

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION HELD IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY ROOM, TASMANIAN MUSEUM
AND ART GALLERY, ON TUESDAY 12 AUGUST 2014 AT 8 PM.**

Present: The President, Caroline Homer, in the chair and about 70 members and guests.

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

Business: The President began by noting the presence in the audience of descendants of Edward and Maria Lord, and gave them particular welcome. She referred to forthcoming excursions, and to the CTHS conference to be held on 11 October.

Speaker: When introducing Dr Alison Alexander the President referred especially to her recent winning of the National Biography award, the audience signifying its further congratulations. The subject of tonight's address was 'Maria and Edward Lord, and Hobart's Rambunctious Early Years'.

Dr Alexander began by characterising Edward Lord, born in 1781, as a man who, congruent with membership of a British family of landed wealth and title, possessed a 'sense of entitlement' and considerable charm. Nevertheless his personal socio-economic situation was insecure and throughout life he was to show a mixture of enterprise and impetuosity. Having joined David Collins's party to colonise Van Diemen's Land as head of the Royal Marines detachment, he nearly came to disaster when leading an overland party from Frederick Henry Bay to John Bowen's settlement at Risdon. From Hobart Town's earliest days Lord joined the common practice of service officers in exploring all possible avenues of money-making. In 1804 he clashed with Collins over the latter's liaison with the wife of a convict. Next year Lord travelled to Sydney. There he chose as his mistress Maria Riseley, recently transported for theft. She appears to have come from the upper working class and probably left her rural home in search of adventure in London; she was accused of massive theft, but the jury was sympathetic, and her sentence for only seven years. Soon after the couple's return to Hobart Maria set up shop in Hobart, her merchandise presumably secured by Edward. In 1808 Edward again went to Sydney where he sided with the officers who had deposed Governor William Bligh and secured a free pardon for Maria. On return the pair married, in time to have seven children. When Collins died in March 1810 Edward briefly held office as acting Governor, one convict diarist giving him credit as respecting principles of law. That year saw his brother acquiring a wealthy inheritance and beginning a career in British public life. In 1811 Edward returned to Britain, leaving Maria in Parramatta. Re-united the couple came back to Hobart in 1814, their economic activity now becoming diverse and intense, with Edward becoming owner of great tracts of land, vast numbers of livestock, and three ships. Edward's chief source of wealth was in supplying foodstuffs to the Commissariat, this continuing despite the counter-efforts of Governor Macquarie, who detested him. Maria's shop likewise expanded, as signified by a shift into a handsome building. In 1819 and 1822 Edward made further trips to Britain, their children also shifting hemispheres. In their latter separation Maria had an affair with upper-class immigrant Charles Rowcroft. On returning Edward took legal action against Rowcroft, but the marriage continued in legal form; Edward's subsequent lovers were all of convict background. From 1825 Maria became a yet more dominant figure in Hobart's business economy, showing pertinent abilities well beyond her husband's; she was tough, efficient, decisive, and said to be capable of vehement bad-temper, but there is no evidence of her ever acting dishonestly. She played little social role, her well-known convict background determining that. Edward, on the other hand, was not only by repute the colony's wealthiest man, but was a highly active citizen, always mingling his affable charm with ruthless calculation. He continued to move back and forth from Britain. Two sons of the marriage came back to Hobart in 1829, one soon drowning, but the other to have many descendants; a daughter came in 1838. Maria spent her last years in Bothwell. There she died in 1859, the same year as did Edward in London. Her death notice yet spoke of her as 'Mrs Edward Lord'.

The President thanked Dr Alexander for her address, and the meeting closed at 9:10pm.

Michael Roe for Secretary

Caroline Homer, President