



FRIENDS OF THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS

St John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

Issue 18

NEWSLETTER

May 2013

St Johns Church Celebrations

In February 1833, John Lee Archer reported to Governor Arthur about the expense and work required to erect a 'church for the Orphan School Establishment at New Town.'

a gang of sixty effective convicts, consisting of Quarrymen, Masons, Brickmakers, Bricklayers, Sawyers, Carpenters, Plasterers, Painters, Black Smiths, Labourers, and Carters, to be permanently stationed at New Town for twelve months to complete the work, the expense of whose support at the usual estimated cost of each man to the Government (viz. 7/- per week) will amount to £1092.0.0.

Materials and Free labour necessary to complete the staircases, Pewing, Sheet- ing of the roof, Plumbing and Flagging will also be required

(TAHO AOT CSO
1/1/581/13168).

And now 180 years later ...

St John's Church is celebrating 175 years of history during the weekend of 18-19 May 2013.

The organising committee promise a fun and informative day for family, friends and visitors on Saturday 18 May. Between 10.00 am and 3.30 pm there will be displays in the Church, Parish Centre and Orchard, live music and family friendly activities. Tours of the Orchard and Church exploring its long and unique history will take place throughout the day.

On Sunday 19 May 2013 celebrations begin with Holy Communion Service at 10.15. The service will include the dedication of the new trumpet organ stop in memory of Denice Featherstone and will be followed by morning tea in the Parish Hall. Tours will be held between 11.30 and 12.30 and again from 3.30 to 4.30. At 2.30 there is a free concert in the Church with Devonshire Tea to follow at 3.30 pm.

The Friends of the Orphan School have helped to put together some of the displays and will provide support for tours on both days.

The celebrations are a great way to learn more about our precinct and we hope that many of our members and friends take the opportunity to come along on one or both days.

To find out more phone 0404 859449 or visit www.stjohnsnewtown.com

Fox's Feast, Sunday 24 February – Life Membership for Joyce Purtscher

Convenor Diane Snowden welcomed guests to Fox's Feast on Sunday 24 February, before presenting Joyce Purtscher with a well-deserved Life Membership of the Friends of the Orphan Schools. Joyce is a founding member of the Friends of the Orphan Schools and a very reliable and tireless worker for us.

Her research is the basis of our 'Find an Orphan' site, she regularly conducts tours of the precinct and visits community groups to speak about the Orphan Schools. With Rosemary Davidson she was the driving force behind the Memorial Garden and Plaques for the children who died while at the Orphan School. All of us treasure Joyce and very much appreciate her many contributions to our work.

Another feature of the day was a display of paintings, prints and photographs – some of which we had not seen before – from the St Johns Church archive.

Since we began celebrating Fox's Feast in 2009 fine weather has often eluded us and we have been forced to retreat indoors, this year the sun was shining but because it was very hot we again opted for



Joyce (L) with Dianne after the presentation

an indoor picnic. At the end of the day rose petals were scattered in the burial ground site in memory of the orphan children who died.

‘Going Behind the Clock’

On Sunday 28 April, Elaine Crisp presented a very interesting talk ‘Going Behind the Clock: A History of Aged Care at the Orphan Schools Site’ for an audience of around 40 members and friends. Elaine provided an overview of aged care in Tasmania from European settlement in 1804 until the closure of St John’s Park in 1994. She detailed the development of the facilities at our precinct from the opening of the New Town Charitable Institution (NTCI) in 1879 following the closure of the Queens Orphan Schools. In 1930 the NTCI changed its name to the

New Town Rest Home before becoming St John’s Park in 1937.

Elaine described many innovations at St John’s Park including the establishment of the first training school in Australia for aged care nurses and a holiday home at Carlton River for residents of St Johns.

Southern Cross Care provided a delicious and very generous afternoon tea. We are very grateful for this support as well as their interest in our work. We are also very grateful to Elaine and her husband who drove down from Launceston for the day.

Elaine’s talk was taken from her recently completed PhD “In Safe Hands: A History of Aged Care in Tasmania.”

One in ten orphans claimed

A milestone was reached on 1 May when the number of claimed orphans reached 617, or just over one in ten of all orphan records. The 617 orphans were claimed by 505 different people (some claimed more than one) and 528 claims were accompanied by stories of varying complexity or detail.

Our web site manager, Andrew Cocker, described this as an exciting milestone that exceeded initial expectations about the popularity of ‘Find an Orphan.’ Andrew also said that the result clearly showed how much people valued Joyce’s research work. Without her painstaking work in the archives the online database would not be possible. Thanks should also go to Andrew for without his work

'behind the scenes' to maintain and moderate the database it would not be so popular and regularly used.

Future plans for 'Find an Orphan' include contacting those who had claimed an orphan and inviting them to submit a photograph. Photos add an extra dimension to people's stories but so far only fourteen have been provided.

Website redesign

Andrew has been hard at work in the last few months redesigning our website so that it complies with the latest web standards and browsers. This work is in its final stages and should be live very soon.

Snippets from the Archive

Colonial newspapers – many of them online – are a treasure trove for our researchers. Dianne Snowden sent in these:

MOST EXTRAORDINARY OCCURRENCE.—We have heard of an occurrence which, had we not enquired into the facts, and found them to be true, we could not have credited them. A lady, at present residing in Hobart Town, obtained a young girl, as servant, from the Female Orphan School; on Sunday last, the girl offended her mistress, who, on the following morning, sent for a barber and had the girls hair cut closely off. Out of pure charity, we forbear to mention this lady's name;—whether our contemporaries will be equally kind, we shall see (*Colonial Times* 24 March 1840, p.6).

SHOPLIFTING.—Yesterday an elderly female named **Ann Giffard**, about 50, and her son **Arthur William Giffard**, a poor

misguided but intelligent lad of 6, were committed by Mr. Wilmot to take their trial on a charge of stealing two shawls from the shop of Mr. Overell, draper, Liverpool-street, on Monday.

The elder prisoner has but been discharged from gaol, where she was sent for a similar offence, about six weeks; immediately upon which she removed her children from the Orphan Schools, where they had been most kindly placed during her imprisonment; and this is the result to the unfortunate boy. At the request of D.C. Vickers, the apprehending constable, the magistrate ordered that the child be kept separate from its mother for the time preceding trial (*The Courier* 15 February 1855 p.2).

To search colonial newspapers visit <http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper>

Membership

Membership donations provide important financial support for the Friends of the Orphan Schools activities and are a valuable and tangible demonstration of community interest in the site and concern for its preservation.

Our membership year runs from 1 July to 30 June and our annual general meeting and election of office bearers is held in August each year.

Members will be invited to renew their membership in mid-June and we hope you will continue your support.

Upcoming Events

18-19 May: **St Johns Celebrates 175 years** (phone 0404 859449 or visit www.stjohnsnewtown.com for details)

26 May: 1.30-4.00 pm open afternoon and tour (2.00-3.30pm)

18 August: 2.00 pm Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Orphan Schools

September 2013: National Wattle Day – details to be announced.

Contact us

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