



BUTTONGRASS

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A fresh look for Richmond Gaol

Australia's oldest, intact gaol, the Richmond Gaol, will present a fresh face to visitors following a significant interpretation upgrade and works.

A week of hard work by Parks and Wildlife Service staff and a keen Green Corps team in August saw the courtyard of the Richmond Gaol transformed from a leafy cottage garden to a stark prison courtyard.

The project began in May with a test archaeological excavation of the courtyard revealing various artefacts including Tasmania Police buttons, a belt buckle ring and part of a bone-handled engraved toothbrush.

Historic heritage officer, Jody Steele said the aim was to return the courtyard to its original purpose, a prison exercise yard.

Generally, the gaol has had few modifications since the day it closed as a convict gaol complex in 1898. It was built in 1825-27, pre-dating Port Arthur by about five years and remains one of the most intact places of incarceration from the early convict period of Australia.

Jody said that over the years various plantings resulted in a leafy, cottage garden environment with bitumen and brick pathways.

"Unfortunately this greenery obscured many of the courtyard's original features," she said.

The courtyard surface was levelled, improvements made to stormwater drainage, and a layer of geofabric was laid. More hard work followed with 18 tonnes of gravel moved into the courtyard by countless wheelbarrow loads and spread manually over the geofabric.

The difference is extraordinary.

"You can now see what a large open space the courtyard was and the removal of the



New interpretation tells the stories of the many fascinating people associated with the Richmond Gaol Historic Site.

vegetation has exposed the whitewash that covered the courtyard walls from ground level to about three metres high," Jody said.

"The walls were regularly whitewashed by the convicts to provide a high visibility area so they weren't able to get up to anything."

It is hoped that removing the vegetation will also prolong the life of the sandstone gaoler's residence which has suffered from damp problems related to the vegetation and drainage.

The interpretation of the historic site highlights the stories of the many and varied people associated with the gaol, including convicts, both men and women, chain gangs, road parties, colonial architects, magistrates, district surgeon, free settlers and others.

Interpretation and education officer Jenni Burdon said that the aim of the interpretation update will include new

signage that explains the history and use of the rooms of the gaol throughout its life.

New hand-crafted steel exhibition cabinets showcase many items of interest associated with the gaol and convict life, including one of the very few original convict jackets and vests.

Among the new displays is a glass window in the floorboards that allows visitors to see into the cellar where many objects, including convict boots, were found.

The project was funded through the Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

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Green Corps partnership

The historic farm complex at the Woodvine Nature Reserve received a boost from the efforts of a Green Corps team in a partnership with the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Green Corps is an Australian Government youth development and environmental training program for young people. Its focus is on conserving Australia's natural environment and cultural heritage.

Over the past six months the team worked at various locations throughout Southern Tasmania, ranging from Woodvine to the Tasman Peninsula, and Maria and Bruny islands.

Their work involved erecting fencing to protect coastal vegetation, to weed control, to planting trees.

However their focus was at Woodvine Nature Reserve near Forcett. The 377 hectare reserve is listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register for the significant information it provides about early farming life in Tasmania. The property was donated to the PWS by Mr Herbert Ernest Shaw.

PWS Southern Region acting manager, Stan Matuszek said the team had made a major contribution to the conservation of Woodvine's cultural and environmental values.

"Their work included the inventory of hundreds of historical items from the farm and this involved an eight step process of cleaning, sorting, numbering, describing, photographing, entry into the database, packing and placing the items into storage," Stan said.

"They also removed Spanish heath at critical locations in the reserve and demonstrated initiative by finding, recording and removing additional weed infestations that we did not know about."



The buildings at Woodvine are a time capsule of early Tasmanian farm life.

Training improves response for whale strandings



Participants in a recent training course at Strahan practice moving an inflatable whale.

Tasmanians will be better placed to respond to future whale strandings following recent training for volunteers at hot spots for strandings around the State. PWS education officer Ingrid Albion said the First Response Whale Rescue Training represents a change in focus for whale stranding training.

"While we've conducted whale stranding training for volunteers for the past several years, this first response training is aimed at establishing groups of trained people, both PWS staff and community members, at key locations for a quick response to a stranding.

Tasmania has more whale strandings than any other State in Australia, but there are also 'hot spots' for whale strandings, such as Ocean Beach at Strahan, Marion Bay and King Island.

Ingrid said that everyone who completes the one-day training course receives a certificate and has the option to join the local first response team.

The volunteers may also be registered on the Wildcare Inc database, which is used to call out volunteers to strandings when required.

The local first response team is tasked with providing an immediate response to the whale stranding while the marine team from the Department of Primary Industries

and Water travel to the incident.

"It's been shown worldwide that speed in getting to the site of a stranding and having trained people as well as a network of trained volunteers, is critical in the success or otherwise of a whale stranding," Ingrid said.

"The significance of having trained volunteers is that they are less likely to injure either themselves or the whales, which is important given that whale strandings generally present a significant risk as people are working in difficult surf conditions and moving around large, heavy mammals."

Training days have been held at Hobart, Freycinet, Narawntapu National Park and at Strahan, with plans for more sessions at King or Flinders islands.

Change to Freycinet camping ballot draw

Freycinet campers are advised that the annual ballot draw for camping at Freycinet National Park has been changed from 1st October to 1st August.

The ballot includes allocation of camping sites from 18 December until Easter. Further information is available from the Freycinet Visitor Centre on 6256 7000 or freycinet@parks.tas.gov.au

Volunteering in wild places



Wildcare volunteer Marianne Watson was thrilled to receive a new fry pan for the Waterfall Valley hut kitchen.

Volunteering has taken Snug residents Marianne Watson and daughter Rosanna to some of Tasmania's most wild, scenic and remote places during the past five years and they're coming back for more.

Marianne first caught the volunteering bug in 2002 when walking the Overland Track with Rosanna, aged 10 at the time.

"We started talking with the hut wardens at Waterfall Valley, the first overnight stop for walkers after leaving Cradle Mountain," Marianne said.

"Through the Wildcare Inc Overland Track Hut Warden Program, we've been hut wardens every summer since, with another stint scheduled for this summer.

"It's fun, it's great being there, talking with all types of different people and it's great to have the freedom to get out and do your own thing during the day."

Marianne said the role of the hut wardens is as much a provider of first aid, advice and encouragement as caretaker of the huts and surrounds.

"We had one bloke who arrived wanting to know how he could organise to get a helicopter out of the park because of a minor problem with his knee. After suggesting that he should put his knee in the creek and simply rest up, with some more encouragement, by the next morning he headed off keen to complete the walk."

After the Overland Track hut warden experience Marianne and Rosanna's volunteering efforts have branched out to include a number of other Wildcare Inc programs, including joining 'friends' groups for Mt Field and Maria Island national parks, Maatsuyker and Deal islands and Wellington Park as well as the recently formed Threatened Plant Action Group.

For Marianne, volunteering has many benefits.

"It's a great way to meet people with similar interests, it's a great way for Rosanna and I to spend time together and we get to travel to places we'd never visit otherwise," she said.

"For example, the time we spent at Birchs Inlet in Tasmania's far southwest working with the orange-bellied parrot program was just fantastic.

Marianne and Rosanna have already booked five solid weeks of volunteering for their summer holidays, including two weeks back at Waterfall Valley as hut wardens, two weeks at Melaleuca for the orange-bellied parrot program and one week at Schouten Island as campground hosts.

For more information about volunteering opportunities with Wildcare, go to www.wildcaretas.org.au or phone 6233 2852 Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Waterworld on show for Maria visitors

Visitors to Maria Island will soon be able to view the rich marine life of the Maria Island Marine Reserve as part of a project to improve wildlife viewing opportunities around Tasmania.

PWS education officer Ingrid Albion said that when complete, island visitors can view a multimedia presentation about the marine reserve habitat at the historic Commissariat Store, which is often the first port of call on a visit to Maria.

"The presentation will include footage of six dives around Tasmania, with most of the dives in the waters surrounding Maria, information about what's special about Maria Island, a look at Tasmania's other marine reserves such as the Kent island group, Nine Pin Point and Port Davey. We're also hoping to present live footage from under the Maria jetty," Ingrid said.

"We're really excited about the project because it will add a totally new dimension to the Maria experience while also raising awareness about the richness and value of marine reserves.

"Tasmania's marine environment is recognised as one of the most biologically diverse areas in the world due to its location, climate and influences of ocean currents.

"The Tasmanian marine environment has fewer cosmopolitan species than the tropical north. For example, about 80-90 per cent of Tasmanian marine species are found only in Tasmania, in contrast to the tropical north where only about 10 per cent of species are endemic or found only in that location."



The colourful leafy sea dragon.

Fact file: Southwest National Park

What: The State's largest (618,000 hectares) and most remote national park, with wild rivers and rugged mountain ranges.

Where: Part of Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Via Maydena, allow 2 1/2 to 3 hours from Hobart. From the Lyell Highway (A10) at New Norfolk take route B62 past Mt Field National Park to Maydena. The Gordon River Road (B61) continues to Strathgordon and the Gordon Dam. At Frodsham Pass on the Gordon River Road, a winding gravel road turns off to Scotts Peak and the Huon Campground.

Via Cockle Creek, about 2 hours' drive south from Hobart. It is reached via the Huon Highway (A6) through Geeveston. Take the C635 past the Hastings Caves turn off then follow the C636 gravel road through Lune River to Cockle Creek. The last stages of the road are fairly rough but can be negotiated by two wheel drive vehicles.

Flights to Melaleuca

In the far southwest, Melaleuca is accessible only by light plane, or boat. Two companies operate flights to Melaleuca: Tasair and Par Avion.

Activities: Southwest National Park offers everything from picnics and brief strolls, to extended wilderness walks, all in an area of outstanding beauty.

The drive along the Gordon River Road to Scotts Peak and Strathgordon is simply spectacular but both roads have steep and winding sections and are subject to snow and ice.

Highlights: Stunning views of some of Tasmania's most rugged and remote mountains are a highlight of the Gordon River Road. There are numerous picnic spots and some of the best fishing is found at lakes Gordon and Pedder (inland fishing licence required).

The Cockle Creek area offers a variety of water activities during summer, with tranquil coves, and sandy beaches. There are a variety of day walks from the bronze whale sculpture (10 minutes) to Fishers Point, to the South Cape Bay walk (4-5 hours return).



The expanse of Bathurst Harbour in the Southwest National Park is a destination for increasing numbers of kayakers and yachties.

At Melaleuca, there is the opportunity to see the highly endangered orange-bellied parrot during the summer months.

Facilities: Basic camping facilities are available at Cockle Creek.

Campsites are located along both the Gordon River Road and Scotts Peak Road. These vary from very basic sites with no facilities to sites with toilets and tank water. On the Gordon River Road, there are picnic facilities, toilets, shelters and basic camping facilities at Teds Beach, Huon and Edgar campgrounds, with no camping fees. At Melaleuca there is a small shelter at the airstrip. Toilets and two walkers' huts are also available.

Camping

Along the Gordon River Road

Teds Beach (managed by Parks and Wildlife) has toilets and electric barbeques (open fires are not allowed). Edgar Campground (managed by Hydro) has toilets and fireplaces and firewood is provided. The Huon Campground (managed by Parks and Wildlife) has a shelter, composting toilets and fireplaces - firewood is provided. There are no charges and bookings are not taken.

Around Cockle Creek

Recherche Bay State Recreation Area

has campsites with toilets but without firewood or water at Gilhams Beach, Finns Beach and Catamaran River. Water is available nearby at Fords Green or from the D'Entrecasteaux River. Dogs and generators are permitted in the Recherche Bay State Recreation Area.

Cockle Creek has a large camping area around Rocky Bay. Past the Cockle Creek bridge, you are in the national park and, of course, dogs, and generators, are not allowed. There is no rubbish collection. The nearest waste transfer station is at Dover. Firewood is not provided so you must bring your own. However the use of fuel and gas stoves is recommended. Composting toilets are available. Tank water is usually available but should not be relied upon in summer, and must be boiled or treated before drinking. There are no charges and bookings are not taken. The closest shops are Hastings Caves Cafe and Southport Tavern about 20km north. Food, accommodation, petrol and postal services are available at Dover 35 km to the north.

Melaleuca

There are two walkers huts at Melaleuca, as well as toilets and water. There are no other huts along either the Port Davey or the South Coast tracks.