



**Friends of the Orphan Schools, St. John's Park Precinct, New Town, Tasmania
15th Annual Report 21 August 2022**

It is a privilege to present the 15th Annual Report of the Friends of the Orphan Schools.

The Friends of the Orphan Schools was founded at a public meeting held in St John's Church, New Town, on 14 December 2007. It was officially launched on 20 May 2008. Since that time, the Friends of the Orphan Schools, with the support of its members and the community, has gone from strength to strength.

The aims that we identified in our first year have not changed and remain to:

- raise awareness of the historical importance of the precinct and the need for conservation;
- conduct research into the history and heritage significance of the site;
- encourage the development of a Conservation Management Plan; and
- work towards listing on the National Heritage Register.

Many more members of the community, in Tasmania and beyond, are now aware of the existence of the Orphan School buildings and their history but we still have more work to do to

counteract some of the myths and misinformation associated with the site.

At the Annual General Meeting held on 22 August 2021, the following were elected:

President: Dianne Snowden

Vice President: 1) Christine Woods
2) David Lewis

Secretary: Jane Hodgman

Treasurer: vacant

General Committee Members (up to 4):

Richard Watson; Bernadette Bell; Bill Stewart

Public Officer: Bill Stewart was appointed Public Officer.

Web Secretary: Andrew Cocker was appointed Web Secretary.

The position of Treasurer was filled after the close of the Annual General Meeting, when Michelle Austen volunteered to take on the role. Unfortunately, Michelle later resigned for family reasons. Margaret Dalkin joined the Committee during the year and has meticulously undertaken a reconciliation of membership records. Unfortunately, Margaret is no longer able to continue on the committee for health reasons. I thank both Michelle and Margaret and wish them all the best.

Once again, your Committee has worked conscientiously throughout the year on your behalf. Without the Committee, there would be no Friends of the Orphan Schools. I thank all the Committee for their energy, enthusiasm, and support. Jane Hodgman has done an exceptional job as Secretary, as has

Christine Woods, who volunteered to act as Treasurer after the resignation of Michelle Austen. I thank them both. Thank-you, too, to Bernadette Bell, who for many years now has looked after catering for our events; to David Lewis, who has been our diligent Hall Manager; and to Bill Stewart, our Public Officer. Andrew Cocker has continued as Web Secretary. I thank them all.

Our Guest Speaker at the Annual General Meeting was Committee Member and Tour Guide, Richard Watson, who spoke about the Great Exhibition of 1851, held at the Crystal Palace, London, and the connection with the Queen's Orphan Schools.

Fox's Feast was held on Sunday 27 February 2022 from 12-2 pm in the Old Sunday School with special guest speaker, Jan Liddicutt, from Victoria, talking about her Orphan School connections. This was followed by a simple BYO lunch, after which the traditional scattering of rose petals took place on the burial ground adjacent to the Old Sunday School. Many of those who attended *Fox's Feast* moved to the ground in front of the Infant Orphan School, where the unveiling of Rowan Gillespie's Orphan School Children took place. As you know, the Friends of the Orphan Schools have been a supporter of the Rowan Gillespie statue project, *From the Shadows*, and we are pleased to see the statues in place. The next stage of

this project will be interpretation signs and seating and *From the Shadows* is working with Curio Projects to achieve this.

Tours continued throughout 2021-2022, with our regular tours held in October, November, March, and July. Special tours were arranged for the Fellowship of First Fleeters, Derwent Chapter, in October, and the Ionian Club in June. The first raised \$315 and the second, \$460. A total of \$1075 was raised. Thank-you very much to our Tour Guides, Jane Hodgman and Richard Watson, for their ongoing commitment to our tour program.

The Research Committee, convened by Christine Woods, continued to meet on a regular basis throughout the 2021-2022 year. As I mentioned at the Annual General Meeting last year, 2023 marks the 195th anniversary of the establishment of the first Orphan Schools and the Research Committee is working towards two publications: one about the St John's Park Precinct site, compiled by the Research Committee, and another about the people associated with the site, with contributions from members and others. As well, in partnership with Kickstart Arts Centre, through the assistance of Jason James, we will be holding an Open Day in the Orphan School buildings, on 25-26 March 2023. It is an ambitious program, and we welcome any assistance you can provide.

We are currently updating our database, looking for duplications and mistakes. As you can imagine, this is a slow painstaking process, and the Research Committee is doing an amazing job. Members of the Research Committee also respond to queries about individual orphans and the site generally. Thank-you very much to Christine Woods, Jane Hodgman, Richard Watson, and Deb Norris.

As I reported last year, the Committee undertook to organise conservation work on the weather vane removed from the 1920 rectory garage. After conservation work, the weather vane will be placed on the cowshed on the site. Thank-you to Bruce and Christine Woods for their help with this project.

On 26 May 2022, at the invitation of Peter Hughes, TMAG Senior Curator of Decorative Arts, a small group from the Committee, with our Life Member, Joyce Purtscher, visited TMAG's Rosny repository to view the recently acquired Orphan School sampler. We have asked if the samplers could be put on display at TMAG as part of the 195th anniversary commemoration.

Thank-you, too, to Paul Swift of *Insurance Masters*, for organising our insurance policy.

There has been no progress on the updating of the 2009 Conservation Management Plan for the site. As I mentioned last year, a Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is the

principal guiding document for the conservation and management of a heritage place. The main objective of the CMP is to ensure that decisions about a place are carried out with regard to its cultural heritage significance. The Committee will continue to advocate for an update.

And finally, my heart-felt thanks to our members and supporters, who share an enthusiasm for the history of the Orphan School children and our significant heritage site. I look forward to working with you again during the coming year.

Dr Dianne Snowden AM
President
Friends of the Orphan Schools, St John's Park Precinct
21 August 2022