



Friends of the Orphan School and St. John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

2nd Annual Report December 2009

It is a privilege to be able to present the 2nd Annual Report of the Friends of the Orphan School and St John's Park Precinct.

It has been two years since the Friends of the Orphan School and St John's Park Precinct was established at a public meeting held in St John's Church, New Town. The group was formed to:

- raise awareness of the historical importance of the precinct and the need for conservation;
- conduct research into the history and heritage significance of the site;
- encourage the development of a Conservation Management Plan; and
- work towards listing on the National Heritage Register.

The Group was constituted as an independent community group under the umbrella of the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania). Members of the Group, however, are not required to be members of the National Trust, although many of them are because of their commitment to heritage. Our finances and administration are separate. Nevertheless, the National Trust remains an important partner, helping with a range of issues including publicity, insurance and practical advice. An important part of the Friends work is promoting awareness of the site and our activities. We have a segment on the National Trust of Australia (Tasmania) website and have been included in National Trust publicity throughout the year.

In December 2008, we elected the following Committee for the 2009 year:

Convenor

Dianne Snowden

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| Deputy Convenor | Toni Sherwood |
| Secretary | Karen Stott |
| Treasurer | Simon Cocker |
| Assistant Treasurer | Roger Stott |
| Web Manager | Andrew Cocker |
| St John's Church representative | Jessie Wagner/David Featherstone |
| Committee Members: | Rosemary Davidson; David Featherstone; Warwick Oakman; Joyce Purtscher |

Throughout the year, your Committee has worked tirelessly on your behalf and I thank them all very much for their hard work, contribution and dedication. Jessie Wagner requested leave of absence during the year, because of ill-health; our thoughts and best wishes go out to her. Karen Stott, who has decided to step down as Secretary, has done an exceptional job, and we thank her for her hard work and commitment. Karen has indicated that she would like to focus her energy on a special project to do with the Isolation Huts. If any members would like to work on particular projects, as Karen has offered to, please talk to the Committee. Simon Cocker has done an outstanding job as Treasurer, ably assisted by Roger Stott. Joyce Purtscher has continued our successful excursion program and is investigating ideas for new excursions for the coming year. Toni Sherwood and Rosie Davidson have produced an excellent newsletter, with the assistance of Karen Stott. All committee members have contributed generously to the smooth running of our general meetings and importantly the provision of supper and afternoon teas!

The Research and Publications Group with Toni Sherwood as Convenor, has continued to meet regularly in 2009. Regular quarterly research days in the Tasmanian Heritage and Archive Office were introduced during the year.

Chris Woods has continued to convene the Descendants of Orphans Special Interest Group and with a small committee successfully organised our first Fox's Feast on 15 February 2009, held in the old St John's Sunday School building. The event included an outstanding photographic display and Bruce Woods' photographs of the day have been compiled into a CD. Joyce Purtscher compiled a booklet *The First True Friends of the Queen's Orphanage* especially for the event.

In 2008, Andrew Cocker generously offered to build and host a website for the Friends. He worked closely with the committee to understand the aims of the Group and to gain an insight into what website users might be seeking. The initial design was completed earlier this year and various members worked hard to produce the initial content. The first version of our web site slipped quietly into production earlier this year. It can be viewed at www.orphanschool.org.au. A formal launch is planned for Heritage Festival 2010.

Some of you may have already heard me tell of my find in the 1964 St John's Church minutes and the mention of 'young David Featherstone's' appointment as Church organist. David's commitment to the Church and our group is outstanding. David and his wife Denice give generously of their time to open and close the Church and the St John's Parish Centre. David is always willing to open up the Church for visiting groups – most recently Grade 8 New Town High School students on an excursion. We have all benefited from his love of music and I wish to sincerely thank him, on behalf of all of us, for his generosity and commitment.

We are still refining our Committee structure and the Executive recently decided on a number of changes, to even the workload. Our committee at present comprises a Convenor, Deputy Convenor, Secretary, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Web Manager, St. John's Church representative and three general committee members. The Secretary currently has considerable administrative responsibilities. In order to make the workload manageable, we have decided to add the position of Minutes Secretary to the Committee: the Minutes Secretary will be responsible for recording the minutes at general and committee meetings, compiling agenda and organising notices of meeting and distributing these as necessary.

We also decided to maintain the Committee at 10 members, who will be elected by the membership at the AGM., and to include an ex-officio member from each of the following partnership organisations: St. John's Church, Ogilvie High and New Town High. Ex-officio members of the committee will be appointed by their respective organisations. They do not have voting rights and attend committee meetings on a voluntary basis or when requested by the committee.

We are also seeking a volunteer (not necessarily a committee member) to take on the role of Publicity Officer, and another to co-ordinate Fundraising. Please contact a member of the Committee if you would like to help.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to announce that we have entered into a lease with the Department of Health and Human Services for the old St John's Church Sunday School building, built in the 1880s. We will use the building for meetings, special events and as an Interpretation Centre. Andrew Cocker will be responsible for our Building Committee, which will oversee maintenance of the building and facilitate its use. If you would like to help, please contact Andrew.

In a very short time, our group has grown in strength and public recognition – thanks largely to the commitment and generosity of our membership. To the

Committee, members and supporters, thank-you all very much for your contribution and commitment. I look forward to working with you in 2010.

Dianne Snowden Convenor