



# FRIENDS OF THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS

## St John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

Issue 29

NEWSLETTER

August 2017

**New Tour Guides Raring to Go** Tours of the St John's Park Precinct have recommenced.

In March, Simon Cocker, Richard Watson, Bill Stewart and Jane Hodgman were lucky enough to have Robyn Everist share her valuable experiences as a tour guide to help develop a thorough and engaging walking tour of the St John's Park Precinct.

Each new tour guide has a personal connection with the site and has been able to weave their family stories into their tour.

The history of the site was researched and photos unearthed. It was discovered that socks, gloves, shawls and stockings knitted by the girls at the Queens Orphanage were exhibited at the Great Exhibition in London in 1851 and that during World War Two, veterans living at Gellibrand House made camouflage nets for the war effort.

Now, armed with a folder of fascinating photos and riveting facts, our new tour guides are ready to impress visitors to the site. Jane Hodgman

### Wattle Day

The celebration of Wattle Day in Australia has a long history but it was not until 1992 that Governor-General Bill Hayden declared that '1 September in each year shall be observed as "National Wattle Day" throughout Australia and in the external Territories of Australia'. The celebration of Wattle Day has strong links to the St John's Park precinct as it raised funds for the Consumptive Sanatorium located on the site.

One of the earliest Tasmanian references to Wattle Day was published in the *Daily Post* (Hobart) on 11 September 1912:

### WATTLE DAY.

Yesterday was quite a red letter day in the city—the inauguration of Wattle Day. A very large number of ladies conducted stalls for the disposal of the golden blossom, the proceeds to go to the funds of the Consumptive Sanatorium. The leading business places were decorated with blossom, and everybody wore a sprig of the national emblem. Much of the success of the celebration was due to Miss Maggie Moore, the popular actress, and the members of the M'Sweeney Company. The climax was reached at 4 p.m, when Miss Maggie Moore's hat was disposed of by auction at the Tourists' Bureau, where over 1000 people



Jane Hodgman conducting a tour with new members (and orphan descendants) from Victoria, Lorraine Kennedy and Marisa Long

gathered. The bidding in shillings, at the close, reached £2/4/, when Mr. H. Hawkins, of the Stock Exchange, became the purchaser. Hearty cheers were given for Miss Maggie Moore, the members of her company, and the ladies who assisted during the day. The streets were crowded in the afternoon, and 'Wattle Day' may be said to have been established with the greatest of enthusiasm. By courtesy of Nettlefold's transport service Miss Maggie Moore was taken for a couple of hours' motor ride round Hobart and its environs.



**Join us** on 3 September 2017 from 11am for an informal Wattle Day BYO picnic in the St John's Orchard, St John's Avenue, New Town.

### Special Church Tour

On Sunday 30 July, in the Old Sunday School and St John's Church, the focus of our special event was on the history of St John's Church. Approximately 35 people, including St John's parishioners attended. Such was the suc-

cess of the event that we hope to make it a regular July feature.

### New Town Charitable Institution (Invalid Depot)

An Invalid Depot was a government run institution for people who were sick and in poverty. The New Town Charitable Institution was housed in the former buildings of the Queen's Orphan School after it closed in 1879. Women were housed in the former Infant Orphan School from 1874. The Institution underwent a number of name changes: from 1912-1934, it was known as the New Town Infirmary; from 1934-1936, it was the New Town Rest Home; and from 1936-1994, St John's Park Hospital.

The Friends of the Orphan School are starting to research this period of the site's history. If you would like to be involved, please contact Dianne Snowden, [convenor@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:convenor@orphanschool.org.au).

### BREAKING WINDOWS.—

Bridget Hollogan, an inmate of the Invalid Depot at New Town; was charged by Mr Scott, the Superintendent, with having broken three panes of glass valued at 6s 6d and a door, to which damage had been done to the extent of 10s.

Kate Ranston, head nurse and cook, said as she was sitting in the

kitchen, the prisoner came in and broke three panes of glass with the heel of her boot, and she was then locked up. She afterwards smashed the door with a board.

The prisoner said she would prefer going to New Norfolk to being returned to the asylum, and she was informed by the Bench that she was not justified in destroying Government property, but, if she had any complaint to make, she should go to the superintendent, and he would forward it to the Colonial Secretary. She had rendered herself liable to three months' imprisonment and would be sent to the Cascades for fourteen days.

Prisoner: Thank your Worship; I shall get plenty to eat there. God bless you!

[*The Tasmanian* (Launceston) 9 January 1875 p.4.]

### The Old Sunday School 1882

The building now known as the Old Sunday School was constructed in the early 1880's as a Sunday School following the closure of the Queen's Orphan School. Previously St. John's Church had used a room in the Orphan School for Sunday School classes but this was not available after the Orphan Schools closed in 1879. The new Sunday School building was designed by E. C. Rowntree and tenders for its construction were called in May 1881. Money to fund the school was raised by subscription from parishioners and a bazaar in August 1882 which contributed £27 16s 7d. The building was opened on 17 August 1882 by the Archbishop of Tasmania, Charles Henry Bromby, who was also a subscriber to the Sunday School.





### **A Desecration.—**

The old Roman Catholic Cemetery adjoining the Invalid Depôt at New Town is at present in a most dilapidated and disgraceful condition. The fence is broken down and rotted away, and cattle are at liberty to roam at will through 'God's acre,' trampling down the mounds. Something should be done to prevent a continuance of such a desecration. The graveyard contains the remains of many old residents, long since deceased.

[*The Mercury* (Hobart) 21 October 1887 p.2.]

### **Memorial Garden**

Thank-you to Ruth Mollison, who has kindly agreed to take on the maintenance of the Memorial Garden.

### **A note from the Membership Secretary**

Dear Members,  
We encourage you to take the time to explore our website. Browsing through the dropdown menus not only allows you to 'Find or Claim an Orphan' and discover stories about the orphans' lives after they were discharged from the orphan schools, but also opens up an informative insight into the history

of the St John's Park Precinct. Coming events are listed on the 'Contact Us' dropdown menu. This is an informative list of annual events, upcoming tours and more, with the opportunity to register for events online. We welcome your feedback.

Deborah Norris, Membership Secretary

### **Female Convicts Research Centre Spring Seminar 2017**

The next seminar is on Sunday, 8th October, 2017 at the Hobart Town Hall. Registration is now open. There will be a fascinating line-up of papers, with topics ranging from cross-dressers to runaways and body-snatchers.

Cost is \$40 a head and includes morning tea and light lunch. Bookings and payments must be finalised by Sunday, 1st October. <http://www.femaleconvicts.org.au/>

### **10th AGM 27 AUGUST 2017**

The 10th Annual General Meeting of the Friends of the Orphan Schools, St John's Park Precinct, 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 Re-

ports and the election of Office Bearers.

Guest speaker: Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, University of Tasmania: 'Using the Founders and Survivors Database to Keep Track of the Past'.  
Dianne Snowden, Convenor.

### **General Meeting 21 Sep 2017**

On September 21, Deb Norris will speak about her current research into the Irish boys who came with their convict fathers. The meeting will be held on 21 September. Arrival time 5.30 for a pre-meeting cuppa. The meeting will start at 6 pm.

### **2017 Newsletter Article Deadlines**

1 November 2017

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