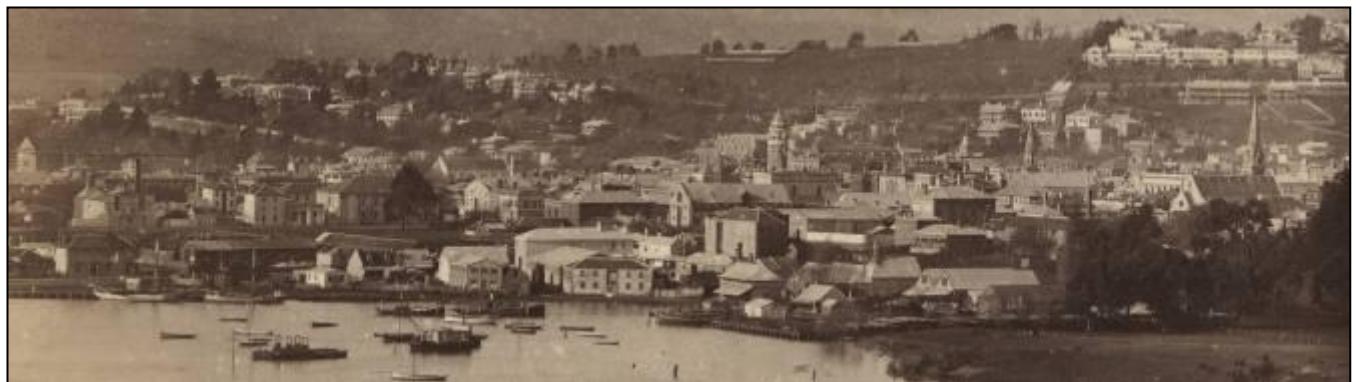


Launceston Historical Society Inc.

“Bringing together people with an interest in history”

Annual Report for year ending 31 December 2025



Alfred Coleman Bonner, 'Launceston from Trevallyn', 12 March 1890. Launceston Library, LPIC 21, NTCC Album 6, No 171

**Presented at its Annual General Meeting held at the
Meeting Room, QVMAG Museum at Inveresk
Sunday 15 February 2026**

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Introduction

As President of the Launceston Historical Society (LHS), and on behalf of the members and visitors here today, I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which this event is taking place.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege to present the Annual Report of the Launceston Historical Society for the financial year ending 31 December 2025.

John West Memorial Lecture



On Sunday 16 March 2025 Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart presented the 37th John West Memorial Lecture with the topic *Networks of resistance: Mapping a convict road gang in northern Van Diemen's Land 1829-1839*. Drawing from his research on convict records through Digital History Tasmania Hamish focussed on superintendent Notman's road gang which had a high number of absconders.

This year the John West Memorial lecturer, Brad Williams, will speak on *Re-discovery of the Queenborough Cemetery at Hutchins School* at the Meeting Room, QV Museum on Sunday 15 March 2026 at 2pm.

Monthly meetings

In 2025 we hosted a variety of interesting guest speakers at our monthly Sunday meetings. At the Annual General Meeting in February Jai Paterson and John Dent gave a riveting account of *Launceston Court Records*. In April Stefan Petrow presented a sobering lecture on 'Our first baptism of fire': *Northern Tasmanians in the 12th Battalion at Gallipoli, April 1915*, and in May, Lou Rae spoke about the inspiration behind his book *The Lost Province on Tasmania's West Coast*. In June Marion Sargent gave an outline of the life and work of *City Engineer and Surveyor, Charles St John David*.

In July Alison Alexander told us about 'A low state of public morals in Launceston': *VDL in 1820 from the Bigge Report*, and in August Richard Mack related the story of Calcutta convict *James Austin: of Beehives and Ferries*. In September Steve Radford recounted the exploits of *Reginald Munro: Aviator Extraordinaire*. John Dent and Sam Diprose-Adams presented a paper on the *Archaeological dig at Mountford Cottage, Perth* at the fifth re-instated Mead, Smith, von Stieglitz Memorial Lecture in October. The final speakers for the year, Louise Zarmati and Bradley Wood, revealed their meticulous research into *Debunking the myth of "Wauba Debar"*.

We appreciate the support of the Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk, for making the meeting room available to us. And thank you also to Bent Eared Records who looked after our audio-visual needs. Our lectures have been recorded and will be sent to LHS members.



The Committee: Catherine, Wendy, Franky, Sophie, Carol, Marion, Prue, Phil, Leonie, Sue. Absent, Bradley.

Executive Committee

The extent of events and activities conducted by the Historical Society would not be possible without the many hours of work undertaken by a dedicated team of volunteers. Thank you to the members of the Executive Committee who have helped the Society continue to do so well.

In February 2025, the following committee members were re-elected: Marion Sargent (President), Sophie Appleby (Vice-President, Publicity, History Prize and Launceston History Centre representative), Leonie Prevost (Treasurer and Public Officer), Catherine Pearce (Minute Secretary), Prue McCausland (Correspondence Secretary and History Prize), Wendy Roberts (Representative of the City of Launceston Heritage Advisory Committee), Bradley Wood (History Prize and YouTube), Sue Bell (Archaeology), Carol Fuller (History Prize), Phil Page (LHC representative). Franky Del Vecchio joined the team.

History Prizes

The 18th annual **Primary History Prize** in 2025 received 55 entries submitted by three primary schools: Evandale, Mowbray Heights and Hagley, and a few individuals. A total of \$684 in book vouchers from Petrarch's Bookshop was awarded to 18 children. Every student received a certificate of participation and a volume of Anne Green's *Stories in Stone* which were presented at their school assemblies. A selection of entries was displayed at the Launceston Library for several weeks and will be at the AGM in February 2026. Thank you to Carol Fuller, Prue McCausland, Brad Wood and Sophie Appleby for organising and judging the awards.

Once more we have provided the **University of Tasmania** with the \$500 Launceston Historical Society History Prize awarded for the best History essay written in 2025 by a student enrolled at the Launceston campus in first year History.



Spring Excursion to Hobart Convict Penitentiary

A group of 21 members enjoyed our Spring excursion to Hobart on Thursday 27 October 2025. Professor Hamish Maxwell-Stewart explained the Digital History Tasmania project which created the Convict Memorial displaying 75,000 convict stories in the 1834 chapel and courtroom complex, with tunnels, condemned cells and execution yard. We hired a bus from McDermott's Coaches.

Launceston History Centre

The Launceston History Centre was formed on 23 May 2022. The incorporated body brings together three independent history groups – the Launceston Historical Society, Tasmanian Family History Society (Launceston Branch), and Friends of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute. The LHS representatives are Phil Page and Sophie Appleby.

An open day held on 7 February 2025 at the LHC's new home at 56 Frederick Street was attended by about 100 people who took the opportunity to look over the 1836 building before it is converted into a history centre.

A planning application was submitted in January 2026 to the Launceston Council to erect new toilets and the Jenny Gill Archive building. This process is expected to take a couple of months after which building approvals will be obtained, contracts let, and building work should commence later in the year.

Archaeology Group

The Launceston History Centre organised an archaeological dig at the old kindergarten at 56 Frederick Street from 24 to 28 November 2025. Volunteers unearthed lots of artefacts from five trenches. Marbles, pieces of ceramic, bottles, coins, a Jory and Campbell brick, bones and plastic toys including a dinosaur were found. *The Examiner* published an article about the dig on 7 December 2025 with the title, "Launceston's own Jurassic Park moment".



Publications

A list of the 341 'Our History' stories published in *The Examiner* from 3 December 2017 to 28 December 2024 is available on our webpage: [OUR-HISTORY-STORIES.pdf](#)

Most of the stories are also available to read on our [Facebook](#) page. If a particular one is not there email us and it can be added. A small sub-committee is slowly working through the first 100 to publish in a book. We have edited 72 so far.

The two free audio apps with 'Cya on the Road' – *A Walk Along Historic Cameron Street* and *Launceston City Walk* are still popular. They were both created by our committee members Catherine Pearce and Wendy Roberts, but the latter is now owned by Launceston Central.

We thank the staff at Simon Wood MP and since October, at Senator Peter Whish-Wilson's office, for printing the Newsletters and Annual Report.

Membership

The Historical Society had 209 financial members at the end of 2025. Thirty-nine new members joined throughout the year.

Conclusion

My sincerest thanks to the dedicated Committee members whose expertise and energy ensures that this Society remains active and vibrant. Thank you also to the members who come along to engage with the speakers, enjoy our excursions and other activities. We are always looking for new and enthusiastic participants to join us.

Marion Sargent
President 2025