

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH  
ASSOCIATION HELD IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY ROOM, TASMANIAN MUSEUM AND  
ART GALLERY ON TUESDAY 11 AUGUST 2009 AT 8PM.**

Present: The President, Dr Alison Alexander, in the chair, and about 80 members and friends.

Apologies: Mary Ramsay.

Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting were read, and approved as a correct record.

Business: The President first referred to the death of Hugh Campbell, for thirteen years (with David Dilger) editor of *Papers and Proceedings*. She gave notice of the forthcoming Eldershaw lecture, and of two excursions, and also referred to events organised by the School of History, the Launceston Historical Society, and the Bruny Island Historical Society.. Flyers were available describing the next conference organised by joint Tasmanian historical societies.

Speaker: The President introduced Peter Boyce as an academic who had been Vice-Chancellor at Murdoch University before retiring to Tasmania. His topic tonight was 'The Conservative Establishment at Prayer? St David's Cathedral in Tasmanian Social History'.

Professor Boyce began by outlining various circumstances which helped give the Cathedral a salient place – Anglicanism had a long history in the colony, it had quasi-'establishment status, at least formal adherence from a majority of the population (that still continuing); the Cathedral traditionally had been the focus of 'civic religion', and the building itself was impressive.

The first period in the institution's history, down to the 1850s was probably the most interesting. The Church then had particular privileges, and particular duties; Governors expected it to teach morals, not theology. Old St David's was capable of holding over a thousand people; it was always crowded, with civil and military officers virtually bound to attend, and convicts compulsorily so. In early years the liturgy was simple, with little music. This reflected the Evangelical disposition of chaplain William Bedford. With the appointment in 1842 of FR Nixon as Bishop there arose dissension, he being a Tractarian; at one stage Bedford locked the Cathedral against his superior. This clash between church factions continued and even intensified into the 1850s. The second period in the Cathedral's history, down to 1914, comprised its happiest period. Cathedral clergy of these years were men of considerable intellect and ability, harmony prevailing between them and their bishops. Their churchmanship was 'High', in moderate way. Now arose the nucleus of today's Cathedral building, to the brilliant 'Decorated Gothic' design of GF Bodley. Divisions did continue, provoked especially by Evangelical laymen, as the new Cathedral arose, the church wardens of the old showed reluctant to transfer its furnishings. From elsewhere – the radical newspaper *Clipper* and even the *Cyclopaedia of Tasmania* – came criticism of the Church's alliance with social conservatism. Yet radical sympathies affected some clergy, outstandingly JE Mercer, the Bishop 1902-14.

The third historical period, c.1914-80, had less drama. World War I united clergy and Bishop Stephen in support of compulsory military service. The next years saw the giving of fairly generous financial support, this enabling the completion of the Cathedral building. Professional men and spinster ladies dominated lay participation. In the aftermath of the second war a difference arose between Bishop Cranswick and Dean Fewtrell as the latter ardently supported anti-Communist activity, while the former's politics were Leftward. Through the 60s and 70s decline was less marked in Tasmania than elsewhere in the nation, partly because of Dean Harlin Butterley's effort to cater for particular groups within the congregation. However from around 1980 began a further historical stage, as Butterley's successor followed a different path and regressions showed on other fronts – declining attendances, financial mismanagement, lay rebellion, disastrous dismissal of the choirmaster in 1992. The story had some other aspects. Evangelicals at last had control of St David's, lost since Bedford's day. A Foundation, launched in 2004, raised sufficient money to begin restoration of the fabric. Hope arose of presenting the Cathedral as a focus of civic life and culture.

After thanks to Professor Boyce, the meeting closed at 9.05pm.

**Michael Roe for Secretary**

**Alison Alexander, President**