

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH  
ASSOCIATION HELD IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY ROOM, TASMANIAN MUSEUM  
AND ART GALLERY, ON TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2013 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 noticed a further excursion to Ouse on 23 November and the CTHS conference on 5 October. Members were invited to the launch of Margaret Mason-Cox's history of Hutchins School on 19 September. Copies of Tony Harrison's study of TT Flynn were on display.

Speaker: The President introduced Patsy Graham as a graduate from the Universities of Sydney and Tasmania, who had particular interest in the social history of marginalised groups. She was now working on a doctorate allied to tonight's subject: " 'A Church for the perishing heathen'—the challenges of building Holy Trinity Church, North Hobart, 1835-50". Ms Graham began by citing criticism in the local press of the mid-1840s as to the grossly slow progress in building Holy Trinity Church, intended to replace 'Old Trinity', the penitentiary chapel. At this time the Church's incumbent, Philip Palmer was in Britain, seeking funds wherewith to complete the church. In doing so he invoked the desperate situation of his poor, often ex-convict parishioners, warning that they confronted moral doom. Tonight's paper would address the background to this situation, and its aftermath.

The approximate site of the church had been proposed back in 1826 by the Land Commissioners, although Governor Arthur raised some difficulties and others arose from the need to close an adjacent quarry. Arthur believed that putting the Church at the very apex of "Potters' Hill" would discourage attendance, yet that choice prevailed. Not until 1832-3 did the project advance, with £1000 being allocated in the official estimates and James Blackburn named architect. Final costs were estimated at £4000. A committee was appointed to gather funds from the public, Joseph Hone its leader. Now too Palmer arrived in the colony. Through years ahead he would complain of difficulties in using Old Trinity, Arthur agreeing that the place needed better ventilation. Otherwise acrimony developed between these two, Palmer bewailing lack of government's support. Government had now allocated another £1000 while public subscriptions rose above £900, partly through the efforts of William Hutchins, Archdeacon from 1837; in 1840 Hutchins married Mrs Palmer's sister, but died the next year. Work on the site proceeded—but with many delays and difficulties. The estimate of £4000 being obviously unreal, original plans were modified. After further hitches, John Franklin laid the foundation stone 10 October 1841, pomp and ceremony proceeding. Yet difficulties continued, drainage already affecting the foundations. On James Blackburn ending his term of servitude he exercised more independent authority, some controversy arising from his decision to have Franklin's coat of arms carved on the tower. In October 1843 Blackburn told newly-arrived Bishop FR Nixon that virtually all available funds had been spent, while the building still lacked its roof. Now Palmer went off to Britain, achieving a remarkable gift of £3000 from a Lady Palmer and negotiating a cut-price deal for a set of bells. After his long-delayed return to the colony work proceeded fast, being completed in January 1848. Controversies still had some role, but the Church's consecration on 27 December 1849 marked a kind of closure. In concluding Ms Graham adduced convincing evidence that the Church originally had been thought of as Hobart's likely Cathedral, possibly with Hutchins becoming Bishop and Palmer its Dean. Hutchins's death would have closed this scenario.

In discussion Ms Graham remarked that she had found no evidence of Lady Palmer being kin to Philip. Brian Rieusset argued that the building's façade had decayed not because of the stone's quality, but from how it was laid. After thanks to the speaker, the meeting closed at 9:15pm.

Michael Roe for Secretary

President

