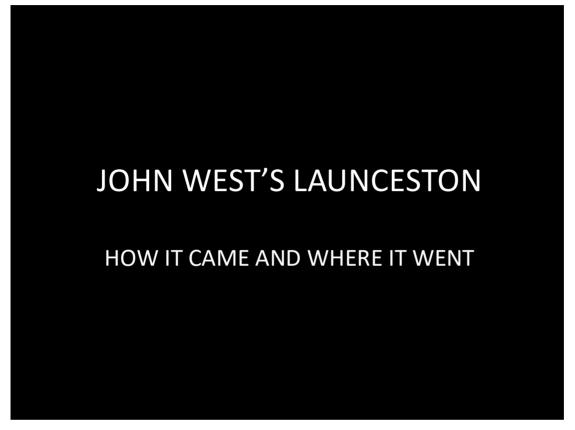
John West Memorial Lecture, 12 March 2021

Dr Eric Ratcliff John West's Launceston, how it came and where it went

Presented at the Sir Raymond Ferrall Centre, University of Tasmania, Newnham



[Slide 1: Title]

We meet this evening on Letteremairener land, and I am very conscious that the stories I am about to relate belong to a tiny fraction of the human history of this place.

I lived for about twenty years with John West as a member of my household, so perhaps that provides some justification for accepting the Society's humbling invitation to deliver this year's lecture in his honour. In the Preface to her book on John West's life and times, *The Usefulness of John West*, my late wife Patricia explains how she came upon her hero while working on the Weston papers in the old Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery.



[Slide 2: Robert Dowling, John West c. 1851 (TMAG) & Audrey Wilson, Patricia Ratcliff 1998]

One day she came home and asked me who this Rev. West might be who had received unfavourable mention in the former Premier's correspondence, but who sounded so much more interesting than the politician. I reminded her that we had a facsimile of his great *History of Tasmania* already in our library. That was how it all began.

Unlike Patricia, I am not an historian, except of Building and Architecture. I have been conscripted at times as a medical historian, but I cannot claim any special expertise in that realm. For a critical audience such as yourselves, this cobbler should stick to his last. My interest is in why buildings look as they do, and that leads inevitably to questions on the one hand about what their purpose was and why they stand, or stood, in a particular place, and on the other hand what else was in the mind of the designer or the builder. Those questions lead inevitably to social history, and social history is inseparable from architectural history, although regrettably the converse is not always held to be true.

So, my second thought after deciding to accept the Society's invitation (after contemplating the likelihood or otherwise of being still around to deliver the lecture), was to talk about the Launceston John West found when he arrived in 1839, the Launceston he lived and worked in for fourteen years, and what has happened to the town since he departed in 1854, up to the time in which we live. As with a building, so with a town: why is it where it is, what was its purpose, why was it arranged as it is, why does it look as it does, what changes have there been and why?

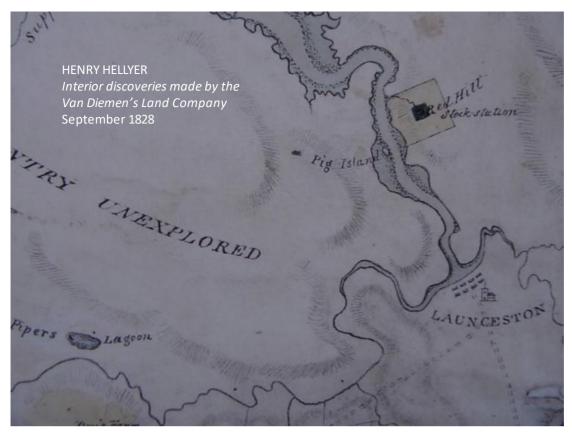


[Slide 3: MONA FOMA sticker, Launceston, January 2021]

West's time in Launceston began when the place was affected by the exodus of labour, but not yet of capital, to Port Philip, and was nearing its end when the Victorian gold rush had caused a further exodus, and our former colony across the Strait had begun to boom, and to supplant Launceston as the metropolis of Bass Strait. That was what it was when West arrived, and he used this seat of influence in the development of an inter-colonial movement against Transportation of convicts. That brought him into conflict with the Governor of the time, Sir William Denison, an engineer whose practical impacts on Launceston still affect us today, as do the political impacts envisaged and fostered by West.

West's time in Launceston included the pioneering use of ether anaesthesia by Dr William Russ Pugh (1847), another example of the right man in the right place at the right time; it preceded such momentous events as the coming of responsible self-government to the Colony (1856) and the bringing of reticulated water to the town (1857).

The man himself provided a brief description of the town in an appendix to his great *History*, but that cannot be our starting point, as a lot had happened here between his arrival and the time of writing. West's description occupied a page in his *Alphabetical Account of Chief Places*. He gave the latitude and longitude of the town, and placed it 'at the confluence of the North and South Esk rivers' and '121 miles from Hobart, and 40 from the sea at port Dalrymple'.



[Slide 4: Henry Hellyer, *Map of the Interior Discoveries made by the Van Diemen's Land Company* 1828 (TAHO) detail: Launceston]

Now we know where we are.

Why here? In all the explorations of the Australian coast by George Bass and Matthew Flinders, the only navigable estuary that seemed likely to penetrate to an extensive hinterland was Port Dalrymple on the northern shore of Van Diemen's Land. The Sydney authorities wanted Flinders and his borrowed ship back, so there was no time to follow up his hunch, but his visit led to the choice of Port Dalrymple as the site of a settlement to consolidate the British claim to both sides of Bass Strait. The French had been peaceably sniffing around the region for some time, but the two nations were still mostly at war, and it would be inconvenient for the infant colony of New South Wales to have a French colony less than a thousand miles to the south, and in a position to blockade shipping at the end of the great circle route from Britain.

The first up-river exploration by the British was in the *Lady Nelson*, captained by Mr Simmonds, with William Collins appointed to make the survey of what was yet to be named the Tamar River. In quest of water, they found the Cataract Gorge on 9 January 1804, and the following day it was visited by the mineralogist, Adolarius Humphrey and the botanist Robert Brown.¹



[Slide 5: John Lewin after George Prideaux Harris, *The Cataract near Launceston, Van Diemen's Land* 1808, watercolour (Mitchell Library, Sydney)

This familiar image was made four years after Collins' visit, and after the town had been founded]

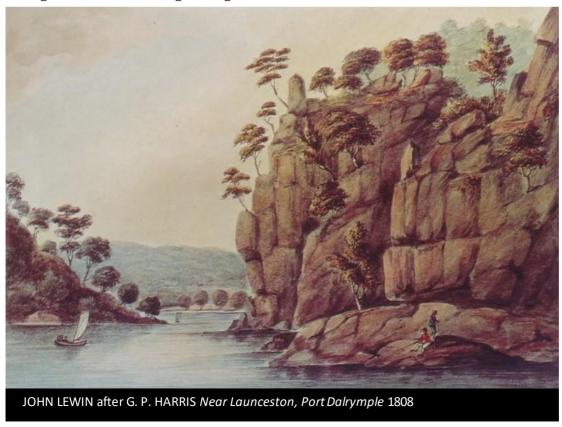
With him, we were brushed by the beginnings of modern science, for with his later discovery of the molecular agitation in fluids known as 'Brownian movement', he laid the foundation for atomic theory, and all that has followed from it.

Humphrey is remembered for more trivial reasons. On the *Lady Nelson's* way back to the sea, he accompanied some of the crew to the falls on Supply River, and as they filled the ship's water-butts there, he whiled away the time by using his geological hammer to make the first non-Aboriginal petroglyphs on our island, his initials *AH* for Adolarius Humphrey, and the year, 1804.



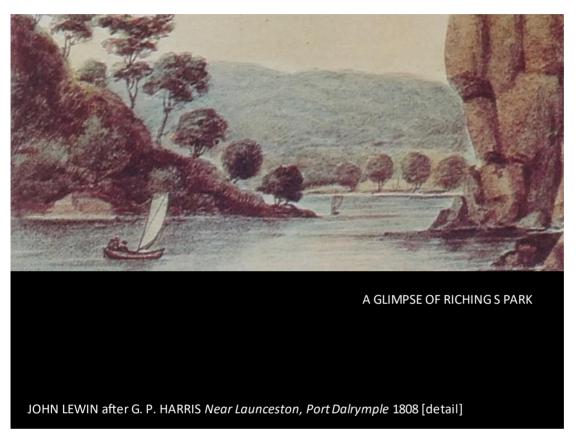
[Slide 6: Adolarius Humphrey, AH 1804, cut in rock at the falls, Supply River, West Tamar]

Colonel Paterson's Sydney bosses wanted the Port Dalrymple settlement to be close to the sea, but with a safe harbour, so they chose sites on Outer Cove and then on West Arm, but neither proved very satisfactory. Where the harbours were adequately sheltered, they were shallow, and they would be quite accessible to gunfire if the French chose to turn belligerent. The two sites were watered by unreliable streams, there was not much good grazing for the herd they had brought with them, and little ground suitable for growing food.



[Slide 7: John Lewin after G. P. Harris, *Near Launceston* 1808, watercolour (Mitchell Library, Sydney)] This is a view looking out from the Cataract Gorge into the head of the Tamar.

The site at the head of the estuary was much more promising. There were two rivers with plenty of fresh water upstream, and more or less level ground with an attractive park-like appearance. They did not realise that this was not its natural state, but the product of aeons of firestick farming by its Aboriginal inhabitants, and they called it Riching's Park, after a famous beauty spot to the west of London, a landscape made for Earl Bathurst, forebear of the Colonial Secretary who we still commemorate with Bathurst Street in Launceston.



[Slide 8: Glimpse of Richings Park 1808 (detail of Slide 7)
This glimpse gives the only visual impression of why they called it Richings Park.]

The site had access to water, excellent grazing and some good soil, was accessible by ship, and was safe from Napoleon. Some convicts charged with the care of the colony's cattle were probably its first European inhabitants from 1805, but the first substantial shelters, and the official beginning of the settlement, were in the following year, 1806.

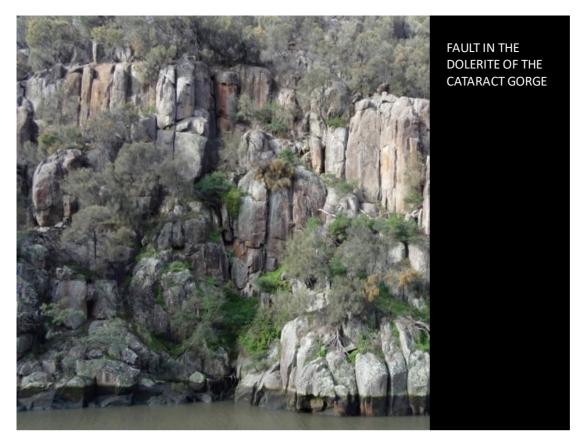


[Slide 9: Letterremairener stone tool of Dolerite, Launceston]

It is fatally easy to be glib about this beginning to our city, two hundred and sixteen years ago, to acknowledge that Riching's Park was a creation of Aboriginal land management, and then to view what happened next as inevitable, because it happened; to make the assumption that the British invaders made, that Richings Park was good grassland without settled occupants. Naturally they moved their precious herd of cattle on to it, and stationed a few convicts there to tend them.

Aboriginal artifacts are found within the city; in the 1960s the late Frank Ellis of the Queen Victoria Museum investigated a site in what was then Victoria Street (now Crown Street) near the Brickfields, once marshland beside the rivulet that now runs underground along Margaret Street, and in 1971 I found this one in in my own garden. The site would have been close to an intermittent stream flowing down the hill where Arthur and Elizabeth Streets run today. It is of interest for its unusual material, dolerite, the most prominent hard rock in Launceston but never a favoured material for the Aboriginal toolkit. Lin Sutherland's important paper makes clear that dolerite is an uncommon material of edged implements found in Tasmania.² Other stone implements found in the town are of more favoured types of rock, brought from elsewhere, such as Flinty Creek near Perth. The site of Launceston was an inhabited place for aeons before the British invasion. I acknowledge the memory of the Letteremairrener people, disinherited to give place to Launceston.

They too were latecomers to an ancient land.



[Slide 10: A fault in the Cataract Gorge (author's photograph)]

Dolerite is the most conspicuous rock in Launceston; it forms our beloved Cataract Gorge and the hills to the west of the city and to the east beyond the North Esk flood plain; it weathered into the reactive clays of West Launceston and Windmill Hill. 180 million years ago last Wednesday, the supercontinent of Gondwana was breaking apart and the molten rock was welling up from unknown depths and spreading between other strata in a great sheet to form our highest mountains from Cradle in the north-west to Mt Anne in the south-west, the Central Plateau, and the mountains of the Eastern tiers. A mere 90-120 million years ago, rifting was dropping part of the great dolerite sheet to deep below the city and the northern Midlands, covered by its natal surface rocks and to be further covered by the sediments of a lake in the Tertiary period. At the edges, the rifting produced, step-like, a series of faults, and we can still see the cracks in the Gorge. Our beloved natural feature may be perfect, but it is not faultless.

The town grew despite official attempts to limit it. Governor Macquarie ordered that the headquarters must remain at George Town, but the people on the ground knew better and from a combination of insubordination and good sense, enabled by the slowness of communication with Sydney, the upstream settlement continued to develop. The late Dr Clifford Craig pointed out that alone of the Australian towns founded during Macquarie's time, Launceston has no Macquarie Street. Our main street was named after his successor, Governor Brisbane, long before his name was given to the town that grew from the convict settlement at Moreton Bay.



[Slide 11: Macquarie House, built by John Sprunt for Henry Reed in 1829]

In the 1920s, Mr Ernest Sidebottom, a manufacturers' agent, decided that the deficiency should be made good, and rechristened Henry Reed's former warehouse, 'Macquarie House'. The name, in cement render, has stuck, but has never been appropriate.

When York Town was abandoned, Paterson removed his headquarters to Launceston, but on the visit of Macquarie he determined to constitute George Town the northern capital. The superior convenience of a spot at the head of the river to one forty miles distant, gave Launceston the mercantile preference. Macquarie maintained his project to the last, but the opinion of Mr. Bigge determined the dispute in the favour of Launceston.

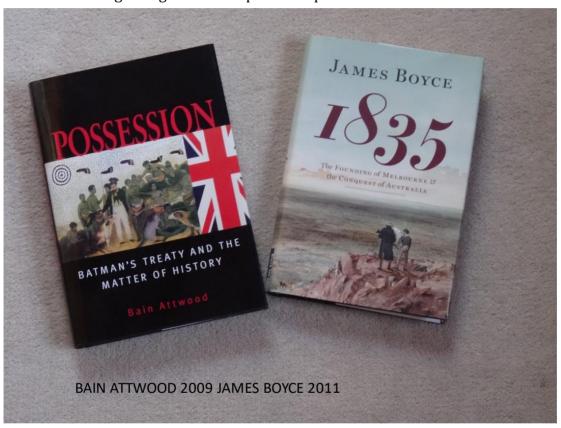
John West, *History* p. 86

[Slide 12: West, History of Tasmania, Launceston 1852, p. 86]

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If Launceston had an official sponsor for its continuation, it was Mr Commissioner Bigge. Bigge Street might not sound as good as Brisbane Street, but it might have exalted the 'Brisbane Street Barons'! Launceston became the official headquarters in 1824.

'Macquarie House' is, in terms of the short European history in Australia, of the highest historical importance, on a par with, say, the White Tower in the Tower of London in British history, for it was not only commissioned by the dynamic young immigrant, Henry Reed, born in Yorkshire in the year Launceston was founded, and a member of the Port Philip Association, but its contents effectively victualled the settlement that began in 1835, which James Boyce has now convincingly demonstrated to be the true beginning of the European occupation of Australia.



[Slide 13: Covers: Bain Attwood, *Possession*, Melbourne 2009 & James Boyce *1835*, Melbourne 2011. Mature re-evaluations of the role of VDL in the settlement that spread from Port Philip]

But that is to get ahead of ourselves. John West's *History* reminds us that the town was named by its founder after a town in Cornwall, 'in honour of Governor King', and that 'he proposed a sea port town, for the northern section of the island' which was 'not under the government of Hobart Town until 1812'. ³

That administrative subordination has rankled ever since. Don't take my word for it; Professor Bain Attwood has summarised the historical evidence in his book about Batman's treaty with the Aborigines at Port Phillip: after 1812, he writes:

the island barely became a unitary state. Launceston had a self-regarding energy of its own, an almost republican spirit and a resentment of Arthur's authoritarian government in Hobart and its oversight of Bass Strait.⁴

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Bain Attwood, Possession 2009

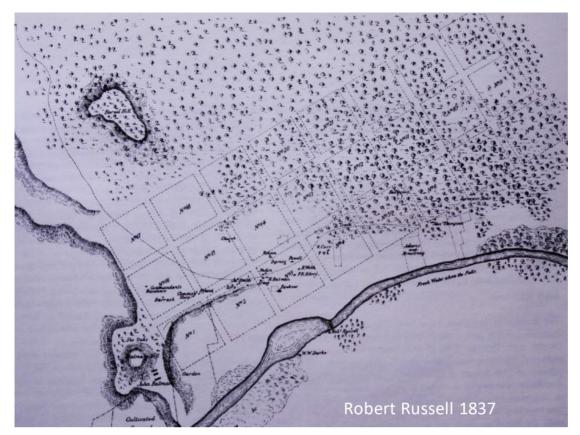
[Slide 14: Attwood Possession, p. 27]

The incursions of Fawkner and the Port Philip Association were separate acts of disobedience to the colonial authority, which wanted to limit the spread of settlement and had some regard for the interests of the Aboriginal inhabitants, although there is evidence of some support from George Arthur after the Port Philip settlement became an established fact, contrary to both British and international law of the time.

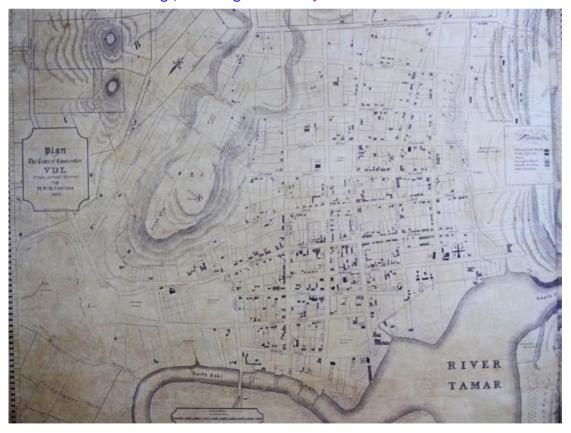
Our administrative subordination to Hobart Town has given us advantages as well as disadvantages. Many will remember the reign of the late Mr. Laurie Shea when he was appointed the State Government's representative on earth, or at least on Launceston. When I was a State employee many years ago, responsible for mental health services in this region, I rediscovered what provincial public servants in all parts of the former British Empire had long known: that in head office, out of sight is out of mind, and administrative neglect there can be a source of practical freedom. It made my task at that time manageable, as it had that of our early commandants.

Like Hobart Town, Launceston was begun as a kind of 'company town', the company being the Convict Department of government, but its position in relation to Bass Strait and a fertile hinterland encouraged the development of private enterprise, and the distance from the seat of Government allowed it to grow in ways that differed from the capital. For example, Governor Macquarie's 1811 ukase that gave Australia the quarter-acre block constrained the development of Hobart, but was belatedly applied here, which is one reason why terraces are unusual in Hobart, but not here.

Private enterprise was as hungry in 1835 as it is today, and leading Launceston entrepreneurs had famously and notoriously caused Melbourne, the only capital city in Australia that was not a government foundation, exporting our local tradition of pragmatic action and insubordination to distant authority.



[Slide 15: Robert Russell, official survey of the site of Melbourne, 1837 (Lands Department, Victoria) I count some 22 buildings, including outhouses]



[Slide 16: H. W. H Smythe, *Plan of the Town of Launceston, Van Diemen's Land* 1835, Sydney 1836 (QVMAG)]

By the time John West appeared in Launceston it was a flourishing town scattered over about a square mile, with development concentrated near its two principal reasons for being: the port on the North Esk waterfront and the penal complex in Paterson Street. Private businesses were already Launceston Historical Society, John West Memorial Lecture, 2021

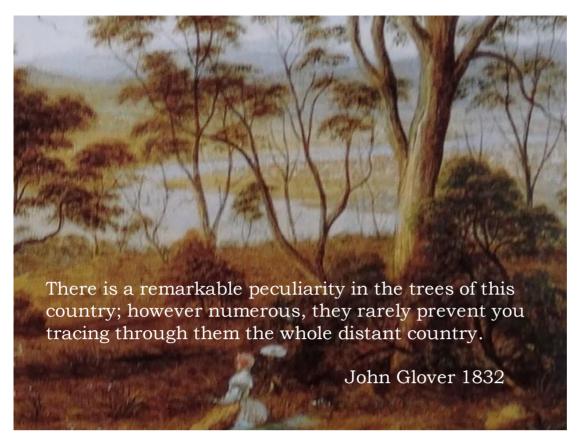
concentrating on Brisbane Street and the streets nearer the river, and there was ribbon development along the Wellington Road, the Launceston end of the Main Road to Hobart Town, where Wellington Bridge was the point from which colonial road distances were measured.

Maps are wonderful stimuli to the imagination, but that needs to be informed by descriptions and preferably pictures. Of these, there are very few that tell us of the built appearance of the town, and most of that few are of individual buildings we can still see.



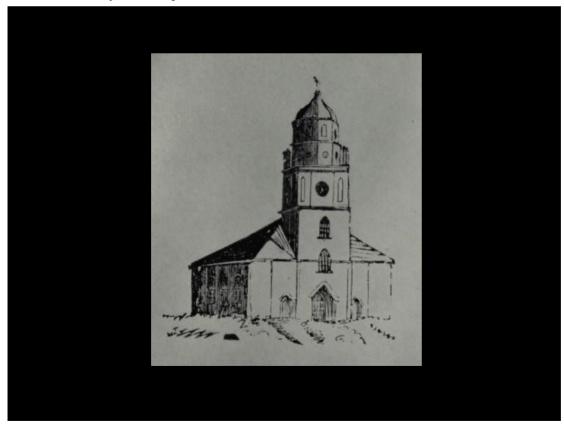
[Slide 17: John Glover, Launceston and the River Tamar c. 1832, oil (Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney)]

On 18 February 1831, his sixty-fourth birthday, the artist John Glover's ship arrived in Launceston, and he first set foot ashore on the following day. With his busy sketchbook he climbed the hills to the south of the Cataract Gorge, and from a site near upper Brougham Street now occupied by some reservoirs and a telecommunications tower he made the sketches that resulted in the painting of the town that now hangs in the Art Gallery of New South Wales.



[Slide 18: Glover, Launceston (detail of Slide 17)]

What Glover thought of the place is not recorded. The town appears in the distance seen through trees, and it was here that he first noticed the transparency of Tasmanian woodlands as compared with the density of European forest in full leaf.



[Slide 19: St John's Church, anon, from Ross's Almanack 1830]

John Glover in 1832: '... there is a remarkable peculiarity in the trees in this country; however numerous, they rarely prevent you tracing through them the whole distant country.'

The buildings are pale flicks of the brush scattered beside the estuary of the North Esk, with one given enough prominence to indicate the presence of a church with a tower: St John's.

In 1829 and 1830, Mr and Mrs Augustus Prinsep lived in Tasmania, and *The Journal of a Voyage from Calcutta to Van Diemen's Land* was published in 1833. Mr Prinsep wrote of Launceston in 1829 that it:

almost equals its rival, Hobarton, in beauty, but for the broad spreading Derwent, and the same number of substantial edifices. A you descend the hill towards it, your eye is arrested by a high rocky bank, to the west, covered with trees. Four large brigs were lying in the South Esk [sic] giving evidence of the traffic of the place, though from the scattered wooden cottages which composed the principal pat of the town, one would hardly have guessed its commercial importance. Farmers on this side of the island ship all their wool from thence, in preference to Hobarton. Large brick store-houses seemed the principal public buildings – what they called the government house, being merely a large cottage prettily situated in an excellent garden, The church was just finished.⁵

In 1833, Glover's natural son, the younger John, described the church as 'a respectable stone London like edifice externally; and still more surprisingly so in the interior, it reminding me of the new Chapel in North Audley Street, London, in its arrangement, rich ceiling &c. as if it had been designed by the same architect.' He was fooled by the external stucco, not yet a decade in place. Prinsep's description of the town in 1829 and Glover's in 1840 bracket the first great transformation of Launceston: On 13 December 1840, he wrote of the town that:

... its increase since we landed there in 1831 is prodigious; it was then about three parts small detached wooden cottages in 1/4 acre or less paled gardens, it is now a little London of grand continuous shops, (or stores as they are here called) of brick, stone or handsomely stuccoed, scarcely a quarter of the original cottages remaining,

John Richardson Glover, 13 December 1840

[Slide 20: John Richardson Glover, letter, Mills Plains near Evandale, Van Diemen's Land, 13 December 1840]

... its increase since we landed there in 1831 is prodigious; it was then about three parts small detached wooden cottages in ¼ acre or less paled gardens, it is now a little London of grand continuous shops, (or stores as they are here called) of brick, stone or handsomely stuccoed, scarcely a quarter of the original cottages remaining.⁷

He must have been strolling past places like this:



[Slide 21: Staffordshire House c. 1835, store and dwelling built for the merchant James Denham, who imported Staffordshire ware (ceramics)]

That was just a year after John and Narcissa West and their children arrived; it would seem that by that time, the CBD was flourishing.

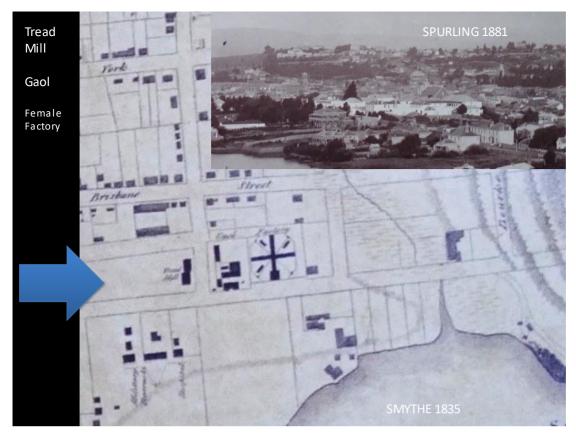
Patricia's book tells how West came to be in Launceston. He had been sent to Van Diemen's Land to answer pleas for help from the neurotic Independent minister in Hobart Town, but on his arrival after a voyage of sixteen weeks from London, he was immediately perceived as a stronger personality likely to supersede him in the unstable affections of the congregation, and judged to be surplus to requirements. A plan was hatched to have him based in Launceston to itinerate in the northern part of the Colony on behalf of the Colonial Missionary Society, and for this purpose, he was provided with a horse, but as the husband of Narcissa and the father of a young family who had done his time as a home missionary in rural England, he was looking for a settled ministry.



[Slide 22: Alice Place and West's houses in Balfour Street and Lord Street]

The Wests stayed first with the Methodist, Isaac Sherwin at *Alice Place* on the slope of Cataract Hill, then took a house on the steep part of Balfour Street, and then settled at the top of the hill. His house, where many momentous plots were hatched and the great *History of Tasmania* and many an editorial, including the important series on *Union of the Colonies* were written, still stands, but what should be an ornament to the city, scheduled for restoration as a national monument, is at present something of a disgrace to us.

The town the Wests came to was still primarily a 'company town', despite the pragmatism of its commandants and the enterprise of its merchants. John West tells us in his History that from 1817, 'there were gradations of penal banishment', Van Diemen's Land was the place where convicts who re-offended in NSW were sent, and 'those separated to special punishment were sent to Hobart Town; those as were still further implicated were forwarded to Launceston; but the dregs of all settled at George Town.'8 [No wonder that the sometime Hobart journalist and later popular maritime historian, Alan Villiers, was later to write of Launceston as a seaport town where no questions were asked.]

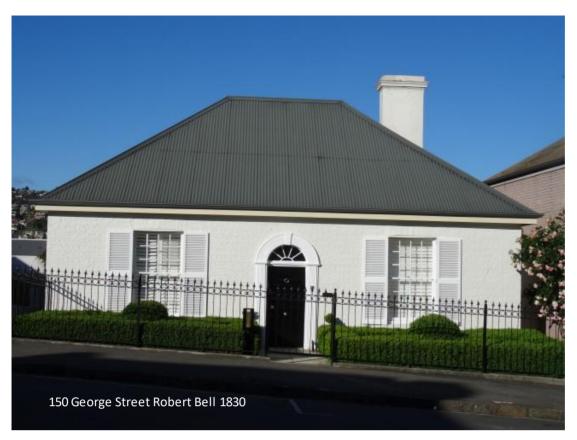


[Slide 23: penal buildings: detail from Smythe's *Plan* (Slide 16), detail from a print by Samuel Spurling 1881, viewed from Trevallyn.

Gaol by 1829, Female Factory 1832, Treadmill/separate apartments 1847 (barracks not shown, George St 1839)

The penal buildings dominated the town below the hills; the gaol buildings straddling Bathurst Street, with the gallows permanently on display on Paterson Street, the Female Factory alongside it. Many of the transportees would have been in lodgings in the town and not in cells unless they offended again, but in pursuance of the new Probation system, a prisoners' barracks had recently (in 1839) been built at the bottom of George street. The buildings symbolised the purpose of the place.

As we all know, John West became a leader in the movement to change all this; the Press became West's principal weapon in the fight against Transportation. Today marks the 179th anniversary of the first appearance of *The Examiner*, our former principal sponsor for this lecture. In his *History* West wrote that 'the idea of abolition was started by the press'. He had recognised in 1844 that the 'settlers may not be prepared for this', but as he wrote in the *Examiner* in that year, he believed that they soon would be. In his *History* he modestly commented on the formation of the Australasian or Anti-Transportation League that 'Not the least important of the series [of meetings] were in Launceston' and that it was 'the tradesmen of that public spirited community first expressed their sentiments' against transportation. Motives were mixed. Some worried about the moral effect of a concentration of criminals in the colony, others about their economic impact. According to West's *Examiner*, the first to undertake not to employ transportees was Robert Bell, a cabinet-maker and timber merchant. 11



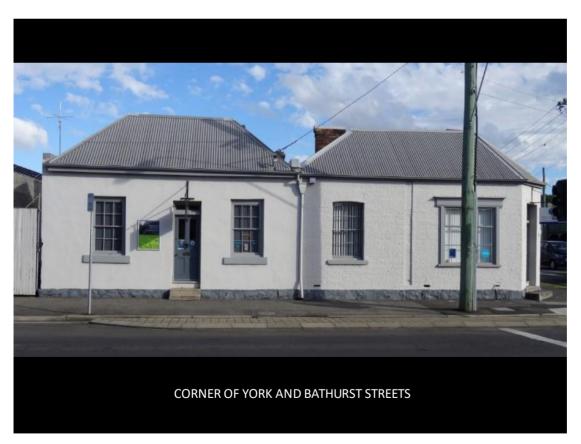
[Slide 24: No 150 George St, built by Robert Bell in 1830]

Sir John Franklin had introduced strong encouragement to the 'introduction of suitable working families from Great Britain', and in fits and starts they came, 'an exceedingly useful class of emigrants' [West] and all went well for two to three years, sparking a building boom as 'every mechanic (i.e. tradesmen, people who make things) aspired to possess a dwelling of his own'. Then came Lord Stanley's probation system, so that convicts could work for themselves, and undercut the migrants, who were often forced to sell their holdings:

In Launceston especially many suburban neighbourhoods were deserted. 13



[Slide 25: E. Ratcliff, Bourke Street, sepia wash c. 1966]



[Slide 26: Corner of York & Bathurst Streets 2020]

'Suburban' here appears to imply that the migrants' 'small brick tenements' stood on subdivisions on the fringe of the town, the town centre itself being occupied by the aspiring middle classes.



[Slide 27: E. Ratcliff, De Little's Buildings, Cameron Street 1965, watercolour]

One of the major concerns of that stratum of society was religion. The incomers had imported their religious alliances and differences, and there was a multiplicity of congregations in the town. John West was at the centre of a group who evidently considered that what they had in common was more important than the differences. In the description of the town prepared for his posthumously published second edition of the *History*, he wrote:

There are two large episcopalian churches, a handsome Presbyterian church, a Roman catholic church (all built in the Gothic style), a Wesleyan chapel, two congregational chapels, a free church, a Baptist chapel, and a synagogue, all neat and commodious buildings.



[Slide 28: Frederick Strange, Holy Trinity Church, Post Office and Custom House, Cornwall Bank, Wesleyan Chapel, Particular Baptist Chapel, St Joseph's Church, watercolours c. 1856 (QVMAG)]

We are fortunate that the town West described in 1852 was almost contemporaneously being depicted by the former convict Frederic Strange.

The dominant English were apt to consider Van Diemen's Land to be an English colony, ignoring the presence of a high proportion of Scots and Irish. All three seem to have ignored the Welsh. West made common cause with the Scots and the Roman Catholics against Bishop Nixon's determination to make the colony Church of England with an Established Church and an Anglican system of education. He supported the Jewish community in their request for a grant of land for a synagogue and a burial ground [the first request was refused, the second, granted]. If there had been a Muslim community, he might perhaps have supported a request for land for a mosque, despite his suspicion of Islam. In 1846 he published a closely argued lecture on *Mahometanism* in the *Examiner*. 14

West was a friend of the Rev. Dr William Browne, the Irish rector of St Johns who, as a colonial chaplain had been responsible to the Governor and resented Bishop Nixon's incursion of episcopal authority, and also of the Rev. Henry Dowling, the not-so-particular Baptist who laid the foundation stone of West's Independent chapel, and had West conduct his second marriage. He associated with leading Methodists, Henry Reed and Isaac Sherwin among others. The Cornish architect, Richard Peter Pink Lambeth may have designed his chapel and Henry Dowling's; he certainly designed the Synagogue, which was built by James Bennell, who was probably a Baptist. Everybody was something, whether they attended worship regularly or not.

Most of Launceston nestled in its valley, subject then as now to winter morning fogs, trying to be a microcosm of an English provincial town.

That included the stratification of society: in place of a landed aristocracy, there were the families who had prospered on large grants of rural land, some supporting comfortable hotels when they came to town, others owning or renting a town house; there were the upper middle class of merchants and professionals (doctors and lawyers); the lower middle class of tradesmen and small shopkeepers; and the working class mostly of relatively unskilled convicts.



[Slide 29: 'Quality Row' (Bennell's Buildings), St John Street, built by James Bennell 1844-1845, probably to designs by Robert De Little, with an interposed Victorian house, probably by Peter Mills or Harry Conway, c. 1870]



[Slide 30: Kinross House, built c. 1840 for Dr Maddox, recent renovation, and photograph by S. Spurling n.d.]

[So it remained in Launceston and its hinterland, apart from the shortage of convict labour, until comparatively recently.]

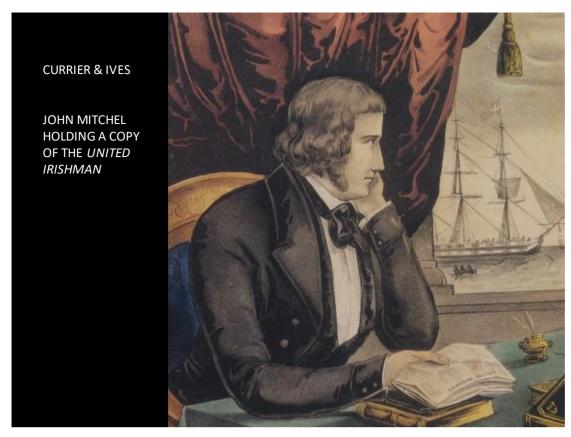
There is an apocryphal story of a scientist whose wife bore him twins, so he had one baptised and kept the other as a control.

Hobart and Launceston had an English twin, and it is interesting to compare the development of social and commercial enterprises in towns begun in the first decade of the nineteenth century, particularly those enterprises that we might regard as markers of middle class aspiration: banks, insurance offices, merchant establishments, charitable foundations and nonconformist chapels (in contrast with government establishments, prisons, military barracks, public buildings and the churches of the establishment). Middlesborough in Yorkshire contained four cottages and twenty-five inhabitants in 1801, 5,463 by 1841; Launceston a few convict trusties in 1805, some buildings in 1806, and a population of 10,855 in 1852. In place of the Convict Department, Middlesborough had the Stockton and Darlington Railway Company, seeking a seaport terminal. The Wesleyans built their first chapel in Launceston in 1826, in Middlesborough in 1833, the Independents and the Particular Baptists raised chapels in both towns in 1837 and 1840 respectively. Launceston opened a mechanics institute in 1842, Middlesborough in 1840. Launceston opened a savings bank in 1835 to encourage thrift among the lower orders, Hobart ten years later, Middlesborough by 1850. Launceston, Hobart and Middlesborough elected their first Mayors in the same year, 1852. ¹⁵

All that was about the respectable part of colonial society, but there were other layers. A streak of rebellion lay in the *Examiner's* questioning of the right of the British Government to hold the Young Irelander rebels in Van Diemen's Land [26 Feb 1851] holding that they had a right to escape if they could. Apart from John West and the Probation system, one of the crosses that Governor Denison had to bear was the management of the 'Irish Exiles', the gentlemanly captives from the Young Irelander rising of 1848. Their legal status and social class differed from those of the convicts, and Denison found them an embarrassment to have around. John West was friendly with the best known of them, William Smith O'Brien, and O'Brien wrote a draft constitution for a federated Australia that *The Examiner* published as a special supplement on 31 August 1853. Never let it be said in Launceston that Henry Parkes, a late convert to the idea, was the father of Federation!

The first of the exiles to escape from Van Diemen's Land was Terence Bellew McManus who nicked off from Launceston in February 1851. McManus had challenged the right of the government to hold him as if a convict, and gained a writ of habeas corpus. The colonial court rejected this, but found that there was no valid record of his conviction or transportation, or indeed any proof that he had not been hanged as originally sentenced. Nevertheless, the Governor ordered that he present himself to the authorities in Launceston, but McManus apologetically broke his parole and absconded, leaving a sick man, John Galvin, who strongly resembled him, to receive the visit from the police. [Galvin's brother, Charles, was bandmaster of St Joseph's Band, and is remembered as having had them assembled on Bathurst Street to serenade John Mitchel, another exile, with Irish airs when he was in Launceston Gaol; Galvin later became the developer of 'Galvin Town', recalled in Galvin Street, South Launceston.] ¹⁹

Launceston, remember, was a seaport where no questions were asked; McManus had found a ship to take him to California. We had a direct trade in those days; pre-cut houses were one of our known exports to the US during the gold rush days, my ancestor James Bennell promoted at least one trading voyage to California²⁰, and the Anti-Transportation League flag was reportedly seen flying on ships in San Francisco harbour.²¹ Two years after McManus escaped, John Mitchel left his designated police district of Bothwell, and after riding over the Central Plateau was given sanctuary in the very Irish Westbury district.



[Slide 31: John Mitchel, lithograph portrait by Currier & Ives c. 1854]

He failed to make rendezvous with his intended ship off George Town, so Father Butler hid him in the tower of St Joseph's Church in Margaret Street and sent him off to Hobart Town in the public coach, dressed as a priest.



[Slide 32: Strange, St Joseph's Church (detail from Slide 28)

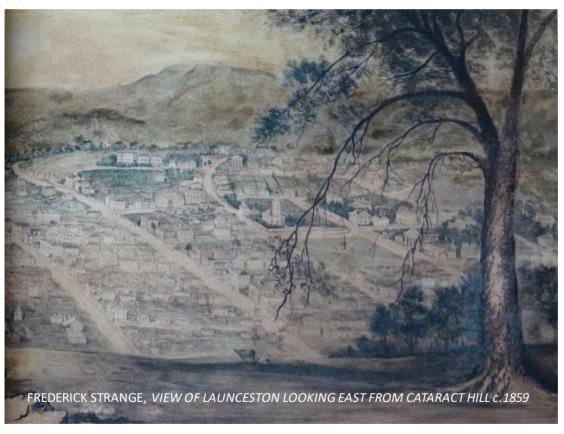
It stood facing Margaret Street, where the liturgical end of the Church of the Apostles is today]

There he too found a ship to take him to the United States.²² This succour was Irish patriotism, not sectarianism, for Mitchel was a Protestant! Launceston had its rebels, and not all were of the convict class!

There were the poor, there was crime, and there was prostitution. Dianne Cassidy has recently lifted that lid a little in her book, *On The Town*²³, examining newspaper and other reports about women who got into trouble or had criminal associations between about 1863, when the Town Council made a 'bylaw for the suppression of houses of ill-fame within the town of Launceston' and 1890. The picture is darkened by the source of the data, and may not be entirely typical. Earlier newspapers were less inclined to report on such cases, or did so even less euphemistically, but we can be sure that the picture in the earlier decades was similar.

Alcohol was not unknown in the town. Jai Paterson has uncovered at least twelve breweries operating between 1824 and the present day²⁴, and the pubs have been almost beyond enumeration, due to their habit of changing names from time to time. The intersection of York and George Streets, for example, had three corner pubs, the Britannia Inn, the Albion Inn and the Belfast Wine Vaults; the last remains as O'Keefe's Hotel. Numbers are fewer today, but we still have a two-pub intersection on Cimitiere Street, and Dry Street, appropriately, has two. Distillery Creek was not named for nothing. Opium was frowned upon as an oriental foible, but laudanum and paregoric were respectable parts of the pharmacopeia, as was cannabis.

At the time when John West's *History* was published, much of the town probably looked better from afar.



[Slide 33: Frederick Strange, Launceston from Cataract Hill c. 1850 (QVMAG)]

In John West's 'Alphabetical Account of Chief Places' appended to his *History of Tasmania* (1852) he described Launceston:

The town is well laid out, and viewed from the hills which overlook it, or from the Tamar, it has a picturesque appearance. The wharves Extend along the river which forms the northern boundary.

Farther up are numerous spacious stores, and other commercial buildings.

Charlotte Cleveland arrived in Launceston in August 1852. She had been disgusted with gold rush Melbourne: 'nothing but dirt and confusion presented themselves', so she was ready to be nice about Launceston:

Some of the shops are equal to any I have seen in a county town in England and the town itself bears great resemblance to one of considerable importance 'at home' as everyone here calls England. Provisions are very dear being above two-thirds of the Melbourne prices. ²⁵



[Slide 34: Frederick Strange, Brisbane Street, watercolour c.1858 (QVMAG)]

Everything was on the up and up, until the discovery of gold in our colony to the north was announced in May 1851. Anyone free to go the goldfields soon began to do so, and a shortage of tradesmen and labourers soon developed. Lady Denison, writing from the comfort of the Governor's Wing at *Entally* in 1853, complained that 'the principal hotel there, in these *golden days*, is so destitute as to servants, that I doubt if they could have received us'. ²⁶ Charlotte Cleveland complained in August 1852 'the Botanic Gardens ... are just now very much neglected owing to the scarcity of labour.' ²⁷

Launceston had passed its first peak.

In the first edition of West's *History*, recording the success of the Anti-transportation movement, Invermay is listed as 'a village near Launceston, on the road to George Town', [but in the second edition, not published until 1971, 98 years after West's death, he included the suburb in the description of the town].

If Colonel Paterson, FRS was the official founder of Launceston, Sir William Denison RE was the founder of Inveresk and Invermay. In his journal in November 1852, he wrote:



I walked carefully around the Launceston Swamp. This ... is always partially under water during the floods, but it semed to be such a very simple undertaking ... that I thought it worth while to employ a gang of convicts to embank and drain it.

Sir William Denison RE, November 1852

[Slide 35: Sir William Denison, Journal November 1852, relief bust in wax (State Library, Hobart]

I walked carefully round the Launceston Swamp. This, which is situated below the meeting of the two rivers, the N and S Esk, is always partially under water during the floods, but it seemed to be such a very simple undertaking to keep the water of the river from backing on to it, and to provide for the discharge of the drainage by means of one or two sluices, that I thought it worth while to employ a gang of convicts to embank and drain it. The work was nearly completed when I went to visit it.²⁸

The only delay in the project had been the collapse of about 30 yards of the embankment that 'quietly subsided during the absence of the men at dinner', but this was soon remedied. [When the north bank of the North Esk was being sheet-piled near the Boatshed about fifteen years ago, the same thing happened, although it may not have been during the dinner hour.]



[Slide 36: Cottages in Balaclava Street, Inveresk, the nearest dating from about 1855. The street name was topical, the Battle of Balaklava was fought on 25 October 1854. It was part of the Siege of Sevastapol, from where we gained the Russian cannon now in City Park]

Sir William Denison, an officer of the Royal Engineers, had been sent to govern Van Diemen's Land with a special brief (and an extra salary) to implement the new Probation System for dealing with transported convicts. Inevitably, he encountered the Anti-Transportation movement, and therefore became the principal adversary of John West. That made him unpopular in Launceston, at least with a faction of the leading citizens, some with the power of the press. Being an engineer, Denison was a considerable nuisance to his public works people and involved in a famous row with Major Victor, who as Superintendent of Public Works was subordinate to the Governor in the Colony, but outranked him as a Royal Engineer and in military seniority. Denison, being an expert on canals and docks, had interested himself in the drainage of the Swamp on the other side of the North Esk, giving us the transpontine suburbs of Inveresk and Invermay, and eventually leading to unintended consequences like the North Launceston Football Club, the Star Theatre, and the University of Tasmania campus. His other gift to Launceston was a new Market.



[Slide 37: Remnant buildings from the New Market, Lower Charles Street]

For over a century it was the Council yard, and the Engineer Governor might not be particularly chuffed to know that most of it is now Harvey Norman's car park! Denison's name is perpetuated, whether accidentally or on purpose, in the name of the road to the city's proudest nineteenth century engineering achievement, the hydro-electric power station at Duck Reach.

The engineer Governor also undertook to blow up the rock in Whirlpool Reach²⁹ to make the river safer for ships coming to Launceston, and he planned a beacon on the Hebe Reef at the mouth of Port Dalrymple, a project that might have saved several ships.

The Examiner's opposition to Denison [7 Aug 1852] extended beyond the convict system, printing the untrue remark that all his engineering projects in the colony could have been accomplished by one steam engine. Denison may have indirectly returned the compliment, as three executions were carried out in Launceston on the day the Bill granting representative government to the colony was to be celebrated here [13 Feb 1851]. The Examiner reported that the Governor had been cheered in Hobart Town but awarded three groans in Launceston. Two years later, on 18 June 1853, the Municipal Council unlawfully demolished the gallows on Paterson Street as part of the celebrations of the end of Transportation.



[Slide 38: Susan Georgina Marianne Fereday, *Launceston VDL Aug 10, 1853*, watercolour of the celebration of the abolition of Transportation in St John Square 10 August 1853 (Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Hobart)]

These celebrations coincided with the jubilee of the British invasion of Van Diemen's Land, and that was celebrated in Hobart Town, but the Launceston celebration was entirely to do with the end of Transportation.

Those political adversaries, John West and Sir William Denison both departed Tasmania in October 1854, West to become the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, and Denison to become Governor of NSW and in effect the first Governor-General of the Australian colonies. West's departure was tearful, and quiet, a gathering of the Independent and Baptist congregations at the St John Square Chapel, and the presentation of a gold watch.³³

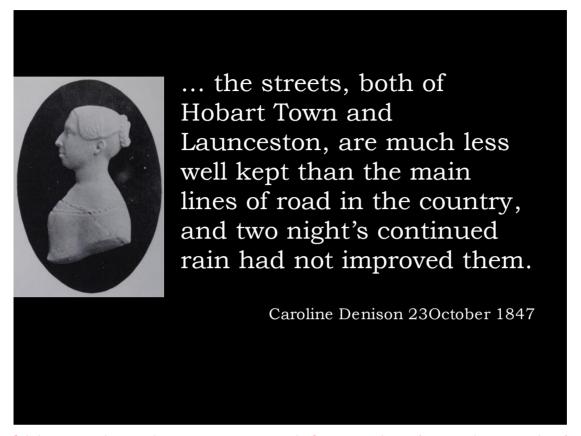
On Denison's last visit to Launceston before his departure Lady Denison wrote of an enthusiastic reception 'like a triumphal procession'. 'I suspect the cause to be partly that he has done a good deal for the improvement of Launceston ..., has extended their wharves, built their markets, and is in process of draining their swamp ...'³⁴

Sir William was accorded a farewell dinner where, according to Lady Denison, he was toasted as 'the best Governor we ever had!!' He had, after all, blown up the rock in the Whirlpool Reach that had endangered our shipping, drained the swamp to enable the building and cultivation of Inveresk and Invermay, built us a market, and fostered the establishment of municipal government. The new Council, however, according to *The Examiner*, refused to vote an address to the departing Governor.

The Launceston correspondent of the *Hobart Town Courier* wrote an enthusiastic report of the occasion that Lady Denison considered 'particularly nice, as coming from Launceston, the place has always hitherto seemed the least well affected towards him',³⁵ but *The Examiner* sourly estimated the crowd for the 'triumphal procession' at 200 children and 50 adults.³⁶ 112 sat down for his farewell dinner, but Campbell Town had mustered 150.³⁷ Whatever John West may have thought of Denison, he was of all governors the one who had most influence on Launceston, and most of this occurred during West's time here. Was his unprecedented interest due to being an engineer, or a politician? Swampies should give him the benefit of the doubt, even if the dwellers on *terra firma* remain cynical!

Lady Denison seemed to like Launceston, although she complained of the condition of the streets, writing from the Government Cottage on 23 October 1847 that:

strange to say, the streets, both of Hobart Town and Launceston, are much less well kept than the main lines of road in the country, and two night's continued rain had not improved them.³⁸



[Slide 39: Lady Caroline Denison, wax relief portrait bust (State Library, Hobart), letter, Government Cottage, Launceston 23 October 1847]

Her husband refused to provide convict labour for the streets of the towns, believing that the inhabitants should pay for it; he was advocating the development of local government for such purposes. Some developers added to the respectability of their properties by attending to the adjacent guttering and kerbing.



[Slide 40: James Bennell's guttering and kerbing, 'Quality Row', St John Street circa 1844]

Lady Denison described the Government Cottage as:

this little cottage, the appearance of which very much pleased me. It is prettily situated, looking down over nice gardens (partly belonging to itself and partly to the Botanical Society (sic), to the two rivers [...] which meet here.

[Actually the Horticultural Society, which still exists, and which had awarded a prize to John West in 1842 for an Italian marrow.]

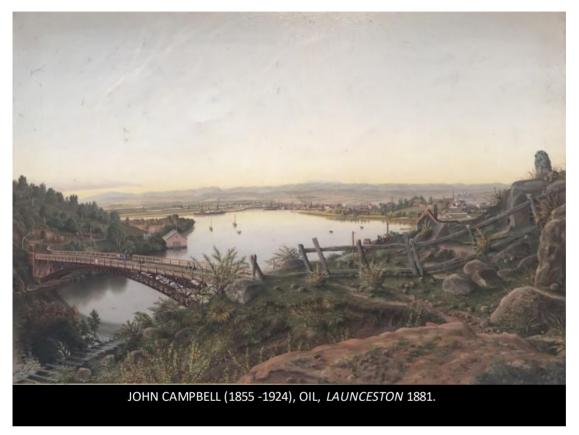
She held that 'every Government House certainly ought to be provided with a ball-room; the one at Launceston has one'.³⁹ She complained that Government House in Hobart Town was deficient in this respect, and she was still remarking on this advantage of Launceston in October 1847.⁴⁰ The magnificent space in the present Government House in Hobart is undoubtedly her monument.

[A British regiment that had had a detachment stationed here was serving in the Crimean War, and the many attachments formed during that time led the citizens to contribute handsomely to funds in support of the troops there. In August 1854, Lady Denison noted the 'day of fasting and prayer on account of the war', and the handsome subscriptions made. In acknowledgement of this, the city received one of the Russian cannon captured at Sevastopol, and it stands in the City Park on a site very near to where the Government Cottage once stood.]

Sir William and Lady Caroline 'took a walk to a place called 'the Cataract', about a mile and a half from Launceston, where the river South Esk seems to have burst through a range of rocky hills, and comes pouring down through a narrow gorge, whose wild beauty exceeds, I think, that of any place I have seen here'.⁴¹ [23 October 1847]

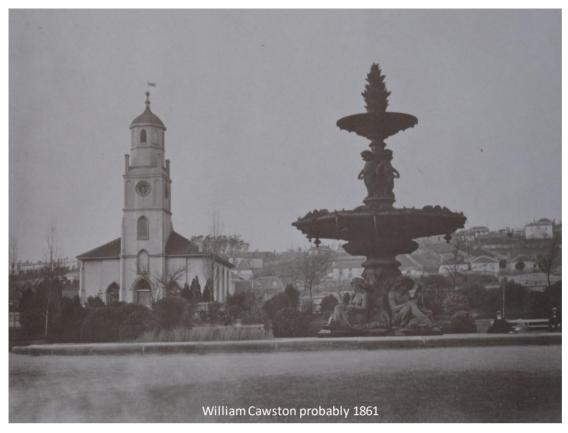
John West's description of our proudest possession in his first edition was separate, but included with the town in the second:

About half a mile from the place where the South Esk joins the Tamar, the river forms a considerable basin, surrounded by lofty hills ... A few yards lower down, there is another cataract – one of the most magnificent in the island – and the river continues its course to the Tamar between two high and almost perpendicular hills. Along one of these hills a wooden aqueduct is carried, which conveys water to turn a mill and supply the town. ... The view up the Esk at this place is one of the most picturesque in the colony.



[Slide 41: John Campbell (Scotland 1855 – Perth, WA 1924), *View of Launceston,* 1881, oil on canvas 71.5 x 106.5 cm. (Private collection, auctioned Sydney 2015) from the Zig-Zag, Cataract Hill]

Despite the availability of water being one of the chief reasons for the effective establishment of Launceston, a reticulated supply was not achieved until 1857. Before that, water had to be from rain tanks or purchased from Ritchies Mill and delivered by cart. There had been abortive schemes to tunnel the hill under Evandale and bring it by aqueducts consisting chiefly of earthworks to the town, operating a series of watermills as it came. The town end of the earthworks was partly constructed; nowadays we call it Churchill Crescent and Lawrence Vale Road – we can only shudder at the thought of what would have happened if the water had arrived in such a notorious landslip area. Having dodged that bullet, there was a scheme to lift water out of the First Basin and send it through a tunnel to Brougham Street, and thence to the town. Some believe the tunnel is still there, but there is no known trace of it. There were proposals to tunnel from the Third Basin, or even from Beams Hollow.



[Slide 42: William Cawston, St John's Church & Fountain, photograph c.1866]

The Director of Public Works, William Rose Falconer, colluded with the locals in having the fountain included in the estimates for the St Patrick's River water scheme.⁴²



[Slide 43: Princes Square fountain sculpture by Lienard, figures by Maturin Moreau 1855, casting by Fonderies du Val d'Osne, France, owned by Barbezat et Cie, Paris, c. 1858, erected Launceston 1859]

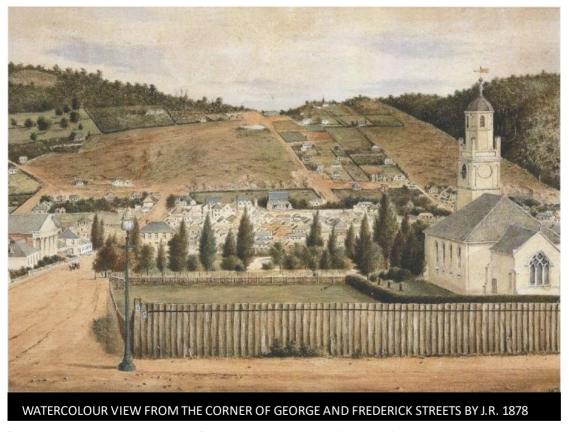
Legends persist about it being topped by a nude lady of such beauty as to threaten public morals, or by an infant peeing into the basin, or that it came to Launceston by mistake, but none of these are true; the fountain, including the finial were chosen from a catalogue, and ordered by the Municipal Council, and it has their names cast in iron upon it. It may be that the coming of a French Second Empire fountain to Launceston in 1858 contributed to the advanced taste of Launcestonians for the more florid Victorian styles that appeared during the following decades, well ahead of their appearance in Hobarton.

West's 1852 description of the town continues:

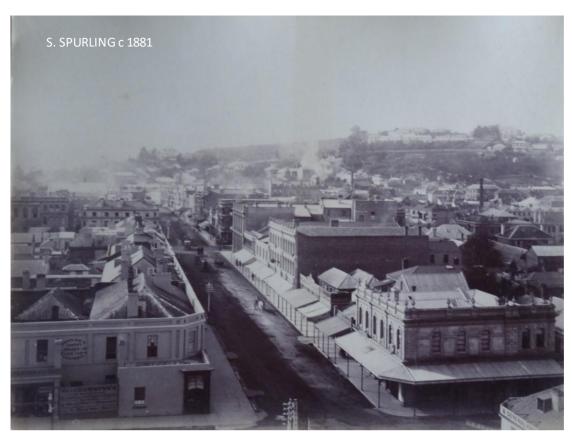
The population of the town is 10,855, the number of houses, 2,181; 798 of which are of stone or brick. There are an episcopal grammar school, a Wesleyan day school, an infant school, three episcopal day schools, a catholic school, seven Sunday schools, and numerous private schools.

... a mechanics' institute and reading room, a library society, several circulating libraries, two horticultural societies, a benevolent society, auxiliary bible society, two masonic lodges, Oddfellows society, Rechabite society, and a teetotal society.

After West's departure, headhunted by James Fairfax to become the editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the transformation of Launceston from a Regency colonial town to a Victorian one proceeded apace. This was less obvious beyond the CBD where new buildings appeared in the latest style and old ones were renovated to look like them.



[Slide 44: J.R., watercolour of Launceston in 1878 (St John's Church collection, on loan to QVMAG, viewed from George Street, the Chancel was added to St John's Church in 1862]



[Slide 45: Stephen Spurling, Brisbane Street, photograph looking east from the Firebell Tower c. 1881]



[Slide 46: John Watt Beattie, Brisbane Street 1890]

New buildings appeared in the latest style, the well-to-do built villas as near to town as they could, or in the suburbs, the churches rebuilt conspicuously to hold large congregations.



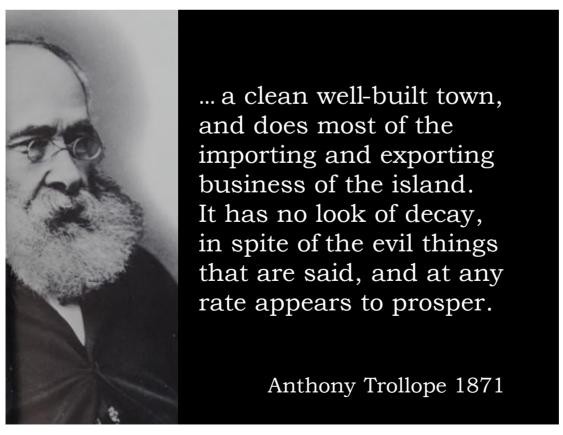


[Slides 47 & 48: Victorian houses, villas and terraces]



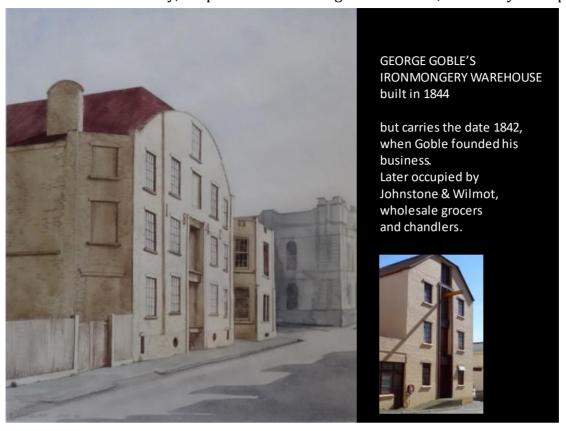
[Slide 49: Victorian churches, Christ Church, Launceston Baptist Tabernacle (engraving, *Tabernacle Echoes* 1884), Margaret Street Methodist Church]

The middle classes lived over their shops, or in new terraces, or built 'bay villas' on the hills around the town, flowing along Elphin Road and into the valley of Abbott Street. The town was transformed by Peter Mills and Harry Conway; new town buildings and old buildings restyled to match them.

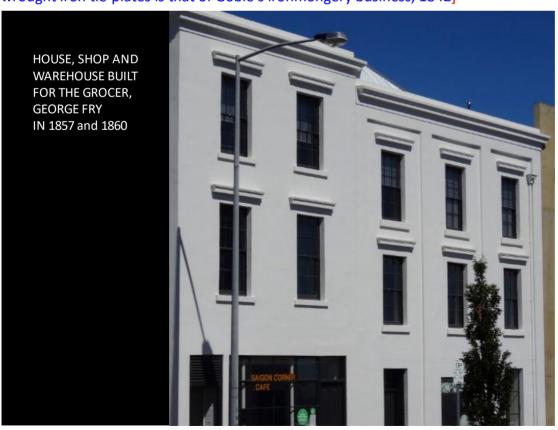


[Slide 50: Anthony Trollope, Australia and New Zealand 1872]

in 1871, seventeen years after John West left Launceston, Anthony Trollope came to Launceston. He found it "a clean, well-built town, and does most of the importing and exporting business of the island. It has no look of decay, in spite of the evil things that are said, and at any rate appears to prosper."⁴³

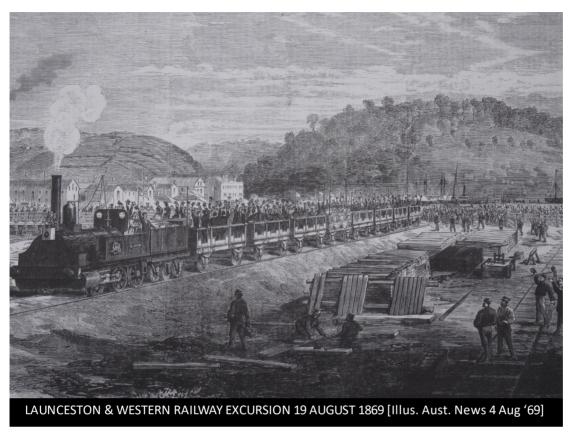


[Slide 51: E. Ratcliff, *Goble's warehouse, Cimitiere Street* 1966, watercolour. Built in 1844, the date in wrought iron tie-plates is that of Goble's ironmongery business, 1842]



[Slide 52: The renovated 'C. H. Smith' buildings, a house, shop and warehouse built in 1857 and 1860 by James Bennell for the grocer, George Fry]

Trollope had just come from Melbourne by steamer, and had yet to take the coach to Hobart Town. There he found general economic despondency; he was assured that the colony was 'going to the mischief'. He failed to mention Launceston's major enterprise of the time.



[Slide 53: Launceston and Western Railway public excursion, engraving in the *Illustrated Australian News*, 4 August 1869]

Launceston entered the railway age in 1868 when construction of the locally promoted Launceston and Western Railway began. HRH Prince Alfred, the first Duke of Edinburgh, had turned the first sod in 15 Jan 1868 and the line was officially opened to Deloraine early on 10 February 1871.⁴⁴

[The image is of the first public excursion on the unfinished line, arranged to keep up public enthusiasm for the project.]

The enterprise was always somewhat economically hairy, and had been authorised on the basis that a rate could be levied on the landowners of the districts served if it failed to make a profit. When the Government carried out this threat, most of the locals refused to pay on the grounds that a similar levy had not been made on the beneficiaries of the Tasmanian Main Line Railway, promoted by Hobart interests and begun in 1872. When property of the defaulters was seized and put up for auction, people bought the items and returned them to the original owners. On 5 February 1873, public unrest was such that the Government threatened to send soldiers from Hobart and a gunboat up the Tamar. It is interesting that the only time the Riot Act has been read in Launceston was in connection with this; in Hobart, the only comparable event was the Chiniqy affair, a sectarian riot occasioned by the visit of the Canadian ex-priest who wrote a scurrilous book called *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome* and travelled the world inciting extreme Protestant hostility. 46

The Government acquired both railways and built their own extensions, and Launceston eventually became the rail transport hub.



[Slide 54: Bernie Kelly, photograph of Launceston Railway Yards, 1968, locomotive H2 built by Vulcan Foundry, Manchester 1950, recently rebuilt Launceston Workshops 1968, X Class diesels, built by English Electric, Manchester 1950, coaling tower and water tower by Edward Giles Stone in the background]

In his memoirs, published in London in 1897, Sir John Lefroy recalled his time as Governor of Tasmania [the ghost town near the East Tamar is named after him, and Lefroy Terrace on the corner of York and Wellington streets (1881) named after the source of wealth it once was. The matching Montrose Terrace (1904) opposite still stands.]:

Launceston is the rival city to Hobart: there is excessive jealousy between them. We are obliged to be extremely careful to avoid offence by appearing to favour one more than the other.⁴⁷

The Examiner wrote of him that:

he has been the first Governor to recognise that Hobart is not Tasmania, that Launceston is the natural centre for the largest portion of the population... 48

No comment.

In 1891, Launceston became the smallest city in the world ever to hold an International Exhibition, following a nineteenth century mania that had been begun by Napoleon, but went international with Prince Albert's Great Exhibition in London in 1851.



[Slide 55: Tasmanian International Exhibition poster, *Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, November 1891 (QVMAG)]

From the later 1880s, Launceston began to experience a mining boom like a miniature WA, against the depressed trend of the other Australian colonies, based on the discovery of tin at Mount Bischoff and in the North-East, and Gold at Beaconsfield, Lefroy, Mangana and a few other places. The new money led to a spectacular spate of building in the latest style.





[Slides 56 & 57: 'Queen Anne' or 'Federation' houses]

The well-to-do of Hobart already had themselves ensconced in villas designed by Henry Hunter, so the place for an architect to practice was in Launceston. Alexander North, Harold Masters, Thomas Searell, J. Martyn Haenke (transiently), Thomas Tandy the elder, and Alfred Luttrell held their own against competition from Marvellous Melbourne, or supervised designs that came from there.





[Slide 58 & 59: Red brick Launceston buildings]

In 1884, most of the houses in the town still had cesspits, but by the end of the century, Launceston had become the best sewered city in Australia, well in advance of Sydney and Melbourne, and even of London. Our Municipal Council was considered a seat of enlightenment. Launcestonians are particularly fond of Peter Cannon's glowing summary:

Launceston at the end of the century ... was one of the most heavily municipalized and tidiest little cities in the world, operating efficient sewerage, water, slaughtering and electricity services, providing museum, art gallery, swimming and Turkish Bath facilities, and paying its employees the first public oldage pensions ever known in Australia. ... this was an extreme case of municipal enlightenment.

Peter Cannon, Australia in the Victorian Age: Life in the Cities, Melbourne 1975.

[Slide 60: Cannon, Australia in the Victorian Age: Life in the Cities, Melbourne 1975, p. 21]

Launceston at the end of the century ... was one of the most heavily municipalised and tidiest little cities in the world, operating efficient sewerage, water, slaughtering and electricity services, providing museum, art gallery, swimming and Turkish Bath facilities, and paying its employees the first public old-age pensions ever known in Australia. ... this was an extreme case of municipal enlightenment. ⁴⁹

Nevertheless, there were still slums, and into the second half of the twentieth century the Gee mansions on Upper Brisbane Street still looked down on an estate of cottages in Margaret Street that did not have electric power connected.

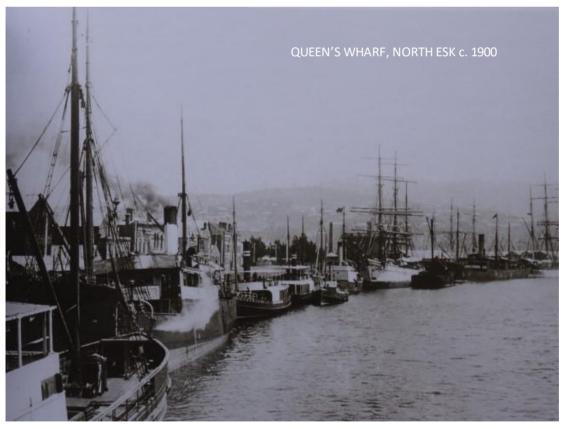


[Slide 61: McHugh and Campbell Pottery, Huttons brick, the duplicate King's Bridge arch made by Salisbury's Foundry floated on Weedon's dry dock in 1904]

By the end of the nineteenth century, Launceston could make nearly anything a non-luxurious society might require. Our founders and boilermakers could make almost any kind of machinery or build any kind of structure. Our mills could spin and dye and weave the wool from our hinterland. They could grind our flour, roll our oats. They could saw and dress our timber. Our brickworks made the material for the city, our potteries made commercial and decorative ware, and drainpipes galore.



[Slide 62: Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company *SS Flinders* and others in port in 1881 (detail from Slide 41]



[Slide 63: Unidentified photographer, Queen's Wharf c. 1890]

Alexandra Wharf in the mouth of the North Esk gave place to King's Wharf as the gateway to Tasmania; to get to Hobart from the rest of the world you had to catch a liner in the apple season, or else a steamer in Melbourne, disembark in Launceston and take the Boat Train to Hobart.



[Slide 64: Unidentified photographer, Kings Wharf 1934 with TSS Taroona and TSS Loongana]

Bass Strait was notorious for seasickness, so a family of local shipowners decided that the answer to the Strait was aviation. Holyman's Airways started by serving the islands, then the Melbourne – Launceston route.



[Slide 65: H. J. King, Miss Flinders photographed in flight 1933]

Our airport turned 90 last year. Holymans amalgamated with the airline started by Kingsford-Smith and Ulm to create Australian National Airways, the giant in the field before Ansett and TAA. Another Launceston Grammar boy started Qantas in Queensland. Sir Hudson Fysh.

The liveliness of Launceston in the inter-war years, despite the Great Depression, is demonstrated by the beginning of another transformation of the inner city with the coming of Art Deco.



[Slide 66: Holyman House by Hubert Springford East and Roy Sharrington Smith 1936]

This one was cut short by the Great Depression and then the Second World War, and resumed only in a cutprice era where we flourished for a time before beginning to face a diminished relevance to all but ourselves.



[Slide 67: Art Deco Launceston: Alfred Harrrap woolstore (Colin Philp 1931), *Luck's Corner* (Roy Smith and Gordon Willing 1937), St John's clerestory (Alexander North 1937), Brougham Street pumphouse (C. L. Clennett, City Architect 1940)]

One aspect of history is the occurrence of 'bottlenecks', events narrow in time and space that have enabled or led to momentous changes in all that follows after. One thinks of Thermopylae or Lepanto or the Battle of Britain, but not all of them are battles. Launceston was the epicentre of two movements that have made Australia what it is, for better or for worse. The unlawful settlements by the Port Philip Association and by Fawkner in 1835 were the true beginning of the invasion of a continent; the Anti-transportation League the decisive turning from being a remote British penal colony towards self-governing nationhood, and a harbinger of Federation; John West was central to the latter movements.

John West was in many ways an exceptional man, but in this evening's context we might consider that he flowered in an exceptional place, and ask whether that, combined with a particular time, produced the man he became.

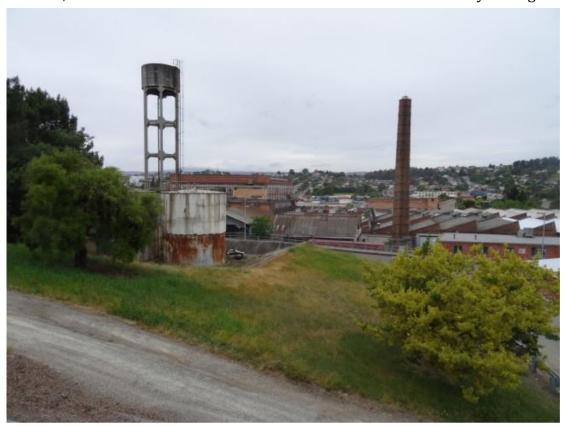
John West's Launceston was a more important provincial city than any other in the Australian colonies, at the time of his arrival more advanced than Geelong, Port Macquarie, and Newcastle: Ballarat and Bendigo, Rockhampton and Cairns were in the future, Brisbane and Perth in their infancy.

What is the heritage of a city that is the third to be founded in the whole of Australia, that took a leading part in the development of the nation, that nurtured and produced people of national importance in medicine, the fine and the performing arts, and politics. It has been advanced in publicly owned utilities, enlightened in social security measures.

Local doctors pioneered surgical anaesthesia, diagnostic and therapeutic x-ray, cardiac massage to revive the apparently dead, and attempted organ transplant. The late lamented Birchalls is credited with the invention of the writing pad.

Do we still punch beyond our weight? We publish more than any other provincial centre, and more than Perth or Brisbane. We contribute professional leaders who come from outside of the capitals. We sustain the most important museum and art gallery outside the capitals.

But we are being hollowed out by the twenty-first century. Most of our industries have moved offshore, much of our wholesale and retail trade has been absorbed by the big box and the Internet.



[Slide 68: Industrial waste-land, former Patons & Baldwins (later Coats Patons) spinning mill, Glen Dhu]



[Slide 69: James Nelson and ACL Bearings, Mowbray Heights]



[Slide 70: Harts for Hardware, York Street]



[Slide 71: Ogilvie Park and Bunnings 2020: ? a burial plot for the CBD]

Unemployment is high, particularly amongst the young. The city centre has been depopulated, dormitory suburbs spread like a rash over the surrounding countryside, parked cars spread like a rash around the city centre.



[Slide 72: Douglas Wherrett, Corner of Bathurst and Brisbane Streets 1940 (QVMAG)]



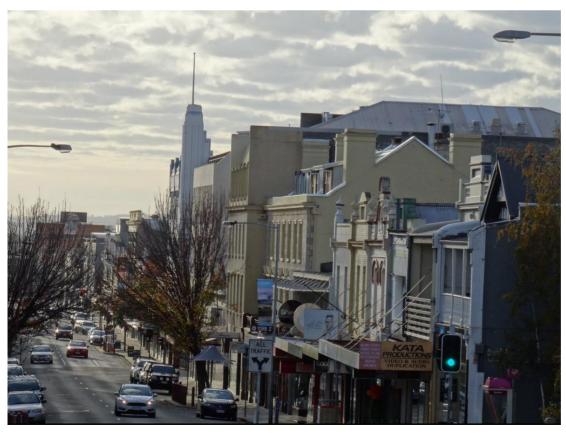
[Slide 73: Bathurst St depopulated 2019]

Governments see us as irrelevant, except at election time. Local government, desperate for development, permits projects that do not respect our special character.



[Slide 74: Invermay Road 2019]

The University pursues a commitment to the city that is intended to bring 'the cargo', but hugs its higher academia to the capital, in many fields treating education as a mere transfer of knowledge and not a life-changing face-to-face experience. The AFL brings us occasional circuses, Covid-19 permitting, but where is the bread?



[Slide 75: The Architectural Zoo, George St.]

I am one of those who advocate the return of a rebellious spirit in the city, in every aspect of its life, but especially against doctrines like 'economy of scale' or 'centralised planning' or 'centre of excellence' or 'where has it been done before' or 'all growth is good' or 'there isn't enough parking'. Some of our past rebels have come from afar, some have been born here.

Our town was born of insubordination, flourished on its own enterprise, resisted established authority, and fostered innovation. Let it be a place where we can again nurture constructive rebellion.

[All photographs are by the author, unless otherwise attributed]

Passages In blue may have been omitted in the presentation of the lecture.

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