

FRIENDS OF CRADLE VALLEY BULLETIN

14th AUGUST 2011

Wintery evenings in Tasmania are wonderful, don't you think? Especially when you're well rugged up in front of a nice warm fire; there's soup on the stove, and you've got a good book to read. The only sounds outside are the soft snow snuffles of silence. Bliss!

1. SNOWS: As you can imagine, the Dove Lake road is closed to vehicular traffic every now and then because of heavy snow falls. When this happens, don't think for a moment that the Cradle Mountain National Park is closed, for it is not. These can be some of the best times to explore the Valley and its precinct anew, for the snow changes the look of the whole place. Become a snow-enthusiast, and explore the opportunities!



The late Carl Clayton took this snap of Waldheim Chalet bathed in snow during the 1960s, prior to its demolition and reconstruction. Can you spot the differences today?

2. STAKEHOLDERS MEETING: You are invited to the Cradle Stakeholder Pre-Season Meeting that will be held in the Gallery of the Interpretation Centre at the Ranger Station, on Wednesday 31st August 2011, commencing 10.30am. The key items for discussion will include a P&WS update on achievements and priorities, as well as an update on the Emergency Plan, and the proposed Cradle Park Centre project (I gather this is what we've previously optimistically suggested might be called "*The Weindorfer Centre*" - my Ref.). If you are coming along to this meeting (these P&WS pre-season get-togethers are always worthwhile attending), please RSVP to Rod Davey by Friday 26th August for catering purposes. There will be a "*light lunch*" provided, says Rod, but if you're really hungry, you'd better bring an extra sandwich for yourself. Rod's email is rod.davey@parks.tas.gov.au

3. BUDGET CUTS: Back around June, the State Government announced that all Departments would receive a significant cut to funding over the next several years, and if the directions given to Heads of Departments of Health, Police and Education are anything to go on, these cuts will be in the region of 4-5% for P&WS as well. We're sure that P&WS management and staff will be working hard to respond and accommodate these budget issues over the coming months, while focusing on maintaining front-line operations and quality of support to residents, tourist operators and visitors in the Valley. However, there are many questions to be asked, and just how these cuts will effect visitor-experiences in Tasmania's National Parks and Reserves, and the well-being of Cradle Valley in particular, will be on everyone's lips at the Stakeholders' meeting. So do come along, and be prepared to share your concerns.

4. OVERLAND TRACK RANGERS: We're pleased to see that a number of Overland Track Ranger positions have been advertised in the *Mercury* recently. Salaries range from \$51,832 p.a. to \$45,823 p.a., and if you are interested, you will need to talk with Kathryn Raymond at P&WS Phone (03) 62336047 or Email kathryn.raymond@parks.tas.gov.au . These positions are good news, and we do hope that the proposed budget cuts won't see them cancelled or delayed prior to the busy summer season.

5. NEXT GENERATION WEATHER FORECASTS: We would like to thank Mr. Steve Pendlebury, the Regional Director of the Tasmanian and Antarctica Bureau of Meteorology for keeping us informed of progress to upgrade meteorological services to Cradle Valley. Mr. Pendlebury has now advised us that the national initiative Next Generation Weather Forecast and Warning System (NexGenFWS) has now become a reality. The upgrade provides an increased number of forecasts, particularly for regional areas such as the Cradle Valley precinct, and current forecasts contain extra detail and extend out to 7 days. Some of the improved services include 7-day forecasts for over 30 locations in Tasmania immediately, including Cradle Valley (for the first time), and for around 60 locations later in the year, by a "point and click" facility for those with internet access. This service provides precise forecast information per locations to within a 3km resolution. For more details, check the bureau's own website www.bom.gov.au/NexGenFWS .

6. RENEWED FOCUS ON SAFETY: We'd also like to thank Mr. Richard Burk, Northern Regional Manager of the Traffic Management Section of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources who met with us at the Devonport Library last year, and who has now come up with improvements to road signage along the Cradle Mountain Tourism Highway from Lincoln's Junction at Moina to Leary's Corner, including bright red "slow down" signs at Lehman's Creek and near the old homestead near Daisy Dell. Given the horrific accident and fatality that occurred there early last year, these new warning signs are very welcome. Let's hope they have the desired effect.

7. MIDDLESEX PLAINS: On May 28th, Harcourts Rural held an auction of historic Middlesex Plains (excluding the station homestead) and 10 smaller lots of the old Daisy Dell property at the Wilderness Gallery. Two of these blocks sold at the auction, and two more lots have sold since. Having noted the public interest previously expressed in extending the Cradle Mountain National Park through Federal Government land acquisitions in this area, the Australian Government advised us "*... I note your concerns for the future of Tasmania's unique highland landscape, in particular the Middlesex Plains property. The Australian Government provides funding for the protection of environmental and Indigenous cultural heritage through Caring for our Country. Each year under this program, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities assesses applications from government and non-government organisations who are seeking funding to assist them purchase*

land for inclusion in the National Reserve System. This is a highly competitive process and a successful land purchase depends on many factors such as the partner's financial contribution and management capacity, ensuring good value for taxpayers' money and negotiating an agreeable price with the vendor. While we are aware of the Middlesex property and its natural and cultural values, and there are a number of organisations interested in its protection, it has not been possible to purchase this property under the Caring for Country program. Nevertheless, I am pleased to inform you that this year we were successful in working with the Tasmanian Land Conservancy to purchase another Central Highlands property known as Skullbone Plains. This 1,647 hectare addition to the National Reserve System is located 14 km north-east of Derwent Bridge and contains predominantly intact native ecosystems. Skullbone Plains will enhance linkages between the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and the Tasmanian Central Plateau Conservation Area. The property includes state listed highland grasslands and provides significant habitat for eight nationally listed threatened species, including the endangered Tasmanian devil, spotted quoll and the Clarence galaxias."

We welcome our new neighbours, and look forward to meeting them.

8. ABORIGINAL HERITAGE: Cradle's Aboriginal past has been largely overlooked by archaeologists for many years as priority has been given to the large number of coastal sites that are under threats of development, but all that's gradually changing now. In a project funded by the Commonwealth Government's Indigenous Heritage Program, the local Six River Aboriginal Community (SRAC) undertook on-ground surveys at Daisy Dell recently, and registered 9 heritage sites on the Tasmanian Aboriginal Sites Index (TASI). Incidentally, SRAC provides the closest Aboriginal health services to Cradle Valley, and will be opening new premises at 34 Alexandra Road, Ulverstone on 26th August.

9. CRADLE FLIGHTS: For another perspective on Cradle Mountain and its surrounding countryside, Cradle Mountain Helicopters offers 30-minute flights over stunning places, such as Fury Gorge, Dove Lake, Hounslow Heath, Barn Bluff and the Overland Track. Prices depend on the number of passengers. Phone (0364) 92 1132 or www.cradlemountainhelicopters.com.au

10. ANNUAL GET-TOGETHER: Once again, you are invited to the Friends of Cradle Valley's annual get-together, which will be held at the Blandfordia Alpine Club Lodge over the week-end of 15th & 16th October, 2011. You are all welcome to come along at any time during the weekend, and to stay overnight as well if you wish (you will need to bring your own bedding, bed socks, toothbrush, drinks and eats). There's no set programme for the Saturday, although most people do tend to get together for chats, bring a book to read, or go for short walks around Waldheim. Our AGM will start promptly at 11am on the Sunday, and President Cathy Clayton will probably have the business end of things completed by lunchtime. It's a good idea to bring a plate to share, which is an excellent Tasmanian tradition. Your friends and family are welcome to come along too.

11. DONATIONS: Many thanks to Jenny Pearce and the Friends of Iris Reserve whose donations have helped FoCV to pay its bills for another year.

That's about all from me for now. Have you noticed the wattles are coming out early?

Best wishes,
John Wilson
Hon. Secretary FoCV

