

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

Present: Margaret Glover-Scott in the chair, and about 50 members and friends.

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

Business: There were still vacancies for the Anniversary Dinner in September, and for the Deloraine excursion.

Speaker: Andy McKinlay was introduced as a graduate from Oxford who had taught medicine there and at Yale before coming to Australia; more recently he had settled in Richmond and in association with his wife engaged in historical researches. His topic tonight was 'Turret Clocks in Van Diemen's Land'.

Dr McKinlay began by remarking that accurate chronometers were crucial in such navigation as brought Bowen and Collins to Van Diemen's Land. For decades afterwards everyday time-keeping was hazardous: there is report of the postmistress at Ulverstone in 1884 having to rely on 'astronomical observations'. Thus there was need for public clocks. The first was installed in old St David's, Hobart, in 1824; it was made by the London firm, Thwaites and Reed, who were to supply all those mentioned in this paper, and the firm continues. However this first clock proved faulty and in 1828 Lieutenant-Governor Arthur ordered six more. The original clock remained at St David's until 1843; it was later restored by ex-convict Francis Abbott and set in Government House tower, where it remains.

Of the additional six, one joined the earlier clock in St David's until it too was removed in 1843, then going into storage where it remained until 1922. Amidst some controversy it then went to St Luke's Richmond—where parishioners had vainly sought such a boon in the 1830s. In 1937 the face was replaced with a white dial using Roman instead of the original Arabic numerals. In the 1970s the original dial returned. A major over haul in 2003-4 cost \$15,000. St John's Launceston was another recipient. Its clock, installed probably in 1835, is the only one with three faces in use, and has remained in good condition. Nearby another stands at Christ Church, Longford. The present church dates from 1844, but the clock had been housed in its precursor, built in 1831. Restorations occurred in 1880 and 1960. Rivalling Launceston's in public exposure is the clock at Hobart's erstwhile Penitentiary ('old Trinity'). Architect John Lee Archer took particular care with the tower, and for many years all proceeded well. Then trouble arose—attributed by some to the ghost of the convict who installed it—but restoration in 1965 has proved effective. A fifth clock is at St John's New Town. Here the tower was to have troubles, although not the clock itself. At some stage the face was repainted but with the original 'III' replaced by 'IV'; one might hope that the future will see this solecism corrected. The last in the series is at Scots Church, Hobart, occupying this position because only with difficulty and belatedly did the author gain access to it. In chronological time, its installation came early, the church dating from 1825. This clock is the only one built outside a tower, although within the roofing; the 'tower' itself is but a façade. The recent installation of an electric winding system (also costing \$15,000) has achieved exact time-keeping.

Throughout, the talk was appropriately illustrated. The speaker also introduced various references to his wife's forebear, the Reverend James Norman, thus echoing his interest in family history.

After several questions and comments the chairman thanked the speaker for an interesting paper which had addressed issues of everyday living. The meeting closed at 9pm.

Michael Roe for Secretary

Caroline Homer, President