

Historical Notes of Wellington Park



At least 35,000 years ago Aborigines arrive on the land now known as Tasmania.

10 000 – 12 000 years ago Rising sea level floods the Bassian Plains isolating the Tasmanian Aborigines from mainland Australia.

1642 Dutch explorer Abel Janszoon Tasman sails past the west coast of Tasmania, naming it Van Diemen's Land after the governor of Batavia.

1792 Captain William Bligh of H.M.S. *Providence* shows Mount Wellington as 'Table Hill'.

D'Entrecasteaux shows the Mountain on maps as 'Le Plateau'.

1793 Lt John Hayes' chart shows the Mountain as 'Skiddaw'.

1798 George Bass and Mathew Flinders circumnavigate Van Diemen's Land
George Bass climbs Mount Wellington on Christmas Day.

1800s American whalers 'fishing' the Derwent River and waterways

Aborigines who lived around the area knew the Mountain as 'Unghanyahletta' or 'Pooranetere'.

1801 French explorers Francois Peron and Henri de Freycinet from Nicholas Baudin's expedition note local vegetation ablaze from Goat Hills (Aboriginal burning).

1803 Lt John Bowen arrives to the Derwent River and attempts to form a settlement of 49 inhabitants at Risdon Cove.

First fatal encounters occur between the Aborigines and the English.

1804 Lt David Collins establishes convict settlement at Hobart. Risdon Cove is abandoned.

Collins calls the Mountain 'Table Mountain' after the mountain behind Cape Town, South Africa.

Robert Brown (a member of Collins' settlement party) makes a number of ascents for plant collecting.

1810 Salome Pitt (the first European woman) and an Aboriginal girl known as Miss Story climb the Mountain.

- 1817** Convict timbergetters working in the foothills of Mount Wellington along the Hobart Rivulet.
- 1819** Botanist Alan Cunningham ascends Mount Wellington and records the weather as 'alternatively fair, with snowstorms'.
- 1822** The Mountain renamed in honour of the Duke of Wellington who defeated Napoleen Bonaparte at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.
- 1825** Van Diemen's Land, which had been part of the colony of New South Wales, becomes a colony in its own right.
Canal work begins with convict labour to channel the waters into the Hobart Rivulet near Milles Track.
- 1830s** First Huon Road built via the Sandy Bay Rivulet and Fern Tree.
Quarrying of slate just below Junction Cabin by Robert Barter Wiggins.
- 1831** Artist John Glover retires to Van Diemen's Land at the age of 64. He paints prolifically (including Mount Wellington and Hobart Town from Kangaroo Point 1934).
First major piped water supply built in Australia from the Springs along the Hobart Rivulet ('the 1831 Diversion') in an attempt to source clean, potable water following industrial pollution of the Hobart Rivulet.
- 1832** Kings Pits – government sawpits in operation at Browns Flats (near the Junction Cabin area) to at least 1833 – visited by James Backhouse.
- 1833** Degraves & McIntosh are given a temporary location order for land on the lower flanks of Mt Wellington to just past the Kings Pits for timber to supply their new state of the art sawmill at the foot of the Mountain on the Hobart Rivulet. The sawmill was the first powered (water driven) mill in Tasmania.
- 1836** Charles Darwin climbs Mount Wellington with a guide during his round-the world trip on H.M.S, *Beagle* and finds it 'a severe day's work'.
- 1837** Miss Wandly climbs to the summit to see the location where her fiance drowned in the Derwent River. Lady Jane Franklin, wife of Lt Governor Sir John Franklin climbs Mount Wellington approx 2 weeks later. Climbers in the party paint their names in white lead paint and large letters on a dolerite column on the Organ Pipes.
- 1840s** First white visitors to Wellington Falls.
- 1841** Mr Huggins disappears while attempting to climb to the summit. His body is never found.
- 1842** **Convict transportation reaches its peak – 5 329 in one year**
Lady Jane Franklin initiates the building of Ancanthe 'blooming valley' (at

current day Lenah Valley), a museum to focus the colony's cultural aspirations.

- 1843** Lady Jane Franklin initiates the building of two huts on Mount Wellington (one at the Pinnacle and one at the Springs) to encourage more women to climb the Mountain.
- 1845** A track financed by public donations built to Wellington Falls.
- 1849** The first of the Mount Wellington ice houses built by convict labour to compact snow for ice, then transported to Hobart by pack horse 'to be used by the confectioners of Hobart in the preparation of ice creams'. Development instigated by Governor Sir William Denison.
- 1851** February – 'Black Tuesday' bushfire afflicts the Mountain.
- 1853** [Last convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land](#)
- 1855** [Van Diemen's Land's name changed to Tasmania](#)
Bushranger John 'Rocky' Whelan hides on the slopes of Mount Wellington in a cave below the Springs (he also had another retreat near Kingston). Rocky is eventually captured after committing several murders around Hobart. He is rumoured to have said he would 'kill a man for four pence'. Despite clemency pleas Whelan is hanged.
- 1856** [Tasmania becomes self governed and elects its own Parliament](#)
- 1858** Dr John Smith, surgeon of the *Derwentwater* becomes separated from his party on the descent from the Pinnacle, and is found dead after a search that lasted 5 days. During the search one party was twice attacked by robbers. (Smith's Monument at South Wellington marks the location where his body was found).
- 1861** Construction of the original Waterworks scheme begins taking water from the Mountain to a reservoir in the Sandy Bay Rivulet. Stage one involves taking water from Fork Creek and Browns River to the Waterworks below Ridgeway. The workforce lives on site during construction.

Fern Tree Inn built and opened by John Hall.
- 1869** Huon Rd (the second route via the Mountain) opens between Hobart and the Huon Valley.
- 1870s** [West Coast mineral boom](#)
Henry Woods 'the old man of the Mountain' and his family live in a hut at the Springs and provides refreshments to visitors and sells ice from the ice houses.
- 1871** First water reserve proclaimed between North West Bay River and the Pinnacle.

- 1872** After torrential rain in June, a huge landslide occurs on the north-west face of Mount Arthur, with rubble, mud and water flowing down Humphrey Rivulet and through Glenorchy. Several houses destroyed, and one man killed. (The scar of the landslide can still be seen).
- 1875** Waterworks pipeline scheme extended to St Crispins Well.
- 1876** Mounting concerns re timber felling and fern collecting around Mount Wellington, including the western slopes. *The Mercury* reports a warning that 'the mountain slopes are being stripped of their timber, disfigured and robbed of their attractiveness'.
- 1880** Ferns and trees cleared around the Fern Tree Bower results in public outcry.
- 1887** Second Waterworks Reservoir built.
- 1888** Construction of Pillinger Drive from Fern Tree to The Springs begins using prison labour (later finished with free workers).
The first of the famous turn-of-the-century 'weekender' huts built in the eastern foothills of Mount Wellington. Many more were built in the following 3 decades.
- 1890** [Widespread Depression](#)
The first Mountain ranger, Mr Charles Gadd, appointed to control illegal exploitation of the Mountain. He also continues the selling of ice from the ice houses, while Mrs Gadd supplies meals for visitors. The ice houses later cease operating.
The track (now known as Jefferys Track) used to send stock from the New Norfolk area to Huon markets.
- 1892** St Raphael's Anglican Church at Fern Tree, designed by Alan Cameron Walker, constructed of hand adzed Huon Pine.
- 1893** Idea of a hotel at the Springs mooted but opposed due to water contamination concerns.
- 1895** Clement Wragge establishes meteorological observatories on the Mountain.
- 1897** Fern Tree Strawberry Festival becomes an annual event after a local fete. Southern slopes from Cascades to Lower Longley ravaged by 'Black Friday' 31st December. Several lives and approximately 20 houses lost.
- 1898** The Neika School (with one teacher) begins operating and caters for the children of many fruit growers in the area. Operational until 1944.
- 1900** Detailed survey of Wellington Range undertaken by HR Hutchison for assessing water supply (c.1900-1903). Hutchison established several camps on the plateau.

- 1901** The Commonwealth of Australia proclaimed, Tasmania becomes a state of Australia.
Royal Commission appointed to investigate Hobart's water supply and the Hobart Corporation.
The Mountain pipeline extends from St Crispins Well to North West Bay River near Wellington Falls.
- 1902** The Merton Lime Company operating near Glenorchy with lime exported from Victoria Dock on the Hobart Wharves.
New hotel built at Fern Tree replacing the 60 year old Fern Tree Inn.
- 1903** Women in Tasmania win voting rights in state elections.
G.H. Radford and J.M. Richards die on the way down Mount Wellington during the 'Go-as-you-please' race from Hobart to the Pinnacle. Mr Cockshutt went on to win the race in 2 hrs and 44 mins. (Monuments to the men can be seen on Radfords Track and Pinnacle Track).
- 1905** First application proposal made for an aerial tramway from Cascades to the summit (in the following hundred years at least seven applications for a similar cable car concept would be made, all strongly protested by citizens of Hobart).
- 1906** Much of the eastern face of Mount Wellington declared a Public Park by an Act of Parliament and vested in the Hobart City Council. A high proportion of timber getting activities cease.
- 1907** The Springs Hotel opens (built at a cost of £3 300 by a private developer. Architect Alan Cameron Walker was well known for his Arts and Crafts Tradition style buildings including St Raphaels Church at Fern Tree.
- 1914** Tasmanian forces leave to fight in the First World War February – major fires occur in the area.
October – major fires occur in the area.
- 1915** Track cut from Myrtle Forest near Collinsvale to Collins Bonnet (although an informal track may have existed before this).
- 1916** Mount Field declared Tasmania's first National Park.
- 1917** Ridgeway Reservoir built to supplement the mountain water supply system reservoirs in the Sandy Bay Rivulet (the Waterworks).
- 1920s** Many current walking tracks on the eastern side of Mount Wellington constructed.
Skiing occurs on the Mountain.
The struggling Springs Hotel purchased by Hobart City Council.

- The Pipeline from Neika to North West Bay River opens to the public as a recreational/access track.
- 1922** Cradle Mountain proclaimed a scenic reserve.
- 1929** Negotiations with Cascade Brewery results in about 560ha added to the park (this land was formerly the timber and water supply land owned by Degraves and McIntosh who established the first sawmill in Tasmania at the base of Mt Wellington, and also the Cascade Brewery).
- Hobart Walking Club established.
- 1930s** The Great Depression
- Lone Cabin rebuilt, then lived in for over 20 years by Danny Griffiths, retired Hobart hairdresser who was made an honorary ranger.
- 1931** Unemployment in Tasmania reaches 27%
- Albert Olgilvie, Labor Premier, champions the building of a road from the Springs to the summit to ease unemployment, subsequently named Ogilvie's Scar.
- Lenah Valley Track opened.
- Work begins on the Old Hobartians Track cut from the Lenah Valley Track to Hunters Track.
- Designs commence for the Exhibition Garden at the Springs Hotel grazing area creating an area for less common species of native plants. The initiative was designed to raise money to aid the unemployed by fundraising for the development of tracks and shelters on Mount Wellington.
- 1934** Major bushfires occur in the area.
- 1937** The road between the Springs and the summit opens. The Mercury reports the construction as a 'triumph of engineering ingenuity over nature at its wildest'.
- Bluestone and sandstone lookout constructed at the Pinnacle (the podium from the lookout has been retained in the current viewing shelter).
- Further major fires occur.
- 1938** Luckmans Hut built by the Hobart Walking Club used as a base in winter by skiers and ice skaters (originally named the Mt Wellington Hobart Walking Club Hut).
- 1939** Water storage facility built at Lake Fenton on Lady Barron Creek in Mount Field National Park to provide a water scheme that wasn't reliant on Mount Wellington.

An open ice skating rink was built near the Pinnacle by the Hobart Walking Club. However it is reported that it didn't hold ice well and suffered from 'a wind sculpted surface' and so was not used for long.

- 1940 Tasmanian forces leave to fight in the Second World War**
- A second ski hut built near the Pinnacle, this time by the newly formed Wellington Ski Club. There were ski runs on The Drift (above the Zig Zag Track), at Mt Arthur, on Thark Ridge and near the huts.
- 1945** December – most of the eastern face of Mount Wellington burnt. Sailors from visiting warships help fight the blaze.
- 1956 Television arrives in Australia**
- 1958** Knights Creek Dam built at Glenorchy to supplement local water supply after a period of prolonged drought.
- 1959** Two separate towers built near the summit of the Mountain to provide television reception to southern Tasmania.
- 1960** Silver Falls and the Fern Tree Bower, both popular recreational destinations, destroyed by flooding.
- 1967** 7th February – 'Black Friday' burns approximately 270 000ha of Southern Tasmania. 1 300 houses and 128 major buildings burn in five hours. 62 people die. Damage bill to become the biggest insurance payout in Australia's history to that time. Extensive areas of Mount Wellington burned
- 1972 Lake Pedder in south west Tasmania is flooded by the Hydro Electric Commission despite opposition from environmental activists.**
- The world's first Green political party is formed - the United Tasmania Group.
- 1988** The new observation shelter built at the Pinnacle.
- 1993** The Wellington Park Act passed through Parliament formalising and integrating management for protection of natural, cultural, water catchment, aesthetic, and tourism and recreation values. Wellington Park Management Trust created as the managing authority for Wellington Park (now 18,250ha).
- Strong community opposition to the 'Skyway' proposal, the most recent cable car proposal for Mt Wellington, which featured a 4.5km cable car system from South Hobart to the Pinnacle, summit restaurant and ski complex.
- 1994** Work begins on the concrete transmission tower at the Pinnacle to replace the two TV transmission towers and provide upgraded telecommunications facilities for the greater Hobart area.
- 1997** The Wellington Park Management Plan finalised to establish Park values, define management objectives and consider recommendations.

- 2000** Various tracks on Mt Wellington opened to recreational cycling.
- 2001** WPMT undertakes an oral history project to record the stories of Wellington Park and better understand the significance of the area.
- 2002** The first Mountain Festival held, now a popular bi-annual event that celebrates Mount Wellington, and Wellington Park.

Sourced from:

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- Wellington Park Recreational Map and Notes, 2005
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- Fern Tree Community Association website, 2006