the world.Even on the calmest days there is always a swell and the surf breaks high on the rocks around Tasman and under the Pillar....

The truth is that the Tasmanians of the coast had good canoes and were, within their limits, bold and daring seamen. Their canoes, it is true, were made of bark, but they were workmanlike craft. Peron, the French scientist, who visited Tasmania in 1802, not only described the canoes but gave a drawing of one from the east coast, which was quite a neat, little craft. Amasa Delano, the American sealer, who was on the Tasmanian coast in 1804, does indeed speak of the canoes as ill made, but asserts that they had outriggers. If he is right, they were ahead of the canoes of almost all the natives of the mainland of Australia.....

Today the Aborigines of Tasmania sail the seas no more in their bark canoes...yet still today their descendants sail on the crayfishing ketches to work round the storm beaten, tide swept rocks and reefs to Bass Strait...

Cliff Climbers of Tasman Isle

these men too show the skill and daring of their ancestors who dared the Southern Ocean with but a sheet of bark between them and death.”

Editor's note

A small number of men in the Tasmanian Aboriginal community today have successfully revived the tradition of canoe building, constructing the first bark canoe in nearly 170 years for the Ningenneh Tunapry exhibition at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG). The skills of these men were put to the test when their second canoe was successfully launched in the sheltered waters of Cornelian Bay on the Derwent River. Since this historic moment, several canoes of both stringy-bark and paper-bark have been constructed. One has even been paddled across the D'Entrecasteaux Channel from Bruny Island proving the craft to be stable and seaworthy.

Image and text courtesy TMAG



New members of Friends of Tasman Island, Elaine and Greg Bell, have a very special connection to the Island. Elaine's great-grandfather was George Johnston, the first Superintendent of the Tasman Island lighthouse in 1906. Her grandfather, Leslie Babington Johnston, was a keeper in the 1920s and her mother, Eileen, was born on the island!

At our last meeting, Elaine gave us a fascinating insight into life on Tasman Island light-station in the early years – accompanied by some wonderful old family photos, - which we hope to feature in future FoTI newsletters.

This is a poem written by Leslie Johnston for his sister, Eileen's 65th birthday.

Buggery Hill

by Leslie Johnston

I woke to the strain of driving rain
With the wind from the sou west still
Well bugger me luck to arrive in this muck
To be born on Buggery Hill...

Nurse Cleary sighed as she took me aside
And the nerves in her face were twitching
I only wish I had a nice big dish
to wash this little bitch in...

I'll wash none of mine in a bath made of iron
This place is bloody disgusting
Someone for sure will, have their arse on the
floor when the bottom she starts a-rusting...

This job is a curse said the weary nurse
I've just about had my fill
If I'd been around later and been a man-hater
I might have invented the pill...

But in nineteen-twenty I suppose there are
plenty of kids just waiting there still
But my face starts burning when I think of
returning to come back to Buggery Hill. . .

I'm starting to gloat when I think of the boat
that will one day come here and take me
If I ever yearn to want to return
I hope that some bastard stops me.....

I try and I try as the days go by
 to distinguish Friday from Monday
 I win my fight and get it right
 When the boss dresses up every Sunday...

I try to hold back from that loo at the back
 The place wasn't meant for outsiders
 I have to make sure when I come out the door
 I'm not covered in ashes or spiders...

I have to take dope for there isn't a hope
 That there will ever be any bridgin'
 Because if you take ill you have to wait till
 They let loose a great flock of pigeons....

They tell me that few ever make it -mind you
 For the eagle-hawks swoop down and eat-em
 But what the hell-with this bloody great swell
 If a boat came the sea would defeat 'em

That five year old girl has her head in a whirl
 She's screaming to nurse her new sister
 Those marks on her arse I saw as she passed
 should have been a great blister...

Her dad said her mum put the marks on her bum
 And it looks like they're going to linger
 Came a voice from the bed "As I've always said
 you can see the marks of my fingers"....

I'll tell his dad that I've had that lad
 The rotten little bastard
 Without my will and an Indian Root pill
 I never would have lasted...

It's nearly a three year old I'm told
 And I say this without any mirth
 If I'd been about when he popped out
 He would have been strangled at birth...

Dad came in and said with a grin
 "Now what have we got in the bucket?"
 Do you want me to broil it or boil it
 Or do we still have to pluck it?"...

You should be pleased, the good nurse wheezed
 It's a child, I was going to smother
 And that I'd have did if the poor little kid
 had looked any more like its brother...

In all my bids to deliver kids
 I've never struck such a rotter
 With his bloody "ach you dirty detch
 And ' pooh you dirty dotter"...

That dear little girl with a head full of curls
 I'd keep - but the others I've had 'em
 You should get a bag and make up a swag
 and lose 'em down the chasm...

Said mum I feel fine don't you think it is time
 we decided what we should name her
 She looks a bit wild -that long haired child
 So perhaps first we should tame her...
 Dad said you can tame her and I will name her
 I've thought it out up in the light
 She's Flannigan O'Rielly, Murphy Mick-Really
 But if you like just plain Mike...

Said mum look here Lel I'm taking a spell
 She's the last one I'll be conceiving,
 If you don' t get that note away on the boat
 It's the double bed I'll be a-leaving...

I'll bet you a quid I know what he did
 And no-one knows any better
 When the mails came ashore -always to be sure
 was that neat little box of French letters...

My folks never did have any more kids
 So I was the last of the muster
 And I'll bet you that still on Buggery Hill
 It's blowing a southerly buster...

The real names they gave me I've carried them bravely
 Eileen & Tessie -you guess
 No -not even Bessie- lit had to be Jessie
 After my Gran -De la Jess...

When I was four we were shifted ashore
 Where I started into my schooling
 But when I was ten we were back there again
 milking cows, cutting wood and some fooling...

Aged fourteen we were off it again
 This time to be no more landing
 But my parents went back for another attack
 at that bloody great rock -so commanding...
 I can say to your face there is such a place
 Its right down the bottom of Tassie
 Even Leyland abounds with their trips around
 but he hasn't mentioned it has he?...

Its a rugged spot -whether you like it or not
 And the mutton birds nest there at will
 When my mother was there she was heard to declare
 I named that bloody great hill...

It reaches high to the clouds in the sky
 Just off the end of the mainland
 If your ships Hobart bound it will take you around
 The steep cliffs of old Tasman Island...

Four thirty thousand nights it's been the guiding light
 to ships either coming or going
 Whether rough, wet or fine it's there all the time
 Giving guidance and comfort by glowing...

This rock and I have survived ,I am now sixty five
 And there's plenty who love me
 But I'm telling you I'm one of the few
 to be born on Buggery Hill...

The tale this has told be it ever so bold
 Will probably make you shudder
 But I assure you that most of it's true
 It was written by my BRUDDER!

BREAKING NEWS AND A FUNNY STORY

Erika Shankley

FoTI's main grant writer, Di Smith, was somewhat surprised to receive an official invitation from the Minister for Community Services, Julie Collins, to attend a gathering at the DSS for light refreshments. Di and I went along with high hopes - had we or hadn't we been successful in our Volunteer Grant application for a new fridge for Tasman?

It wasn't surprising that we knew many of those present - Hobart's like that. There were friends from the Hobart Walking Club and sailing circles with a large number wearing navy t-shirts bearing the green Sailability logo.

In her speech, Minister Collins said that the Australian Government is providing 4,800 not-for-profit volunteer organisations with \$16 million as part of the Volunteer Grants 2012 initiative. These grants of between \$1,000 and \$5,000 are being delivered to recognise the valuable contribution volunteers make to Australian society. In Australia, more than six million people volunteer each year, accounting for over one-third of the population. More than 166,000 of those volunteers are set to benefit from this year's grants. Volunteer Grants are one way that the Government can say thank you for the selfless work and commitment of the nation's volunteers.

The penny dropped when a response was given by a member of Sailability, thanking the Minister for the \$5000 that they had received from the 2012 round of Volunteer grants! Di had been invited as a member of Sailability, not FoTI, as she had first thought.

But what of FoTI's application? Mulling it over, Di finally fronted the minister - were we or weren't we successful in our application? A few quick phone calls by various ministerial helpers finally got the result we were hoping for. **Yes, we did get our grant - \$2190 towards a new fridge for Quarter's 3.** The Minister, Di said, had missed a golden opportunity for a bit of extra publicity.

We did enjoy the lunch and it was nice to know that all Di's work has been successful.

Editor's note: Well done Di! To accompany our new fridge, Rotary (Tasman Peninsula Branch) has also kindly offered to purchase FoTI a new gas stove for Q3 – Cooks for future working bees will be pleased.

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