BOOK LAUNCH OF BENEATH THE MOUNTAIN:
A HISTORY OF SOUTH HOBART
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR THE HONOURABLE
KATE WARNER AM, GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
CASCADE VISITORS’ CENTRE
TUESDAY 8th SEPTEMBER 2015

It is a great pleasure to be invited to launch Beneath the Mountain: a History of South Hobart, written by Alison Alexander, designed by Julie Hawkins and commissioned by the South Hobart Progress Association. There are three reasons why I am very pleased to be invited to do this launch. The first is I was brought up in South Hobart and spent my first 22 years there. It was a wonderful place for my brothers and I to grow up. We lived at 332 Davey Street and I was lucky to be surrounded by girls my own age, the Millar girls down the lane at 334, Susan Warlow Davies next door at Holebrook, Janet Thompson around the corner at No 7 D’Arcy Street and Pip Wilson up the road at 345 Davey Street. There were boys too of course, but I did not take too much notice of them until my mid-teens.

We were allowed a lot of freedom. Roller-skates and billycarts were popular. I left a large amount of skin on the surrounding streets and tore many pairs of trousers – skating from the Wentworth St corner ... and in numerous billycart crashes. Washington Street, the scariest street for billycarts we called Death Street. Thank goodness, we did not try Lynton Avenue! The Rec as we called it, the South Hobart Recreation Ground, was also a good spot to roller-skate. We were intrigued by the bodgies and widgies and the colourful language in the graffiti was very educational!

Tree climbing was also a favourite activity particularly in the big pine tree at the Monfries at the Priory at 328 and the Wilsons at 345. Tree climbing, in my case, meant more torn clothes – and one badly cut leg when I fell out of a an oak tree and caught my leg on the barbed wire fence below ...

The second reason for being so pleased to launch this book is that it is written by Dr Alison Alexander. Alison has made an amazing
contribution to Tasmanian history by accepting commissions to document the history of Tasmanian institutions and she has close to thirty published works. Her publications include written biographies including the recent *The Ambitions of Jane Franklin: Victorian lady adventurer* for which she won the National Biography award last year. I very much enjoyed this biography and like the fact that Alison forms a personal view about Lady Franklin which she shares! This whetted my appetite for more and I am now reading *Obliged to Submit: Wives and mistresses of colonial governors*, an intriguing story of the women in the lives of the colonial governors. Our first two Lieutenant-Governors Bowen and Collins had mistresses – in fact Collins had a succession of three as well as a wife and his last mistress was just 15 when she went to live with him at Government House.

And the third reason for relishing this book launch opportunity is that I love *Beneath the Mountain*! It is both extremely readable from end to end and fascinating to dip into. I loved reading about the old houses in Davey Street, or Holebrook Place as Davey Street was called beyond Antill Street. 332, our house on the south side of Davey Street, and its pair on the other side of a lane, were built by the Lewis/Hungerford Family in the nineteen twenties or thirties on land, in the Arts and Crafts style with leadlight windows. The land must have been subdivided from *Holebrook* or the *Priory*.

I was intrigued to read that *Holebrook* was built in 1846 by Valentine Fleming, an English lawyer who became Chief Justice in 1854 and later it was home to Lambert Dobson, another Chief Justice.1 When I was a child, *Holebrook* was owned by the Mather family, who owned Andrew Mather & Co, a clothes store in Liverpool Street. They were keen gardeners and had a beautifully maintained garden with a seductive mulberry tree which was easily accessed from the fence in the lane.

*The Priory* was built in the 1830s by another lawyer, Hugh Ross, and later had a second story added by a pharmacist, Hinsby.2 In my

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1 *Beneath the Mountain*, 48, 124.
2 *Beneath the Mountain*, 46-47.
childhood, *The Priory* was owned by the Monfries family, an elderly couple and their rather eccentric daughter, Nell. Nell loved children and welcomed the neighbours’ children to the house, climbed trees with us (she was in her fifties) and took us bushwalking on the mountain. We played in *The Priory* paddocks which in those days ran down to the creek at the bottom of Lynton Avenue.

Directly opposite us on the north side of Davey Street were the conjoined houses *Fernleigh* and *Ferndene*, built between 1844-48 and which also feature in the book.³ In my childhood, *Fernleigh* was occupied by Dr Terry Horne and has family and later by the Vincent family and their six children. *Ferndene* was divided into flats; Dr John Freeman’s parents lived there for a time, his mother was Billy McMahon’s sister.

Other houses featured in the book that I visited as a child include a number in Elboden Street:

- *Aldridge Lodge*, where Miss Allport lived with lots of cats and silkworms – the book tells me it had been an Allport house since 1840. Miss Allport was memorable for many other reasons.
- *Bellona*, formerly Rouseville,⁴ the beautiful Henry Hunter house on the corner of Elboden and Davey Street, built in 1866, which I visited from 1950s until the 1970s whilst Joy Chapman, an aunt of my school-friend Nicky Chapman, lived there. I can well remember marvelling at the original condition of the house.
- *Elboden*: on the far corner of Elboden Street. I was intrigued to read that Henry Dobson and his wife Emily commissioned it in 1874. He was later to become Premier and a Senator. Emily lived there until she died in 1934, aged 91.⁵ When I was a child, it was still a Dobson house, and Miss Gladys Dobson and

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³ *Beneath the Mountain*, 49.
⁴ *Beneath Mountain*, 123
⁵ *Beneath the Mountain*, 123.
her mother ran a Sunday school at Elboden that I attended when I was very small.

And of course there are the shops: Mr Steven’s pharmacy on the corner of Elboden and Macquarie Street – I remember that he lived upstairs and made up his own potions and creams – even hair shampoo to order; Lipscombe’s Grocery Shop on the other corner (now the Salad Bowl); Williams Newsagency where we were allowed to read the comics for 10 minutes or so without buying them; and Long’s grocery shop opposite. The book recounts the history of all of these buildings and businesses. The photographs of what is for me Long’s grocery shop, still a shop today and one that is visibly the same as it was when Irish convict, Richard Shirley set it up as Kilkenny House.6

I was also interested in discovering more about the Kindergarten I attended in Angelsea Street in 1952, when I was just three and a half and four. The Kindergarten, I discover, was opened in 1914 by the Hobart Free Kindergarten Association. The book has pictures of children attending there from the 1920s until it closed in the mid-1950s and merged with the Macquarie Street School.7 I can remember the two-storey timber building. I can well understand that, with its pine lining and lack of exits, it was a fire risk. Nevertheless, it was a quaint building and it is sad that it was demolished.

An early memory is walking home from Kindergarten and looking through the hand-hole of a wooden gate in the house on the corner of Macquarie and Angelsea Street, which is now the doctor’s surgery with the mural (see picture on page 265). A dog jumped up and bit my little nose. I must have screamed loudly because I have a vivid memory of a woman coming out with a basin of Dettol and water to sponge away the blood. Whilst this building was a residence in 1952 when my nose was bitten, Beneath the Mountain tells me it has an interesting history. It started life as a pub – it was the Mountain

6 Beneath the Mountain, 69.
7 Beneath the Mountain, 185, 227.
Retreat in 1861 and remained a pub until its licence lapsed in 1918. It then became a grocery and a bootmakers. In 1979 Dr Freddie von Schmidt set up his medical practice in the building.

The amusing story of the brothel in the flat upstairs from the surgery is an example of the intriguing little anecdotes that are scattered though the book. It’s a wonderful compilation of historical sources and photographs supplemented with oral history. It’s a treasure. I would like to congratulate the South Hobart Progress Association, Alison Alexander and all associated with its production and I declare the book launched.

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8 *Beneath the Mountain*, 118, 158.
9 *Beneath the Mountain*, 289.
10 *Beneath Mountain*, 273.