HAVEN'T you ever heard about the town of Crotty? Perhaps you have seen photos like those above, or even visited the site of Tasmania’s version of Atlantis.

Of course Atlantis, the underwater lost city in the Atlantic Ocean, is believed to be a mere legend.

But Crotty is real and it is underwater - well usually it is. Crotty is one of the many ‘ghost’ towns scattered around Tasmania, and like many of the others it is the crumbling ruins of a once bustling mining community.

Named after Irish gold prospector James Crotty, it is located on Tasmania’s West Coast - on the eastern side of Mt Jukes, below the West Coast Range. The town has an interesting, if short history.

James Crotty is a fascinating character in his own right. He arrived on West Coast seeking his fortune in 1884, and bought a one-third share in a mining lease at My Lyell called Iron Blow.

James Crotty found what he was looking for - gold, and declared he would be rich enough to buy Ireland. Unfortunately, he didn’t realise he was sitting on a fortune, but not of gold.

The real riches were deeper underground—a huge deposit of copper. In desperation James Crotty sought out an investor, and in 1891 Mr Bowes Kelly of Broken Hill Proprietary Limited (BHP) arrived to inspect the mine. Bowes Kelly clearly liked what he saw, and a deal was agreed to. James Crotty became a minor shareholder in the Mount Lyell Mining Company, and still did pretty well, because large volumes of copper were soon emerging from the Iron Blow mine.

The Abt Railway, from Queenstown to the port of Strahan, was built to take the copper to market. Bowes Kelly became extremely wealthy, and James Crotty believed he had been cheated.

He purchased another lease on land at North Lyell and began the North Mount Lyell Copper Company. During the construction of roads to service the new mine, another copper deposit was discovered, and the copper was more pure than at Iron Blow.

James Crotty then built his own railway along the King and Bird Rivers to Kelly Basin. A number of towns sprung up along the line, including Crotty on the southern bank of the King River.

But just when it looked like James Crotty was going to fulfill his ambition and surpass Bowes Kelly, tragedy struck. In 1898, the North Mt Lyell smelters at Crotty collapsed.

Then James Crotty, who had travelled to England to attract more investors, became ill and died within a few weeks. Attempts to fix the smelters failed, and in 1903 The North Mount Lyell Copper Company had to accept being taken over by the Mount Lyell Mining Company.

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People left Crotty and other towns along the rail line in their droves. About 20 years later Bowes Kelly decided to close the North Lyell Railway and tear up the line. The last residents of the town left in 1928.

In the 1990s what was left of the town vanished under the dark waters of Lake Burbury, a hydro lake established when Crotty Dam was built as part of the King River Power development scheme.

Drought conditions in 2016 resulted in Lake Burbury reaching very low water levels, and Crotty re-emerged. Well at least the foundations of several buildings did, including the smelter, a hotel and a school. Crotty is just one example of ghost towns on the West Coast, and in other parts of Tasmania. While Crotty is usually underwater, the remains of other towns are a bit easier to find. Perhaps you have visited some of these ghost towns in the past. If you live on the West Coast you probably have.

Your challenge is to research one of Tasmania’s abandoned towns. Some examples are listed below right. Find out as many facts about your chosen town as possible, and present the findings in a creative way. Mark the location of the town on the map below. If you live close by one of the ghost towns, perhaps you could pay the location a visit, and take some photographs of the historic remains.

Children’s University Tasmania members can earn stamps in their passports for this challenge, at the discretion of their school coordinator.

**Tasmania’s fascinating ghost towns**

- Adamsfield
- Boobyalla
- Crotty
- Dundas
- East Pillinger
- Gormanston
- Lake Margaret
- Lindal
- Lottah
- Mathinna
- Moina
- Pillinger
- Lake Margaret
- Poimena
- Waddamana
- Williamsford

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**Wetlands on the UCTV Alive for Kids agenda**

What makes a wetland a wetland? What lives in them? Why are they important? For answers to these questions and many more tune into UCTV Alive for Kids tomorrow, November 30, from 9:15am – 10:00am. This episode will be presented by Dr Vishnu Prahalad from the University of Tasmania. Register here: [bit.ly/UCTV8](https://bit.ly/UCTV8)