



# FRIENDS OF THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS

## St John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

Issue 11

Newsletter

May 2011

### FERTILE SOIL: NEW TOWN'S AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE

Sunday 22 May 2011 and 29 May 2011, 2.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m. at the Old Sunday School

Learn about New Town's long association with agriculture. See our photographic displays. Visit St John's Orchard, the Lenah Links Community Garden, and browse the produce stall of goodies from their garden. Take a tour of the Orphan Schools precinct.

Entry to the Old Sunday School is free. Tour is \$10.00 and bookings for the tour are essential.

Phone Joyce: 6234 1392 or email [secretary@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:secretary@orphanschool.org.au) to book your place.

The theme of this year's National Trust Heritage Month is agriculture. We have collected photographs which highlight agricultural aspects of New Town and research which attempts to unravel the confusing history of Government Farms at New Town.

For more information please contact [research@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:research@orphanschool.org.au) or phone Toni Sherwood on 6228 5150.

### Successful Research Seminar

More than 50 people attended a combined research seminar of the Friends of the Orphan Schools Research Group and the Female Convicts Research Group in the Old Sunday School on Saturday 9 April. Members from both groups presented an interesting and varied selection of papers.



**Left to right:** Lucy Frost, Grant Finlay, Ann McLeavy, James Parker, Andrew Cocker

Andrew Cocker told the story of his great-great grandmother, Sarah Briggs. Sarah's mother died on their voyage to Australia and she was subsequently placed in the Orphan School. Andrea Gerrard gave an interesting and well-researched paper which explored three generations of the Quamby and Taylor families and their connection to the Orphan Schools.

Grant Finlay, a postgraduate student

from the University of Tasmania, spoke about Aboriginal children in the Orphan Schools. Lucy Frost told an interesting story about John Offer, a school master in the Orphan Schools and Ann McLeavy explained the history and struggle of her Irish forebears transported to Van Diemen's Land.

Our research group was well represented – besides Andrew's and Andrea's papers Joyce Purtscher explored people's reluctance to admit they or their family members had been admitted to the Orphan Schools,



Rosie Davidson shared some of her research about the burial ground and Toni Sherwood presented some observations about the experience of childhood outside the Orphan Schools.

During the lunch break Joyce and Rosie led a tour of the Precinct, which included the rear section of the Infant Orphan Schools. The group paused in the vicinity of the former Roman Catholic Burial Ground where they scattered rose petals in memory of the orphan children buried there.

## Fox's Feast

Our annual Fox's Feast Picnic Day was held on 27 February. This year the weather, although cool, was fine enough for a picnic, which most of us did in St John's Orchard, the garden of the Lenah Links community group. The members of this group had gone to a lot of trouble to make us welcome. They provided hot drinks and a fire as well as sausages and hamburgers for those of us without a picnic. They also provided a well-stocked produce store. Ruth Mollison, convenor of the group, welcomed us to the garden and told us all a little about the garden. After lunch, Joyce took a tour of the precinct for the St John's gardeners.

## Friends of the Orphan Schools Calendar

Annual General Meeting

Sunday 21 August 2011 2.00 p.m.  
Old Sunday School

Convenor's Annual Report and Election of Office Bearers.

Nomination forms will be circulated prior to the meeting.

The committee of the Friends of the Orphan Schools meets on the second Wednesday of each month at 5.30 pm in the Old Sunday School. If you have any issues you would like raised at the meeting please feel free to contact us: [secretary@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:secretary@orphanschool.org.au)

## Contact us:

The Friends of the Orphan Schools can be contacted by writing to:

PO Box 461  
North Hobart 7002

or emailing:

[secretary@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:secretary@orphanschool.org.au)

Visit our website [www.orphanschool.org.au](http://www.orphanschool.org.au) for up-to-date information about upcoming events and to find out more about the Friends of the Orphan Schools or the Precinct.

We welcome your inquiries and interest.



David, Dianne and Rosie

## Book Launch

Rosie Davidson's book Deaths and Burials in the Parish of St John's was also launched at this year's Fox's Feast. Canon David Lewis, rector at St John's, generously set aside time on his busy Sunday to come along to Fox's Feast and to launch Rosie's book. He spoke enthusiastically about the value of careful and detailed research such as that found in Rosie's work.

The book is available for purchase for \$20.00 plus postage and packing. Please contact the secretary.

## Precinct Tours Prove Popular

Joyce Purtscher's tours of the Orphan School's Precinct are in great demand at the moment. She has recently led a tour for the North Hobart Probus Club and has requests for later in the year. In March she spoke to a group at Vaucluse Gardens. She is a tireless worker for the Friends of the Orphan School and we are grateful for all the work she does so generously. Besides her work as a tour guide her research is the basis of our very popular 'Find an Orphan' page.