

Diary — 2002 Discovering Tasmanian Safari —1

**Day 1
Saturday, 2 March
Launceston - Coles Bay
by the Chats Group**

8 a.m. in Launceston – Hello John, Hello Eddy, hello everyone! We're going bush. We are a representative group; from Tasmania, Western Australia, Queensland, N.S.W., A.C.T. and New Zealand.

Eddy & John talked (after the microphone was adjusted by Alan) about the geology and the plantation of cultural eucalypts which are taking over good farm land. Farmers find it is more profitable to rent out their properties; the good trout streams, the hops, poppies and potatoes are cash crops. We all notice the wildlife dead on the roads and decided this was a sign of the abundance of wildlife population.

We had morning tea at The Siding before going through Scottsdale to near Ledgerwood where Eddy first taught, at age 17 years. Nearby was Eddy's old home, built by his father and still in the family. Once it was surrounded by tall myrtle trees (*Nothofagus cunninghamii*). Eddy and his brother walked the 35 miles to and from boarding school – they took two days and slept out at night. We went through Branksholm where there was originally tin mining with Chinese labourers. Eddy told us he remembered sneaking in to the Joss House. We then drove through Derby where the houses are all weatherboard. We stopped at Weldborough Hotel – “The Worst Pub” briefly, with a longer stop at Weldborough Pass where there is a magic rainforest area with Grandmother & Grandfather Myrtle, sassafras, leatherwood, blackwood and huge tree ferns whose trunks were covered with filmy ferns.

Lunch by the water at St. Helens, followed by a drive with spectacular coastal views until we stopped at Bicheno to walk on the beach before visiting the Gulch, a haven for fairy penguins and oyster hatcheries.

About 4.30 p.m. we arrived at the cabins at Coles Bay (3) very comfortable. After afternoon tea and unloading our gear we headed for Tourville Lighthouse. The road was steep and corrugated but at the end we found a walkway and tremendous scenery looking into Wineglass Bay and north to St Helens. We detoured into Sleepy Bay to see the red lichen on the rocks.

On arriving back at the cabins at 6.30 p.m. we began our “chores” after a great day.

**Day 2
Sunday, 3 March
Freycinet National Park**

After a substantial breakfast we left for Freycinet N.P. about 9.15 am. It was a mild sunny day and we left umbrellas and raincoats behind. We'd decided at breakfast which of the walks we would tackle and set off together on the walk up to the lookout over Wineglass Bay. At the beginning of the walk we stopped to look at a wallaby which Eddy had whistled up. It was a Bennett's. The more adventurous walkers moved ahead to the lookout while the rest of us took a very leisurely walk (talk and walk) to the top.

The lookout was crowded with folks enjoying the view including some backpackers with their golf clubs. They told us they were competing in the Wineglass Bay Open. The intrepid group walked on to Wineglass Bay Beach for lunch and then across to and along Hazards Beach past a group of sea kayakers and then back into the bush for the long, long, long return walk to the car park.

Many birds and flowers were admired along the way including Hyacinth Orchids and the *Westringia* that is endemic to Tasmania. The last tired walkers arrived about 4 pm for a cuppa at the bus and then to pick up the explorers who had gone off to Honeymoon Bay.

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Their story was of a leisurely trip up and down from the Lookout with stops to enjoy the magnificent views visible through the trees of Coles Bay and to examine the plants and trees along the way. The trees in bloom were beautiful and Joy and Owen were anxious to get back to identify a particular eucalypt.

This group split again with Eddy also known as EM for Encyclopaedic Mind, leading the way with Madge and Annette to find Honeymoon Bay. This was a longish walk but worth the effort. The view of the Hazards in the background with the glorious and varied blues of the water were soaked up by the group who had a lovely rest and chat on the beach. This group saw another Bennetts at the entry to the turnoff of Honeymoon Bay and found some baby Oyster Bay Pines growing at our feet as we rested waiting for pickup.

Back to camp and getting ready for the next stage.

Day 3 Monday, 4 March Freycinet — Maria Island

The day dawned grey and overcast as we tried to discard all but the most essential for our boat trip to Maria Island and overnight in the penitentiary.

Firstly, on the way we visit the Church which Eddy Smith restored to be his home - a matter of - "from Church to Prison". Our group of nine plus Fearless Leader and Octogenarian Eddy (a wealth of information on Tassie) are melding well, we support each other with a sense of humour and caring. On the road at 9.30 a.m. from Iluka, at Freycinet to Moulting Lagoon (where black swans moult). Through cultivated paddocks with grass drying we turn in at sign 'one billion trees planted'. The game reserve supports swans, shell-ducks and teal ducks. The Apsley River runs into the lagoon. Rare plant species are found in this part of the state and it is an important fish nursery.

We were 32 kilometres from Swansea and another 22 kilometres further to Eddys' place. We looked over land of the oldest cemetery in Tasmania. Old established families still make use of it; one grave was for a person massacred at Port Arthur. One kilometre further on is the earliest home built in the area.

We shortly passed the first commercial vineyard. To the left we looked across at the Hazards - John's dream homesite. Near the Swan River are trials for growing walnuts. We passed the village of Cranbrook. A century of fine wool farming in this district. Then we drove through an avenue of English elms planted by English settlers. We had a quick look at Swansea and a stop on great Oyster Bay. We saw Meredith House where Eddy spent his honeymoon in 1937. Turning off to Spikey Bridge - built by convicts in 1832, part of the convict coach road connecting the east coast road to Hobart. We arrived at the church built in 1864 by John Mitchell with feudal labour. The building never consecrated was used for church, school and social occasions. By 1937 the 120 people who had lived on the estate had reduced to a small number. In 1968 Eddy discovered the ruined church and restoration commenced. He eventually purchased the building as a retirement home and named 'Mitchell Cottage' the house he built alongside. In 1992 Eddy was awarded the medal of the Order of Australia (O.A.M.). The house and church are a great credit to an enterprising man, a collector of memorabilia. The garden is a work of art, colour cascading in every nook & cranny. We left Eddy while we proceeded to Maria Island named by Tasman in 1642. At Louisville, near Triabunna we boarded the boat the "East Coaster Empress" taking 1/2 hour to the island where there is a unique combination of history and nature. There are no shops; we took all food supplies and bedding. Our accommodation in the penitentiary was basic with no power. Originally Europeans had a whaling industry. In 1825 a

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convict settlement was established which closed in 1832. Again from 1842 to 1850 there were convicts on probation. From 1884 to 1896 an Italian, Bernacchi, rented the island to establish a wine industry etc., which failed. Again, between 1920-1930 he focused on cement production, failing the second time. Later sheep were farmed by three families until 1965. In 1971 Maria Island was declared a wild life sanctuary.

We arrived after a smooth crossing and all assisted to pull/push a loaded trolley to our home for the night - a restored convict quarter. After the usual tasty lunch and a browse through the former 'Coffee Palace' the group walked to the Commissariat, then to the cemetery and uphill to the former Millhouse where we debated whether the grindstone was sail or horse driven. Further across to the east we viewed a fenced area for research on grassland. Then on to the first area of fossilized rock which was used for cement manufacture. Some of the group walked further uphill to the quarry where deep mining of fossilized rock took place. Also seen were ruins of Manager and Engineer's houses. Silent sentinels stood by, curious but not afraid of human intruders. Wallabies and Cape Barron geese quietly graze. Back at our present quarters, after dark possums emerged keen to fossick for leftovers. The evening meal supervised by our F.L. and assisted by our rostered team. We bedded down for a quiet, peaceful night with a clear sky and brilliant stars above.

Day 4 Tuesday, 5 March Maria Island to Seaview Lodge

A tranquil island with a turbulent past! The present name dates from 1642 when Abel Tasman sighted it from the sea and named the island in honour of Maria Van Diemen, the wife of the Governor of Batavia. By 1825 Maria Island had become a penal settlement.

As I walked around the island I was taken back in time, almost a feeling of being on another planet. The peace and solitude are soul restoring.

After F.L.'s "cure all" porridge we set out to enjoy the Reservoir Dam walk. A perfect morning, clear blue skies and Darlington Bay iridescent hues of blue. This walk provided excellent bird life and always the chance of spotting the forty-spotted Pardalote. We walked through open woodland, *Eucalyptus globulus* dominating the landscape, a favourite habitat of the pardalote, no luck this morning but other numerous bird species were seen in the magnificent forest trees.

The Mountain Currant bush was covered with edible fruit enjoyed by our walking group and the many silvereys. A return to base for a quick cuppa and then yet another interesting walk, this time to the Painted Cliffs. We walked around Hopground Beach on white sand and as always the blue, blue water. The wonderful patterns in the rocks are caused by ground water percolating down through already formed sandstone and leaving traces of iron oxides which stain the rock formations.

It was almost time to say goodbye to our all too short a stay on Maria Island, an experience to remember and contemplate. A well organized "pack up" had us down on the wharf on time to catch the 1.30 p.m. ferry back to the mainland and our journey south to Seaview Lodge and Koonya.

From Triabunna we headed south along the interesting coast road. In the Wielangta Forest we stopped to see a small 20 hectare relict piece of rainforest. A fine boardwalk allowed us to see and enjoy the denser foliage, the mosses, the lichens and the very tall eucalypt, *Nothofagus* and sassafras. We admired the Robertson Bridge built with very large tree trunks rescued from the milling of the road-making. Then back into the sclerophyll forest.

Down to the isthmus at Eaglehawk Neck where the Dog Line was kept to hold escaping convicts on the Tasman Peninsula. On to Koonya where we found the Seaview Lodge with a superb views to the harbour on the north side and up to Hobart in the west.

We are well accommodated for the night and enjoy the showers again!!

Day 5
Wednesday, 6 March
Port Arthur—Tasman Peninsula

Away to an early start at 8 a.m. on a great morning to Windgrove Wildlife Refuge where Peter Adams is awaiting us. We go via Nubeena on the road to Roaring Beach. At the entrance to the Peace Garden we read –

There are three main elements for the creation of sustainable peace:

The Past – The Ancestral Midden – (a circular hollow with rocks in the centre where visitors place a stone to represent their ancestors – their roots).

The Present – The Split Rock - A visual representation of how all of us at some time in our lives have our hearts broken open. This is a necessary process to mature us to teach us compassion, to polish our inner beauty and to allow reconciliation to begin.

The Future – The Spiral – A symbol of hope, representing the ability of life to be continually reborn. It begins with the womb of the earth and ascends to spirit.

This spiral is carved out of blue gum. We then went on a short walk to see the carved wooden seats overlooking Roaring Bay and the sea beyond. Peter carves and polishes these with hand tools.

We arrived at Port Arthur at 10.15 a.m. F.L. gave out tickets and we headed for the coffee shop. At 10.30 a.m. we joined the walking tour where we were given an hour's review of the history of the convict settlement and the influence of various Commandants. The ruins and reconstructed buildings were all explained. Then the majority walked past the single memorial for those massacred in 1996 – (28th. April). On to the boat trip to the Isle of the Dead. This was an eye-opener for the stratas of society, with convicts unmarked and free settlers with headstones with backs to the convicts. Our guide told us many individual stories. The rest of us went to the restored Junior Medical Officers' house and the ruins of the sandstone Church.

Lunch was prepared in the Port Arthur Carpark.

After a short stop at Nubeena, we drove to Mangion Bay and walked down to the lookout to see the Remarkable Cave where F.L. descended to write his initials in the sand! (to be viewed by the law-abiding)

Brief stops were made at Tasman Arch, a roadside fish stall and the Tessellated Pavements. Rain!! At 4.15 p.m. we drew up at Bangor where Tom Dunbabin, whose family had owned the property for generations, gave us an interesting talk on the history and land management, with emphasis on sustainability and conservation including his problems with bureaucracy. Then followed a drive for 1-1/2 hrs. through the 6,000 hectares! We heard about the native grass management, the covenanting of some bush areas, the wallaby fences, the increase in bird life after the ban on fishing inshore, the shelter belts of blue gums and shrub eucalypt. On the way out Eddy visited with Tom's wife Cynthia who, along with Tom was his student.

Back at Seaview Lodge(Koonya) at 6.45 p.m. and a delicious late dinner of fresh fish.

Day 6
Thursday, 7 March
Tasman Peninsula to Maydena

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Though it was a bit brisk this morning as we packed to move on we still had the sun. Certainly "Seaview" lived up to its name and it was with a general feeling of some regret that we said our farewells.

Other places called though and we were off to Richmond to take in some more of the early history of Tasmania which is to be found in this quaint village. Here we found the oldest bridge in Australia built in 1823 and the oldest Catholic church built in 1843. The main street and its souvenir shops were an attraction for some of our travellers.

Morning tea and an introduction to Eddy's son Paul who lives nearby were an extra treat.

On then to Hobart. Along the way we saw old style haystacks which were an unusual sight these days.

First stop in Hobart was at the Botanical Gardens where the party split up for all to enjoy their own preferred option of where to go and what to see. The Japanese gardens, the native, the Antarctic display and the brilliant colours of the Conservatory gave us lots to talk about later. On to lunch.

The venue for this was a place called Arthur Circus and a more delightful place would be hard to find. Several of our group toyed with the idea of purchasing one of the cottages and although this idea was a bit of fun, an inquiry indicated the prices seemed most reasonable. The rain was coming over as we finished eating and it seemed too that our departure was timely as the local Council was anxious to mow the area where we had been set up.

Next stop was to drop off those who were interested to shop in the Salamanca area while the rest of us went off up Mt Wellington. We didn't go right to the top but found a lookout which gave us a view right across the seascape around Hobart. The showers came on us again as we descended to do the shopping.

The Salamanca Place group went exploring to Constitution Dock, the Cathedral and to enjoy the delightful Georgian buildings of the area.

All aboard was set for 4 pm and all but "The Late Kid" had made it back to the meeting spot. We couldn't go without our expert birdo and plant spotter and didn't really have to wait long.

Leaving Hobart we travelled up the Derwent valley. This waterway flows strongly despite its having all those hydro systems to pass through on its way to the sea.

The journey on through a major hop growing area and heavily timbered valley brought us to Maydena and comfortable accommodation including a welcoming log fire. This was just the place to enjoy our happy hour with the wine a gift from "Eddy".

The day was rounded off with a wonderful meal at the Cockatoo Cafe.

Day 7 **Friday, 8 March** **Lake Pedder & South West N.P.**

The day dawned misty after overnight rain following a warm day. We found gloves and caps and prepared ourselves for our journey from Tyenna Valley Lodge at Maydena. We proceeded to the Styx River Road, passing a truck loaded with HUGE swamp gum logs (forest giants). We passed massive stumps which had been cut using the springboard method in the past. There was evidence of tree tops having been struck by lightning and an under-storey of myrtle.

We drove by a quarry of dolerite rock, then observed clear felling, exposing a plantation of swamp gum. Leatherwood, sassafras and ferns in the under-storey. A truck passed us hauling "skidders" which are versatile at handling logs. The Green Movement has had many protests in this area.

We crossed a bridge over the swiftly flowing Styx. Sun shone on moist leaves creating a sparkle effect.

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Arriving at the Big Tree Reserve for a ten-minute walk to a viewing area. The Big Tree, *Euc. regnans*, is the tallest flowering hardwood in the world, standing at 98 metres. Nearby another at 87 metres and looking healthier. (Sydney Opera House is 67 metres).

There was a system of boardwalks and viewing stands made by environmental design students. Here and there were placards of explanation often altered by wise words of graffiti. The propaganda stated "timber harvesting is carefully planned to make sure the valley's special character is not lost." We felt we had observed differently — clear felling being obvious.

On the road out we saw the stark white of snowberries and the button grass which grows in poorly drained soils. On the road toward Strathgordon we deviated to Scott's Peak Road, passing Mount Anne wreathed in cloud and stunning mountain scenery. Along roadside were beehives on leatherwood flowers. Then a sign that we were entering a World Heritage Area. The highest point was 651 metres with rainfall at 190 cms. This is the Florentine Area where osmiridium was mined, more precious than gold, a very tough metal. We turned at Fordsham Pass to drive to Lake Pedder where Huon Pine forest was drowned. The biology was unique but hasty decisions were made. Attempts to reverse decisions were not successful. Area flooded in 1972.

We stopped at Creepy Crawly Nature Walk, boardwalks with signs explaining insect activity. The forest was coated with lichen. Leatherwood flowers sprinkled the floor with many trees growing horizontally. The only bright colour was small red bells of climbing heath. Prolific beehives further along the road.

The South-West National Park has never been logged. Progressing downhill the Western Arthurs came into view and we glimpsed one end of Lake Pedder. To make the dam, several streams were exploited. To the left is Edgar Dam, a lower level than Pedder. Along the top of the Western Arthurs is a reliable source of water formed by cirques at head of ancient glacier beds. We had lunch near Scott's Dam and took a short walk along the Port Davey Track, viewing young celery-topped pines, walking over peat beds and viewing rainforest areas. We then drove to Scott's Peak Lookout viewing the Huon Basin and Lake Pedder beyond Solitary Island.

Domestic electricity generated through the Hydro scheme is not used, therefore Lake Pedder was not needed. Back at the main road we stopped to read signs at an Information Kiosk. During our return journey we glimpsed West Mount Field to our left - a craggy sentinel. A brief stop at our Lodge and we set off for Junee Caves. The river begins high in the mountains of Mt. Field National Park and flows through the ground as melting snow. It erupts to the surface from a limestone cave. Glow worms, crickets and graceful spiders colonise the entrance. We viewed fine gossamer webs. The Junee River flows into the Tyenna River on which is a fish hatchery.

The evening was still and fine and augured well for another great experience in good weather and great company.

Day 8 Saturday, 9 March Mt. Field, Midlands & Poatina

We start from Maydena Valley in a fog with temperatures in the low single figures. Our first stop is fruitless - literally - the blackberry notice is obsolete. We creep past the roses and dahlias in the garden which belongs to the woman who asks people to pay just to look! We then drive into the attractive area of Mount Field National Park, unhook the trailer prior to driving up the mountain.

The aim is to see the altitudinal sequence in the forest.

At 540 m. the dominant trees are swamp gum, dogwood and musk.

Quote from Bruni d'Entecastreaux, describing the Tasmania *E. regnans* forests in 1799:

"...trees of an immense height and proportionate diameter, their branchless trunks covered with an evergreen foliage, some looking as old as the world".

"Closely interlacing in an almost impenetrable forest, they served to support others, which crumbling with age, fertilized the soils with their debris".

At 640 m. these have given way to celery pine, the Johnston eucalypts and *Eucalyptus delegatensis*, the laurel and the sprawling horizontal tree, *Andopetalum*.

Robert Johnston, Geologist wrote of the "Horizontal scrubs" in 1874:

"The woody interlacing branches will bear the weight of a man laden with his knapsack but woe betide the luckless wit who, travelling through the scrub, treads on the disguised branch which has decayed. Down to unknown depths he may drop, while the treacherous mossy carpet springs into place like a trap concealing the engulfed explorer."

At 960 m. the glacial boulders cover the ground. They are slowly on the move downhill and the dolerite slowly grinds together. Here we see the *Nothofagus gunnii* - the deciduous myrtle, the snow gum, the cheese berry, the richea pandani, pepper tree and pencil pine. We see here too an eastern spinebill.

At 1070 m. we are right out on moorland, walking across Wombat Moor. We find here cushion plant, pineapple grass, strawberry pine, boronia, the colourful rocket, the prostrate leptospermum, drosera, *E. subcrenulata* and lancewood. There is here a wealth of colour, great diversity of plants and a vigour born of the need to survive in this harsh climate. Also too we see a bronze-winged pigeon.

We return to the foot of the mountain and walk up to the Russell Falls. They are very graceful, not great in volume but delicate as they spread across the horizontal step and drop like a curtain to the pool below.

Back to the van and another splendid lunch with John's excellent ham, tomatoes, lettuce and his wife's delightful fruitcake.

After lunch we set off to journey through the midlands aptly named as this highway goes north, passing through numerous interesting small townships and crossing typical trout streams, always clear water and photogenic landscapes. First stop was the small township of Hamilton, renowned for a special craft shop which features so many examples of the famous timber Tasmania produces. A planned 10 minute stop became extended as our passengers gave way to increasing the weight of their backpacks. Signs along the way advertised berries for sale, but after numerous attempts to purchase same we decided we were too late for the berry season.

Bothwell township presented English-style cottages. Impressive were the stone walls surrounding dwellings and farm dwellings. So many buildings belonging to our past. Travelling in Tasmania does give one a strong feeling of our past history. Next stop was Ross - this hamlet also presented wonderful buildings, most famous the Ross bridge built by convict labour and the Scottish church commanding the surrounding countryside, a lovely scene for our avid photographers.

We then travelled through grazing country and dry sclerophyll landscape with a backdrop of the western tiers. After a long day which gave us all so much to remember we arrived at Poatina at 6.45 p.m. and after settling ourselves in, gathered at the community centre to enjoy another bush safari feast.

Day 9 Sunday, 10 March Central Plateau & Lake St. Clair

A leisurely beginning – breakfast at 8 a.m. and away at 9.20 a.m. heading to Liffey. We cross the tailrace from the Power Station and John talked about co-generation as an efficient alternative which re-

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uses the water from the tailrace. (A cable could be laid under Bass Strait to link with Victorian generation schemes).

We drove through farms which had been harvested, poppies, potatoes and grain. There was some gorse infestation. Rape was being used as a fodder crop. On our left were the Western Tiers and Dry's Bluff, at the foot of which is Bob Brown's house which is sadly, frequently ransacked. After winning the Goldman Environmental Prize, Brown donated the money to the Bush Heritage Trust which was able to prevent the logging of Dry's Bluff for wood chips, by buying it!

We passed through Bracknell (where street names, frequently of ladies), included portrait paintings. As we climbed high we came to a look-out over the plain with Quamby Bluff to the left & Dry's Bluff to the right. The World Heritage Area is fragmented into fingers with Liffey Falls on a "finger". We left the trailer at the top of a steep descent and at the parking place below had morning tea before walking to view the Liffey Falls. Most of us reached the second cascade, some walking on to the third.

We went on the A5 across the central plateau to the Pine Lake. Here we spent an hour on the Pencil Pine Boardwalk, noting the alpine plants and in particular the pencil pines which can be up to 1,000 yrs. old. This lake is at 1,210 metres elevation. We looked down on the Great Lake with its pockets of shacks originally built by squatters, but now leased.

Further on the shacks are freehold.

Lunch at the Information Centre at Liawenee.

Nearby we crossed the Liawenee Canal between Lake Augusta and the Great Lake.

On the lakeside are the Fishing Commission offices. Here large numbers of fish spawn in the canal. Briefly we stopped at the dam and the Beaumont Memorial. We had noted sheep grazing on the lakeside and many trees suffering from die-back.

John pointed out the Travellers Range and the glacial valleys and discussed plans for Monday. We arrived at Lake St. Clair at 4 pm.

Day 10 Monday, 11 March Lake St. Clair & Walks

The wind was up early this morning but the fine weather continued as we breakfasted, prepared cut lunches and organized for a day exploring this area.

We've had company this stay with others sharing the facilities. Alan found a young woman here last night who had grown up near his home town in Great Britain. It's a small world indeed!

Our first prospect for adventure today was to be a boat trip on Lake St. Clair. The wind was still active and on arrival at the jetty where the boat awaited us, half the group decided it was just too rough. Those who opted for a shore-bound start to the day had time to explore some of the local short walks with more intense study of plant & birdlife.

Those who braved the cruise trip were pleased that the rough conditions were only a challenge for the first leg of the journey. The ride across the wind-stirred waters was rather like a bus ride over corrugated bush tracks – perhaps not even as rough! Wonderful views of the rocky mountains and the rugged terrain were a treat and on landing at Echo Point those who ventured ashore for the short stop had a close up view of the flowering leatherwood. Around this lake (deepest natural lake in the Southern Hemisphere) are huge stands of banksias.

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For those who took the Aboriginal Heritage walk when the boat returned and our party linked up again there were lots of occasions to appreciate the banksias and the prolific birdlife attracted by the beautiful yellow blooms. Madge had a clear sighting with her monocular which was a wonderful thrill for her.

Back though to a bit more of the story of the lake cruise, for it was topped off by the opportunity for all aboard to step ashore (an easy disembarking manoeuvre) at Narcissus Bay giving beautiful views and a particularly fine display of mountain rocket. The surrounding mountain scenery provided a fine backdrop for photographs. The return trip was much smoother and made even more interesting by the presence of the backpackers returning from a five-day trip. Among this group was an **eight year old** girl with her parents; she had had a wonderful time.

After the boat returned there were several local walks to choose from. The Aboriginal walk had wonderful close-up views of banksias, young stringy bark, waratah and many other favourites. Alison found ferny aprons alongside the boardwalks, as well as first glimpse of the water which flowed through to the Watersmeet area we found a lovely purple seeded plant. The Aboriginal Walk gave us information (on display boards) about the people and their culture and gave us time to pause and reflect on their demise. The local Aboriginal tribe had lived in this place before white settlement.

Alan had taken the Cloud Lake track and although he didn't tread the full length he had been impressed by the large eucalypts and Nothofagus. Currawongs and yellow tailed black cockatoos were in this area as well.

June & Johanna, who had taken the Aboriginal Walk at a different time, had the wonderful experience of meeting up with an echidna. He was not camera shy and stayed around long enough for a couple of good shots to be taken. (We'll await the photographs with interest).

A few of the group (& F.L.) took the opportunity for a quick "snooze" before dinner.

Day 11 Tuesday, 12 March Franklin River — Lyell Highway

A chilly morning after overnight rain, the breakfast topic was about the commotion during the night in the room shared by June, Alison and Madge – an unwelcome intruder - a possum!

We moved off at 9 a.m. from "Travellers Lodge" by Lake St. Clair on our way along the Lyell Highway to Queenstown and Strahan, with a quick stop at Derwent Bridge for ice and fuel. The Derwent flows into Lake King William (part of Hydro Scheme) which is presently drier than normal.

The Franklin River has its source at the Lake St. Clair National Park. Mt. King William was wreathed in cloud. At the base of the mountain we viewed a few King Billy pines, a rare, ancient tree with few survivors. Geologically the area changed and there were open areas of button grass. The Park Service regularly burn button grass to stop growth of *Leptospermum* so there is food for the endangered orange-bellied parrot. We entered the Surprise Valley, a delightful atmospheric drive with misty fog. Epacrids, a brilliant pink/red on the rough rock face, also white snowberries on the more open areas beside the road.

We stopped at the junction of Surprise & Franklin Rivers for a walk through a forest of myrtle, brown stringy bark and tall beech covered in lichen, coming upon the Franklin River – signage - "LET THE RIVERS RUN FREE". We had drink of the water which flowed over smooth rounded rocks, of the river we had heard so much of in the news and the fight against Dams on the Franklin and Gordon (into which the Franklin runs). We observed leatherwood and saw the white petals on the ground, sassafras (even one growing out of a decaying log, its roots clinging into its source of nourishment). Some of the group saw a 'pademelon' (small marsupial). Many fungi of diverse varieties, particularly bolete – which turns blue when cut. Our morning cuppa nearby. The weather cool and overcast, but no rain. Not far

along the road we stopped and climbed Donaghy's Hill to the lookout above junction of Franklin & Collingwood rivers.

There were three quotes on the top lookout from Donaghy's Hill by three of the most famous American philosophers on wilderness. **Aldo Leopold** in "Sand County Almanac" wrote:

"Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language."

John Muir, founder of the Sierra Club, wrote in "My first summer in the Sierra":

"Nevermore, however weary, should one faint by the way. Who gains the blessing of one mountain day, whatever his fate, long life, stormy or calm, he is rich forever."

Henry Thoreau wrote in "Walden":

"The life in us is like the life in the river. It may rise this year higher than man has ever known it and flood the parched uplands."

Donaghy's Hill offered views of Frenchman's Cap through the mist. Bauer's rose was the significant flower on lower slopes leading up to tree ferns and larger trees.

Driving on we observed the Raglan Ranges where King Billy Pines had been harvested after fire had scorched them. Next stop was at Nelson River where 3-day rafting trips take place, much to the alarm of environmentalists.

Some Quotes

There were two differing views of wilderness presented on the way down the Lyell Highway. In 1840 Surveyor James Calder was commissioned by Governor Franklin to cut a track from Lake St Clair to the Lower Gordon near Macquarie Harbour. It took him 32 weeks of arduous and frustrating work with the help of his seven convicts. He wrote:

"I called these hills the Deception Range, from the frequency with which I was foiled, or deceived in my attempts to find the path across them. This locality presents no other view than that of a sterile wilderness, and scenes of frightful desolation. The great river which joins Deception Range to the westward, is very deep; down 2000 feet, and is far too steep for travelling, and not to be crossed without excessive fatigue and risk. In a fit of desperation I reached Macquarie Harbour instead of the Gordon. At a navigable part I twice got to the bottom of this hideous defile, but was at last forced to relinquish all idea of a track across, and retraced my steps to Lachlan Plain, bitterly disgusted with the venture. A large furious torrent flows through it, and connecting to the water that falls on a wide extent of mountainous country, emerges from a glen a large and beautiful river. I called it the Franklin."

A quote from **Wallace E Stegner**, an American novelist who wrote in 1960:

"We simply need the wild country available to us even if we never do more than drive to the edge and look in. For it can be a means of reassuring ourselves of our sanity as creatures as a part of our geography of hope."

A very attractive boardwalk through rainforest ferns and trees alongside the Nelson, coming to the Falls, a spectacular cascade of water, the best we have seen at this point. Along the path a bright red native plum was seen as well as the white snow berry. Further on a mountain range came into view, Mt. Owen being dominant. Our lunch was at Lake Burbury on the King River where one of the last Hydro dams was built.

We came on to the moonscape of Queenstown – revealing the barren slag dumps from the copper mining. Surprisingly some vegetation is beginning to cover the dumps. At the town the ABT Railway has been resurrected and the station re-developed.

Nearby clever sculptures in bronze tell the history of Queenstown.

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Alongside the road toward Zeehan, where we were to spend the next two nights, we viewed the Henty Glacial site. Zeehan formerly mined silver/lead, now gemstones. Some of the group went to the Mining Museum and Eddy Smith especially enquired about ‘Crocolite’ – a valuable lead/chromate crystal of orange shade. The largest piece found in the world was mined by a new Australian in his own tunnel.

Our accommodation is motel-style, which is a good change. Our weather fine and good fortune is with us.

Day 12 Wednesday, 13 March Strahan — Macquarie Harbour

Very comfortable motel at Zeehan, so we were all agreeable to make an early start so as to be in Strahan to board our cruiser for the Sarah Island and Gordon River trip. We set off at 8.00 a.m., a light shower of rain and overcast sky but so soon the clouds lifted and once again blue sky & fine weather. We have been blessed with excellent weather throughout our journey in Tasmania. Driving to Strahan we crossed the Henty River, the mirror-like reflection superb and surrounding dunes of almost pure white sand, a lovely forty-minute drive to the coastal resort of Strahan on Macquarie Harbour.

We boarded the vessel Wanderer III and saw very soon why an early start was necessary – a full ship of tourists!

We sailed west thru’ what is known as Hell’s Gates, a narrow channel opening into the Great Southern Ocean where strong tides are experienced and waves up to sixty feet have been recorded. After a quick turn around we sailed up into the Gordon River estuary.

We anchored at Sarah Island jetty and had an hour to join a guided tour and hear about the Convict Penal Settlement that was on the island between 1822 and 1833, a place of secondary punishment. Cat o’ Nine Tails was the name given to the whips used to inflict punishment. Also the island is the setting for the novel “For the Term of his Natural Life” which portrayed Sarah Island as a living hell for its hero, one RUFUS DAWES. The island once had massive stands of Huon Pine.

Convict labour was used to fell the huge trees.

One large specimen on the island Heritage Landing Boardwalk is 2,000 years old. Huon Pine represents an ancient family of native conifers dating back 135 million years. A sudden sun shower sent us back on board, where a buffet lunch was served, including fresh salmon from the salmon ponds we saw at the beginning of our journey into Macquarie Harbour.

Over lunch we reflect on the experience of Sarah Island, not just on the privations endured but also in the slow development of the understanding of human potential. It was clear that the harsher the regime the more the inmates were challenged to escape and rebel.

The success of the management was measured by the number of escapes attempted. However, some began to realize that you can’t build a good boat with disgruntled convicts. For good results you need men who are committed to doing their best. How to do this? Reward, not punishment became the policy. Rewards in the form of food or time off motivated men to do better. Selected men were trained in a variety of ship-building skills. Before long they were building boats of varying size and purpose and building a reputation for the place as a place of good workmanship. Tasmania had learned something very valuable.

As we travel up the Gordon River the banks close in and we can begin to admire the forest presented on the hillsides. The sun comes out and the diversity of colour and form becomes clear: the rainforest is incredibly beautiful. Closer still we can begin to identify some of the trees – sassafras, celery-topped pine, beech and swamp gum. At Heritage Landing we go ashore on the nature walk for 20 minutes and

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200 people move slowly round the boardwalk experiencing something of the environment and beauty of the rainforest. Even the Harley Davidson 'bikies' appear to enjoy the experience. Again we appreciate the superb signage and information provided by the Parks & Wildlife Service.

We are shown a 2000-year old Huon Pine which has fallen. The Huon has special protective oil, methyl eugenol, which protects the timber even when lying on the ground and in water and it can survive for hundreds of years. Moreover, it is capable of sprouting new shoots even when on the ground and of even growing again from old roots.

Back in Strahan we meet a former pupil of Eddy's, Darrel Geraghty, who is now Mayor of West Coast. A lively, colourful and unorthodox figure, he entertains us with stories, some political and some just his spontaneous sense of fun.

We drive to the King River estuary and are shown the chemical-laden silt which has been washed down the King River from the mining at Queenstown. Mining for gold, silver and copper has produced a toxic mix. So toxic that the wind blowing over the silt has poisoned the bordering trees.

At Ocean Beach we see the sand dunes where the short-tailed shearwater comes in to nest. We could see their footprints in the sand, as well as the footprints of fairy penguins coming in to their nesting burrows.

Back to Zeehan and the comfort of a motel unit and all its facilities. We are warned that at Cradle Mountain we will not be so lucky!

Day 13 Thursday, 14 March West Coast — Cradle Mountain

We set out at approx. 9.30 a.m. along the Murchison Highway passing a large collection of buildings and the slag-heaps of a tin mine. At Roseberry while John shopped, we saw three vintage cars and two boys crawling back to class with the school lunches. Tin, Lead and Zinc are mined near here. Morning tea by Lake Roseberry at Tullah and then followed a scenic drive with views of Mt. Murchison and Cradle Mountain. On the way we glimpsed "Wee Georgie Wood" – a tiny railway engine.

We stopped for a view of Cradle Mountain at the highest point – 930 m. and then continued to the Visitors' Centre at Cradle Mountain.

Here we did the Pencil Pine walk and admired the falls and the yellow wattlebird.

At 1 p.m. we reached the Waldheim Cabins, ours is Karana 2. After lunch we all set off in the bus for Dove Lake Car Park. Everyone began the walk and we had a group photo on a rocky promontory – Suicide Rock. We then all made our own pace on the Dove Lake circuit. It is a well-maintained track, much of it as a boardwalk with a rougher section over the hill towards the end. There are spectacular close views of Cradle Mountain and the Lake. It is well used.

On the way home we saw a wombat. The cabins are very clean and well equipped. We used one cabin as kitchen-dining room and beds for the men. The women all slept in the second cabin. After dinner some of us went in the bus with John to find some "animal nightlife".

Day 14 Friday, 15 March Cradle Mountain

It was cool and cloudy with a light mist this morning. The cabins have been comfortable, cheerful and nicely warmed by a gas heater. Just as important there has been lovely warm water for showers!

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The discussion over breakfast about who was going where was influenced by the weather prospects. Again there were about half of us who chose to stay close to the cabins and explore the replica of Gustav Weindorfer's home here in this mystical area and take the rainforest walk behind this building. Others took off with John to begin more ambitious walks starting from the Dove Lake Car Park. Three intrepid walkers, Alan, June & Betty set out for Marion's lookout. They walked past Lilla Lake and Badger's Lake and on to the rocky area only to find themselves in cloud, with cold & damp conditions which did not look likely to change soon. They decided to return to the bus!

We all met up again in the mess hut for a cuppa and what turned out to be a good yarn. Subjects ranged around plants and animals as might be expected with this group. Discussion about the healing properties of various plants and the processes of preparing certain plants to counteract their poisonous potential, certainly inspired us to revere the wisdom of indigenous people and here we were particularly focusing on Australian and New Zealand examples.

Joy and Owen told us about a harrowing experience with ticks when they were on a trip to Europe which could have ended in tragedy had they not read the signs warning about the dangers of tick attacks. Moral of the day "READ THE SIGNS".

Those who had not visited the Waldheim founder's hut earlier took the opportunity to do so after lunch. There were plenty of photographic opportunities in the forest walk. Giant pandani (*Richea*) deserved attention and was well worth some film. We went on a quick trip into the Visitor's Centre again – to make a phone call or two for some, to pick up mementos for others.

Betty made another attempt at one of the walks but again found the weather closing in. The arrival of the bus as she was hurrying along the road offered a welcome ride home and an opportunity to remain dry after the soaking of the earlier morning walk!

All again back at our billets as we settled in to read, write, snooze, prepare for tomorrow, etc. A nice relaxed way to end our stay at this special place. We're hoping too as the daylight fades to catch a few more glimpses of the animal life here.

Later: A pademelon and what looks like two babies (real nature) are outside and one has been feeding. A currawong joined us early outside the kitchen window.

Day 15 Saturday, 16 March Marakoopa Cave — Launceston

9 a.m. all packed on our last morning. We set off in misty rain from our comfortable cottage at "Waldheim" at Cradle Mountain. Two great nights spent in the High Country. We were all intrigued with the story of Gustav & Kate Weindorfer who brought attention to the area.

As we drove into the Forth Valley the mist and rain lifted and we began to leave the conglomerate rock. We drove up through the sclerophyll forest to Round Mountain Lookout. Further on we turned on to Mole Creek Road overlooking Mersey Valley – noticing dairy farm conversion to plantation timber.

We observed sink holes in paddocks (underneath which would be cave structures). The Marakoopa Caves nearby were a sight to remember with varied coloured shawls and stalactite formations. Glow worms in the dark were a delight.

We drove around Mt. Roland into Paradise, alluvial soils producing potatoes and of course dairy farms – some of which again converting to plantation timber. Sheffield with its colourful scenes on stores was our lunch stop.

After lunch we made a presentation to John; A wonderful artwork of the Safarists produced by Johanna and a donation to F.I.D.O.

At Deloraine it was "goodbye" to Eddy and the completion of a wonderful experience of Tasmania.

THE REAL SAFARI DIARY

Owen Lewis

*Eleven strong, we take the field
Tasmania's charms to be revealed.*

*By day John drives, our fearless leader;
By night he is our tireless feeder.*

*He drives with not two hands but three –
One for the mike to tell us what to see.*

*The second hand is used to change the gear,
The third's occasionally used to steer.*

*It's all aboard and then we're ready
To hear another trouty tale from Eddy.*

*On Wombat Moor there's frequent stoppings
To speculate on wombat droppings.*

*From Koonya, Tyenna and Maydena
To Triabunna and Nubeena;*

*We learn that beautiful Lake Pedder
Undammed was, when smaller, better.*

*"A comfort stop is sure to please?
Speak now or forever hold your pees".*

*Loading our luggage in locations strange
We buckle like the Saw Back Range.*

*We admire the strong pines of King Billy
And forests dry and schlerophylly;*

*From waterfalls and sheer rock drops
Through wilderness and the wildest wops;*

*With Cradle Mountain far above
We circumnavigate Lake Dove.*

*Darryl, colourful Mayor of Strahan
Entertains with cosmic porn;*

*And Alison's language starts to blossom
When invaded by an amorous possum.*

*We love you easy going Aussies –
We're not so struck on all your mozzies.*

*We've widened our appreciation
Of plants and birds and conservation.*

*For friendship and your kindness shown
Our thanks, Yours truly, Joy and Owen.*

OMJEBA, OMJEBA, OMJEBA
Annette Carswell

*Go Bush Safaris forever
"it'll füt", "it'll turn up", "it'll come",
The bus gave us all a stiff bum!
We all became experts about
where to find the wary trout.
The bush showed affect from past drought
but we still found trees quite stout.
Weather was always fine
Eddy's forecast sublime.*

*We've travelled far and wide
all points of the compass we've tried.
Tassie has brought us all here,
and with our glorious soup
we are all cock-a-hoop.*

For Go Bush Safaris we cheer!

Contributed at last night of Bush Safari – March 15th. 2002. "OMJEBA" comes from the initials of the	
safarists	
Owen	O
Madge	M
Johanna, John, Joy & June	J
Eddy	E
Betty	B
Alan, Alison & Annette	A

Eddie of Lisdillon

John Sinclair

Eighty seven years have passed. He has led life of sport and learning.
But his richer accumulated memories make him more mature now.

He no longer cycles. He uses a walking stick now.
But he isn't immobile and continues accumulating wisdom.

He says he doesn't actively engage in campaigning now.
But he is still eager to organize a local meeting for the green candidate.

He tells many former students, You don't have to call me 'Sir' now!".
But he still follows their progress as he has done for half a century.

He doesn't catch as many of his beloved trout now,
But he still remembers his old fishing cobbles as he stalks his elusive prey.

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The additions to his cottage are fewer and the garden a little wilder now.
Because his latest challenges are mastering chess, his computer and his e-mail.