



# CHANNEL Museum



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Museum – Research Room – Gallery – Camera Collection - Café

## Annual General Meeting

**Wednesday 12th June 2024 1:30 pm in the Museum Library**

All welcome, afternoon tea to follow

## President's report

Frosty mornings and cooler days herald the beginnings of Winter. It is tempting to huddle up in front of a fire to keep cosy and warm but alas progress continues.

The BIG NEWS is that works on the new storage shed have begun – at last! We have been preparing for this for a couple of years with delays due to permit applications and approvals, lack of tradies and dare I say, “red tape”. Expected completion will be the end of July, after which our team will be kept busy with relocating and sorting items for storage. This in turn will free up much needed space for other projects and room to move.

Our AGM is just around the corner (Wednesday June 12<sup>th</sup> at 1.30pm) reminding us that another year has gone by. All positions are open, and we encourage ALL members and volunteers to nominate. This is a great opportunity to become more involved with the running of the museum and have your say. Please consider joining us to assist in the progress of our little treasure in Margate.

The Night at The Museum (held every second Wednesday of the month) continues to draw a full house with interesting and varied topics. Wherever possible our temporary exhibition display coincides with our subject of that month.

Our promotions team continues to raise awareness of our activities and maintain connections with our promoters. Well done team!!

Our school group guides have been kept on their toes with the many eager students asking hundreds of questions and sharing their own family stories – some are very entertaining. For example: chamber pot/gasunder – what is it and what is it used for? Answers include water, dog bowl, soup, vomit, tea, amongst others. How childrens' minds work!! It is such a pleasure to see such enthusiasm and interest in our history from our youngsters.

We have recently begun a partnership with the Children's University with a program they run for students who participate in extra educational activities outside of school hours. After they reach a certain number of hours, they are eligible to receive a certificate at a graduation ceremony at the University.

We were fortunate to be offered space at the Huonville Hub and Art Box display in April. This proved very popular and was another avenue to promote the Channel Museum.

Finally, I would like to thank all Committee members for your support and hard work and to all our wonderful volunteers for your time, ideas, and enthusiasm.

Stay warm, happy and healthy.

Judi Castle  
President

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# Introducing Michele Mason

I grew up in Woodbridge where my father operated the general store, one of three stores that my grandfather had established in the Lower Channel. The other stores in Middleton and Gordon were destroyed in the 1967 Bushfires. In addition to the Woodbridge store, my father operated a freighting business.

When I retired from my job within the Tasmanian Public Service, I used my experience in research to explore my family's history as well as the history of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. And like all research, each bit you do provides clues for where to look for further information.



*Mason's store in Woodbridge in the 1990s*

It therefore feels like an ideal fit to have become a volunteer at the Channel Museum, focussing on the library and research areas.

Over the years, I have collected information and objects from family members to build on my knowledge about my ancestral background. And with more information available online, I have been able to explore much further than I could have imagined. Being able to access contemporary reports from newspapers through *Trove* is wonderful. But I have also found searching the Historic Title Deeds that are available on the LIST database a bit of a game-changer in unlocking various changes in family circumstances.

My interest has largely been to explore the social history aspects and how life experience and environmental circumstances had impacted on my family. Names and dates are important, but so are the experiences of those ancestors that impacted on their lives, as well as the people they married and the places they lived.

The convict experience is a case in point. For each convict, being transported was a major change in their lives as they were removed from family, friends and country, with virtually no prospects of returning. However, it is also clear that many former convicts were able to achieve more in their new environment than if they had remained in the UK or Ireland.

I haven't done a head count, but if I did, I suspect I would find that the majority of my family ancestors in Australia arrived as convicts, some of whom were part of the First, Second and Third Fleets. On my mother's side, my first ancestor in Tasmania was George Mundy (or Munday) who arrived aboard the convict ship *Calcutta* in 1804. His family later settled in Cygnet.

Other convict arrivals followed, including Samuel Free, who arrived in Tasmania in 1808 from Norfolk Island with his family as a ticket-of-leave settler. As for the family name, Joseph Mason arrived aboard the convict ship *John* in 1831. He married Eliza Davie in 1849 and they settled in Woodbridge, or Peppermint Bay as it was then named, in 1850. Eliza's father was a former Superintendent of convicts who settled in Woodbridge where he had bought land. Since that time, there have been members of the Mason family living in the Woodbridge, Birchs Bay, Flowerpot, Middleton and Kettering areas.

I have set myself the task of documenting the history of my particular branch of the Mason family line in the Channel. However, actually writing that history is proving to be a challenge as each new bit of research reveals details that I hadn't been aware of, or enhances my understanding of events. Like many an amateur historian, knowing where to start and when to stop is not easy.

However, I am definitely in the right place to get inspired. Not only is the Museum a wonderful source of information about the Channel, but the people I have met, both fellow volunteers or visitors, provide the encouragement I need, not to mention their knowledge.

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# Carol's search

by Mike Avery

This is the story of Carol Whayman's search for her biological grandparents.

Carol is the daughter of Wally Groombridge (long time Margate resident and character) and Lola Salvo.

Carol's mother Lola was born on 8 December 1913 at 11 Kelly Street, Battery Point (believed to be a boarding house run by the Burles family). Her birth was registered in the name of Leola May Blyth. Her mother's name was given as May Blyth from Victoria, aged 25.

We don't know how or why May found her way to 11 Kelly Street. She gave birth to her baby and returned to Victoria, leaving the baby behind to be raised by Blanche Burles and her husband, Salvatore Inquarez (more often known as Monte Salvo). There was no formal adoption. We don't know whether this was prearranged, or whether it 'just happened'. With hindsight, we know that May was not married at the time.

Blanche died when Lola was about 12 years old, leaving Lola to be raised by Monte with a lot of help from the broader Burles family. Monte himself passed away when Lola was in her early 20s.

Lola knew that Blanche and Monte weren't her birth parents, and when she later applied for a passport gave her mother's name as May Blight, which turned out to be a critical factor in our search. Lola never asked many questions, and by the time she thought to ask them, Blanche and Monte had already passed away. However, she did pick up bits and pieces of information. She was told that her mother 'gave her away' as she wasn't yet ready to be parent. She also overheard a conversation where it was mentioned that "Lola's father is coming over from Melbourne tomorrow". Lola was left with the impression that her father may have been one of Blanche's brothers.

Since she was 12 years old, Carol has wondered about her biological grandparents, and made a couple of attempts to try and track them down. But she put it all aside after the tragic death of her son Matt in a motor vehicle accident, caused by the negligence of another driver, in the 1990s.

Late last year (2023) I was doing some research on Salvatore Inquarez, as he was a one-time licensee of the Silver Crown Hotel at Margate. I knew of his connection to Carol, so we arranged to meet for a chat and a coffee. Carol was a big help in filling in some of our gaps in knowledge, and a copy of Monte's story is now in the Museum library. During the chat she mentioned the mystery surrounding her Mum's birth. So, we embarked on another search to try and find Lola's biological parents.

We started by doing some of the more obvious things, like trying to find a birth record for May Blyth, and checking for any relevant newspaper reports. We found options and possibilities, but nothing definitive. And, as it turned out, none of these possibilities were right. We then had a very close look at the Burles family to see whether any of Blanche's brothers lived in Victoria. And there was one, Richard, so he became the focus of attention as a possible father.

The Burles' story is a colourful one, but that will be saved for another day.

After doing everything we could think of using traditional research methods, we decided to try DNA testing. Carol is still in touch with members of the Burles family and one of them agreed to also be tested, to see if we could prove or disprove a Burles' connection.

So, DNA tests were acquired from Ancestry, test tubes filled with saliva, and sent back for testing.

DNA tests can be conclusive, but to be useful in this situation, you need some luck. It requires other close relatives of Carol's biological grandparents to have also had their DNA tested through Ancestry. Carol nominated me as co-manager of her DNA test as I already had an Ancestry account and had access to additional tools and resources.

About 3 weeks after doing the test, we got the results. I had said to Carol that it could still be like trying to find a needle in a haystack, but, as it turns out, it was more like finding an elephant sitting on a bale of hay. We knew who Lola's biological mother was, with certainty, within 30 seconds - literally.

Carol's two closest DNA matches were on her Mum's side, and one of those was a 15% match, meaning that the other person was most likely her first cousin. Using tools provided by Ancestry we were able to look at this person's family tree, and see that his grandmother was Maie Blight - one of the names we were looking for.

It took a few more days to find Lola's biological father with some degree of certainty. And it was not a Burles. In November 1914, Maie Blight married Arthur William Gibson. A 15% match is a close match, and more indicative of a full first cousin, as opposed to a half full cousin.

(cont. p.4)

So, we decided to work on the assumption that Arthur may have been Lola's biological father. What we did next was to develop a family tree based on this assumption, and link it to Carol's DNA results. This was not difficult as we had access to the family tree that had already been put together by other members of Arthur's family. This was very enlightening. We found about 15 DNA matches that linked directly back to Arthur's ancestors. There is absolutely no doubt that Carol is biologically connected to Arthur Gibson.

So, thanks to DNA we know Lola's biological parents: Arthur William Gibson and Maie Blight. Arthur and Maie lived in central Victoria - in places like Murtoa, Nhill and Horsham. They have never lived in Tasmania.



**Arthur Gibson (Lola's father, Carol's grandfather) is top row, far right. Maie Gibson (nee Blight) is bottom row, third from the right). Lola's brother Des sits to the right of Maie.**

(Photo is courtesy of Horsham Historical Society).

There are still many unknowns, including the reasons for Lola being given away, and how Maie found herself giving birth at 11 Kelly Street, Battery Point. Perhaps the timing of Lola's birth is relevant, as it wasn't that long before the start of World War 1. One of the things that surprised us in our search was discovering that Maie was 25 years old when she gave birth to Lola. We were expecting someone younger.

It's very unlikely that we will ever find answers to these questions. Our only really chance is if Maie told her story to her children or grandchildren, and that does not appear to have been the case. We have been in touch with the first cousin, and his daughter (also a close DNA match to Carol).

The daughter has responded and there has been some ongoing email communication. She is trying to encourage her Aunt Cheryl to get in touch with Carol, and share whatever information she has - if any.

Did Blanche and Monte know Maie and Arthur? We doubt it, and we doubt whether Maie or Arthur ever saw Lola again after she was handed over. One loose end is Lola's overheard conversation that "Lola's father is coming over from Melbourne tomorrow". The most likely explanation is that Lola misheard the comment. Richard Burles (who lived in Melbourne) had a daughter, Agnes Lillian, better known as Lily. Most likely, it was Lily's father coming over from Melbourne.

Arguably the real heroes of this story are Blanche and Monte - for 'adopting' Lola and giving her a good start in life. Lola was loved and supported and provided with a good education at a private school. And it is also clear that the Burles family were close knit and stepped in to help when Blanche passed away. Lola was living with Monte when he was licensee at the Silver Crown Hotel at Margate, and this is where she met Wally Groombridge. Lola and Wally spent their married life at Margate.

Carol considers Blanche and Monte to be her family. But she is glad to have discovered her biological grandparents. And she is very appreciative of the help and support provided with her search.

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## Tasmania's top footballers — Mike Avery

A special edition of the AFL Football Record was recently released to celebrate the launch of the Tasmania Football Club. Included is a list of Tasmania's top 25 footballers (ever). It includes two men who played for Margate - John Leedham at number 11, and Murray Steele (Margate born and bred) at number 25. That's not a bad achievement for a small country town. Some of Murray's football memorabilia, including his William Leitch Medal, are on display in the sports section in the Museum.

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# Temporary exhibitions

## Women's Objects Channel Museum March 2024

Our temporary exhibition for March was the 'Channel Museum's Collection of Women's Objects', an exhibition showcasing female domestic and personal items donated and used by local Channel residents. Each piece tells a story of femininity, style, and practicality throughout the 1900s.



## Shot Tower history Julia Russell April 8– April 30 2024

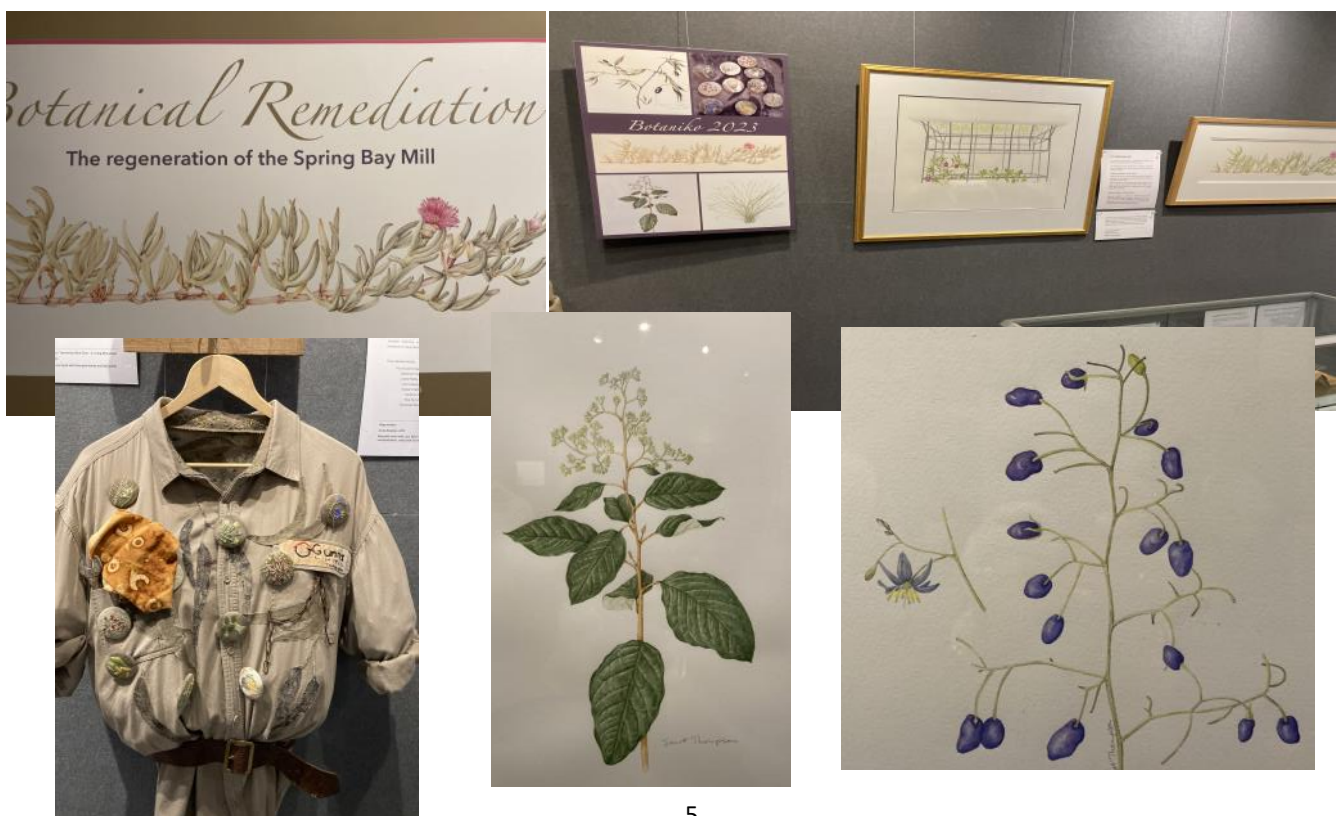
The exhibition showcased various objects and panels related to the Shot Tower in Taroona, offering insights into its history and significance.

## Botanical Remediation: The Regeneration of the Spring Bay Mill May 2024

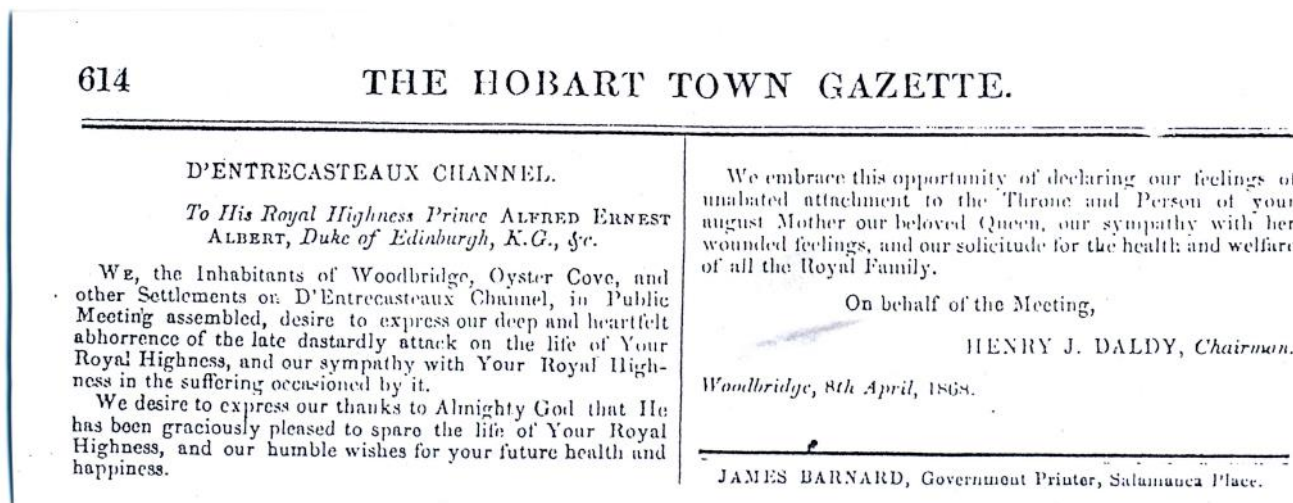
Our temporary exhibition for May was *Botanical Remediation: The Regeneration of the Spring Bay Mill* by the Botaniko art group.

In the 1970s, the site at Freestone Point near Triabunna was known as Gunn's Triabunna Woodchip Mill, home of the world's largest woodchip mill with a licence to export 600,000 tons of woodchips per year. Today, it is the calm and transformed site known as the Spring Bay Mill – a site rich in endemic and introduced flora, some with a story to tell. The transformation is thanks to philanthropist Graeme Wood, who purchased the Mill in 2011 and up-cycled the industrial infrastructure into state-of-the-art indoor and outdoor spaces. The site's contaminated areas have been managed and remediated, offering surprising landscaped zones. The repurposed Mill was officially opened by Her Excellency the Honourable Barbara Baker AC, Governor of Tasmania, in June 2022.

Botaniko, a group of Tasmanian botanical artists, was offered the opportunity to access the site during 2023 to illustrate a selection of botanical specimens, some new and others reintroduced. This exhibition embraces the Mill's floral regeneration.



Michele has been delving into the vast amount of information which is not indexed yet and is housed in the filing cabinets in the Library. She came across this gem recently, from 1868:



Here is Michele's explanation:

The pictured notice from an 1868 edition of the Hobart Town Gazette was found among a collection of papers in the Museum recently.

Initially, it was the wording of the notice that caught my eye. It's not often that you read an official notice expressing "deep and heartfelt abhorrence" for a "dastardly attack" on anyone, let alone a son of the reigning monarch, Queen Victoria.

A little bit of research found that the message of thanks from the "Inhabitants of Woodbridge" referred to the visit to Australia by Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh in 1868. The Prince's trip took in visits to Adelaide, Melbourne, Hobart, Brisbane and Sydney. His visit represented the first to Australia by a member of the Royal Family.

During this visit, an assassination attempt was made on Prince Alfred's life by Henry James O'Farrell in Sydney on 12 March 1868. A shot was fired at close range by O'Farrell, striking the Prince and inflicting a slight wound. The Prince recovered completely and left Australia to sail back to the UK in early April.

The incident led to considerable outrage throughout Australia. Notices such as the one illustrated were issued by other communities in Tasmania, as well as throughout Australia. There was also much anti-Irish feeling, as O'Farrell was Irish. The New South Wales government quickly passed the *Treason Felony Act* a few days after the incident. O'Farrell was convicted of attempted murder and hanged on 21 April 1868 at Darlinghurst Gaol.

On 23 March 1868, the most influential people of Sydney voted for a memorial building to be erected, "to raise a permanent and substantial monument in testimony of the heartfelt gratitude of the community at the recovery of HRH". This led to a public subscription which paid for the construction of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

Which just goes to show that one small piece of paper can reveal so much.

**Note: The Research and History Group will be meeting on Thursdays from June 2024, to enable more participants to attend. The meetings are on the fourth Thursday in the month at 1:30pm in the Library—all welcome.**

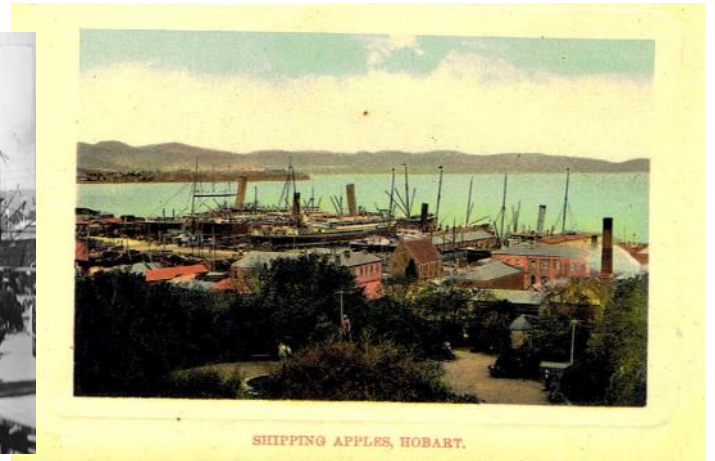
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## Library News

The Library organizes many digital photographs. Here's just a few relating to apple growing in the Channel.

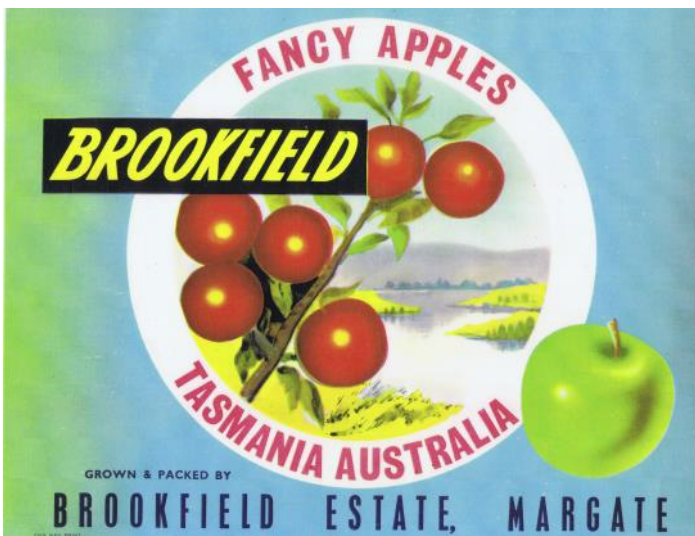


*Barrett Bros orchard, Van Morey Road Margate*



SHIPPING APPLES, HOBART.

*Shipping apples in Hobart*



*Brookfield apple label*



*Apples at Meredith's after the bushfires*

## Recent booklets

We've added to the Channel Museum booklets. Recent very interesting titles are:

History of pubs in Tasmania by Mike Avery.

Convicts coachmen and pirates : family tree stories part 1 by Mike Avery

and

Convicts in the Channel by David Tulip.

They are available in the Library in the serials at SER 994.62 CHA, or for sale at Museum reception for \$5 each.

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### Office Bearers 2023-2024

President:	Judi Castle
Vice President:	Mike Jackson
Secretary:	Andrew Tomes
Treasurer:	Sarah Jackson
Co-Curators:	Lara Colrain and Ekaterina Lukina

### Committee Members 2023-2024

Andrew Wadsley	Michele Mason
Jenny Morgan	Helen Wadsley
David Tulip	

### Appointments

Auditor:	TBC
Public Officer:	Mike Jackson
Newsletter editor:	Di Worth
IT Manager	Col Hocking
Kingborough Council Representative	Cr Aldo Antolli

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