



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

Issue 8

Newsletter

September 2010

## Website Launch

On Sunday afternoon, 23 May 2010, the Friends of the Orphan Schools and St John's Park Precinct website: [www.orphanschool.org.au](http://www.orphanschool.org.au) was officially launched by the Hon. Lin Thorp, MLC, Minister for Education and Skills, Minister for Children and Minister for Police and Emergency Services. Ms Thorp has a long association with our group and remains interested in our progress and achievements. While Minister for Health she was a strong supporter of our group and instrumental in some of our early achievements.



Lin Thorp with Dianne Snowden and Andrew Cocker

**Following the launch** we presented a digital display of recent and archived images of the Precinct. The display: *The Orphan Schools and St John's Park Precinct, 1833–2010: A Pictorial Guide* included images of John Lee Archer's architectural drawings of early buildings, and photographs from the 1860s until the present day. The images were collected by the Research Committee and compiled by Bruce Woods. The screening was followed by a

successful tour of the Precinct, led by Joyce Purtscher. This event was our contribution to the National Trust's Tasmanian Heritage Festival, this year themed 'Deco to Digital – Our Twentieth-Century Heritage.'

## The FOSP Website

Although launched in May the website had been operational for some months previously. It contains information about the Precinct, publicises events and activities and provides contact details. The website has generated some interest and we receive regular requests from people looking to trace family members who may once have been at the Orphan Schools or the New Town Charitable Institution.

We have been busy over winter building a facility for people to search for their relatives through our 'Find an Orphan' page. Those people who do will be encouraged to provide their details and any information they have about their relative. This will then be available online to others and allow descendants or researchers to make contact with each other. We are in the final stages of quality assurance before this section of the site is online.

## Provisional Heritage Registration

The Tasmanian Heritage Council has provisionally registered the St John's Park Precinct as a consolidated entry in the Tasmanian Heritage Register. This is an exciting development which recognises the site as a whole, rather than individual buildings. The Council's recommendation stresses the Precinct's architectural, arch-

aeological and social significance and its importance as 'a place of institutionalised health care since 1833' which, crucially, 'demonstrates the official response to disadvantaged groups within society ... from the convict period to the present.' Buildings such as the Orphan Schools, the Watchhouses and St John's Church are described as 'fine representative examples of their type' and the archaeological potential of the burial grounds to yield information about the Orphan Schools is also deemed significant. If the Precinct's registration is accepted then it will be permanently registered on the Tasmanian Heritage Register and subject to building regulation for further development.

## A Sense of Community and Continuity

For ten years between 1958 and 1968, Sue Folder and her family lived in the grounds of St John's Park. Sue's father, Bruce Clothier was the Principal Nursing Officer at the time and he, along with other senior people at the hospital, was expected to live on the site. The Clothier's lived in the building now occupied by Cerebral Palsy Tasmania. The house, as Sue remembers it, had four large main rooms with two weatherboard additions at the back. Today the house, although converted to offices, looks much the same on the outside as it did when she lived there. Sue remembers the glassed-in verandah and was told by her father that at one time, someone who suffered from TB lived in the house. The verandah was

then covered with wire netting to allow the free flow of fresh air.

The extensive vegetable and fruit gardens attached to the house are no longer evident. Sue remembers her mother, Beat (Beatrice) working there with the help of their gardener Lal, who lived in Karingal. According to Sue, Lal gave her mother definite instructions about what she should buy for the garden. Sue says that Lal and the other residents of Karingal, built in 1961 to house adults with intellectual disabilities, were affectionately known around the precinct as 'the boys and the girls.' They worked within the precinct and were paid for their labour. They holidayed at Carlton beach and Sue's family visited them there.

The families who lived at St John's all knew each other. They attended Monday night film screenings in the converted dining room of the original Boys Orphan School, along with 'the boys and the girls,' and enjoyed Christmas Dinners delivered to their door from the Hospital kitchen. For the first three years that Sue lived at St John's she attended Ogilvie High and walked to school each morning with the children of other families. Her mother was a volunteer in the St John's kiosk – then located in what we now call the Parish Centre – which provided snacks for St John's staff as well as the students at Ogilvie.

Sue's father had a long career at St John's Park. He first went to work there in 1947 following his discharge from the army Medical Corps. During his time at St John's he witnessed many changes. In the early days of his employment he recalls the nurses had to do all the work. They scrubbed floors and brought food from the kitchen to the wards in a hand-drawn trolley. He remembers when conditions were such that residents, other than those who occupied a hospital bed, made do without sheets and in the absence of toilets used a chamber pot.

Bruce retired from the hospital in 1978, but the family connection continues today. Sue's younger daughter, Michelle, now works in one of the government departments whose offices are located in the Woodhouse building. Conversations with her grandfather suggest that, at one time,

she may have occupied the same office he once used.

### **FOSP focus 2010**

This year, for a number of reasons, we have held very few member events; we hope to be able to remedy this before the end of the year. Plans are underway to establish our hall as a research and information centre which has regular open days – perhaps one afternoon a month. Picture rails have been installed for display and themed photographic displays are being prepared. We also have extensive records from the Orphan Schools and New Town Charitable Institution which we will make available. When this facility is operational we expect to be able to help people looking for their ancestors as well as casual visitors interested in the site.

We experienced a minor setback a few weeks ago when vandals broke into the building. Nothing was stolen and property damage was limited to a broken window and a light globe, however considerable inconvenience was caused after a dry-chemical fire extinguisher was discharged. When Andrew Cocker arrived to open the building for a Tasmanian Family History Society Inc. meeting he found almost all of the surfaces in the room covered in a fine dust. Andrew, assisted by members of the Society, accomplished a rapid clean to enable the meeting to go ahead. If nothing else this has provided an impetus for a proper spring clean of the hall!

We are confident we can take steps to prevent this happening again.

### **A Name for Our Building**

We are struggling to settle on a name for our building. Originally built as a Sunday School in 1882 for the St John's Parish, after the closure of the Orphan Schools, the building has been known as 'The Hall' for a number of years. Since gaining the lease we have referred to it, at different times, as the Sunday School Building, the Old Sunday School, the Sunday School Hall or simply the Hall. Our Research Committee favours Old Sunday School but we would like to know what you think. If you have thoughts on this please contact [research@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:research@orphanschool.org.au) alternatively write to us at: PO Box 461 North Hobart TAS 7002

### **Precinct Tour**

On Sunday, 17 October 2010 at 2.00 p.m. Joyce Purtscher will lead a walking tour around the Precinct, departing from the Sunday School Hall. **Prior booking is essential for this tour.**

Phone Joyce on (03)62341392 to make a booking or contact [secretary@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:secretary@orphanschool.org.au)

A donation of \$10 is requested.

### **Annual General Meeting**

FOSP will hold its third Annual General Meeting on Thursday, 11 November 2010 at 5.30 p.m. in the Sunday School Hall. The guest speaker for this meeting is yet to be advised.

### **Repairs to Orphan School Windows**

At long last protective glazing has been installed along the outside of ground floor windows of the former Boy's Orphan School. However, the upper story windows are still a concern. Several of them have broken panes and while security is not a risk, rain could result in significant water damage.

### **A Tunnel from *Carolside*?**

From time to time we are asked if we know anything about a tunnel which connected the Orphan School to *Carolside*, 219 New Town Road. Our research has not uncovered any evidence of such a tunnel and we are at a loss to explain why one may have existed. We will keep working on this and if you have anything that might help us we would love you to share it with us. Contact us at

[research@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:research@orphanschool.org.au) or write to: PO Box 461 North Hobart TAS 7002

### **St John's Church Concerts**

**Sunday 10 October**, 2.30 pm: Brahms French Horn Trio and Beethoven's Violin Spring Sonata. Donation: \$10.00.

**Tuesday 19 October** at 7.30 pm: Free concert by students of Elizabeth College Campus.

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Please note that our mailing address has changed. Anything you need to send us should be sent to our new address at:

**PO Box 461 North Hobart 7002**

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