



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

Issue 2

Newsletter

February 2009

## Coming Events

### 'Fox's Feast' Picnic Day

The Descendants of Orphans Interest Group first Picnic Day will take place on 15 February 2009, from 12 noon until 3.00pm. We are planning to meet in St. John's Avenue in front of the church as the actual site will be depend on weather conditions on the day. All descendants and interested friends are welcome to attend.

Displays are being prepared and there will also be a camera, scanner and computer to help record the events of the day and any items of memorabilia and information that we hope you will bring to share. A searchable descendants' database will be available.

Bring a picnic lunch and a rug or chairs for seating if the weather is suitable for outdoors and don't forget to dress for the weather. Hot water will be available for making drinks.

A service of Holy Communion will be held in St. John's Church commencing at 10.15am and all are welcome to attend—a good opportunity to view the children's seating, and that of the convicts, at the conclusion of the service.

Registration will take place on the day from approximately 11am onwards but it would be appreciated if expressions of interest could be emailed to Chris Woods at [bcwoods@bigpond.net.au](mailto:bcwoods@bigpond.net.au) (to make sure your name is included on the Descendants Register), or phone Dianne Snowden on 0409 140 657 for further information.

Joyce Purtscher will be happy to take groups on a tour of the area with particular emphasis on the school buildings.

For those who did not receive the first newsletter—the picnic is to celebrate the annual 'Fox's Feast' day that was held each year for the children in the Orphan School. John Fox, a former convict, left a bequest to the Orphan School for the children to have an outing each year on the anniversary of his death.

## Friends of the Orphan School and St. John's Park Precinct Calendar Dates

- 15 February, 12.00–3.00pm. Fox's Feast Picnic Day for descendants of orphans and interested friends, St. John's Park Precinct.
- 8 March, 2.00pm. Tour of St. John's Park Precinct with Warwick Oakman. Please contact the secretary to make a booking on 6228 2152.
- 12 March, 5.30pm. General Meeting in the Parish Centre. Guest speaker to be announced.
- 19 April, 2.00pm. Tour of St. John's Park Precinct with Warwick Oakman. Please contact the secretary to make a booking on 6228 2152.
- 14 May, 5.30pm. General Meeting in the Parish Centre. Guest speaker Robert Vincent on the Isolation Huts at St. John's Park.
- 24 May, there will be a Musical Event as part of Heritage Week.

## St. John's Church February Program 2009

St Johns Avenue, New Town.  
Enquiries phone 6228 5965

- 1 February, 10.15am. Holy Communion followed by a cuppa in the Parish Centre.
- 5 February, 5.10pm. Organ Recital with Mary de Hoog and David Featherstone.
- 8 February, 10.15am. Book of Common Prayer followed by a cuppa in the Parish Centre.
- 15 February, 10.15am. Holy Communion followed by a cuppa in the Parish Centre.
- 22 February, 10.15am. Holy Communion and shared lunch.
- 25 February, 10.15am. Ash Wednesday Service.

## Our First Annual General Meeting

The AGM was held in St. John's Church, New Town, 4 December 2008. The meeting began with the election of Committee Members whose nominations were all accepted unopposed.

Convenor: Dianne Snowden  
Deputy Convenor: Toni Sherwood  
Secretary: Karen Stott  
Treasurer: Simon Cocker  
Assistant Treasurer: Roger Stott  
Public Officer: Karen Stott

The following appointments were confirmed.

Research Group: Toni Sherwood  
Descendants' Group: Chris Woods  
Web Manager: Andrew Cocker

Newsletter: Rosie Davidson and Toni Sherwood.

Committee Members: Rosie Davidson, David Featherstone, Warwick Oakman, Joyce Purtscher and Jessie Wagner.

Chris Tassell, Managing Director, National Trust in Tasmania, was the guest speaker. Chris outlined the changes in the organisation and summarised its activities and achievements in the two years since the National Trust Act was passed by the State Government. This legislation provided the Trust with an accountable Board of Directors appointed by the Minister, a Managing Director, a funding agreement with the Tasmanian Government, and an independent and transparent annual audit process. With the passing of this legislation the Trust accepted responsibility for heritage advocacy, education, property management and support of community heritage activities.

Given the recent history of the Trust, re-establishing its credibility and capacity of the Trust was seen as a principal concern of the new Board. Since its appointment in March 2007 it has worked hard to ensure that governance is effective. To this end rules have been set in place for Trust operation, a code of behaviour for Trust directors has been established and Terms of Reference for Trust committees and groups have been developed. Importantly steps have been taken to ensure adequate financial reporting and improved asset management.

Chris was pleased to report that by the end of the 2007–2008 financial year the Trust had successfully achieved a surplus in its operating budget, reduced its debt by almost 50% to \$400,000 and launched an Income Support Scheme. It had also negotiated a triennial funding agreement with the State Government and installed an effective IT system at the State Office and at Trust properties.

The Trust has responsibility for 14 key Tasmanian heritage properties which it either owns or leases. In the past 18 months the organisation has identified maintenance issues for buildings and grounds and has begun to address these issues. Grants from the Tasmanian Community Fund and

the Tasmanian Heritage Council Conservation Fund have facilitated repairs to the roofs of Oak Lodge at Richmond, the Umbrella Shop in Launceston and Ellis House. Two major and exciting projects in which the Trust was involved were the redevelopment of Home Hill in conjunction with the Devonport City Council, and the development of the Norfolk Plains Heritage Centre and Lake Masonic Lodge at Longford.

Chris pointed out that the Trust manages one of the four largest publicly owned heritage collections in Tasmania. Efforts have been made to adequately catalogue this collection and provide a suitable environment for this very valuable asset. An Arts Tasmania Small Museum's Grant has provided funds to document Trust collections at the Umbrella Shop, Norfolk Plains, the Penitentiary Chapel library and Home Hill. Environmental data logging equipment has been installed at Home Hill, Franklin House, Runnymede, Oak Lodge and Clarendon. Specific research projects such as one at Runnymede which looks at the women who lived there, and another based at Clarendon and Franklin House focused on the contribution of women to the collection of marine algae flora in the nineteenth century also contribute in this area.

The new administration has worked hard to increase the Trust's community activities and raise its profile. A new website launched in late 2007 has been important in helping achieve this. This site carries a great deal of content about the organisation, its properties, collections and activities. Collection guides and small virtual tours of some properties are two key innovations. Events associated with Seniors Week, Living Writers Week and the Heritage Festival were held at several Trust properties and in 2009, five properties will host major contemporary art installations as part of Ten Days on the Island. This increased activity has contributed to an increase in visitor numbers at Trust properties (more than 50,000 in the last two years). Membership numbers have risen by 18%, along with an increase in volunteer numbers. The National Gallery of Victoria indicated its support with the donation of

furniture for Franklin House and Clarendon.

Considerable effort has also been made to establish strong relationships with local governments. The Launceston City Council Heritage Advisory Committee has been re-established and requests have been received from other councils to participate in various committees and initiatives.

Chris concluded his address with a reminder that although the Trust had made significant progress in recent times much was still to be done. He was confident that the new-look administration would continue to work to reduce the Trust's present level of debt, develop excellent standards for maintenance and interpretation of heritage properties and maintain its strong advocacy for the preservation of Tasmania's cultural heritage.

The singing of Christmas carols to the accompaniment of the wonderful organ, played by David Featherstone, was enjoyed by all who participated, along with the excellent supper in the Parish Centre.

A 2009 calendar, with coloured reproductions of architectural working drawings, by John Lee Archer, for the building of St. John's Church was launched at the conclusion of the meeting. The originals are held in the Archives Office of Tasmania and have been collected and presented by Robert Vincent, Cultural Heritage Practitioner and Conservation Architect, with the aim of highlighting the importance of this nationally significant site and to make a connection between the symbolic nature of the place and its original purpose.

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#### **Contact details:**

Friends of the Orphan School and St. John's Park Precinct  
PO Box 111 Moonah TAS 7009

#### **email:**

friends.orphanschool.stjohnspark@gmail.com

#### **web site:**

www.nationaltrusttas.org.au/friendsorphans/pages/friendsorphans.htm