

Gordonvale World Heritage Area Reserve

Background Report



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Front Image: Gordonvale homestead (archive photo) and the Vale of Rasselas landscape © Grant Dixon

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Acknowledgements

The Gordonvale World Heritage Area Reserve was secured by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC) in 2013 after a successful public fundraising campaign to purchase this private freehold block of land. The TLC has long identified Gordonvale as a world heritage gem, one of only a few private properties included in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA), completely surrounded by the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park. Securing Gordonvale to ensure its conservation and cultural history values could be protected in perpetuity makes a significant contribution to protecting the integrity of the TWWHA as a whole. The TLC celebrated the success of this campaign with supporters and friends, including some of Ernie Bond's descendant family on 27th September 2013 in Hobart.

The TLC would like to sincerely acknowledge the generous support given by the many people and organisations who donated to the Gordonvale campaign, especially past and present members of the Australian Plant Society Tasmania, Hobart Bushwalking Society and to over 600 people who gave so generously to ensure this area could be protected. TLC would like to acknowledge the assistance of Roger Nutting (Mountain Huts Preservation Society) and John Cannon for providing information on Ernie Bond's history and for helping promote this campaign. Special thanks also go to Grant Dixon from the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service for information on reserve management relating to access, track maintenance and fire management of the surrounding Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park. Grant also participated on a TLC survey trip and has kindly allowed the use of his superb photographic images. The TLC also acknowledges the data provided by Land Information System Tasmania (theList) and DPIPW Natural Values Atlas.

The TLC greatly appreciates the assistance of its many supporters and volunteers who continue to contribute time and labour towards management of this globally significant reserve.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

DPIPWE	Tasmanian Government's Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment
EA	Environment Australia [Commonwealth department]
EPBC Act	The Commonwealth's <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia. A planning framework for the systematic development of a comprehensive, adequate and representative 'CAR' National Reserve System
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature
NC Act	Tasmania's <i>Nature Conservation Act 2002</i>
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NVA	Natural Values Atlas database, DPIPWE
PWS	Parks and Wildlife Service, Tasmania
TLC	Tasmanian Land Conservancy
TSP Act	Tasmania's <i>Threatened Species Protection Act 1995</i>
TWWHA	Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Covered by the TWWHA Management Plan 1999 and the new draft plan now being finalised
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (WHA nominations and listings)
WHA	World Heritage Area

Introduction

The property known as 'Gordonvale' is located in a remote corner of southwest Tasmania. This 80.87 hectare parcel of land is surrounded by the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and is one of only a few private properties included in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. In 2013 'Gordonvale' was included on the World Heritage Area register. It is nestled in a large glacial valley known as the Vale of Rasselas, traditional home territory of Tasmania's Aboriginal Pangerninghe clan of the Big River nation. It boasts spectacular scenery, including the peaks of Great Dome and Wylde's Craig and opens up to a wide landscape of undulating buttongrass plains, riparian vegetation, scrub and forest all home to a large array of Tasmania's distinctive wildlife. Gordonvale is known to many bushwalkers, past and present, as the iconic home of a legendary Tasmanian, Ernie Bond. Despite its physical decay, this cultural history remains vibrant and significant.

Gordonvale Fundraising Campaign

In 1985 'Gordonvale' was purchased by the American Martin Polin, a former Utah lawyer and businessman. After his death in 2007 the property transferred to Mr Polin's children who, in 2012 assigned it for listing with LH Commercial Real Estate for sale by private tender (Appendix A).

In October 2012 the TLC commenced a public fundraising campaign to purchase Gordonvale. This target was soon reached and in May 2013 Gordonvale became TLC's 12th permanent nature reserve (Fig 1, Fig 2).



Fig 1 Gordonvale Fundraising Campaign.



Fig 2. Gordonvale donor sign installed at the head of the track to Lake Rhona in 2015.

Location and Access

Gordonvale is located in the southwest region of Tasmania. It is nestled in the Vale of Rasselas in the Denison Range and surrounded by the spectacular peaks of Mount Wright (1083m), Bonds Craig (1219m), Great Dome (1232m) and Wylids Craig (1286m). The reserve lies entirely within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (Fig 3) within close proximity to the Gordon River and Gordon Range (Fig 3, Fig4).

Property Name: Gordonvale

Land title number: 211960/1, 213435/1

PID: 5472170

Property address: Gordon River Rd, Southwest Tas, 7140

Area of property: 80.87 hectares

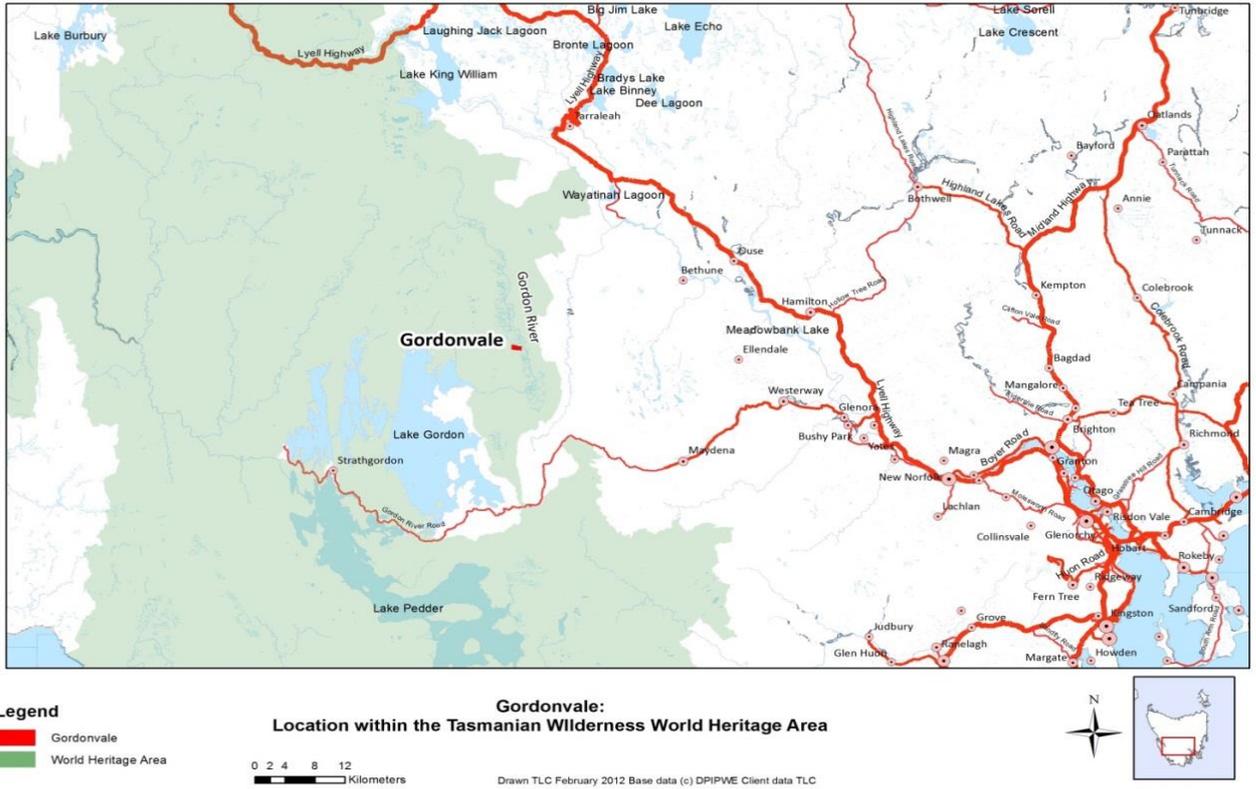


Fig 3 Location of Gordonvale Reserve within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.



Fig 4 Proximity of Gordonvale Reserve to the Gordon Range.

Gordonvale is in a remote location and accessed either by helicopter or on foot. Foot access has traditionally been via a number of historic walking tracks namely the Timms Track and Rasselas Track with the nearest vehicle departure points being either Adamsfield or Maydena. More information about the Timms Track and Rasselas Track is in Appendix B but this may now be out of date. The most current bushwalking access is via the Rasselas Track approximately four hours walking from the Florentine Valley via Maydena, west of New Norfolk. This walk involves crossing the Gordon River, which can be dangerous due to rapid flows and regular flooding. The vehicle departure point is approximately one hour's drive from Hobart with its latter part winding through State Forest managed by Forestry Tasmania. A bushwalker registration booth is located at the departure point. Bushwalkers need to be totally self-reliant and well prepared when travelling in this area and bushwalking permits may be required for accessing the TWWHA.

Bioregional and Landscape Context

IBRA and NRM

The Gordonvale WHA Reserve is located in the Southern Ranges IBRA region and within the NRM South region.

Catchment values

The Gordonvale WHA Reserve falls within the catchments of the Gordon River and its many feeder tributaries from Reeds Creek located to the west.

Regional values

The Gordonvale WHA Reserve is completely surrounded by (but not part of) the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

World Heritage Area Status

Gordonvale is private freehold land within the World Heritage Area. In 2013 Gordonvale was formally added to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area by UNESCO and has legal WHA status.

IUCN Protected Area Management Category 1b and V

Gordonvale WHA Reserve has a unique set of values which meet two criteria for protected area management (Dudley 2008). Due to its landscape context Gordonvale WHA Reserve meets:

IUCN Protected Area Category 1b - Protected Areas

Protected areas are usually large unmodified or slightly modified areas, retaining their natural character and influence, without permanent or significant human habitation, which are protected and managed so as to preserve their natural condition.

Primary objective

To protect the long-term ecological integrity of natural areas that are undisturbed by significant human activity, free of modern infrastructure and where natural forces and processes predominate, so that current and future generations have the opportunity to experience such areas.

IUCN Protected Area Category V - Protected Landscape/ Seascape

Due to Gordonvale's significant cultural heritage values part of the reserve also meets IUCN Protected Area Category V. This is where the interaction of people and nature over time has produced an area of distinct character with significant ecological, biological, cultural and scenic value and where safeguarding the integrity of this interaction is vital to protecting and sustaining the area and its associated nature conservation and other values.

Primary objective

To protect and sustain important landscapes/seascapes and the associated nature conservation and other values created by interactions with humans through traditional management practices.

Legal Status and Compliance

A conservation covenant under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002* (NC Act) is currently being finalised for adherence to the property titles and when registered, this covenant will have the force of a statutory document that binds the TLC to its provisions in perpetuity. The area completely surrounding Gordonvale is reserved as the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The TWWHA Management Plan (PWS 1999) classifies this area as wilderness (Not Managed for Visitor Services, Self-Reliant Recreation Zone), with the track to Lake Rhona classified as Bushcamping Remote and Bushcamping Backcountry (basic), but this plan is currently being revised.

Gordonvale is in the Derwent Valley Municipality and managed as 'World Heritage' under the New Norfolk Planning Scheme S.46 1993. Any proposed developments may need to meet the requirements of this scheme and be assessed by the Derwent Valley Council.

Constraints may apply to activities which could adversely affect species and vegetation communities listed as threatened under Commonwealth and State legislation, and special permits for works or research are required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). Tasmania's *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995* (TSP Act) lists species threatened in Tasmania and it is an offence to knowingly disturb or destroy a listed species without a permit. Schedule 3A of the NC Act lists threatened native vegetation communities and any disturbance to listed communities is regulated through revisions to Tasmania's *Forest Practices Act 1985*.

Natural Values

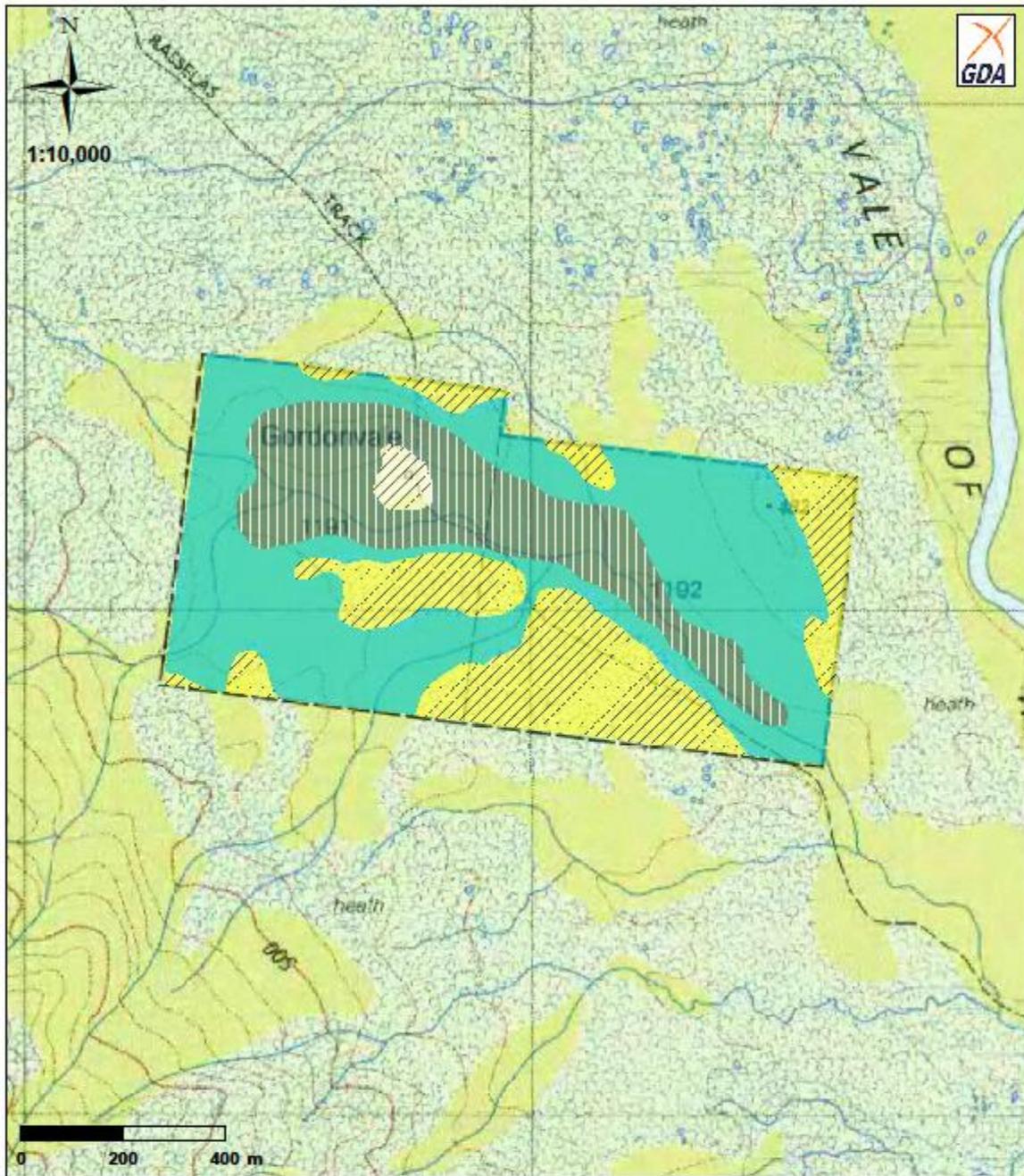
The wet eucalypt forest of Gordonvale dominates the landscape with its tall forest merging into gullies of rainforest. Two TASVEG forest types occur in this reserve. *Eucalyptus delegatensis* forest over rainforest (WDR) is dominated by old-growth *Eucalyptus delegatensis* and occupies a fire-protected, south-facing slope and the riparian zone along a small creek that crosses the property. The canopy contains large, mature hollow bearing trees with a dense sub-canopy of rainforest species such as *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, *Atherosperma moschatum* and *Phyllocladus aspleniifolius*. The understorey is dominated by ferns *Dicksonia antarctica* and *Polystichum proliferum*, with occasional shrubs *Aristotelia pedunculata* and *Anopterus glandulosus*. This community is in excellent condition, with little evidence of recent disturbance other than past felled trees and small clearings converted to marsupial lawn where Ernie Bond's homestead, outbuildings and farming ventures were situated (FRG regenerating cleared land). Sphagnum moss beds are scattered throughout scrub or woodland and extend onto poorly drained flats near the numerous creeks and small pools.

Eucalyptus nitida forest over Leptospermum (WNL) occupies much of the property. The canopy is dominated by open-crowned trees from a range of age classes, suggesting it has been subject to a historic regime of relatively regular burning. The understorey is dominated by a dense layer of tall shrubs such as *Monotoca glauca*, *Leptospermum lanigerum* and *Nematolepis squamea*, and the ground layer by sedges such as *Gahnia grandis* and ferns *Histiopteris incisa* and *Gleichenia alpina*. The vegetation is in excellent condition, with high species richness, no weeds and a complex vegetation structure.

Buttongrass moorlands with emergent shrubs (MBS) are widespread and form part of a vast extensive moorland system in very wet situations with poor drainage on nutrient poor rock types such as quartzite. The dominant plant species in this vegetation community are *Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus* with diverse emergent shrubs such as *Melaleuca squamea*, *Baeckea gunniana*, *Oxylobium ellipticum* and *Richea procera* and a variety of sedges, herbs and mosses in the inter-tussock spaces, such as *Lycopodium laterale*, *Selaginella uliginosa* and the ferns *Gleichenia dicarpa* and *G. alpina*. These TASVEG vegetation communities are typical of the wider surrounding landscape and none are threatened at State or Commonwealth levels (Table 1, Fig 5).

Table 1 Vegetation communities on the Gordonvale WHA Reserve (TASVEG code, status under EPBC or NC Act).

Vegetation community	TASVEG code	Status	Area (ha)
<i>Eucalyptus delegatensis</i> forest over rainforest	WDR	Not listed	16.4
Buttongrass moorland with emergent shrubs	MBS	Not listed	20.8
<i>Eucalyptus nitida</i> forest over leptospermum	WDL	Not listed	40.3
Regenerating cleared land	FRG	Not listed	3.0
Total area (hectares)			80.5



Gordonvale - Vegetation (TASVEG)



Map produced by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy - 31/08/2012

Fig 5 TASVEG Vegetation communities on Gordonvale WHA Reserve.

A total of 43 plant species were identified on Gordonvale in September 2012 with a checklist of over 200 species known in the wider area (Brown *et al.* 1982). Although suitable habitat exists for a number of listed species none were threatened at the State or Commonwealth levels (Table 2).

No fauna surveys have been undertaken on the reserve as yet; however, some of the world's most unique creatures are known from the surrounding area (<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=642>). The TWWHA is the world centre of diversity for velvet worms, amphipods and crustaceans including the 250 million year old mountain shrimp *Anaspides tasmaniae* and the rare Hickman's pygmy mountain shrimp *Allanaspides hickmani*. Hickman's pygmy mountain shrimp is thought to have once occurred in the quaternary lake which straddled the Wedge and Gordon Rivers so extension surveys in the upstream plains of the Gordon River system would be needed to confirm its presence (Threatened Species Unit 2000).

The wet eucalypt forest provides excellent habitat for the Tasmanian devil *Sarcophilus harrisii*, spotted-tailed quoll *Dasyurus maculatus* and wedge-tailed eagle *Aquila fleayi* (Table 2), while the old growth trees provide hollows, limbs and fallen decaying logs for a diversity of other fauna species (Ziegeler 1976). In September 2012, superb lyrebird *Menura novaehollandiae* (introduced to Tasmania in the 1930s and 40s) were heard calling near the reserve and scrub tit *Acanthornis magnus* were foraging in manferns along creek lines.

Table 2 Threatened species potentially occurring on the reserve based on the presence of suitable habitat.

Threatened Species	TSPA /EPBCA	Type of NVA record	Comments
Flora			
Toothed orites (<i>Orites milliganii</i>)	r/-	NVA record 5km	Suitable habitat occurs on property (WDL, MBS)
Grooved cheeseberry (<i>Planocarpa sulcata</i>)	r/-	NVA record 5km	Suitable habitat occurs on property (WDL, MBS)
Fauna			
Wedge-tailed eagle (<i>Aquila audax fleayi</i>)	e/EN	Suitable habitat	Wide ranging species – areas of old-growth forest on the property provide suitable nesting habitat
Tasmanian devil (<i>Sarcophilus harrisii</i>)	e/EN	Suitable habitat	Wide ranging species, likely to be in the general area
Spotted-tailed quoll (<i>Dasyurus maculatus</i>)	r/VU	Suitable habitat	Wide ranging species, likely to be in the general area

TSPA – Tasmanian *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*, EPBCA – Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*

Geo-conservation Values

The geology of Gordonvale is predominantly siliceous conglomerate and sandstone, limestone (Gordon Group), alluvial sand, gravel and mud and talus and colluvial slope deposits. The Vale of Rasselas land system consists of undulating country with river terraces or raised surfaces typical of other older, broad valleys in Tasmania's southwest. These terraces probably formed during Pleistocene times. Well drained knolls support

taller vegetation (scrub to forest) than surrounding plains and typically have relatively shallow peat over a deep gravelly mineral soil. Small pools are scattered through the area potentially associated with occurrences of Ordovician limestone, although this may not always be a controlling factor. They are common through a range of sites from poorly drained riverine position where they sometimes have the appearance of oxbow lakes, to well-drained 'raised surfaces'. Large areas of the Rasselas Valley are underlain by alluvium and quartzitic gravels, with some yellow brown clay deposits. Dolerite gravels occur in a soil profile near Gordon Bend and probably originated from the upper reaches of the Gordon River which emanates from dolerite country of the Central Plateau. Areas of buttongrass moorland on the Gordonvale property form part of 'The Western Tasmania Blanket Bogs' geo-conservation site.

Wilderness Values

The Gordonvale WHA Reserve is surrounded by the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and lies within Tasmania's South West Wilderness World Heritage Area. Its context and wilderness values are significant. The overall objective for managing the TWWHA, in line with the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, is to identify, protect, conserve, present and, where appropriate, rehabilitate the world heritage and other natural and cultural values of the TWWHA, and to transmit that heritage to future generations in as good or better condition than at present (Parks and Wildlife Service 1999). The aim of the TLC's Gordonvale WHA Reserve Management Plan is consistent with this objective.

Indigenous Values

Research of Tasmania's southwest including the Vale of Rasselas shows there has been continuous Aboriginal occupation in the area from the earliest period known for Tasmanian occupation, until European exploration in the area (McConnell 2001). The sites in the Vale of Rasselas are amongst the closest sites to the Huon-Serpentine Impoundment. There is evidence of Aboriginal occupation (undated) in the Southern Forests in the area of the Picton/Huon confluence (McConnell 1995), and Aboriginal campsites have been exposed in the eroded south eastern shores of the Gordon Impoundment. There is Pleistocene occupation evidence dating back to c. 31,000 years BP in the Weld Valley and in the Florentine Valley (Allen *et al.* 1988). Numbers of occupied limestone shelters have also been recorded in most of the main valleys of the southwest, including the Maxwell, Denison and Franklin Valleys.

European Heritage

In 1833 John Darke completed a survey of the country around Wylds Craig and a track was cut to Lake Pedder in 1836. The Florentine River and Vale of Rasselas were then crossed and Wylds Craig climbed about the same time. Gordonvale is best known as the outpost home of the legendary Tasmanian Ernest (Ernie) Bond (aka Prince of Rasselas) and in past times was a well-known mecca for bushwalkers often on-route to Lake Rhona.

Ernie was an osmiridium buyer and prospector at Adamsfield, arriving in 1927. He purchased and named 'Gordon Vale' in Sept 1934 as a place to retire and built his four roomed house with a number of detached rooms from split timbers on site. During his 18 years there, Ernie lived a fairly solitary, self-sufficient life with few companions other than his dog, livestock and native animals. However, his reputation for hospitality and kindness to all who passed became legendry and reflected the true spirit of a pioneer in the wilderness (Appendix C). After Ernie's departure in 1953 Gordonvale was initially leased then transferred to the Hobart and Launceston Walking Clubs for their use as a hostel. Due to its remoteness these groups were unable to keep up the maintenance or commitments to the site and sadly over time it fell into disrepair.

'Gordonvale' is registered on the Tasmanian Historic Archaeological Sites Catalogue (THASC 8112-009) with a heritage listing on the dwellings, namely main house; office, bunk house, cement pad, bakery remains, ruins of floors and footings of unidentified buildings, garden, exotic vegetation (rhododendron), camping area, pits (seemingly recently excavated), and remains of a plough. Some of these structures were still standing in the early 1980s but all have subsequently fallen into ruin with mere remnants of the foundations and a few farm implements now surviving. The Gordonvale WHA Reserve, however, remains significant in this cultural context (Gowlland 1973) and documenting and protecting this history is an important value of this area.

The remoteness and isolation of this southwest region has long attracted recreational users who over many generations have fostered a sense of ownership. Members of the bushwalking community hold valuable knowledge about the past history and conservation values of the Gordonvale WHA Reserve, which may help the TLC with its ongoing management and efforts in helping to protect the wider TWWHA landscape.

Invasive Pests, Weeds and Diseases

Small infestations of Californian thistle *Cirsium arvense* occur on-site as do spring bulbs and Rhododendron sp. associated with Ernie Bond's settlement. *Phytophthora* has not been identified on the reserve which is consistent with the wider surrounding area being identified as a *Phytophthora* management zone (Parks and Wildlife Service 1999) to reduce the potential for this root rot fungus to reach the area. No other invasive pests, weeds or diseases are known on Gordonvale at this time.

Scientific Studies

The TLC is not aware of any scientific studies specifically focusing on Gordonvale at this time, but a number of strategic and overview documents provide information on scientific research undertaken in the wider area. These include identification of research and monitoring priorities in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (DPIPWE 2013) and a review of potential impacts of climate change on fauna values in the Tasmanian World Heritage Area (Mallick 2013).

Management Plan

A separate management plan has been developed for the Gordonvale WHA Reserve based on the vision, targets and strategies shown below (Tasmanian Land Conservancy 2015). The management plan was reviewed by the TLC's Science and Planning Advisory Council, approved by the TLC Board and is available via the TLC web site (www.tasland.org). A working version of this document is maintained in-house using Miradi software and used to guide staff works plans and annual budgets. The management strategy is summarised below.

VISION	The Gordonvale WHA Reserve is managed for its wilderness context and Ernie Bond's cultural values.
CONSERVATION TARGETS	GOALS
Native Ecosystems	Maintain or improve the condition of native ecosystems on the reserve
SOCIAL TARGETS	GOALS
Cultural Heritage Values	Cultural heritage values of Ernie Bond's settlement are retained
Wilderness Values	No change to the wilderness character of the region caused from within the Reserve
Community Connection with the Landscape	Community connection with the reserve and region is maintained or enhanced
STRATEGIES	OBJECTIVES
Build Resilience to Climate Change	Conservation targets are more resilient to threats
Fire Management	No unauthorised fires start on the reserve
Weeds and Disease Management	Existing weeds eradicated by 2017 and any new outbreaks addressed in a timely manner
Community appreciation	Enhanced community appreciation of the cultural and wilderness values of the reserve and region
Cultural Heritage Preservation	Ernie Bond's legacy is preserved
Development Guidelines	Any development on Gordonvale is consistent with the TWWHA management objective
Neighbour Relations	Effective communications are maintained with neighbours
KEY ACTIONS	MONITORING ACTIVITIES
Climate change effects are considered	Condition of conservation targets
Promote conditions of access	Visitor feedback
Promote fuel stove only	Fire incidents
Maintain neighbour communications	None identified
Control weeds	Annual reserve assessment
Provide reserve information	Visitor feedback
Protect cultural heritage	Cultural preservation strategy in place
Maintain community engagement	Communication events

References

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Major Tasmanian Rural Portfolio

For sale by formal tender.

- [Central Highlands & Great Lake Region](#)
- [Derwent Valley & Surrounds](#)

- [Home /](#)
- [Derwent Valley & Surrounds/](#)
- 'Gordonvale', Gordon River Road, Southwest Tasmania 7140

'Gordonvale', Gordon River Road, Southwest Tasmania 7140

Rare Offering in the Tasmanian World Heritage Area - Steeped with History

Location	'Gordonvale', Gordon River Road, Southwest Tasmania 7140
PID	5472170
Land Area	80.87ha
Property Price	SOLD

'Gordonvale' is a remote rural property located in the southwest of Tasmania, positioned west of the Gordon River and northeast of Mount Wright.

The property is the last piece of privately owned land in this remote area, being surrounded by World Heritage Park and is currently only accessible by foot along the Rasselas walking track or possibly by air.

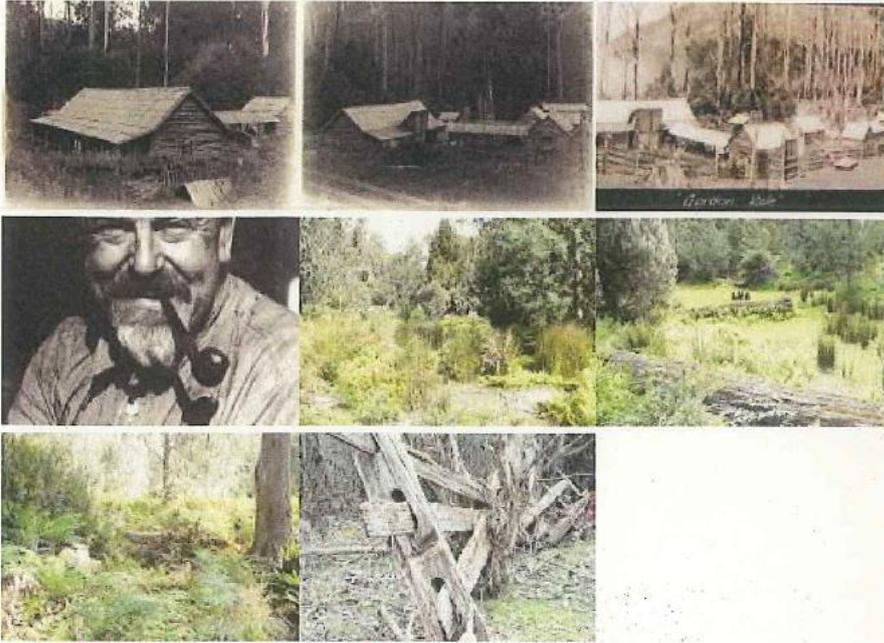
These two adjoining titles are both square in shape comprising grassy plains, marsh and low scrubby bush. 'Gordonvale' was once the home to the iconic Ernie Bond, also known as the 'Prince of Rasselas'.

Description Ernie Bond came across this fertile piece of land whilst stationed at Adamsfield, an osmiridium mining settlement in the early 1930's and later developed Gordonvale which included eight stand alone buildings comprising a substantial homestead, butchery, bakehouse and bathhouse.

Ernie was at the forefront of the initial growth of bush walking in Tasmania and became famous for his hospitality to bush walkers passing through or visiting the property. Little evidence remains of the original homestead with the property gradually being reclaimed over the years.

This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to acquire a piece of Tasmanian history!

Zoning	World Heritage
Services	None



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Photographs and images used on this site may include views of neighbouring properties not included in the Polin Estate or generic regional photography.
It is recommended interested parties make their own investigations into boundary locations and land areas.

Appendix B Bushwalking tracks into Gordonvale.

Reference: TASTRACKS: A COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO TASMANIAN WALKING TRACKS. (29/08/2012)

Timbs Track

This is the original access track from the Gordon River Road into Gordonvale and Vale of Rasselas. Located in the Florentine valley, grid reference (AGD 66) - Gordon River Road 452500E, 5267800N; Adamsfield Track 452000E, 5270600N (Determine using map grid). Well maintained and marked track, starting at small brown sign on Gordon River Road. Currently there is a long-term forest protest here. Track is 3.5 km long with a 20m-height difference. Expect to take 1.5 hours. Track starts in tall old growth forest. After a short while exits forest onto an open scrubby plain with nice views of the Saw Back and Tiger Range and forests of the Upper Florentine. Shown on Tasmap 1:25000 Topographic map sheet Adamsfield and Tiger. Track is also marked on Google Earth if you zoom in far enough. Right-Click here to download and save a gpx file of the track. File can then be imported into your GPS or opened in Google Earth. For more information contact the Wilderness Society in Hobart. Information correct to March 2007.

Rasselas Track

This is the original access track into Gordonvale (Ernie Bonds former residence 1934-1952), the Vale of Rasselas and the Denison Range from Adamsfield Track. Located in the Gordon Plains and the Vale of Rasselas, grid reference (AGD 66) - Adamsfield Track 451300E, 5270900N; Gordon River 449050E, 5278050N; Gordonvale 446750E, 5283250N; Lake Rhona 441500E, 5288600N (Determine using map grid). Track is disused south of where Richea Creek meets the Gordon River, north of here track is easily followed along the Buttongrass plain until the turnoff to Lake Rhona in the Denison Range, north of here original track is overgrown into the Vale of Rasselas. Track is, 26km long with a 470m-height difference. Expect to take from Terry Walch Road, Gordon Range 7 hours to Lake Rhona. From the Adamsfield Track the Rasselas Track starts in rainforest but soon enters an open button grass plain and the Vale of Rasselas. At the Gordon River, the bridge that once crossed the Gordon River at Gordon Bend burnt down in 1950, a Hydro flying fox that has also been removed eventually replaced it. At low water the river can be forded with difficulty. It is best to now access the Vale of Rasselas north of the Gordon River from an alternative access point in the Florentine Valley. The new link track along Richea Creek begins on the Gordon Range at the end of Terry Walch Road (450950E, 5282300N - AGD66). To get to this forestry road from Maydena, you need to turn onto the Florentine Road west of Maydena and travel north for 26km to Tiger Road. Florentine Road veers east here, Tiger road continues straight on (north). Follow Tiger Road for 3.7km to Range Road, turn west onto Range Road and follow for 3km to Terry Walch Road, turn west and around a hair-pin bend and follow Terry Walch Road south, the forest is encroaching onto this road, continue to a car park of sorts at the end of the road (ignore minor logging tracks along the way). Richea Track initially follows old logging tracks for 800m downhill to the west before entering the bush along Richea Creek, the Gordon River is reached after another 2km (448750E, 5281450N – AGD66). The crossing is wide; only attempt a crossing if water is less than thigh deep. The river can be high due to rain upstream. West of the Gordon River the marked track continues for another 600m through swampy forest to

meet the original Rasselas track from Adamsfield (448050E, 5281300N – AGD66). Old Rasselas Track is shown on Tasmap 1:100000 Scale Wedge Ed. 4 map sheet and on Tasmap 1:25000 Scale Tiger and Gordonvale map sheets. Richea Creek Track is not shown on maps. Track is also marked on Google Earth if you zoom in far enough. Right-Click here to download and save a gpx file of part of the southern most part of the track. File can then be imported into your GPS or opened in Google Earth. For more information refer to Chapman, J. (1998). South West Tasmania: a guidebook for bushwalkers. 4th Ed. John Chapman, Melbourne and Wilkinson, B. (Ed.) (2011) The Abels, Tasmania's Mountains Over 1100m High, Vol. 2. Tasmanian Outdoors Collection, Moonah.

The Gordonvale - Lake Rhona track was generally accessed by walkers from the Strathgordon Rd (via Timms Track) until the mid 1990s. At that time access via forestry roads to the Richea Creek catchment became available and walkers increasingly utilised this shorter approach. At about the same time the derelict flying fox at Gordon Bend was removed, increasing the practical difficulty of access from the south. Multiple routes from the Richea Creek were developing so PWS cut the current track to the Gordon River about 1999 to formalise a single route in an appropriately robust location. The river crossing was a ford until about 2008, so river levels could readily impede access and several parties were stranded on the west bank. There was some discussion within PWS about the need for a suspension bridge to address perceived safety issues but the potential cost of such a structure and the view that the area was being managed for self-reliant users who should accept a higher level of risk (see later) prevailed.

Apart from establishing the track to the Gordon River noted above, no works have been undertaken by PWS on the Gordonvale – Lake Rhona track. While there are areas of mud most of the track to Gordonvale remains within the limits prescribed by its classification and limited monitoring suggests little change (apart from localised braiding) over the last 15 years. This is not the case for the Lake Rhona track beyond Gordonvale on which there are actively eroding sites and camping related issues at the lake. The aforementioned track management strategy contains recommendations for addressing these problems but there are no plans (or resources) to do this any time soon.

Based on walker registrations, current use of the track is about 350 per annum (most of which will be return trips traversing Gordonvale); some 300 to Lk Rhona (& beyond in a few cases) and about 50 doing mostly day trips to other destinations, including Gordonvale.

PWS Track classification scheme

To prescribe appropriate track conditions and levels of management input, the PWS uses its own track classification scheme (Policy P-036, 2011) as a tool for the planning, provision and maintenance of walking tracks across lands it manages (Policy P-036, 2011). The scheme is prescriptive, ie. it specifies track standards as guidelines for management.

The Gordonvale – Lake Rhona track is considered a T3 track (about mid-level in the scale of seven track classes). Some relevant elements of this classification are:

- Rough bushwalking track (hence mud is acceptable), track mostly unimproved.
- Width generally <750mm.

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- Improved surfacing/drainage minimal – for environmental purposes only.
 - Fairly easy navigation under normal conditions, some obstacles.
 - Track markers where necessary to ensure that direction is obvious.
 - Directional signposts only at start of track and junctions with tracks of grade T3 and higher.
 - Recommended maximum party size 8 persons.
 - Low key publicity preferred.

The Reserves Standards Framework

The Reserves Standards Framework (RSF) is a strategic planning mechanism developed by the Parks and Wildlife Service to define and maintain acceptable levels of public risk and to establish standards for the provision and maintenance of services and facilities throughout the park system (PWS 2008). The RSF recognises that there is an unavoidable element of risk in all forms of outdoor recreation and aims to manage risk primarily by matching visitors' skills and abilities with the level of risk involved in a particular activity and location.

The RSF is defined by a system of zoning different to the overarching zoning scheme in the TWWHA management plan. The main difference is that whereas the Plan zones cover wide areas, the RSF zones apply only to developed sites (such as walking tracks and campsites) and their immediate surroundings. In the case of walking tracks, the RSF zone extends just 10m to either side of the centre of the track. Each RSF zone has a series of associated policy guidelines. The hazard rating defines the level of hazard that visitors should expect if a site is managed as prescribed.

The Gordonvale – Lake Rhona track lies within a Bushwalking Backcountry (basic) RSF zone with an acceptable risk level of Severe. The surrounding country, in terms of the RSF, is Not Managed for Visitor services and hence also has a de facto hazard rating of Severe. This means that visitors are expected (and must expect) to take full responsibility for their own safety.

APPENDIX C HISTORY OF ERNIE BOND

Some excerpts from traveller's tales about the Prince of Rasselas

LAUNCESTON WALKING CLUB'S VISIT TO VALE OF RASSELAS (EASTER 1950)

Keith Lancaster

At 5 p.m. we were all under way once more across the river, this time taking the track to Gordon Vale, the outpost home of that renowned hermit of the Vale of Rasselas, Ernie Bond. We arrived there in the rain at dusk (1460' - 22m. - 6.30 p.m.) to find a record crowd of visitors present and mine host dishing out 'roo stew and pudding for all, but sadly dismayed that he had underestimated the number of the invasion force. The hospitality of this grey eyed, bearded giant has to be sampled to be believed! What he has done for the walking fraternity of this State is never likely to be surpassed by any other living person. He adopts the "give and go without yourself" policy and his door is always open to any visiting hiker. His only worry on this occasion was that numbers prevented him from giving all the personal attention he desired.



At Ernie Bond's place, from right: Keith Lancaster, Anne Husband, Ian?, Jim Turner and Margaret Williams (?)

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Hoyle

FEATURE – GORDON VALE

“GORDON VALE”

By Lindsay D Crawford
Launceston Walking Club

Many clubs members will have passed though Gordon Vale on their way to places such as Lake Rhona, but may not have realized that it was once a permanent home which was a mecca for bushwalkers. The following article, written by former Launceston Walking Club member Lindsay Crawford, was submitted for publication in “Wild Life” magazine in 1953 and marks the occasion of Ernie Bond’s retirement and his handing over of his home for use by bushwalkers. Lindsay was a biologist at the QV Museum from 1950-1953 and his insightful observations illustrate how much some things have changed – and how much some things are still the same!

Bushwalkers from all over Australia will be sorry to hear that their friend and host, Ernest Bond of “Gordon Vale” has retired from his bush home in the picturesque Rasselas Valley, set amid the rugged mountain ranges of western Tasmania. Ernie, of the hearty welcome and even heartier meals, is already a legend among bushwalkers throughout Australia and there are many who will look back with regret on the days that are no more with Ernie at Gordon Vale. But, in retiring, Ernie has remembered his many friends and his home is now leased to the Hobart and Launceston Walking Clubs for use as a hostel.

Over six feet tall and well proportioned, Ernie, with his hearty laugh and cheery welcome that puts one at ease straight away, is an unforgettable identity for whom nothing is too much trouble when looking after his visitors.



Ernie with visitors

As an osmiridium buyer and prospector at Adamsfield in the early 30s, Ernie saw much of the wild and rugged yet fascinatingly beautiful south-west of Tasmania. He liked it so much that in 1934 he took up land in the Rasselas Valley and there set about building his home amid a tall stand of gum trees on one of the creeks flowing down into the Gordon River from Mt Wright.

At first he had several assistants to help clear the land, but in later years his main company there – apart from his dog and the many animals which Ernie knew as a friend – was parties of bushwalkers. These parties came at first from the Hobart Walking Club and then later, as his fame spread, from all over the Commonwealth. They tramped in across the plains to experience for themselves the wonderful hospitality and the magnificent scenery that the valley had to offer.

Ernie can perhaps be termed one of the last of the pioneers. With his own hands he created a home out of a wilderness, using much the same implements as did the early settlers in the colony. “Gordon Vale” was built from the timber split from the trees on the site, and consists of a four room house and a number of detached rooms. The huge open fireplace, 9ft square, has helped to

Gordonvale

Gordonvale was the infamous home of the King of Rasselas, Ernie Bond. Ernie was a cartage contractor, and commonly carried incredible loads on his back from Hobart or Lake St Clair, to the West Coast. Loads over 120 pounds weight (about 60 kilograms) were common for him.

He retired to Gordonvale, and in his later years, lived there through the summers, and wintered at Glenorchy. He was famous for his hospitality, and grew his own vegetables and brew. Visitors were in for a wild time when they called in, as many did.

Gordonvale homestead is now almost a ruin, and may be just saveable - surely a goal for someone. It was effectively derelict by the late 1970's with "the office" the last building standing.

It is situated behind Mt Field National Park, in the Florentine Valley and **constructed in** classic split pine shingles (walls and roof) over wood frame, in true Tasmanian Style.

References

- [The Hermit of Gordon Vale](#) by Keith Lancaster (himself famous as a walker - 1947 - webbed by Dirk Veltcamp.
- The Tasmanian Tramp Annual collection of the Hobart Walking Club.



Gordonvale 1974 Photo posted on <http://bushwalk.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=3&t=6595>