



Launceston Historical Society Inc.

Newsletter No 193

April 2024

ISSN 1036-7950

PO BOX 1296 LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Bringing together people with an interest in history

Welcome to the Committee Members for 2024

Thank you to everyone who attended the Annual General Meeting on Sunday 18 February 2024. John Dent took the chair while the new committee for 2024 was elected.

Marion Sargent was re-appointed president. The other executive committee members are Wendy Roberts (vice-president), Leonie Prevost (treasurer and public officer), Catherine Pearce (minute secretary), Prue McCausland (correspondence secretary). The re-elected committee members are Karin Lê, Brad Wood, Sue Bell, Carol Fuller, and Phil Page. We welcome one recruit, Sophie Appleby, after Kelli Schultz stepped down after seven years.

The 2023 Annual Report can be read online: <http://launcestonhistory.org.au/publications/annual-reports/>

AGM Guest Speaker: John Dent



John Dent presented a fascinating insight into 100 years of the Rotary Club of Launceston at the Launceston Historical Society AGM on 18 February 2024. Rod Oliver put the PowerPoint show and talk together but could not attend the meeting.

The initial meeting convened to form a Rotary Club in Launceston was held at the Brisbane Hotel on 18 February 1924. All the members were businessmen, one from each occupation in the city. The photo of the Charter Members shows them formally dressed in suits, ties, waistcoats, and watch chains. There was John Ingles the grocer, CF Monds the miller and the first president, Dr John Ramsay among the 23 members.

There have been lots of changes in 100 years, but over that time the club has helped as needed when disasters strike, with youth projects, polio eradication, St Giles, Relay for Life, New Horizons, a community garden, and many more projects at home and overseas.

Fundraising has always been an important part of the club. It held an air pageant at Western Junction, garden festivals at the old show grounds in Cypress Street, and still holds barbeques and sausage sizzles to enable them to carry on their good work.

The first female member was Colleen McGann in 1995. After having a peak of 130 members in the 1980s, membership has dwindled to 30, but the Rotary Club continues to be a quiet achiever in the city.

John West Memorial Lecture: Kristyn Harman



Dr Kristyn Harman presented an insightful outline of her in-depth study of convicts registered in CON16 at the 36th John West Memorial Lecture on Sunday 17 March 2024.

The focus of the current study, funded by the Australian Research Council, with Dr Vicky Nagy, is on men, women and children who were either born or arrived free in former British colonies but were later criminally convicted and transported to, or even within, Van Diemen's Land between 1835 and 1853.

The lecture was divided into three parts. The first covered the inception of criminal transportation, which is a global phenomenon and has been in place for thousands of years. The second focussed on criminal deportation to VDL in colonial Australia and the final part looked at the long trajectory of transportation up to modern times in Australia. Transportation is a long-established practice in Australia, dating back to the colonial period.

A more detailed summary is on our Facebook page. Read the written version of the lecture on the LHS website.

April Meeting: Julian Burgess

Crooks, Craftsmen and Gold Diggers! French and Italian convicts in Launceston in the 1840s

Sunday 21 April 2024 – 2pm, Meeting Room, Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk

Launceston in the 1830s and 1840s had a small community of French and Italian watchmakers and jewellers. Some were highly skilled tradesmen and others were dishonest and less scrupulous members of their trade.

How did they all manage to be in Launceston at the same time? Some were convicts, found guilty of crimes in Britain and transported to Van Diemen's Land. They had very little choice in their destination, but several were adventurous free settlers.

Perhaps a life in England or its colonies offered a less uncertain future after the second French Revolution in 1830 caused political conflict in France and also set in motion turmoil in neighbouring Italy.

Maybe the opportunities for fame and fortune in a new land on the other side of the world was an attraction. And for some of these European craftsmen there was fame, or at least notoriety, and wealth in Australia.

Two of these European craftsmen went on to play a key role in the discovery of gold in Victoria and one would be the victim of perhaps the biggest gold robbery in Launceston's history. Their little-known stories are a fascinating insight into Tasmania's convict era and life in the growing town of Launceston at the time as well as the tumultuous events that helped shape Australia. Their stories are among the many told in *Doing Time: Stories of Convict Clock and Watchmakers in Van Diemen's Land* published July last year.

Julian Burgess is a former Associate Editor of the Launceston Examiner newspaper, where he edited and wrote many of *The Examiner's* annual historical supplements between 2006 and 2014, and the author or co-author of a dozen books on local history.

He has written hundreds of articles on Tasmanian history and contributed to a number of local historical publications. He is a regular contributor to the Launceston Historical Society's Our History series in the *Sunday Examiner*.

You can find out more at www.julianburgess.com.au.



May Meeting: Stefan Petrow

Joseph Reginald Forward and the Making of the Launceston Public Library 1906 to 1948

Sunday 19 May 2024 – 2pm, Meeting Room, Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk



Over its long history, the subscription Launceston Mechanics' Institute and Public Library was the most important cultural institution in Launceston. A key period in its history was from 1906 to 1948 when Joseph Reginald Forward was the Librarian in charge of modernising the library and creating what many regarded as the best library in Tasmania. Widely known and admired by the community in the first half of the twentieth century, Forward is remembered today only by aficionados of the library's history. This talk will restore Forward to a prominent place in community consciousness by examining among other things Forward's background and career as a librarian and mentor, his efforts to build the library book and special collections, his ideas on children's reading, his attitude to the free library movement in Launceston and his brief role as City Librarian of the free Launceston Public Library in the last few years of his working life.

Emeritus Professor Stefan Petrow taught Australian, Tasmanian, European and family history at the University of Tasmania until his retirement in June 2020. His research interests cover all aspects of Tasmanian history, but he has a special interest in aspects of Launceston's health, planning and cultural history. His latest book is *A Priceless Gift: The Launceston Mechanics' Institute and Public Library 1906 to 1948* (2023). His next book called *Tasmanian Anzacs, Families and The Impact of World War One: Volume 1: The 12th and 52nd Battalions* will be published by Forty South Publishing in 2024 and he has begun work on a commissioned history of St. John Ambulance in Tasmania.

June Meeting: Hamish Maxwell-Stewart

Constructing a Convict Memorial for Tasmania

Sunday 16 June 2024 – 2pm, Meeting Room, Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk



Over the last two decades, swathes of Tasmania's world heritage listed archive has been digitised, coded, and linked in order to tackle questions as diverse as the impact of solitary confinement on convict life expectancy, levels of reoffending, and patterns of convict resistance. A spinoff of this research has been the creation of the largest and most complicated historical dataset assembled in Australia to date. This is now being used to drive new heritage interpretation initiatives. This includes an interactive exhibition unveiled in March 2024 in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (*Unshackled: The True Convict Story*) and a digital Convict Memorial in the Hobart Penitentiary unveiled in November 2023. This paper will explore the ways in which cutting-edge research is being used to tell Tasmania's story and how this might develop in the future.

Hamish Maxwell-Stewart is a professor of heritage and digital humanities at the University of New England and an associate member of staff at Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania. The author of over a hundred books and articles, Hamish has long been an advocate of the necessity of connecting cutting-edge research with heritage interpretation. His previous heritage collaborations have included the Lottery of Life visitor gallery at the Port Arthur Historic Site, viewed by over 2,000,000 visitors, and the Digital Panopticon website.

LHS Activities 2024

Launceston Historical Society meetings are usually held at the meeting room, Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk, on the third Sunday of the month at 2pm, unless otherwise notified. Free for members, visitors are welcome to attend at \$5 each. Bring some cash for a chance to win a prize in the raffle. Come along to learn about our history.

Earlier talks are available on our website, so catch up on ones you missed or listen to them again: <http://launcestonhistory.org.au/lhs-lecture-series/>

21 July	Catherine Pearce & Wendy Roberts , <i>A virtual walking tour of Launceston's CBD with Cya on the Road</i>
18 August	Brad Wood , <i>Henry Rice: East Coast Explorer</i>
15 September	Louise Zarmati , <i>Maria Campbell, an Aboriginal girl</i>
20 October	Jen Thompson , <i>"Scenes that are brightest"</i>
17 November	Darren Watton & John Dent , <i>The old Perth Gaol Archaeological Dig</i>

New Members

The President and Executive welcome to our Society the following new members: Julia Clifford, John Cole, Lorraine Green, Mark Gunn, Peter Jacobson, Christine Russell-Stone and Kallun Willock.

Membership Form

Membership forms are available on our website in both PDF and Word formats. Sunday meetings are free for LHS members, and admission for visitors is \$5. Renewals for 2024 were due on 31 December 2023. We encourage members to pay by direct debit into our Commonwealth Bank of Australia account: BSB 067-003 A/C No. 2804 8638, by cheque in the mail, or cash at the next meeting you attend.

Primary History Prize 2024

The LHS Primary History Prize opens soon and completed entries are due on 18 October 2024. Students from grades 3 to 6 are invited to create posters, projects, essays or 3-minute videos depending on their grade. We encourage students to pose a question related to the history of Tasmania or Launceston. Some suggestions are a person, an object, a place, a building, or family history. The judging criteria will concentrate on originality of topic, accuracy of research, acknowledgment of sources, and visual and language presentation. Vouchers from Petrarch's Bookshop will be awarded to the best entries. Guidelines and entry forms will be sent to schools and placed on the LHS website.

For further information contact Carol Fuller: phone 0419 116 636 or email carol.fuller@bigpond.com.

Other Events of Interest

George Town & District Historical Society: At the Grove, George Town, third Monday of the month at 7.30pm: 15 April 2024, The Committee and others, *TBA*; 20 May 2024, Des Wootton & Daryl Camino, *History Slide Evening*; 17 June 2024, *TBA*. Email: info@gtdhs.com.

Book Council of Lutruwita/Tasmania: Launceston Library, Level 2, third Wednesday of the month at 1.15pm. 17 April 2024, Stefan Petrow, *'A Priceless Gift: A History of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute and Public Library 1906 to 1948'*; 15 May 2024, Claire van Ryn, *'The Secrets of the Huon Wren'*; 19 June 2024, Liam Randall, chef and horticulturalist, *'Australian Cuisine'*. Members free; non-members \$5. RSVP: bookcouncilt@gmail.com.

Royal Society of Tasmania (Northern Branch): Meeting Room, QV Museum, Inveresk on the fourth Sunday of each month at 1.30pm. 28 April 2024, Dom Geraghty, *The University of Tasmania's Northern Transformation Project – 8 years on*; 26 May 2024, Anna Wrobel-Tobiszewka and Valeryia Komyakova, *Microplastics in Tasmania*; 23 June 2024, Hannah Fair, *Modifying health and lifestyle factors to reduce dementia risk*. Inquiries: Lois Beckwith, loisbeckwith27@gmail.com

Tasmanian Family History Society: Wednesday, 17 April 2024, 2pm, Elderly Citizens Club, Landale St, Invermay, AGM & Terese Binns, *War Animals*.

Other Events of Interest Continued

Oral History Workshop: Jill Cassidy will conduct an oral history workshop in Launceston on Saturday 25 May for Oral History Tasmania. It will cover all aspects of oral history practice. Topics include the value of oral history, the use of equipment, preparation for an interview and interview technique, along with ethics and alternatives to transcription. There will be a demonstration of OHT's digital recorder, available for hire, and participants will do practice interviews and listen to interview excerpts.

Cost of the workshop is \$50 for non-members of OHT and \$30 for students. Prior registration is essential: go to www.oralhistorytas.org.au. Enquiries to Jill Cassidy on 0418 178 098, or president@oralhistorytas.org.au

Tasmanian Historical Research Association: Legacy Function Rooms, 159 Macquarie St, Hobart on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. 9 April 2024, Clare McShane, *A Tasmanian Life*; 14 May 2024, Grace Karskens, *Eldershaw Memorial Lecture: Naming Country again - place names, mapping and Aboriginal cultural renewal*; 11 June 2024, Stefan Petrow, *'Making libraries free for all': the case of Launceston 1929-1945*. Email: info@thra.org.au.

From the Past

Launceston Examiner, Saturday 16 October 1897, page 8 (Trove)

Building Trade:

The new buildings in Brisbane-street known as **The Block**, which were erected by Mr. J. T. Farmilo for Messrs. R. D. Richards and Co. have now been completed. The facade has been finished in "Queen Ann" style, and The Block, which was designed by Messrs. A. and S. Luttrell, is the prettiest set of buildings in Brisbane-street. One shop is occupied by Messrs. Richards and the others have been sub-let to Mr. W. Gardiner, Jeweller, and the Boot Palace Company. The erection of them cost about £2200.

A professional brick residence of ten rooms is being erected at the corner of Brisbane-road and Tamar-street for Dr. C. S. Richardson. The doctor is also having a seven-room cottage built in Tamar-street. Both of them, which will be fitted with modern conveniences, were designed by Messrs. Luttrell, and are being erected by Messrs. Chaplain and Malcolm.

Plans are now being prepared by the above firm of architects for a new Anglican Church, of gothic design, at Parattah. They have also been instructed to furnish a report on the English church at Beaconsfield, with a view to making several alterations and improvements.



The Block, originally three shops, is pictured next door to McKinlay's with drapers JW Pepper & Son at 133 and 133a and James Duncan's shoe shop at 135 Brisbane Street, Launceston. Only one section of the attractive façade remains. The five windows of 133 and 133a have either been demolished or hidden behind the plain Harris Scarfe façade. Pictures: Launceston Library, LPIC147-6-306 and Marion Sargent.

Reassign: True Tales from the Grassy Woodlands.

Reassign tells the stories of Tasmania's 'grassy woodlands' using a range of digital techniques to deliver surprising and thought-provoking outcomes.

Tasmania's northern midlands was shaped by strong women and men: Aboriginal people, convicts, bushrangers, pastoralists, politicians, and soldiers. *Reassign* brings them back to life.

The *Reassign* Project presents Aboriginal, colonial, and agricultural history in new and vibrant ways with augmented reality, video, music and podcasts. The past meets the future at <https://reassign.net.au/>

Our History

These stories on Launceston's history and beyond have been contributed by our members. Read the stories in *The Sunday Examiner* or on the Launceston Historical Society's [Facebook](#) page.

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324	25 Feb 2024	25	Marion Sargent	Seasons in sun: fond memories of Royal Park beach	Royal Park Beach
325	3 Mar 2024	23	Kelli Schultz	Ruins remain: Perth's connection to historic silos	Scone Mills
326	10 Mar 2024	27	Nigel Burch	The Sunpolishers Club: when radio topped the charts	Sunpolishers Club
327	17 Mar 2024	23	Marion Sargent	The saga of the Post Office tower, clock and chimes	Launceston Post Office tower & clock. Part 1
328	24 Mar 2024	23	Marion Sargent	The Launceston Post Office tower saga: Part II	Post Office tower, clock & chimes. Part 2
329	31 Mar 2024	31	Nigel Burch	Why this Charles Street building is mostly missing	Coach & Horses Hotel / National Hotel
330	7 Apr 2024	27	Nigel Burch	Peaceful locale belies mill's turbulent past	Supply River Mill
331	14 Apr 2024	27	Marion Sargent	Remembering the Norwood Avenue Tea House	Norwood Avenue Tea House
332	21 Apr 2024		Julian Burgess		<i>Marco Polo</i> and Rev. WH Browne
333	28 Apr 2024		Julian Burgess		Charlotte Shoobridge: Tasmania's first Deaconess

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Deadline

Items for the next *Newsletter* should be sent to the editor by **1 Jul 2024** at marionsargent@bigpond.com or PO Box 1296 LAUNCESTON TAS 7250.

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