

Launceston Historical Society Inc.

Newsletter No 204

July 2026

ISSN 1036-7950

PO BOX 1296 LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Bringing together people with an interest in history

One family's experiences of WWI

On 19 April Rosalie Triolo, OAM, FRHSV gave a powerful and emotional visual presentation on the grief suffered by one family and their community during the First World War. The Dennis family from 16 Clarence Street, Perth, Tasmania lost two sons during the war. Archie died from meningitis at Claremont Camp so didn't see active service. His younger brother Roly was killed in action after three years at Gallipoli and on the Western Front.

Their younger sister Edith was Rosalie's grandmother, and along with other siblings attended the Perth State School during the war. Rosalie asked how children, parents and teachers coped with their young men going away and deal with the grief from losing those who did not return. The Dennis family was patriotic; and supporting the British Empire's war was part of the school curriculum. Edith joined the Red Cross while at school and served for over 80 years. She knitted socks and scarves, made a milk jug cover featuring a map of Australia with the words "Our Bit" crocheted in the centre.

Roly sent postcards home, mostly blank or with a brief greeting only. Edith kept these in a box with "Roly's letters box" written on the inside of the lid. Roly visited Scotland and sent a brooch with a thistle home to Edith which she treasured.



When the Church of England minister knocked on the door and told the family that Roly had died on the 25th or 26th April 1918 the grief was immense. Roly's father George went outside and chopped wood for hours, tears streaming down his face. His mother Edith sat in the front room and eventually made a cup of tea. Young Edith went to her bedroom and cried.

The dusty Perth School honour board was retrieved from under the school in recent years. It lists 32 soldiers who served in WWI, of which 11 died. Eight boys from the Dennis family served; four did not return home.

Rosalie Triolo is pictured above with photos of her grandparents and the Perth State School. Roly's letter box and post cards are shown on the left.

Launceston Girls' Industrial School



Dianne Cassidy presented a fascinating account of the Launceston Girls' Industrial School at the Launceston Historical Society meeting on 17 May 2026. Industrial Schools are institutions for the detention, care and training of children who were neglected, homeless, or considered "uncontrollable".

It appears that there was a Free and Industrial School in the Bethel Chapel near the wharf at the bottom of St John Street for both boys and girls from about 1862 to 1869. By 1871 Hobart had two industrial schools and three ragged schools, but Launceston had none. Magistrates despaired at to what to do with young female offenders – adult gaols were not suitable, and Hobart didn't want them.

Catherine Pearce, Dianne Cassidy and Leonie Prevost. By January 1877 the Launceston Industrial School for Girls was established by a committee of Protestant ladies, but the five elected governors were all men. A house next to the Congregational Church (later called Milton Hall) in Frederick Street was leased for five years. The first girl admitted was Catherine (Kate) Nicholson who was Catholic. The girls were given a basic education and did washing, ironing, sewing and needlework to earn money for the school. Several girls absconded, but all were returned.

The school had to move as the house was to be demolished for the erection of the new Congregational Church. A site was purchased in Welman Street, and the school moved to unsuitable temporary accommodation in Canning Street. The Government would not assist with building funds, so the governors purchased the old Salvation Army Home for Fallen Women on the northeast corner of Wellington and Galvin streets. The school moved into there on 9 February 1886 with 30 girls in residence. It proved to be too small, and the committee struggled to make ends meet relying on donations. It was finally free of debt in 1890/91 but was struggling 10 years later as the government would not provide adequate funds. A new south wing was completed in June 1912, and a north wing was added in 1921 when the school was renamed the Launceston Girls' Home.

From 1877 to 1921 300 girls had passed through the school. Dianne concluded her talk with profiles of several girls, some of whom went on to live long and productive lives.

Thank you to Prue McCausland



At the 17 May meeting the president, Marion Sargent, presented Prue McCausland with a gift in appreciation of her service to the Society.

In February, Prue McCausland stepped down from the role of correspondence secretary — a position she carried out with dedication for 12 years. The committee deeply appreciates the breadth of work Prue has contributed: assisting the treasurer with Sunday check ins, judging the Primary History Prize, and quietly ensuring the Society runs smoothly behind the scenes.

Her tasks have ranged from writing letters and emails, compiling correspondence lists, to directing people with research queries to the Launceston Library and the Family History Society.

Prue is a wise and thoughtful person with sound instincts. At one point she was secretary of four organisations at the same time, which tells you everything about her capability and commitment.

Marion is pictured presenting the newly published book *Tasmanian Built* to Prue McCausland.

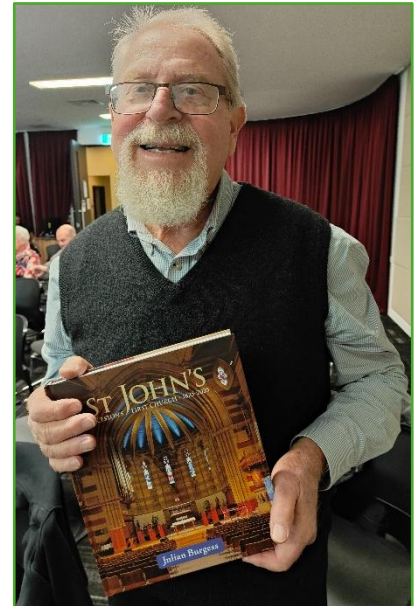
St John's, Launceston's first church 1825-2025

Julian Burgess presented a fascinating overview of St John's 200-year history at the Launceston Historical Society meeting on 21 June 2026.

Rev. John Youl overcame many obstacles to establish St John's Church, the first in Launceston. He travelled overland from Hobart in January 1819 to see his new parish for the first time and married 41 couples and baptised 67 children during his three-week visit. Youl, with his family, returned from Sydney in November 1819. Youl travelled by foot, horse and boat to minister to his flock between Launceston and George Town.

Governor George Arthur laid the foundation stone for St John's Church on 28 December 1824. Designed by Colonial Architect David Lambe, it was based on St David's Church in Hobart but was two thirds the size. On 24 August 1825 Charlotte, the wife of Lt-Colonel William Balfour, was buried beneath the partly built church. A plaque was later erected in her memory and is still there. The first service was held on 16 December 1825. There have been 21 rectors at St John's, the second, Rev. Dr WH Browne, officiated for 40 years from 1828 to 1868.

In the 1890s the congregation grew and the foundation stone for an extension was laid in 1902. It took 10 years to complete, and Charlotte Balfour's vault was uncovered but left in place. The Last Supper mosaic was installed in 1921 as a memorial to the parish's soldiers who fell in the First World War. During the 1938 extensions to Alexander North's design, Charlotte Balfour's grave was uncovered again, and the brick arch was replaced with concrete. Renovations in 2024 revealed Charlotte's grave for the third time. St John's is the oldest public building in Launceston and is heritage listed. Read more about the church and its social history in Julian Burgess' book *St John's: Launceston's first church 1825-2025* for sale at the church office.



July Meeting: Alistair Scott

Urchin Convicts: The Point Puer Boys in Van Diemen's Land

Sunday 19 July 2026 – 2pm Meeting Room, Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk



Alistair's talk will provide a brief history of the Point Puer Boys Establishment and describe the treatment of the boys held there. He will discuss the later lives of some of the boys after they gained their freedom, and follow the extraordinary life of one boy, Thomas Loveday.

Point Puer, across the bay from Port Arthur, today stands deserted, with stone ruins scattered across the headland pointing to an earlier era. Few people now visit the headland but between 1834 and 1849, Point Puer was home to over two thousand boys transported to Van Diemen's Land from Britain.

At Point Puer, these urchin convicts – from impoverished backgrounds and convicted of petty crimes – were to be reformed and turned into 'useful and worthy members of the Colony'. For many of the boys, however, Point Puer became a place of unrelenting punishment and maltreatment. For some, their time at Point Puer became a death sentence – one in thirty died at the establishment.

The boys who survived Point Puer faced an uncertain future; released into the colony semi-skilled at best, they were confronted by an unwelcoming society anxious to put its convict origins behind it. Some succeeded in establishing themselves in the colony, living quiet and unobtrusive lives, but most struggled to integrate into colonial society and reoffended.

Alistair Scott was born and raised in northern Tasmania. He is a former journalist, ministerial adviser and public servant, and is a past general manager of natural and cultural heritage with the Tasmanian Government. Alistair gained a PhD in 2022 after completing a thesis on the life courses of the boy convicts held at Point Puer between 1834 and 1849. His book, *Urchin Convicts: The Point Puer boys in Van Diemen's Land* (Forty South Publishing), was released last year.

August Meeting: Anne Green

Beyond the Antipodes: threats and fear in the psyche of Tasmania

Sunday 16 August 2026 – 2pm Meeting Room, Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk



Decontamination workers busy in East Launceston area.
The Examiner, 26 August 1940 p.1 and LPIC 147-7-208

Tasmania has long had a culture and a perception of its own vulnerability. Its isolation had amplified the perceived risks to its safety. So, from where did this vulnerability stem? How has this vulnerability changed over time? From the early 1800s, threats from rival colonial powers were clearly felt. The response was manifest in the decisions of government, the writings of the press and even the actions of the island's people during the nineteenth century. This culture became most apparent in the lead in to World War II when conflict spread across the globe.

Anne Green has recently returned to the joys of historical research completing her PhD through the University of Tasmania. This focused on the vulnerability of Tasmania, with a particular emphasis on World War II and Tasmania's Civil Defence Legion. In the past

she has completed heritage projects for bodies such as the National Trust, St Giles and the Launceston City Council, particularly the *Stories in Stone* heritage series of books.

September Meeting: Jen Thompson

On the forager trail of Thomas Jeffrey

Sunday 20 September 2026 – 2pm Meeting Room, Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk



Driving along the Forager Trail from Launceston to George Town, one thinks of wineries and gourmet food but Jeanette Thompson's research into the career of convict Thomas Jeffrey, suggests a far darker meaning. With the benefit of archival documents and early surveys, she retraces the steps Jeffrey took from George Town to Rose's Rivulet, a trail of murders that branded Jeffrey the *Monster of Tasmania*.

Jeanette Thompson's interest in colonial history began with her doctoral research into the Bathurst Rebellion of 1830. She has authored books of oral history, poetry, prose and literary non-fiction. Currently she is recipient of an Australian Society of Authors/Arts Tasmanian Mentorship with the Indigenous Australian poet, Yvette Holt. The focus of the mentorship is the publication of a collection of Jen's poetry and prose written in Far Western New South Wales, North-Western Ontario and Northern Tasmania.

LHS Activities 2026

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 \$5 for visitors. Bring some cash for a chance to win a prize in the raffle.

The **audio recordings** of earlier talks are available on our website, so catch up the on ones you missed or listen to them again: [LHS Lecture Series Audio](#)

18 October Eleanor Casella, *Ross Female Factory: Convict Mothers and the Nursery Ward*

October/November Excursion TBA

15 November Darren Watton & John Dent, *Archaeological Dig at 56 Frederick Street*

New Members

The President and Executive welcome to our Society the following new members: Vicki Crase, Bree Hutchinson, Donald McQuestin and Miriam Robinson. New members for whom we don't have any details: Robert & Valerie James.

Membership Form

Membership forms are available on our website in both PDF and Word formats. Sunday meetings are free for LHS members. We encourage new members to pay by direct debit into our Commonwealth Bank of Australia account: BSB 067-003 A/C No. 2804 8638 or by cash or EFTPOS at a monthly meeting.

National Family History Month – at Launceston Library

National Family History Month is a nationwide celebration of the stories, mysteries and secrets that shape who we are.

Launceston Library, Civic Square is hosting a talk every Wednesday in August 2026 from 1-2pm.

Register to secure your seat at [Events - Libraries Tasmania](#) or phone 6777 2446.

5 August 2026: Carr Villa: From Estate to Cemetery

Join historian Marion Sargent for a virtual tour exploring the history of Carr Villa's beginnings and hear some stories of interesting individuals laid to rest there.

12 August 2026: The enigmatic art of the Ross Bridge

Join author Jennie Jackson at Launceston Library as she shares the fascinating story behind the art of Ross Bridge and her personal connection to it.

19 August 2026: Alice and Daniel Stanfield

Join Maureen Bennett for a discussion of her latest book, *Alice and Daniel Stanfield: A First Fleet Family's Impact on Australia*.

26 August 2026: Are you an Arnott's baby? Saving lives with Arnott's Milk Arrowroot biscuits.

Join historian Greg Cooke as he shares his research about Arnott's *Living Pictures* campaign.

200th Anniversary of Mechanics' Institutes in Australia

Friday 19 March 2027: Hobart, Opening: Reception at the State Library at 5pm Speaker: Margaret Blow.

Saturday 20 March 2027: Hobart walking tour led by Ian Morrison: *Lost Libraries of Hobart*

Morning tea: Visit to Wesley Hall, 58 Melville Street, home of the Van Diemen's Land Mechanics' Institution 1840 -1871.

Travel to Launceston with lunch at Ross and a visit to its Reading Room.

Afternoon tea at the Launceston History Centre to see progress on the Jenny Gill Archive and the Launceston Mechanics' Institute collection.

Sunday 21 March 2027: Launceston Seminar 9am to 3.30pm at QVMAG, Inveresk

Keynote Speaker: Dr Susan Marsden – *The significance of the LMI collection*

Peter Richardson – *Subscription Libraries in Launceston*

Mike McCausland – *Preserving the LMI Heritage Collection*

Jordana Lory – *Evandale Subscription Library: the stories within*

Lunch at QVMAG.

Launceston Historical Society's John West Memorial Lecture, QVMAG Inveresk, 2pm

Stefan Petrow – *Early Mechanics' Institutes in Tasmania*

For more information or to receive email updates please advise – John Dent at jdent8@bigpond.com

Other Events of Interest

George Town & District Historical Society:

At *The Grove*, George Town, 7.30pm. Email: info@gtdhs.com.

20 July 2026, Anne Batt, *Taking a chance: future and failure in Colonial Launceston*

17 August 2026, Lorraine Wootton, *A family history*

21 September 2026, Ron Riley, *The Waikato and Tekoa*

Book Council of Lutruwita/Tasmania:

Launceston Library, Level 2, at 1.15pm. Members free; non-members \$5. 29 July 2026, TBA. Inquiries: bookcouncilt@gmail.com.

Royal Society of Tasmania (Northern Branch):

Meeting Room, QV Museum, Inveresk on the fourth Sunday of each month at 1.30pm, \$7 for non-members. Inquiries: Pippa Cotton, pippa.cotton@outlook.com.

26 July 2026, David Adams, *What Counts as Valuable Knowledge Nowadays, and Who Counts It?*

Note change of venue for this meeting: Horton Auditorium, Scotch Oakburn College, 85 Penquite Road, 23 August 2026, Toby Walsh, *On Artificial Intelligence*.

27 September 2026, Tony Webster, *History and Influence of Geology in the Growth and Building of the Yorktown-George Town Region*.

Tasmanian Historical Research Association:

Legacy Function Rooms, 159 Macquarie St, Hobart on the second Tuesday of each month at 7.30pm.

14 July 2026, Grant Finlay, *Returning Fire to Country: the role of history in supporting Aboriginal burning in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area*

11 August 2026, Dean Greeno, *Preserving Pakana seafaring culture through canoe making*

8 September 2026, Alessandro Antonello, *Coal in Antarctica: an unignited history*

Email: info@thra.org.au.

Federation of Australian Historical Societies:

The FAHS Newsletters and eBulletins are full of stories from member societies around Australia that show a diverse and active history community. Read the Newsletters online: [Newsletters and eBulletins — Federation of Australian Historical Societies](#)

Launceston Historical Society

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Deadline

Items for the next *Newsletter* should be sent to the editor by **1 October 2026** at marionsargent@outlook.com or PO Box 1296 LAUNCESTON TAS 7250.

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