



FRIENDS OF THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS

St John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

Issue 23

NEWSLETTER

July 2015

The Tasmanian Sanatorium Association was a volunteer community group which was formed to set up and run the Sanatorium. It ran for forty one years until 1946 when the Sanatorium was handed over to the government. For thirty eight of those years its president was John Evans.



He described his career as cabin boy to Premier, but also rated his contribution to the Sanatorium Association as the greatest work of my public life. Born in Liverpool in 1855 he came to Hobart when his father's seafaring career led to the port being his home base. A self-confessed poor scholar, he went to sea and eventually earned his Master's ticket.

He spent twenty years at sea before accepting a job with a local shipping company. This led to extensive work in the Huon Valley aiding producers to get their produce to markets in Hobart. As a result of his work in the area, he won the seat of Huon in the 1896 election. He became Premier in July 1904 in unusual circumstances, and after winning the subsequent election he remained in power until retiring for health reasons six years later. His time as Premier saw the introduction of the Hare Clark system, the abolition of school fees and establishment of free public education, and legislation to establish the Great Lakes Hydro scheme. He was also

a member of the Federal Committee which chose the Australian flag. He was elected speaker of the Parliament and held that role for three terms or sixteen years. He was knighted in 1926.

The conservation plan to save the Rechabite Hut and the Alan Rogers Chalet has been completed. The Friends now intend to create a display which recognises the remarkable contribution of the Tasmanian Sanatorium Association in creating and running the Sanatorium for forty years. Many thousands of Tasmanian owe their life to the efforts of the association.

The committee would welcome hearing from anyone with images,



REMINDER: AGM 2.00pm Sunday 2 August 2015

memorabilia, correspondence or medical items.

“Footsteps towards Freedom”

Two years ago a small team of volunteers (John Kelly, Lucy Frost, Jo Lyngcoln, Carole Edwards) embarked on a project to remember the arrival of the convict women and their children through a high quality sculpture. Since then, we have produced a Business Plan; registered as a not-for-profit incorporation; set up a website; held general stakeholder meetings; made numerous presentations; and held a public launch. Most important, we have secured the perfect site and commissioned a brilliant sculptor.

After a prolonged search, we have reached an agreement with Vos Construction and TasPorts to locate the sculpture in the forecourt of the Macquarie Wharf No. 1 development. This is exactly where convicts were disembarked onto Hunter Island, and the sandstone remnants of the wharf (under today's concrete apron) are still visible from the water.

Once the site was confirmed, it was time to undertake a search for the artwork which would best meet our aims. A call for expressions of interest was circulated widely in December 2014, with a closing date of March 2015. EOIs were received from local, national, and international artists. The project team met with an expert advisory panel of artists and curators who were impressed by the range and quality of the submissions. Following extensive discussion, each member of the arts advisory panel was asked to indicate his/her top one or two recommendations. The one artist who figured in all responses was Rowan Gillespie.

Because Rowan Gillespie's 'Famine' sculptures in Dublin had been the inspiration for this project, we sent him a copy of the

Artwork Briefing Paper. Initially his response was that for many years he has not participated in competitions. Nevertheless, the project obviously captured his imagination, and he did submit an EOI, saying at its conclusion:

I want to be clear that I am very interested in the commission, I believe that I have the experience to bring the passion needed to the project and feel that it would be long as the final part of a trilogy along with 'Famine' in Dublin and 'Migrants' in Toronto.

We were absolutely thrilled by Rowan's response, and said, yes, please come to visit us in Tasmania.

In mid-June, this internationally renowned artist with sculptures across Europe and North America set out on his first flight from Dublin to Australia. Over the next week he immersed himself in stories of the convict women and their children, and we took him to places where they began their new lives after disembarking from the prison ships.

He was very moved by his visit to the Orphan Schools, and as his ideas about the figures in the sculpture evolved over the week, they came to include a child, probably a boy about eight years old, who stands bewildered on the dockside as his mother and four other women begin their walk towards the Cascades Female Factory. The little boy's future lies in the Orphan Schools.

Rowan Gillespie has now returned to Dublin where he plans to complete his current commissions by the end of this year. In January Rowan will begin work on our sculpture:

I work alone, do everything from concept to installation myself, using the most basic of equipment in a simple workshop at the bottom

of the garden, armed only with ideas and a barrage of techniques, old and new, learned and developed over the 43 years since I poured my first bronze.

If you go to Rowan's website (<http://www.rowangillespie.com>) and click on "Video", you'll learn more about the way he works, and you'll see how astonishing his sculpture is.

Now the job of the project team is to raise money to fund the artwork. We will pay Rowan AU\$60,000 for each of the projected six figures (five women and the boy). At the moment we have sponsorships for three figures from the Hobart City Council; from the Vos family; and from Ros Escott. Donations are also coming in from individuals, and even the smallest amount is most welcome.

If you would like to make a donation, please go to our website at www.footstepstowardsfreedom.com.au. If you would like to know more about the project, feel free to contact us at info@footstepstowardsfreedom.com.au

Lucy Frost,
For the Project Team

Orphan Schools Web Site added to Trove

The National Library of Australia operates Pandora, an archive of selected Australian online publications and web sites with the aim of ensuring long-term access to significant Australian documentary heritage that is published online. Our web site was recently assessed as meeting the selection guidelines and has been added to Trove's Pandora archive.

This means that a twice yearly archive of the site will be saved in perpetuity. Also, the web site content can now be searched as part of the overall Trove content and

this will raise its profile and accessibility. Good news all round!

The Courier (Hobart) 31 January 1853 p.3:

The first female school was established in Davey-street, Hobart Town, in the year 1828. The first male school was established also in 1828, but was situated on the New Town Rivulet. In December 1833 the female establishment was moved to the north wing of the present building and consisted of about 45 girls; six months subsequently they were removed to the south wing, and the boys took possession of the north wing of the building (then complete except the Church), vacated by the girls. The number of the boys consisted of about an equal number as the girls.

1837- 451	1838- 439
1839- 405	1840- 381
1841- 402	1842 - 507
1843 - 486	1844 - 494
1845 - 450	1846 - 399
1847- 448	1848 - 460
1849 - 450	1850 - 507
1851 - 503	1852 - 506

The numbers of children attending the schools during the years:

In 1850 the Roman Catholics compared with the Protestants stood in the proportion of 3 to 2, the numbers being, Roman Catholics 303, Protestants 204, while during the half-year which has just come to a conclusion the numbers, exclusive of the Infant School, ... were Catholics 200, Protestants 160, or the Catholics numbered nearly a fourth more than the Protestants.

**Orphan 5242
Alexander SWEETINGHAM**

Alexander Sweetingham was 4

years old when he arrived in Hobart Town on February 24 1830. He had sailed with his mother Elizabeth (Eliza) Sweetingham and his grandmother Lydia Hart. They left London on November 7 1829 and sailed to Van Diemen's Land on the ship Eliza.

Alexander's father had either died or abandoned them and his mother was transported for larceny. Apparently Eliza needed money to buy medicine for Alexander and she stole fabric to make a petticoat to sell. Alexander's grandmother Lydia was transported for receiving stolen goods. It is possible that Lydia made this claim to being the receiver of stolen goods, in order to be transported with her daughter and grandson rather than remaining alone in England. She had been successfully employed as a senior housekeeper at a manor house in southern England for many years and Eliza was also employed at the manor house as a seamstress. Perhaps they were both fired and transportation seemed a good option.

Alexander is listed by the ship's surgeon as 'W. Sweetingham' as he was sometimes called William. Alexander and five other children between 6 months and 4 years of age were treated during the voyage. They were all 'taken ill at Woolwich' and 'were each repeated attacked with diarrhoea'. Surgeon Thomson blamed their illness upon their diet of salted meat.

On arrival in Hobart Town the two women were sent to the Cascades Female Factory and Alexander was admitted to the King's Orphan School on March 2 1830. Initially this was in a disused distillery on Creek Road until the Queen's Orphan School buildings were finished at New Town. The male children moved into the wing on the north side of the St John's Anglican Church, New Town. This

area was not referred to as St John's Park until 1936.

Alexander's mother is registered as 'Ann' Sweetingham in error as it should have been Elizabeth, or Eliza, which she seemed to prefer. Both Lydia's and Eliza's Certificates of Freedom were dated from July 17 1836 and Alexander was discharged to his mother on June 24 1836. In fact he lived with his grandmother Lydia who had a Ticket of Leave which was gazetted on July 21 1832. Lydia had been employed as a housekeeper at Government House in Hobart and had married Robert Williamson, a Kingston solicitor, at St David's Church, Hobart Town on May 23 1836. The couple became Alexander's guardians and Alexander later changed his name to Williamson.

Alexander SWEETINGHAM WILLIAMSON lived in Kingston and the Brown's River area. He married Elizabeth Stanfield at St Andrew's manse Hobart Town on July 10 1847. Elizabeth was born at Clarence Plains on 7 March 1820, the sixth child of Daniel Stanfield Jnr and Maria (nee Kimberley). Their only known child was William Lackey Sweetingham Williamson who was born in Melbourne on February 2 1848 and baptised September 18 1848 at St James' Church in Melbourne. On his certificate his father is listed as being a timber merchant.

Lydia became Head Housekeeper at old Government House and on retirement the Governor presented her with an antique chair, which had been given to the Governor when he attended a coronation in England. This chair was passed on to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery after Lydia's death on October 26 1879.

It seems that both Lydia and her daughter Eliza took years off their ages when they each married men

much younger than they were. Lydia's head stone at St Clements' Church Kingston states that she was 88 years old, when in fact she would have been 94 or 95 when she died. Her daughter Eliza's headstone in Victoria states she was 33 whereas she would have been 39 when she died- still much too young! They had no idea their descendants would be able to find their date of birth on the www!

Eliza married her second husband, William Henry COPE, in Hobart on February 11 1839. They had three children and travelled to Bathurst in New South Wales, and Melbourne Victoria, where William was a bank manager. Apparently, when the 'establishment ladies and gentlemen' of Melbourne discovered Eliza had been a convict she was so poorly treated and socially shunned that on March 4 1846 she committed suicide. Knowing this makes William's words on her headstone 'Devotedly attached good wife and mother', all the more poignant...

A visit to Shene

Friends recently enjoyed a Sunday morning tour of the historic Pontville property Shene, with its convict built homestead and iconic stable building. The tour included a guided walk through both buildings and a very pleasant morning tea. Dating back to 1819 the prop-

erty became one the homes of Gamaliel Butler and his family and is now privately owned and being restored by the Kernke family. The sandstone is local in origin and gleams bright and white when new. The stable buildings include horse stalls, a tackle room, a small chapel and a large room doubling as a small café and club rooms for polo. The property has more recently become one of the homes of the Hobart Polo Club and a whisky distillery.

We learnt that there are two quirky connections to St John's Park. The first involves the clock in the tower of St John's Church. Apparently this was originally imported to be installed in the tower of the stable building at Shene but as the tower was not completed, the clock went to St John's.

The other connection was through Gamaliel Butler's third son, Francis (1823-1916), who became a successful architect. His designs included the Commercial Bank building on Macquarie Street and the Gothic sandstone stables at Shene. He also designed the tree lined avenue which connects the watch houses on the corner of Main Road and St John's Avenue, and the church. The trees are English Oaks which were propagated at the Botanical Gardens from imported seed. They were planted in 1897 to mark Queen Victoria's jubilee.



St John's Church

2015 Tours

Bookings may be made online for Precinct tours for the remainder of this year. Just follow the link from the home page.

2014 Deadlines for articles for newsletter

Wednesday 12 November: Deadline for articles for December newsletter.

Contact us

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