



FRIENDS OF THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS and St John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

Issue 10

Newsletter

February 2011

End-of-year concert

The Friends of the Orphan Schools ended the year on a high note. The Choir of High Hopes (Hobart) concert held on Sunday 28 November 2010 in St John's Church attracted a large and enthusiastic audience, who were generously entertained by the Choir, along with soloists Melinda Briton, Sylvia Romeike, Lucy Henry, poet Ron Challis and St John's organist, David Featherstone. From the proceeds of the concert we were able to make a donation of \$300.00 to the St John's Organ Repair Fund.

St John's Community Orchard

The sustainable living group, Lenah Links, in Lenah Valley, Hobart has established a community garden within the St John's Park Precinct. The garden is part of the backyard of the former rectory at 9 St John's Avenue and is an example of the once ample urban backyard – where there was plenty of room for fruit trees, chooks and a game of cricket. Most of these big backyards have disappeared from inner city suburbs, as blocks are subdivided and houses built, leaving little green space for inner city inhabitants. Fortunately, in this case, the Anglican Diocese's involvement has preserved the space from development.

The Lenah Links community group negotiated with the church to take out a lease on the garden, to relieve them of the task of maintaining such a large block. The garden has a lovely

ambience with a mature walnut tree providing shade for summer picnics, an old chook shed (in need of a makeover) plus an assortment of fruit trees including apricots, nectarines, apples, peaches and a mulberry tree. It is in the ideal position to invite local residents to come and relax and grow some food.

The group's convenor, Ruth, says local residents are very welcome to join the garden group. At present they are clearing the last of the woody weeds, so they can put in some individual allotments. Ruth says any assistance would be welcome. She also mentions that her group would welcome some help to construct a verandah off the tool shed, a compost bin and a picnic table.

During summer, the group has a barbecue dinner in the garden each Thursday from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. and visitors are welcome to come along for a chat.

On the last Sunday of every month, the group meets to garden from 11:30 a.m. until 3.00 p.m. After some gardening they light the pizza oven and have a wood fired pizza.

For more information ring Ruth on mobile: 0408 344 105

Fox's Feast Picnic Day

Our annual Fox's Feast Picnic Day will be held on Sunday 27 February 2011 from 12:00 until 3:30 p.m. This year we will meet in the Old Sunday School from midday. Canon David Lewis of St John's Church will launch Rosemary Davidson's book: *Deaths*

and Burials in the Parish of St John's New Town at about 12:30 p.m.; after this, if the weather is fine, we will picnic in the St John's Community Orchard. After lunch Joyce Purtscher will conduct a short tour of the Precinct.

Please bring your picnic lunch and a rug or chairs for seating. If the weather is unsuitable, we can eat in the Old Sunday School.

Hot water, tea, coffee and milk will be available for making drinks.

Copies of *Deaths and Burials in the Parish of St John's New Town* will be available for purchase for \$20.00.

All descendants and interested Friends are welcome to attend this celebration, commemorating the annual summer picnic day for children at the Orphan Schools. It was originally funded from the estate of former convict John Fox who never married and who worked for many years on the Derwent River where he provided transport between New Norfolk and Hobart. At the time of his death in 1859 he bequeathed his estate of almost £500 to the Queen's Orphan Schools. He stipulated his bequest should 'stimulate the industry of the children and ... afford them at least once in the year a day of healthful and innocent recreation'.

The first Fox's Feast was held in 1861 and then annually from 1865 until the closure of the Queen's Orphan Schools in 1879. This tradition was revived by the Friends of the Orphan Schools in 2009 and has been held annually since.

Find an Orphan

Late last year – thanks to our web manager, Andrew Cocker and Joyce Purtscher, who compiled the research – we added a ‘Find an Orphan’ page to our website. This page provides access to the names of all children at the Orphan Schools from the 1830s until its closure in 1879. It has excited a lot of interest and lifted our profile considerably. Researchers and descendants are invited to ‘claim an orphan.’ So far seventy-one orphans have been claimed and extra information about individual orphans has been added. To visit this page go to: www.orphanschool.org.au and follow the links (on the left-hand side of the screen) to ‘Find an Orphan’.

Old Sunday School update

During the summer break, Andrew installed a ceiling-mounted data projector which will make presentations both more professional and easier to execute as the need for cables across the floor is alleviated. Rosie Davidson has been busy too – preparing poster displays which focus on different aspects of the Precinct’s history.

Open Days: From 5 March 2011 the Old Sunday School will open regularly on first Sunday of each month from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. Members of the research group will be working in the building but will be on hand to answer questions about the Precinct, share their research and assist with research queries.

Members and their friends are welcome to drop in.

Events in 2011

The Friends of the Orphan Schools Research Group will hold a short information session on Wednesday, 23 February at 5:30 p.m. in the Old Sunday School. We will outline plans which include a twice-yearly seminar series along with an annual publication of research about the Orphan Schools Precinct. If you are interested in research generally, or have a particular aspect of the Precinct’s history that you would like to research then it would be lovely to see you there. We can suggest topics and tasks for interested researchers.

For more information please contact research@orphanschools.org or phone Toni Sherwood on 6228 5150.

Research Group Seminar

On Saturday 9 April 2011, we will hold a joint seminar with the Female Convicts Research Group (Tasmania) – the new name for the Female Factory Research Group – in the Old Sunday School. The seminar’s focus is the Orphan Schools of Van Diemen’s Land; short papers of 15 minutes will be presented by both members of the Female Convicts and Orphan Schools Research Groups.

The seminar will run from 9:30 – 3:30 p.m. with a break for lunch and a tour of the Precinct.

All members of the Friends are welcome to attend.

If you are interested in presenting a 15 minute paper associated with any aspect of the Orphan Schools – stories of particular children in the schools, stories about staff members or research about other issues related to the schools – please email brief details to research@orphanschool.org.au by 7 March 2011.

We are also happy to answer any queries you may have.

Tasmanian Heritage Festival 2011

New Town’s agricultural heritage will be the focus of our Tasmanian Heritage Festival events this year. On Sunday 22 May 2011 and Sunday 29 May 2011 from 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. we will present ‘Fertile Soil: New Town’s Agricultural Heritage’. This display maps the trajectory of agricultural development and decline in New Town. St John’s Community Orchard will be open for visits on both days and conducted tours of the precinct will be available each Sunday.

The tour costs \$10.00 and bookings are essential.

Please phone Joyce on 6234 1392 to make a booking for the tour.

Have you renewed your membership?

Reminder notices for membership renewal were issued in January. If you have not renewed please consider doing so. Your tax deductible membership donation will not only provide invaluable financial support for the

Friends group, but more importantly, your continued membership is a valuable and tangible demonstration of community interest in the site and concern for its preservation. Your continued support will help ensure that the national heritage significance of our precinct, along with the need for conservation and preservation, is recognised.

To renew visit <http://orphanschool.org.au/join.htm> to pay by bank transfer or download a membership renewal form. Renewal forms may be posted along with your donation to PO Box 461, North Hobart, TAS 7002

Contact us:

The Friends of the Orphan Schools can be contacted by writing to: **PO Box 461 North Hobart 7002** or emailing: secretary@orphanschool.org.au

Visit our website www.orphanschool.org.au for up-to-date information about upcoming events and to find out more about the Friends of the Orphan Schools or the Precinct.

We welcome your inquiries and interest.