

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH  
ASSOCIATION HELD AT THE BAHAI CENTRE, HOBART, ON TUESDAY 14  
FEBRUARY 2012 AT 8PM.**

Present: The President, Caroline Homer, in the chair, and about 80 members and friends.

Minutes: The minutes of the previous AGM were circulated, and approved as a correct record.

Business: The President first explained how building works at the Museum had forced the move to the B'Hai Centre at short notice. She then spoke to her report for the year 2011. The Treasurer spoke to his report, details of which were circulated, and that report was received. for the year 2011. The election of office bearers proceeded, with the following result: President, Caroline Homer; Vice-President, Ian Terry; Secretary, Andy McKinlay; Treasurer, Ross Kelly; Editor, Heather Felton; Committee, Margaret Glover, Stefan Petrow, Michael Roe, Dianne Snowden, Caitlin Sutton. By motion, Malcolm Groom was re-appointed Auditor.

Speaker: The President introduced Tony Brown as a geologist by professional training who for many years had pursued historical research on art history in Tasmania. Tonight he would speak on the 'The Younger Prouts'.

Dr Brown began by speaking of John Skinner Prout, who in later 1840 migrated from England to Sydney, accompanied by his wife and their children, in time to number eleven children. In 1844 the family moved to Hobart. In 1847 the eldest daughter, Matilda, married JS Dandridge, soon to become controlling bureaucrat at the Aboriginal station, Oyster Bay; the couple moved to Hobart in 1873, accompanied by Truganini, for whom Matilda cared until the former's death in 1876. Meanwhile in Hobart there had occurred the tragic death by accident of the eldest Prout son. The family returned to England in 1848, settling in London as part of an extended network of relatives and friends. The children's education probably proceeded within the home; a kinsman, SP Newton, wrote several texts designed to assist parents in this task. Three of the sisters married into a family named Copping, one of them living until 1912. Of one of the boys scarcely anything is known, but three others became photographers. Most distinguished of these was Victor Albert, born 1835. He travelled to Boston in 1853, there receiving instruction in Daguerreotype photography. Returning to Britain, Victor had his first exhibition in 1855, one of his works being among the first of its type purchased by the Victoria and Albert Museum. The next year he published an outstanding series depicting Westminster Abbey, these and other works being shown by Dr Brown. Victor's next major work was of Thames-side views, his studio a darkroom housed in a riverboat. Meanwhile he married Amy Barber, already part of the family network. In 1863 he travelled to Scotland, there taking photographs of the Prince and Princess of Wales, much enhancing his prestige. Yet in 1866 Victor, with his family, returned to Sydney. There he did much fine work, among it a series on Australian fauna (including the Tasmanian Tiger) for lithographs published by the NSW Education Department. However Victor was spending over-lavishly, and so became bankrupt in 1870. Some recovery followed, his portraiture now winning particular regard. In May 1874 Amy Prout became a patient at Gladesville Mental Asylum. A year later Victor, with three children, returned to London. Now he too suffered mental illness, and entered a Sussex asylum where he died in 1877.

The audience plied Doctor Brown with numerous questions. Then the President thanked him for giving the Association an exceptionally interesting evening, and the meeting closed at 9:15pm.

Michael Roe for Secretary

Caroline Homer, President