

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION HELD IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY ROOM, TASMANIAN MUSEUM
AND ART GALLERY, ON TUESDAY 14 APRIL 2016 AT 8 PM.**

Present: The President, Caroline Homer, in the chair and about 100 members and guests.

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

Business: Ms Homer welcomed Julie Hawkins as a new member, already associated with THRA through her splendid design of the *Papers*' new format. She appealed to anyone prepared to do some 'old-fashioned' typing of THRA documents. The President then introduced Alison Alexander, stressing her achievement in gaining the 2014 award for Australian biography. Her subject tonight was '*How much discrimination was there in Tasmania against Germans during World War One?*'.

Dr Alexander began by paying tribute to the late Marita Bardenhagen, with whom she had first discussed this subject. She then spoke of German immigration to earlier Tasmania. Von Stieglitz and von Bibra were names among the early 'gentry' while from the 1850s began more everyday migration, evoking generally positive response from the established community. These migrants generally struck permanent roots in the island. Various settlements became known as 'German Town'. The best known was present-day Collinsvale, which in 1881 was formally named 'Bismarck'. Others were a settlement close to St Mary's, and Lilydale. The dominant theme was of effective assimilation, the Germans proving industrious and community-minded. Even as tensions mounted between Britain and Germany in the early twentieth century good relations prevailed. When war came in 1914 the *Mercury* expressed regret that these two nations should be enemies. Withal, tensions did rise, especially as alleged German atrocities were reported. Internment of German nationals got under way, some 63 persons thus suffering. As Ian Terry had recently told the Association, considerable feeling mounted against Fritz Noetling, who indeed behaved treasonably. Military authorities led anti-German activity. 'Hate' letters appeared in the press. Gustav Weindorfer suffered the same kind of ostracism as did Noetling, altogether without justification. However counter-forces always had their play, one notable spokesman for moderation being Premier (to April 1916) John Earle. Some anti-German sentiment was patently absurd. The Australian Natives Association in 1916 considered arguing for prohibition of marriage between Australians and 'Germans', but in the event resiled from this stance. Police were generally careful and moderate when enquiring into alleged German disloyalty. When one German protested that he was denied employment on account of his background, at once he received various job offers. Other Germans spoke in emphatic self-defence. Even extreme anti-German feeling never aspersed women. The renaming of Bismarck to Collinsvale resulted not so much from anti-German emotion but because British and Danish residents who had long disliked the former title now had excuse to push for change.

As the war continued, so did relevant tensions. Signifying this were 1918 episodes involving the Kalbfell family and Hobart butcher Charles Metz. But the protagonists in such cases generally belonged to three groups on society's fringes: 'nutters'; larrikin rowdies; and individuals moved by personal antagonism. As against this were continuing forces of moderation—the press and the judiciary to the fore. The overall story was not so grim as some commentators have suggested. Possibly Tasmanian experience was less fraught than that of the nation at large.

After numerous questions and comments, often involving familial experience, the meeting closed at 9:05pm.

Michael Roe for Secretary

Caroline Homer, President.