



FRIENDS OF THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS

St John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

Issue 19

NEWSLETTER

December 2013

Annual General Meeting 2013

This year our Annual General Meeting was held on Sunday 18 August at 2.00 p.m. in the Old Sunday School. Twenty members attended. The Convenor, Dianne Snowden, read her Annual Report for 2012/2013, mentioning the many activities conducted over the past year and thanking the committee and other members for their participation and support. Special mention was made of the website and all the work put into developing and maintaining it by Andrew Cocker; the activities of the Research and Publications Group and of the retirement of Joyce Purtscher, whose contribution over the years has been so important.

Simon Cocker distributed copies of the Financial Statements for the year ending 30 June 2013 and spoke to these statements, noting while funds overall are down for the year overall, due to a variation in activities, the revenue for tours, publication sales, hall hire and membership fees are all up. Additional expenditure has been incurred through printing costs and the restoration work being undertaken on the Consumption Chalets.

Election of Office Bearers

This was conducted by Sue Newitt as Returning Officer.

Convenor

Dianne Snowden

Secretary

Andrew Cocker

Treasurer

Simon Cocker

Committee Members:

Bernadette Bell

Lorraine Davidson

Berry Dunston

Peter Gaggin

Chris Leppard

David Lewis

Ex-Officio (New Town Primary)

Di Smith

Following the formal meeting, we visited the South Wing (Female Orphan School) to hear about Kickstart Arts activities from Jami Bladel, Artistic Director, before returning to the Old Sunday School for afternoon tea.

Wattle Day 1 September 2013

A very pleasant afternoon was spent in the sunshine in the St John's Orchard, the garden of the Lenah Links Community Group, celebrating Wattle Day. Originally, funds were raised on Wattle Day for those in the Consumption Chalets. We hope to make this an annual event.

Open Doors 1-3 November

Along with several other heritage sites, we participated in Heritage Tasmania's 'Open Doors' program which ran over the weekend of 1-3 November. The high-profile program, now in its sixth year, was launched by the Minister for Tourism, Scott Bacon. Our site was the first to be booked out and we offered an additional tour to cater for the high level of interest. The ground floor of the South Wing (the Girls Orphan School) and the ground floor of the North Wing (the Boys Orphan School) - including the theatre - were opened for the event.

Joyce Purtscher and Dianne Snowden, with the assistance of the Friends Committee members, were tour guides. Jami Bladel from Kickstart spoke about her program which operates from the South Wing and David Featherstone gave a superb organ recital in the Church. All in all, a great success.

School visits to the Orphan Schools

Committee members have been working with teachers with a view to bringing classes to visit the Orphan Schools. The National History Curriculum has a focus on local history for primary school classes.

One early childhood class has already made a very successful visit to the precinct and a group of teachers has visited the site to learn more for future visits. The curriculum aims to develop an understanding of how things change through time. This includes the different ways buildings have been used and changing life styles. The Friends committee believes that it is important to assist teachers and students to be more aware of our unique site.

Lorraine Davidson and Bernadette Bell, Co-ordinators.

Did You Know?

That between the first in 1836 and the last in 1938, some 2000 burials took place at St John's. Most headstones were relocated to Cornelian Bay in 1963 and they are now lined up near the entrance. Some remains and the vaults and tombstones were privately relocated to the Church of England Section F. Those relocated include:

1. The large Swan family vault.
2. Reverend William Wallace Fullerton Murray MA . Born in Scotland in 1820, he was ordained as a deacon and then priest in England in 1843. He arrived in Van Diemen's Land on board the barque Wellington on 9 October 1850, at the invitation of Governor Sir William Denison to tutor his children. His first chaplaincy, from 1850-1854, was Clarence Plains, and then New Norfolk, from 1854 to 1893. He died at The Tower, 1 Tower Road, New Town in 1894. A stained glass window has been erected to his memory in St Matthew's Church at New Norfolk.
3. George Herbert Bailey. Born in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) in 1853 George toured England in Australia's first cricket tour in 1878. His great great grandson,

George Bailey is touring England in the current Ashes series.

Report on Chalet Project

The Chalet project has reached a vital point where we can no longer rely on volunteers and will have to pay a builder. We have finished the external conservation work and thanks to Peter Gaggin we have completed the planning and design work and also achieved the range of permissions and permits required to do the work. The next step is to construct new foundations so the timber structures can be lifted out of the dirt and then to rebuild the steps and verandas.

The huts will have to be lifted by crane onto the new foundations. Construction firm Fairbrother is assisting the project and has advised that it will cost around \$18,000 plus GST to complete. This is clearly a major challenge for the Committee but we are optimistic that we can find a way to finish the job.

Simon Cocker

Web Site

Our web site continues to attract a steady stream of visitors, most searching for an orphan. Many descendants who have claimed an orphan have been contacted by other descendants or researchers who have found their claim and story. 691 of our 5958 orphans have been claimed. Have you claimed yours?

Report of Publications and Research Committee

The new committee met for the first time in November and has outlined an ambitious agenda for the forthcoming year.

Negotiations are underway to produce a small booklet about the St

John's Precinct which will include stories of some of the orphans who passed through the various Orphan Schools. It is proposed that the booklet will sell for about \$12 and be available for visitors to take away after their tour. Hopefully we will be able to secure a grant to assist in the production costs.

Other publications which are currently under consideration include a small booklet listing the children who died and were buried at the Orphan Schools. This too will be available for visitors to purchase.

The committee also intends to produce a booklet which focuses on the Aboriginal children who were admitted to the Orphan Schools. Research has already been undertaken which could provide a basis for this publication.

A stock take and review of our currently held publications has also been completed. The committee is now in the process of re-assessing the content, and updating material where necessary.

Chris Leppard-Quinn, Convener.

2014 Deadlines for articles for newsletter

Wednesday 12 February: Deadline for articles for March newsletter.

Wednesday 13 August: Deadline for articles for September newsletter.

Wednesday 12 November: Deadline for articles for December newsletter.

Contact us

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