



# FRIENDS OF THE ORPHAN SCHOOLS

## St John's Park Precinct New Town Tasmania

Issue 13

Newsletter

February 2012

### Memorial Garden

The square garden bed next to the Old Sunday School entrance has been prepared as a memorial garden for children who died while they were in the Orphan Schools, many of whom were then buried in St John's Burial Ground—often in unmarked graves. (Before December 1835, children from the Orphan Schools were buried either at Trinity Burial Ground, Campbell Street, or the Catholic Burial Ground above St Mary's Cathedral.) The garden has been planted with a box hedge and carpet roses. They have been carefully nurtured since planting and are showing good signs of growth.

This project has been led by Joyce Purtscher. During the summer break, she and her husband Joe have worked on all the gardens that surround the Old Sunday School. They have dug up countless belladonna lilies, taken away many bags of twitch, spread mushroom compost and planted the gardens. Earlier in 2011 Simon Cocker and his son James had done significant heavy work clearing the gardens of existing shrubbery. On that occasion rubbish was removed by Andrea Gerrard and her husband.



The newly planted garden

Joyce, together with Rosie Davidson, is now compiling a list of all the children known to have died while at the Orphan Schools. The names of these children will be recorded on bronze plaques attached to the garden walls.

We are very grateful to Shirley and Greg Kerin from the New Town Station Nursery for their assistance with this project. Shirley and Greg are descendants of two children from the Orphan Schools and have been strong supporters of our Friends group for a number of years. For this project they have very generously donated the plants for the garden and will make a major contribution to the cost of the memorial plaques.

### FOX'S FEAST

Sunday 26 February 2012

The Friends of the Orphan Schools will commemorate Fox's Feast—the traditional summer picnic day for the Orphan Schools' children funded by former convict John Fox—on Sunday 26 February 2012 at 2:00 pm in the Old Sunday School.

Celebrations this year will focus on our recently prepared Memorial Garden. We will have a short dedication ceremony during which a plaque honouring those children who died while at the Orphan Schools will be unveiled. This will be followed by afternoon tea in the Old Sunday School.

Members and Friends together with descendants of Orphan School children are warmly invited to attend.

For more information about John Fox and Fox's Feast see *The First True*

*Friends of the Queen's Orphanage*, Joyce Purtscher, Hobart, 2009. Another of Joyce's publication *School Days at the Queen's Orphan Schools New Town, Tasmania 1848*, Hobart, 2010 may also be of interest. Both publications are available for purchase from the Friends of the Orphan Schools.

### Sanatorium Huts

For some time members of our group have been very concerned about the long-term survival of the two chalets from the former Tasmanian Consumptive Sanatorium which now sit in the grounds of the St John's Precinct between Karingal and the former Parsonage. Late last year the Friends of the Orphan Schools Committee was given permission to organise some conservation work on the chalets.



Exterior of the chalets

A recent inspection by Heritage Tasmania's heritage advisor Danielle Picaud of the outside of the chalets has identified that urgent repairs are needed to conserve the chalets and prevent further deterioration. The main concern is to prevent any water damage. This would require work on the gutters, roof, fascia and barge-

boards. Poor drainage around the buildings is also a concern and would be improved with some trenches to direct the flow of water away from the chalets. Since Danielle's inspection we have been able to look inside. It was good to see that no water damage has occurred so far.



Interiors of the chalets

This will be a major project for us and the Committee is very keen to hear from members and others who would like to be involved. If you have something to contribute, whether it's building or project management skills or just a willingness to pitch in at a working bee, or would like more information, please make contact through any of the methods at the end of this newsletter.

## Tasmanian Heritage Council Appointment

Congratulations to our Convenor Dr Dianne Snowden on her appointment as the new Chairperson of the Tasmanian Heritage Council. The Minister for the Environment, Parks and Heritage, Brian Wightman announced Dianne's appointment in December last year. Dianne together with the Director of National Parks and Wildlife will head a Council of thirteen members with expertise in various heritage, community and industry fields.

Dianne is a committed, passionate and experienced heritage professional and historian whose dedication and expertise make her an ideal and deserving candidate for this appointment. The Heritage Council has a vital but sometimes difficult role to play in its negotiations to ensure the protection and good management of Tasmania's important heritage place.

We are pleased that despite her new responsibilities Dianne will continue in her role as Convenor of the Friends of the Orphan Schools. We are also delighted that Chris Tassell, Managing Director of the National Trust in Tasmania has been appointed to the Council.

## December Concert

Our Treasurer, Simon Cocker and fellow members of the Grass Roots Union Choir gave an outstanding performance of songs from *Loveless in Hobart Town* their musical based on the experience of Tolpuddle Martyr, George Loveless. The concert was held in St John's Church on Sunday 27 November. Two hundred dollars was raised, \$100 of which was passed on to the Church Organ Fund.

## St John's Church News

Restoration of the church's William Hill organ will be undertaken in 2012. The organ has been in need of major repairs for some time. Funds set aside by the Parish Council together with the Organ Repair Fund and the successful application to the Tasmanian Community Fund for a grant of \$10,000 have allowed the work to progress. Repairs include the replacement of the blower, re-leathering and

refurbishment of the double-rise bellows.

## Research News

From time to time one of us comes across interesting snippets of information about the Precinct in our searches of old newspapers. Dianne Snowden supplied the following interesting article that contributes to our understanding of the former St John's Burial Ground and suggests past uses for the Old Sunday School, which is surely the 'schoolroom' referred to in the article.

### TREE PLANTING AT ST JOHN'S, NEW TOWN.

A parish commemoration of the Queen's Jubilee took place at St. John's Anglican Church, New Town, on Saturday afternoon, when 18 trees were publicly planted alongside the main carriage-way of the church yard, in the presence of a good number of people.

An evensong service was first held in the church, at which the temporary Administrator of the diocese (Archdeacon Whittington), assisted by the Rev. Mr. Cass, officiated, and Mrs. Malcolm Harrison presided at the organ.

A nice lot of young trees of various kinds were procured by Mr. Geo. Richardson, Superintendent of the Charitable Institution, for the ceremony from the Botanical Gardens.

Archdeacon WHITTINGTON, in an address delivered immediately before the planting of the first tree, spoke of the important duty of keeping clean and renovating the graveyard where their dead rested to await the trumpet of the resurrection. There was scarcely anything more distressing than to pass by a neglected graveyard, though often its upkeep was too great a strain upon the slender finances of the parish; but now at New Town, the boys of the institution had come to their assistance. Mr Richardson was anxious to provide spade and shovel and gardening work for some of the boys handy to the Home, and this particular roadway being the most convenient approach to the Home, he set them to work at improving it. All the brambles and bushes had been cleared away, and a very great improvement had been effected in the

churchyard generally. Then the tree planting to be done that afternoon was arranged for with Mr. Richardson's kind assistance. Possibly another row of trees would in time be supplied for the opposite side of the walk, and so make an avenue. He was very pleased and thankful that the wives of his two predecessors as Archdeacons of New Town were able to be present and to each plant a tree. The wives of several other clergymen would also take part in the ceremony.

Mrs. Davies, widow of the late Archdeacon Davies, then planted the first tree a Scotch pine, Mrs. Mason, widow of the late Archdeacon Mason (whom Archdeacon Whittington succeeded), planted the second, and Mrs. Whittington the third. The remainder of the trees were planted by ladies in the following order, Archdeacon Whittington himself planting the last: Mrs. Justice Dodds, Mesdames Hudspeth, Cass, Sutcliffe (wife of the churchwarden), Geo. Richardson, Watt, Jno. Pearce, Jas. Whyte, J. H. Innes, Malcolm Harrison, P. Wilkinson, St Hill, and P. S. Seager; Miss Murray, and the Archdeacon.

After the ceremony Mrs. Whittington served tea in the schoolroom, to which all present were invited, and in the evening a number of ladies and gentlemen entertained the boys at the institution.

(The *Mercury*, Monday 28 June 1897, page 3)

### ***Voices from the Orphan Schools***

Dianne Snowden is writing a series of articles entitled *Voices from the Orphan Schools for Tasmanian Ancestry*, the journal of the Tasmanian Family History Society Inc. So far four articles have been published:

The *Blackfriar* 1851: Vol.32 No.1, p.9

The *Tasmania* (2) 1845: Vol.32 No.2, p.99

Mary Cullen and the *Neva*: Vol.32 No.3, p.140

The Leathley Children: Vol.32 No.4, p.216

Two of them can be viewed online:

The *Tasmania*  
<http://www.tasfhs.org/TasAncArticleV32N1.htm>

Mary Cullen and the *Neva*

<http://www.tasfhs.org/TasAncArticleV32N3.htm>

## **Upcoming 2012 Events**

### **Fox's Feast**

Sunday, 2:00 p.m., 26 February 2012

### **General Meeting**

Thursday, 5:30 p.m., 1 March 2012

### **Open Day and Precinct Tour**

Sunday, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m., 29 April 2012

### **General Meeting**

Thursday, 5:30 p.m., 3 May 2012

All the above events will be held in the Old Sunday School

## **Willow Court Tour**

The Friends of the Orphan Schools offer all members a unique opportunity to tour the Willow Court Precinct at New Norfolk on Sunday afternoon, 18 March 2012. There is no cost for financial members but there is a charge of \$10.00 for non-members.

Bookings are essential and will be accepted in order of receipt. Transport will **not** be provided and full details will be forwarded after registration.

If you would like to join us please contact the Secretary

[secretary@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:secretary@orphanschool.org.au) to reserve a place. If unable to email please leave a message including all names and a contact phone number on our answering service at (03) 6285 2654.

### **Tours**

Group walking tours of the Orphan Schools and St John's Park Precinct can be arranged by negotiation, minimum ten persons.

The tour includes a visit to St John's Church and a short organ recital (subject to availability of church). Learn about the site and its history from one of our tour guides: Joyce Purtscher, well known for her work on the children in the Orphan Schools and paupers, or Dianne Snowden our convenor and historian.

\$10 donation towards tour notes and afternoon tea.

Email the secretary at

[secretary@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:secretary@orphanschool.org.au) or phone Joyce on (03) 6234 1392 to enquire about a tour of our fascinating site.

## **Office Bearers and Committee for 2011/12**

**Convenor:** Dianne Snowden

**Deputy Convenor:** Toni Sherwood

**General Secretary:** Andrew Cocker

**Minute Secretary:** Colleen Read

**Treasurer:** Simon Cocker

**Assistant Treasurer:** Roger Stott

**Committee:** Joyce Purtscher, Rosie Davidson, Lorraine Davidson and Lisa Hutton

**St John's Church (ex-officio):** Rev. David Lewis

**Ogilvie High School (ex-officio):** Wendy Frost

**New Town Primary School:** Danny Neal

**Newsletter:** Toni Sherwood, Rosie Davidson, Andrew Cocker

The Committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month in the Old Sunday School at 5:30 p.m.

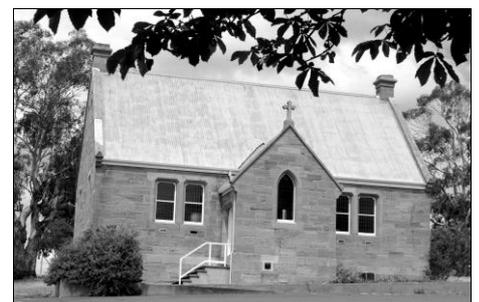
**Contact us:**

**PO Box 461  
North Hobart  
TAS 7002**

**Phone: 03 62852654**

**Email:**  
[secretary@orphanschool.org.au](mailto:secretary@orphanschool.org.au)

[www.orphanschool.org.au](http://www.orphanschool.org.au)



The Sunday School Hall