



Launceston Historical Society Inc.

Newsletter No 144

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PO BOX 1296 LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

"Bringing together people with an interest in history"

Before the LGH or Former Places of Uncertain Health Care

On 13 April 2014 Jenny Gill presented an amusing talk on the early hospitals of Launceston. Using several maps dating from Grimes' 1807 plan she pinpointed where the hospitals for convicts, military personnel and civilians were located before 1863. Most were less than desirable places to be when sick, as often they were overcrowded, crawling with vermin and filthy. Hospitals were a certain precursor to the cemetery. The most successful establishment was St John's Hospital run by Dr Pugh from 1840. See *The Examiner*, 14 April 2014, p. 11 for more information.



Speaker Jenny Gill. Photo: M Sargent.



Part of the crowd at the band rotunda in City Park.
Photo: M Sargent.

Monuments and Monkeys: A Walk in Historic City Park

Autumnal hues created the perfect backdrop to our walk in City Park on 18 May 2014. Robyn Jones introduced committee members and John Dent, who spoke on the park's colourful history to more than 70 appreciative people. During afternoon tea at Victoria's Café on the Park a slide show of historic photos compiled by Catherine Pearce was enjoyed. Paul Edwards won the lucky door prize of a leather-bound copy of *History in Our Streets*. The Launceston City Council has printed a flyer, *City Park Heritage Trail*, depicting 17 iconic sites; a second edition will be available soon. See *The Examiner*, 19 May 2014 p. 10 for an article on the walk.

June – Third Pugh Day Lecture

Dr Chris Ball, *Cobras, chloroform and consumption – the life and times of Joseph T Clover*

Sunday 15 June 2014 – 2.00pm at the Meeting Room, QVMAG Museum at Inveresk.



Dr Christine Ball is an anaesthetist at the Alfred Hospital in Melbourne and an adjunct senior lecturer at Monash University. For 25 years, she has been an honorary curator of the Geoffrey Kaye Museum of Anaesthetic History at the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists in Melbourne. She has written and presented many papers on the history of anaesthesia and was awarded an MD for her research in 2012 by Monash University. Dr Ball is currently working on a biography of Joseph Clover.

Joseph Clover was a medical student at University College Hospital in London when the first anaesthetic was given there in 1846. The following year, appointed as resident medical officer to the hospital, he began studying for his surgical fellowship. During this period he became so proficient in anaesthesia that he eventually abandoned his fledgling surgical career for full time anaesthesia, becoming one of the first specialists in Britain. Clover was inventive and thoughtful, devising many new techniques and pieces of equipment. He collaborated extensively with his surgical colleagues, also creating equipment for them in his workshop. The Geoffrey Kaye Museum contains one of his casebooks, the discovery of which was the beginning of an international search for all his papers. Clover's papers and diaries give us a unique insight into medicine and surgery in these interesting times and form the basis of this lecture.

July Talk

Dr Roger Kellaway, *The Third Basin Gold Rush 1857*

Sunday 20 July 2014 – 2.00pm at the Meeting Room, QVMAG Museum at Inveresk.

The *Launceston Examiner* of Thursday, 14 March 1857 contained a short paragraph noting that some weeks ago a fishing party had found gold in the bed of the South Esk River. A group of respectable gentlemen were now setting out for the Third Basin to assess the extent of the discovery. Their report published on Saturday was positive. Every dish washed contained 10 to 20 specks of waterworn gold: not enough to be profitable on its own but a clear indication that the source must be close by. On Sunday, three to four hundred people visited the site. Most were merely curious but some went with spades and tin dishes to test the discovery for themselves.

Within a week, a small mining camp emerged at the Third Basin. It contained a few crude huts with boughs for roofs, numerous canvas tents and even one business. An enterprising pastry-cook had set up a shop to sell cakes and ginger beer to diggers and visitors alike. The population was highly variable. The census of 31 March 1857 recorded 65 persons living at the Third Basin. Other parties were off searching upstream or in bush country towards the Asbestos Range in an unsuccessful search for the source of the gold. As summer turned into autumn, low gold yields and colder and wetter weather saw most diggers return to their normal jobs back in Launceston.

There would be thousands of gold rushes of this scale in nineteenth-century Australia. The Third Basin gold rush gains its historical significance from the juxtaposition of place and time. A major gold field within an hour's walk of Launceston was seen as a city-transforming event. This accounts for the detailed coverage the local papers gave to the diggings and to developments such as the revival of the Northern Gold Prospecting Association. The rush also occurred at a critical time in the economic history of Tasmania. In 1857, the colony was slipping into a depression that was to last until the mid-1870s. While many of the causes involved complex international issues, a Tasmanian gold field could ameliorate the local factors that intensified the depression.

Roger Kellaway

Roger Kellaway left Canada in 1969 to undertake postgraduate studies at the University of Canterbury. In 1971, he came to Australia to work on sand dune morphology in the Simpson Desert; and in 1972 took up a post as tutor in the University of Tasmania. He retired from the School of Geography and Environmental Studies at the end of 2011. The last nine years of his career involved splitting his time between the Hobart and Launceston campuses. Each year, he would teach the first-year unit in Human Geography and either Geography of Asia or Historical Geography in the north. He greatly enjoyed his time in Launceston, where he regarded the historical streetscapes as world class; and the students a pleasure to teach.

Monuments & Monkeys: A walk in Historic City Park

Ronald Campbell Gunn 1808 – 1881

by Dianne Cassidy and Marion Sargent

Ronald Campbell Gunn was a botanist, horticulturalist, public servant and politician. He was born in Cape Town in 1808, educated in Aberdeen, and married his first wife in Antigua. His brother William urged him to come to Van Diemen's Land. He arrived in Hobart Town in February 1830 and became the Superintendent of Convicts in Launceston, and a JP and Police Magistrate from 1833. He married his second wife Margaret Jamieson in Hobart in 1839.

On 4 July 1838 Gunn, together with William Henty, convened the first meeting of the Launceston Horticultural Society. Gunn was elected as president. The Society was instrumental in the creation of the Horticultural Gardens in 1841 which became the People's Park and now City Park.

RC Gunn, possibly in conjunction with his brother William, bought 45 acres of land in Glen Dhu on which he established a botanic garden. In 1855 he purchased 200 acres and built *Newstead House*, which still stands today. Gunn exchanged plants and corresponded with Sir William Hooker at Kew Gardens. In 1850 he sent a live *Thylacine* to the British Museum. He was involved in an unsuccessful attempt to introduce South American Alpaca to Tasmania.

He was a member of the Royal Society from 1854, and, for seven years, edited the *Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science*. In 1855 he was elected to the Legislative Council and later won a seat in the House of Assembly. A pioneer in the study of Tasmania's native flora, in 1878 he donated his private herbarium to the Royal Society of Tasmania.



When Gunn died on 13 March 1881, he was buried in the family vault at the Scotch Presbyterian Cemetery in High Street. Later the headstone was moved to Carr Villa. This fine statue of Ronald Campbell Gunn, looking at a sprig of *nothofagus gunnii*, was commissioned for the City of Launceston's bicentenary year and was unveiled on 4 July 2006 at a cost of \$72,400.00.

**Geoff Terry, a descendant of William Gunn, pictured being photographed by Chris Clarke from *The Examiner*.
Photo: Marion Sargent**

New Members: The President and Executive welcome to our Society the following new members: Joy de Wouters, Neil & Jenny Drury, Tom Dunning, Caroline Heine, Claudette Huw, Fred and Anne Jensen, Kathleen Petrovsky, Michael Quinlan, Sharon Richardson and Jan Stanes.

Archaeology Group: Enquiries to John Dent email: john.dent@pda.com.au.

Advance Notice of LHS Activities for 2014

Launceston Historical Society meetings are held at the Meeting Room, QVMAG Museum at Inveresk, on Sundays at 2.00pm, unless otherwise notified.

- 17 August** **Hamish Maxwell-Stewart**, *Imprisonment and the Family*
- 21 September** **Joint Seminar with the Oral History Association –**
Peter Henning, *WWII Nurses*
Tom Gunn and Anne Green, *Writing the History of St Giles*
Alis Wood, *Jessie Luckman (1910-2014): Conservationist, Bushwalker and Musician*
- 19 October** **Nick Clements** *Frightened to Death: Colonists' Experience of Aboriginal Violence in Tasmania*
- 26 October** **Robert Smith**, *Excursion to Springfield*
- 16 November** **Steve Radford**, *History of Telecommunications*

Other Items and Events of Interest

QVMAG Art Gallery, Inveresk: *We are Hawthorn* is an exhibition on the history of the club and its place in the story of the AFL in Tasmania. All eleven Premiership cups, along with other memorabilia and objects, will be on display from 7-29 June 2014.

A re-vamped QVMAG exhibit *Tasmanian Tiger: Precious Little Remains* includes Thylacine remains not seen before as well as historic photographs, objects and stories about this remarkable and misunderstood animal. A book of the same name will be available to purchase from July 2014.

Launceston LINC: Display of old anaesthetics paraphernalia on loan from the Launceston General Hospital Historical Committee. Reference Library, First Floor, 2-30 June 2014.

George Town & District Historical Society: Meetings are held at *The Grove*: 16 June 2014, John Watts, *The Leading Lights*; 21 July 2014, David Churton, *Potion of the Past*. Email: info@gtlhs.com. Web: www.gtdhs.com.

Tasmanian Historical Research Association: Meetings take place in the Royal Society Room, Custom House, TMAG, Hobart, starting at 8.00pm: 10 June 2014, Sir Guy Green, *A Tasmanian Life*; 8 July 2014, Gillian Ward, *Olive Pink as an Artist*.

LAUNCESTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Deadline

Items for the next Newsletter should be sent to the Editor by **1 Aug 2014** at marionsargent@bigpond.com or PO Box 1296 LAUNCESTON TAS 7250.