

QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY

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THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF ST GEORGE, LAUNCESTON BRANCH COLLECTION

Patriotism, Launceston Societies, Launceston

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INTRODUCTION

The Royal Society of St George was founded in England by Howard Ruff in 1894, although its origins may be claimed to date from a St George's Society established in America as early as 1770.

The Society is a non-sectarian and non-political body and has Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II as Patron. Its badge was that of St George and the Dragon (based on a medieval legend), and its objectives are:

- to foster a love of England and the Commonwealth through the dissemination of the knowledge of English history, traditions and ideals,
- to maintain the memory of those from all walks of life who have served England or the Commonwealth,
- to ensure that St George's Day is duly celebrated,
- to provide opportunities for English men and women throughout the world to meet together

The Society's affairs are vested in a Council. Branches could be established in any part of the world, subject to Council sanction and the payment of capitation fees to the London Head Office.

The first branch of the Royal Society of St George in Australia was established at Scottsdale in Tasmania's north east by R T Dyer on 23 April 1900 with 13 members. The first minute book of that branch is included in this collection (2/4). It came from the estate of A W Biggs (a former president), and was passed to the Launceston Branch by the late Rev W H MacFarlane.

A Launceston branch, also established early this century, had ceased to exist by 1919. However, the branch was re-convened by Sir Gordon Rolph at a meeting at the Town Hall on 9 July 1945. By 1959, it had 150 members, although membership subsequently fluctuated, with 70 members in 1969, 130 in 1985 and 93 in 1994. In the 1960s, interest was expressed in seeking members from sponsored British migrants to the state.

Branch membership included a president (elected annually), vice-presidents, life members, ordinary members and honorary members. Over the years, activities included annual celebration of St George's Day and Trafalgar Day, an annual church service at St George's Church, Invermay, presentations to St George's School, Newstead, and other schools, establishment of a School Essay Competition, the award of an Art of Speech prize at the Launceston Competitions, and donations to various charitable organisations including St Giles Home, 'Tresca' (Fairbridge Society Home for Children, Exeter), the Multiple Sclerosis Society of Tasmania, Salvation Army, Launceston City Mission, Masonic Garden Village Special Care Unit, Launceston War Memorial Community Centre Association, Tasmanian Deaf Society and *The Examiner's* Winter Blanket Appeal.

At the annual general meeting of the Launceston Branch held on 4 April 1995, there were no nominations for either president or secretary. Amidst other concerns about its aging membership, many of whom were also members of the Royal Commonwealth Society, and difficulty in attracting younger people, it was decided at a special council meeting on 5 September 1995 to disband the Branch, effective from 30 November 1995. All liabilities were discharged and grants of \$2,500 made to the Launceston Church Grammar School and Scotch Oakburn College, for prizes in English. Remaining members, residual funds and some memorabilia were transferred to the Northern Tasmanian Branch of the Royal Commonwealth Society.

The collection was donated to the Queen Victoria Museum in July and October 1996.

1. Legal Records

1/1 Rules and By-laws 1971

2. Minutes of Meetings and Annual Reports

2/1 Minutes of annual general meetings and annual reports 1959-1984
(includes AGM minutes 25 March 1960-26 March 1984, agenda, annual reports and financial statements 1959-1983)

2/2 Minutes of annual general meetings and annual reports 1984-1995
(includes AGM minutes 27 March 1985-4 April 1995, notices of meetings, annual reports and financial statements 1984-1994)

2/3 Minutes of council meetings (includes agenda, minutes of special meetings and final meetings May-November 1995, auditor's reports November-December 1995) 1960-1995

2/4 Minutes of Scottsdale branch meetings (includes minutes of general, annual and committee meetings 23 April 1900-23 January 1912, members roll 1900-1911, membership forms 1912, newspaper cuttings 1906-1909) 1900-1912

3. Correspondence

3/1 Correspondence re Field Marshal Montgomery, membership; St George's Day; Trafalgar Day and other functions; vice-regal and other invitations; guest speakers; St George's Church; Windmill Hill Memorial Avenue; schools; Fairbridge Society of Tasmania ('Tresca'); British High Commission etc 1947-1979

3/2 Correspondence re St George's Day and other functions; life membership; vice-regal patronage; schools; Falklands War; Launceston Foundation Festival, March 1986; certificate and Loyal Societies sub-committee minutes of meetings 1985-1986 1980-1986

3/3 Correspondence re St George's Day; Trafalgar Day and other functions; donations; Launceston Competitions; R R White; G Upson; royal visit; membership; Royal Commonwealth Society; vice-regal invitations; foreign land ownership in Tasmania etc 1987-1990

3/4 Correspondence re vice-regal invitations, St George's Day and other functions; guest speakers; donations; investments; Launceston Competitions; Clifford Craig Medical Research Trust (September, December 1993 newsletters); Monarchist League; Queen's Cup Carnival; school prizes; Royal Commonwealth Society; Launceston Branch closure 1991-1996

3/5 London Correspondence re royal celebrations; newsletters; Branch capitation fees; Selangor Branch (Malaysia); *England* (publication); Branch Delegates Conference, annual reports, 1973-1977, 1992-1995 1948-1996

3/6 Selangor Branch (Malaysia) re relationship with London Head Office 1983-1984

4.Financial Records and Working Papers

4/1 Cash book 1967-1995

4/2 Working Papers, St George's Day and Trafalgar Day functions (includes speech and other notes, order of proceedings) 1975-1995

4/3 Miscellaneous Working Papers (includes notes re history of Tasmanian Branches, donations and Christmas greetings lists) 1962-1994

5.Membership Records

5/1 Membership forms, completed (includes correspondence and address lists) 1963-1994

5/2 Membership forms, unused (includes life membership certificates) nd

5/3 Members' subscription register 1980-1995

6.Miscellaneous Items and Ephemera

6/1 H W Blackburne, *The Romance of St George's Chapel, Windsor Castle* (6th ed, 1962); *The Fairbridge Society* (2 issues, 1971-1974, includes references to 'Tresca', Exeter); *The Dragon Flyer* (Hobart Branch newsletter, various issues 1990-1995); *England* (various issues 1970-1994, some with references to the Launceston Branch); Sir David Smith, 'Some thoughts on the monarchy/republic debate', address, 1993; M Hodgman, Trafalgar Day address, 1994 1962-1994

6/2 Greeting cards; invitations; menus; Launceston Church Grammar School and Scotch Oakburn speech night programs 1995; leaflets 1953-1996

6/3 The Australia State Coach certificate ***Framed item*** 1987

6/4 Recording of St George's Day address by His Grace the Duke of Beaufort 1962

OTHER SOURCES

Archives Office of Tasmania, Miscellaneous Papers of Basil Rait, re Royal Society of St George, Hobart Branch, 1944-1946, AOT NS 314/6

John Beswick, ed., *Macfarlane's history of North East Tasmania*, Scottsdale, 2007

W H MacFarlane, 'Scottsdale led the way', *North-Eastern Advertiser* 21 April 1950; 'St George: Knight and Martyr', *The Examiner* 21 April 1962