



LAUNCESTON BRANCH NEWSLETTER

Library

Hours:

Tuesday

10am–3pm

Monday - Thursday:
By appointment



Annual General Meeting

Thursday

27th April

7pm

**At the
Harry Abbott
Scout Hall**

St Georges Square



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From the Library:

The Launceston Branch Annual General Meeting will be held Thursday 27th April, 7pm at the Harry Abbott Scout Hall, St George's Square.

Guest speaker will be Roger Vere McNeice OAM FRNS whose topic will be 'Money in Colonial Times' – tokens, coins, etc.

"Roger Vere McNeice OAM FRNS is an Australian numismatist historian, and coin collector. He is also a *token and medal designer*.

McNeice was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 1984 "to study developments in the conservation and preservation of coins and medals." He was awarded a National Medal in 1984, and a Medal of the Order of Australia in 1996.

McNeice founded the Tasmanian Numismatic Society and has served a Honary Curator of Numismatics at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery."

From Wikipedia – https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roger_McNeice.

At the Annual General Meeting all positions will be declared vacant. The President and the Vice President are available for re-election. The Secretary and Treasurer are not available for re-election and a number of new Committee members are required.

Consider accepting nomination for any of these positions.

Nominations forms will be available at The Stables, or contact the Secretary for a copy.



Volunteers are always welcome to do duty at our Branch Library. Come along any Tuesday (10am-3pm) to see how the library works, you may like to be trained to work on the desk as a "Duty Officer".



Current Membership expires on the 31st March 2017. Renewal reminders will be issued with the March edition of *Tasmanian Ancestry*. If you haven't already done so, early renewal of your Membership is appreciated so that you don't miss out on early delivery of your June *Tasmanian Ancestry*.

Strange Characters in the City's Memory

A century ago when the people of Launceston lived in small cottages hugging the uneven streets, the clanging of the bellman, with his familiar cry would bring heads popping out of doorways and children running.

The bellman was one of the best known of the townsfolk, for he brought news as well as proclamations. This office was held for many years by James Cooper, popularly known as Chequers, who had been a rascal, but ended his days in piety.

In stature he was under medium height and in habits filthy, yet when arrayed in his official livery — a red coat much too large for him, trousers turned up about six inches, with a broad-brim white hat and a huge bell under his arm, he was as proud as a peacock.

Last Minute Reprieve

Chequers rather exulted in his early offences against the law. He had suffered hundreds of lashes and more than once had been sentenced to death, but the sentence had been commuted. On one occasion his reprieve arrived when he was on the gallows.

At the close of his life, however, he was a changed man. He preached in the streets and in season and out in his own rude way, urged the duty of repentance.

John Woodcock, who was known a Pegleg, because he had a wooden leg, was a notorious character who was the terror of his neighbourhood when drunk as he frequently was. Even the police feared him, for if he had no other weapon to defend himself he would unscrew his wooden leg and lay about him with it. Sometimes four constables had their hands full to take him into custody.

When, through age and infirmity, he was incapable of earning a living, he became an inmate of the Invalid Depot that existed in what is now Royal Park and there he became gentle and devout, trusted and respected by all in the establishment.

When he died he was buried in Charles Street General Cemetery where a memorial stone, the gift of one who had known him in both conditions, recorded that "John Woodcock died July 2, 1889. I was lost, but Jesus found me. Is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?"

An old market gardener who lived at Invermay was very eccentric in his habits. He determined most of his actions by tossing a coin and had been known to adopt this procedure in church when the offertory was being taken up.

Popular and widely known was Major Wellman, a tall Irishman of soldierly bearing who had fought under Wellington and had been promoted from the ranks for distinguished bravery. He was noted for never spending money if he could get what he wanted without it. Constantly walking the streets, his appearance was the signal for good-humoured banter, in which he usually scored.

A story is told of him that illustrates his wit. On the western side of Charles Street, a few yards south of Paterson Street, was a store kept by Mr James Lilley. The building stood 12 or 13 feet back from the street and in front of it were his wares, including on this morning an open firkin of red herrings, several of which were laid out on a board.

Major Wellman was passing when the herrings caught his eye.

"What might these be?" asked the Major, with affected simplicity.

"Oh, they're what we call soldiers," replied Mr Lilley, hoping to take a rise out of the Major.

"Indade," said Major Wellman gravely. "Sure thin, I'll arrist the lot as desarters" and he walked away with the fish.

Hawker's Wares

Lal -----, a hawker, was often to be seen in Launceston streets with his goods stowed away in the capacious pockets of a huge shooting coat and more delicate articles displayed on a tray suspended from his shoulders by a leather strap. He had been a tailor, but cried, "Hubble-bubble, toil and trouble; anything to-day?" At open air amusements he confined his trade to smokers, whom he invited to indulge in a "Young Queen cigar and a light for threepence."

Many residents of Launceston will remember Edward Ackerman, who for many years had a museum of oddities at the corner of Charles and Cameron streets. Anything from a needle to an anchor could be found there, as well as a lending library, roundabout for the children, public baths and quasi-scientific contrivances which were to immortalise his name, but failed.

Then Mr Ackerman had a floating bath at the Cataract and a gridiron at the Russian's Wharf, on which small craft could be repaired. These two appliances had been converted out of an old English trading barque, the *Earl of Dalhousie*. All these and other harmless eccentricities procured for Edward Ackerman a celebrity that extended beyond Tasmania.

The Examiner Thursday, 12 March, 1942. p4.

DNA Workshop

As the registrations for the DNA Workshop with Ros Escott to be held in early March, 2017 at the Launceston Branch are **fully booked**, it was decided to have a DNA Discussion Circle on **Wednesday 21 June** at 2pm to help members who are considering using DNA testing as a tool in their research.

If any members are interested in this Discussion Circle would they please register their interest by coming into the Branch Library or contacting us by email at Intasfh@bigpond.com to enable us to make arrangements for this meeting.

The Society Annual General Meeting and Conference will be held **Saturday 17th June**, hosted by Burnie Branch. See the March edition of the *Tasmanian Ancestry* for a registration form.

Conference programme Saturday – registration from 9.45am followed by morning tea.

Cost: \$20.00 each – morning tea and lunch.

- 10.30 Welcome and presentation of 'Early Bird' Prize
- 10.45 **Dennis Turner** – Early Mining on the West Coast of Tasmania
- 11.30 **Doug Elms** – Genealogy Software – How can it assist you.
- 12.15 Lunch
- 1.15 **Craig Broadfield** – For Love or Money, Family Antique appraisals
- 2.00 **Society AGM**, inc. Lilian Watson Family History Award, and Tasmanian Family History Society Inc. Awards.

- 6.30 **Dinner at the Penguin Surf Club** – after dinner speaker will be Dale Elphinstone, of Elphinstone Engineering – 'Burnie as a Manufacturing Town'. **Cost:** \$30.00.

Sunday: 10am -3pm. **Workshop by Doug Elms** (lunch included) – getting the best out of *Family Tree Maker*. Venue: Burnie Branch Library, 58 Bass Highway Cooe. **Cost:** \$20.00.

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**Family Reunions:** Members wishing to advertise a Family Reunion in the *Tasmanian Ancestry* can advertise free – quarter of a page. Non Members – usual advertising rate.

### Newsletter articles – always welcome!

Have you made any interesting family history discoveries recently?  
An article (about 500 words) on your discovery, or any other family history topic, would be a welcome addition to the Newsletter.

Come to the Library and tell us about your ideas.



## **British Interest Group**



**Meetings on the 1st Wednesday of the month  
Meeting Room 2 on 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor of the LINC building, Civic Square  
from 2:00 to 4:00.**

We are a small group of enthusiastic members of the Tasmanian Family History Society Inc., Launceston Branch, with an interest in anything associated with researching in Britain. The meetings are generally of an informal nature, designed to enable the discussion of either a specific subject, current problems being encountered, or more usually, both.

New members and guests are always welcome, so if you are researching British ancestors and their families, why not come along and join us?

The topic for the February meeting was "Probate & Wills", although we did go on a few side-tracks into other areas in our usual way! Below is some basic research information related to the subject.

### **PCC Wills 1384-1858 at National Archives** – <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk>

Prerogative Court of Canterbury Wills in series **PROB 11** made between 1384 and 12 January 1858  
<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/wills-1384-1858>  
PDF copies of Wills may be purchased on-line for £3.45 (Aus\$ 5.75). Available free-of charge, via Ancestry as part of a subscription package, or at the Family History library at Tamar Street.

**After 1858** .... <https://www.gov.uk/search-will-probate> A free search here will take you to the relevant Probate Calendar entry. You can then order a copy of the Will for £10.00 (Aus\$ 16.65). Though this is also a useful site even if you just want to know when a relative might have died. Probate Calendars are also available to search at Ancestry, though these are limited to 1858-1966; 1973-1995. The site also includes "Soldiers' Wills" – the Wills of soldiers who died on active service. Often these were hastily written notes while fighting at the Front and are basic by their very nature, but quite poignant to see the actual writing in these circumstances.

### **Prerogative & Exchequer Courts Of York Probate Index, 1688-1858**

Available to search at Find my Past with a subscription

**Scotlands People** - <https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk> - have the Scottish Wills, though you need to buy credits to access them. A useful guide is also available at this site:-  
<https://www.scotlandspeople.gov.uk/guides/wills-and-testaments>

**Irish Wills**, or the probate indexes seem to be available from the following sources .....

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1921305>

<http://search.ancestry.com.au/search/db.aspx?dbid=7287>

**Note:** Don't be confused or surprised by finding a Will proven at "Llandudno" during the years 1939-1946, even though your family member was from elsewhere. The probate offices were moved to Wales during the war years for reasons of safety and all documents were "proved" from there during that time.

*Irene Taylor*

### **Topics for next meetings**

|                     |                                                                |
|---------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| Wednesday 1st March | Deaths & Burials                                               |
| Wednesday 5th April | Backing-up of your family history information in whatever form |
| Wednesday 3rd May   | Births & Baptisms                                              |