

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION HELD IN THE ROAL SOCIETY ROOM, TASMANIAN MUSEUM AND
ART GALLERY, ON TUESDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2012 AT 8PM.

Present: The Vice-President, Ian Terry, in the chair, and about 60 members and friends.

Minutes: The minutes of the previous meetings were read and approved.

Business: The Vice-President explained that Caroline Homer currently was overseas.

Speaker: Mr Terry introduced Dr Eva Meidl as one of Austrian birth who came to Tasmania in 1993 to teach German at the University. Her publications included a translation of Archduke Ludwig Salvator's account of his sojourn in Tasmania, February 1881, and tonight she was to speak about the illustrations he drew to accompany that text.

Dr Meidl began by remarking that Salvator's visit to Australia was inspired by his interest in international exhibitions, specifically that hosted by Melbourne at this time. Islands were another of his particular interests, this surely drawing him to Tasmania, Travelling incognito, with three companions, he arrived 7 February 1881. Ever an intense *observer*, through the days ahead he drew various local scenes; most of these duly appeared as illustrations to his fore-mentioned book, although one of Launceston was elsewhere published. They numbered 29 in total; one or more came from his hand each day. Throughout her talk Dr Meidl showed reproductions of Salvator's work, juxtaposing these works with photographs of the same sites she had herself taken; her commentary related the two versions to each other.

Salvator began sketching as he approached Hobart by sea, and the first work displayed was Tasman Island, the 'fantastic basalt columns' of which he compared to icebergs, and which ever have retained their impact. A depiction of the Iron Pot Lighthouse has the value of showing cottages subsequently destroyed. His overall presentation of Hobart necessarily showed it as smaller and more rural than the place of today, yet basic continuities are apparent. Salvator enthused over the flora of Fern Tree, which remains much the same. Likewise his depiction of Rose Bay is faithful to the present scene. Next he climbed Mount Wellington, showing its rock-strewn summit in dramatic mode, while also referring to ice-houses placed there, some ruins of which Dr Meidl's camera has recorded. From Mount Nelson Salvator drew an extensive panorama, remarkably accurate and detailed but unfortunately too expansive to reproduce. At Kingston his subject was the beach and the 'swampy banks' of Browns River, latter-day suburbia of course absent. The Derwent Valley Salvator found a further delight. Back in town he drew a vista towards Mount Direction from about the junction of Stoke Street and New Town road—the same site chosen by artist Henry Gritten in 1850. From there the traveller sketched a view extending as far down-river as Blinking Billy point; Eva risked a hazardous climb to recapture this, but in vain. Likewise it had proved impossible to get the same view of St George's Church (and the then-nearby flour mill) as had Salvator. His last trip out of Hobart was to Seven Mile Beach. Daniel Stanfield's 'Clarendon Farm', the centrepiece of Salvator's drawing, burned down in February 1967, but the background littoral has scarcely changed.

On 28 February Salvator's party travelled to Launceston, and thence far away. Salvator spent most of his remaining years, increasingly in ill-health, in Majorca but the first war compelled his return to Prague where he died in 1915. His estate was bequeathed to one of his companions of 1881.

After an animated question-time, the meeting closed at 9pm.

Michael Roe for Secretary

President