



The big idea that was almost a disaster

The Great Lake Power Scheme was the brainchild of Central Highlands sheep farmer, Harold Bisdee, and his brother-in-law, Alexander McAulay, a university physics professor.

Together with metallurgist, James Gillies, they battled to establish it as a private enterprise, until impending war in Europe cut off new capital.

The Tasmanian Government took over the scheme in 1914, forming the Hydro-Electric Department — Australia’s first public, statewide energy generating enterprise.

The visionary scheme came close to disaster many times, with formidable snowstorms, industrial unrest, impossibly heavy construction gear, specialist equipment delayed by World War I, and budgets that ran out.

“...Tasmania was practically destitute of manufacturing industries. Now new industries are starting every few months.”

Northern Advocate newspaper, New Zealand, 17 April 1923

What you see as you explore was part of the sacrifice and endeavor that changed the fate of an island — from the abandoned tennis court at Waddamana Village to giant handmade spanners at the power station and a canal that looks more architectural than industrial.

The scheme and other hydropower developments that followed it brought change on a scale unparalleled. It created what became a statewide electricity grid, a new economy and a fresh direction.



JOURNEY INTO CENTRAL HIGHLANDS HERITAGE — and the power of the human spirit

For more information:
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www.highlandspowertrail.com.au

Photo: Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office



Australian Government

The development of the Highlands Power Trail has been supported by Hydro Tasmania, Central Highlands Council, and the Australian Government.

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HIGHLANDS POWER TRAIL

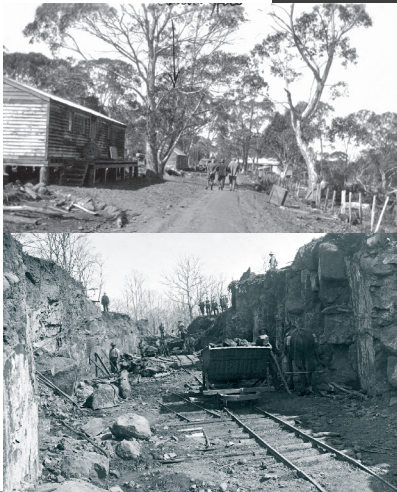
HERITAGE LISTED

Step into an inspiring story

Highlands people dared to take on the impossible, powering a mighty hydro scheme that ultimately created today's Tasmania.

Their efforts of yesterday inspire us in our challenges today.

Construction of the Great Lake Power Scheme was a remarkable feat, especially in the early 1900s.



Experience compelling landscapes



Photo: Harry Gilbert

The self-guided trail

Take the circular trail north from Bothwell to Waddamana, continuing north to Penstock Lagoon then on to rejoin the Highland Lakes Road for the return journey to Bothwell.

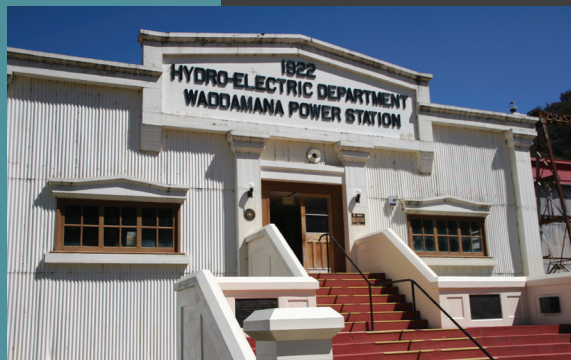
For those travelling south from yingina / Great Lake, follow the trail in the opposite direction to Waddamana and continue on to Bothwell via Highland Lakes Road.

Travel time for the circular route is approximately 1 hour and 40 minutes. Allow extra time to tour through Waddamana Power Station and explore the Heritage Site.

Please note:

- Waddamana Road is unsealed gravel. It is accessible by all regular vehicles.
- Check weather and road conditions. Snow is possible in any season.
- Fuel is available at Bothwell and Miena.
- Waddamana Power Station Heritage Site is open daily from 10am-4pm, except for Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday.
- Toilets are available during opening hours, and an electric barbecue is located on site.
- Throughout most of the trail there is limited/no mobile phone access.

Find stories that will captivate you



yingina / Great Lake

Miena

Shannon

The settlement was a place of friendship, family and tragedy, all unfolding in exposed conditions on the plateau.

Waddamana Canal

Get a taste of the way workers and families battled the elements and see how a hand-built canal can be a thing of beauty.

Waddamana Power Station

The power station heritage site was the nerve centre for the greatest wave of change Tasmania has seen. The turbine hall will amaze you. Power station entry is free.

Waddamana Village

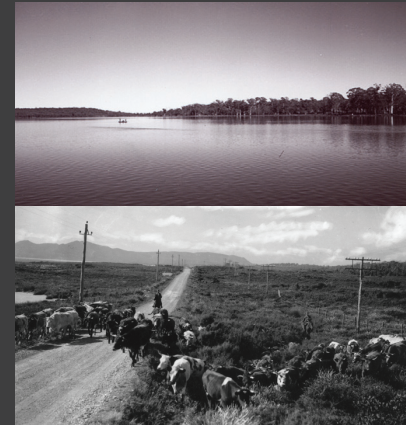
Get the inside story on a village and community that grew and thrived in tough conditions and isolation. Could you live here?



Arthurs Lake

Penstock Lagoon

Now a fishing paradise, for decades torrents of water were unleashed from the lagoon to feed turbines. But what happens when the lagoon freezes?



Further north

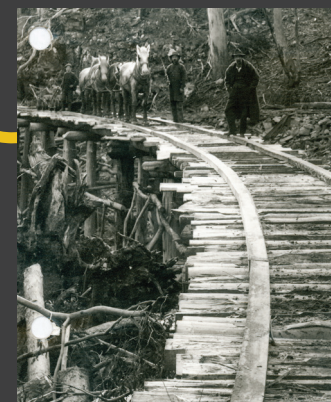
The Great Lake Power Scheme also includes dams and canals at Shannon, Miena and Liawenee. Only Liawenee Canal is still operational.

Hermitage

Hundreds of workers needed food. Farms like this one, and local families, were enterprising in unexpected ways.

Red Gate Tramway

The ingenuity of the horse-drawn wooden Red Gate Tramway was remarkable. Find out why it succeeded and how it echoes the route for your driving journey.



Step into extraordinary challenges and times

Bothwell