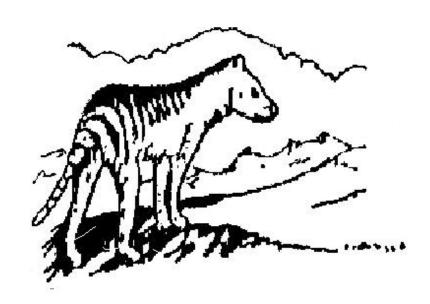
THE LAUNCESTON NATURALIST

Issued to members of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club as a contribution to club activities.



The aim of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club is to encourage the study of all aspects of natural history and to support the conservation of our natural heritage

Volume XLIV No 6

August/September 2011

Patron : Mr Chris Tassell, AM

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N'letter Co-ordinator : Ms K. Manning

Librarian : Ms T McGlynn

Committee : M Clarke, L Mockridge, J Simmons, M Simmons,

R Skabo, P Warren, N Manning

Meetings 1st Tuesday of month, Feb-Dec at Scotch-Oakburn College, Penquite Rd Newstead

PROGRAM

OCTOBER

Tuesday 4 AGM Dinner Meeting / General Meeting

(Newstead Hotel, Penquite Road Newstead)

Sunday 9 Field Trip: Meet at Carr Villa Reserve, Opossum Road

entrance at 9.30 am (see newsletter for more detail)

Sunday 23' Skemp Day: Water Monitoring

Fri 28 /Sun 30 Federation Weekend @ Bruny Island hosted by TFNC

NOVEMBER

Tuesday 1 General Meeting - Speaker: Lesley Kirby - Royal

Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (RTBG)

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL DUE

Sat 5 / Sun 6 Field Trip: RTBG and other locations (see newsletter

for more details)

Sunday 20 Skemp Day

DECEMBER

Tuesday 6 General Meeting - Speakers: Mick & Helen Statham

- Native Rodents

Saturday 10 Christmas at Skemps

JANUARY 2012

To be advised Alpine wildflowers on Ben Lomond

FEBRUARY

Tuesday 7 General Meeting

For short notice changes or additional information visit http://www.lfnc.org.au/meetings.htm

COMMITTEE AND GENERAL MEETING Puggle

August - Noel Manning asked which was the fastest bird in the world. Mark Leech and Bob Montgomery correctly identified the Peregrine Falcon.

September - Bob Montgomery showed the meeting a video he had taken of a bird at Quamby. John Elliott correctly identified it as a Lewin's Rail.

Sightings

August - Noel Manning described a pademelon feeding on lichens at Skemps. Margrit Korosi had seen two White-faced Herons at Prospect. Peter Warren reported a wombat and wallabies in the snow on Ben Lomond. Peter Ralph had seen three eagles at Legana and Tom Treloggen reported seeing a Wedgetail Eagle over Targa Hill Road. Alma McKay said she had seen Black Cockatoos in St Georges Square. Karen Manning reported a Little Wattle Bird feeding on an Eremophila in her garden. Maureen Johnstone had seen Noisy Miners at Riverside. Irmgard Rosenfeldt reported Black Cockatoos feeding on banksias at Norwood. Alanna Smith had seen three Echidnas. Peter Warren reported an Echidna crossing the road and a flock of about 100 Galahs at Legana. Peter Ralph said that Magpies were nesting early at Legana. He had also seen a nesting pair of Grey Currawongs. Michael Clarke reported a Starling imitating the calls of Black Cockatoos and Blue Wrens in his garden. Mark Leech said he had seen a Nankeen Kestrel in the Gorge. John Elliot said that he had seen what might have been Firetail Finches in Targa Hill Road.

September - Margrit Korosi had seen a Masked Lapwing with chicks on the golf course. Noel Manning reported seeing three Echidnas near the Tasmania Zoo. He had also seen two Brown Falcons beside Targa Hill Road and two Tawny Frogmouths at Skemps. Tina McGlynn said she had seen a Platypus in the Meander River. Shirley Anthony said that there was a bird display in the Inveresk Museum. Peter Manchester spoke about wattle birds killing smaller birds in his garden.

Library Report

Tina McGlynn reported that reprints of the *Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania* were available but the errors had not been corrected. Tina also advised that the library computer at Skemps was broken. Peter Manchester offered to donate his computer. His offer was gratefully accepted. At the September meeting Tina reported that the new computer had been installed and was working well.

General

Members were asked to put their names in the book if they were attending the Annual General Meeting dinner at the Newstead hotel and reminded that nominations for office bearers and committee need to be lodged with the Secretary no later than 10 days prior to this meeting.

FIELD TRIP - SUNDAY 9 OCTOBER - WILDFLOWERS

Today we will be visiting some local reserves looking for wildflowers. We will start the day by meeting at Carr Villa Reserve, Opossum Road entrance at 9.30 am where we will spend an hour or so. The next stop will be Punchbowl Reserve which will include our BYO lunch break. Last visit will be to the reserve on Country Club Avenue Prospect.

WEEKEND IN HOBART - SATURDAY 5 & SUNDAY 6 NOVEMBER includes visit to Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

Please contact Roy on 6334 6787 asap if you are attending these weekend activities, as numbers need to be known, especially for the RTBG session.

<u>Saturday 10am SHARP</u>: Meet at Antarctic House (within the Gardens) for a guided tour of the Millennium Seed Bank and the propagation area for endangered plants. These are areas of the gardens which are not usually open to the public.

(Members driving from Launceston on the Saturday morning should allow plenty of time to get to the RTBG)

Lunch will be at the Gardens (either bring lunch or buy it at the Cafe).

Saturday 1pm: Drive to Snug Tier where we will be guided through this interesting area by David Marrison from the RTBG, who lives in the area.

<u>Sunday 10am</u>: meet at turning circle at southern end of Saundersons Rd, Risdon, for a walk in the East Risdon State Reserve looking for wildflowers. This is a fairly easy walk of up to 2km each way through delightful bushland. Bring lunch and then drive to Launceston, after the walk, via Old Beach.

For those people who do not want to bushwalk a visit to the Plants of Tasmania nursery at Ridgeway (near Ferntree), perhaps combined with a drive up Mt Wellington, is a delightful way to spend an afternoon or morning.

Members will need to organise their own accommodation.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL

Reminder that all subscriptions are due for renewal. At the Annual General Meeting on 4 October the amount due will be determined for the Club's new financial year. As per our new Constitution, subscriptions are due and payable by 1 November.

Members who remain unfinancial following this date will receive a final request for payment, if this is not paid prior to the December meeting, members

will not receive newsletters until payment is made. Membership will lapse if the payment is not made prior to the end of the financial year (September 2012).

GENERAL MEETING AUGUST Guest Speaker Mark Leech - A Future by Design

Roy Skabo introduced Mark and told us that as well as his work as a professional forester, with Private Forests Tasmania, he was involved in honey bee marketing, did wood turning and is a missionary.

Mark started by telling us that his big passion at the moment was a book on bees and that it would feature only 200 species, although 2000 would make the work more authoritative.

Mark described himself as a 'woody' as he had been raised with timber, including wooden boats, which led to his passion for fine timber that dominates his life today. He is a gallery owner and is involved in wood design, manufacture and the harvesting of timber through forestry management.

He had been a forester all his adult life starting with a scholarship from Forestry Tasmania to study forestry in Canberra. His first job was in native forest management around 30 years ago and that this was prior to the formalised forest practices of today and he hinted that perhaps a lot of what was done would not be acceptable today.

We were given a brief history of the way timber was used in Tasmania starting from the primitive timber splitting for fences and buildings by the early settlers to the use of quality straight timbers for buildings, including the frames. Today there is greater diversity in timber usage including recompositioned wood products such as veneer or wafer products, pulp products and paper. Veneers can vary in quality from those used in fine design to those used in container floors and direct timber manufacture still includes housing which stores carbon and can be very energy efficient.

Mark then talked about fine timber which is one of his passions and he mentioned that in following field naturalist activity on the internet he had encountered musk which is also a bee attracting tree. But the slide of the living tree did not suggest the quality, high value product locked up in the tree and of this he spoke. His presentation was matched with excellent slides demonstrating each aspect of his talk.

Mark stated that in the 80s he lived some eight years off horizontal scrub. He made hundreds of thousands of wooden buttons as well as kitchen utensils giving them a crafty look by leaving the bark on. He had developed a machine to make the buttons which were used on knitted garments. A display at the Hobart Museum focused on special timbers and the fact that this type of usage turned small pieces of timber into high value outcomes.

The veneer lighting, which was probably familiar to most of us, was from a two man business turning out products not just for Tasmanian galleries but also featured in high end interior design shops in Melbourne and Sydney. Many craft products and furniture featured the knotty timbers which would not normally be used in manufacture. And we heard mention of Toby Muir-Wilson who is an internationally known innovative designer of high end, top quality timber furniture.

Mark told us of small volumes of timber ending up as a couta boat that could fetch \$100,000 for what is little more than a large dingy.

Musical instruments are a fine example of where small quantities of specialty timbers, in the form of veneers, fetch enormous prices. Legitimate producers involved in this sort of production use timbers which at this stage can only come from old growth forests and use a chain of custody to obtain certified timbers. This is independently audited to ensure that these timbers are not harvested illegally.

We saw beautiful tiger Myrtle that is one of the most valuable timbers in the world for use in craft products, furniture or musical instruments. Mark said that he considered tiger Myrtle compares in value and rarity with snakewood from Suriname in South America. Snakewood occurs in only one in three hundred logs and is considered to be the most expensive timber. Another popular timber for craft and expensive furniture is textured grain blackwood which comes from old growth forests and attempting to cultivate it is an unknown. Will you get such timber from an existing tree using tissue culture or is it site issues or the environment of the area that cause the patterns?

Mark finished with his hope for the future of forestry in Tasmania including marketing and managing the forests to end up with socially acceptable forestry. He had broad ideas for management which included the roads and recreational uses, sustainable harvesting which would leave something for future generations and regrowth.

The talk was enthusiastically received and Mark spent more than twenty minutes answering questions after which Elizabeth Montgomery thanked him on behalf of the members.

Noel J Manning

SKEMPS DAY - Planting on Skemp Creek - 21 August

Eight members arrived at Skemps on a miserable Sunday morning to plant another 100 seedlings along Skemp Creek. Once again John Elliott had set up each planting site with items to enable the seedlings to survive animal browsing. In pairs the holes were prepared and planting process completed. We worked until lunchtime during which time we had two heavy rains.

During lunch we dried off and warmed up. The sun came out for the first time just as we headed back to put the final plants in. This was completed quickly so we were able to head home early.

GENERAL MEETING SEPTEMBER Guest Speaker Angela Williams - Fox Eradication Program update

Angela Williams, Community Liaison Officer with the Fox Eradication Program (FEP) gave members an update on the FEP at September's General Meeting.

The population of European Red Fox in Tasmania is unknown, but DNA has proven that male and female foxes exist in Tasmania. There is an estimated 7-30 million foxes on the mainland which are moving into urban areas and are responsible for wiping out 60 types of animal.

As the fox is nocturnal there are few sightings, although missing or killed animals on farms are an indication that they may have been around. Angela described foxes as successful and adaptive, intelligent, wary and elusive, and opportunistic feeders. Foxes

have good stamina, are strong swimmers, can run 50 km/hr and are agile climbers. Fox cub gestation is 53 days, with a litter size being 4-6 on average. Foxes have large pointy ears, their eyes are quite wide apart and shine yellow in the dark, have a white chest and belly, the lower legs are dark and they have a long thick bushy tail. Angela played a recording of foxes calling which were quite distinctive with some members describing them as bird like.

In Tasmania, the core fox habitat spreads from the north-west to the north-east, then down through the midlands as these areas have open areas for foraging and bush for cover which is ideal for foxes.

Historically the first foxes were introduced to Tasmania in 1864 at Oatlands for hunting and in 1998 a fox was seen exiting a freight ship in Burnie that came from mainland Australia.

Fox activity since 1998 has been confirmed by evidence of 4 carcasses, 1 skull, 2 footprints, blood and 58 scats. DNA analysis of the positive fox scats has identified 15 individual foxes. There are only four carcasses to date. An adult male fox was shot by a hunter at Symmons Plains in September 2001; an adult female was road kill at Burnie in October 2003; a juvenile was road kill at Lillico Beach in February 2006 and an adult male was road kill at Cleveland in August 2006.

Scat surveys are the best method to identify areas of fox activity as they remain long after the fox has moved on. Dogs are trained as scent trackers and are used in Tasmania to locate scats with fox scent for analysis. To ensure that the dogs skills remain sharp, they receive ongoing training here and also in places like Philip Island in Victoria where foxes are a problem. Results on DNA analysis takes one month.

Foxes are a threat to native wildlife and agriculture stock as well as being a threat to Tasmania's 'clean, green' tourism image and a threat to the economy. Many of Tasmania's native wildlife are at a high risk of extinction or a serious reduction in their populations and there may be a risk to devils of re-establishing their populations if there is recovery from Devil Facial Tumour Disease.

State wide baiting is currently underway. Meat-based baits with 1080 poison are being used. These have been found to be unattractive to many of our native animals. The baits are buried 10 cm and widely spaced to limit exposure to wildlife and consumption by any one animal. Baits were not left in the ground to decompose; they were retrieved after 14-28 days. With this process in place, the team were able to assess if baits were being taken and if so, checks of scats in the area could be made. 1080 is biodegradable and loses its toxicity quickly. The baiting program is being conducted from either end of the ideal fox habitat and working toward each with further baiting done for specific sightings.

Angela advised that to manage risks to working dogs on farms, baited areas were clearly marked, dogs were provided with muzzles and vets in the area were advised of the baiting.

The Fox Eradication Program team believe that the fox can be eradicated while fox numbers are low and there is continued support from the public reporting of possible sightings, and while landowners continue to allow access to their properties to enable a fully effective baiting program in areas where foxes are likely to be found.

The Fox Hotline contact number is 1300 369 688 (24 hours a day)

Noel Manning thanked Angela on behalf of members for her update on the Program

Karen Manning

CLUB PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION

During supper at September's General Meeting, members were asked to cast their vote on the twelve images entered by five members for the photographic competition. Gift vouchers from Petrarch's were awarded to the following winners.

1st prize - John Elliott, *Hygrocybe* 2nd prize - Karen Manning, *Pale Sundew* 3rd prize - Robert Mitchelson, *Devils Gullet*

CLUB PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

Just a reminder that the **Club Calendar** is now available for purchase at \$5 and also copies of the *Guide to Flowers and Plants of Tasmania* for \$21. Both these items would make ideal gifts. Please see Karen or contact her on 6344 2277, to arrange your purchase.

SKEMPS WEEKEND - Planting on Skemp Creek and Astronomy Evening

12 members arrived at Skemps to a lovely warm blue-skyed morning. While John E, Roy, Noel, Michael, Tina, Louise and Karen proceeded down to Skemp Creek to plant the remaining 50 plants, Marion, John S, Geraldine, Kath and Peter stayed at the Centre to sort out boxes of crockery that had been stored in the barn and other crockery that had recently been donated to the Club.

With the stakes, cages and seedlings already in situ, Roy and Noel dug the holes, whilst Tina and Louise, and Michael and Karen paired up and planted the seedlings, managing to keep just behind John who was placing the plants and doing other little jobs on the go. Our hole diggers headed back to the Centre once they had done their job to get the BBQ going and to cook lunch while the planting group finished up.

All done we headed back. The group who had stayed at the Centre had been busy, all the boxes had been sorted, the new crockery had been washed and placed in the cupboards.

Following lunch apart from some little jobs still underway, work was done on selecting some Landcare related items to be used in a display to publicise the Club at the Landcare Conference to be held in Stanley early October. Our Club had been selected, as part of the programme, which will feature Tasmanian groups who have been running more than 20 years.

Peter Warren set up his telescope during the afternoon and we all had the opportunity to look at the spots on the sun in between periods of cloud cover. Prue and Rhys arrived late in the afternoon for the astronomy evening.

With all members other than Peter, Noel, Karen, Prue and Rhys departed for the day, we went for a stroll along Skemp Creek to Bob's Bog where recent visitors to the Centre had reported seeing a platypus, alas it was not there. We then headed back along the road and onto the paddock along the top of the creek to the Top Pond where we heard the Tasmanian Froglet, *Crinia tasmaniensis*; Brown Tree Frog, *Litoria ewingi* and possibly the Tasmanian Smooth Froglet, *Geocrinia laevis*. At dusk we returned for our evening meal, waiting for the dark and our evening under the stars.

Around 8pm we all rugged up and went outside to a clear dark night. As our eyes became accustomed to the dark it proved to be a very starry sky out in the country away from light pollution. During the evening we viewed Alpha Centauri (a binary star), the globular cluster 47 Toucani near the Magellan clouds, Antares (the Eye of the Scorpian) and various open clusters with the telescope and while we waited our turn at the scope we managed to see five shooting stars. Around 10 pm we returned indoors and Peter dismantled his equipment. When Peter went to depart at 11 pm, his car was covered in frost, so we now understood why we were so cold standing out there, but it was well worth it. We would like to thank Peter for the use of his equipment.

On Sunday Rhys left early, leaving Noel, Karen and Prue. With talk of the 'adopt-a-track' being resurrected Prue was interested to know where individual tracks in the forested area were, so off we went, walking the Forest Track, out into the paddock and down to the Top Falls, out into the paddock and up to the Scotch Oakburn patch, which is where Prue spotted a Swamp Harrier (*Circus approximans*) flying down and around the open grass area just above the East Track. We were unable to get a photo. We then entered the Bedfordia Track and were dismayed by the site of the property next door following removal of the plantation and cleaning up. Continuing on we walked up onto the larva flow at the edge of the property before re-joining the roadway and heading back to the Centre. At this stage Prue headed off and then there were two. Following a quick lunch and cleaning of the Centre we headed up the drive where a couple of wallaby were feeding and back to Launceston following a lovely relaxing weekend.

In addition the following birds were seen during the weekend: Welcome Swallows, *Hirundo neoxena*; Flame robins, *Petroica phoenicea*; Scarlet robins, *Petroica multicolour*; Prue heard a Southern Boobook, *Ninox novaesellandiae* calling during the night; Grey Currawongs, *Strepera versicolour*; and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos, *Calyptorhynchus funereus*.

GENERAL MEETING - Tuesday 6 December

As this is our last meeting for the year, it would be appreciated if members could bring a plate of food to share for supper. Many thanks.

CHRISTMAS AT SKEMPS - Saturday 10 December

Members and their family and friends are invited to join in this end of year function. There will be a guided walk leaving the Centre around 10.30 am.

Please bring your own lunch and a plate of food to share for afternoon tea. The BBQ will be lit for those who choose to cook food.

AUSTRALIAN PLANT SOCIETY MEETINGS

LFNC members are welcome to attend APS meetings held at Max Fry Hall, Gorge Road Trevallyn at 7.30 pm. Their last general meeting for 2011 will be on Tuesday 18 October.

QVMAG EXHIBITIONS

Two new exhibitions opened on 24 September at the Inveresk site. They are the *Wildlife Photographer of the Year* from the Natural History Museum in London and the *ANZANG Nature Photography* from the South Australian Museum. Both exhibitions are free and run until 6 November 2011.

MARINE WILDLIFE AND PLASTIC POLLUTION SEMINAR

Sunday 23rd October - 2pm – 4pm Bicheno Memorial Hall

The Earth Ocean Network (EON) will host a seminar by Dr Jennifer Lavers on the global problem of plastic garbage endangering the lives of marine wildlife. All welcome - it's free and afternoon tea will be provided.

Since the world's oceans have no boundaries, wind & wave patterns lead to the development of Gyres/garbage patches. Our garbage can end up a long way from Australia. Dr Jennifer Lavers is a Research Fellow in the Institute for Marine & Antarctic Studies and a zoologist with the Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery. Her studies of the Fleshfooted Shearwaters, which breed on Lord Howe Island, have shown that 96% of the birds have ingested plastic and the population has halved since 1978.

Keep Australia Beautiful has accepted her project 'Marine wildlife & plastic pollution' as one of their campaign projects for 2011/2012.

Jenny is very excited about coming to Bicheno & happy to be asked any questions – her contact details are on the website. www.jenniferlavers.org/plastic-pollution/

ALL WELCOME Free Afternoon tea. Contact: Helen & Kim 63751565

SEA ROCKET INVASION OF TASMANIA: HELP NEEDED

Request from Roger Cousens, Professor, Dept of Resource Management & Geography, University of Melbourne

Two sea rockets (Cakile spp., Brassicaceae) have invaded Australia. C. edentula (from eastern N. America) was first collected from Victoria in 1863. Over about 60 years it spread west as far as Eucla, and up to sub-tropical Queensland. C. maritima (from Europe) arrived in WA by 1897. From there it reached SA and Vic by the 1920s, NSW by the 1960s and since 2000 there have been records from southern Queensland.

As C. maritima spread, C. edentula disappeared. There is some conjecture about whether maritima outcompeted edentula, whether they have hybridised, or whether edentula was more susceptible to a disease (Alternaria bassicicola). Or perhaps there are other reasons, such as climate change. Whether there has been single or multiple introductions of either species is also unclear at this stage. Sara Ohadi, at the University of Melbourne, is looking at their population genetics to try to reconstruct the biology of what took place. In Tasmania, C. edentula was first collected in 1875 ("near Circular Head") and has been recorded sporadically around the State's coasts. C. maritima was first collected in 1963 (at Sullivan's Cove) in 1963 and is now widespread.

We know that both species are still present in Tasmania: colleagues have sent us seeds of C. edentula from Kingston this year. But will C. maritima go on to completely replace C. edentula, as it has done on mainland Australia (with the exception of northern NSW/southern QLD) and as happened in California and the North Island of New Zealand? Or will they co-exist, either on the same beaches or in slightly different habitats? This is a wonderful opportunity to observe invasions/extinctions in action. The trouble is, I live in Victoria!

In trying to reconstruct invasion histories, we tend to rely on herbaria. Although herbarium specimens give a very broad indication of distributions, they are very patchy in coverage, both in time and space. What is the current situation in Tasmania? There are only seven herbarium specimens of C. edentula since 2000. Is it still widespread, but no one has looked carefully? Is it hanging on by a thread? Sara and I would appreciate your help, both to help bring the information up to date and to help future collecting trips. If you are on the beach, could you let us know which species you find (photos of the fruits would be fantastic) and where? Or if you were near the most recent records for edentula: Bruny Island, Orford, Spiky Beach (S. of Swansea), Ulverstone, Marrawah and Strahan (Ocean Beach), could you take a look?

Flowering/fruiting is most common from November to March, based on herbarium collections. On mainland Australia, sea rockets occur just above the highest tides, at the base of the fore-dunes, and only a couple of metres into the dune vegetation. They have fleshy green leaves that range from entire margins to pinnate. Petal shape and size vary between species, but the best characteristic for the beginner is the shape of the fruit. Fruits have two sections, one above the other, but sometimes only the upper one develops. Look for fruits in which both sections have developed. In edentula, the top section is almost globular (except towards the top), narrowing to a tight waist where it joins the lower section. In maritima, the top section is more elongated and the top of the lower pod section is distinctly triangular at the zone between the two sections (though there is quite a lot of variation). Although only maritime has pinnate leaves, both species can have leaves with shallow lobs or none at all.

If you can help, please contact Roger Cousens, email rcousens@unimelb.edu.au or by phone 03 83449749, or Dept of Resource Management & Geography, The University of Melbourne, Vic 3010.



Additional Information

Club Outings:

- 1. All outings depart from Inveresk carpark (near Museum entrance) at 9 am unless otherwise specified. Internet site updated regularly to reflect short notice changes. Saturday all-day parking cost is \$3.00. Sunday parking free.
- 2. You need to provide your own food and drinks for the outing unless otherwise specified. Morning tea is normally provided by the bus company on bus outings.
- 3. When travelling by car in convoy, each driver is responsible to ensure that the vehicle behind is in sight immediately after passing each cross road or fork in the road.
- 4. When car pooling, petrol costs should be shared between all the passengers, including family of the driver, and based on other clubs the Committee suggested \$11 per 100 km. This is a guideline only.

Name Tags: Name tags are to be worn at meetings and on outings.

Tea/Coffee: A levy of 50c is currently charged for supper provided at meetings.

Field Centre: All members have access to the John Skemp Field Centre. Contact our booking manager, John Elliott on 6344 9303 regarding availability and keys.

Field Centre Phone Number - 6399 3361

Postal Address: PO Box 1072 Launceston 7250

Internet site: http://www.lfnc.org.au

E.mail: secretary@lfnc.org.au