



Friends of Deal Island

# FRIENDS OF DEAL ISLAND

## Newsletter 35

December 2016



Well, it has been longer than we hoped since the last newsletter, but we are still very busy (some of us too busy!) The coming year holds a lot of opportunities. Our lighthouse needs help and we have to get moving. There are big jobs and small which we need help with. The following positions are available. Please apply!(email below)

- There is manning the stall at the Wooden Boat Festival when one person at a time is rostered to work with other volunteers from FoMI and FoTI. This is a chance to meet a whole variety of interesting and interested people.
- FoDI needs both a Secretary and a Treasurer. Neither would be too demanding as we only hold about four meetings a year, and our finances are fed through the Wildcare system, which reduces much of the work.
- A minute taker for the General Meetings would be very helpful.
- An editor and contributors for the newsletter – perhaps four per year
- We need a group of people with energy and good ideas for fund raising and to raise the profile of FoDI and the Deal lighthouse.

### News of our Leaky Lighthouse

The lighthouse has had little maintenance since the Australian Government handed it over to the State in 1998 and it now seems to be deteriorating more rapidly. Volunteer caretakers and some earlier working bees have done some minor work and kept the tower clean. The main problem is due to water entering the tower – mainly through the light room – and then percolating down through the entire structure. The door out to the balcony is very rusty and threatening to fall apart Window frames are rusty, and the walls both inside and out have been stained by the rust. Mould and algae grow on the inside walls. Many cracks have developed in the render on the outside of the tower, with a piece actually falling off during the year. The cost of repairs necessary to stabilise the tower has been estimated \$500 000. But for around \$90 000 the lantern room can be stabilised and made water tight.

Deal Island is hugely significant in Australian history. The vision for the Kent Group National Park as stated in its management plan is that *‘a future visitor finds an intact and well-presented light station on Deal Island, healthy natural biodiversity free of exotic species and viable populations of all indigenous species’*. The light house is central to the light station, and the reason for its existence.

As Friends of Deal Island we must take the challenge to raise funds to **SAVE OUR LIGHTHOUSE**. We have a bit over \$10 000 in Group funds and will be launching a funding campaign with \$90 000 as our target in the near future. The first step is to raise the profile of the island, the light station, the lighthouse, and the work that Friends of Deal Island have been doing.

## Opportunities to raise our profile

**Inaugural Tasmanian Lighthouse Conference:** This event was organised by Thomas Gun and held at Lindisfarne on 26 November. It attracted about 50 people. The eight speakers gave an interesting variety of



illustrated talks. Topics ranged from the information about lighthouses held by the Archives Office and how to access it; two speakers told about life growing up as lighthouse kids, an account of the restoration of Maatsuyker Light, life as a keeper, the history of the Iron Pot, caretaking on Maatsuyker, and then “The History and Mystery of Deal Island” by our own Dallas Baker, a repeat of his successful one given for the Maritime Museum lunchtime program of talks. We also put up our display and sold a few dollars’ worth of cards and cookbooks.

**Display in Maritime Museum of Tasmania:** A wonderful opportunity! We have been offered a small amount of space for a display near the entry to the Carnegie Gallery (upstairs) for the three month period late December to March next year. This is to run concurrently with an exhibition from the National Maritime Museum “War at Sea - the Australian Navy in World War 1”. A small committee is working to prepare this display, and we hope to be able to use it in the future at other venues and continue raising the profile of the importance of the work that we, the Friends of Deal Island have been doing. A \$1,000 grant from the Wildcare Board of Management has been received to assist in preparing the display.

**The Wooden Boat Festival** will be held from 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> February. Friends of Deal Island will be sharing a single booth with Friends of Maatsuyker and Friends of Tasman Island. Our site is at Victoria Dock between Mures and Hunter Street. (For the last Festival, the groups were able to spread out in three booths.) There will be a combined raffle and some merchandise to sell. Most important though will be to provide information about and promote the work that we have been doing on Deal Island. One person from FoDI at a time will be rostered on duty for the length of the show. Please contact Bob or Penny Tyson (contacts on last page) to offer to help. More news later.

**Our AGM** will be held sometime between the Wooden Boat Festival and the Wildcare AGM which is on the 28 March – more details later.

**Deal Island cards:** Kate Hansford, a member of FoDI who has been a member of working bees on several islands - including Deal Island, and other places too - has offered us the use of this wonderful art work to raise funds for our Group. It is available as a card (on good quality paper and with envelope) and measures 13cm x 13cm approximately. Cost of the card is \$4:00. A larger version looks good on a wall, and as the drawing has now been digitalised, it is possible to arrange with the printer to print a size to fit your space. Contact Penny Tyson for your order.



## The November Working Bee



A working bee with eight participants was held from November 3 – 21 at the tail end of spring. As is often the case, the weather played a part with predicted strong winds and wild weather causing an early exit from the island which cost us three lost work days.

Our first glance as we arrived in East Cove, revealed a dramatic change in the vegetation on the surrounding slopes. The native grasses were thick and tall and carrying heavy seed. Other natives too had thickened considerably since the previous visit. The long wet winter, fencing the wallabies out of the main area of the slopes, and removing the inhibiting effects of the sea spurge would have all contributed.

But the weeds also benefitted from the wet weather. **Thistles** were much larger than usual, and their flowers were well developed. There were far fewer than previous years though, and no mature seed was observed.



Surprisingly, 150 flowering **horehound** plants were found in the Jetty Patch which were removed as well as just a few plants from other sites. Although well grown and flowering, none appeared to have seeded. All would have grown in the eight months which followed the last working bee when the patch was last weeded and the successful removal of this number of plants will have made a significant dent in the numbers of seed still stored in the soil. Horehound seed can remain viable in the soil for up to 15 years (!!!) These were weeded just in time, because if the plants had not been dealt with – if working bees were held twelve monthly, for example – then new seed would have been added to the seed bank in the soil which would have been real backwards step.



Some **arum lilies** are still being found in the East Cove area (usually at one leaf stage but a few in flower) A satisfying bagful was collected from the population at Half Way House.



We have been fighting an uphill battle to stop the spread of **ragwort** for a number of years. It was interesting to see that compared with thistles and horehound, the ragwort plants were much more advanced than usual, the development of ragwort towards flowering and production of seed was lagging behind

Only one flowering ragwort was seen over the entire bee! An exciting development in the battle against this weed occurred in February this year when Ragwort Flea Beetles were introduced as biological agents to control it. These have been used successfully on mainland Tasmania for a number of years, where it has had a huge impact on populations of ragwort.

**Heritage and Maintenance:** A variety of maintenance jobs were undertaken including repair of display banners in the museum; the tow behind mower, and other tools and equipment; minor building works, removal of a tree over the wallaby fence, and also a clean-up around the top station of the lighthouse whim.



**The next working bee** has been tentatively planned to be held in March – early April 2017. As yet, no specific funding is available for this working bee. The main activity will be follow-up weeding, and removal of flowering heads and seed from ragwort in the main patch.

**Ragwort Flea Beetles:** Since the beetles were released in February, we have been wondering how they were settling in. Have they successfully survived the long, cold and wet winter? Have they migrated to infect ragwort in different parts of the island? Are they multiplying to sufficient numbers to control ragwort numbers on Deal Island? Have they all blown away? The answer to all such questions is that unfortunately we don't know – and may not know for a few years!

The beetles themselves are tiny, difficult to see, and we didn't see any. It was probably a little too early for them to have left their snug over-wintering places in the roots anyway. The beetles emerge in spring and feed above ground from mid-December to mid-April, leaving shot like holes in the foliage which are easier to spot than the beetles. Two people saw damage like this during the 'bee.

Adults lay up to 400 eggs in summer, which hatch into larvae in autumn. The larvae which live and feed underground in the roots and crown of ragwort plants are small and hard to see too. The best time to see them (by breaking open affected crowns and roots) is from August to October after they have been working away all winter, munching those roots. Working bee members looked very hard for signs of beetle infestations, but didn't feel that anything really definite was seen.

**Vale: Gavin Reynolds:** We are very sorry to note the recent death of Gavin, son of David and Trauti, and brother of Mark. Most people wouldn't know that Gavin designed the Friends of Deal Island logo. Our sincere sympathy goes to David, Trauti Mark and to Gavin's partner Sarah.

**Renew your Wildcare membership: Quick tip (repeated)** - It's a lot easier to renew you Wildcare membership **before** you renew your Parks and Wildlife Annual Car Pass. If you do, simply quote your Wildcare number and you will receive a discount on your Park Pass.

**Check that you actually are a member of Friends of Deal Island** by logging in to Wildcare Tasmania, selecting the "members" button, then "my preferences". Here you will find a list of all the groups you have expressed interest in. If Friends of Deal isn't on your list, use the box provided to "add new group". Please do check. It saves so much time and effort in getting information out to you if we can use member lists which are complete and up to date. If you wish to withdraw your membership, or do not want to receive news by email, do let us know and we can 'unsubscribe' you.

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