

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
HELD IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY ROOM, TASMANIAN MUSEUM AND ART
GALLERY AT 8PM ON TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2010.**

Present: The President, Dr Alison Alexander in the chair, and about 85 members and friends.

Apologies: Malcolm Groom; Tony Harrison; Andrew McKinlay; Stefan Petrow; Mary Ramsay; Dawn Ransley; Leone Scrivener; Robert Sharman; Dianne Snowden; Gillian Winter.

Minutes: The minutes of the previous AGM were read, and confirmed as a true record.

President's Report: The President spoke to her report, and it was received.

Treasurer's Report: The Treasurer spoke to his report, and it was received.

Appointment of Auditor: Mr Malcolm Groom was re-appointed auditor.

Election of Office-bearers: Nominations having been received only for the following, they were declared elected: President, Carline Homer; Vice-President, Ian Terry; Secretary, Andrew McKinlay; Treasurer, Ross Kelly; Editor, Heather Felton; Committee, Alison Alexander; Robert Dooley; Margaret Glover Scott; Stefan Petrow; Michael Roe; Dianne Snowden.

Speaker: The President introduced Mr Barry Mc Neill, as this evening's speaker, his address to belong in the series "A Tasmanian Life". Barry remarked that he had distributed a flyer indicating some basic facts concerning his life, but in the address itself he wished to pursue several themes rather than follow strict chronology. His forename honoured Kevin Barry, a young Irishman executed by the British government in 1920 for involvement in IRA militance. Although the McNeill's had belonged to the seventeenth century 'plantation' of northern Ireland from Scotland, Barry's more immediate forebears had been republican nationalists. His paternal grandparents had migrated to north Queensland in 1885, the grandfather dying in service of the Queensland railways. Barry's father was a waterside worker, travelling so far afield as Hobart when he met his future wife, her family of convict descent and otherwise colourful. The couple returned to North Queensland, Barry being born there in 1937 but eventually settled in Hobart.

Barry's first major theme was 'Disadvantage can be an advantage'. He had found his father's itinerant life, passed in various small communities, had offered opportunity to experience variety (including contact with Aboriginal people), and to grant freedom for self-development of his individuality and education. Suffering polio had widened experience, and increased determination to enhance his intellectual capacity. His brother's schizophrenia had been tragic in many ways, but was decisive in bringing the family to Hobart, another different place.

A second theme was 'Luck'. In remote Queensland Barry's polio was treated by an expert who rejected dominant orthodoxies, to the great benefit of his patients. At Albuera Primary and Junior Technical schools, he had been guided by outstanding teachers in a halcyon period of state education. Already he aimed to become an architect and just at this time the Technical College course won national accreditation. He somehow found time to do an Arts degree at the University, and (simultaneously) a Diploma in Town and Country Planning at Technical College. A Churchill Fellowship, one of the last to be given for a full year, allowed study in extremely enriching American institutions in the momentous time of the later 1960s. Back in Tasmania Barry was Director of the TCAE's Department of Environmental Design 1972-80, the early years outstandingly fruitful, although ending unhappily. At a more personal level 'luck' offered in the strength and wisdom of his father, and a happy marriage now 50 years and some days old. Various other individuals were named whom Barry held in particular esteem.

Barry next discussed issues of 'class'. His father embodied working class attitudes and standards at their best, and those values had remained dominant. Citing his peers at Junior Tech, Barry suggested that in those days there was an aspirational drive within working-class people that impelled remarkable personal achievements. Now the working class was smaller, but less dynamic. Finally Barry spoke of his work as an architect, showing slides of places that he had designed, seeking thereby to express social concern, rationality, love of place, and spiritual depth. After questions, the President thanked the speaker for a remarkable address.

Michael Roe for Secretary

President