

Present: The President, Caroline Homer, in the chair and about 65 members and guests.

Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting were read, and approved as a true record.

Business: The President welcomed a new member, and spoke first of the recent excursion led by Andrea Gerard at Cornelian Bay cemetery and then of the impending excursion to Westbury, featuring the wood-carving of Nellie Payne. She then introduced our 'Tasmanian Life' series speaker:

John Honey: A Tasmanian Life *'Emerging from the Swamp'*

Speaker: Mr Honey began by telling that his title referred to the Mowbray swamp, 'a little lost world' in Launceston's suburbia, where passed his earliest years. At his own birth his father worked as a bookmaker, whose earlier interest in jazz and greyhound racing had been modified after marriage to the daughter of a strict Cornish Baptist. John's first school was Mowbray Heights. Asthmatic troubles impaired his progress, yet he read widely—*Treasure Island*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Biggles*, even a popular encyclopaedia which *inter alia* offered some sex education. There were good teachers at the school, one of their enterprises being to create a radio station, John thus having his first active involvement with the medium, while at home the wireless led him into new worlds especially of music. Movies were important too, while the Launceston Competitions prompted grass-roots culture, John himself learning 'art of speech' in this context. Meanwhile the family had moved to Charles Street, later to Trevallyn whence one could overlook Mowbray Swamp. John's father now worked in a senior position at Repco, while his mother continued 'an angel of mercy' in the community; both John's grandfather and his sister were found to have tuberculosis and spent time at northern sanatorium, on recovery the sister becoming secretary to Frank Ellis of the Queen Victoria Museum. At Launceston High John pursued sport, jazz, rock and roll, and 'almost innocent' mixed-gender weekend bus trips. John and still more his friend, John Lees (future Mayor of Launceston) came into halts with the Headmaster. His academic performance secured matriculation in 1961, and an Education Department studentship with its customary bond. Resident in Hytten Hall at the University of Tasmania the undergraduate appreciated the 'profoundly understanding' personality of Warden George Wilson, and friendship with Asian students. John established a successful inter-collegiate drama group, and enjoyed Bill Perkins's showing of special-interest films. After graduation John was posted to Deloraine High, managing teaching well enough but never finding it his vocation. Accordingly he joined the ABC, coming to work with the active current affairs group, its major (but not exclusive) program 'This Day Tonight'. A crisis came as John and his fellows resigned in protest at the continuing appointment as the group's head of Harry Holgate, a declared adherent of the Labor Party. John found satisfactory employment in television work for the ABC's Education Department, a notable production being 'The Colonials' in 1976. That year also saw establishment of the Tasmanian Film Corporation, John transferring thither. The Corporation built an outstanding record, including production under John's leadership of *Manganini*, object of world-wide acclaim. John succeeded, without enthusiasm, to leadership of the Corporation, but soon the government of Robin Gray abolished it. John and his wife Maria then formed an independent company, but from 1986 he returned to the ABC. During this while he began collaboration with Phil Osborn, and after John settled in the USA the two joined in producing work about aviation and its history. Their work achieved high repute through its presentation on the 'Discovery' Channel. However that Channel itself thwarted the pair's further plans, and John returned to Australia in 2001. In the following years he wrote three novels, well received and sold substantially by John himself at a Salamanca stall. In 2010 began collaboration with composer Don Kay, this leading to production in 2014 of 'The Bushranger's Lover', with further such work to come.

After questions and enthusiastic applause, the meeting close at 9:15pm.

Michael Roe, for Secretary

Caroline Homer, President