

7—9 FEBRUARY 2015 AUSTRALIAN WOODEN BOAT FESTIVAL  
VOLUNTEERS PRESERVE OUR MARITIME HERITAGE

Erika Shankley



Photo: Erika Shankley

Ever wondered what it was like to live and work on some of Tasmania's remote offshore islands! Well, come along to the Australian Wooden Boat Festival and find out. Wildcare Inc volunteer groups Friends of Deal Island, Maatsuyker Island and Tasman Island will be there!

Just imagine life on these islands set in the Roaring Forties - gale force winds and raging seas battering precipitous cliffs. Nineteenth century light keepers and their families lived for long periods in isolation and showed incredible fortitude and resilience. Modern-day occupational health and safety legislators would, no doubt, cringe at some of the conditions they endured. Indeed, one newspaper correspondent wrote in 1891 that *"the person who had suggested the construction of a light on the top [of Tasman Island] was not altogether compos mentis..."*

Supplies came irregularly. *"We get things we do not require and those most required we do not get"* wrote Superintendent William Baudinet in 1848 at the new Deal Island lighthouse in Bass Strait. To supplement their stores they kept sheep and cattle and grew their own vegetables. One keeper even made his own shoes using the hides of both native and domestic animals – including a dog identified as Rover!

Photos: Ron Fehlberg



Photo: Erika Shankley

There was a flurry of lighthouse building towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with Australia's most southerly lighthouse on Maatsuyker Island built in 1891. Here, keepers of the historic light had to regularly clean the magnificent 1<sup>st</sup> Order Chance Brothers lens assembly, more than three metres high, made from 540 pieces of precisely cut glass.



The iconic lighthouse on Tasman Island is well known to sailors as the final turning point in the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. At 276 metres above sea level it is the highest operational lighthouse in Australia. Erected in 1906, it was the last of the manned lights to be built before the Commonwealth took over administration from the States in 1915.

However, light keeping as a way of life is now a thing of the past. The historic lights on Deal and Maatsuyker Islands have been replaced by automatic fibreglass beacons while Tasman Island lighthouse now operates, automatically, in its original tower.

Lighthouses will always play a key role for mariners. The islands, and their caretaker programmes, are administered by the Parks and Wildlife Service, but Tasmania's unique lighthouse heritage is now actively protected by Wildcare volunteers from the Friends of Tasman, Deal and Maatsuyker Islands through fundraising and working bees.



Photo: Erika Shankley

See them at the 11<sup>th</sup> Australian Wooden Boat Festival, 7—9 February, and catch a glimpse of life on these spectacular islands. Maybe you'd like to join them!

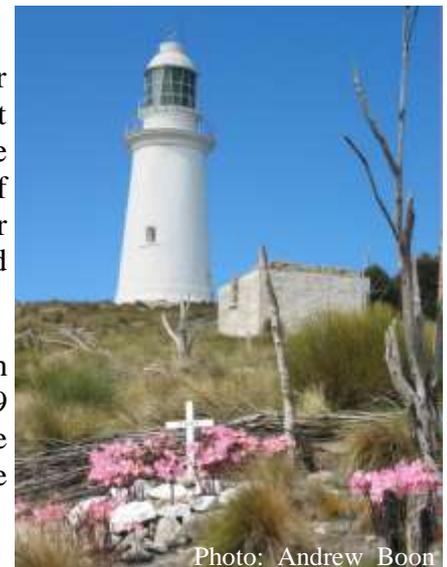


Photo: Andrew Boon