

QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

CHS 40

THE EXAMINER W R ROLPH COLLECTION

Businessmen, Launceston Newspapers, Launceston

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INTRODUCTION

William Robert Rolph was born at Carrick on 26 March 1864, the son of Daniel, licensee of the Prince of Wales Hotel, and Henrietta Louisa (nee Ives) Rolph. He was educated in Launceston. After leaving school he worked for Douglas & Collins, solicitors, for about two years, followed by five years with Dalgety, Moore (later Du Croz, Smith) & Co. About 1886 he left Tasmania for mercantile employment in Brisbane, Townsville and Sydney.

An accomplished violinist, Mr Rolph subsequently travelled to England and the Continent with his sister Ada to continue his music studies, but eye trouble forced him to abandon his plans. Upon his return to Launceston in the early 1890s, he became chief clerk in the Railway Department, then entered into partnership with Edward Sheargold as mining agents and sharebrokers. Later Mr Rolph and Alex T Young practised as public accountants and trade trustees under the firm name Rolph and Young. A T Cruickshank subsequently joined the firm.

Mr Rolph and Mr Young became associated with the *Launceston Examiner* in November 1897. After Mr Young's retirement due to ill health in 1916 the firm became W R Rolph & Sons.

Under Mr Rolph's direction *The Examiner* published the *Weekly Courier* from 1901 to 1935, the *Saturday Evening Express* was commenced in 1924 and in 1938 the radio station 7EX was established. In 1908 he inaugurated *The Examiner* Empty Stocking Fund. Later an annual children's picnic was associated with this fund and attending the picnic was one of his greatest pleasures.

A caring man with wide interests, Mr Rolph was involved with an impressive number of organisations. He was chairman of the Tasmanian Permanent Executors' and Trustees' Association Ltd; director and past chairman of the Equitable Building Society; member of the Launceston Public Library Board; foundation member and past president of the Northern Branch of the Royal Society and a trustee of the Northern Home for Boys, Queen Victoria Hospital, Ministering Children's League Convalescent Home and Lyons Memorial Bursary Fund. He was a government nominee on the Launceston General Hospital Board, chairman of the Ramsay Memorial Library Fund, a member of the Launceston Commercial Travellers' Association and Returned Soldiers League clubs and first secretary pro tem of the Launceston Rotary Club. An early motoring enthusiast, he was a vice president of the Tasmanian Automobile Club, a member of the Northern Tourist Association and vice president of the Australian Provincial Press Association for a quarter of a century. He was a member of the 1929 Flood Relief Committee.

During the First World War he was instrumental in establishing many patriotic funds and was one of the original members of the Fathers' Association. His son, Robert Stewart, who joined the AIF in 1915, served overseas until early 1919.

Probably his greatest interest was music. A foundation member (1903) and a member of the first executive of the Launceston Literary and Musical Competitions Association, at the time of his death he was senior vice president, having been

associated with the competitions for over 40 years. Vice president of four Launceston bands and a member of the advisory committee of the Australian Music Board examinations, he was a staunch supporter of all visiting artists.

In his youth a keen swimmer and boxer, Mr Rolph was closely identified with the "Learn to Swim" campaign, president of the Esk Lacrosse Club and enjoyed watching cricket and vigoro matches.

Deeply conscious of the responsibilities of the press, for nearly half a century he influenced *The Examiner's* policies and under his guidance the paper achieved a high standard in Australian journalism. A patriotic Launceston citizen, he did much to promote industrial and other developments in the north of the state.

While in London, on 30 January 1892 he married London born Emily Jane Bickell. Their six children were born in Launceston: Gordon (1893-1959), Robert Stewart (1894-1965), Dorice Alice, later Mrs S B Stewart (1897-1930), Mavis Emily (1898-1958), Trevor William (1901-1923) and William Henry (1905-). Mrs Rolph died on 16 November 1936.

After an illness lasting almost four years, W R Rolph died at his home 'Strathairlie', 52 Elphin Road, on 23 January 1948, survived by three sons and a daughter. His funeral service was held at the Frederick Street Christ Church (Congregational) where he had been a regular attendant.

The collection was donated to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in 1998 and 2007.

1. Letterbooks

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|------|---|-----------|
| 1/1 | July 1889-March 1890, cover endorsed 'Letter Book No.14', handwritten letters from Barnard Mackay & Co. (wine & spirit merchants, St John Street, Launceston), pp 1 - 750, indexed A-Z, most are addressed to Tasmanian residents | 1889-1890 |
| 1/2 | December 1897-December 1904, letters (mostly handwritten, some typed) from W Rolph, some in his capacity as Trustee Henry Button's Trust Estate, pp 1 - 525, indexed A-Z | 1897-1904 |
| 1/3 | January 1908, December 1911, letters (handwritten) from W R Rolph, pp 1 - 8, not indexed | 1908-1911 |
| 1/4 | August 1910-November 1913, letters (handwritten) from W R Rolph, (often family matters) pp 1 - 250, not indexed | 1910-1913 |
| 1/5 | November 1913-November 1914, letters (handwritten) from W R Rolph, (often family matters) pp 1 - 252, not indexed | 1913-1914 |
| 1/6 | November 1914-January 1916, letters (handwritten) from W R Rolph, (often family matters) pp 1 - 255, not indexed | 1914-1916 |
| 1/7 | December 1914-December 1917, letters (typed) from Rolph & Young, pp 1 - 855, indexed A-Z; letters (handwritten and some typed) from W R Rolph, June 1924-September 1925 at back of book | 1914-1925 |
| 1/8 | January 1916-November 1916, letters (handwritten) from W R Rolph (often family matters) pp 1 - 250, not indexed | 1916 |
| 1/9 | May 1916-December 1918, letters from W R Rolph | 1916-1918 |
| 1/10 | November 1916-December 1918, letters from W R Rolph | 1916-1918 |
| 1/11 | December 1918-July 1921, letters from W R Rolph | 1918-1921 |
| 1/12 | March 1921, two letters from W R Rolph | 1921 |
| 1/13 | July 1921-June 1924, letters from W R Rolph, several loose letters November 1925 at back of book | 1921-1924 |
| 1/14 | November 1925-August 1929, letters from W R Rolph | 1925-1929 |
| 1/15 | September 1934-May 1937, letters from W R Rolph | 1934-1937 |
| 1/16 | February 1911-November 1913, letters from W R Rolph | 1911-1913 |

2. Correspondence

- 2/1 Letters, postcards to W R Rolph, 1907-1944; Letters from W R Rolph, 1928-1941; Correspondence between W R Rolph and George Stone, 1930-1940; Letters to and from G B Rolph re his father, W R Rolph's illness, 1944; Postcard from Robert S Rolph, c1918? 1907-1944

3. Scrapbooks etc

- 3/1 *Examiner* scrapbook (includes forms, form letters, flyers, programs for two Alan Wilkie productions, nd, and for "Sally" at National Theatre, 1925 etc) **Oversized item** 1912-1936
- 3/2 Scrapbook of *Examiner*? cuttings concerning World War 1 1914

4. Photographs

- 4/1 Photograph (29 x 38 cms) of W R Rolph's four sons and two daughters (**Oversized item**) nd
- 4/2 Dorice [Rolph] 1910
- 4/3 Mavis [Rolph] 1910
- 4/4 Eight photographs of unidentified men, most probably W R Rolph's sons (includes soldier in uniform, probably R S Rolph, with W R Rolph) nd
- 4/5 W R Rolph and Dr C A Hogg, Low Head nd
- 4/6 Gordon G Rae 1931
- 4/7 Frederick S Denney, King Island 1935
- 4/8 Dickson Gregory (includes information on *The romance of the Edina*) 1935
- 4/9 Mayor & Mrs Gee in car decorated by 9th Battery nd
- 4/10 "The Meeting Karoola", photograph of group of unidentified men nd
- 4/11 Government Accommodation House, Mienna; photograph of car in the snow at Mienna nd
- 4/12 Three photographs of flood taken from Trevallyn [1929]
- 4/13 Part of front of house, Trevallyn, showing statue of nd

Venus

4/14 Nine photographs of unidentified grave, Carr Villa 1930

5. Theatre and Concert Programs

5/1 Miscellaneous Tasmanian and Australia programs, including the Corrick family at the Albert Hall, Launceston, 1932 1925-1937

6. Company Reports Etc

6/1 Miscellaneous Tasmanian company reports, several of which relate to J W Pepper's estate, of which W R Rolph was trustee 1917-1938

7. J W Pepper's Estate

7/1 Papers relating to J W Pepper's estate, including Pepper's will, 1913, correspondence, billheads and share certificates 1889-1940

8. Captain F A Hare's Estate

8/1 Correspondence concerning Captain Hare's estate, includes two letters to Captain Hare 1930-1935

9. Miscellaneous Items

9/1 Cruickshank & Creasey (late) Rolph, Young & Cruickshank, estate trustees receipts 1907

9/2 Typed notes concerning the *Mercury* intrusion into northern Tasmania c1928

9/3.1 W R Rolph's desk diaries 1938

9/3.2 W R Rolph's desk diaries 1939

9/3.3 W R Rolph's desk diaries 1940

9/3.4 W R Rolph's desk diaries 1941

9/3.5 W R Rolph's desk diaries 1942

9/3.6 W R Rolph's desk diaries 1943

9/4 *7EX, The Examiner Station, Launceston, Tas.: Souvenir*, pamphlet 1938

9/5 W R Rolph and Misses M E and J Rolph trip to Colombo, Singapore, Batavia, Samarang, Sourabaya and Bali, 1939

	miscellaneous items	
9/6	Metal stencil (10 x 8 cms) with ornate “W” and “W.R. Rolph” across the “W”	nd
9/7	Swan Point Estate Subdivision, River Tamar, Tasmania, map <i>Oversized item</i>	nd
9/8.1	Minute book of the Australian Journalists' Association	1940-1960
9/8.2	Minute book of the Australian Journalists' Association	1960-1971

10. Ephemera

10/1	Miscellaneous ephemera, including concert, civic reception and event programs, menus, Christmas and New Year cards, postcards, including some from the First World War, and a brochure entitled <i>Launceston Tasmania: Australia's most beautiful provincial City: where to go and what to see, c1930?</i>	1911-1945
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11. Additional Letterbooks

11/1	Letterbook, June 1929-December 1931, letters from W R Rolph	1929-1931
11/2	Letterbook, January 1932-September 1934, letters from W R Rolph	1932-1934

12. Additional Correspondence

12/1	Letters to W R Rolph (includes correspondence from Roy Bridges)	1892-1934
12/2	Letters etc to W R Rolph from James Rolph, California	1924-1934
12/3	Letters etc from W R Rolph	1931-1941
12/4	W R Rolph, correspondence with A C Walch and E J Rogers re Hobart property mortgages	1931-1942
12/5	Letters to W R Rolph from his son Gordon	1932-1940
12/6	WR Rolph, correspondence etc re sea voyages in Pacific	1933-1937
12/7	Letter to W R Rolph from his son Robert	1934
12/8	WR Rolph, correspondence, plans, specifications etc re house and land in Elphin Road. See also 15/12	1936-1938

12/9 Letters to W R Rolph (includes two letters from Dame Enid Lyons and 1940 correspondence re death of H S Blackburn, Manager of *Examiner* Hobart Office) 1938-1942

12/10 Letter to WR Rolph? from his daughter Dorice nd

13. Additional Theatre and Concert Programs

13/1 Miscellaneous Tasmanian and Australian programs 1930s

14. Additional Company Reports

14/1 Miscellaneous Tasmanian company reports 1939-1940

15. Additional Miscellaneous Items

15/1 *Examiner Extraordinary, Arrival of the English Mail* Thursday, Sept. 12 [1867] (broadsheet) 1867

15/2 *Launceston Examiner*, supplement to the *Launceston Examiner*, 12th March 1892 1892

15/3 *Jubilee of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute*, Launceston, 1892 (pamphlet) 1892

15/4 W R Rolph, paper on Hayden read at Launceston Musical Association, 1908; paper on *Vanity Fair*, read at Christ Church Circle, 1911; paper on Dickens, read at Australian Amateur Press Association, 1912; paper on Longfellow, nd) 1908-1912

15/5 *The Examiner... Almanac 1914*, supplement to *Examiner*, December 1913 ***Oversized item*** 1913

15/6 *The Examiner War Map* ***Oversized item*** c1915

15/7 *Daily Telegraph Pty Ltd*, statement of affairs, 1918; balance sheets, 1921-1926; insurance on stock, plant, machinery etc, schedule, 1923; salaries list, 1928 1918-1926

15/8 J S Gill, compiler, *Launceston the Northern Capital of Tasmania and Why*, Launceston Fifty Thousand League, c1928 c1928

15/9 *The Tasmanian: official organ of the Tasmanian Association* (N.S.W.), vol. 1, no. 1, September 1932 1932

15/10 *Souvenir of Tasmania's Pioneer Festival, Launceston, April 5,6,7, 1935*, Launceston, 1935 1935

- 15/11 *Picturesque Launceston Tasmania: the city and adjacent tourist attractions illustrated by fifty-two photographs taken by S. Spurling*, Launceston, Spurlings, 1930s 193?
- 15/12 A Harold Masters, plan of proposed brick house Elphin Road for Miss Rolph; block plan proposed residence of Miss Rolph Elphin Rd. Launceston Tas ***Oversized items*** 1937
- 15/13 *The Examiner Special News Bulletin* (one sheet) 1939?
- 15/14 *Centenary Services Christ Church (Congregational) Launceston* (with invitation to Mr W R Rolph to the Centenary Services and Centenary Banquet serviette) 1940
- 15/15 Mavis E Rolph, morandum of agreement re purchase of property at 54 Elphin Road; note re valuation of property 1940
- 15/16 *Tasmanian History at a Glance: the Examiner 1842-1942*, Launceston, 1942 (with introduction by W R Rolph) 1942
- 15/17 Examiner and Weekly Courier Offices, Hobart, an of alterations to premises Collins Street Hobart ***Oversized item*** nd
- 15/18 'The Acoustics of violin making' (4 handwritten pages) nd
- 15/19 Alex. F. Lithgow, 'Land of the Moa', 'Favourite Successes', sheet music for piano solo nd

16. Additional Ephemera

- 16/1 'A Meeting will he held... 18th May, 1921,... to form a Northern Branch of The Royal Society of Tasmania, in Launceston (notice, one sheet, W R Rolph's name is on the notice) 1921
- 16/2 The Historical Society of Tasmania, invitation to Mr & Mrs W R Rolph to attend unveiling of memorial at George Town to commemorate the annexation of VDL by Lieut-Col Paterson 1935
- 16/3 Christmas cards (from Mr & Mrs E Dwyer Gray, 1939; Davies Brothers, 1939; Public Service Commissioner, 1939; W T Condor, 1st Aust. Corps, A.I.F. Abroad, nd; unsigned card with copy of Eldershaw watercolour of Golf Links, Kingston, on cover, nd) 1939
- 16/4 'Staff Luncheon tendered by Mr. W.R. Rolph to mark the Centenary of the Examiner', Brisbane Hotel (menu, includes names of staff and those with the Fighting Forces) 1942

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| 16/5 | Tasmanian Steamers Pty Ltd, T.S.S. Tarooma (4 perforated postcards on a large sheet) <i>Oversized item</i> | nd |
| 16/6 | “The Examiner” “Weekly Courier” and “The Saturday Evening Express” letterhead; printed envelope addressed to ‘Manager, “Examiner” & “Courier” Branch Offices, 124 Collins Street, Hobart’ | nd |
| 16/7 | Bridestowe Lavender, Lilydale, Tasmania, advertising folder container sample of lavender and colour photo of Bridestowe lavender harvest time | nd |

17. Photographs

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| 17/1 | Photographs (46) of the coronation of George VI, May 1937 | 1937 |
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OTHER SOURCES

Australian Dictionary of Biography vol. 11, article on W R Rolph and G B Rolph

Cyclopedia of Tasmania, Hobart, 1931

Examiner, 24 January 1948, p. 2 (obituary and tributes, W R Rolph)

Jenny Gill, *Engraved in memory*, Launceston, 1988 (T W Rolph)