

Real to Reel

Newsletter of Oral History Tasmania Inc.



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NEWS FROM THE EXECUTIVE – Jill Cassidy

Annual seminar 21 September

A reminder that registrations for this year's seminar at Launceston's Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery at Inveresk are now open. Details are on page 10 and the registration form on page 11.

National conference 11–12 October 2019

A reminder that this year's national conference will be held in Brisbane with the title, *Intimate Stories, Challenging Histories*. The conference itself will be held over Friday and Saturday, and there will be training workshops on Thursday 10th and a selection of history walks and tours on Sunday 13th.

Conference scholarship

We received two applications for the conference scholarship and could see that both members would benefit greatly from attending. As one year we were unable to award a scholarship at all, the committee finally decided to award them both. We congratulate Yvette Barry and Elisha Goss and look forward to reading their accounts of the conference sessions in due course.

Institutional member: St Helens History Room



St Helens History Room with the bell from the Anchor tin mine, Blue Tier, which was used for changes of shifts.

The St Helens History Room has been operating as a museum since 1974. The museum was originally a private collection started by Peter and Kathleen Burns. Peter's father, Thomas Burns, had a photographic collection that eventually became the Burns Collection and part of the State Library series of private collections. This photographic archive is housed at the St Helens History Room.

There were three different locations for the St Helens History Room, starting at Goulds Country near the Blue Tier, then moving to two locations in St Helens' main street, Cecilia Street. In 1985, with the redevelopment of the St Helens public library, a dedicated space was incorporated to house the History Room. It was here that

it really became a public museum. It was also during this time that visitor information services commenced operation through the History Room, and with increasing demands from the burgeoning tourism market further models of operation were explored as a volunteer outfit was not able to accommodate expectations. The voluntary committee decided to approach the local government in an effort to secure stability and financial support. This was negotiated successfully, resulting in a new facility being built especially for the History Room in 2006. This building became known as the St Helens History and Visitor Information Centre where the dual roles of visitor information and the history of the settlement of St Helens could be explored in tandem. This has proven to be a very successful arrangement and the St Helens History Room continues to operate from this Break O’Day Council facility.

There is one part-time Curator for the St Helens History Room working 14 hours per week and paid by the Break O’Day Council. The Curator currently oversees a team of 12 volunteers who provide a range of specialised services: photographic archivists, volunteer genealogists, box makers, librarianship of a reference library, cataloguing collections using a software management system and general cleaning.

Under our Collection Policy we collect items relating to the following:

- Aboriginal history of the local area
- Tin mining
- Early settlement of St Helens
- Tourism
- Transport and communications
- Maritime history
- Local government
- Family history
- Natural history
- Social history
- Military



Model of the 18-metre water wheel from the Anchor tin mine, made by Jack Sutton in 2000.

- Agriculture
- Business
- Industries
- Sport
- Clubs and societies

The St Helens History Room supports and promotes the practice and methods of oral history, following the Guidelines of Ethical Practice of Oral History Australia. The production of the St Helens History Room Oral History working manual (OHM) is designed to re-engage and re-activate oral histories into the daily function of the History Room.

In 2018 there were 1311 visitors who came into the History Room. This number was made up of 937 families and/or couples and 374 concessions. On average, there are approximately 1325 visitors per year.

Currently on display until the end of August is the special exhibition, ‘The Changing Face of St Helens’, which was curated to coincide with the Bay of Fires Winter Arts Festival during the June long weekend in 2019.

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The St Helens History & Visitor Information Centre is open 9 am–5 pm, seven days a week. The centre is closed on Christmas Day, Good Friday and half days on ANZAC day.

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STORIES OF FARMERS IN THE EVANDALE MUNICIPALITY

Dr Tony McCormack

Based on a talk given at the Oral History Tasmania seminar on 4 August 2018.

I have always had a passion to advance the causes of farmers and the part that they have played and still play in enhancing the lifestyle of the people of our nation. I fixed my research on the area of Tasmania that I know best, the area where I grew up: Evandale. As indicated under the title of my book, *Reaching Out From Evandale* (2017), I write about farms around Clarendon, Nile, Deddington, Blessington, White Hills and Relbia. I had previously written *Reaching Out From Trafalgar* (2015).

As a boy I was encouraged by my uncle Horrie Taylor to appreciate the White Hills paddocks in summer. He likened the white hawthorn hedges to those in Devon. Born in England, Uncle Horrie liked to reminisce. In 1952 ET Emmett wrote that he loved the view of White Hills from the west. Emmett, who was Director of the Tasmanian Tourist Department, states in *Tasmania By Road And Track* (1952) that the third best view of cultivated areas in the island was White Hills from the train (below the current position of the Launceston airport) in spring when the hawthorn hedges are in flower.

Growing up on a farm at Trafalgar in Evandale enabled me to know most of the local farmers whom I made contact with when writing about them and their farms. My colleague David Dixon also had contacts in the Evandale district which filled in the gaps for me when an introduction was required. David and I had several common contacts and interests; each of us came in contact with 'Bluey' Gatenby who worked on Trafalgar prior to working on Relbia which is David's farm. In February 2014 Blue and his wife Jan visited Trafalgar for a relatively long chat. Rick Hart, John Hart, David Dixon and I were all eager to listen to the stories that Blue told about his employment as a farmhand at Trafalgar from 1949 to 1954. Blue always recalls an extra large Go-Kart crash.

David and I started visiting farmers in 2013. I had a simple methodology. We would listen to some stories, be driven by the farmer around the major features of the farm and listen to a few more stories. I would often return to tape the farmer at a later stage. Importantly, the stories about a particular farm would always be checked and approved by the farmer.

In 2013 I wrote and published my first book, *The Blessington McCormacks*, which included the farming practices of my grandfather Ned McCormack at Khantz, Blessington, and my father Eddie McCormack at Burnbrae and Willowdene, Evandale, where I grew up. Growing up on a small farm of 150 acres was exciting and adventurous. At Willowdene, we lived the life of Riley on the small farm milking five cows and collecting our own eggs as well as growing our own lambs. To a significant degree we lived off the land. We played over the creek and my elder brother John and I built a gym under a low willow tree. We jumped creeks and ran up half-fallen trees; we hung for a few minutes from low branches to strengthen our bicep muscles and we fell in the creek from time to time. We had 39 cousins on Dad's side of the family and 18 on Mum's side but we saw Mum's family more often as they often stayed with us for Christmas and Easter. We also saw many of Dad's family, mainly for day visits.

I was amazed to find that there were 14 lots of Andrew Barclay's estate Trafalgar when they were listed for auction in 1889 as I thought it comprised only 3 lots. From 1935 Dad rented Burnbrae from the Monds Family Estate from whom he purchased Willowdene in 1950. Tobe Hart also purchased Trafalgar in 1950 from Monds (of flour-millers Monds and Affleck fame).

The Trafalgar homestead is the oldest in the Evandale district. In 2013 the old house was surveyed with eight acres as a separate title and sold to builder Trevor Couchman. Ola Hart had to move out in 2014. Ola's son Tony said they were very lucky that they were able to survey the homestead and a few acres onto a separate title, as normally 50 or 60 acres are required for such a title to be approved. In this case it was argued that once the house was vacated, the rats and possums would have overrun the place and it would have become derelict and fallen down over time. Because the house is the oldest existing residence in the Evandale district, it was a wise decision by the authorities and now the homestead is being restored.

Tony recalled that the Trafalgar homestead was extended by the Hart family in the early 1950s. These extensions are all external to the house built in 1817 by Andrew Barclay. Tony is not sure whether the extensions will be demolished in the restoration but this would not be too difficult to achieve. The Hart family is delighted that the new owner has the incentive, the expertise and the energy to restore the historic homestead to a liveable state.

Understandably, Ola found it very hard to leave the home where she had arrived as a newlywed to Toby (Tobe) in 1948. She had lived at Trafalgar for more than 66 years. But she was ready in 2013 to move to a new flat adjoining her son Rick's home at the entrance to the Trafalgar farm. In January 2014, I visited her to record her memories of life at Trafalgar. She never once faltered when recalling life on the farm from the 1950s. One of the events that was still very vivid in her mind was the time that the haystack burned down. The Harts had visited relatives and were near Deloraine on their way back from the north-west coast when they first noticed a red glow in the distance. As they neared their home they feared the worst. It was bad to lose a haystack but it would have been devastating to lose the homestead.

Tony Hart recalled that his father had a herd of Hereford cattle and that the yearlings were in demand by the butchers until the Black Angus became the prime breed throughout Tasmania. He said: 'I recall the big Hereford bull, which was very large and potentially dangerous! The roads through Trafalgar were not fenced so we had to be wary of the bull.' The family ceased breeding cattle about the time that his father Tobe died in 1983. Tony's father taught him to sew bags. Dad said that Tobe was a first-class sewer so Tony had a good teacher. Tobe was also a renowned stack-maker; I watched him ensure the corners were pinned correctly. In 2014 I watched Charlie Watson heading wheat with his 10-metre (32-feet) wide header which collected the grain in a bin and emptied it into a large bin on a stationary truck; gone are the days of sewing bags on the header as we did in my teenage years in the 1960s.

The black soil is highly productive of grass, clover and all grain crops; as well as running four sheep to the acre the Hart family continue to crop peas, oats and wheat. Nowadays contracts for crops of poppies are sought after with the processing companies such as Tasmanian Alkaloids at Westbury. According to Tony, Tasmania has the right climate for growing and harvesting poppy crops. Being an island, it is also ideal to ensure the security of the poppy plants which can be harvested for illegal drugs. Because some of the products extracted from poppies are dangerous drugs, a major condition of the contracts between grower and processor is to prevent theft of the poppy plants. This condition is taken very seriously indeed. Tony's brother Rick has prepared two paddocks ready to plant 32 acres of poppies in June. Despite a 40% cut back on production in 2014, income from poppies still remains a significant part of the productivity for those farmers fortunate to have a contract with a poppy processor.

In May 2014 Rick Hart took time off a busy schedule to take me in his ute around the 400-acre Trafalgar. Rick has been farming Trafalgar since 1973 when he left school at age 16. His father Tobe died in November 1983 and Rick has managed the farm ever since. So it is over 30 years since Rick took over the responsibility of ensuring that Trafalgar has retained its mantle as one of the best farms in the Evandale district.

In 2014, as he does each year, Rick was rotating paddocks between pasture and early oats and wheat to feed to the sheep. After so many years of cropping barley each year, wheat and oats are the only grain crops now grown at Trafalgar. The property accommodated 650 Romney-Merino cross ewes which are served by Dorset rams to provide both quality wool and fat lambs. When he left me after a fascinating trip to the extremities of the farm, Rick was ready to pen a ute-load of fat cull ewes to transport to the new sale yards at Powranna, where Roberts now hold their sale each week instead of holding it at Killafaddy. Later Rick told me that the buyer paid \$32, which was a good price for cull ewes (in 2014).

Like many of the farmers in Tasmania, Rick has put his hand up to show an expression of interest in buying water in future years. Such a decision is not taken lightly and yet the chance to be assured of water to irrigate in case of drought is too good to miss. When the new scheme to re-direct water from the North Esk river to farms in the Evandale and surrounding districts comes to fruition, each farmer will have to make changes such as increasing the size of paddocks to allow for pivot spray irrigation. Undoubtedly, the outlay costs have to be assessed against the projected increased productivity and income.

JW (often called Farmer Will) Cheek is listed in the 1890 Evandale Assessment Rolls as the owner of Cambock but he leased the farm to another farmer until 1895 when he commenced farming his property. Tom (Toss) and Bob Cheek, the only surviving sons of JW and Lydia Cheek, managed the property after the death of their father in 1942. Their middle brother William (born in 1897) was killed at Pozieres, France, in 1916 during World War 1.

Tom Cheek was a notable figure in the Evandale district. He was, by all reports, a very strong man with stories of him having carried a bag of peas under each arm; most men struggle to carry one bag of peas in two arms! According to his daughter Bobbie, the true story is that her father could rise from the prone position with two bags of wheat, each weighing 180 pounds [82kg], on his back. Tom told Rod Wilkes that he lay on his back in the dining room at Parliament House and lifted two weights, each of 56kg. Bobbie's family still have the weights.

Toss was also a very good sheaf-pitcher, a sport held annually at the Evandale show. David Perry, whose main link with Evandale is as past-President of the Tasmanian Gun Club, Nile Road, said that folklore has it that Toss Cheek was so nick-named due to his ability to toss the sheaf as high as the best competitors. Bobbie and Terry Childs think it is more likely that Toss (or Thos) is short for his baptised name, Thomas.

An astonishing story about Toss Cheek was told to me by my mother, Edith McCormack. In about 1953 I asked Mum why Tom Cheek, then the Warden of Evandale, was bald. She said that he was gored by a bull and the fright caused him to lose all the hair on his head, never to grow again. Mum told me that Cheek was so strong that he held the bull by the ring in its nose and wrestled the bull, which had its horns close to Tom's head. Bobbie Childs verified that part of the event. According to Bobbie's husband Terry the bull was distracted by one Joe Oakley, thus enabling Toss Cheek to escape. Either way, he was a brave man to continue to farm cattle.

Toss Cheek had a period of 10 years (1944–1954) as Warden of Evandale. When I was at primary school (1950s), I can recall him visiting the Evandale school each year on 24 May – Empire Day, now Commonwealth Day – to address the school assembly. He was a very accomplished speaker. John Hart told me that when he was at primary school in the 1930s Toss's father, JW, also used to visit the Evandale school and speak on the importance of Empire Day.

Tom Cheek lived to the age of 99, dying in 1994. At the ripe old age of 93, he was honoured by his home town for his services to the local community and to Tasmania. On 26 January 1988 he was named Evandale Citizen of the Year. Around Australia it is the practice to recognize the service provided by leading citizens. Toss Cheek certainly fitted into that category for his untiring service and leadership. Tom and his wife Nance had a long history of doing good deeds for the local community. Bobbie told me that her mother and father always welcomed and helped settle into the district any new teachers at the Evandale school. Likewise, new Presbyterian ministers were taken under their wings and provided with such hospitality that they soon felt at home in their new parish of Evandale.

I first visited the McKibbens' Springvale at Western Junction with Dad and particularly remember their nectarine tree; it was my first taste of this delicious fruit which I rate second to none! June McKibben was a very hospitable person. In 1960 I worked with the always cheerful Mac McKibben to cart bags of grain from his father-in-law's farm to Longford. Mac sold his grain to Clements and Marshall at Longford. Bob Hart, Tobe's brother, was the agent.

I spoke to Guy McKibben in April 2014 about his family's farm, his home from birth until adulthood and beyond. In 2009 Guy sold Springvale to Paul Willows who in turn sold it to Malcolm Dean of Breadalbane in 2011. I met both Guy and Malcolm at the house to drive around the farm and talk about methods of farming Springvale. We steered clear of the natural spring close to the house; Malcolm said he could well one day obtain water from the spring with the aid of a windmill.

As well as farming all day, Mac McKibben joined his wife June at the start and end of each day to milk, by hand, 14 or 15 cows. My father Eddie and I used to milk four or five cows each morning and night. It was a chore that resulted in fresh milk, separated cream, and skim milk for the calves and pet lambs, also for a pig on the few occasions that we had one. Milking one cow took about 10–15 minutes. Can you imagine taking

the hour (plus) each morning and night to milk 14 cows? June helped Mac to milk, and then Mac had to separate the milk into cream and skim milk. Often June made butter from part of the cream. Guy McKibben told me that the rest of the cream was placed in a 10-gallon [4 litre] can and sent to the Toppa Products Butter Factory in Lindsay Street, Invermay. The cream cans were left on the side of the road for the carrier Tom Hoggett to collect and deliver. June sold the butter in Launceston, some to shopkeepers and most to Herds Mart.

According to Guy, his mother loved to cook cakes and delighted in seeing her guests sit down for a cup of tea and eat what she had cooked. Obviously she gained the same satisfaction from the farmers eating a large mid-day meal when they were harvesting or shearing and expending plenty of energy. There weren't too many overweight farmers as they worked any extra cholesterol off after lunch.

Like Ridgeside and Everton, the eastern boundary of Harland Rise is Rose Rivulet, which begins in the northern paddocks of Logan above Dalness and runs past Ridgeside, Harland Rise, Everton, Burnbrae (where I grew up), Barbrook, Talisker and other properties on its way to the North Esk river, meeting the river at Scout Island, Corra Linn. I would recommend to anyone who is interested in beautiful scenery to drive from Evandale approximately three kilometres down White Hills Road and turn right up Everton Lane where you will pass Everton Rise, Glendale and Glenelm and end up on Blessington Road. Then turn left and it takes only two minutes to reach White Hills. If you wish to return to Evandale, turn left at White Hills and you will again be on White Hills Road. The loop from Evandale to White Hills via Everton Lane and back to Evandale via White Hills Road takes about 20 minutes. I've driven the loop over 50 times, possibly 20 times in 2013–2015 as I went with David Dixon, David Lindsay, Tony Gardner and others, including John Shepherd who took the photos, whilst researching geographical aspects of the farms for *Reaching Out From Trafalgar*.

One year, Tony Gardner harvested 40 tonnes of grey peas and the agent Clements and Marshall would not purchase his produce. So Tony decided to find his own market. He listed his peas for sale and within a day or two had sold the lot to pigeon owners. This was the start of Tony branching out on his own in the grain business. From the early 1970s Tony decided to buy grain from local farmers and sell to pigeon owners and others. Tony built a grain business from scratch, commencing with northern pigeon owners and expanding state wide to supply pigeon clubs in Hobart, Burnie and on the west coast. He told me he had very much enjoyed his life farming in the Everton district and believed that he had had a fortunate life.

When travelling past Harland Rise and Everton with Tony in late November 2014, he commented that Rose Rivulet valley was once the path of the South Esk river. During the 1929 flood, the river needed only to rise another metre and it would have diverted at the railway line on Evandale Road near Cambock, to flow east and link up with the North Esk river. My mother told me the same anecdote, and my brother John confirmed that it was well known at the University of Tasmania Geology department that the South Esk river used not to follow its current course. Over 30 million years ago it proceeded east from Evandale via Rose rivulet into the North Esk river and into the Tamar river.

This was confirmed by my colleague and respected engineer Dale Luck, who has much supportive data to back his claim that a volcano at the Cocked Hat (Breadalbane) erupted 30 million years ago and resulted in enormous gravel reserves where the airport has been built as well as blocking the South Esk river at Evandale. Henceforth, it took its present route west past Perth, Longford (where it is joined by the Macquarie river) and then north past Hadspen (where it is joined by the Meander river) and through the Gorge to the Tamar river.

Tony pointed out that the Rose rivulet valley is effectively the head of the Tamar valley. It's feasible when you look from Egerton Lane, off Everton Lane. I've not thought of it before because I lived on a lower level farm. Unlike Tony Gardner who spent 50 years farming on the higher properties of Harland Rise and Everton, I lived at Burnbrae and Willowdene. With the advent of the North Esk Irrigation Scheme the Rose rivulet valley could potentially become a food bowl.

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THE HISTORY OF ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA

Jill Cassidy

Two years ago I was asked to write a history of Oral History Tasmania for publication in the 2018 book The Kaleidoscope of Launceston, edited by Tom Dunning, Barbara Valentine and Paul AC Richards. The committee feels that members would be interested in reading it and it is reproduced with permission.

Oral History Tasmania had its origins in the celebration of Australia's Bicentennial in 1988 when staff at the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery wanted to commemorate Launceston's history in a way which involved the community. Funded by the Tasmanian Council of the Australian Bicentennial Authority, the Museum's Oral History project allowed almost forty interviews to be conducted with a wide range of mainly Launceston residents. The emphasis was on hearing the voices of people who had intimate knowledge of the subject in question but whose story was seldom heard.

The topics were carefully selected to provide information about events or aspects which were important in Launceston's history but about which it was generally hard to find written information. The topics were: technical education in Launceston; nursing at the Launceston General Hospital plus early days in the Cancer Clinic; Chinese migrants; the Launceston railway workshops; women in Launceston's textile factories; the 1929 floods; the home front in the Second World War; Launceston's motor vehicle manufacturers; and the Longford motor races.

Jill Cassidy, Research Officer at the Museum, conducted the interviews. She had already recorded one or two people encountered in the course of her research projects but had no particular skill in the area and had to learn quickly with the help of a small booklet put out by the South Australian Branch of the Oral History Association of Australia, formed some ten years earlier. Excerpts from the interviews were used as the basis for nine exhibitions at Macquarie House, curated by Elspeth Wishart, and edited transcripts were published in the book, *Launceston Talks*.

The oral histories were a great success. It was clear that visitors appreciated reading or listening to the stories of their own locality, told by those who were directly involved. These stories made history live. Moreover, the recordings and transcripts which were kept in the Community History Branch of the Museum provided new information about the city's history which could then form the basis for further research. Since that time oral histories have been commissioned by the Museum for use in exhibitions, and from 1990 the Friends of the Museum provided financial support to Cassidy to interview significant individuals solely for the benefit of future researchers.

Cassidy received an increasing number of enquiries about oral history, particularly from those wishing to know the techniques of interviewing. Realising the need to discover more, in 1989 Cassidy contacted the Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA) and was pleased to be invited to Perth for the upcoming National conference, with the OHAA offering to pay half the fare. Unfortunately, this coincided with the pilots' strike and she was unable to attend. In 1990 she attempted to become a member but was reluctant to do so when she found that the only option was to join the Victorian Branch. This was the catalyst for a discussion with Wishart at which time it was decided to try to initiate a Tasmanian branch.

The role of the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery was crucial. In the early 1980s historian Peter Macfie had attempted to start a branch in southern Tasmania but it had not lasted long; the experience in other states shows that institutional backing makes a big difference. With the Museum providing a meeting room, a postal address and other in-kind support, along with some financial support for Cassidy during the initial set-up and the provision of airfares for the launch (see below), the organisation had a good start.

On 19 July 1991 the book *Launceston Talks* was launched by the well-known Tasmanian journalist Tim Bowden to a packed Museum gallery. By then residing in Sydney, Bowden had a weekly spot on television and his affable personality and wry wit ensured he had many fans, but his main job was with the ABC Social History Unit (now defunct) which used oral history to develop award-winning documentaries. He was the

perfect choice to attract as many people as possible to both the book launch and the meeting on Saturday 20 to form the Tasmanian branch, after which he delivered a public lecture to over 100 people on 'The value and pitfalls of oral history'.

The 'Meeting of those interested in forming a Tasmanian branch of the Oral History Association of Australia' was publicised widely and attended by 31 people, with others expressing interest but unable to be present. They came from many fields: those interested in family history, or the history of their community; teachers who wanted to enliven their history classes or university students wishing to find out more for their thesis; tourism operators preparing information for travellers and museum curators wanting livelier exhibitions. In general they all liked the idea of a participant-based narrative rather than a top-down view of history. The motion 'That a Tasmanian branch of the Oral History Association of Australia be established' was passed unanimously.

At the branch's inaugural meeting held the same day, Cassidy was elected president, Jenny Gill secretary and Anne Bartlett treasurer. The other committee members were Macfie, Kaye Williams from Carrick, Norma Hooper from the Beaconsfield Museum, Tess Schramm from the Maria Island National Park, and Faith Layton who had been an enthusiastic supporter of oral history through her role on the Tasmanian Council of the Australian Bicentennial Authority.

The initial hope to have a statewide committee quickly ran into practical difficulties in those years before the internet, and the full committee never met. After Jenny Gill resigned as secretary in October because of other commitments, Pat Mathew from Sheffield took over the role and also served as co-editor of the newsletter. Fortunately the branch was able to use the national constitution for the first few years and gradually the format of the new branch was developed. Cassidy was elected to be the Tasmanian representative on the national committee of the Oral History Association of Australia; she has held that position ever since.

In 1992 several meetings were held with specialists providing essential information. In February Margo Gorman talked in Launceston about her experiences interviewing retired teachers. In April a day-long workshop was held in Hobart. Jim Parish, training officer with the ABC, provided detailed technical hints; Peter Hay who had previously coordinated an oral history project in Warnambool spoke about how to integrate oral histories with other research, and Cassidy followed up with what to do after the interview. In June lawyer Graeme Jones talked about defamation in Launceston and then in August Parry Kostoglou talked in Hobart about his oral histories about the historic timber industry. Finally, in October Cassidy gave a talk on how to use a tape recorder.

The subjects of these talks show what members were especially interested in, but it became clear that regular general meetings could only ever attract a very limited number of people. By March 1993 the decision was taken to limit the annual program to just two events. One is a workshop on how to do oral history held in alternate years in Launceston and Hobart; an early workshop at Burnie failed to attract more than a token number of participants and this experiment was not repeated. The second event held each year has been a seminar with one or more speakers, coinciding every second year with what was initially the Biennial General Meeting. Originally these speakers came from the mainland with airfares and accommodation provided. High profile speakers included Hank Nelson from the Australian National University (1993) with financial support from the University of Tasmania, Dr Janet McCalman and the ABC's Bill Bunbury. Within a few years, however, the speakers were sourced from within the state as local histories prove of greater interest. On two recent occasions the seminars were held in conjunction with the Launceston Historical Society but this arrangement has now lapsed.

Also in 1992 the committee determined to replace the one-page news-sheet with a more interesting and informative newsletter with lengthier articles; the new format under the name *Real to Reel* was first issued in October of that year. Since 1994 the newsletter has been issued three times a year and usually includes one of the seminar papers.

Just two years after forming and following a request from the National President, in 1993 the branch decided on the big commitment of hosting the OHAA's national biennial conference. The committee felt that it would be unwise to take such a big financial step without the protection of incorporation, so the first activity was to

develop a specifically Tasmanian constitution, replacing that suggested by the national OHAA. It was passed at an Extraordinary General Meeting in August 1994 and incorporation followed the next year.

The 1995 conference, *Words at Work*, was a great success, once again made possible with the financial and other support of the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery as well as sponsorship from the British Council, the National Committee of the OHAA and local businesses. People from around the country plus four speakers from overseas came to Launceston's Albert Hall for spirited discussion of all aspects of oral history. The conference helped to publicise the Tasmanian branch and membership increased as a result.

Perhaps more importantly it put the branch on a sound financial footing for the first time and led to the decision to buy a high quality tape recorder and a transcribing machine for hire by members. The hire of equipment has been very popular and of great importance in attracting and retaining members. Following the advent of digital recording the branch successfully applied for a grant from the Tasmanian Community Fund to purchase a high quality digital recorder in 2006. This proved to be a great investment and the recorder is still used by members keen to obtain good quality audio, despite the proliferation of cheaper and very accessible recording devices.

All committee members had worked hard but both Pat Mathew and Anne Bartlett were pivotal in the success of the conference, building on their outstanding work during the establishment and consolidation of the branch. It was therefore a great loss when both declined to seek re-election at the 1996 Biennial General Meeting. Cassidy continued as president until 1998 when the constitution demanded a replacement. For the following two years she was branch secretary while Elizabeth Godfrey-Smith took on the job of president, but in 2000 she returned to the presidency and when no-one else volunteered for the position in 2004 the constitution was changed to allow her to continue past the four years. She has remained president ever since. She has also edited *Real to Reel*, usually alone but occasionally with the help of a co-editor, since the branch's inception.

Although the primary function of the branch is to educate in the use of oral history through workshops, seminars, newsletters and the national Journal, from time to time its activities have gone further. In 1997 the branch organised an oral history project designed to give members practice in interviewing and transcribing a short interview. The subject of 'Free Pickings' led to the documentation of a surprisingly wide variety of items which people in the past have been able to get for free from the roadside or the beach. The success of this undertaking inspired the committee to apply successfully for money from the Tasmanian Office of Multicultural and Ethnic Affairs to interview refugees and displaced persons who had settled in Tasmania. The resulting interviews with twelve people were completed in 1999 and lodged with the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery.

Lastly, as part of the 'It's About Us 2006' celebrations for the 200th anniversary of the foundation of Launceston, members interviewed eleven people who were helping to shape the future of the city in, for example, health, the environment, and the Aboriginal community, who could describe the current position and provide their vision for future directions. The interviews for 'Launceston Now and Tomorrow', described as an Oral History time capsule of Launceston in 2006, were once again lodged with the Museum.

In 2009 Tasmania again hosted the national conference of the Oral History Association of Australia. *Islands of Memory: Navigating Personal and Public History* attracted a large and diverse range of participants and once again membership increased. Moreover, at the conference for the first time Tasmanians were elected as the national executive, with Cassidy as president, Margaret Eldridge as secretary and Lana Wall as treasurer. Elaine Crisp had already compiled an index to the 1998–2009 issues of the national *Journal* and fellow-Tasmanian Terry Whitebeach volunteered to edit the *Journal* for two years.

In 2012 because of alterations to state legislation, an Annual General Meeting replaced the biennial meeting which had hitherto been held. Then following 2013 changes to the national body, now called Oral History Australia, the Tasmanian 'branch' became a stand-alone organisation in 2014 with the new name of Oral History Tasmania. Affiliation with Oral History Australia continues so members still receive the national *Journal* and can attend the biennial conference.

Sources: Oral History Tasmania minutes and other documents

SEMINAR

Saturday 21 September 2019

Meeting room, Queen Victoria Museum, Inveresk

10.00 **Registration**

10.30 **Garry Richardson, *Half a lifetime: thirty-nine and a half years in forestry***

Garry Richardson joined the Forestry Commission as a Trainee Ranger at the age of 15½ and spent almost 40 years as a forester. In that time he was involved with the establishment of pine and later eucalypt plantations and the development of woodchipping. Protective burning and the various types of eucalypt regeneration were part of his brief. His talk will also cover the move to joint ventures and the slow demise of Forestry Tasmania.

11.30 **Chris Goodacre and Barb Lypka, *An oral history of the Theatre Royal***

Much of the written information about theatre productions depends on material produced by marketers. Oral histories provide the opportunity to redress the imbalance and shine light on previously undocumented 'real' accounts of theatrical performances. Managed by the Friends of the Theatre Royal, the Theatre Royal Oral History Project uncovers first-hand, behind the scenes accounts of performances at the theatre during the 1960s–80s. It helps to chart the career and influences of some of Tasmania's most significant performers and theatre makers of the period. The presentation will also detail the process and challenges involved in gathering the oral histories.

12.30 **Lunch and AGM**

1.30 **Elizabeth Nickols, *The people you meet each day***

Penguin's Elizabeth Nickols became interested in the stories of people in her community many years ago, initially writing down what they told her. Since then she has recorded several interviews for the Penguin History Group and for family history. In 2013 she produced *Clogs, Courage and Community* about Penguin's Dutch migrants and followed that in 2017 with *Fair dinkum Dutch courage: stories of the Dutch settlers in Ulverstone, Tasmania*. As well as entertaining us with interesting stories she has collected, Elizabeth will pass on some of the lessons she has learnt along the way about doing oral history.

2.30 **Afternoon tea**

Cost: \$25 members of Oral History Tasmania and students, \$35 all others

Prior registration is essential for catering purposes.

Enquiries: president@oralhistorytas.org.au

Jill Cassidy 0418 178 098; Lana Wall 6391 1086

SEMINAR REGISTRATION 2019

ABN 85886 045 388

For catering purposes registration must be received by **Monday 16 September**.

If you are paying electronically or an institution is paying your fee, please ensure that we receive a copy of this form.

Name.....

AddressPostcode

EmailMobile/Phone

Dietary requirements:

Payment (includes lunch) is for (please tick):

- \$25 member Oral History Tasmania
- \$25 student
- \$35 all others

Payment options

Electronic transfer to: Commonwealth Bank, BSB 067 003; account number 2803 2783
Account name Oral History Tasmania
Please provide your name and 'seminar' as a reference.

Date transferred: _____

After making electronic payment, email form to president@oralhistorytas.org.au or
post to The Treasurer, OHT, 40/177 Penquite Rd, Newstead 7250.

Cheque or money order: made payable to: 'Oral History Tasmania' and sent with completed form to: The Treasurer, OHT, 40/177 Penquite Rd, Newstead 7250.

Receipts will be issued on 21 September, if not emailed earlier.

Office use only Internet/Cheque/Money Order/Cash Receipt No _____ Date _____

Do you have a project to tell us about?

We are always looking for items for the newsletter, anything from a few sentences to a lengthy article. All members are interested in knowing what is going on in the state, and you may make some good contacts through responses to the article.

WEBSITES

Oral History Tasmania: www.oralhistorytas.org.au

Oral History Australia: www.oralhistoryaustralia.org.au

IOHA (International Oral History Association): www.ioha.fgv.br

EQUIPMENT HIRE

A **Fostex digital recorder** is available for hire to members. It comes with its own lapel microphones and *User Guidelines*.

Cost of hire: \$20 a week, plus transport costs if necessary. You will also be required to sign a form agreeing to pay to replace any part that is damaged or lost while you have the recorder, up to a maximum of \$250 for individuals or \$500 for groups or institutions.

To make a booking, contact Jill Cassidy on 0418 178 098 or email president@oralhistorytas.org.au

THE OBJECTIVES OF ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA

- promote the practice and methods of oral history
- educate in the use of oral history methods
- encourage discussion of all problems in oral history
- foster the preservation of oral history records
- pursue common objectives and maintain links with other Australian oral history associations through membership of Oral History Australia Inc.

MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS

Individuals	\$40.00	Households	\$55.00
Student/unemployed/pensioner	\$30.00	Institution	\$65.00

ORAL HISTORY TASMANIA EXECUTIVE

President, and delegate to Oral History Australia:

Jill Cassidy 0418 178 098 Email: president@oralhistorytas.org.au

Secretary: Alison Johnston

Treasurer: Lana Wall

Committee members: Jon Addison, Terry Fritsche, Karin Le, Jai Paterson, Leonie Prevost.

All correspondence should be emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au or directed to Jill Cassidy, Oral History Tasmania, Queen Victoria Museum, PO Box 403, Launceston Tas 7250.

Real to Reel is edited by Jill Cassidy. The next edition is due in December 2019 and contributions should reach the editor no later than 30 November. They can be emailed to president@oralhistorytas.org.au