



FRIENDS OF THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS

St John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

Issue 28

NEWSLETTER

July 2017

What Remains?

It is of great interest to many people to know what remains under the ground of the grassy hillside behind the Old Sunday School at St. John's Park, New Town.

Nearly 80 years ago, in December 1938, Archdeacon Frederick Taylor Whittington was the last person buried at St John's Burial Ground. Over the previous 100 years approximately 2000 people, including just over 400 children from the Orphan Schools, were buried on the site.

In 1963, many vaults and tombstones were removed to Cornelian Bay Cemetery and relocated in the Church of England section F. These removals were privately arranged. The largest vault is that of the Swan family with eleven known burials recorded. Many of the remaining headstones were also moved to Cornelian Bay and were placed in the South-Western corner near the old crematorium. More recently they have been relocated to an area in the former paupers section nearer the entrance to the cemetery.

A list of burials and a brief history of the burial ground, compiled by Rosemary Davidson, has been published by the Friends of the Orphan Schools. (Rosemary Davidson, *Deaths and Burials in the Parish of St John's New Town*, 2010.)



**Relocated headstones
from St John's Burial Ground
to Cornelian Bay**

The only memorial to remain as a visible reminder that this was a burial ground is that of Matthew Forster, Comptroller General of Convicts. Forster married a niece of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur. (A.G.L. Shaw, 'Forster, Matthew (1796-1846)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 1, (MUP), 1966.)

A former nurse shared her memories of seeing some small lead coffins dug up during roadworks some 30 years ago while comparison of aerial photos old and new show that Middle Road has cut through the corner of the Anglican part of the burial ground and that the parking area on the northern side is over the top of grave sites.

It was therefore an offer greatly welcomed when engineering company *GHD Australia* offered to do a geophysical survey of the burial ground. The survey uses ground penetrating signals transmitted downwards and then measured by sophisticated equipment when bouncing back. The transmitter and measuring equipment are transported on a wheeled trolley which in this case was pushed up



Burial Ground 2015

hill and down again by Tim Swann, Senior Technical Officer and GHD's technical expert. Tim covered nine kilometres in gathering the data that covers much of the burial ground and about half the vacant hill side.

Interpretation of the data collected is a specialist task performed in this case by Hugh Tassell, Principal Geophysicist at GHD Civil Engineering. In a special public presentation hosted by the Friends of the Orphan Schools, Hugh and Tim explained to nearly forty interested people how the process works and gave an interpretation of the data.

Two of the key findings are that coffins remain in the burial ground and that there was an unexpected level of disturbance in several places that probably means that soil has been dumped on the site, possibly from surrounding building works and the graves are therefore deeper underground than expected.

Hugh has offered to extend the survey as a project with university students. The Friends thank *GHD*, Hugh and Tim very much for do-

nating their valuable expertise and time to this important work.

To find the burial ground site, travel north from Hobart along Main Road, New Town, past Ogilvie High School. Take the next turn left at the Gatehouses into St John's Avenue. Turn left and then right. The burial ground with the Old Sunday School building and Forster monument are on the left hand side.

Simon Cocker

Special Tour St John's Church

Sunday 30 July 2017 2.00pm

The Friends will host a special tour of St John's Anglican Church on Sunday 30 July at 2.00pm.

The tour will provide information about the church's architecture, history, religious use and the features of the 1835 church building.

Noted colonial architect John Lee Archer designed the church and its parsonage, as well as the Orphan School buildings which form part of the complex. The foundation stone for the church was laid in

1834 and the church opened in 1835. It was consecrated in 1838.

Enjoy a guided tour of the building and hear a demonstration of the historic organ.

The tour will start and finish at the Old Sunday School, where you can view historic displays created by the Friends.

The cost is only \$20 including afternoon tea. Please register online at www.orphanschool.org.au.

To find the Old Sunday School, travel north from Hobart along Main Road, New Town, past Ogilvie High School. Take the next turn left at the Gatehouses into St John's Avenue. Turn left and then right. The Old Sunday School building is on the left hand side.

Closure of The Orphan Schools

Did you know that the Queen's Asylum for Destitute Children (formerly the Queen's Orphan Schools) closed on Monday 19 May 1879? In 1879, there were about 88 children there, although many of these were apprenticed out shortly before the closure of



the institution. In 1879, only thirteen children were admitted to the Asylum and these were 'sent there solely on account of exceptional circumstances, arising either from their own age and conduct or the bad character of their connections.' (*The Mercury* (Hobart) 27 February 1879 p.2) Some of the 1879 admissions were apprentices who were returned to the Asylum. The boarding-out system – placing children with foster parents who were paid a small sum – was increasingly favoured as a method of care, leading to decreased numbers at the Asylum. In May 1879, the *Cornwall Chronicle* reported the closure of the institution (*Cornwall Chronicle* 21 May 1879 p.2 (Wednesday):

THE QUEEN'S ASYLUM—Mr W. Tarleton, P.M., accompanied by Messrs. Downing and Reynolds, proceeded to the Queen's Asylum on Monday (the *Tribune* says), and drafted the children off to the various charitable institutions of this city, and also closed the institution. The following is the number of children transferred:—To the Girls' Industrial School, 5 for a period of 5 years, 3 for 7 years, total 8. Boys' Home, 1 for 2 years, 5 for 3 years, 2 for 4 years, 3 for 5 years, total 11. St. Joseph's Orphanage, 2 for 2 years, 7 for 3 years, 5 for 4 years, 1 for 5 years, total 18. Mr Tarleton addressed some kind words to the children, and the work of transference began immediately after.

If you have any information about the last orphans, please contact the Research Committee:
research@orphanschool.org.au.

Dianne Snowden

Congratulations!

The Friends of the Orphan Schools founder and convenor, Dr Dianne Snowden, was named in the Queen's Birthday Honours for 2017. Dianne was recognised 'For

significant service to the community as an historian and genealogical researcher, to higher education, and to heritage groups'. She was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia (AM). Recognition in the Queen's Birthday Honours List is one of the highest acknowledgments of community service an individual in Australia can receive. The award follows Dianne's induction into the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women earlier this year. Well done, Dianne!



Annual General Meeting 27 August 2017

The Annual General Meeting of the Friends will be held on Sunday, 27 August 2017 at 2.00pm at the Old Sunday School, St John's Park Precinct. Business will include Annual Reports and the election of Office Bearers.

Dianne Snowden, Convenor.

Boys Orphan School

Kickstart Arts have just received a grant of \$210,000 to fund the first stage of essential conservation works for the north wing, boys orphan school, building. The last remaining tenant, Meals on Wheels, has vacated the building in preparation for works to commence which will make the building safe to occupy. Watch for more details on the plans next newsletter.

2017 Deadlines for Newsletter Articles

1 August 2017
1 November 2017

Contact us

Friends of the Orphan Schools,
PO Box 461,
North Hobart,
TAS 7002

www.orphanschool.org.au

email:
secretary@orphanschool.org.au

telephone messages:
03 6285 2654