

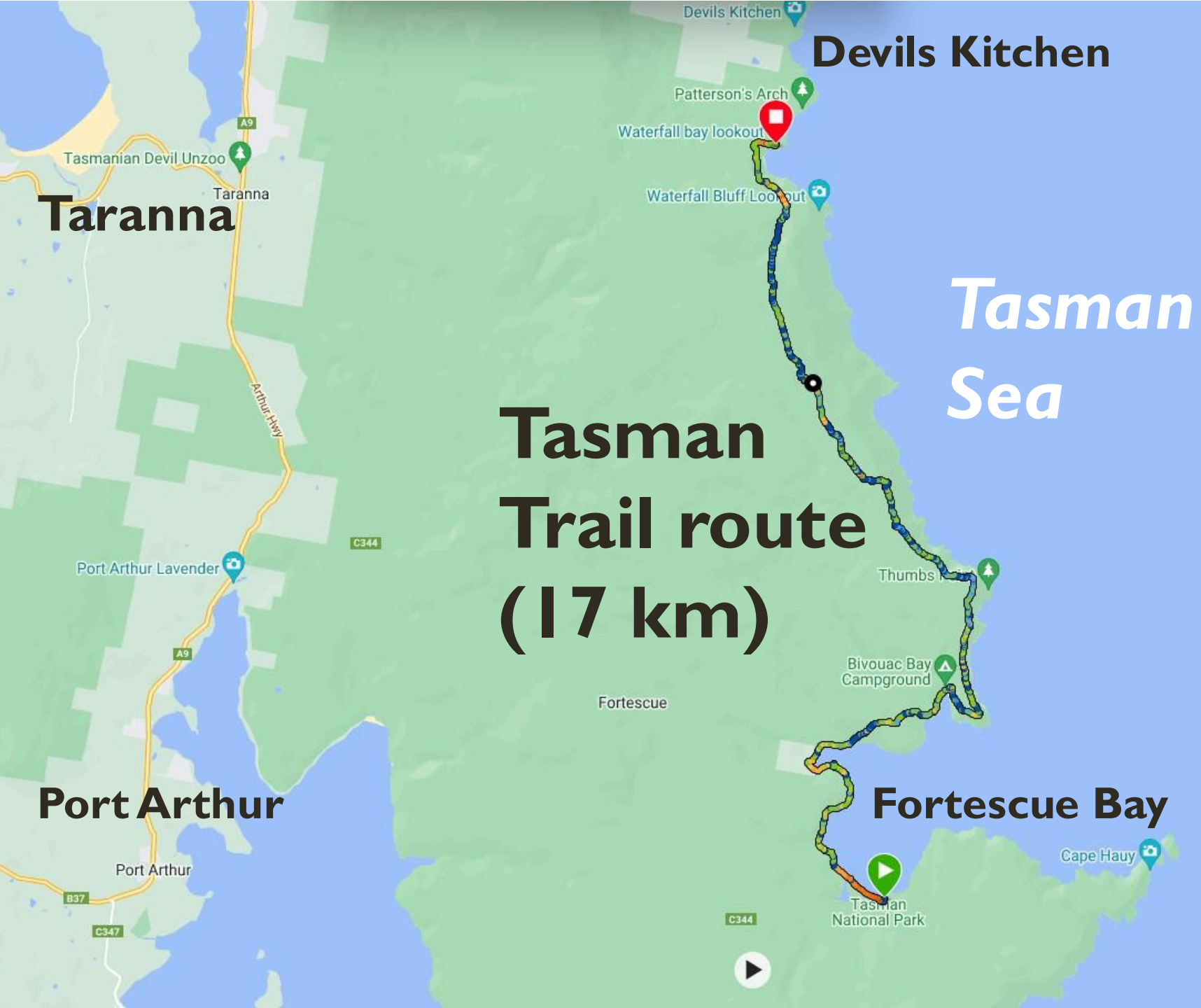
“Track into splendour”:
**50 years of hiking on
the Tasman Trail**

Presentation by Brendon Bowes
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The Tasman Trail

- One of the great walks of Tasmania; a track along east coast of the Tasman National Park
- May be walked in either direction, commencing at Devils Kitchen or Fortescue Bay
- Trip one-way is 17 km and takes 6 - 8 hours
- Cumulative height gain 880m
- A car shuffle is required - no regular public transport



**Tasman
Trail route
(17 km)**

**Location of the
Tasman Trail on
the Tasman
Peninsula, east of
Port Arthur**



Views of the Tasman Trail in 2023

(Photos B. Bowes)





**Dolerite
columns,
looking
towards
Dolomieu
Point**

Bivouac Bay tent camping platform





**Sea cliffs along
the Trail, with
in the
background
Cape Hauy
and the
Candlestick**

A much-appreciated feature of the Tasman National Park, this high-quality walking track is due to the vision and labour of the Hobart Walking Club

- In the late 1960s the Club blazed rough paths on the Peninsula to reach Cape Pillar, Clemes Peak and Cape Hauy
- Stunning scenery was discovered, but these rough paths were not suited for use by the general public

- In 1972, the Club's Track Clearing Committee suggested building a track appropriate for public use to access the Peninsula's spectacular coastal features
- Club President Frank Morley was a mover of the project with the Club to perform the work
- At a meeting in April 1972, his proposal received unanimous support of Club members

- Permission for a new track was granted by all stakeholders including the Forestry Commission, National Parks and Wildlife, the Lands Department, and the Tasman Council
- A private landowner at Fortescue Bay also gave their consent
- After three months of plotting the route, ground works began July 1972



Progress November 1972 (Photos Margaret Williams)



Lunch October 1972

The Club's 1971-72 Annual Report:

- “The Club has started a project to cut a track from Waterfall Bay to Fortescue Bay, which will open-up a very scenic but presently inaccessible area of the Tasman Peninsula”
- “This is proving a challenging but interesting venture which will occupy the Tracks Committee for some time”.

These words were later shown to be prophetic!

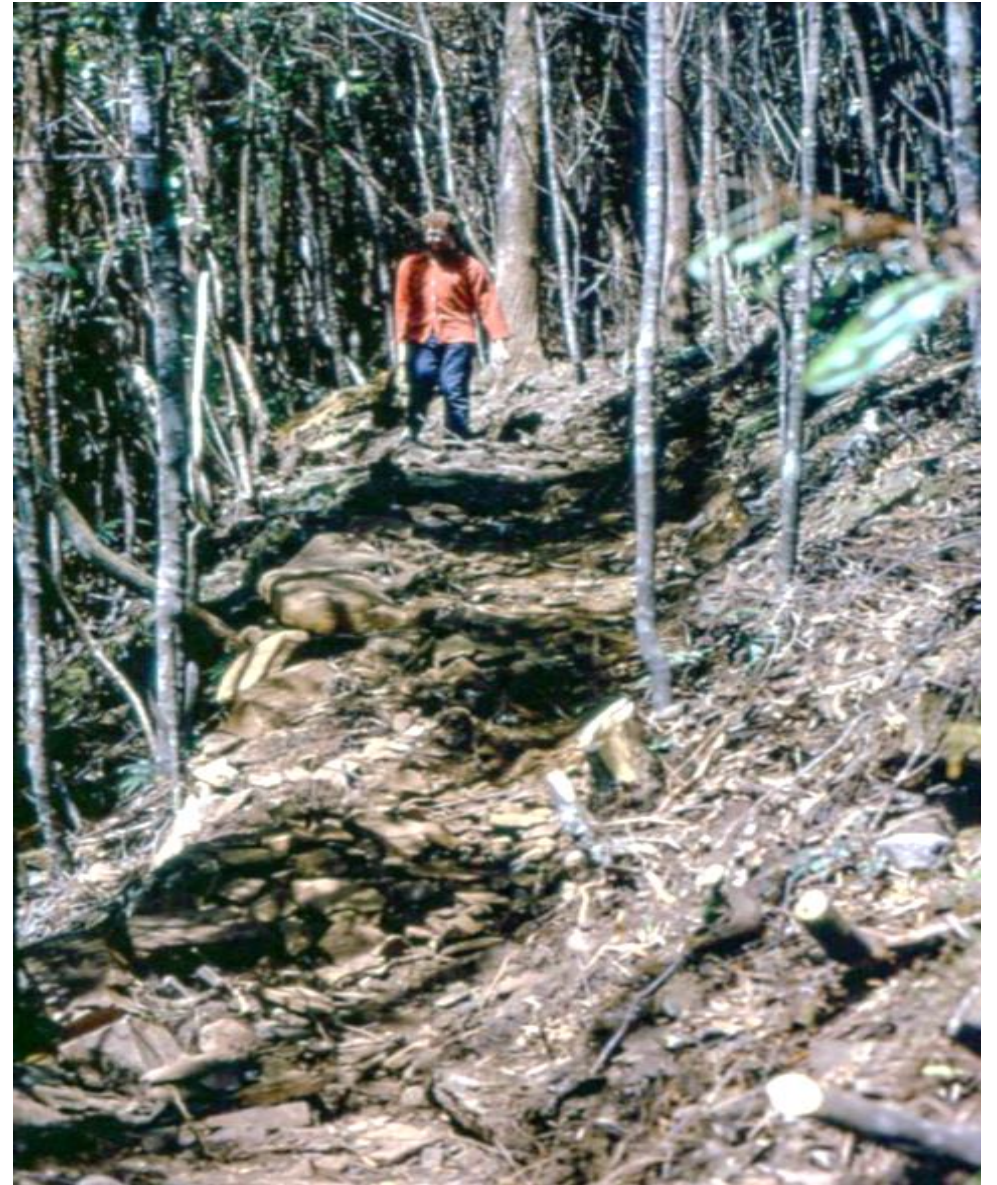
Works progress – 1972-73

- By April 1973, 6 km of the first stage of a 17 km track from Waterfall Bay to Fortescue Bay had been completed to a high standard, 1.5m wide
- It began at Waterfall Bay south of Tasman Arch on evenly graded paths, past a series of waterfalls to Waterfall Bluff

All work was by HWC volunteers



Works October 1972



November 1972

- A section around Clemes Peak required a steep path to Tatnells Hill to avoid seaward cliffs
- Another 800m had been blazed beyond this ridge
- A record attendance of 45 volunteers in October 1973 meant work could commence at Fortescue Bay end
- Wet winter months allowed safe burning of debris



All vegetation felled was required to be burnt in winter to avoid creating summer fire hazards.
(Photos Margaret Williams, April 1973)



Progress 1974

- With regular monthly working bees, by October 1974, 16 km had been cut with only 3 km needed to link Waterfall and Fortescue Bays
- Work parties ranged from 10 to 40 members
- The track was expected to be completed within two years



Work and lunch, October 1972

(Photos Margaret Williams)



October 1972



April 1973



Progress - 1975

- Work steadily continued, but members were anxious to preserve some of the state's best coastal scenery
- To remove the threat of woodchipping, the Club lobbied for the creation of a new national park on east Tasman Peninsula
- It proposed a coastal strip 2 km wide between Waterfall Bay and The Lanterns be reserved

Works received regular media coverage.

- Club spokesman, David Wilson, said the new track was:
 - “The finest of its kind in Tasmania, with superb awe-inspiring coastal views”
 - “The path passes through scenic forests, including a majestic waterfall 20 minutes from Waterfall Bay. It continues over Tatnells Hill to untouched country between Waterfall and Fortescue Bays”



Winter camp 1973 (Photo Margaret Williams)

Progress 1976

- In October, the two ends of the track were finally linked
Four and a half years and 1700 person days of work had been expended
- Although major track cutting was completed, there was still important draining, surfacing and signage to be finished



Winter 1973, snow on Tatnells Hill

(Photos Margaret Williams)



Burning cutting grass

Progress 1977-79

- Removal of large rocks and clumps of saggs (native grass) proved time consuming
- Top quality routed wooden signs, provided by the NPWS were installed, and a 10m bridge over Walkers Creek, of split local timbers for decking and heavy logs for bearers



**Lunch at Camp
Falls, December
1972**

**(Photo Margaret
Williams)**

Progress 1979-80

- Access to spectacular coastal scenery meant even an unfinished track was popular with walkers
- A proposed opening in 1980 gave urgency for completion
- On some weekends working bee attendance was disappointing, but those who came made great progress

Track official opening - 1980

- Eight years' work by volunteers marked by official opening by Premier Doug Lowe Saturday 8 November 1980
- Ceremony took place at the Camp Falls Creek campsite at the Waterfall Bay end
- Before 130 members, guests and friends, Club President Frank Morley gave history of the track and all the work involved



**Club President
Frank Morley at
the Tasman Trail
opening day,
November 1980**

- It had taken the Club 20,000 person hours work
 - Premier Lowe thanked the Club for its public spirit and good work, saying how necessary it is for modern man to be able to commune with nature
 - He commended the well-made track with its beautiful views; and the enjoyment made possible for non-walkers



**Opening
ceremony,
1980.
Premier
Lowe in fawn
cardigan,
right**

Naming the track

- In 1980 the Nomenclature Board requested a name for the new track, but it rejected the Club's suggestion of "Tasman Edge Track".
- Members gave alternatives, including some based on Aboriginal heritage or French explorers, before the title *Tasman Trail* accepted in 1984

**HWC trip, November 2023, starting the Trail at each end with a car shuffle.
Crossing Fortescue Bay beach (Photos B. Bowes)**





**Wreck of
scuttled dredge
SS William Pitt
in Canoe Bay**

References:

- Annual Reports, Hobart Walking Club Inc., 1971 - 1984.
- Hobart Mercury newspaper articles, 1972 – 1980.
- The Tasmanian Tramp, HWC, various articles 1972 – 1982.
- “A sneak peek back into time of the Tasman Trail construction”, by Daniel Dourneau; published 15 March 2022; retrieved 10 May 2023, Life’s an Adventure website: <https://www.lifesanadventure.com.au/a-sneak-peak-back-into-time-of-the-tasman-trail-construction/>