



Hawley & Rubicon Estate Walks

Hawley House is situated on the 400-acre Rubicon Estate, which consists of the landscaped gardens, horse grazing pasture and 300-acre wildlife sanctuary. Suggested walking routes are outlined below. Please ask us if you would like more information.

Point Sorell & Penguin Rookeries (45 minutes return)

Venture to the beach in front of the house, either by meandering through the gardens or down the driveway. Turn left and follow the walking track which starts at the end of the beach. The foreshore track takes about 20 minutes each way, and past the historic Larooma Homestead (c.1875), Spy Island and the Carbuncle, both of which can be reached at low tide for those more adventurous souls. Fairy Penguin and Muttonbird rookeries inhabit the Point, and in summer months it is possible to watch the penguins coming ashore at dusk.

Eagles Lookout (1-2 hours return)

A slightly more energetic excursion takes you through the heart of the property, on a gentle rising slope. Walk behind the house, through the paddocks, past the horses, the Winter Lake, beyond the unspoiled sclerophyll woodlands and coastal heathland to the Eagles' Scarp where you will be rewarded by a panoramic coastline view to Nut at Stanley, and with luck, be awe-inspired by the resident pair of Wedge-tailed Eagles overhead.

Gardens & Wetlands

The Hawley Gardens have been featured in the international Gardens Illustrated magazine, and are regularly open as part of the ABC Open Garden Scheme. Awaiting exploration are the Wetlands, Wolf Wood, All Creatures Church, the bronze eagle and grouped plant associations from all over the world. A detailed map of the gardens is found in the main entrance hallway.

Hill Top View & Horses

A shortcut version of the Eagles Lookout walk for those with less energy or time to explore, don't miss the fantastic view of the Estuary from the top of the hill near the Hill House. The four friendly horses Trojan, Phantom, Juno & Persia will be happy to greet you!

In your wandering, please be careful not to go through any locked gates or climb over any fences, as these are boundaries to neighbouring properties.



Hawley House

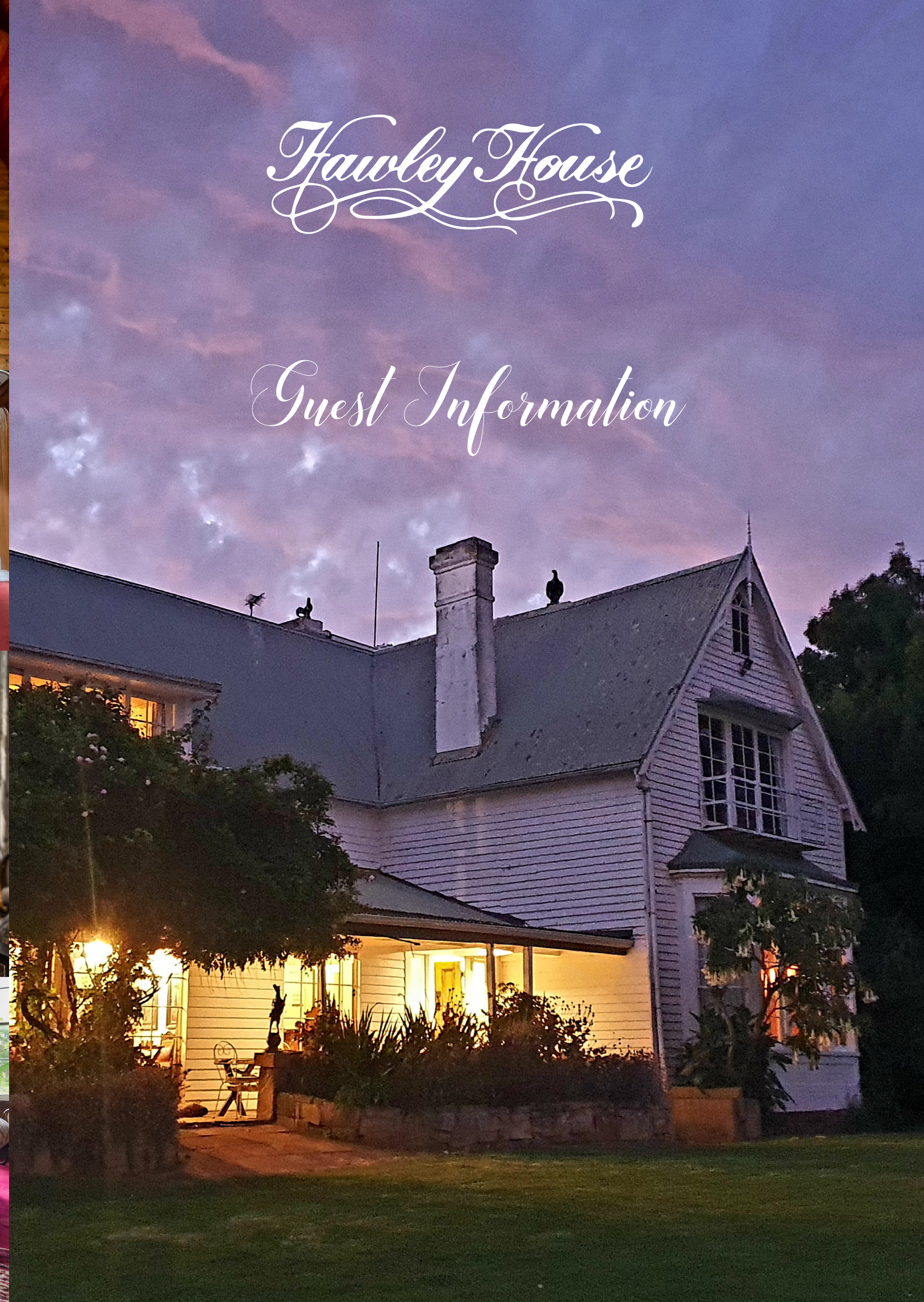
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Hawley House

Guest Information



History of Hawley House

Circa 1878

The construction of Hawley House, now listed by the National Trust Heritage Register, was completed in 1878 and was instigated by a retired Indian army officer - Major Arthur V. Dumbleton. The name Hawley (from the lee side of the hawthorns) was that of his family home, a very substantial early Georgian pile in Aldershot, Surrey. Major Dumbleton's son Henry took a parcel of land from his father's original holding and built Taroona, a similar style but smaller residence in what has subsequently become the Hawley Beach village. Henry's three daughters went the way of all pretty girls - their descendants still visit the house as Lovibonds, Walpole's, and Eddies.

The son concentrated on developing a manly tan with the Devonport Lifesaving Club at the Mersey Bluff. As his suntan deepened the family fortune faded. His father had a coastal shipping enterprise, transporting material between Launceston, Port Sorell, Devonport and Melbourne. It is noteworthy that Batman spent some days in the Port Sorell estuary, frustrated by inclement weather, before setting off to found the city of Melbourne. For the record, he found it "beautiful but dull". He set sail from Port Sorell 26th May, 1835.

Major Dumbleton moved back to East Devonport in the 1890's and the house entered a period of declining fortune. The Busby family, from the wonderful house and garden in Westbury, Culzean, rented it for a period.

In 1902 a Mrs. Spencer operated Hawley as a guest house. In 1907 James Ross of Devonport purchased the property and it was leased to David Dick. His parents John and Mary Dick raised 11 children at Hawley. David was eligible for War Settlement Scheme Assistance after World War I and in 1921 purchased the property. The Dicks ran the property as a mixed farm until 1942. Their meager livelihood from the land was supplemented by renting out rooms at Hawley House for holiday makers. There were minimal funds for upkeep of the large house and by the time it was purchased by the Douglas family in the early 1940's the place was in very poor condition.

The future of the house rested largely in its past when the urbane Englishman, Colonel H. W. Houghton was shown her by the real estate agent Arch Day in 1948. A sensitive if somewhat impractical impulse inspired by Hawley's glorious setting rather than the house itself resulted in the purchase of the property which has remained in the Houghton family ever since.

Colonel Houghton and his wife Mary caused some eyebrows to be raised in the area by spending an enormous sum totally "modernizing" the house, wiring it for 12-volt electricity, adding plumbing and indoor lavatories and extensively expanding the staff quarters, including 2 cottages. Much of the architectural attention can be criticized today but their efforts certainly saved the house from ruin. For the next 40 years, the house remained a family home, somewhat an outpost of the British Empire, a vestige of the British Raj.

The house was opened to welcome visitors in 1989, at the same time as planting the 8 hectares of vineyards. Many of the windows installed in 1948 have been replaced and plumbing and wiring was once again seriously reviewed but the house remains largely unaltered. The 'Stables' were constructed in December 1994 and utilized timbers from the c.1910 Devonport wharf. The original stables fell down in the 1950's.

The culmination of years of pleasure and industry in the grounds resulting in the current landscape gardens are an example of tenacity against the odds, as the poor soils and bedrock have to some extent been overcome over the years since the early 1980s, transforming what was once the sheep paddocks into a watery oasis. It is an historic fact that this house owes its continuing existence to the rabbit. Had they not grazed every blade of greenery right up to house it would certainly have fallen prey to the ferocious bushfires which regularly raged across the area over the past century.

The maintenance of the house is an ongoing labour of love - both the interior and exterior are restored on an ongoing basis. As anyone who has lived in a period home would appreciate, it is a never-ending and usually thankless task - it is rarely obvious what has been completed compared to what needs doing next! We can at least be confident that the home now enjoys a maintenance program better than it has ever experienced. Above all, she still prides herself in being a family home and appreciates your contribution to her ongoing happy state.

Hawley Gardens

Hawley's Garden extends over 30 acres with many areas and plantings to explore, with beautiful views and exploration. Originally planted in the 1870's the garden was designed with a central hedged garden around the house, lily ponds and a rose enshrouded summer house to the north. Lack of water, poor drainage, atrocious soil and salt winds all helped to achieve the result which was complete failure. All that remains of the original endeavours are some Pinus sylvestris, Pinus radiata, Pinus pinea, one Quercus ilex which is an evergreen oak from North Africa.

The next major exercise in gardening occurred in the late 1940's when Colonel and Mrs. Houghton once more endeavoured to impose an essentially English concept on an inhospitable site. Effectively defeated, the next 30 years saw the proliferation of bulbs of every description - daffodils, jonquils, bella donna lilies, agapanthus, arum lilies and freesias, many bearded irises, kniphofia - red hot poker - which gave an abandoned, wild beauty to the grounds at certain times of the year.

In the 1980s the current garden structure was started, based around a series of small lakes, relying on runoff from the rest of the Hawley farm. The shallow soils cover sheets of bedrock between which are poorly drained clay areas. On the slopes behind the house, leached, podsolitic sands revel in being deficient in everything except corby grubs.

The combination of ample rock, clay and sand, of whalebacks of bedrock, and of poorly drained marsh areas has allowed the land to dictate emphatically the structure which the garden would take. Poorly drained areas were excavated and flooded to promote constant moisture supply through the often long and critically dry summers. The good topsoil scraped from the rocks form the beds. The rocks contribute their own beauty and to the east the soil and clay from the pond form a bank of deep material into which the fruit orchard has been established. In the netted enclosure at the top of the garden is the organic vegetable garden from which much of the produce for the dining room is sourced.

To the North, a windbreak had been planted in 1979. Up until this time the incessant salty north westerly winds had cruelled the chances of all but the hardiest plants to survive and those that did were physically and psychologically scarred. Large lagoons were excavated, the soil forming a swale between them. This garden is designed to accentuate the seasons, almost all trees are deciduous and most plantings are herbaceous.

The original "lawn" graded down to long grass and a cyclone rickety fence - the existing level front lawn was constructed in 1990. Soil taken from in front of the house left a hole which has formed a front pool. The "causeway" walk features Japonica, Plumbago, Japanese Pagoda tree - Sophora, Japanese Privet and Zelkova and rose arches, towards the All Creatures Church, where the giant Ecium spires have dominated the rhododendron bed.

In recent years, the addition of a new sunken driveway, planted with flowering cherries, and the 'Tsunami Deflector' embankment formed along the front boundary features blue and grey cacti and aloes to give an uninterrupted vista from the house to the horizon, and shielding view of passing traffic. On the face of the earth embankment nearest the beach, plantings are designed to welcome birds and butterflies. Flowering gums, Eucalyptus ficifolia, buddleias, banksias, callistemons and grevilleas. The southern bank is subject to the reflected heat from the water which contributes to the success of the limes, oranges, cumquats and even bananas which have been planted, though it is yet to bear fruit.

The Wetlands on the northern boundary were inspired by coastal lagoons and marshlands which exist across the bay in the national park and also at the rear of the farm behind Moorlands Beach. They are intended to provide homes to an abundance of water fowl and native marsupials, including the endangered Barred Bandicoot, echidnas, reptiles and yellow-bellied water rats amongst other animals. We are committed to keeping this area as a wilderness reserve concentrating on an enhanced wildlife habitat and refuge. The ecosystem necessitates that the marshes be largely dry by the end of Autumn.

We encourage guests to enjoy the gardens by taking a picnic, a stroll, a game of cricket or just lying in the springy grass soaking up the sunshine. There is a map of the garden in the entrance hallway but there is no 'right' way to meander through it - just feel free to explore. Please bear in mind that although it is large, it is not a 'Botanic Garden' with dozens of gardening staff, but a family home and hobby we like to indulge in, and some parts of are more 'under control' than others at various times of the year!



Circa - 1878



Circa - 1927



Circa - 1990



Circa - 2020

