



Chauncy Vale
Wildlife Sanctuary

“Day Dawn”

Information Booklet

Nan Chauncy and Chauncy Vale

Nancen Chauncy was born on 28th May 1900 at Northwood in Middlesex, England, to Charles and Lilla Masterman. Nancen, who was always called Nan, enjoyed a prosperous childhood in the family mansion *Highover* in Kent, where she was taught by a governess. Her English childhood came to an abrupt end when her father's business failed. With her parents, sister and four brothers, she emigrated to Tasmania in 1912.

Charles Masterman secured employment as a council engineer involved in diverting the Hobart Rivulet. The family lived in Lipscombe Avenue, Sandy Bay, and in 1914 Charles bought the land now known as Chauncy Vale, planning to clear some of it and plant an apple orchard on the flatter land of the valley floor.

When the Rivulet project finished the family moved to Bagdad and lived there while they built their first home in the valley. The plan to start an orchard must have seemed quite an adventure to the children, although it also involved a lot of hard work. The land was covered in bush with some enormous trees, far bigger, according to Nan's sister Eve, than any there now. It was a stony and secluded valley with only a rough track for access. The creek had to be forded, as there was no bridge. All members of the family pitched in to clear the land, plough, sow and plant. They built a slab hut of two rooms near to the site of the Information Centre and Lilla romantically named it *Cherry Tree Cottage*. The family had fruit and vegetable gardens on the creek flat below the hut.

Nan and her parents, brothers and sister lived in very confined quarters, and told stories by lamplight in the evenings. The children's real and imaginary world centred on the Tasmanian wildlife, the bush and the gardens around them. They were told the legend of the cave in the sandstone cliffs which had sheltered Bushranger Brown.

Charles and Jan gradually built this small concrete cottage *Day Dawn*, which was finished in 1918 for Kay, while he was away at the First World War.

After selling all of the property except the cottage and twelve acres in about 1919 the family moved first to Sandy Bay, and then to Austin's Ferry. *Cherry Tree Cottage* burned down soon after the sale.

Nan and her brother Kay were enthusiastic bushwalkers and this interest drew them to the guiding and scouting movements. Nan established the first company of Girl Guides at Claremont and later became a Guide Commissioner. From 1918 to 1930 *Day Dawn* was used for guide and scout camps.

From 1925 to 1930 Nan was employed as a welfare officer at Cadbury's factory at Claremont. She returned to England in 1930, living for some time in a houseboat on the Thames. She wrote an (unpublished) adult novel and travelled to Finland and the Soviet Union. She lived in Denmark each winter, teaching at a finishing school.

While returning to Australia by ship in 1938 Nan met a Jewish refugee, Helmut Anton Rosenfeld. He had left his family home in Konigsberg, in what was then German East Prussia and is now part of Latvia, early in the 1930s, going first to Switzerland and then to England.

Anton and Nan married in Victoria before moving to *Day Dawn* which Kay had given them as a wedding present. To avoid the wartime antagonism directed at people with German names they changed their surname to Chauncy, Nan's grandmother's maiden name. They established a Saanen goat stud, and named the property *Chauncy Vale*.

Day Dawn has no electricity or running water but Nan enjoyed the simple and frugal life there: *No electricity, only the soft light of the oil lamp and the sounds of dogs snoring on the skin mat, the iron kettles singing in praise of simple things.* Her writing was inspired by the cottage's bush setting and many details from Chauncy Vale can be recognised in her books.

To supplement her income Nan wrote articles for *Wildlife* magazine, radio scripts for the ABC, and was Australian correspondent for the international Guide magazine *The Campfire* until 1963. At Chauncy Vale she wrote her first full length children's novel *They Found a Cave*. It was

accepted in 1947 by Oxford University Press in England. They remained her publisher and she became a distinguished figure in Australian children's literature.

Nan's books include:

They Found a Cave (1948)
World's End was Home (1952)
A Fortune for the Brave (1954)
Tiger in the Bush (1957)
Devil's Hill (1958)
Tangara (1960)
Half a World Away (1962)
The Roaring 40 (1963)
High and Haunted Island (1964)
Mathinna's People (1967)
Lizzie Lights (1968)
The Lighthouse Keeper's Son (1969)

Tangara and *Mathinna's People* were regarded as innovative at the time for their understanding of Aboriginal and conservation issues. Today they are considered her best works.

Nan's books have been translated into thirteen languages and produced in Braille for blind readers. *They Found a Cave* was released as a feature film in 1962, and later on video, and *Devil's Hill* was released on video as part of the Bicentennial series *Touch the Sun*.

The literary quality of Nan's work was recognised in 1958 when she was awarded the Australian Children's Book of the Year Award for *Tiger in the Bush*. This was followed by the same award for *Devil's Hill* in 1959 and *Tangara* in 1961. In 1961 she became the first Australian author to win the Hans Christian Andersen Diploma of Merit, and in the same year won the Boy's Club of America Award.

Nan was a member of the Australian Society of Authors and in 1958 and 1959 President of the Australian Fellowship of Writers. She influenced the work of many other children's writers in the 1960s and 70s. Nan is commemorated in the Children's Book Council quin-quennial Nan Chauncy Award for Children's Literature.

Nan died from cancer on the 1st of May 1970. Although her books are no longer in print copies of *Tangara* are available from The Friends of Chauncy Vale.

Nan and Anton shared a love of the Tasmanian natural environment and they bought 1000 acres to extend the boundary of their property. In 1946 they had the Animals and Birds Protection Board declare Chauncy Vale a private sanctuary under the *Animals and Birds Protection Act, 1928*, the forerunner of the *National Parks Act*. A copy of this proclamation is now hanging on the kitchen wall.

The sanctuary was open to the public from 1946 until Anton was forced to close it to unregulated access after bushfires in 1982. Anton died in 1988 and bequeathed the sanctuary to the local council. Nan and Anton's daughter Heather has extended this gift to include two further blocks near the entrance, the paddocks, and the house where Nan wrote her books, and has left the furniture on loan.

The Chauncy Vale Wildlife Sanctuary comprises nearly 400 hectares of narrow creeks, secluded valleys, sandstone cliffs and caves, and dry sclerophyll bushland. It is again open to the public and is used as a study and recreational area, and as a place where Nan Chauncy's home and writings can be displayed. It is now owned by the Southern Midlands Council and run by one of their sub-committees under a Management Plan which was sealed by the Governor-in-Council in 1994, and a Business Plan endorsed by the Council and the Friends of Chauncy Vale Inc. Under these plans there is an entrance fee of \$2.00 for each adult and the sanctuary is visited by school groups free of charge. Friends of Chauncy Vale Inc. holds an Open Day on the fourth Sunday every January with exhibitions, stalls, afternoon teas and guided walks.

The Chauncy House

The Chauncy Vale house, *Day Dawn*, was built between 1916 and 1918. It was originally a three room single storey cottage with an open North facing verandah, an enclosed side verandah on the East side and a lean-to kitchen and scullery on the South side. It was built by Nan's father and her twin brother Jan, both engineers specialising in concrete construction, for her brother Kay while he was away at the First World War. Kay gave the house to Nan and Anton as a wedding present.

The three room main block is constructed in slip-form concrete and the lean-to is weatherboard. The shingle roof was covered with corrugated iron in the 1920s. The three original main rooms, now two, are panelled in Tasmanian Oak to dado level. There is a sandstone fireplace, and the windows are four-paned glass. The end of the open verandah was enclosed in 1946 with vertical boards to extend the East end sleepout. The kitchen/scullery was rebuilt in two stages in the 1950s. The first stage was the kitchen/dining room with a convict brick double chimney and weather boards of Baltic pine. The second stage of laundry, bathroom and bedroom was built from concrete block and bagged to match the original building.

The furniture in the cottage is that which was used by the Chauncys in the 1960s. It includes the typewriter and desk at which Nan wrote her books. Lighting was with Hurricane lamps in the sleepout and Heather's bedroom and Aladdin lamps in the other rooms, with candles for emergencies.

The outbuildings include feed/tool shed, dog kennel, toilet, and four water tanks. The main garden faces North with a small extension to the West. There are some dry stone walls built by Nan and Anton. The garden has recently been refenced with wire netting with an overhanging top to discourage possums, and contains typical colonial garden plants and shrubs including lilacs, rosemary, brooms and large beds of daffodils. The big pine tree was planted to commemorate the end of the First World War. A path, brick steps and small metal gate leading into the donkey paddock are connected to the Information Centre by an upgraded path to provide tourist access from the bus turning circle.

The Sitting Room

Pictures

from left of the front door as you enter

Oil of Day Dawn by Tas Fehlburg c.1951. The artist was Education Officer at the ABC when Nan was writing scripts for school broadcasts in the 1940s and 50s.

Watercolour of Tasmanian animals by Colburn Pierce. Captain Pierce had retired from the Indian army and was in charge of the wildlife displays at the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart. He and his wife were friends of the Chauncy family.

Oil bush scene by Viv Webb. Purchased for Anton by his daughter Heather from an exhibition at the Tasmanian Art Gallery

Oil of native wildflowers and berries found in Chauncy Vale, by Nell Francombe. Commissioned for Anton by Heather.

Colour photograph of the caves by Joscelyn McConnel. Presented to Anton.

Oil of an oast house at Plenty by Harry Kelly, given to Nan by Anton. Nan had first known Harry when she was working at Cadbury's in the 1920s and he became a friend of the Chauncys.

Pen and ink drawing of Bunty, the Chauncy's Cairn terrier, by J Barry Lawrence. Barry had a photographic studio in Hobart and took many photos in Chauncy Vale. Every time he tried to photograph Bunty she shut her eyes so, exasperated, he drew her for the family c.1943 - 44

Black and white photograph of William, one of the Saanen goats at Chauncy Vale, by a photographer from the Mercury newspaper.

Colour photograph of a peregrine falcon chick at Chauncy Vale. Given to Anton by Nick Mooney.

Etching of white peacocks by Lionel Lindsay. Nan always wanted white peacocks but Anton pointed out that they would cross with the coloured Indian birds already at Chauncy Vale. Anton wrote to Lionel asking if he would accept a pair of peacocks as payment for this etching and Lionel replied saying that he could not cope with peacocks and was pleased to give the picture to the Chauncys.

Tapestry sampler sewn by Nan.

Furniture

Pie-crust teak veneer Baltic pine sideboard brought to Tasmania by Anton's parents from Königsberg in 1939.

Kauri pine pew bought from a church which had been closed, thought to have been in the Derwent Valley. Used as a settle.

Mahogany bureau, a ship's captain's desk, given to Nan to keep her manuscripts in by Mrs Jo Johnson, nee Palmer. It was brought to Van Diemen's Land by the Palmer family early in the 1800s.

English oak-top desk, *Nan Chauncy's writing desk*, made for her about 1940. The top is made from two extension leaves of the dining table now in the kitchen, laid over two sets of Tasmanian oak drawers. It was here that Nan wrote all her books. The typewriter is one of the first Olympia portables, bought by Nan in the 1930s.

Fire screen, Tasmanian oak, with two poems, one by Nan's brother Kay Masterman, the other by Clive Sansom. Lettering by Anton's cousin Elsa Larse.

Elephant bell bought by Nan in Ceylon, now Sri Lanka. Old, as the clapper is very worn.

Camel bell sent to Nan by her brother Bob from Syria during the Second World War.

Lion carved from English oak by Nan's cousin Dimsdale.

Carved Dachsund brought by Anton from Konigsberg. The lion and dog were known by the family as Dignity and Impudence.

Two tiles set above the fireplace. Bought by Madge Boyes in Portugal on the voyage to Australia in 1938 on which Nan and Anton met. Madge gave the Chauncys the tiles after they married, keeping a second set with the colours reversed.

Small lap top desk which belonged to Ellen Chauncy

Bellows carved in oak by Rosamund Braithwaite, Nan's cousin, with whom she used to stay as a companion.

Books and videos in the glass fronted corner bookcase. Nan's children's novels, with translations and other editions. Books about Chauncy Vale, awards and certificates.

Emu egg laid by an emu at Chauncy Vale.

Large white vase. A wedding present which because of its shape was thought to be a pudding and not unwrapped until Christmas. The Chauncys were very late in saying thank you for the gift.

Main Bedroom

Pictures

Poem about Nan by Viv Smith, calligraphy by Christine Farmer

Photograph of an oil painting by T.F.Hanphy, 1892, of Ellen Masterman (nee Chauncy) with Emily and Charles, Nan's father, on her lap. The original is in England with Nan's twin brother's family.

Furniture

Mahogany veneer chest of drawers brought to Tasmania by Nan's mother Lilla Masterman in 1912

Walnut sewing box brought to Tasmania by Lilla Masterman

Cloth on side table embroidered by Nan while in Denmark in the 1930s

Brickery

The area between Heather's bedroom and the kitchen, so called because it originally had a brick floor, later concreted over.

Kerosene refrigerator

Wash troughs with hand wringer

Two food safes

Heather's bedroom

Heather took most of her belongings with her when she moved to Hobart in 1960

Bathroom

The hot water was originally heated by a wood chip heater

Kitchen

Pictures

Oil of the view from Constitution Hill by Tas Fehlburg. North of Bagdad, looking South.

Watercolour of a map and sponges from Port Davey. By Harry Kelly, painted for Nan as a gift.

Print of horses under apple blossom

Print of a girl in a blue wishing cap. A favourite of Nan's mother Lilla Masterman

Oil of flowers by one of Nan's aunts

Original proclamation notice of Chauncy Vale Reserve under the Animals and Birds Protection Board. Printed on linen.

Furniture

Dining table and six chairs, English oak. Brought to Tasmania by an early Dean of Hobart about 1850. There were a number of leaves which could be inserted so that the table seated up to 24 people.

Kerosene tin drawers. Kero tins and boxes were used extensively for furniture in the early days. Nan said that much of the furniture in Cherry Tree Cottage was of this type.

Two dressers. The dresser with the glass door has bread boxes on each side and four small drawers in which the Chauncys kept eggs. The cutlery drawer contains the four piece Danish setting Nan bought while she was working in Denmark. The pattern of waves and lines commemorates the joining of two Danish islands by road bridges in the 1930s

Wood fuel stoves. These were the only form of cooking and heating apart from the small kerosene stoves which were used in summer. The wood was cut on the property.

Three irons. These were heated on the stove top and shared one interchangeable handle. Each iron was used until it cooled and then replaced on the stove, the handle being transferred to the next.

Pheasant pattern dinner service given to her parents by Heather. Nan and Anton previously used a setting decorated with black and white Canada geese.

Green and white jug set given to Nan as a wedding present.

Pottery bowls and frogs made by Heather at school

Sleepout

The end section was originally part of the front verandah, which was enclosed to make a bedroom for Heather in the early 1940s. When the new rear bedroom and bathroom were built this room was used for storage.