



# Friends of the Orphan Schools and St John's Park Precinct

## New Town Tasmania

Issue 6

Newsletter

February 2010

### Passing of Jessie Wagner

The Friends of the Orphan Schools and St John's Park Precinct Committee is saddened to advise that Mrs Jessie Wagner passed away on 8 January 2010 after a long illness. Jessie was a much-respected founding member of our group and served on our committee from its inception. She was devoted to the history and conservation of the Orphan Schools, and to St John's Church. Her commitment was expressed in many ways and she will be sadly missed. Jessie was highly esteemed in historical circles and was President of the Hobart Town and First Settlers Association from 2005–2010. A Celebration of Thanksgiving for her life was held at St John's Church, New Town. It was attended by Dr Dianne Snowden, our convenor, on behalf of the Friends group.

### Forthcoming Events

#### Fox's Feast Picnic Day

'Fox's Feast' Picnic Day will be held on Sunday 28 February 2010, from 11.30 until 3.30 pm. The main venue is the Old Sunday School building near St John's Church New Town (go to the left at the end of St John's Avenue, then turn right - the hall is on your left). All descendants and interested Friends are welcome to attend.

Displays are being prepared and we will have experienced researchers

attending who will try to help you with any research queries you have. We will have a camera, scanner and computer to record any items of memorabilia that you are able to bring along to share with us.

Please bring your picnic lunch and a rug or chairs for seating if the weather is suitable for outdoors. If the weather is not suited to outdoor dining, we can eat in the Sunday School Hall. There will be hot water available for making drinks. Joyce Purtscher will be taking a tour of the Orphan Schools area.

This event commemorates the annual summer picnic day for children at the Orphan Schools, which was funded from the estate of former convict John Fox. Fox arrived on the *Prince of Orange* in 1822 and received a conditional pardon in 1838. He never married and worked for many years on the Derwent River where he provided transport between New Norfolk and Hobart. At the time of his death in 1859 he bequeathed his estate of almost £500 to the Queen's Orphan Schools. He stipulated his bequest should 'stimulate the industry of the children and ... afford them at least once in the year a day of healthful and innocent recreation.' The first Fox's Feast was held in 1861 and then annually from 1865 until the closure of the Queen's Orphan Schools in 1879. Fox's Feasts were held at various locations including Cornelian Bay, the Cascades and New Norfolk. In 1877 the children

were treated to a return train trip from New Town to Brighton and in 1878 and 1879 they travelled in the steamer *Monarch* to New Norfolk.\* The Fox's Feast tradition was revived in 2009 by the Descendents of Orphans Special Interest Group.

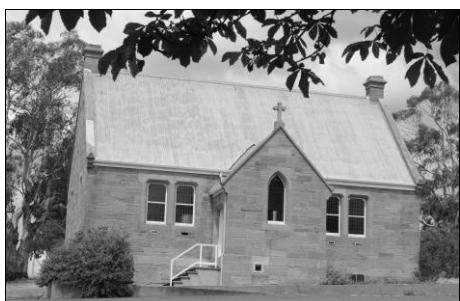
A new booklet, *School Days at the Queen's Orphan Schools New Town, Tasmania 1848*, prepared by Joyce Purtscher from the Inspector of Schools Report, will be launched.

\*For more information about John Fox and Fox's Feast see *The First True Friends of the Queen's Orphanage*, Joyce Purtscher, Hobart, 2009.

### March General Meeting

Thursday 11 March 2010 – 5.30 pm  
Old Sunday School

A plan for our hall.



We have been granted an initial two-year lease for the Sunday School and we have started using it as our regular meeting place. But we would like to look at other ways of using the building. Should we establish an interpretation centre, a little museum, or a research centre? Do we have members with the skills and time to help?

At our March meeting Andrew Cocker, who convenes our Building Committee, will facilitate a discussion about future uses of our Sunday School building. Come along and share your views. Help the committee to develop a plan for making the most of this exciting opportunity.

Following this general discussion, Dianne Snowden will be our guest speaker. She will present a paper with the interesting and intriguing title ““Ten shillings for Loleys’: Voices from the Orphan Schools.” Dianne recently presented this paper at the Australasian Social History Workshop conference held at the University of New South Wales, Sydney.

### Sunday 23 May 2010

#### Old Sunday School from 2.00 pm.

May is Heritage Month and this year the theme is *Deco to Digital ... Our 20<sup>th</sup> Century Heritage*.

As our contribution to this celebration, we will officially launch our website [www.orphanschool.org.au](http://www.orphanschool.org.au) and we will also host a digital photographic display in the Old Sunday School. Orphan Schools admission records will also be available and our volunteers will be on hand to answer questions.

Bookings will also be accepted for a site tour on that day. Cost of the tour is \$10.00. For bookings, please contact Joyce on (03) 6234 1392.

We hope to see you at all these events. We will hold further Sunday afternoon events in July and September.

Our Annual General Meeting for this year will be held on Thursday 11 November 2010 at 5.30 pm in the Old Sunday School.

### A filing cabinet or two?

The Old Sunday School building is very well set up for meetings and will be equipped with a computer, microfiche and microfilm readers which have been generously loaned by members. Before we can leave some of our resources and research material in this building, we need secure storage.

Do you have a lockable filing cabinet, cupboard or map drawers that you could donate or loan? If so, please let Andrew know at [secretary@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:secretary@orphanschool.org.au) or drop him a line at PO Box 111, Moonah, TAS 7009.

### Tour dates for 2010

This year tours will be conducted on

- Sunday 28 February,
- Sunday 23 May
- Sunday 25 September.

Tours will begin at 2.00 pm. and the meeting place will be the former Sunday School (turn left at the end of St John’s Avenue, then right – the hall is on your left).

Tour cost is \$10.00. To make a booking please contact Joyce on (03) 6234 1392.

### Have you renewed your membership?

Membership was due for renewal on 1 January 2010.

We are a voluntary organisation and do not receive funding from any other body and manages on a very small budget. Since our formation in December 2007, we have had considerable success in raising community and government awareness of the Orphan Schools and St John’s Park Precinct. Your membership donation provides invaluable financial support to enable us to continue our work in this area. More importantly, your membership indicates support for the group and its aims. Membership is a valuable and tangible demonstration of community interest in the site and concern for its preservation.

If you have not renewed your membership, then please consider doing so, in order that we can continue to work to ensure that the national heritage significance of our precinct, along with the need for its conservation and preservation, is recognised.

To renew, send your membership donation to: The Treasurer, PO Box 111, Moonah TAS 7009. Renewals and new memberships will also be welcomed at our General Meeting on Thursday 11 March.

The Friends of the Orphan School and St John’s Park Precinct Committee thanks all those who have renewed their FOSP membership for 2010 and regrets to say that those who do not renew will no longer receive our quarterly newsletters.

### Thanks Andrew

During his summer break from work, Andrew Cocker carried out maintenance and cleaning tasks on the Sunday School building. We have all benefitted from his hard work and initiative and thank him very much for getting the building ready for us to use.

### FOSP Office Bearers for 2010

Convenor: Dianne Snowden

Deputy Convenor: Toni Sherwood

General Secretary: Andrew Cocker

Minute Secretary: Andrea Gerrard

Treasurer: Simon Cocker

Assistant Treasurer: Roger Stott

Committee Members: Joyce Purtscher and Rosie Davidson

St John’s Church (ex-officio): David Featherstone

Ogilvie High School (ex-officio): to be advised

New Town High School (ex-officio): to be advised

### St John’s Church News

St John’s Avenue, New Town.

Enquiries phone 6228 5965

### February/March Program 2010

It is hoped work will soon commence on the church roof which unfortunately will limit the number of events.

10 March 2.00 pm.—‘Nibble and Natter’ in the Parish Hall.  
Every Sunday at 10.15 am, a service of Holy Communion, and also on Good Friday.

### Contact details:

Friends of the Orphan Schools and St. John’s Park Precinct  
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