

Aboriginal Historical Place *putalina* / Oyster Cove

lutruwita is the country of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and everyone has a responsibility to protect our heritage.



putalina / Oyster Cove coastline

For thousands of years Aboriginal people lived in the area around *putalina* / Oyster Cove. A quarry site near *putalina* is a continuing reminder of the strong ancestral connections to this area.

In the 1840s, a convict probation station was established in the *putalina* area for the convicts who worked around the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, south of Hobart. This closed in 1846 when its buildings became too dilapidated. At that time, 47 Aboriginal people were living at the Government settlement called Wybalenna on Flinders Island. Wybalenna was closed by Governor Denison in October 1847, and the Tasmanian Aboriginal people were removed to *putalina*. After Christmas in the same year, seven children were removed from their families and placed in the Queen's Orphan School in New

Town. This included Mathinna, who had previously lived with Governor John and Lady Franklin.

Life at *putalina*

For several people, such as *Trukanini* and *Myyungge*, also known as Davy Bruny, son of *Wurati*, *putalina* was close to their *Nununi* home country which is also known as Bruny Island. Life at *putalina* was harsh, as conditions in the valley were often wet and cold and the buildings were in great need of repair. Weekly food supplies came by boat from Hobart and were often foul and inedible. Pastoralists on the surrounding farms regularly complained to the Government about the presence of Aboriginal people at the Station, and particularly their dogs. Aboriginal people at the Station were also seen as a curiosity and boats travelled from

Hobart carrying passengers who were keen to observe Aboriginal people from a distance.

Aboriginal people lived at the ex-probation station, and sometimes away in the bush. Occasionally they visited the public house in nearby North West Bay. They also hunted, performed ceremonies and continued making traditional cultural items.

By 1858, only ten women and five men survived. Two of these men were Terminope (Augustus) and Walter Arthur, who joined whaling ships that were based out of Hobart. They were sometimes gone from *putalina* for months at a time. Arthur even employed a white labourer to tend to his vegetable garden.

Other survivors included Dray who, with two other women in 1860, travelled for several weeks to visit

1864 MARRIAGES in the District of *Hobart*

Number.	When Married, and where.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Rank.	Signature and Description of Parties.	Name of Clergyman, Officiating Minister, or Deputy Registrar.	When Registered.	Signature of Deputy Registrar or Officiating Minister.
297	October 27 th Independent Chapel Hobart	William Smith Fanny Cochrane	47 47	Lawyer	W. Smith Fanny Cochrane	Rev. Miller	Oct 27	J. Miller

Married in the presence of his wife according to the Rites and Ceremonies of Independent, by licence of
 This Marriage was solemnized between us } *William Smith* } In the presence of } *J. Miller*
 } *Fanny Cochrane* } } *J. Miller*

Marriage Register entry Fanny and William Smith, Independent Chapel, Marriage Register, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, NS 650/1/2, No. 297.

their home country at Port Davey on the south coast to see if any of their people were still there. The local Church of England clergyman, Rev. Edward Freeman, also visited once a month to conduct prayer book services, but most Aboriginal people left for the bush during these visits.

One woman, Fanny Cochrane, gained permission from Parliament to marry William Smith. They were married in Hobart in October 1854. For a few months they lived in other parts of Tasmania including running a boarding house in Liverpool Street Hobart before they moved to Nicholls Rivulet, about nine kilometres west of *putalina*. Fanny received a land grant and a pension in lieu of her station rations.

Fanny regularly hosted people from the station including her mother, *Tanganutara*, and her brother, Adam. Two other Aboriginal women, *Pengenoburric* (Bessy Clark) and Mary Ann, later married local white men but they were not permitted to leave the *putalina* station.

The station effectively closed in 1862. From this time, *Trukanini* lived with the Station Superintendent and Mrs. Dandridge in Hobart until she died in 1876. The surgeon, William Crowther, infamously raided the graves at *putalina* and removed skeletal remains of many Aboriginal people.

For most of the next 100 years, parts of the former station land were sold, while some remained as Crown land. In 1976, after a successful campaign, *Trukanini's* remains were returned to the Aboriginal community. Her remains were then cremated and her ashes scattered near her home country in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. In 1981

most of the former station area was proclaimed as a Historic Site. Despite strong opposition, the Aboriginal community reoccupied the site on 16 January 1984.

In May 1985, ancestral remains from the Crowther Collection were returned to the Aboriginal community. Further successful campaigns resulted in the return of the remains of other ancestors, most of which were cremated at *putalina*. A building was later erected for a caretaker of *putalina*, and a larger hut was named in honour of Aboriginal community Elder, Morgan

Mansell. Each year since occupying the *putalina* site, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation has held an annual music and cultural festival.

In 1995, the State Government formally handed the title of Oyster Cove to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania. The site continues to be managed by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Corporation. Today, the *putalina* festival attracts hundreds of people each January to enjoy local and interstate musicians, cultural activities and interactions with extended family and community.

J. W. Beattie, National Library of Australia, nla.obj-140385483



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