



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

Issue 1

Newsletter

November 2008

Coming Events

General Meeting

Thursday, 6 November 2008, 5.30 pm
in Parish Centre of St. John's Church.

Bring your memorabilia and memories associated with the site. The Research Committee will share some of their discoveries, including maps, photos and cemetery research. David Featherstone will bring his medallion made from the original bell of St. John's Church.



Do you know what this is?

It belongs to Sid Davis who will be bringing it to the November meeting. Come along and perhaps you could win the 'What is it?' competition.

Please bring a plate to share for supper.

Tour of the Orphan School and St. John's Park Precinct

Architectural historian Warwick Oakman will lead an informative tour of the site which will include an organ recital in St. John's Church on Sunday, 2 November 2008 at 2.00 pm. Cost of \$10 includes tour, handout and afternoon tea. For bookings please ring 6228 2152.

Annual General Meeting

Thursday, 4 December 2008, at 5.30 pm in St. John's Church. Our guest speaker will be Chris Tassell, Managing Director National Trust, Tasmania.

The meeting will be followed by *Carols in the Church* and supper in the Parish Centre. We are hoping to include a performance of *Star of Australia*, the words of which were written for Federation by W. H. Dawson, poet, who was buried in St. John's Burial Ground.

St. John's Church Program 2008

St. John's Church, St Johns Avenue, New Town. Enquiries phone 6228 5965

- 2 November, 10.15 am. Holy Communion followed by a cuppa
- 9 November, 10.15 am. Holy Communion followed by a cuppa
- 16 November, 10.15 am. Holy Communion followed by a cuppa
- 23 November, 10.15 am. Holy Communion and shared lunch. 2.30 pm. Concert in the church with well-known pianist Roz Langlois
- 30 November, 10.15 am. Holy Communion 1st Sunday in Advent, followed by a cuppa
- 4 December, 5.30 pm. Friends of the Orphan School and St. John's Park Precinct AGM followed by Christmas Carols in our church. Please bring your family and join with us at 6.30 pm. All welcome.
- 7 December, 10.15am. Holy Communion. 3.00 pm. Advent Service with All Saints Choir

- 14 December, 10.15 am. Book of Common Prayer and cuppa. 2.30 pm. Concert Belcanto
- 21 December, 10.15 am. Christmas Lessons and Carols, and Special morning tea.
- 28 December, 10.15 am. Special focus, service for children who died in infancy or pre-term.

Descendants' Group

The Descendants of Orphans Interest Group, comprising Chris Woods, Joyce Purtscher, Rosemary Davidson and Dianne Snowden, is compiling a register of descendants with a view to holding a get-together early in 2009. The date will probably be in February to coincide with the annual 'Fox's Feast' day that was held each year for the children in the Orphans School. John Fox, a former convict, left a bequest to the Orphan School so that the children could have an outing each year on the anniversary of his death. The first Descendants Day will probably take the format of a picnic and further details will be advised in the next newsletter.

Please contact Chris Woods bcwoods@bigpond.net.au to have your name included on the Descendants Register.

Members' input

The committee is organising next year's program and would like to hear from you about what you would like to see or do. Contact the secretary at friends.orphan.school.stjohnspark@gmail.com or by post to PO Box 111, Moonah TAS 7009, or tell us at the general meeting.

St John's Church Bell: can you help?

Recently we had an inquiry from an interstate visitor who acquired a commemorative coin made from the original St John's Church bell. He wanted to know what had happened to the bell, how it came to be broken, and how many coins were made from it. He wrote: 'It was lovely to see that the oak trees on the coin, which at that time only went half way up the stained glass windows, were still alive and much taller now'.

The Research Committee discovered that the medals were made from the bronze church bell, which cracked in 1916 and was in need of replacement. Three thousand medals were made to raise funds for a new bell. Today the medals are considered common, and are currently worth between \$5 and \$15. The Research Committee was also informed that a second batch of medals was made in 1930. These medals were apparently undated and according to one dealer, Queen Victoria is pictured on the obverse. We have not been able to verify if this was the case or not.

Round the Clock. Bits & Pieces about Early New Town (Hobart, 1990) edited by Fay Ibbott, Ervins Mieзитis and Vera Read and illustrated by Reima Mieзитis, has this to say about the bell:

The first bell that rang from St John's tower was given by King William IV. However, this bell fell in a great storm and was damaged. It was replaced and served until 1916 when it was so badly cracked it was dangerous and had to be removed.

In 1929, parishioners combined with members of other churches in the area and a new bell was bought to serve the whole area (an early example of ecumenism)!

The old bell was melted down and tokens made of the metal. There are still a few of them about.

Round the Clock has sketches of the token:

One side:

1835 MADE FROM THE ORIGINAL
BELL OF ST JOHN'S CHURCH
NEWTOWN TASMANIA 1916

Reverse side (has picture of church)
ST JOHN'S CHURCH NEWTOWN,
TASMANIA
1833-1916

At one of our early excursions, I was privileged to be shown one of the medals by a local lady. The Research Committee would like to photograph the medal for our records: do you have a medal which we could borrow for this purpose? Perhaps you might know whether there was a second batch of medals made in 1930? Perhaps you might have additional information about the bell. If so, we would be delighted to hear from you.

The Old Bell

It is notified that the bell of New Town, is not to be rung at present. The present bell has rung for a considerable number of years, perhaps since the church was opened in 1834. It has not only served to summon the congregation of to their worship, but has acted in the same capacity to the other churches in New Town. Unfortunately, something went wrong with the bell last Sunday, and an expert has now reported that the bell is badly cracked, and is unsafe to ring. Much sympathy has been expressed to the rector and churchwardens over the matter, as it is so much like the departure of an old friend – *Mercury*, December 16, 1916.

For eighty years it hung and swung

In yon old tower behind the trees,
Long years, through which its call has rung

On winter storm and summer breeze:
And good folk, hearing, would repair
To the house of God, and make their prayer.

It echoed to the mountain side,

It spoke to all the quiet town,
It sounded where the Derwent tide
By gardened banks goes gliding down;
Faithful, it bade the folks incline
Their hearts and minds to things divine.

What souls have thrilled to hear its chime,

And felt high thoughts stir through the breast,

Who strove the upward way to climb

That led them to the heavenly rest;
How many now in silence sleep
Who heard its summoning, slow and deep.

Through eighty years! But tyrannous time

Has spoken sentence, it must go;
No longer will the message chime,
In solemn cadence, deep and slow
And said it is to know its end –
This old church bell, so like a friend.

C.D.

The Mercury, 30 December 1916 p.3

Early Orphan Schools of Hobart

At our September meeting, Andy McKinlay gave an informative presentation about the early orphan schools of Hobart. He has kindly provided the following summary of his talk.

The first Orphan School in Australasia was opened on Norfolk Island in 1796, the first in New South Wales in 1800. Van Diemen's Land was settled in 1803 and the search for orphan school premises began in 1806. A house near the present Anglesea Barracks was converted but not used, and old Government House was also considered. Nothing permanent happened till 1828 when an orphan school for boys was opened in a disused distillery on the New Town Rivulet and a girls' school in Bellevue, Davey Street. These schools continued until the purpose built schools we all know in New Town were opened in 1833–34.

Education in the early days was the province of the Church who provided the administration services. The staff caused many problems, misappropriating the children's food and mistreating the boys, but in general the children survived well. It is interesting to note that over half the boys and girls eventually returned to their families, and nearly all the others were successfully apprenticed.

In addition to genuine orphans, the children included those with one or both parents alive but unable to care for their children as they were in convict service. A small number of children from rural areas whose parents or guardians were willing to pay for maintenance also attended the school.

Andy McKinlay

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