

Launceston Historical Society Inc.

Newsletter No 196

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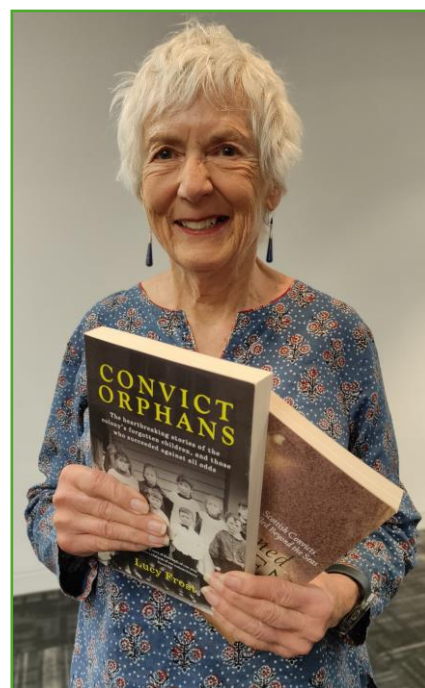
Bringing together people with an interest in history

Children at Work

On 20 October 2024, Emeritus Professor **Lucy Frost** presented a paper on a little-known aspect of Tasmanian history. During the past decade, she has collated a database of 2000 children apprenticed from the Orphan Schools in New Town between 1859 and 1879. Lucy has identified over 100 of those sent to Launceston and its immediate surrounds.

A Board of Guardians sent children between 12 and 18 out to work as unpaid labour for applicants they knew little about. It was expected that the masters and mistresses would teach the boys and girls skills and the values of domestic life. Having come from an institution with 500 inmates, childhood trauma, and little experience of home life, the success of the indentured servants' placements was varied and often depended on luck.

Some masters and mistresses were kind and willing to teach the children the skills required to do their work and shape their future lives. Others were a disaster. There were no wages, only clothing, food, and a place to sleep. No conditions attached to the labour, no set hours of employment, or mandated days off. "White slaves", colonists sometimes called them, and it's not hard to see why.



Perth Gaol Archaeology Dig

On 17 November 2024, **Darren Watton and John Dent** presented a fascinating insight into the archaeology of the old Perth Gaol site on the Hobart side of the South Esk River. By using maps, plans, sketches, and archival resources, John found the site of the old and new gaols dating from circa 1823 to 1852. It might have been part of the adjacent convict road station. The site was repurposed as the Esk Brewery from 1858 to 1885.

Darren, from Southern Archaeology, spoke about the two community digs undertaken in 2023 that uncovered stone walls, post holes, and drains of the gaol. Seven trenches were dug by enthusiastic LHS members and a couple of school groups who found 2,205 items in various layers. These included bone buttons, a military button, a mouth harp, braces buckle, bottles, bricks, marked ceramics, an 1860s clay pipe, and at the very bottom of a trench, an 1827 coin from George IV's reign. The gaol site is not yet heritage listed but has an important place in our colonial history. Other sites nearby are registered, including Native Point, a significant Aboriginal quarry site.



Perth Cottage Dig

The Archaeology Group completed a dig at Mountford Cottage in the week of 28 October 2024. Twenty-five LHS members participated including four archaeology students from La Trobe University who came along to experience, in some cases, their first dig. Fifteen St Patrick's College students and three from the Sheffield homeschooling group spent one day experiencing a real-life dig.

The site was the remains of a farm cottage that historic research indicated was there from at least 1870 and went out of use around 1970. It was lived in by Roy and Evelyn Powell and family over most of its life. Some publicity in *The Examiner* (31 October) led to a visit from their granddaughter who had been to the house when she was five. She was able to tell us what the different rooms were used for.

Large stone foundations and a brick chimney were uncovered which gave a great outline of the extent of the house. Many items were found, including building materials, bottles, coins, toys, ceramics, personal items, pins, and other interesting objects which indicate that the building was most likely in existence from about the 1840s. The artefacts will now be cleaned, dated, and catalogued.

We appreciate the landowner permitting us to undertake the excavations before the land is subdivided. The dig would not be possible without the time, knowledge, and expertise provided by Darren Watton from Southern Archaeology. Darren will prepare a detailed report for participants, the landowner, and LHS. Darren and John Dent will give a talk at the LHS meeting in October 2025 about this exciting archaeological dig.

John Dent, LHS Archaeology Group convenor.

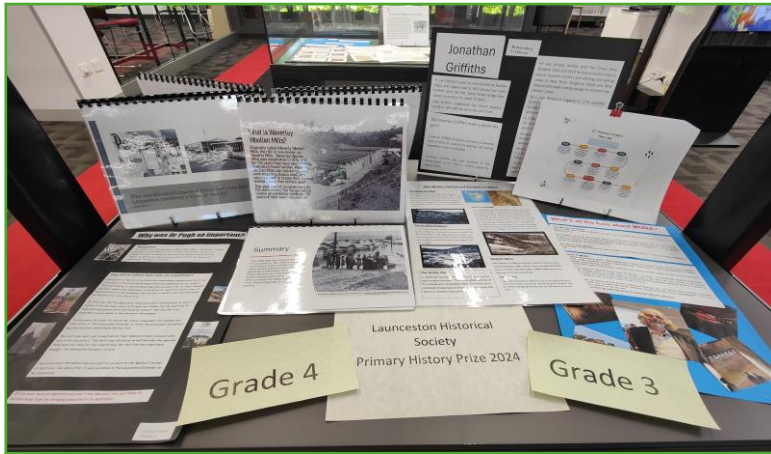


Latrobe Excursion

Eighteen LHS members enjoyed a beautiful day for our annual Spring excursion on Thursday, 7 November 2024. After a quick stop at Elizabeth Town, we drove into Latrobe where Wendy told us about the old Devon Cottage Hospital. We admired the elegant buildings on Hamilton Street, crossed the Mersey River to see the memorial to Thomas and Dalrymple Johnson, and passed the old mansion of *Frogmore*. In Bells Parade, once a thriving port, we enjoyed the tranquil recreation reserve where Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh 'partook of light refreshments' in February 1954. We had a peek inside the re-erected Johnson home of *Sherwood Hall* dating from the 1850s.



Catherine and Sophie conducted a guided walking tour along **Gilbert Street** pointing out historic buildings and telling us interesting snippets about their past and present uses and the people who lived and ran businesses in them. We viewed the many photographs and objects in the **Courthouse Museum** and had time for lunch and a wander around the shops. On the way out of Latrobe, we stopped at the memorial to the legendary footballer Darrel Baldock. The new statue of Teddy Sheean was erected a few days after our visit. It was a great day out!



17th Primary History Prize

Posters, projects, PowerPoints and movies were submitted by 43 children from four primary schools – Evandale, Mowbray Heights, Exeter, and St Thomas More's and one individual. Some wonderful entries were received with topics ranging across a broad spectrum from early maritime explorers through some highs and lows of our history to the MONA phenomenon. Some of the children's creations were displayed at the Launceston Library from 5 November for three weeks.

Book vouchers from Petrarch's Bookshop totalling \$594 were presented to 12 children. Every child received a certificate of participation and a volume of *Stories in Stone* by Anne Green. The History Prize was judged by Brad Wood, Prue McCausland, Sophie Appleby and Marion Sargent.

LHS Activities 2025

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. Admission is free for members, and visitors are welcome to attend at \$5 each. Bring some cash for a chance to win a prize in the raffle each month. The president and committee wish everyone a **Merry Christmas** and hope to see you all again in 2025 to enjoy the full program we have put together.

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/>

16 February	Jai Paterson & John Dent , <i>Launceston Court Records</i>
16 March	Hamish Maxwell-Stewart , <i>Convict Memorial</i> (John West Memorial Lecture)
13 April	Stefan Petrow , <i>Tasmanian Soldiers in World War One</i>
18 May	Sophie Appleby , <i>Harlequin Bob: The 'chequered and eventful' life of Robert Cowburn</i>
15 June	Lou Rae , <i>The Lost Province on Tasmania's West Coast</i>
20 July	Alison Alexander , <i>'They cannot be worse': VDL and the Bigge Enquiry, 1820</i>
17 August	Richard Mack , <i>James Austin of Austins Ferry</i>
21 September	Steve Radford , <i>Reginald Munro: Aviator Extraordinaire</i>
19 October	Darren Watton & John Dent , <i>Perth Cottage Archaeological Dig</i> (Mead, Smith, von Stieglitz Memorial Lecture)
3 November	Excursion (Monday)
16 November	Bradley Wood , <i>Debunking the Myth. The True Story of Waubadebar</i>

New Members

The President and Executive welcome to our Society the following new members: Dylan Barnett; Sara Carlin; Alison Duffy-Bell; Sue Field; Riley Flood; Judith Freeman; Kylie French; Jess Hall; Rhys Pearton; Shannon, Conrad & Caitlin Towns; Lisa Schutz; and Gary Yates. Jemma Wilson has paid for her membership, but we do not have any details.

Membership Form

Membership forms are available on our website in both PDF and Word formats. Sunday meetings are free for LHS members. **Renewals for 2025 are due on 31 December 2024.** 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 by cash or EFTPOS at the next meeting you attend.

Membership Renewals

Annual subscriptions for the Launceston Historical Society are **due on 31 December 2024**. The [Membership Form](#) is on our website. Pay directly into the Society's CBA bank account BSB 067-003 A/C No. 2804 8638 (put your name in the reference field), by cheque or cash. Please email your details to launcestonhistory@gmail.com, or hand the form to Leonie Prevost at the next meeting, or post to: Treasurer, Launceston Historical Society, PO Box 1296, LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Other Events of Interest

George Town & District Historical Society: At the Grove, George Town, third Monday of the month at 7.30pm. 2 December 2024, Christmas dinner, Gray's Hotel. 6 for 6.30pm. Email: info@gtdhs.com.

Book Council of Lutruwita/Tasmania: Launceston Library, Level 2, third Wednesday of the month at 1.15pm. 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. Inquiries: Lois Beckwith, loisbeckwith27@gmail.com

Tasmanian Historical Research Association: Legacy Function Rooms, 159 Macquarie St, Hobart on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm. 10 December 2024, Members' Night with various presenters talking about their research. Email: info@thra.org.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.

No	Date	Page	Author	<i>The Sunday Examiner</i> Title	Topic
339	27 Oct 2024	30	Geoffrey Harris	Tassie's first Lion king paved the way for Fagan	Vic Belcher, the Lion king before Fagan
340	23 Nov 2024 1 Dec 2024	Online 16	Catherine Pearce	Journalist sister of famous ANZAC leaves a legacy	Estelle Campbell: the job she chose
341	29 Dec 2024		Prue McCausland		The theft of the Glover medal

Launceston Historical Society

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Deadline

Items for the next *Newsletter* should be sent to the editor by **1 Feb 2025** at marionsargent@bigpond.com or PO Box 1296 LAUNCESTON TAS 7250.

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