

Friends of South Solitary Island Lighthouse



NEWSLETTER

June 2019

Welcome to the first edition of the Friends of South Solitary Island Lighthouse (FOSSIL) Newsletter for 2019.

The Annual General Meeting for the group was held on 24 November 2018 and resulted in the following Management Committee appointments:

President: Rob Trezise

Vice President: Darren Squibb

Secretary: Brian Bevan

Treasurer: Rosie Squibb

Media Officer: Donna Dalton

Fundraising: Bob & Tania Lamb

General Committee Members:

- Terrie Beckhouse
- Suzi Clayton-Pearson
- Pam Semmens
- Andrew Winter

The Management Committee are looking forward to continuing the great work of FOSSIL throughout 2019.

It is encouraging to see the increasing interest in our Facebook page through online group membership. Followers are welcome to invite others who may have an interest in South Solitary Island and the Lighthouse, even if it is only to find out more about who we are and what we do.

Financial membership is available for a small annual fee of \$15. Application forms are available on our Facebook page or you can email fossil2450@hotmail.com for more information or to request an application.

Members are invited to offer their assistance with working bees carried out 2-3 times a year under the direction of the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS). This provides a unique opportunity to visit the island and contribute to habitat restoration along with maintenance and preservation works on the island cottages.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service took over management of South Solitary Island in 2005. As a result of acquiring necessary funding to support work on the island, significant improvements have been made to the buildings. This is clearly evidenced in the following images; the before image taken around 2001 and the after image taken in more recent times.

Staff from NPWS continue to work with FOSSIL volunteers to preserve the significant historic heritage of the site.



Before restoration (est. 2001)



After restoration (est. 2016)

Chance Bros Glass Works

Members of FOSSIL, Darren and Rosie Squibb, travelled to the UK in 2018 and visited the renowned Chance Brothers Glass Works. First established in Smethwick in 1824, Chance Brothers were a leading glass manufacturer and pioneers of British glassmaking technology. From 1851 Chance Brothers became a major lighthouse engineering company, producing optical components, machinery and other equipment for lighthouses around the world. James Timmins Chance pioneered placing lighthouse lamps inside a cage surrounded by Fresnel lenses to increase the available light output, revolutionising lighthouse design. Another important innovation from Chance Brothers was the introduction of rotating optics, allowing adjacent lighthouses to be distinguished from each other by the number of times per revolution that the light flashes. John Hopkinson, the noted English physicist and engineer, invented this system while employed at Chance Brothers.



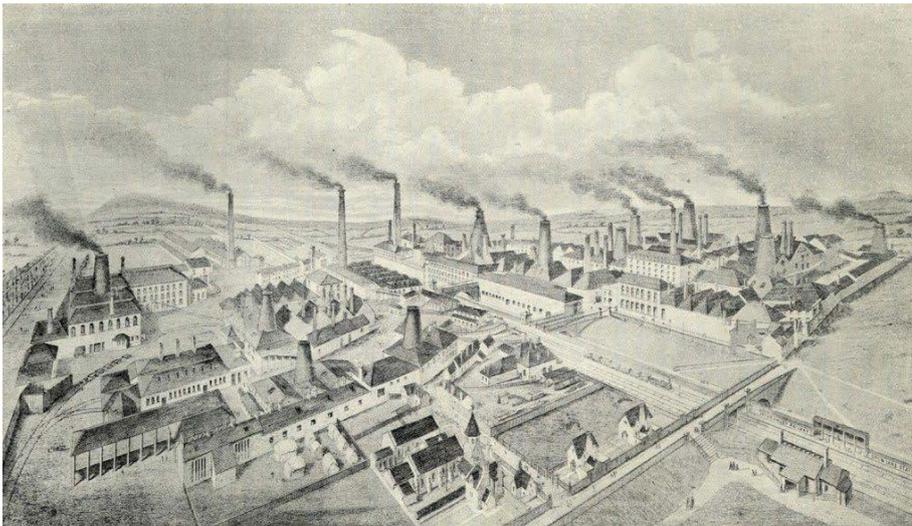
The Heritage listed Chance Bros Glass Works

The South Solitary Island light was displayed at a focal height of 192 feet (59 m) and was visible for 16 nautical miles (30 km). As of 1934, the intensity of the light was 205,000 candela and the light characteristic was one flash every 30 seconds (Fl W 30s).

The lens system rotated in a bath of mercury and was driven by a clockwork mechanism. The clockwork, which was made by the Renault Company of France, was driven by a weight wound up at half-hourly intervals through a tube running at the centre of the lighthouse tower, from the lantern room to the tower base.

The Coffs Harbour City Council were gifted the original Fresnel lens by the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA). Unfortunately, due to space limitations at the Coffs Harbour Museum site, the lens is not currently on display to the public.

For more information about the Chance Brothers Glass Works, go to www.cbgwht.org



An early lithograph of the Chance Bros Glassworks

The Lantern

The original lantern installed in the lighthouse at South Solitary Island was a first-order dioptric Fresnel lens made by the Chance Brothers and the second of its type to be used in Australia. The original light source was a kerosene burner, the first of its kind in New South Wales, rather than the colza oil ones used by other lighthouses of that period. As other lighthouses upgraded to kerosene, then to carbide lamps, and finally to electricity, South Solitary remained kerosene-operated until 1975, the last of its kind in New South Wales.



FOSSIL Merchandise

We now have FOSSIL branded merchandise available for sale. Quality polo shirts are \$40 and caps are only \$20.



Contact our Secretary, Brian Bevan, to arrange to make a purchase on 0490 469 562.

Working Bees

The first FOSSIL working bee on South Solitary was conducted in May 2019. FOSSIL member, Garry Kennedy, attended the working bee and took a number of amazing images whilst on this island. Thankfully Garry has agreed to share his images and his experience...

My interest in South Solitary Island Lighthouse stems from two main factors; my previous 34-year career in the Royal Australian Navy where lighthouses were a primary component of the ship's navigation and my diving experiences of around 1,000 dives around the island where I could see the lighthouse and the buildings from the surface. When I saw the FOSSIL Facebook page, I joined as a way of learning more about the lighthouse and offering myself to assist where I can to preserve the lighthouse and the buildings. I was fortunate to be selected for the working bee in May and thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

I was seated at the window in the helicopter on the way out and managed to get some video footage of the island as we circled in to land. After unpacking, Jude, Richard and I set to work on the bathroom, fixing plywood panels in order to seal the room from the elements. That took us a bit longer than we had expected. We measured and cut the ply before we painted it and it was a perfect fit. We then painted the panels before screwing the panels in place and unfortunately after painting, the panels swelled and we had a devil of a job to get the last panel to fit! What should have been a 20-minute job took about 3 hours!



Our other jobs included fitting fibreglass sheets on the roof and walls of the laundry and the "chook" shed. We also moved the concrete bags from the drop off point between the houses into the newly sealed bathroom.

I enjoyed the work and Jude, Richard and I made a great team, but we won't be starting our own construction company anytime soon. I shared a room with Richard and despite fears of our snoring, we didn't keep each other awake. The accommodation was comfortable and after long days working outside, I slept really well.



As a keen photographer, I also took the opportunity to take some unique images, especially at night with the clear atmosphere and lack of ambient light being a real bonus.



I think the Island and its infrastructure is a unique part of the Coffs Harbour area and with the interesting history attached to the island, it should be preserved for as long as possible. If there is any way that access to the island can be provided to greater numbers of the public who have an interest, it would be a significant asset to the Coffs Coast.

I am really grateful to FOSSIL for the opportunity to visit the island and provide a very small contribution to the preservation of the buildings.

Thanks Garry for your contribution to the newsletter and both Garry and Jude de la Torre for the images included here.

Fundraising Raffle

Thanks to the following sponsors of our recent raffle:

Jo & Andrew from **Precision Helicopters** & the **NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

Chris Bramley – Whale Watching Experience on the **Pacific Explorer**

Mike & Deb from **Jetty Dive**

Over 600 tickets were sold with FOSSIL acquiring a net profit of almost \$1,300. This is the most successful fundraising effort for FOSSIL to date and will likely continue each year into the future. Well done everyone!

Friends of Tasman Island Milestone

In 2005, the sad spectacle of the Tasman Island light station keepers' quarters – abandoned since 1977 – was the catalyst for the formation of the Wildcare group; Friends of Tasman Island. Fast forward 14 years and the group has now celebrated its 30th working bee on the island.

However, this time, Tasman seemed to be playing hard to get! Gusty winds and intermittent showers postponed the morning departure. Finally, in early afternoon, five volunteers took off for the short ten minute helicopter flight. But it seemed that they'd hardly left when they were back again – the flight aborted due to the continuing turbulent conditions. An "exciting" flight, they said!

Reassembling early the next morning, the weather gods were at last in their favour. By 10am, Tasman Island had welcomed eight volunteers (two were forced to drop out at the last minute) as well as three 600+kg sling-loads of materials and equipment, each load dropped precisely where needed to minimise handling. PWS Heritage Officer, Peter Rigozzi, had also hitched a ride to see how work was progressing and Rosemary Bailey was on a quick visit, gathering data for a proposed smartphone app of the island's historic features.



The Friends of Tasman Island are one of over 80 similar volunteer groups which are part of Wildcare Inc; the largest not-for-profit volunteer organisation in Tasmania.

Having arrived, there was a sense of urgency. There were only 9 days left in which to complete the planned works – restoration of the sunroom and verandah of Light Keepers' Quarters No 3; the replacement of rotten floor boards and rusted lintels at Quarters No 2 and a weeding programme, commenced by Bob and Penny Tyson in 2009, this time planning to concentrate on infestations of Californian thistle.



Thanks to Erika Shankley from the Friends of Tasman Island for granting us permission to share her story and images in our newsletter.

For more information, go to <https://wildcarea.org.au/branches/friends-of-tasman-island/>



© Garry Kennedy

MORE INFORMATION & Membership Enquiries

Friends of South Solitary Island Lighthouse

Email: fossil2450@hotmail.com



[Friends of South Solitary Island Lighthouse](#)

Return and Earn

In order to encourage fundraising through the container return program, Committee members Bob and Tania Lamb have established a 'group return account' at the Coffs Container Return facility. This facility simplifies processing of recyclable containers by sorting and counting them quickly and efficiently. All eligible glass and plastic bottles, aluminium cans and tetra-pak containers with a return and earn indicator are accepted.



Take your recyclables to **Coffs Container Return facility at 313 Pacific Highway** – down the service road between Bunnings and Coffs Harbour Base Hospital. Once your recyclables are counted, simply instruct the cashier to direct the proceeds to **FOSSIL customer number 234284**. We thank you in advance for your generous contribution to our cause.