

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE TASMANIAN HISTORICAL RESEARCH
ASSOCIATION HELD IN THE ROYAL SOCIETY ROOM, TASMANIAN MUSEUM
AND ART GALLERY, AT 8PM ON TUESDAY 12 APRIL 2011.**

Present: The President, Caroline Homer, in the chair and about forty members and guests.

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

Business: The President noted that papers were now due for the forthcoming maritime history conference. She introduced Ann Thwaites who spoke of an intended excursion to Westbury in late October. Mention was also made of the celebration of the Association's 60th anniversary in September; they would include a reception at Government House.

Speaker: The President introduced Brad Williams as an archaeologist of wide training and experience. He was manager of the Southern Midlands' Council Heritage project, and this evening would speak on that subject.

Mr Williams first referred to the district's history since settlement began around 1820. Farming had long been the chief industry, but in recent years that had ebbed, and it became increasingly evident that the future of the place lay in its past—that is, in the presentation of heritage, and so enhance tourism. There indeed was a wealth of remains, Oatlands perhaps unequalled in the southern hemisphere for the number and variety of pre-1850 structures. The Southern Midlands Council attended to this responsibility partly in discharge of statutory requirements, but also through its own initiative, albeit with the aid of funding from State and federal governments. Tonight's talk would concentrate on the second category. The Council had proved remarkably pro-active, working to a five-year strategic plan. It posited logical processes to realistic goals, and achievements were ahead of schedule

Flagship in the story was Callington Mill, built in 1837. With steam soon supplementing wind power, the mill worked until about 1890. Then it fell into decay. Various remedial moves culminated with a master plan in 2007, major work beginning in February 2010. The task posed many problems, but these were overcome and in recent months the sails had gone into place, grinding wheat into flour for which demand exceeds supply. Investigation proceeded into ancillary remains, notably the engine-house. Another highly important site was the Oatlands Gaol, built to JL Archer's design in the mid-1830s, with capacity for 200 men and 70 women. When its use ended in 1936, inmates numbered two. Much demolition then took place, but with plentiful remnants for archaeology to explore. Likewise, the building of a municipal swimming pool in the gaol yards in 1954 had not been altogether destructive. The gaoler's residence had been largely restored, and other work foreshadowed in a master plan of 2009 largely completed. The still older Court House was in remarkably good condition overall: in the judges' chamber there had been found eighteen layers of wallpaper, fragments of the original being on display. The Supreme Court sat here from 1841 to 1883; it was intended to develop a museum on site. A wider-ranging project embraced the town's whole military precinct, including barracks, probation stations, workshops, and so on. These, with the Court House and Gaol signified Oatlands' role as 'the interior capital of Van Diemen's Land'. A self-guided tour was being planned, so as to assist tourists' understanding.

While Oatlands dominates this story, work had begun and would continue at other sites—for example, the watch-house at Kempton, and probation stations at Jericho and Lovely Banks. The project sought further outreach by offering courses in trade skills, and through co-operation with a variety of local groups. Volunteer assistance had been crucial in all achieved so far. The Council had established a business -- 'Heritage Buildings Solutions'-- which was succeeding financially and otherwise. Governmental agencies of significance included Arts Tasmania and Heritage Tasmania. There was every intent to build on past achievement into the future.

After questions, the President thanked Mr Williams, and the meeting closed at 9:10pm.

Michael Roe, for Secretary

Caroline Homer, President

