TNPA NEWS

TASMANIAN NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION INC

Newsletter No 23 Winter 2016

Celebrating Mt Field National Park

Giant swamp gum, Mt Field National Park

Image credit: Mark Clemens

"A National Park such as this now set apart may and ought to be a most valuable possession in many ways, in which the "business asset" value may be the least worth taking into account - for there are things far more worthy to be thought of than the lucre to be obtained from tourists or by other means. Such things as healthy and educative holidays, days among those crowded solitudes that appeal to the finer natures, opportunities for communing with the spirits of the trees and the brooks … will not be without their real value, though it may not be expressible in pounds, shillings and pence." (The Mercury, 10 Mar 1915)

See article on page 7 on the history of the establishment of Mt Field National Park

THANK YOU

The TNPA Committee would like to thank the following people and organisations who over the past 6 months have volunteered their time to assist the TNPA, or have helped us in other ways.

TNPA Autumn Walks: Rosemary Bruce, Catharine Errey, Peter Franklin, Rob Hill, Bec Johnson, Anne McConnell, Lesley Nicklason

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EDITORIAL

This year, 2016, marks the centenary of the declaration of Tasmania's first national park, Mt Field, followed in the same year by Freycinet.

In the case of Mt Field we can be thankful that in 2013 the park was at last included in the TWWHA (Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area). In this issue of TNPA News we celebrate Mt Field National Park, a place dear to the hearts of so many Tasmanians – and others from further afield.

Freycinet National Park has also been a favourite holiday place for generations of Tasmanians but with the added distinction of being one of the state's top tourist destinations it runs the risk of being 'loved to death'.

In 2014 the Tasmanian government called for expressions of interest (EoIs) for commercial tourism developments in Tasmania's national parks and one of the proposals put forward was for expansion of the Freycinet Lodge, involving an enlarged lease within the Freycinet National Park.

The Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) is unable to consider development proposals which do not comply with the existing management plan for the reserved area and this was (and still is) the case regarding Freycinet. So, as it had done late last year to facilitate a tourism development proposal for Narawntapu National Park, the government proposed to change the existing (2000) management plan for Freycinet.

The closing date for comment on the draft plan was 1 Feb 2016. However the government hadn't reckoned on the public response to proposed changes to what the PWS website calls 'The jewel of Tasmania's stunning coastline'. A strong public campaign was launched, making good use of the tools of social media, and while the Minister for Tourism was not prepared to give ground, the proponent, the motoring body RACT, was sensitive to the damage that could be done to its standing in Tasmania – and was prepared to meet with and listen to members of the community. After consulting with the PWS and its own members the RACT took the decision to withdraw its proposal for an extension to the leasehold site (into the national park) and instead to limit its redevelopment to its existing footprint. (See Nick Sawyer's article *What Has TNPA Been up to Lately?* in this issue of TNPA News).

The TNPA, along with other groups and the concerned community, commends the RACT for listening and responding.

Where this leaves the proposed changes to the management plan for Freycinet National Park remains to be seen.

This issue of TNPA News includes an excellent piece by Debbie Quarmby on the history of the establishment of Mt Field National Park. Reading this article, one cannot help but conclude that some things do not change: 100 years ago and we learn of the all too familiar clash of values between those who see national parks as a means of making money from tourists and those who view them as precious places that need to be preserved for posterity. By and large the politicians, government officials and landowners were the ones whose names were given to natural features in the Park – but William Crooke, the visionary who fought tirelessly for the establishment of the Park so that "the people of Tasmania in the far future be able to see what primeval Tasmania was like" and for "the preservation of the native flora and fauna," and "the recreation of the people of Tasmania", was the one lauded by the public after his death.

NEW BOOK BY MARK CLEMENS

"The Field of Dreams" – a book of essays and photographs, celebrating the centenary of Mt Field National Park.

The Field of Dreams is the first book ever written about Mt Field, Tasmania's oldest national park. The book is a series of essays describing journeys on foot into this exceptional national park. They delve deeply into the personal and universal connection with natural places.

The book is a series of essays describing personal journeys on foot within Mt Field National Park - together with Mark's images.

The launch of *Field of Dreams* was 29 August 2016, the centenary date of the establishment of Mt Field National Park.

The image on the front cover of this issue of TNPA News was donated by Mark. It features in the book.

by Nick Sawyer

What has the TNPA been up to lately?

This is an expanded version of the talk presented by Nick Sawyer during the introduction to Grant Dixon's very successful Mountain Seasons public event for TNPA on 11 August 2016.

The TNPA is the only conservation group which has the good management of Tasmania's existing reserve system as its main priority.

The TNPA's main role is to advocate good planning for our reserves, not only the protection of natural and cultural values but also the protection of the visitor experience, which is extremely important but often overlooked. Why else do proposals involving helicopters attract so much controversy? They have little or no impact on the flora or fauna or cultural values of the land but a huge impact on the experience of visitors – often described by that overused phrase "the wilderness experience".

The TNPA is an active member of the National Parks Australia Council. This is the umbrella organisation for state National Park Associations (the Victorian and NSW NPAs are major conservation groups with thousands of members). TNPA's membership gives it an opportunity for input into national issues - which would otherwise be beyond its resources.

The TNPA has been involved in the sorts of activities that most people probably expect of a National Parks Association. The organisation made a submission to the enquiry into last summer's bushfires in the TWWHA and has had input into Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) recreation management of the Walls of Jerusalem, the Overland Track and Frenchmans Cap. But the TNPA's main focus has been on opposing the inappropriate tourism developments in our national parks and reserves that have been encouraged by our Liberal state government's election promise to "unlock" our national parks.

TNPA has a low public profile. This is partly because the TNPA has few resources but also because most of its recent effort has gone into working through an informal group of environmental NGOs. This has enabled the TNPA to achieve more than it would have been able to do working alone.

Not Expressions of Interest

Before moving on to the state government's well publicised call for Expressions of Interest in tourism developments in our national parks, it is important to remember that the state government's "anything will be considered" attitude has encouraged several tourism proposals in our reserves outside the EoI process. Most notably:

- The Mount Wellington Cable Car has been on hold for years but has won some concessions which may facilitate its eventual approval.
- Cradle Mountain Cable Car. Yes, there are major issues with visitor access to Dove Lake but these deserve a serious consideration of all possible options – not a Clayton's plan that spruiks an extremely expensive and intrusive cable car.
- The refurbishment of Bernacchi, the derelict former Antarctic Division training facility at Lake Augusta, into an upmarket fishing lodge. There has been no mention yet of the use of helicopters to transport clients to remote lakes on the plateau but this could be authorised once the revised management plan for the TWWHA comes into force.
- Lake Geeves Track. A proposal for a high standard walking track (with huts) to the base of Federation Peak, arguably Australia's prime wilderness walking destination. This would have major impacts on the wilderness value of the area and be extremely expensive to construct for a market that is likely to be very limited.

Expressions of Interest

This was essentially a call for an industry brain-storm – developers were encouraged to put forward ideas regardless of the requirements of the current management plan. The assessment process is characterised by an absence of openness and transparency, regardless of the description on the official website. The Minister is advised by a committee of senior public servants on compliance with basic legislative requirements. Minimal information on proposals is available to the public and there is no provision for disclosure of the advice to the Minister. In some circumstances there may be public comment but there are no appeal rights.

The assumption underlying the call for EoIs was that there is a pent-up demand for tourism ventures in national parks which is holding back the development of the tourism industry. Critical scrutiny of the projects proposed in the first round of EoIs demonstrates this to be false. None are game changers. A few could easily have received approval

through normal channels; several are what you would expect from a brain-storm – they are never likely to be viable. Several are for commercial huts (sometimes described as "standing camps") on walking tracks. These mostly appear to be a pre-emptive strike by the biggest existing operator to exclude competition through locking in approvals.

The proposal to expand the RACT's Freycinet Lodge further into the national park was an EoI but the RACT eventually revealed in discussion with groups, including the TNPA, that its main aim was to modernise existing facilities; there was no need to expand into the surrounding national park and little thought had been given to what they would do with the extended lease if it was offered. Once the RACT realised that the expansion was controversial but the upgrade of existing facilities was not, the expansion proposal was withdrawn.

Changes to Tasmanian planning legislation

The main changes passed the Tasmanian parliament last year with remarkably little media attention, however they will not fully take effect until the corresponding State Planning Provisions are finalised – these are currently subject to hearings so this could take some time. Even amongst people who are aware of the legislation, most have assumed that it relates only to urban planning. Wrong! It also has major implications for development assessment within reserves.

Reserves will fall within the Environmental Management Zone, where development is a permitted use (i.e. it receives automatic approval by council) if it has the requisite approvals from PWS (this is already the case with some but not all councils). This will result in automatic approval of any proposal approved under the EoI process while the main process for the assessment of non-EoI proposals is the PWS' Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA). **This is not statutory (hence it cannot provide appeal rights or be subject to legal challenge) or even well defined, and provides for public comment only on the largest proposals.** The RAA is not inherently a bad process but it is inadequate for the task; it originated as internal PWS assessment guidelines – it was never intended for assessment of proposals such as commercial accommodation or to mesh with other planning legislation.

The World Heritage Area Management Plan

We are likely to see the revised management plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area take effect before the end of the year. The draft was released for public comment late in 2014 and it has also been subject to critical attention from the World Heritage Committee including a visit to Tasmania by a Reactive Monitoring Mission.

The Director's report and public statements by the state government give a good idea of the changes to be incorporated in the final plan.

Superficially, things look positive. Massive public criticism of the draft's downplaying of wilderness and wilderness protection resulted in some recognition of wilderness being restored to the plan. The World Heritage Committee expressed strong support for wilderness and the control of tourism development, and the state government has agreed to incorporate their recommendations.

In reality, the outlook is gloomy. The state government has committed to restoring the name of the wilderness zone, but this is largely symbolic; it has made no substantial changes to what may occur within this zone. Likewise, **the World Heritage Committee's recommendations missed the crucial point of the need for a robust development assessment process**. This leaves the way open for the state government to incorporate most of their recommendations concerning criteria for tourism developments with little risk of them being enforceable, so the final plan will open the door to many currently prohibited proposals with little opportunity to challenge them.

The TNPA has written to the new federal minister Josh Frydenberg in a last ditch attempt to get him to intervene with the state government but it is unlikely that he will see any political advantage in doing so.

This is probably the perfect outcome for the Tasmanian Government – the changes to the plan give the appearance of addressing criticism from the Tasmanian public and the World Heritage Committee while doing very little to inhibit their stated intention to "unlock" the World Heritage Area for tourism developments.

Where to from here?

In an attempt to address all of the concerns described above, the TNPA's main ongoing campaign continues to be the need for a proper (statutory) process for assessment of development proposals in reserves. It needs to be:

- Statutory – defined in law;
- Open and transparent – plans and all major documentation available to public;
- Provide for public comment; and
- Provide for third party appeal rights.

Tasmanian planning legislation provides all these for the assessment of development proposals on private land. Why don't we have the equivalent for developments on reserved land?

It is the absence of such a process that permits the Tasmanian Government's Expressions of Interest process to proceed and will allow any development not explicitly prohibited under the new World Heritage Area Management Plan to proceed with little or no scrutiny.

There is another common theme to all of TNPA's current concerns: the need for consensus on the future of Tasmanian tourism. There's general acknowledgement that our greatest strength is wilderness – a place to appreciate wild nature without an awareness of the proximity of modern civilisation – so why don't we embrace this instead of trying to diminish it with proposals for accommodation in wilderness and helicopters and cable cars that make Tasmania the same as everywhere else? If we had consensus we could plan to provide a range of experiences that cater for almost everybody while excluding a few intrusive activities that diminish the experience for everyone, without divisive public conflict over each proposal.

TNPA REPORT

TNPA Autumn Walks Report

South Wellington *Image credit: Bec Johnson*

This year the TNPA and our wonderful walks leaders, all volunteers, again offered the Tasmanian public a varied program of bushwalks. TNPA Autumn Walks 2016 was organised and coordinated by Anne McConnell.

The Autumn Walks program appeals to people in the community who are keen to visit and walk in our many scenic places and who welcome the opportunity to go there with someone who knows how to get there, knows the tracks – and is knowledgeable about the history and natural history of the area. The only disappointment for walks participants is that the TNPA is not able to run the walks all year round! Certainly we see some of the same people joining the walks each year.

South Wellington *Image credit: Bec Johnson*

This year's program included:

Ice House Track/South Wellington,
coordinator: Bec Johnson

Recherche Bay historical walk,
coordinator: Anne McConnell

Pipeline Track, Wellington Park,
coordinator: Rosie Bruce

Cape Hauy, Tasman Peninsula,
coordinator: Catharine Errey

Blue Tier - Don Mine/Boiler/Duco Adit Circuit Walk,
coordinator: Lesley Nicklason

Chauncy Vale – Caves & History,
coordinator: Bec Johnson

Mt Field National Park: Lake Fenton/Lake Webster/ Lake Dobson circuit walk, coordinator: Peter Franklin

Fern Tree to Lenah Valley via Junction Cabin – public transport walk, coordinator: Rob Hill

Caves at Chauncy Vale *Image credit: Bec Johnson*

Extracts from walks reports:

South Wellington/Ice House Track

The walk was from the Springs carpark, returning the same way. We had great weather - calm, clear and sunny.

Looked at the sites of the old Springs Hotel and Woods Hut, looked at some photos of them on the internet on my phone, and everyone felt there should be more interps there onsite.

We found 3 icehouses plus a maybe-icehouse. From the topmost icehouse we walked south (left) along the contour to look into the Devils Gulch, which is pretty impressive. Then back up the track to South Wellington and looking into the same basin from above. Around South Wellington and west along the track for a little way towards 'Potato Fields', then we left that track to head overland north to intercept the track to Smiths Monument. All enjoyed the views and the day.

Chauncy Vale

My daughter Katie came with me on both walks, and was a great help in leading the kids through the caves and into the 'kids only' areas. For me (and I guess for Nan Chauncy) taking kids into the bush and helping them gain confidence is what Chauncy Vale is all about. One of the caves is called the Childrens Cave, and the natural sandstone pool in the creek is called Eve's Bath (named for Nan's younger sister.) Australia's first ever outdoor education structure (so the plaque proclaims) was built at Chauncy Vale by the Hutchins School in 1946. So this is becoming a big theme for me, especially since the Parks and Wildlife Service Forum on 7 April this year when Dr Bill Jackson talked about the younger generation being likely to develop weaker bones and nature-deficit disorder.

Cape Hauy track *image credit: Catharine Errey*

Cape Hauy track *image credit: Catharine Errey*

Cape Hauy, Tasman Peninsula

There was a lot of interest in this walk as Cape Hauy is included in the 'Three Capes Walk' which had received much publicity and promotion prior to and after its opening late in 2015.

We did the walk as an 'out and back' from Fortescue Bay. The weather was kind to us and participants were impressed by the coastal scenery, cliffs and offshore rocky islands – and the pair of sea eagles that soared above us at one point. The downside was that the track, and particularly the Cape Hauy lookout, was very busy – as well as day walkers like ourselves there were many people doing the last leg of the Three Capes Track, including some 'independent walkers' with large backpacks.

Lake Fenton/Lake Webster/ Lake Dobson circuit

Peter Franklin, who led the walk, has a longstanding connection with Mt Field National Park and is one of the key people in the Friends of Mt Field group of volunteers. The first section of the walk followed the old pack track, which used to be the only way that enthusiastic skiers could get up to the snow slopes and huts, in the days before the Lake Dobson road was put in. The 'Friends of' group reopened this track, which had become overgrown through disuse.

The endemic deciduous beech (Nothofagus gunnii) treated us to a display of autumn gold near the shores of Lake Fenton.

The most challenging part of the day was the crossing of the Broad River (it's actually a creek and not broad, but there's no bridge!) with some doing elegant rock hopping and others going for the boots off and wet feet approach.

Lake Webster, Mt Field National Park *Image credit: Catharine Errey*

by Debbie Quarmby

The National Park at Mt Field:
A great achievement for TNPA's predecessor the National Park Association

Mt Field National Park - officially announced in the *Tasmanian Government Gazette* on 29 August 1916 - turned 100 years old in August this year. It was one of a few reserves declared then, but it was the only one named 'National Park', and so it has become known as Tasmania's first national park.

Quite a while before Mt Field National Park was declared, Tasmania's national park movement emerged through interests in flora, fauna and scenery preservation, tourism and public access to parklands. Interests that were complementary in some respects and contradictory in others, but then, the complementary aspects - a common goal of achieving national parks - dominated largely because the contradictory aspects were not apparent to most people in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Back then there were a lot fewer people, travelling was not as easy and didn't involve noisy helicopters and planes flying over solitude, and structures that were built within parks to cater for visitors were relatively few, small, unobtrusive and accessible to everyone.

From the 1820s to the 1860s, amateur natural historians studied, ordered, classified and drew living things, and they became aware of the impacts of habitat change being caused by human activity, including species extinction. Initially they studied pieces of nature independently of their surroundings, but during the 1860s there was a shift towards an ecological approach to natural history. George Perkins Marsh warned, in his book *Man and Nature*, published in 1864, that human's impact on the natural world, impacts such as forest clearing, extensive land clearance and pollution, would eventually render the earth unfit for human habitation, and, while his book was controversial, it had a strong influence on naturalists.

Responding to growing concerns about wildlife depletion, destruction of wildlife habitat and natural scenery, the 1860s saw the Tasmanian government pass more comprehensive legislation to protect fauna, and declare the reserves. The *Wastelands Act 1858* formalised guidelines for setting aside land for public purposes such as roads, schools, churches and recreation. The first public reserves proclaimed under the Act were recreational parks in, or adjoining, townships, botanical gardens, cricket grounds, racecourses and agricultural showgrounds. Complementing the *Wastelands Act, the Queen's Domain & Launceston Swamp Act 1860* dedicated 634 acres of the Queen's Domain, Hobart, and 72 acres of the eastern por-

tion of the Launceston Swamp, for public use and recreation.

In the 1860s, alongside the movement to create urban parks and set aside land for public purposes, a movement for reserves of a type that came to typify the national park concept gathered momentum in Australia and the USA. The parks that this movement proposed were generally larger and further away from cities; they featured elements of impressive natural scenery such as waterfalls, rock formations or stands of ancient forest and, soon after their inception, they were also promoted as wildlife sanctuaries.

The first reserve of this kind in Tasmania was created when 300 acres around Russell Falls was withdrawn from sale or selection under the *Wastelands Act*. The reserve is attributed to Louis Shoobridge, who was apparently first shown the falls by Robert Browning who, at 'Fentonbury', was a neighbour to Louis at 'Fenton Forest'. Though the approximate position of the falls, named Russell Falls after a member of an early exploratory expedition to the area, had been shown on maps from as early as 1830, not many people knew of their whereabouts at the time Browning took Louis to see them around 1880. The falls were at the time known as 'Brownings Falls'. More accessible falls nearby had become known as 'Russell Falls' and the name was later transferred. Recognising the potential of the falls and surrounding forests as a scenery and forest reserve, Shoobridge sought to have the area protected.

By 1884 Louis' influence had resulted in the Minister for Lands requesting that 300 acres around Russell Falls and an access road be surveyed for the purpose of making the area a public reserve. A proclamation advising that the area was withdrawn from sale or selection under the *Wastelands Act* appeared in the *Tasmanian Government Gazette* on 10 March 1885, and Louis Shoobridge became a local contact for inquiries relating to the falls reserve.

Following the example of Russell Falls, areas set aside for nature conservation and hardy recreation expanded; a listing of reserves prepared in September 1899 included twelve scenery, falls (of which the Russell Falls reserve was one) fernery and cave reserves. By the turn of the century the national parks and nature reserves movement was well established in both Australia and the USA. The USA had Yellowstone National Park, a wilderness park of 3,300 square miles; Yosemite which, though not called a national park, was a national park type reserve of 1,500 square miles, and some smaller national park-like reserves. NSW declared Royal National Park in 1879, and that was followed by other capital cities setting aside large parklands. In Tasmania, lobbying by members of a number of organisations, notably the Tasmanian Tourist Association (TTA), Tasmanian Field Naturalists Association and the Australian Natives Association, resulted in an understanding that part of the eastern slope of Mt Wellington would become a national park. In 1871, 3,750 acres of the mountain fronting North-West Bay River had been reserved and management vested in the Hobart Corporation for the purpose of the city's water supply, and legislation passed in 1906 foreshadowed transferring some of this land to national park status. This understanding led park proponents to refer to the reserve as a national park, and the Minister of Lands actually acknowledged it as such. A Mount Wellington National Park didn't eventuate, however, because the Hobart Corporation argued against it on the grounds of water contamination and won the debate.

Soon after the mountain park disappointment, national park proponents became focused on the Russell Falls Reserve as a favored site for the State's first national park. Around 1910 William Crooke, a retired teacher and keen angler who had a fishing cottage on the Russell River near Russell Falls, teamed up with a number of men, most of whom had previously been involved in the Mt Wellington National Park campaign, in an effort to have the Russell Falls/ Mt Field area proclaimed a national park. Among those men were Henry Dobson, Leonard Rodway, Herbert Nicholls. Clive Lord, Louis Shoobridge and William Legge.

While it has been suggested that Herbert Nicholls and Leonard Rodway initiated the push for Mt Field to become a national park while holidaying at Mt Field East, William Crooke became the most prominent figure in the campaign. In October 1911 the Southern Tasmanian Railway Exploration League and the Tyenna Railway League, of which Crooke was a committee member, arranged a parliamentary trip to Tyenna. The 1911 Public Works estimates had included the sum of £80,000 to extend the Derwent Valley Railway further along the Russell River towards Tyenna and the trip was arranged in order that parliamentarians could be shown the Russell Falls, to which the railway extension would improve access. Crooke acted as host and guide to the party, which included the Liberal Premier, Sir Elliott Lewis, a number of members of parliament, the Surveyor-General and a *Mercury* reporter. Following refreshments at Crooke's cottage, the party visited Russell and Lady Barron Falls with Crooke and some local residents including William Belcher, who had cut tracks to the Falls and to Mount Field East for the Tourist Association, acting as guides.

In 1912 William Crooke formed the National Park Association from an amalgam of people representing community organisations in support of the national park idea. Comprising representatives of the Tasmanian Tourist Association, Southern Tasmanian Railways Association, Australian Natives Association, Royal Society, Field Naturalists Club, University of

Tasmania, Fisheries Commission and the New Norfolk Council, it remained in existence until the end of 1916 by which time the national park at Mt Field was secured.

In October 1913, Sir Elliott Lewis, by then ex-Premier, led a deputation to the Minister, Edward Mulcahy, to promote the national park proposal. With him were William Crooke, Dr Bottrill, Clive Lord, Henry Dobson, Leonard Rodway, Louis Shoobridge, and William Legge. The delegation promoted the area's natural beauty, its lack of economic value for other purposes, and its potential as a fauna and flora reserve. The Minister said there would be no point in declaring a reserve without the funds to manage it, but he did undertake to see what he could do. Soon afterwards the *Mercury* published a map of a 22,000 acre (890.3 hectare) reserve that had been recommended to the Minister by park proponents. The article accompanying the map reported that the area, 'presented a combination of natural beauty and sublimity of character not to be rivaled in the Commonwealth', and that, 'the reservation would for all time be a region of delight for the people of Tasmania, which they could proudly invite visitors from other countries and States to explore.'[1] By the end of 1913 the Liberal Government had agreed to expand the area of the proposed park to 5,000 acres (2,228 hectares), and the Assembly had passed a vote of £500 for the park, as well as £500 for the Forestry Department which was to manage it. The 'package' did not, however, go far enough for park's proponents.

The succession of a Labor Government in April 1914 presented an opportunity for the proposal to be pursued with the new regime. As a result of the National Park Association's lobbying, in 1915 the Earle Labor government made a commitment to reserve 27,000 acres (10,927 hectares) in the Mt Field/ Russell Falls area as a national park. Hobart's newspaper, the *Mercury*, congratulated the park's proponents, and, about the park wrote:

> A National Park such as this now set apart may and ought to be a most valuable possession in many ways, in which the "business asset" value may be the least worth taking into account - for there are things far more worthy to be thought of than the lucre to be obtained from tourists or by other means. Such things as healthy and educative holidays, days among those crowded solitudes that appeal to the finer natures, opportunities for communing with the spirits of the trees and the brooks … will not be without their real value, though it may not be expressible in pounds, shillings and pence.'[2]

The National Park was not actually proclaimed until management arrangements were in place. Members of the National Park Association worked to influence decisions about the park's management, and pushed for the involvement of community-based interest groups. The Scenery Preservation Act was advanced legislation for its time, and the Scenery Preservation Board, established under the Act, was the first dedicated authority created in Australia specifically to deal with the creation and management of parks and reserves. The Act provided for the 'acquisition and preservation of lands of scenic or historic interest' and, under the Scenery Preservation Act, the only circumstance under which reserved land could be revoked was by the Governor, with parliamentary consent, if the land was rendered unsuitable for scenic purposes due to damage. This meant better security for reserves as under the *Wastelands Act* and *Crown Lands Act* the fate of reserves was determined by the relevant Minister's discretion.

The Scenery Preservation Board, which became known as the Scenery Board, had four representatives of government departments and three other nominees: the Surveyor-General (Chair), the Commissioner of Railways, the Engineer in Chief, a representative of the State Tourist Department, and three 'gentlemen enthusiasts' for the cause of scenery preservation. Responsible for scenery and flora preservation, but not for the protection of fauna, the Scenery Board's main functions were to recommend areas for reservation based on their scenic or historic interest and to administer lands subsequently reserved under the Act. The Act also provided for the Scenery Board to vest control of a reserve, subject to conditions, in a municipal council or subsidiary Board. It was under this clause - a clause that the National Park Association is believed to have initiated - that the National Park Board, and, later, other subsidiary boards, were established.

The Scenery Board set about identifying areas for reservation. At its second meeting it agreed to recommend 26 areas be reserved under the Scenery Preservation Act. Subsequently, in August 1916, the Earle Labor Government proclaimed National Park, Freycinet, St Columba Falls and the Church, Penitentiary, Model Prison, Isle of the Dead and Point Puer in the vicinity of Port Arthur. While Mt Field had been the National Park Association's major focus, Field Naturalist Club members Thompson Flynn and Clive Lord had lobbied that Freycinet (which even earlier been recommended for national park status by the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1894) be declared a national park after the Labor government's election in April 1914, and the Port Arthur sites were established tourist destinations.

A deputation from the National Park Association attended the Board's August meeting and argued for a separate subsidiary board to manage the National Park at Mt Field. The motion was initially lost, but with further lobbying it was

[1] *Mercury*, 21 October 1913
[2] *Mercury*, 10 March 1915

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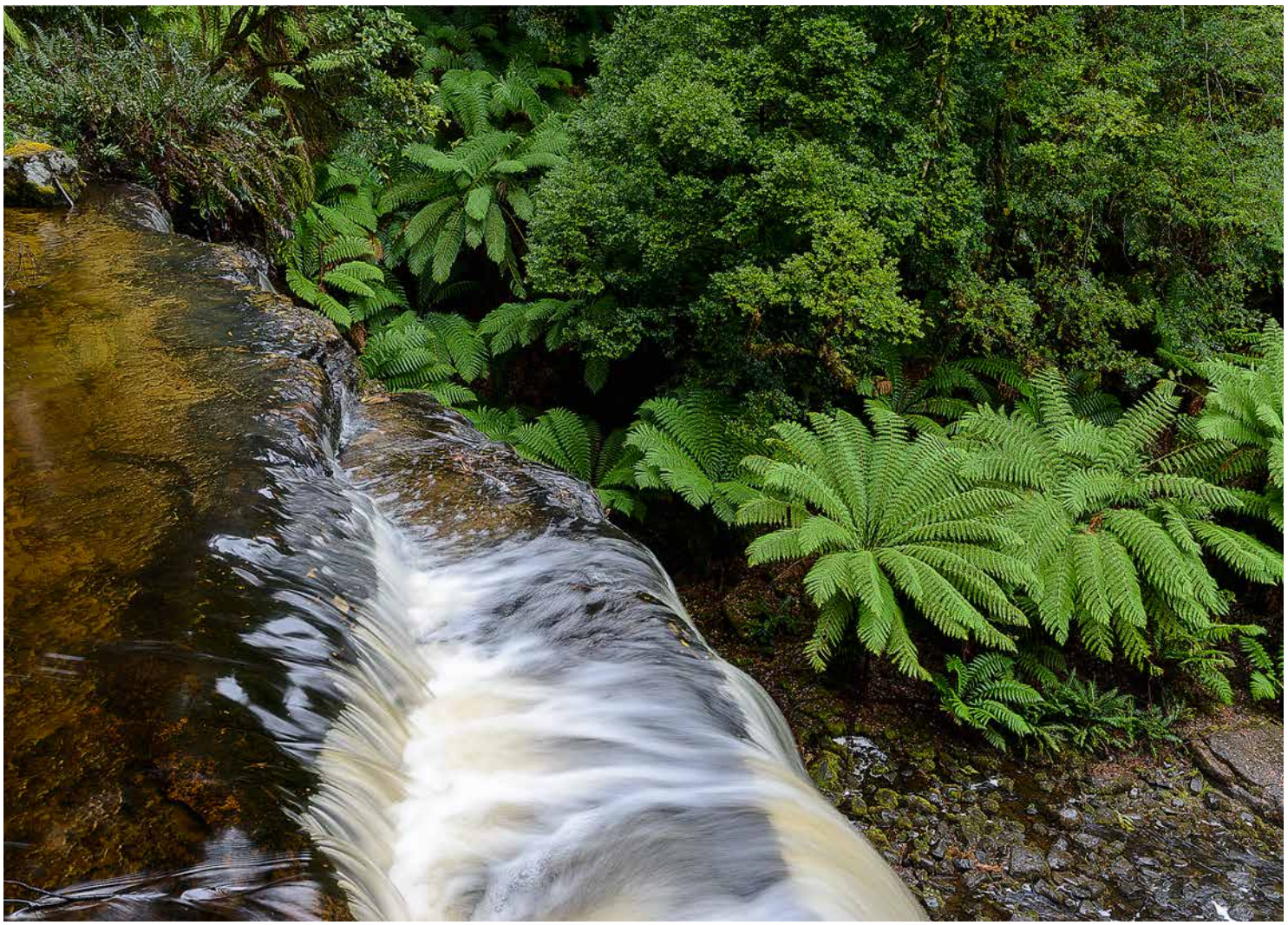
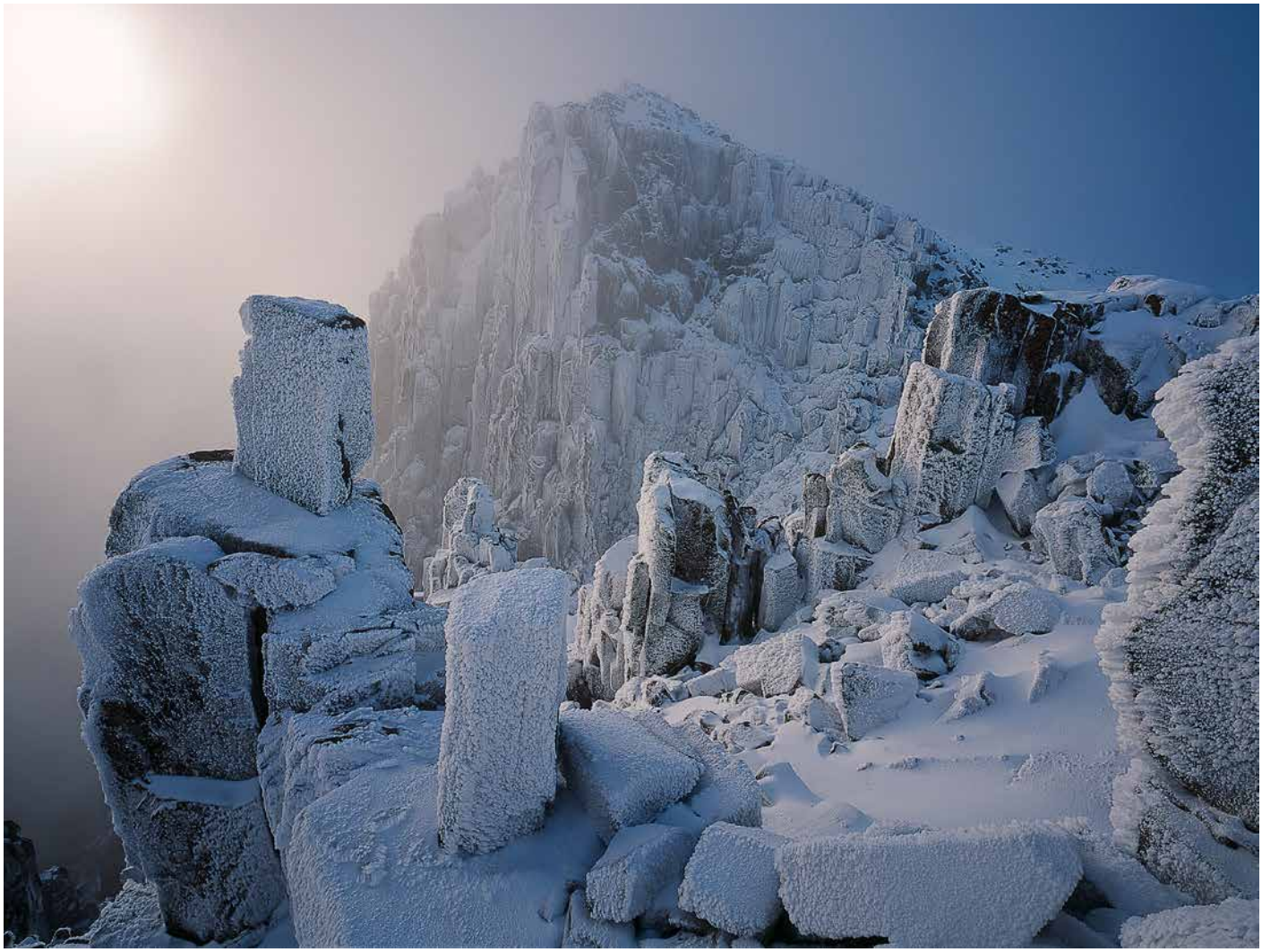
Following pages: Images of Mt Field National Park by Grant Dixon





Continued from page 9

carried at a subsequent meeting. The National Park Board included the Surveyor-General (though he had previously voted against the subsidiary board's establishment), as well as the Engineer in Chief, Government Botanist, Director of the Tourist Bureau, and a number of citizens to be selected from the National Park Association, City Council, University, New Norfolk Council, Fisheries Commissioners, Royal Society, Field Naturalists Club and the Australian Natives Association. The subsidiary board's membership included a broader range of community and local interests than did the Scenery Preservation Board and it, unlike the Scenery Preservation Board, was to be responsible for wildlife protection in addition to scenery preservation. William Crooke was nominated to represent the National Park Association on the new National Park Board

A ceremony 'worthy to rank with the epoch-making events in the history of Tasmania' was held to mark the opening of National Park, on Saturday 13 October 1917. Two special trains travelled from Hobart, collecting passengers *en route* to witness the Governor, Sir Francis Newdegate, perform the official opening. At the ceremony the Premier's representative, John Hayes, stressed the value to the State of tourist traffic and tourist attractions such as the park, and Henry Dobson, speaking on behalf of the National Park Board, also emphasised the park's role in promoting tourism.

William Crooke was praised in both Hayes' and Dobson's speeches for his central role in the movement to establish the park but he was given a minor role at the ceremony - that of seconding Rodway's vote of thanks to the Governor. Nevertheless, he took the opportunity to challenge the other speakers' emphasis on tourism, and was quoted as saying:

> The idea of the Park was not originally conceived simply for tourists. Only by preserving a Park in this way would the people of Tasmania in the far future be able to see what primeval Tasmania was like. That was one of the objects. Another was the preservation of the native flora and fauna, and still another, the recreation of the people of Tasmania. The tourists, to his mind, came last, although they were always pleased to see them.[3]

Crooke, it seems, was voicing a minority opinion, but he was not alone. On the Monday following the ceremony the editor of the *Mercury*, supported Crooke's position by stating in his editorial:

> The only creature to be driven out of the Park and kept out with flaming swords is the Utilitarian, who would indiscriminately chop trees, spoil waterfalls, dig up rare plants, kill live things, and spoil and ravage everything for money profit. If there ever come to exist legislators who cannot see the value of such a place we hope it will become a recognised custom to shoot them on sight when-

[3] *Mercury*, 15 October 1917.

> ever seen within three miles of the Park. But that does not mean that the whole place should be an untended wilderness. Mr. William Crooke, to whose foresight and energy the public really owes the whole idea of the Park, has offered excellent suggestions. Intelligent care, guided by loving knowledge, and assisted with enough filthy lucre to make the Park attractive and convenient for everybody, is what is needed.[4]

Given the importance that is now placed on national parks as protectors of forests, it is ironic that the rest of the afternoon was devoted to wood chopping competitions.

While hundreds of people shared the pleasure of the park's opening they didn't share a single view on the role of the reserve. Views expressed at the time were an omen of political conflicts that lay ahead, contradictions between recreation, tourism and nature preservation, between industry, '*jobs'n growth*' and conservation, though most people were oblivious to the anomalies. William Crooke was an exception and it was probably his suspicion of tourism, embodied in his dislike of Evelyn Temple Emmett, Director of the Government Tourist Bureau, that led him to fall out with and leave the National Park Board not long after his appointment.

Following his death, in August 1920, obituaries acknowledged Crooke's contribution to the community through his efforts to achieve the National Park. But he was more fondly remembered for his role as founder of and energetic worker for the Children's Excursion Association, the group that organised train trips for school children to National Park, where they visited Russell Falls and learnt 'something of the charms of the bush'.[5] Crooke had received little support from the National Park Board for the educational excursions, though the community's appreciation of Cooke's dedication was demonstrated by the crowd of approximately 650 people who travelled to the park in June 1924 to participate in the unveiling of his memorial.

Crooke, with his preservationist views and his involvement in the Excursion Association that encouraged young people to develop protective attitudes towards the natural environment, was progressive for his time. Obituaries help to explain why the memory of a man who contributed so much to the Tasmanian community has been allowed to fade from public memory:

> In appraising the worth of any individual citizen many things have to be taken into consideration, and many factors in the work of the day closely regarded and nicely weighed. The best kind of citizen is, of course, he who not only lives an exemplary life and has high ideals of citizenship, but who comes out into the open in the whirl and whirr of the times, and with voice, pen, and personal effort does his very best to lift up moral tone and place a stone, or many stones, in the building of a strong foundation for civic and state progress. William Crooke was this kind of man. He had a wide and a long vision, and he builded [*sic*] as well as he knew and as well as those with whom he worked in a public sense, and for whom he worked, would allow. In very many matters he was years ahead of current thought, and he had to fight his way through many obstacles erected by stodgy minds. He was intensely patriotic, wonderfully progressive, and of nature untiring, resourceful, and courageous. He was of that type who will not accept defeat of a momentary nature where the public good is at stake, and his tenaciousness carried him very often to a wise success where a weaker nature and less fearless men would have given up in disgust.
>
> … it was his never ceasing propaganda and utterly self-effacing effort which was in large measure responsible, too, for one of the greatest glories this state will ever have as a national and priceless possession – the great National Park up Tyenna way.
>
> … Quite naturally such men get opposition from those who are content to stay in the rut forever, be they ordinary citizens or politicians, because the tired we will always have with us, but it is men of the outlook of the late Mr. Crooke who achieve things, and their work lives after them.[6]
>
> Altogether in Mr. Crooke Hobart has lost a most useful citizen, and yet one whose merits were never fully appreciated. Perhaps the fault lay in himself to some extent, for he was indifferent to popularity, caring only to achieve the things upon which his mind was bent.[7]

Mt Field's 100 year anniversary as a national park is a time not only to celebrate the reserve, but the national park idea, and the people who worked to create and protect national parks and reserves. And perhaps a special thought for William Crooke who advocated so strenuously for preserving natural values in the face of a strong focus on nature's potential to be exploited for tourism.

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[4] ibid·
[5] *Tasmanian Mail*, 2 September 1920.
[6] *Weekly Courier*, 2 September 1920.
[7] *Tasmanian Mail*, 2 September 1920.

By Peter Franklin

The Friends of Mount Field

As would be most notable to anyone with even an ephemeral interest in Tasmanian national parks, they are suffering from funding starvation.

This situation has meant that volunteers are a valuable resource and at Mount Field National Park the Friends of Mount Field fill that role. After a slow beginning when the group started in late 2000, it has gradually settled into a regular once a month activity, and nowadays often with additional days of work during parts of the year. The group is now very much appreciated by the staff at the park, even more so because the Friends of Mount Field have been able to attract grant funding to provide much needed infrastructure improvements.

Much like the bushwalkers who visit, the Friends of Mount Field volunteers have a range of views about the park, but generally speaking having tracks to walk on and not having to get over bogs is a common denominator. Apart from that, what is the appropriate level of infrastructure and how things should be managed are matters where people's views don't always align. For that reason, I feel that, although being the representative of the Friends group, I can't really claim my own views match, so what follows is just from my perspective.

Many years of bushwalking, with Mount Field being a favourite venue, has meant that the alpine areas became very familiar. Along with that was the observation of the gradual deterioration of many of these places and the realisation that some of this was because of my own presence there. Tracks were getting muddier and the precious flora was taking a hammering and it became obvious that the Parks Service was not able to keep up with the repair work needed. Even so, there were and still are places where visitor numbers are quite low, often with no signs of human impact.

Upon retiring I was able to walk more regularly and Mount Field also felt my boots even more. A couple of years on saw the call for volunteers to help in the park, and at long last I could do something concrete to redress the damage I had contributed to causing. This was 2001, which gives away my age even though I retired early.

Among the people originally offering to help there was also a diverse range of interests, but there was a nucleus of people wanting to work on tracks and huts and the Friends of Mount Field was then created as a branch of Wildcare. Originally I was not going to do anything on huts but gradually got roped in there too.

Over this time the group has achieved plenty. Many of the tracks have been repaired, although there are a few lengthy track sections that are in great need of major work. Unfortunately, they all require a lot of on-ground work and heaps of money but really, in terms of what governments spend elsewhere, all it would take is the annual cost of one advisor or press officer over the next 5 years. However, that is not likely to happen and our plan is to chase grants from different bodies to fund the work required, and TNPA has been supportive in this endeavour.

The work already done includes repairing the Tarn Shelf track, loads of hardening with rock on the Field East one and the side tracks to Lake Webster and Seagers Lookout, the Old Pack Track, reopening Beatties Tarn with a slight reroute to avoid a marsh, and maintaining various other tracks.

Lake Nichols hut was repaired before one end collapsed, which involved carrying in timber cladding plus a new door, repairing and maintaining the shelter at the start of Tarn Shelf and the historic Lake Fenton hut of original ranger Bill Belcher. We have also partly fixed up, and are currently replacing more timber on the hut at Lake Belcher. This takes a certain dedication as it is a 2:30 hours walk each way with the last half hour wet and appallingly muddy. Most recently we started to upgrade the inside walls of the K Col hut to meet a grant completion deadline, finding that ice and super slippery rocks added a third to the time to get there.

We have roamed further than Mount Field, after discovering the invasive weed erica beside the Gordon Road in the South West World Heritage Area. Now this is where you get into a bureaucratic nightmare, with the road under Hydro control and the land owners outside the 18 m road corridor of the PWS. Government departments and agencies DPIPWE, Forestry and DIER all have an interest. There is also TasNetworks or whatever incarnation is current with the power line.

When first reported we discovered a committee was being formed to handle the problem, but action was so slow that a few of us decided to pull lots of the weed out from The Needles to Scotts Peak Road. Since then nothing much has happened in the wheels of bureaucracy and the plants have spread even further along the highway beyond Mount Wedge in dense numbers and spraying is the only answer. Perhaps we should try for a grant as we could get the primary work underway very easily and quickly. But like the spurge on the coast it requires follow up commitments from the landowners...

By Veronica Steane

Mt Field National Park Snippets

"National Park", as it was known to the Hobart outdoor fraternity, was a place of myth and doable adventure in my childhood, with the stature in my mind that "South West Tasmania" has in many minds today. Before WW2 car ownership was not common amongst uni students and young walkers wanting to venture beyond Mt Wellington. With a rail service to the township of National Park, and a good horse trail up to Lake Dobson, it was possible for people to catch the afternoon train to the entrance of the Park and walk the 15 km or so up to Mt Mawson, either that night, or next morning after sleeping on the train. My parents and their cohort were part of the University of Tasmania bushwalking group, and visited the Park regularly in this way. Their stories were my legends: Stories of their predecessors, such as Eve Masterman, skating on tarns and lakes in moonlight to music; "The Golden Stairs", where Mum met Sir Edmund Hillary – he would have been rocketing down the steep slope, maybe he stopped to exchange words with the young ladies resting puffing up the climb; "The Lions Den" – a challenge to our little legs; "Anaspides", "Fagus", our introduction to the continued presence of prehistoric life, Gondwana Land, and with it an appreciation of the fragility, and toughness, of our natural environment, and the idea that it is very important that we protect it from human greed and thoughtless destructive exploitation.

1940s:

A story from my father, Doug Steane: They had taken the train on a Friday evening and walked then skied up to Mawson in the night – maybe it was moonlit? The route was well known to them – they reached the site of the (now "old") university hut, and it was nowhere to be seen. Someone stumbled on a pipe sticking out of the snow – it was the chimney of their hut. So it took a bit of digging before they could settle down for the night.

1950s:

My partner Mike Emery tells of his familiarity with the Park in his school years. His mother Edith was Austrian and skiing was part of her culture. So each year in the September school holidays she took her two boys, and with a couple of other families, hired a Government Hut just below Lake Dobson. One year the road was closed at Lake Fenton and the young families towed – with difficulty – a sledge carrying their week's provisions, up to the Hut. The children learned to ski on the small slopes around Lake Dobson, never any question of "will there be enough snow?" Visits to the main slopes on Mt Mawson were a special event, once or twice a holiday, only in good weather. He skied over Lake Dobson once – "probably rather a dangerous thing to do" he says now.

1960s:

My family hired a Government Hut a few times, a great way of providing a sheltered base to extend the horizons of their tribe of noisy, energetic kids beyond the local bush and Mountain of Hobart.

1970s:

I had joined the Hobart Walking Club, and entered the age where my parents had made the myths of my child-world. Their generation had opened up knowledge of the horizons west of the Park, and with Hydro pushing relentlessly into new water catchments, and living standards rising to the point where most young persons acquired a car once they had a job, the Park became like home environment, a back yard for good walks, but for the real adventures we drove past the Park entrance on to sexier destinations. My brother Michael took me into the lakes of the Broad River Valley and I helped carry the raft and gear in for his research into the water limnology there. A continuation of our childhood adventures in the Park that were shaping our adult lives... He died a few years later, in bigger mountains across the Tasman.

1980s:

My uncle, David Steane, together with other Hobart families, had acquired and preserved the "Old University Hut", now an old fashioned spartan hut compared with the mansions setting up nearer the main ski field. But it was always clean and cosy. He loved the Park, knew it well and had favourite places, some of which he introduced me to. He grieved over the big fire that had destroyed part of the Tarn Shelf, and explained to me how it would take more than my lifetime, if ever, for the area to return to its former beauty. Again, part of my education about the need to care for our planet and pass it on intact to the future – not only of people, but of all the species that make our world so rich, so wonderful.

2000s:

Legends are still being made in my life time. Anne Wessing skied through the big fault crack above Lake Seal. Once I participated in "The Winter Challenge" race, that starts as a ski run from Mt Mawson to Lake Dobson – there was a lot of snow, the plough had cleared a narrow trench up the road. Our skier, Anne McConnell, tucked her head in and went straight parallel at high speed all the way, the fastest woman on the run, setting up a great lead for our team – what guts!

By now a wander to Field West was a re-creation on home ground for me, rather than an adventure. We met a lone walker sporting a bushy beard on K Col, and exchanged the usual word or two. He was reticent about speaking with anyone it seemed – turned out he had spent many months "down South" (Antarctica) and was having quiet time coming to terms with being back in every day environments. Maybe the same walk – my companions also wandering off and having quiet time gazing over the mountains and shifting clouds – the space, atmospherics, love and longing later emerging in Sue Pickering's stunning etchings… And in the photographs by Chris Bell and Steve Brown, of twisted pencil pines, of riotous colour in a good scoparia year… I'd love to spend weeks in the Broad River Valley drawing – the big boulders dropped randomly by glaciers, sitting as a quiet massive presence surrounded and veiled by the shifting verticals of eucalypts, the clouds coming down over Lake Seal and the currawongs' call echoing in my head and memories….

There is a rich, dense tapestry of quiet legend, adventure, inspiration, healing, learning, settling quietly into Park history. Mt Field National Park is a gem.

by Melva Truchanas

Memories of Skiing Holidays at Mt Field National Park

Early snowfalls on Mt. Wellington each winter were eagerly observed by many Hobart skiers in the mid-1950s. Hopeful comparisons followed: that the build-up of snow falls on "The Mountain" might be in duplicated in "The Park", in Mt. Field National Park (MFNP). – There were no computer-based weather reports so "heading off to ski" could mean a magnificent weekend, or an enforced stay in a very damp hut.

The friendly owner-driver of the Tasmanian Redline Coaches would offer his first trip of the season to Mt. Mawson for the coming Friday night, and a group of skiers was always ready to depart. In a mid-winter's dark night, he would take us up the mountain road as far as the snow would allow. Then his 'clients' were all out and in positions to assist, turning the bus around. He would speed back to the warmth of his Hobart home, whilst we trudged off up the mountain road to our huts and lodges, meeting on the snowy plateau next day. In that era we were spread over the lodges of the Ski Club of Tasmania, Eagle Tarn, Hobart Walking Club or Old Uni, or slept at the Government Huts, centred on Lake Dobson. Built by their members, the huts were well placed for accommodation on the snowfields.

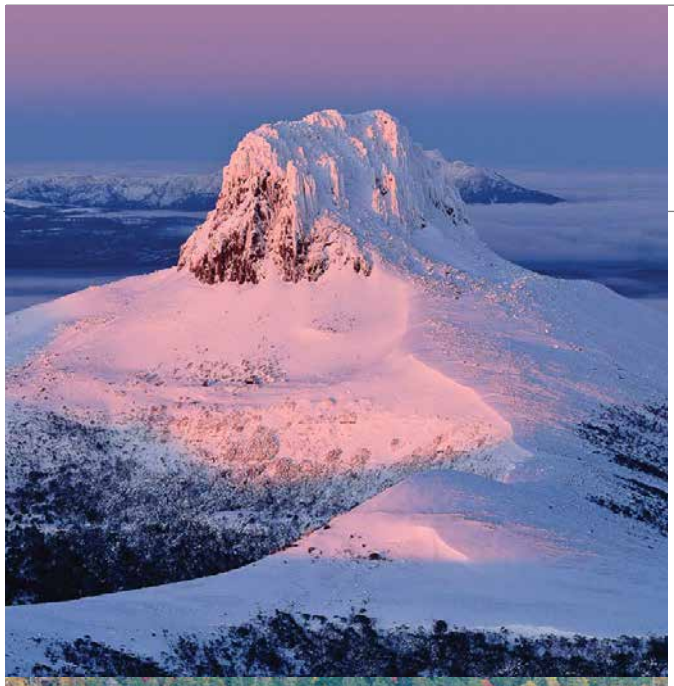
The weather was always variable, but the enthusiasm remained undimmed. Sun, rain, and full moons and wind were accepted in turn. The Mawson and University ski-tows clinging to the eastern face of Mt. Mawson were the centre of the downhill sport, supervised and maintained by generous volunteers of the skiing community. Beyond, extensive wonderful snowfields spread away across the plateaux, along Tarn Shelf, past down to Platypus Tarn, Twilight Tarn or across to Mt. Field West; here was the best cross-country sport on the Island. On our journeys into the snow we moved among our lovely snow gums, draped with white blankets along their beautiful many-coloured widespread branches. Cameras were always ready.

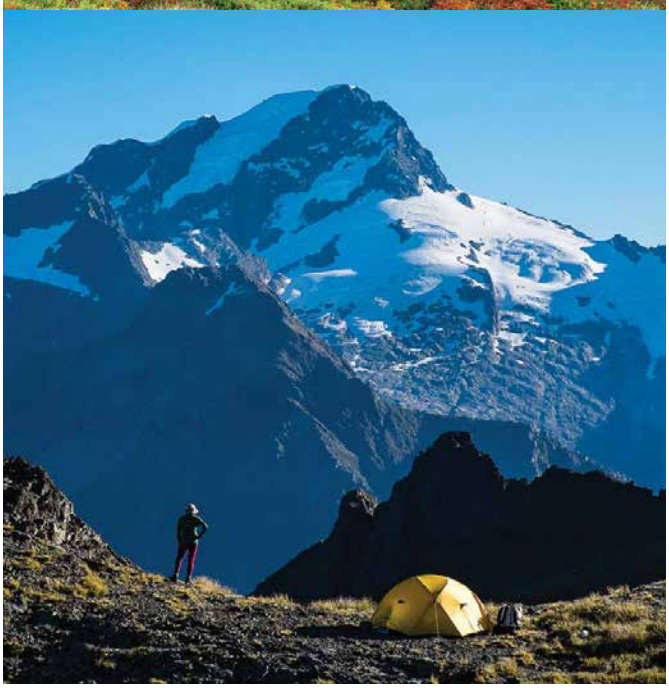
At the Hobart Walking Club hut, who could forget the times some talented university-age students brought out their musical instruments, playing them gently while crouched on the top bunks of the accommodation wing? Or the magical music of the silvery flute of Michael Steane as he wandered out into the moonlight to serenade the stars? Or the unknown hitch-hiker we gathered up and took to our hut - who turned out to be an astrophysicist organised to camp out on the shoulder of Mt. Mawson in order to observe the spectacular play of the southern Aurora lights in the heavens? The joy of the youngsters who were 'allowed' to go with him on his watch.

In the sixties and seventies, the earlier skiers had now become parents, with family groups in cars speeding up to car parks and new lodges. The Hospital Hut, Sitzmark Lodge, the new University hut and others, had been built at higher altitude, in the vicinity of the ski fields. Around these was a wondrous playground – in winter and summer – as Mt. Field's reputation grew, and so close to Hobart. Community atmosphere linked the mountain families who volunteered and rostered to organise ski-races; youngsters tried their skills in spirited competition. Downhill races, slaloms, then free style races including 'bumps', ballet and jumps! They generated lots of excitement and some incredible 'stacks'. Small trophies awarded then are still treasured.

Our family became enthusiastic skiers at young ages. Olegas encouraged the girls to join the races and taught them to handle the rope tows by tucking them between his legs - four-skis-parallel - running up the slope and over bumps leaning back on him. I have it on good authority (now) that by lunchtime when all were exhausted, he gently shared his black coffee and leatherwood honey, feeding them small sips like little birds. It did the trick and they managed to ski all afternoon. The youngsters had to carry their own equipment and some of the gear as we toiled up 'the hill' at night, stopping to talk with wallabies, possums, and owls overhead. Olegas carried the small one in his pack sitting on top of the food. The Big Bend was a favourite stopping place for the essential chocolate boost to get everything to the top. Later, when I had teenagers up ahead of me, I was the one now who needed encouragement.

Now, in 2016, 100 years since the beauty and value of this place has been recognised by committing it to National Park status, other lodges have been built, and some taken down. The Park, now heavily used by tourists and day-trippers, has a guaranteed snowplough to clear the winter road to the Lake Dobson car park, so that modern folk can tolerate the hardships. The memories remain, but reliable snow has gone.





Images: Grant Dixon

‘Mountain Seasons’
Fundraiser Event

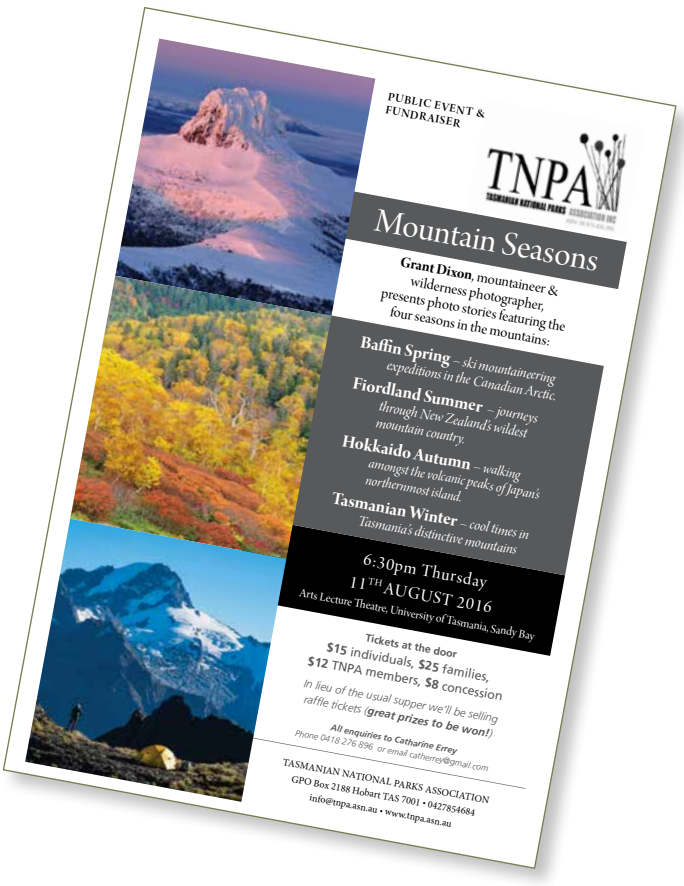
On 11 August the TNPA hosted a public event/ fundraiser called ‘Mountain Seasons’, a presentation by mountaineer-photographer Grant Dixon using a selection of his superb images from expeditions and walking trips in four very different parts of the planet.

Grant is an outstanding photographer and his illustrated articles have appeared widely in various outdoor, geographic, conservation, travel and special interest publications internationally.

Over many decades Grant has trekked, skied and climbed in a great variety of remote and wild places including on all seven continents, the Arctic and the Antarctic – and Tasmania itself, where he has lived all his life when not adventuring elsewhere.

Grant continues the Tasmanian tradition of photography activating awareness of the environment and this was apparent in this latest presentation, which was very enthusiastically received by an almost full house audience.

A raffle was also conducted as part of the event.



Poster design: Bec Kurczok

TNPA News

TNPA News is published twice a year. It aims to provide informative articles on issues related to national parks and other reserves, as well as updates on TNPA activities and campaigns. The views expressed in TNPA News are not necessarily those of the TNPA Inc. For this issue many thanks to: Mark Clemens, Grant Dixon, Peter Franklin, Debbie Quarmby, Nick Sawyer, Veronica Steane, Melva Truchanas. Original articles in TNPA News may be reproduced, but please acknowledge the author and source.

Contributions to TNPA News No.24 are welcome (deadline Monday January 9 2017). Please send contributions to: admin@tnpa.asn.au (attention: TNPA News editor).

This newsletter was correct as at 29 August 2016.

Editor TNPA News 23: Catharine Errey

Newsletter production by Ricoh Business Centre Hobart

The Fern Tree Snow Bet

Fern Tree is Hobart's most elevated suburb, which means that each winter the district can count on getting at least one snowfall where the snow settles on the ground and stays for a day or two. This applies particularly to the more elevated parts of Fern Tree.

The Fern Tree Snow Bet has been held in Fern Tree for some years: residents bet on the date of the winter's first snow that settles – with enough to make a snowball.

This year two Fern Tree children took on the organising of this event and made it into a fundraiser – with 50% of the money raised going to the winner, and the other 50% going to the TNPA.

The children had fun working out the Conditions of Entry. They considered and created rules to eliminate various possible ways of cheating! The following are some of the rules:

- Must be at least one inch of settled snow with ruler to prove amount.
- Reference Photo must be outside front door or letterbox with house number visible.
- Snowball: Minimum 15cm diameter, photo and prove size with ruler.
- You are allowed to freeze the snowball for keeping, but you cannot pour water on it to add size. You must photograph it before you freeze it.
- The photograph must have the date printed or written on it.
- No yellow snow.

The TNPA is very appreciative of being the recipient of $54. Thanks to Marian and Ayden.

Tasmanian National Parks Association Inc

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Meetings Management Committee meetings are held approximately 10 times per year. Members and supporters are welcome to attend meetings and are notified of date, time and venue in the TNPA email communique. As time/venue may change close to time of meeting check with Secretariat (0427 854 684) before attending.

Have your say...

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