

Introducing Jack and Jude

To introduce ourselves, our knowledge and experience, we have published a report of our discoveries within the area of the Lower Gordon River over the last decade. [That report can be found here.](#)

Background ~

In the Macquarie Harbour – Lower Gordon River area; there are many opportunities to excite and educate visitors and bring in much-needed revenue to Tasmania while achieving the great goal of reconnecting humans with Earth.

It was the inspiring history of the early explorers that ignited our quest to find and record remnants of their passages to the west. One of the earliest was in 1842, when Sir John and Lady Jane Franklin journeyed across the island on a track cut by Surveyor James Erskine Calder. Through difficult dense country, the last remnant of that track is the Eagle Creek Track connecting the Gordon River with the Franklin River across mostly open flats under the Elliot Range.

Twenty years after Calder and Franklin, a new team searching for mineral wealth in the west, cut a new, easier route from the east that came to be known as Ibsen's Track of 1862, and later when it brought prospectors and settlers through wilderness to the west, it became, "Goulds Post Track to Hamilton."

Beginning soon after 1900, Huon Piners' used this same track to reach timber resources further up the Gordon. They also used it to transport horses and feed as far as the Dennison River. Many Piners' camps were established along its route.

By the mid-1960s, Hydro Tasmania also used this track to send teams to study river heights and flows. Hydro established a large camp on the banks of the Gordon River just downstream from the Rocky Sprent. Hardly a stone's throw upstream, the Morrison clan had established a large camp with stables high above the river. They hauled timbers harvested from the King Billy Range to the Gordon River to float them downstream.

Jack and Jude are a married team of explorers who have tackled difficult terrain and hardship throughout our fifty years together. When we first sailed into Macquarie Harbour in 2009, our interest in its rich past and lush, vibrant forests sparked our interest to search for relics from the past.

Using a PWS document that noted the approximate locations of huts, stables, bottle cache, even a bed, we explored the Lower Gordon, geo-locating many artefacts previously known only vaguely. On a kayak journey from Sir John Falls to the Rocky Spent, we located the Hydro Camp in a state of collapse. After that, we were invited to assist in the filming of Three Men in a Punt, produced by Garry Kerr and Ronnie Morrison. During the two weeks up-river, Mr Morrison took us on a grand tour of the Morrison family camps that he visited harvesting timbers in his youth.

We could see the natural history woven between the track and camps and wild country bursting with exquisite views, and which also has a recent history, the blockade of the Gordon below Franklin Dam where the environmental movement really escalated.

This motivated us to search for the lost Ibsen's Track clearly marked on our topographical map, and if successful, to geo-locate it and document all artefacts and relics discovered along the way.

[Our report details](#) new camps established each year over several summers to reach the Sandstone Creek and to locate the branch track leading to the Hydro hut on the Gordon. We marked our route with occasional red tapes and recorded the exact GPS position of Ibsen's Track of 1862 and Hydro Track Markers.

SUBMISSIONS:

At this time, much of the area described is isolated country with no facilities, suitable for self-sufficient knowledgeable trekkers. For those, we visualize a return trek from Sir John Falls, or trek one way and return on a packraft for an extraordinary experience. Once established, this could become another overland track

Forest Walk ~

Ready for immediate use is the Forest Walk, a Piners' shoe-road clear from the Forestry House to the last Two Huon Stumps, a distance of approximately two kilometres. Traffic from these last few years has largely cleared the shoe road. Signage would improve the experience. Guided, school orienteering classes from Launceston annually take this walk.

WHAT IS NEEDED ~

To enhance what is available, we need to regain the easy access we had with the old jetty that continued across Cataract Creek to a benched track leading directly to the old Forestry House

Site. If that crossing is now deemed unsuitable, then from a slightly higher point, using a bridge to the established benched road. It's the best, safest way to move visitors onto the site.

Warner's Landing ~

We note that PWS declares, "While the site offers a landing point for boats, any tracks and pathways that were a legacy of HEC's investigation works, have been left to rehabilitate naturally.

We submit that unless the road drains are kept open, water runs over the road face, softening it to muck. The Landing at the river edge is being undermined by the water flow and the structure threatened with collapse. This seems a poor choice when there are Macquarie Harbour Wildcare members in the area several times each month who could keep the road drains open.

Blockade ~

The Sir John Falls area is alive with history. Thousands protested here. Many will want to re-visit the spot of their greatest triumph and to bring their children and grandchildren to be inspired by nature's beauty and see the harsh conditions they endured. This could be capitalized upon with better accommodation than presently available from the barebones Hydro hut, which blockade visitors may object to using. A new building could be built near that structure, a more commodious building with covered walks all around and large windows focused upon the waterway where the action took place. This new building could be funded by donations. Macquarie Harbour Wildcare received several offers.

Lea Tree ~

Across the waterway, slightly inland from Warner's Landing stands the remains of the Lea Tree used as the gathering place by the protestors' leaders. We have geo-located it standing amongst a grove of large Huon Pines near the Perch Lake. One day it could be a brilliant, easy feature walk, one popular with Blockade visitors. (Access via Warner's Landing)

Eagle Creek ~

The last remnant of Calder's track, connecting the Gordon River with the Franklin River runs alongside the Elliot Range. This valuable asset can be greatly enhanced by improving access across Eagle Creek. Replace the fallen-tree bridge with a sturdy bridge suitable for walkers with sizable packs. Given that, Macquarie Harbour Wildcare members could then target thick spots with trimmers to open the track and make it safer.

Many kayakers using the camping area at the mouth of Eagle Creek would benefit from the day walk to the Elliot Range. Requirements are - Better access across Eagle Creek and ongoing agreement between PWS and Macquarie Harbour Wildcare to maintain the track.

Jack Binder

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