



Newsletter

No. 13, December 2018

Cataloguing heritage artefacts on Maatsuyker Island

The lightstation at Maatsuyker Island is acknowledged on the Tasmanian Heritage Register (<https://heritage.tas.gov.au/heritage-listed-places/search-the-register>) for its “historic heritage significance because it represents the principal characteristics of a group of Late Victorian Lightstation Buildings, including the remains of a rare supply haulage system and unusually intact lighthouse.”

2018 has seen completion of a catalogue of heritage objects from the island; undertaken with grants that FOMI has received through the Maritime Museums of Australia Project Support Scheme (MMA PSS <https://www.anmm.gov.au/about/grants-and-awards/funding-for-maritime-heritage>).

Rosanna Cameron, an ex-Maatsuyker caretaker and a trained Museum Registrar, has worked on the catalogue over the decade and FOMI has been fortunate and thankful for her time and skills. FOMI committee member Ailsa Fergusson spent 6 days in the island in 2017 to complete documentation of objects for the catalogue that can be viewed at https://anmm.blog/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/30576-PRINT_Flat_optimized.pdf.



Heritage objects
Photo credit: Ailsa Fergusson



Seafarers Festival, Bellerive Boardwalk Sunday 28th October

Fair weather, festivities, fun, food and friendship all contributed to an enjoyable low key event.

Some got quite enthusiastic about the pigeon post challenge, spending quite a while filling the 2 x 5 cm box with very tiny writing. Our location away from the main children’s activities made the day a little quieter than in past years. This meant we indulged in much more adult conversations and sold more merchandise than previously.

Thanks to all who were able to help out.



FOMI helpers
Photo credit: Ailsa Fergusson

Busy Bees - 2017/18

FOMI completed two successful working bees on Maatsuyker Island over the 2017/18 season. The larger working bee took place from 27 November – 7 December 2017 with a team of 10 undertaking weed control (systematic survey and follow-up control of blackberry, Veronica (formerly Hebe) elliptica, Montbretia), short-tailed shearwater breeding population monitoring (checking study plot burrows for the presence of nests), and restoration of flooring in the historic houses. FOMI are passionate about the special values of Maatsuyker Island and, with removal of invasive weeds one of our most important jobs, the December team attacked an agapanthus patch with gusto! Half a tonne of agapanthus ended up on the back of 'Dave the Daihatsu' destined for disposal.



Some of the December 2017 working bee crew after their enthusiastic removal of invasive agapanthus. From left: Jonah Wiltshire, Christine Howe-Piening, Jesse Siebler (PWS Volunteer Caretaker), John French, Helen Achurch and Bruch Frankcombe.

Photo credit: Marina Campbell

A second working bee team of three were on the island from 27 February – 5 March 2018 to do more weed control program work (focussed control of Montbretia and checking of outlier weed waypoints) and to check short-tailed shearwater burrows in the study plots for the presence of chicks. With the working bee overlapping with PWS Volunteer Caretaker changeover, the FOMI crew enjoyed the company of the outgoing Caretakers, Taylor Stevens and Jesse Siebler, and welcomed the incoming Caretakers, Andrew and Jenny Geytenbeek.

FOMI are very grateful for funding support from an NRM South Naturally Inspired Grant, the Pennicott Foundation and Helicopter Resources, as well as the support of PWS and the FOMI Committee fundraising to enable the successful 2017/18 working bees.



March 2018 Working Bee: Jeremy Hood (PWS), Marina Campbell (FOMI), Sheryl Hamilton (FOMI), Jenny Geytenbeek (incoming PWS Volunteer Caretaker), Jesse Siebler and Taylor Stevens (outgoing PWS Volunteer Caretakers), Andrew Geytenbeek (incoming PWS Volunteer Caretaker) and Amy Saunders (FOMI).

Photo credit: Marina Campbell



December 2017 Working Bee team: Back row - John French, Helen Achurch, Taylor Stevens and Jesse Siebler (PWS Volunteer Caretakers, in yellow coats), Jonah Wiltshire, David Masters, David Milne, Bruce Frankcombe, Ron Fehlberg; Front row - Christine Howe-Piening, Marina Campbell, Sheryl Hamilton.

Photo credit: Marina Campbell

Signal flags – the sequel

All the signal flags were completed a few months ago. For the set of small flags, Glenda invented a brilliant scheme for attaching a double-sided canvas sleeve to each flag which allows them either be hoisted on individual poles, or threaded on ropes for display at FOMI events and festivals here on mainland Tasmania. The set of large flags had ropes and sturdy clips attached professionally, so that they could be hoisted on heavy-duty ropes strung from the Maatsuyker lighthouse on special occasions – ‘the lighthouse dressed in its flags’. The large set was sent down to the island with Davey and Di Masters at the end of September when they started their caretaker stint. They will be stowed in the long-empty set of flag canisters in the base of the lighthouse – what an historic moment.



Jenny and Andrew Geytenbeek, the caretakers who changed over with Davey and Di in late September, gave FOMI a very generous donation which covered the 24 small flags which hadn't been sponsored, although they had been sewn and the makers' names were already embroidered on their hems. Jenny Scott volunteered to embroider the rest of the sponsor names, and was then faced with embroidering 24 'Andrew and Jenny Geytenbeek's. After some thought, she rang them on the island. "Maatsuyker Takeaway Pizza Service"! was the cheery greeting on the other end of the line. We discussed the situation. They were happy with 12 'A&J' and 12 'J&A' as the embroidered names. Phew. They were duly completed, and when Andrew and Jenny returned we presented them with a set of photos of the small flags and the embroidered names.



Signal flags
Photo credit: Jenny Scott

FOMI Committee and Strategic Plan

Wildcare celebrates 20 years this year and FOMI celebrates 15 years. The FOMI Committee elected at the recent annual general meeting are: Marina Campbell President, Jenny Scott Vice President, Sheryl Hamilton Secretary, Derek Inglis Treasurer and general committee Fiona Taylor, Ailsa Fergusson, Amy Saunders, Ron Fehlberg, David Masters, David Milne, Gary Miller and James Stone.

It is a joy to work with such a team of enthused and dedicated people. No more dedicated than Fiona Taylor and Ailsa Fergusson inaugural members of FOMI.

The work of FOMI is guided by our Strategic Plan. This year we reviewed our existing plan and have developed a new plan to take us forward to 2021. You can find a copy in files on the FOMI page.

FOMI philosophy

We care about the island. Even if some of us never go there, we want to know that the historic buildings are being conserved, the Aboriginal heritage is acknowledged and respected, and the Island's animals, plants and marine environment are protected.

FOMI mission

To contribute to the conservation, protection and recognition of the historic, natural and Aboriginal values of Maatsuyker Island.

What's important to us

- Working collaboratively with the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service and other stakeholders.
- Having a long term commitment.
- Conservation and protection of the historic, cultural and natural values of the Island.
- Promoting community understanding and appreciation of the Island's values.
- Recognition of the variety of skills and expertise brought to FOMI by our volunteer base.



Seals on Maatsuyker Island
Photo credit: Di and David Masters

Going Maatpsycho

by current PWS Volunteer Caretakers, David and Di Masters

As I write this, we are fast approaching the half way moment of our 6 month placement as volunteer caretakers at Maatsuyker Island. On Sunday the 9th of December we will have the very real pleasure of nine visitors – 5 PWS staff and 3 FOMI members. Visitors are rare in this part of the world. I suppose that can be a mixed blessing. We will even have a 'real' Christmas dinner while they are here. Part of the visit is to resupply us with (mostly) fresh fruit and veges but also a few depleted necessities. It is significant. It marks the half-way point of each caretaker's time. In those three months we have had nine visitors in all and seven of those all came on the same day.



During the past 3 months, we have had 168kph winds to rattle our walls, rain, fog, hail and some lovely sunshine. There is the constant moaning of the seals below us and every sunrise and sunset, the loudly incessant squabbling of the shearwaters as they leave and return home from a hard day's work. Today, we saw (literally) hundreds of dolphins passing the house (in the water of course but right in front of the house!!).

Our right brains see the work to be done: drains needing to be cleared, weeded and swept; the lawns to be mowed (the previous caretakers, Andrew and Jen, couple of characters with boundless energy and good humour, carried a GPS tracker while they mowed all of the lawns – 16 kms of mowing!!!!), tracks to clear, buildings to maintain, walls and ceilings to demould and weather to observe.

Luckily, our left brains see things differently: sunrises and sunsets, wilderness in many moods, growing and making our own food, history preserved, exceptional wildlife, freedom, solitude and elastic time.



Every day – EVERY DAY – we rise at 5:30 to make weather observations and relay them to the Bureau of Meteorology. At first this was in complete darkness, a serious challenge indeed, but gradually we have come to understand the weather better and having daylight certainly does help to make some sensible observations of clouds (and a chance to argue amongst ourselves) and sea conditions. It is a good thing to have a better understanding of the weather.

We are privileged to be here, there's no doubt about that, and we will be very sorry to leave when the time comes around and they won't let us live here anymore. In the mean time though, we are having the most fabulous time and are/will be making the very most of it here. AND, on top of every thing else Maatsuyker has to offer, we have the most wonderful lightstation to care for. Some visiting "dignitary" once commented that the Maat lighthouse was "disappointingly small". We think that she (?) is just little enough.



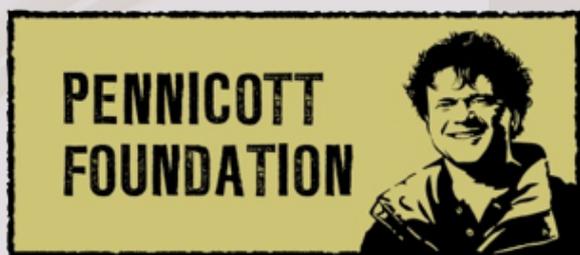
Current PWS volunteer caretakers, Di and David Masters
Photo credit: Di and David Masters

Pennicott Foundation donation

FOMI is extremely grateful to Robert Pennicott and the Pennicott Foundation for the ongoing commitment and new donation of \$5,000 towards the weed control and shearwater monitoring program for the 2018/19 season.

We are very encouraged by the weed control work on Maatsuyker, undertaken since 2003. We aim to continue controlling blackberry, Hebe elliptica and Montbretia for at least the next five years, with the ultimate objective to declare these weeds eradicated. We are proud of the concurrent and complimentary shearwater monitoring program. To date, FOMI have undertaken monitoring of the short-tailed shearwater breeding population for five seasons, with the aim to collect at least 10 years of data.

The Pennicott Foundation donation will enable FOMI to continue these valuable conservation programs on Maatsuyker.



Membership helps all Wildcare groups

FOMI encourages all friends to ensure their Wildcare membership is up-to-date. To do this follow this link www.wildcaretas.org.au to pay your membership or even better receive your membership for free when you renew your PWS pass. Once you have renewed please ensure you have 'joined the branch' by ticking the Friends of Maatsuyker Island branch. You can become a member of any number of branches.



David and Diane Masters, PWS Volunteer Caretakers, on the lighthouse balcony as the December 2018 Working Bee team depart on the helicopter. The lighthouse is decorated for the first time with some of the new Signal Flags made by FOMI. On the left side, the flags spell "FOMI". On the right side, the flags spell "X" (for Mark 'the X-factor' Sheriff, lighthouse restorer extraordinaire) and "PWS".

Photo credit: Sheryl Hamilton



FOMI extend a huge shout of thanks to the PWS team for all their support throughout the year.



FOMI thank Heli-Resources for their support toward our working bees.

Interested in joining or knowing more about Friends of Maatsuyker Island

Contact: Sheryl Hamilton, Secretary, FOMI - Wildcare Inc. wildcaremaatsuyker@gmail.com

Or visit: www.wildcaretas.org.au

Like us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/groups/FriendsOfMaatsuykerIsland