



FEBRUARY 2021

Sentinel

THE FRIENDS OF ALTHORPE ISLANDS CONSERVATION PARK



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

To all our valued members, thank you for your interest, involvement and support with the Friends of Althorpe Island Conservation Park. We are proud to be celebrating our 25th anniversary later this year.

I can remember back at the beginning of the groups formation my first "working bee" as called back then. The cut African Boxthorn bushes were piled up 2-3 meters high in multiple locations from the groups hard work. Nowadays it's more of a hunt to find them and they are usually only around a meter high, a lot smaller than the giants back at the beginning. The difference in the landscape now is very notable, a show of the effectiveness of the friends weed eradication over the last 25 years.

"Repeated visits have allowed observations of bird activity on the islands, including that cape barren geese have increased in numbers on the islands where dense areas of boxthorn have been removed as grazing is enhance by the clearing. We have observed that the Cape Barren geese graze on seedling boxthorn while they are still just cotyledons, which can decrease the numbers of seedlings dramatically." (Friends of Bass Straight islands).

The tree mallow however, is a lot easier to find with its big round leaves and purple flowers and grouping tendency, it seems to establish itself quickly. Perhaps due to the wind spreading the seeds from the abundant flower heads, as opposed to the birds spreading the seeds from the boxthorns small red berries.

"Tree Mallow is a serious threat to seabird populations across the southern coast of Australia, where it replaces key open and undergrowth nesting sites with unsuitable scrub canopy. It has also jeopardised the genetic distinction of the native coastal Mallow, *Malva pressiana*, with which it produces successful hybrids." (Weeds of Melbourne).

After a lot of collaboration with the Australian Maritime Services (AMS), Aerotech helicopter company, and the rangers at Dhillba Guuranda-Innes National Park we completed another successful volunteering expedition to Althorpe Island in October 2020. Many weeds were eradicated and repair and maintenance jobs completed.

During this time one of the AMS crew discovered whilst moving some debris near the light house, a species never before recorded on Althorpe. *Aprasia striolata*- the Striated Worm Lizard (see photo above).



The Striated Worm-lizard is a slender, worm-like burrowing legless lizard that can reach up to 22 centimetres in length. It has a rounded head and snout, small eyes, very small hind limb scales and a blunt tail shorter than the body. There are 12 mid-body scale rows. It is brown or grey/yellow brown on the upper surface with a pale off-white underside. There are three distinctive black stripes along its body, the lower stripe being in alignment with the eye. There is also a short stripe running from the centre of the head along the spine (Viridans 2005; Cogger 2000).

On behalf of the friends group committee I would like to again, thank all members and encourage you to consider putting up your hand to participate in our next trip proposed for October 2021 if this is something you are keen and able to do. Also the Friends of Althorpe Island Conservation Park wishes to acknowledge and thank Russell Walsh, Michael Hoets, the maintenance crew at AMS (Australian Maritime Services), Hamish Burns, the pilots at Aerotech helicopter company, Mark Davison, Stella Kondylas and their team of rangers at Dhillba Guuranda-Innes National Park for the help and support we receive in executing these trips out to Althorpe Island Conservation Park. As well, thank you to Pam Smith and Duncan MacKenzie and the staff at Friends of Parks for their guidance and support with the logistics of conducting a friends group and for granting us the funds to make this all possible. DEW (Department for Environment and Water) increased the total pool of Volunteer Support Grants funding available from \$60,000 up to \$90,000 for the year 2020-2021 so hats off to that !!

We look forward to seeing some of you at the 25 year celebration (TBA) and/or hearing from you via email or our Facebook page with your stories and views on conservation, history and your interests in Althorpe Island Conservation Park.

JAMES VON DOUSSA (FOAICP PRESIDENT)

"FRIENDS OF ALTHORPE ISLANDS CONSERVATION PARK ARE COMMITTED TO THE CONSERVATION OF THE NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE OF ALTHORPE ISLANDS CONSERVATION PARK"

WE'RE CELEBRATING 25 YEARS - FOAICP 1996 - 2021!

This is the front page of the first Friends of Althorpe Islands Conservation Park newsletter, published a few months after we began in September 1996. Twenty-five years later, members of the FoAICP continue to visit the island and one can well imagine those years were filled with remarkable experiences and achievements. With spectacular views of the island whose southern coast endures the brunt of the Southern Ocean and fresh Antarctic winds, many people had provided their time to care for the natural and cultural heritage.

FoAICP are getting closer of reaching the 80th trip and how different are today's circumstances for the volunteers. No longer can we access part of the heritage listed jetty (jetty shed) or attend to the culturally significant graves, which date back to 1838, 1919 and 1937.

From our extensive involvement of maintaining the cultural heritage, including the three 142 year old cottages, it now seems we are restricted to the plateau pulling weeds. Yet during our 25 year history we had maintained a high degree of safety awareness, with a comprehensive induction process and our safety record stands at 100% accident free. But despite this, DEW has ignored our record and declared the path to shore is to be 'unsafe' and closed the historic path.

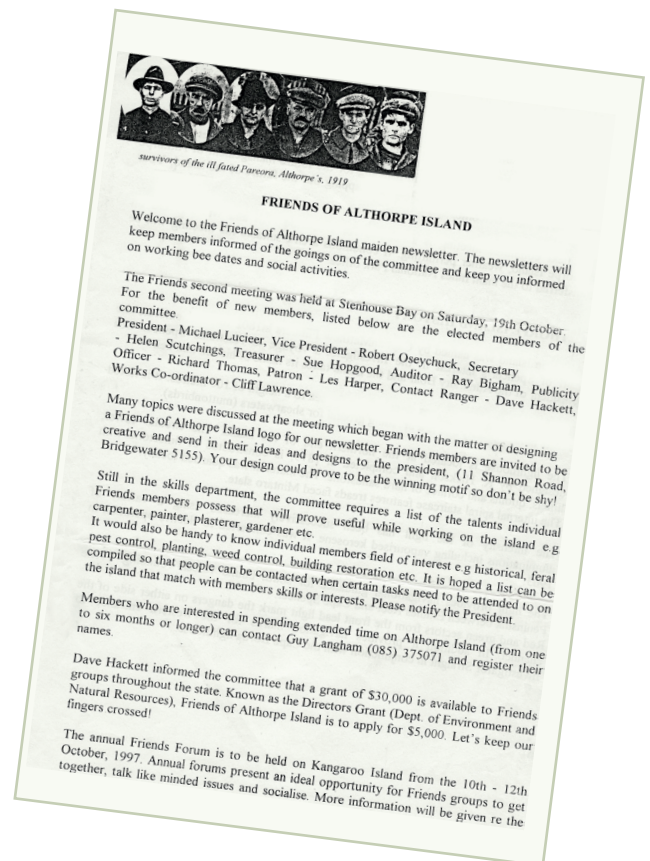
Out of the 365 days of the year, FoAICP visit the island usually for 7 days and during that time we use the 370 meter zig-zag path for maintaining a pristine beach within the conservation park, grave maintenance and record the sightings of the endangered Australian Sea Lion. As we continue in our limited involvement with the conservation park, we are seeking a review of the one-person decision to declare the path 'unsafe', a decision with worrisome consequence that not only contradicts the objectives in the management plan of Althorpe Island but also devalues and ignores South Australia's maritime cultural heritage.

During the last 25 years, the diverse community group had focused on the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage and produced over 78 newsletters. We wrote about the 'island life' adventures and the experiences of our outstanding achievements with the reduction of the invasive African Boxthorn and Tree Mallow. Today, in the digital world, our Website and Facebook continue to tell our stories.

As a tribute to the island's long maritime involvement, the FoAICP recently undertook a significant project with the encased time capsule (pictured), which is due to be opened in the 200th year, 2079. (1879-2079). What a surprise that will be!

"25 years, Thank you, Althorpe Island and FoAICP".

MICHEL LUCIEER
(FOUNDING FOAICP MEMBER 1996 - 2021)



Michiel Lucieer at the Althorpe Island 2079 Time Capsule site.

FOAICP 2020 ALTHORPE ISLAND WORKING BEE

Six people flew over from Stenhouse Bay Ranger Station on Tuesday 13th October using the AMS helicopter which was transporting the lighthouse maintenance crew.

NPWS now requires all friends group work parties to include an accredited Team Leader. As a training programme has not yet happened for our members to become accredited, Parks assigned one of their rangers to fulfil that role.

Five members and Ranger Rick from DEW spent the next week doing weed control, cottage maintenance and wildlife survey work. We removed 80 African Boxthorn, about one thousand common mallow, 80 large flowering tree mallow and hundreds of small ones. Cleared lots of weeds (particularly an invasive succulent) from around Cottage 1, and cleared the path to the lighthouse.

Some essential structural maintenance was carried out on the cottages to stave off further deterioration. This included raising and bracing a leaking and drooping length of gutter over the kitchen, and repairing the plaster surrounds of the kitchen window.

We counted 57 Australian Sea lions, about 40 Long Nosed Fur Seals, five Little Penguin. Twenty species of birds were seen including White Breasted Sea Eagles with chicks in the nest and a probable yearling on the wing with the breeding pair. In addition to the usual skinks and geckos a notable sighting, found by the lighthouse maintenance crew, was a legless lizard, subsequently identified as *Aprasia striolata* - Striated Worm Lizard. This is a new species record for Althorpe (see below).

Altogether an enjoyable and productive trip.

REPORT BY COLIN COLQUHOUN
(FOAICP COMMITTEE MEMBER)



Rick Muller (Innes National Park Ranger) with members of FoAICP.



FoAICP volunteers at work on various Island maintenance activities.

2021 MEMBERSHIP FEES NOW DUE

Just a quick reminder to everyone that our membership anniversary is 1st of January every year, and therefore, annual subs are now due.

Annual Single Membership - \$20

Annual Family Membership - \$30

If you make an EFT, please include your name in the description when making the transfer. New members, please complete the application form included in this Sentinel, return to me or email your contact details to millsy10@adam.com.au

We appreciate your continued support.

Many thanks to all those who have donated during the last 12 months or so – we are looking to purchase a large battery for our next Island trip, and your membership fees and donations greatly assist with our capital purchases.

ANDREW MILLS
(FOAICP TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP)

FOAICP NEWS UPDATE

FOAICP WINS GRANT

We have been successful with our application for a Volunteer Support Grant from Friends of Parks for 2021 – to the value of \$5,500. The grant is to support our travel costs to the island once a year by helicopter, which generally come in at around \$7,250 for both legs of one trip. Due to unusual local availability of the helicopter for both legs of the trip in October 2020, we have been lucky enough to receive a significant discount for our 2020 travel costs. Friends of Parks have approved the carryover of this under spend to put toward our 2021 travel expenses.

The President has confirmed that at this stage Australian Maritime Services (AMS), who work on the lighthouse annually, are intending to visit the island again in October. We highly value the co-operation of AMS as it makes a significant difference in our total travel costs.

As stated elsewhere, being a financial member entitles you to nominate for a place on our next visit in October 2021. Each travelling group needs to include a balance of some experienced members, with newcomers or less experienced individuals. If we have more nominations than places available, then the Committee or its nominees will choose those that attend. Please bear in mind that we rarely know our exact travel dates until a week or so before we leave. This is because we rely on AMS primarily for the first leg of the trip, and their maintenance schedule determines the helicopter arrival date at Marion Bay – the trip is likely to take place in the first two weeks of October and is usually 7 or 8 days in duration.

If you have an interest in joining the travelling group, please let me (Andy Mills) or a Committee member know of your interest as early as possible.

ANDREW MILLS
(FOAICP TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP)

FoAICP are a not for profit membership group of dedicated volunteers who since late 1996, have been actively caring for the historic infrastructure and the natural environment of the Althorpe Islands Conservation Park. The FoAICP need your support as memberships and donations are our life blood.

Visit our website, discover who we are and if you are interested in getting involved in our conservation efforts, please consider becoming a member. You can complete the membership application at the back of this newsletter or online. Forward with your remittance to our Membership Officer (full details are on the application form).

ZIG ZAG PATH CLOSURE

As many of you would be aware, DEW banned the use of the Zig Zag path in Feb 2019. Access to the island since has been by helicopter only (October 2019 and 2020). This decision has had a significant limiting impact on our activities on the island. In addition, the increased costs associated with travel to the island limit the number of times we can visit in any one year.

We expressed our concerns about the decision directly to the Minister in October 2019. In particular, the group argued that banning use of the path due to it being deemed 'unsafe' was unfair, and that a technical assessment by a suitably qualified person was in order. The track has been in use for over 170 years and the safety record of its use is unblemished.

In October 2020, James von Doussa received a phone call from Bronte Leak, Senior Project Officer- PROJECT AND ASSEST SERVICES of the DEW stating that the Environment Minister Hon David Speirs has asked him to follow up on the matter of the path.

James and myself (Andrew Mills) visited Bronte just prior to the last trip taking place in October 2020. Given that access to the island is by helicopter only, we discussed the possibility of an assessment being made during the October visit. However, it was subsequently relayed to us that the timing was not suitable, despite having access to a helicopter for that whole week.

In February 2021, James wrote to Bronte to ask him whether the track assessment had been scheduled. In his reply, Bronte indicated that he was no longer responsible for the matter, and that we should contact the District Manager and Head Ranger at Innes for more information. James has been in communication with the nominated DEW staff, they are planning to assign one of their project officers to tie in with our trip in October to assess the safety of the zig zag path. Although they did state that with all the new funding allocated to projects and assets (\$150 million) to be rolled out over the next 5 years, our concerns were a low priority.

ANDREW MILLS
(FOAICP TREASURER/MEMBERSHIP)

**LIKE TO LEARN ABOUT FOAICP?
WE HAVE A WEBSITE AND FACEBOOK PAGE.**

**www.althorpefriends.com
Facebook: Friends of Althorpe Island**

FOAICP 2021 AGM

WHEN: MARCH 28, 2021

WHERE: 4 BARRACKS LANE,
BRIDGEWATER, SA

WHEN: 11:00 AM

There will be a shared meal to follow the AGM, so please bring a plate/bottle if you would like to have lunch with the Group.

A reminder that Members MUST be financial for 2021 in order to vote at the AGM.

Nominations for the Executive must be received by the FoAICP Secretary, Barbara Colquhoun (*colbar50@gmail.com*) at least 21 days before the AGM, cut off day is March 7, 2021.

2021 ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE FOR FOAICP

The President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary positions will become vacant prior to the election.

2021 ELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Committee nominations are accepted at the AGM or if you are unable to attend the meeting but wish to stand for a position, a written nomination will be accepted.

ELECTION VOTING

According to our constitution, Members need to be present at the meeting to vote. Please note that proxy votes cannot be accepted.

FOAICP 2020 COMMITTEE

President: James von Doussa
Vice-President: Nick Humphris
Treasurer: Andrew Mills
Secretary: Barbara Colquhoun

Kate Forrest, Colin Colquhoun,
Michiel Lucieer, Kaye Finney,
Frances Watkins, Van Penglis,
Peter Barrien.

FOAICP APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Benefits of Membership

Membership will entitle you to the rare opportunity to visit Althorpe Islands as a volunteer on one of our working trips and contribute to the preservation of the environmental and cultural heritage of this unique light house station.

You will be kept informed of the groups' activities throughout the year by receiving regular newsletters (The Sentinel) and if you would like to get more involved, you can nominate to become an office bearer on the Committee of the Friends of Althorpe Islands Conservation Park which oversees the running of this diverse and dynamic group.

I/We would like to subscribe to
Friends of Althorpe Islands Conservation Park

Name of individual(s):

Address: _____

_____. Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Find enclosed membership fee of \$ _____

I/We wish to donate/bequest to FoAICP \$ _____

Date: / /

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP FEES:

\$20 for individuals 18 years and over.

\$30 for family (up to 2 adults with children under 18).

Please make your cheque payment to:

FRIENDS OF ALTHORPE ISLANDS CONSERVATION PARK
or use EFT payment, Name: Friends of Althorpe Island
BSB: 105 063, ACC: 025883440

Please post your membership application with remittance to Mr. Andrew Mills, PO Box 148, Ashton, S.A. 5137.
Your receipt will be returned by email. Thank you on behalf of the FoAICP.