

QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

CHS 106

LAUNCESTON ART SOCIETY COLLECTION

Artists, Launceston
Art Exhibitions, Launceston

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INTRODUCTION

The Launceston Art Society is one of the oldest art societies still operating in Australia and has played an important role in the north of Tasmania since its establishment in 1891.

The Society had its origins in the Launceston Drawing Club, 'a select art society of ladies' resident in Launceston and adjacent areas. Although it is not known when the Drawing Club was established, its first exhibition opened on 19 November 1891 in a room over Messrs Ritchie and Parkers' offices in St John Street. The exhibition included drawings, oil paintings, watercolours, photographs and bric-a-brac. There were 30 members of the Club and the committee consisted of 10 young ladies.

During the second year of exhibition some male photographers also exhibited. By 1898 the group was known as the Launceston Art Club and in 1899 it was named and constituted the Launceston Art Society.

The first president, Mary Augusta Greig, had been taught drawing by Samuel Prout Hill whilst still at school and later studied with Albert Henry Fullwood. Her home, 'Stratton Cottage', a Georgian cottage in York Street, was one of the early meeting places of the Society. Her daughters Ethel and Florence were early exhibitors with the Society and Ethel and her sister-in-law Ella Lillian Greig gave private lessons in their studio above the stables at 'Stratton Cottage' and exhibited with the Society for many years. Louisa Swan, the first honorary secretary, was also one of Fullwood's pupils.

An artist who exhibited with the Society from 1908 until her death in 1946 was Laura Dean, the daughter of artist Robert Beauchamp. Her daughter, Laura Stewart, was honorary secretary of the Society for many years and in recognition received life membership in 1959. Another member with a long record of service was photographer Fred Smithies who was honorary treasurer for 60 years, although according to an article in the *Examiner* of 24 March 1972 he had never tried to paint.

From 1892 to 1896 two exhibitions were held annually, however in the latter year it was determined that one annual exhibition would be sufficient and help to maintain a high quality of entries. This policy remained in place until 1968 when the decision was made to hold spring exhibitions as well as the one in autumn. In 1977 a room was made available to the Society at Ritchies' Mill for meetings and classes.

Over the years exhibitions have been held in a number of venues: from 1891 to 1982 they are listed in *The Launceston Art Society in retrospect: 1891-1983*, published by the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in 1983.

When art education was still in its infancy the Society played an important role in broadening the range of art available to the local community by encouraging artists from mainland states and Hobart to exhibit in its annual exhibitions. In the early years a close association appears to have been maintained with the Art Society of Tasmania, evidenced by the number of Hobart members who regularly exhibited with the Launceston Art Society and local members who contributed to Hobart exhibitions. In

1901 when the Duke and Duchess of York visited Hobart they were presented with an album of sketches compiled by the two societies.

In 1927 Dame Nellie Melba opened a loan exhibition of early Tasmanian art organised by the Society. Between 1927 and 1929 the Society raised sufficient funds to have John Glover's grave at Deddington restored.

In 1932 the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery purchased a selection of Tasmanian works with funds from the Mary Nicholls Bequest from a special Society exhibition. In 1951, in addition to the annual autumn exhibition, a historical loan exhibition was arranged as part of the Society's diamond jubilee celebrations.

Many of Australia's most celebrated artists, and in particular notable Tasmanian artists, have exhibited with the Society since its foundation. Prominent Tasmanian art teachers have supported the Society by exhibiting, acting as judges and committee members.

In 1991 when the Society celebrated its centenary with an exhibition held at Chalmers Church, 12 awards were presented, including the prestigious City of Launceston acquisitive award.¹

In 2007 the Launceston Art Society continues to flourish. It encourages local and developing artists, promotes painting activities and holds exhibitions with a mix of amateur and professional members entering the various categories for prizes offered. Students are encouraged to exhibit as well. Members meet regularly and workshops are conducted twice a year with well known mainland and Tasmanian artists.

Most of the above information comes from Barbara Chapman's *The Launceston Art Society in retrospect: 1891-1983* (Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 1983) and the Society's web site.

The collection was donated to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in 1980, 1983 and 1993, with additional items donated in 2007 and 2008.

¹ *Examiner Launceston Week* 9/10/1991, p.2; *Examiner* 19/10/1991, p.4

1. Legal Records

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|-----|---|------|
| 1/1 | Launceston Art Society, <i>Rules of the Launceston Art Society</i> , Launceston, 1907 | 1907 |
| 1/2 | Rules | 1959 |

2. Minutes of Meetings

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|-----|---|-----------|
| 2/1 | Launceston Art Society, minute book of meetings, 26 May 1898-10 December 1901 | 1898-1901 |
| 2/2 | Minute book of meetings, 12 September 1905-10 December 1909 | 1905-1909 |
| 2/3 | Minute book of meetings, 18 February 1910-17 June 1914, 25 March, 6 May 1918 | 1910-1918 |
| 2/4 | Minute book of annual general meetings | 1911-1914 |
| 2/5 | Minute book of meetings, 26 March 1956-17 December 1962 (includes annual report for 1966) | 1956-1962 |
| 2/6 | Minute book of meetings, 21 November 1969-24 June 1986 | 1969-1986 |
| 2/7 | Minute book of meetings, 29 July 1986-9 March 1992 | 1986-1992 |

3. Financial Records

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|-----|---|-----------|
| 3/1 | Launceston Art Society, treasurer's cash account book | 1913-1940 |
| 3/2 | Treasurer's cash account book | 1941-1958 |

4. Prize Lists

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|-----|---|-----------|
| 4/1 | Launceston Art Society, prize list for annual exhibitions, 1912, 1914, 1925-1931, 1933, 1940-1943, 1945, 1946, 1950 | 1912-1950 |
| 4/2 | Junior art exhibition prize list, 1956-1958, 1960-1963 | 1956-1963 |

5. Exhibition Catalogues

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|-----|--|-----------|
| 5/1 | Launceston Art Society, exhibition catalogues, 1912, 1913, 1918, 1923-1925, 1927-1941, 1943, 1945-1960 | 1912-1960 |
| 5/2 | Exhibition catalogues, 1961-1983 (includes 4-16 April 1978 annual exhibition; 17 November-3 December 1978 spring | 1961-1994 |

exhibition; 13-20 May 1992 annual exhibition; spring exhibition 1992; 23-30 November 1994 Christmas exhibition)

- 5/3 Launceston Art Society, *Catalogue of pictures in the loan exhibition of the work of early Tasmanian artists held at the King's Hall, Launceston, March 10th & 11th, 1927* 1927
- 5/4 Launceston Art Society, *Historical loan exhibition of paintings by early Tasmanian artists, as part of the Society's jubilee year programme... Thursday, 2nd August, 1951*, photocopy 1951

6. Miscellaneous Records

- 6/1 Launceston Art Society, typed list of references from *Walch's Almanac* 1892, 1898, 1899; *Examiner* 1891-1893; *Daily Telegraph* 1895; *Examiner* 1896, 1899 1891-1899
- 6/2 Newspaper cuttings: *Examiner* 8/12/1893; *Daily Telegraph* 13/6/1895; *Examiner* 4/6/1896, 26/10/1950, 16/12/1950, 1/6/1963, *Examiner Northern Scene* 8/4/1981 1893-1981
- 6/3 Typed list of exhibitors from 1912-1957, giving first exhibiting year only 1912-1957
- 6/4 Rules for exhibiting at annual exhibitions, 1932?, 1934, 1935, 1980 1932-1980
- 6/5 Typed lists of members' exhibits at Society's exhibitions held at Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, 1951-1960 1951-1960
- 6/6 Typed notes: 'Brief history of the Launceston Art Society', 1951; 'A short history of the Launceston Art Society 1891-1971'; 'The Launceston Art Society', 1972; 'The Launceston Art Society', 1978; 'A short history of the Launceston Art Society, 1891-1980', Launceston Art Society Inc., 1999, 2002 1951-2002
- 6/7 Letter from Bettie Taylor, honorary secretary, to B Chapman QVMAG, re dates of past presidents from 1956 1983

Addendum

7. Legal Records

- 7/1 Launceston Art Society, copy of sublease with Ritchies Mill Arts Centre 1984

8.Minutes of Meetings

8/1 Minute book of meetings 9 March 1992-14 September 1998 1992-1998

9.Correspondence

9/1 Correspondence August-December 1972, 1983-1991 1983-1991

9/2 Correspondence 1992-1994

9/3 Correspondence 1995-1999

9/4 Correspondence re Maxine Lockett and Court of Requests 1986-1987

9/5 Correspondence etc re centenary exhibition (includes list of winners of awards) 1990-1991

10.Annual Reports

10/10 Annual reports 1970, 1972-1973, 1976-1979, 1982-1983, 1985-1986, 1988, 1990-1992, 1994, 1998-1999 1970-1999

11.Newsletters

11/1 Newsletters February 1984-March 2002 1984-2002

12.Exhibition Catalogues

12/1 Exhibition catalogues 1984-1997, 2001-2002 1984-2002

13.Ephemera

13/1 Invitations 1971-1998, nd; notices for exhibitions 1918, 1926, 1928; notice for annual meeting 1949; exhibition posters; entry forms etc for works presented for exhibitions; notices re requirements for pictures intended for exhibition; committee nomination forms; membership application form; subscription renewal forms; calendars 1992-1994, 1996, 1999; Art Award certificate, nd; Greg Waddle Memorial Art Award certificates, 2002

14.Photographs

14/1 Copy of photograph of 'Geoff Tyson at work, Low Head, Sept. 1973'; colour photograph of W J Stanley Fuller, nd 1973

OTHER SOURCES

QVM 5, 631.0120

Barbara Chapman, *The Launceston Art Society in retrospect 1891-1983*, Launceston, 1983

The companion to Tasmanian history, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, 2008
(on line), article on the Launceston Art Society by Yvonne Adkins