

CULTURAL HERITAGE PRACTITIONERS TASMANIA—NEWSLETTER

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LAKE MARGARET POWER STATION

AS ONE OF THE MOST HOTLY DEBATED ISSUES OF CHPT IN THE LAST YEAR, SARAH WAIGHT (SENIOR HERITAGE CONSULTANT—HYDRO TASMANIA CONSULTING) PROVIDES THE FIRST IN A FOUR PART SERIES ON THE LAKE MARGARET POWER STATION.....

The Lake Margaret Power scheme is located on Tasmania's West Coast to the north of Queenstown. It was originally built by the copper mining giant, the Mt Lyell Mining and Railway Company and began operation in 1914. The potential of hydro power had been recognised early in the company's history, and after thirty years of utilising local timber supplies for power generation, the company looked for a more permanent source of power.

Lake Margaret was selected due to the high rainfall and suitable head of water down the Yolande River to power turbines. The Mt Lyell workforce, including Maltese immigrants began by constructing a two foot tramway into the site. Specialised Maltese stonemasons were involved in the construc-

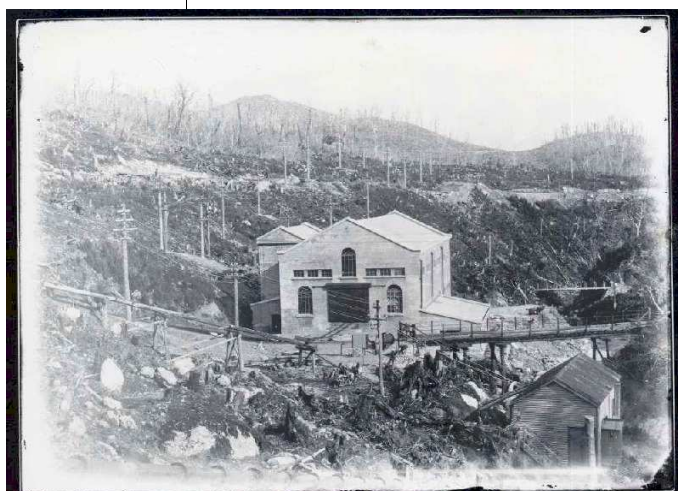
tion of dry stone walls and cutting a bench around a cliff for the tramway to the dam. The power station building had four turbines (single runner, single jet Pelton type water turbines manufactured by Boving in England). The station began by transmitting power to the mining company's works at Queenstown with considerable transmission losses over the line.

Soon after the opening of the station a new penstock and two more generating sets were added, creating additional generation capacity. The 1920s was a period of consolidation with minor repairs and upgrade work.

During the 1930s another power station (using one Boving Francis turbine) was constructed to utilise the water flowing down the Yolande River. In 1938 the upper Oregon woodstave pipeline was replaced due to severe deterioration after only 24 years of operation. This time the woodstave was built out of King Billy Pine harvested and milled locally after an investigation that considered both a steel and a woodstave replacement. The costs of construction of both were similar.

A permanent village of prefabricated houses grew out of a sea of tents and temporary accommodation providing permanent homes for workers at the station and their families.

Continued.....



Lake Margaret Power Station, shortly after completion

WELCOME TO THE INAUGURAL CHPT NEWSLETTER!

As part of CHPT's role of networking and raising awareness of heritage issues in Tasmania, this newsletter has been developed to attract interest and to highlight issues and events. We are trialling a quarterly newsletter, which seems a reasonable amount of time to pull the thing together! The success of this newsletter relies on member contribution, so don't feel shy – send us through

those tasty tidbits of heritage – the good, the bad, the ugly, if you think it's interesting.... chances are the rest of us will too!

Thanks to all those members who have made this edition possible.

Brad Williams – Involuntary Editor.....

LAKE MARGARET CONTINUED...

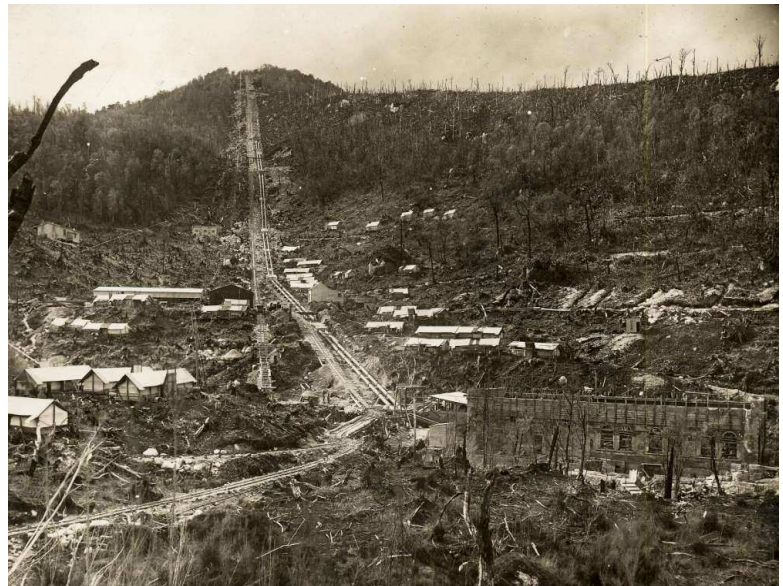
For over fifty years the village remained relatively isolated - the tramway (or walking) the only way in or out. Molly Groves, a resident of Lake Margaret, recently recounted how the rail cars would run children into school at Queens-town, leaving at twenty past eight in the morning and returning at five o'clock at night. Wednesday was 'ladies day' and the rail car would take the women of Lake Margaret to Queenstown for shopping.

In 1948, Queenstown was connected to the grid, and for the next twenty years little changed apart from regular maintenance and upgrade work to the generating equipment. The big change to Lake Margaret came in 1964 when the tramway was replaced by a road, thus ending the isolation of the village.

In the 1970s major works were undertaken. A new penstock was added, new headworks and connections into the station, upgrades to the dam and replacement of some of the outdated equipment. In 1985, the HEC (now Hydro Tasmania) took over ownership of the station. The HEC commissioned The Lake Margaret Cultural Heritage Study by Godden Mackay in 1994 prior to the shutdown of the Lower Power Station. This was updated in 2006 by

Paul Davies Pty Ltd with a Conservation Management Plan. The upper power station was shut-down on 30 June 2006 and put on a care and maintenance program.

The next article will examine the life and times of woodstave pipelines at Lake Margaret.



BULLETIN BOARD

Position Vacant

Admin Support Officer

Heritage Tasmania

See—www.jobs.tas.gov.au

Tasmanian Community Fund

Round 15 Now Open

See—www.tascomfund.org

Southern Midlands Council— Heritage Projects Website

Check out SMC's new Heritage Projects webpage.

See—www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=280

Members—please submit any items you would like advertised here in future editions.....



Lake Margaret Power Station under construction

Lake Margaret locality map

Aboriginal Heritage legislation update:

For an update on the review of Tasmania's Aboriginal Heritage Legislation, see the project resources page of www.tahl.tas.gov.au

Sacrificial members needed for contribution to the newsletter.....

If you can provide stories, photos or just snippets of information that you'd like shared—please email chptas@yahoo.com.au

Bushfire Reveals Unique Mining History at Warrawee Forest Reserve

Jane Becker, Forestry Tas (Mersey District).

A recent bushfire at the Warrawee Forest Reserve behind the township of Latrobe in North West Tasmania, has revealed a wealth of artefacts associated with the once thriving shale-mining industry that flourished between 1910 and 1935.

Oil shale was first discovered in the 1850s and in 1861 an operation was set up to extract and process the oil into paraffin and naphthalene. The venture soon folded and it was not until May 3rd 1911 that processing was recommenced with the opening of the Tasmanian Shale Oil Company.

Over the next two decades several companies tried a variety of new technologies to extract the good quality oil from the local shale known as "Tasmanite". Over 1 million litres of crude oil were produced during this time but the rising cost of production eventually spelled the end of what had been a promising venture.

Oil from the shale-works was refined into petrol but was unpopular due to its repulsive odour. Good quality bitumen was produced and various local streets benefited from the local product. At one stage the oil was destined for use by the Australian Navy, as it was ideal for oil burning steamers, however the price offered was below the cost of production so inevitably the deal fell through.

Today the mining leases have been reclaimed by the bush and it is hard to imagine the hive of activity that was once generated by the succession of shale-works with their crushers, retorts and stilleries. The fire, which has destroyed much of the un-

derstory, has revealed a range of industrial relics and two beautifully preserved adits complete with ventilation shafts. Further investigation by Forestry Tasmania has also located extensive relics on the opposite bank of the Mersey River. Mining interests once bridged the river with a tramway but nothing remains of this old bridge except some rotting stumps in the riverbed.

There is little doubt that the shale-mining era made an important contribution to the history of Latrobe and the relics are worthy of interpretation. To this end Forestry Tasmania is undertaking the development of an interpretive loop along the path of the old tramway. It is hoped to combine historical research, archaeology and oral history to provide a real insight into the life of this fledgling industry and the people who championed its development.



EVENTS CALENDAR

August 17th—PIA Seminar—Pete Smith, Director of Heritage Tasmania gives the presentation entitled *Sustaining Tasmania's Heritage and Character*.
Email—tas@planning.org.au for further details

August 22nd—CHPT mid-year dinner, Sirens Restaurant, Victoria St Hobart, 7pm.

STAY TUNED—Upcoming AGM.... September.....

Become an accredited dry stone waller

For the first time, Tasmanians have the opportunity to receive international accreditation as a dry stone waller.

Geoff Duggan, Australia's only Master Craftsman Dry Stone Waller qualified to do assessments, will run the one-day accreditation course in November this year.

This amazing opportunity will be made possible through the generous sponsorship of Heritage Tasmania and Southern Midlands Council and members of the Dry Stone Walls Association of Australia (www.dswaa.org.au). Without this support the costs to participants would be prohibitive.

The accreditation will be provided in Oatlands and will take place on Saturday the 17th November.

Numbers are limited.

Interested people are asked to leave their contact details with the Heritage Highway Tourism Centre in Oatlands. Phone: 6254 1212, fax: 6254 1467, email: tourism@southernmidlands.tas.gov.au

Further information and an application form will then be forwarded. It is advisable to seek information quickly as there is a lengthy process to follow through the Dry Stone Walls Association of England.

HERITAGE ON FIRE

RECENTLY, A SPATE OF FIRES HAS RESULTED IN LOSSES OF TASMANIA'S HERITAGE. IAN BOERSMA PROVIDES THIS ARTICLE.

In the space of a few days in May this year, two of Tasmania's heritage listed places suffered devastating fires, and only a week later a third heritage place suffered damage from a fire that was fortunately detected and dealt with before much damage was done. These incidents showed how fire can be both rapid and total in its destruction of historic fabric.

The particular circumstances of these fires is also instructive to those concerned with the protection and preservation of heritage buildings.

On the night of April 26th, a fire totally gutted the former Burnie High School, a 1920s landmark complex. Following the fire, an engineering assessment deemed the surviving masonry shell to be structurally unsound and all but the main façade was bulldozed. The fire appeared to have been deliberately lit, kindled under a timber ramp that connected to an outside doorway.

That same night, a fire razed 'Pitt Farm', a two storey Old Colonial Georgian farmhouse in suburban Hobart. It burnt the interiors of the main part of the house to the extent that very little of timberwork could be salvaged. The brick walls were not affected, however, and the roof retained its form despite its timber framing being severely charred from the fire. The cause of the fire is believed to have been faulty wiring which started a fire in the ceiling space while no-one was home. The building's wiring was less than ten years old, and the fault was one that is apparently common in re-wired buildings. The building was insured and reconstruction has commenced.

In early June, 'Hollydene Lodge' on Campbell Street in Hobart suffered minor damage when a fire was lit at the rear of the oldest section of the vacant hostel building. The fire severely damaged a set of French doors and 1820s shutters in the reveals of the doorway. It is probable that the fire was deliberately kindled on the fire stair against the rear door, and that it took hold of the interior once the door burnt through.

Tasmania has in recent years, seen a number of other incidents where heritage places have been damaged or destroyed by fire.

A fire destroyed the roof and gutted the upstairs area of 'Brownleigh', a mid-19th Century two-storey house on Macquarie Street, in 2006. Water pumped into the building in order to put the fire out damaged the ceilings of the floor below. The building was insured and is currently in the process of being reconstructed.

'Korongee', a significant heritage property in Glenorchy, was left vacant for an extended period by an absentee landlord. In 2004, materials were illegally removed from the 1870s house. Following this, two separate fires damaged the building to the point where what little remained was fit only for demolition. At the rear was a weatherboard cottage that may have pre-dated the house. A squatter occupied this cottage until it too succumbed to fire. The fires have conveniently cleared the property of heritage buildings that would have placed constraints on new development.

On Tramway Street in Port Arthur, an old wooden barn that appeared on some of the earliest photographs of the Carnarvon settlement was burnt down just prior to the land on which it stood being offered for sale in 2004.

Other states, and other countries, have also experienced the loss of heritage places through fire. A case with parallels to 'Korongee' is the

recent loss of 'Maddington Park' in Western Australia. 'Maddington Park' was a two storey "Old Colonial Georgian" homestead dating to 1831, the second year of the Swan River Colony's establishment. The property had recently been purchased by developers who left the homestead vacant and untended while they proceeded to subdivide and sell off the land around it. When I visited the place in 2004 it had been vacant for a few months and had suffered damage from vandalism including a small fire. Some time after my visit, a second fire gutted the place. It had been deliberately lit by juveniles who would have had little idea of the value of that which they were destroying. It was obvious that the owner had been negligent in leaving the place vacant, however, the state's heritage legislation had no mechanism for prosecuting the owners for failing to adequately protect the place nor for requiring the homestead to be reconstructed.

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Aftermath.....



Top-bottom—Pitt Farm, Maddington Park (WA) and Korongee (Photos Ian Boersma & Glenorchy City Council)

CHPT

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Does anyone want
to build a website?..

Caring for Tasmania's Heritage

WHO ARE WE?

Established in 1997, Cultural Heritage Practitioners Tasmania (CHPT) is a non-profit group, comprising of heritage practitioners from a range of disciplines, including:

- Architecture
- Archaeology
- Cultural landscapes
- History
- Interpretation
- Museums/archives
- Planning

Among our core activities are the identification of heritage issues within Tasmania and lobbying for the recognition and protection of Tasmania's historic cultural heritage.

We are also an information network, sharing news and events which contribute to the knowledge and appreciation of Tasmania's historic cultural heritage.

For general enquiries, prospective membership, or to raise an issue for consideration, please email the Coordinators—Brad Williams, Allison Ryland and Anthony Bagsgaw at:

chptas@yahoo.com.au

HERITAGE ON FIRE... CONTINUED.....

Lessons can be learned from these incidents. Most obvious is the fact that a property owner can use fire as a means of getting rid of an unwanted heritage building. Although this may be illegal, it can be hard to find evidence that the owner or a person acting for the owner lit the fire. In most cases the owner would not actually have to arrange for a fire to be lit as there are enough people bent on vandalism to take care of this.

For a heritage place to be safe from fire, it is crucial that the property owner is interested in keeping the place standing.

Equally important is that the building should not be left vacant or untended. Many fires occur in vacant buildings. Insurers have picked up on the fact that vacant buildings are prone to fires, and they will not provide cover for buildings left vacant for more than a few weeks.

If a building must remain vacant, ensuring that it is secured against unauthorised entry is critical, particularly in urban environments. Vagrants and other miscreants who enter vacant buildings will oftentimes light a fire for warmth, light, or atmosphere; and not always in fireplaces. It is advisable to remove combustible materials from inside and around the building so that opportunity for kindling a fire is reduced. This is not always possible, and vagrants have been known to cut up fixtures inside a building for fuel causing considerable damage in the process. Protection from fire is greatly enhanced where a building is occupied or under effective surveillance.

Electronic smoke and heat detection systems are useful in providing early warning of a fire, and monitored systems are particularly useful for places that are not occupied at all times. Given that electrical faults often result in fires above the ceiling, it is advisable to locate a smoke detector in the roof space. Wireless systems can be used in

places where the installation of hard-wired systems is too physically intrusive.

Electrical faults, chimney fires and bushfires are accidental causes that can to a large extent be avoided by good management practices. Rewiring is recommended in buildings where the existing wiring does not comply with current standards, but even so the incident at Pitt Farm illustrates how shoddy work practices can negate the benefits of rewiring. Chimney fires are mostly caused by poor maintenance of flues, but are occasionally caused by new flues that have been located too close to flammable material (generally roof timbers). Guidelines for protection from bushfires are readily available from the Tasmanian Fire Service, and include such sensible advice as gutter cleaning, sealing of eaves, sealing of underfloor area, and fuel reduction in the building environs.

For important heritage places, some fire management planning is desirable. This can form part of a conservation plan. Consideration can be given to such things as recording the details of significant spaces or elements (eg: stair cases) so that they can be reconstructed if destroyed by fire; protection of key features by sprinkler systems, fire doors or other means; priority retrieval or protection of important elements during or immediately post-fire; alternative fire fighting methods in areas where water is likely to cause more damage than fire and smoke; and post-fire clean-up including stabilisation of walls. With a little advance planning and the input of appropriate expertise after the event, demolition of fire damaged building fabric can in many instances be minimised. After all, many of the ruins at Port Arthur were buildings gutted by bushfires in the late 19th Century, and they are still standing.