

HISTORY OF THE WINIFRED CURTIS SCAMANDER RESERVE 1994 – 2014

A personal Record by Tim McManus

Believe it or not the history of the Winifred Curtis Scamander Reserve began with the infamous Rum Rebellion by the NSW Corps in January 1808. One of the protagonists in the affair was Lieutenant Anthony Fenn Kemp. Surprisingly. He was not hung for his participation but exiled to Van Diemens Land where, the rogue, characteristically, took advantage of any situation likely to prove beneficial to him. While simultaneously antagonising the Lieutenant Governor, William Sorell.

On Sunday December 7th, 1825, well known surveyor and explorer, John Helder Wedge, climbed the 694 metre peak of the prominent east coast feature, St Patricks Head -almost certainly the first European to do so.

The extensive view from there, down on to the picturesque coastal plain, is quite spectacular. Wedge obviously thought so and subsequently recommended the coastal land be reserved for hapless Waterloo pensioners who were then a severe embarrassment for the British Government.

The publicity this impractical proposal generated, when publicised in the Hobart Town Gazette, initiated a scramble for that land by various would-be developers such as Charles Swanston, James Grant, and of course Anthony Fenn Kemp.

By the time the latter realised the potential for a quick profit, the bulk of the coastal land had been alienated and he had to be content with a lesser area of 640 acres south of the Scamander River - then named the Borthwick.

Fortunately, for the Waterloo pensioners the mad proposal fell on deaf ears and all the land reverted to the Crown. The whole affair however did alert prospective settlers to the availability of arable land at a time when it was becoming scarce in the State.

First on the scene was Captain (Doctor) Alexander Henderson (Henderson Lagoon) who was granted his standard four square miles by Governor Arthur on May 29, 1829. The area was mostly south of Fern Tree Glen Creek, down the coast towards Four Mile Creek.

The second of the two pioneer settlers was William Steel (Steels Beach), from Oxfordshire in England. He was granted his four square miles north of Henderson's by Governor Arthur on December 23, 1829 and officially located to him on March 19, 1830.

The delay between the dates was due to the fact that, unlike Henderson, there was not a sufficiently large area for a single allocation and the difference had to be made up by adding bits and pieces of land formerly claimed by Anthony Fenn Kemp.

Only four families of Steels subsequently farmed the property; William Steel, who was drowned on the St Helens barway on September 5, 1834; then his nephew, Michael Steel until 1864; Michael's brother John until 1913; then John's second son, Leslie John, from 1913 until his death on 17 December, 1968 at the enormous age of 102.

The three latter managers all complained of the uselessness of the northern section of the farm, which they derisively referred to as "Kemp's Ground", which included the present day Winifred Curtis Scamander Reserve. Livestock put there for bush grazing would simply cross over the ford back to better pastures. Consequently, the area was never developed or cultivated. Nor was any clearing attempted. This is very evident today by the many *Xanthorrhoea australis* shrubs (grass trees) throughout the Reserve- the first natives to disappear once their habitat is disturbed.

On November 28, 1969 the large Steel Estate was put up for public auction. All the arable land was purchased by Mr Patrick Wardlaw but he rejected the northern "Kemp's Ground" section. The latter was sold by the Steel family to Seaview Properties Pty. Ltd. in Sydney, who subdivided it into nine small lots adjacent to the Tasman Highway and two larger parcels of 52.10 Hectares to the north and 73.8 hectares, Lot 1, to the south.

The northern parcel is now Scamander Sanctuary. Lot 1 was purchased by Mr Bert Jenkins- formerly of Victoria but later residing in Scamander- for \$90,000. His intention was to subdivide the holding into several residential lots, each surrounded by a native bushland reserve.

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I first encountered Dr Curtis in 1950 when, as a science student, she supervised our Botany prac. class in a discarded army hut at the Sandy Bay campus of the University of Tasmania. I was attempting to depict on paper a section of a chlorophyll leaf, but rather inexpertly. "You must draw what you see", said Dr Curtis.

Little did I realise that this rather forbidding lady would one day become a lifelong dear friend. Our house was on the corner of Lord and Grosvenor Streets in Sandy Bay. Dr Curtis was just round the corner in York Street with a large single magnolia tree in the paved front garden. Subsequently, I visited her often, initially when her parents were living and later, when she was there alone, until she was bashed up by an intruder and had to move across the river to the Queen Victoria Home in Lindisfarne where she remained for the rest of her long life.

I well remember asking her if there were any places in Tasmania where the vegetation was in its original condition. "Very few", she said, "the Hydro has been everywhere". I did not know at the time that Winifred was aware, through her Field Naturalist connections, of the pristine dry sclerophyll bushland north of Henderson Lagoon, still in its original condition from the time of European settlement.

Dr Curtis did not have a lot of friends but one of them was a Medical Student, Miss Geraldine Archer, who was having a difficult time with her studies because it was not then considered proper for women to become doctors. Both women had undergone the bias of chauvinism and remained life-long close friends. They were nearly the same age, both being born in 1905.

Geraldine was a very conservation minded lady. Many years later, in 1980, when she was a busy and much-loved Launceston obstetrician, Dr Archer, doubtless influenced by her botanist friend, purchased one of the small roadside Lots, Lot 33 near Henderson Lagoon. She also bought two combined small blocks of land across the Tasman Highway on which she built a retreat comprising two conjoined miners' cottages, translocated from Rossarden.

She stipulated in her will that the land was 'for the preservation of native flora and fauna, and for the use, enjoyment, appreciation and education of the people of Tasmania'. After a hectic life, Geraldine Archer died on May 29, 1993, at the age of 87. Subsequently, on 15 November 1994, her legal administrators, Shields Heritage, in accordance with her will, selected five persons to become Trustees, to manage the cottage and the piece of bushland.

They were Miss Aida Ball, retired schoolteacher and lifetime friend and supporter of Dr Archer, (she referred to her as 'The Doc') Mrs Mary Cameron, resident botanist at Launceston 's Queen Victoria Museum; Mr Denys Walter, retired science teacher and then President of the North-East Field Naturalist's Association; Ms Wanda Buza, law graduate and niece of Aida Ball; and Dr Tim McManus, ecologist and retired veterinary surgeon.

The first Trustees' meeting was held later that year in the ramshackle Cottage under the guidance of Aida Ball, who brought a cold chook for lunch. She rather dogmatically appointed me Chairman of Trustees, probably because I lived closest to the sites. It was unanimously agreed to name the land the Winifred Curtis Scamander Reserve.

Since affirmation of the bequest deed, the Trustees used an amount of money from it to refurbish the cottage, which was little more than rough hut with an outside thunderbox under a gum tree, to enable periodic residence by biologists and other scientists for research etc. This was done very thoroughly and tastefully by St Helens builder David Torrents under the professional guidance of Aida's friend Mr Ken Partridge for a total cost, including painting, of \$15,600. A big expense component was the installation of proper plumbing, including a septic sewerage system, all of which had to be approved by the Break O'Day Council.

We had a nice, routed sign affixed to the outside wall of the refurbished cottage with the name "Archer Cottage" on it. With assistance from local Parks & Wildlife staff, an attractive entrance, with acknowledgement to Dr Archer over it was erected. A walkway through the lovely piece of bushland was cleared and Mary Cameron labelled important plant specimens. I made a series of direction signs on laminated

paper which I glued to A4 size particle board and screwed to rack sticks, to give the new Reserve a professional appearance.

The first Winifred Curtis Scamander Reserve was officially opened at a public ceremony, by Dr. John Morris of Launceston - a former student of Dr. Curtis and a lifelong friend of both her and Dr. Archer. Aida Ball drew up a list of 99 invitees in the hope that some donations might ensue. David Archer, Dr Geraldine's adopted thalidomide-affected son, designed and sent all the invitations. The event occurred on the afternoon of Saturday, 11 November 1995 and was reported in the Launceston "Examiner" on 23 November.

About 85 people attended and were rewarded with afternoon tea at Archer Cottage afterwards. A welcome attendee was Bert Jenkins who was there with his granddaughter, Eileen Jourdian.

The most useful temporary residents at the now comfortable Archer Cottage were a group of five post graduate students from the University of Tasmania's Environmental Studies Unit, who spent a fortnight there in October 2001, undertaking a very detailed preliminary Fire Management Plan for the whole Reserve. They were Travis Collins, Patsy Harmsen, Sacha Jellinek, Ben Morris and Tony Weaver. Their excellent work enabled us to arrange a successful litter-reduction burn, later on June 21 2002, employing all the local fire brigades.

Notwithstanding the generous donation of land by the late Dr. Geraldine Archer, it soon became apparent to the Trustees that the 2.054 hectares was too small to be representative of the many ecosystems in the Henderson Lagoon area - some 16 or more. Basically, the little WCS Reserve was just a piece of dry sclerophyll bushland, beautiful certainly, but with not much variety.

Meanwhile, Mr Bert Jenkins' plans were frustrated by the Break O'Day Council rezoning his Lot 1 land from 'rural residential' to 'open space', without consulting him. This meant that, despite the fact he had already cleared an area for a residence and erected a substantial machinery shed alongside it, he was unable to continue with his development.

He was in a difficult situation. He advertised the block for \$100,000 but with the limitations of the re-zoning, nobody wanted it. Except of course the WCSR Trustees. The 73 .48 hectares incorporated all the mini ecosystems (bushland, heathland, wetland, marshland etc.) necessary to make an enlarged reserve really something special, and still in accordance with Dr. Archer's wishes.

As well, the Lot, restricted by coastal reserve to the east, and Henderson Lagoon to the west and south, provided ideal boundaries for conservation purposes. Initially, the Trustees approached governments, both State and Local, as well as other potential benefactors, for funds to enable us to buy what had become known as the 'Jenkins Block'

Although many letters were received acknowledging the worth of the cause and the conservation value of the land the Trust was seeking to purchase, all replies were

similar; 'we regret no funds for such ventures are presently available'. I even applied for a \$100,000 grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund, but to no avail.

Meanwhile, to add to Trustees frustration, the Australian Heritage Commission, on 14 June 1997 and as a consequence of separate scientific surveys and reports, entered the whole of the Henderson Lagoon area (390 hectares) on the Register of the National Estate.

Bert Jenkins was prepared to sell us the land for \$90,000, the amount he paid for it, but this was way beyond our resources. Nevertheless, we approached the Federal Department of the Environment to have the Winifred Curtis Scamander Reserve Trust Public Gift Fund, as our Bank account was officially named, established as a conservation beneficiary for taxation deduction purposes. Wanda Buza did most of the organising, application for an ABN etc., and the request was finally approved on 1 April 2000.

The public response when the situation was publicised was amazing. In the three months prior to April 1 nearly \$7,500 was donated by nine generous persons. Subsequently, the flood of over 100 donations from all parts of the State prompted us to apply to the Commonwealth Natural Heritage Trust for a grant that, with the amazing public support, would, hopefully, enable the accumulation of the required \$90,000.

The requisite Federal form was horrific. Eleven pages of incomprehensible questions plus, a wealth of detail. I have to acknowledge the invaluable assistance from staff at the head office of the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service, in particular Jennifer Dyring, without whom the application could never have been submitted. But it was, 70 pages of maps and data, sent to Senator Robert Hill on 7 September 2000. To our delight it was approved, on 26 October 2000, the last such application, I believe, in the current NHT scheme.

By this time, we had acquired nearly \$23,000 in donations, so as soon as I was notified of the success of the application I wrote out a cheque for \$20,000 to Roberts Real Estate as a deposit on the Jenkins block. Public donations were still coming in. We were nearly there. On 9 January we received an electronic transfer of \$65,000 from the Department of Environment in Canberra, and on 12 January 2001 I wrote out a cheque payable to Ritchie, Parker, & Alfred Green & CO. for the balance. The land was ours.

Very generously, Bert Jenkins donated the machinery shed to us - currently insured for \$10,000 - and even before we had bought the block, continued to allow us to make use of it for botanical excursions. I well remember one delightful occasion when Dr. Curtis and Mary Cameron were sitting on the grass there, arguing over the identification of a sun orchid.

Sadly, dear Mary Cameron was not there to see the success of our tedious bureaucratic journey but died after a long battle with cancer on 3 January 2001. Literally, on her deathbed in St Luke's hospital, she wrote out a generous personal cheque to enable me

to finally scratch up the money to cover the \$70,500 purchase price including costs. She had been a wonderful Trustee and a very knowledgeable one when it came to plant identification and ecology. I still miss her a lot.

Her place on the Trust was taken by distinguished Tasmanian Herbarium botanist, Mr Alex Buchanan.

We were always aware from historic information that the Lot to our north, now called the Scamander Sanctuary, was heavily infested with the root-rot fungus, *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, identified early in the 1970's, and were concerned because, before we bought our land and the boundary fence was in place, many uncontrolled vehicles traversed the whole area.

In March 2001 we were fortunate to have a visit and survey by Richard Schahinger, a root-fungus expert from the Department of Primary Industry in Hobart. He certainly found the fungus among affected grass trees on the edge of the Old Coach Road. Grass trees are very susceptible to *Phytophthora cinnamorni*. However, in his report he noted that the infestation was "somewhat subdued", a welcome conclusion. Since then, we have observed some degradation among grass trees, but lots of young vigorous ones also present.

The Official Opening of the enlarged Reserve was rather more complicated than the earlier one. Minister David Llewellyn had agreed to officiate; speaker's notes had to be prepared; official invitations sent out well in advance; acknowledgement of the many generous donors had to be publicised; P.A. Equipment and a generator organised; a sheltered video place made for a recorded address from Dr Curtis; seating for 50+ persons and morning tea for 100+ across the road at Archer Cottage.

Again, David Archer designed and distributed the invitations; 146 were posted to every donor, helper and contributor, 106 acceptances were received.

The enlarged Winifred Curtis Scamander Reserve was eventually opened by the then Minister for Parks & Wildlife, Mr David Llewellyn on Sunday 2 December 2001, again, at a well-attended public ceremony. The aging Dr. Curtis could not attend but, as mentioned, sent a delightful, pre-recorded video which we played in the blacked out school bus shelter. Bert Jenkins, in declining health had by then moved back to Victoria, but was represented by his granddaughter, Eileen Jourdian.

Special mention was made of the help given in recent weeks by the eight 'work for the dole scheme' people- Paul Andrews, Barry Dearth, Suzanne Gilroy, Nathan Maynard, Matt Richardson, Michael Tatnell, Ashley Von-Stieglitz and Michael Wilby, managed by Neil Butterworth. The fire management post graduate team were also thanked.

Sadly, our foundation Trustee, beloved Aida Ball, did not survive to witness the enlarged opening of the Reserve. Despite having half her leg amputated to alleviate cancer, she passed away on September 3, 2001. It was a tragic loss because Aida had been the guiding light of the progress of the Trust since its inception and had personally sought many of the public donations which brought the project to fruition.

I am proud of the fact that I personally recommended all of the four ladies, so intimately associated with the realisation of our unique Reserve, to be included on the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women. Only Dr Curtis was then alive to receive the award personally.

After the official opening, Minister David Llewellyn unveiled a memorial stone at the entrance, bearing a bronze plaque dedicated to the memory of the two deceased Trustees, Mary Cameron and Aida Ball. Wanda Buza, Aida's niece and one of Mary Cameron's grandchildren then placed posies of wildflowers on the plinth. Minister Llewellyn was presented with an attractive, framed picture of *Tetratheca* in flower.

Nothing is for nothing, and the acquisition of the enlarged Reserve with the help of public and Government money came with several conditions. Principal constraint was a compulsory Conservation Covenant, in perpetuity, between the Tasmanian Minister for Parks and Wildlife and the Trust, ensuring the land could not be abused, cultivated, sold or otherwise disposed of, for ever. This Covenant was signed on the day of the second opening. We are indebted to Jim Mulcahy, Conservations Agreements Officer, for the onerous task of organising the Covenant.

A similar binding Contract had to be enacted between the Trust and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment. The Department also stipulated that large, 1500mm X 900mm, signs be erected at the entrances acknowledging, among other things, the financial assistance rendered by the Commonwealth in procuring the land. These signs cost us \$700.00 each.

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The remaining Trustees set about to make the enlarged Reserve 'user friendly'. The northern and western boundaries were cleared by P.A. & T.M. Rawnsley at a cost of \$462.00 and then very efficiently fenced by Alexander Withers of St Helens Combined Rural Services. He included two wooden styles to enable walkers to proceed on to Scamander. Greening Australia generously paid the bill - \$4,752.00. Another \$706.75 was paid to North East Excavations for extra clearing of the fence lines and making a fire break round the service shed.

St Helens resident and environmentalist, Mr E.B. (Ted) Clayton was invited to fill in as a Trustee for the late Aida Ball, and his practical contribution was very helpful. Ted was quite sure he identified a (rare for our Reserve) blue gum- *Eucalyptus globulus* tree but our botanist hasn't been able to find it since. I bet Ted was right though!

A Tasmanian Community Fund Grant of \$2,000.00 enabled us to order permanent, metal track marking signs from Eye Spy Signs in Hobart. These were concreted in place with assistance from volunteers and 'work for the dole' people. Two hundred wooden rack-sticks were ordered from the Goshen Sawmill, and were all painted white and used as walking-track markers. It was \$50.00 well spent.

A compulsory condition pertaining to the natural Heritage Trust grant was a public

liability insurance policy for the Reserve of \$3.00 million dollars. This was arranged through Bugg Goninon Pty. Ltd. In January 2002, at an initial premium of \$460.00, including shed and contents. The premium kept rising thereafter, especially when the Commonwealth stipulated the Public Liability cover had to be \$10 million. The latest premium is \$2,445.00.

A major preoccupation for the Trustees was the ever-increasing cost of maintaining Archer Cottage. The modest rent we were able to obtain went nowhere near covering the ongoing charges for Aurora energy, Council Rates, cost of water, Land Tax, insurance and maintenance. I wrote to the various organisations seeking relief but since the Conservation Covenant already saved us paying Rates and Land Tax on all our Reserve land, they were not interested.

Reluctantly, it was agreed to sell the cottage, on its two parcels of land, after first offering it to the Archer family. This I did, by letter, but after two months had received no reply, so we proceeded with the sale. We contacted both Roberts Real Estate and L.J. Hooker. The latter were more accommodating, so we put the matter in the hands of Mr Glenn McGuinness and the auction duly took place at 12 noon, on site, on September 6th 2003.

We were fortunate that the auction occurred at a time when Tasmanian real estate was at a buoyant stage. The sale realised an amazing \$116,067.95 with an additional \$1,176.20 for the furniture. We now had money with which to work. After paying off all outstanding bills, including the cost of replacement signs stolen by vandals (\$1,333.20), I spent some of the money purchasing much-wanted tools.

Our only brush-cutter had been stolen in a break and enter into the shed the previous month. As well, I had obtained another Tasmanian Community Fund Grant of \$20,500 to construct a much-needed 300-metre-long boardwalk across the melaleuca swamp, to Steels Beach on our northern boundary.

The grant covered the cost of all the timber and infrastructure, but not the wherewithal! So, an electric generator was needed; various electric saws; fuel; hardware etc. I also thought it wise to insure both the tools and the shed against another theft. The shed for \$10,000 and the contents for \$10,000.

When everything had been sorted, I invested the \$105,000 residue from the auction with B&E for 24 months at 5.25% at compounding interest, hoping that would cover all the likely costs in perpetuity.

We employed a qualified construction engineer, Mr Graeme Wathen to supervise the building of the boardwalk, assisted by Trustees and volunteers. It was a rather tedious task but was finally completed, within budget, on May 4th, 2004. An illustrated report was sent to the Tasmanian Community Fund which was gratefully received.

In November 2004, the Trust spent \$325.00 on a bronze plaque to be secured on a memorial stone in the Nancy Grunwaldt memorial grotto. It was inscribed, at her

parent's request, "NANCY GRUNWALDT born Germany 5 February 1967 MISSING NEAR SCAMANDER 12 March 1993 God watch over her." The family have visited the memorial several times since and placed flowers there, the most recent, on the 20th anniversary, 12 March 2013.

On 23 May, 2005, we lost our good friend and Trustee, Edward Bryant (Ted) Clayton, from an incurable brain tumour. His quiet knowledgeable contributions were always welcome and will be missed. He had also been a tireless volunteer in the St Helens History Room where he was especially appreciated.

The fickle east coast weather has always been a factor in the management of the Reserve. Although the long-term average annual rainfall approximates 600mm, this is rarely recorded, ranging anything from 300mm to 750mm in a year. A complication is that, if at times of flood rains the outlet of Henderson Lagoon to the sea is blocked by a sand bar, water backs up all over the level sections of the Reserve.

This happened in July 2001, causing a long delay in the second official opening . By contrast, in September of 2004, lack of rainfall again resulted in a sandbar across Henderson Lagoon's outlet, with excessive evaporation leaving a carpet of dead fish everywhere.

The worst flooding we ever had in the Reserve was in October 2005. The barway had closed on September 9 the previous year, but subsequent flood rains of 759 mm caused a big back-up of stagnant water rendering the Reserve un-useable. In vain did we ask the Parks and Wildlife Service for permission to open the barway, but local 'Greenie' agitators frustrated our overtures. Eventually, the local farmer did the job, accompanied by much verbal abuse, on 21 October 2005. Fortunately, the barway has remained open ever since.

On 14 October, 2005, my dear friend and mentor, Dr Winifred Mary Curtis died at the Queen Victoria Home, aged 101. I was privileged to be able to speak at her rather restrained Quaker funeral on 25 October, when many gathered to farewell a truly great lady of science.

Gradually, as the numbers of visitors increased, particularly local residents, the Reserve's reputation for beauty and tranquillity spread throughout the State. We had eliminated, by hand, nearly all the unsightly gorse and Spanish heath and were very proud of our lovely piece of pristine bushland. By now it was Spring 2006, and the Trustees were well pleased with progress since the second official opening.

Two events of note occurred during 2006. The first was a comprehensive survey, by Genevieve Gates and Dr David Ratkowsky from the University of Tasmania, of naturally existing fungi in our Reserve. They found nearly 100 individual species which they listed in a very useful reference.

The second event was a Crown Land Assessment and Classification Project for the Municipality of Break O'Day, from which recommendations were to be made concerning disposal of surplus Crown Land. One of the areas cited was the peripheral land, bordering ours, surrounding Henderson Lagoon, which we had been managing

for over ten years. The area amounted to 12.32 hectares.

I put in a strong bid for it and the application was granted. "The property is now recommended to adhere to the Winifred Curtis Scamander Reserve". A problem arose with respect to seeking a title to the extra land. I was informed that to obtain one would require a special piece of legislation to pass through both houses of Parliament. We would also need to modify our Trust Deed.

I thought, 'to blazes with it'; we had been in possession of the land for in excess of the prescribed eleven years and anyway rationalising the situation could result in us paying Rates and Land Tax on it because the area was not included in the original Conservation Covenant. I would be very surprised if our ownership were ever challenged.

Our ledger records that on 26 September we paid Graeme Wathen \$413.40 to build a bridge across the ditch at the walker entrance, the final piece of necessary infrastructure. The cost of our insurance had risen to \$1000.00 annually but was still manageable. Then disaster!

On 11th December, 2006, the day before my 74th birthday, a conflagration of unprecedented ferocity engulfed the Reserve. That morning I was playing golf on the Scamander River course and remember remarking to the greenkeeper that a bush fire over the hills to the west could cause trouble later on that day. Little did I know. The destruction was absolute, with only the Service Shed and contents remaining protected by a surrounding fire-break. A feature of the incineration was that it was not caused by a surface fire but an intensely hot aerial one, driven by hot westerly winds. So hot in fact that it melted all our aluminium direction signs- 2000°+ Celsius.

The conflagration sped through the canopy causing it to explode in a shower of burning oil and embers which incinerated everything below. The whole of our beautiful Reserve was totally destroyed in just one hour. More than half the eucalypts were permanently damaged and nearly all the Allocasuarinas. The latter will be a hazard for walkers from falling dead limbs for a long time to come.

All surface vegetation was left as a carpet of ash to a depth of 10 cm. Recovery will, eventually, have to be from surviving seeds or root stock, but it will be slow. The saddest loss was the laboriously constructed 300 metre board-walk which was literally reduced to a trail of orange dust and four buckets of twisted nails. All our outdoor furniture also went up in smoke, as did the fencing along our western boundary. Fortunately, the northern boundary fence survived.

For safety sake, due to the many precariously hanging, burnt branches and dangerously listing trees, we closed the Reserve for the time being while we decided what to do. I organised a long length of galvanised chain across the entrances to deter visitors.

One positive outcome was the exposure of an enormous quantity of discarded rubbish, particularly beer bottles and drink cans. It seems the bush there had been

used as a free rubbish dump for yonks before we bought it. The Trustees and volunteers carted away twelve trailer loads of unimaginable garbage. A feature of the beer and coke cans we collected was that nearly all of them housed a living skink lizard which had cleverly sought shelter within.

A basic \$15,000 State Government Clean-up Grant was available. This was immediately sought and eventually obtained. Almost miraculously, an offer was also received from the Rotary Club of Westbury to replace all our burnt fencing, and this was gratefully accepted. Over \$4,000 of unsolicited public post-fire donations were also received.

The Westbury team did a magnificent job, with infrastructure generously donated by Loones of Westbury and One-Steel. As well as about three kilometres of fencing, both the road entrance, and gate, and the walker entrances were professionally restored, all in less than three days. We had a happy barbecue at the end of it all.

In view of the number of homes and amount of private infrastructure destroyed in the Municipality, the Trustees made a conscious decision not to apply for any Red cross money or other funds being distributed by the Break O'Day Council. It was felt that the Trust would be vulnerable to criticism if it 'wasted' such money refurbishing a nature reserve. Fortunately, we had the back-up of interest from our investment account if needed.

The drastic clearance of all surface material by the fire enabled a search for any clue to the disappearance, in 1993, of the German tourist, Nancy Grunwaldt. Her parents had become good friends of ours during their many sorrowful visits from Germany to Tasmania. Matts Nilsson is a special Reserve volunteer and his wife, Trish Thompson were most dedicated with the search. One morning she rang me with the startling news that she thought she had found a skull penetrating from the ash. I rushed up only to find, that after careful excavation, it was a coconut! We were both relieved. Sadly, Trish died shortly afterwards from multiple cerebral aneurisms. Her ashes were spread by a sorrowing Matts across the John White Memorial Lookout heathland. Matts later, in November 2007, donated a magnificent, solid macrocarpa seat in her memory. Patrick Stone concreted it in place at the sharp bend on the Lagoon Track.

The following is a sequential synopsis of the refurbishment programme.

- [1] Extinguish the many remaining fires.
- [2] Felling dangerous trees and lopping hanging dead branches.
- [3] As mentioned, collecting the tonnes of rubbish.
- [4] Gathering up incinerated infrastructure - signs, nails, bolts, fencing.
- [5] Survey to locate buried Telecom cables before fencing renewal.
- [6] Replacement of footbridge at entrance.
- [7] February 2007, replacement of boundary fencing by Westbury Rotary.
- [8] Reopen Reserve.
- [9] Repair and replacement of picnic tables and seats.
- [10] Purchase 300 new track-markers.
- [11] Order and erect replacement signage from Eye Spy Signs, Hobart.

- [12] July 2007, soul-destroying task of rebuilding the boardwalk.
- [13] Replacement of routed timber signs and entrance notices.
- [14] September 2007, final clean-up excavation work; erect 'You Are Here' signs.
- [15] November 2007, painting and installation of 300 new track markers.
- [16] December 2007, plant-recovery survey by Launceston Field Naturalists Club.
- [17] Construction and installation of Ted Clayton Memorial picnic table at Ford.
- [18] Location of donated Trish Thompson Memorial seat.
- [19] December 11, 2007, refurbishment complete.

The total cost of the restoration, using voluntary labour where possible, was estimated at \$34,467.

One unusual donation of the many generous ones we received, including from the ABC, was \$1,654.05 from the Angasi Restaurant at Binalong Bay. They had placed an enormous glass flagon on the counter and invited patrons to drop in their loose change - which they *did* in abundance. It took me six hours to count it all!

An unexpected post-fire spectacular, amidst all the devastation, was a mass flowering of all the grass trees- Xanthorrhoea. The cream blooms towered above the dead ground, some over three metres high. Visitors, including the media, came from miles around to witness a, hopefully, never to be repeated spectacle. We don't want any more wildfires even if they do produce such a bonus.

Inevitably, refurbishment was a prolonged affair with so much to do and organise. Graeme Wathen and volunteers were kept busy rebuilding the footbridge and all the infrastructure associated with the boardwalk, picnic table and stairs down to the beach. Luckily, the bridge across the creek had survived. It was awful having to bang nails into all those treads again, and even worse having to find the money ourselves. We could hardly ask the Tasmanian Community Fund to finance the boardwalk again. Leon Kohl supplied 300, 2x2" blackwood staves for replacement track-markers.

Patrick Stone pointed them and I paid the scouts from T.S. Argonaut, St Helens \$200.00 to paint them white, which they did, along with each other. We paid Gunns Timber \$11,000 for boards, for the replacement boardwalk, and Eye Spy Signs \$3,400 for new signage. It seemed never ending.

One bright spot was that Mark Cameron managed to obtain a grant of \$3,000 from the Commonwealth for a new ride-on mower and trailer; most welcome although it would be some time before there was anything to mow. I bought them at Agfest in May 2007 from Pellows of Launceston who gave me a good deal, with a trailer thrown in for good measure. I also bought a set of spare blades and a cover, which was a mistake because the latter was eaten by an infestation of rats in our shed.

The Ted Clayton Memorial picnic table was proposed and funded by Friends of the St Helens History Room, as a memento of Ted's many years of voluntary service there. It was well built by Graeme Wathen from a design Eileen and I had seen on Norfolk Island. It was decided to install it at the Ford at the southern end of the Reserve, and this was done on 17 May 2008, attended by a group of 19 interested persons,

including several of Ted's relatives. An inscribed metal, memorial plate was fixed to the middle of the table.

In due course, all the replacement metal signs were received from Eye Spy Signs, Hobart, (about \$3,500 worth), as were the expensive large routed wooden signs for all our entrances. Patrick Stone did a lot of the heavy lifting and installation. He also recovered and painted one of the partially destroyed wooden signs and fixed it above the main door of the service shed as a memento of the disaster.

On 18th November, 2007, we had a welcome visit from members of the Launceston, Tasmanian & Central North, Field Naturalists. They came to do a post-fire survey of plants, birds, vertebrates and invertebrates. They subsequently sent a very attractive, illustrated, colour report which included 71 plant species, 27 bird species, 5 mammals and amphibians, and 12+ mixed invertebrates. A wonderful day's work.

Meanwhile, our botanist, Alex Buchanan, had established several transects from which to observe the rate of new cover and growth. We won't know for some years what species are permanently lost. Certainly, our one rare smoke bush shrub, near the John White Memorial Lookout, seems to be gone forever. He has evolved three interesting charts from his work.

A difficulty early in the public life of our Reserve was that visitors from the northern hemisphere were constantly getting themselves lost. Consequently, I made 'You Are Here' signs and located them at every track junction. These all went up in smoke of course and have since been replaced with coloured, laminated maps each glued on to an aluminium base.

It was always my intention to have the refurbishment complete within the year. We had managed to pay for everything with the recovery grant and generous donations although our working account had been depleted, especially by insurance premiums. Towards the end of 2013 we had to draw \$10,000 from our Investment Account to keep us solvent.

Nevertheless. At approximately 5pm on the evening of December 11th 2007, I banged in the last blackwood track marker on the Scamander track. Refurbishment was complete - at least so far as the infrastructure was concerned. Complete recovery of vegetation in the Reserve, particularly she-oaks, will take much longer. Main concerns are the constantly falling allocasuarina limbs. My wife donated a chainsaw to the Trust which, at his request, I gave to our permanent volunteer Matts Nilsson to cutup limbs after windstorms.

With Trustee deaths, and the retirement in March 2009, of our loyal Denny Walter, due to ill health, it was necessary to evolve a new Trust Deed. That was placed in the hands of Ms Jacinta French at Shields Heritage, Launceston and was ratified on 6th September 2009. It is vital in a Trust such as ours that a living person's name always be on the Title Deeds. If not, the ownership of the land reverts to the Crown, which would be a tragedy. As time goes by then, incoming Chairmen of Trustees will have to bear this in mind.

On 29th September 2012, *Alex Buchanan* wrote a full-page report on post-fire vegetation in which he states, 'overall, recovery of the vegetation has been remarkable and is now almost complete, although we look forward to a long period without destructive wildfires.

Paul Frater has adopted a nice scheme of labelling as many of the plants and shrubs as he can, for the benefit of visitors. One problem is that the dyes in the illustrations fade quickly. We need to find a type of coloured paper that lasts longer to save repetitious work. Lamination helps.

Another very useful innovation is arranging to have the Coach Road and the wider track verges slashed by a mower periodically. Not only does it benefit the tracks but covers them with vegetation spoil to make them pleasant on which to walk. Paul Frater has recently acquired a new long handled hedge trimmer, which the Trust bought him, to control overhead growth.

Because the Trust is a registered tax-deductible charity, we are obliged to submit an audited copy of our financial affairs to the Commonwealth Government each year before the end of October. Failure to do so risks having our name removed from the register - not a good outcome. I am indebted to Peter Andrews of Green Valley Bookkeeping, St Marys, who has been diligently auditing our books since the Trust's inception. Long may he keep doing so.

The current list of Trustees is. Paul Frater, professional Horticulturalist and incoming Chairman; Mark Cameron, retired army Colonel, Minute Secretary and business advisor; Alex Buchanan, professional Botanist and supervisor of floral activities in the Reserve; Ms Wanda Buza, niece of the late Aida Ball, our legal advisor in Hobart; Bob Grant, ex-electronics engineer and technical advisor; Patrick Stone, my second cousin, professional Rigger, strong as an ox, has done much of the heavy work during refurbishment of the Reserve after the fire; Mrs Pauline Biggelaar, helped by her husband, Henry, act as essential field officers; and finally, me, Dr Tim McManus, now Assistant Chairman and glad to be handing over the reins after 20 busy years.

My personal thanks to all who have helped make the Reserve the wonderful place it is today. Good luck to Paul for another 20 years!

