

TERROR AUSTRALIS READERS AND WRITERS FESTIVAL 2022
SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
HUONVILLE, SUNDAY 2 OCTOBER 2022

Many thanks [LJ (LJM Owen) for introducing HE].

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community and recognise their continued connection to land, sea, and culture. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I commit to a future that listens to and respects Aboriginal stories, culture and history.

May I acknowledge among us:

- Festival founder and organiser LJM Owen, and her hardworking colleagues
- Aunty Julie Dunlop, co-founder of SETAC
- Sue McKerracher, Executive Director, Libraries Tasmania
- David Edgar, Program Manager, Events Tasmania
- Festival presenters, including the wonderful interstate cohort, some of whom were at the inaugural Cygnet Festival, and
- those who have done so much for this festival, including Marion Stoneman, Jacq Ellem and Jony Berry.

As a book club member myself, I am delighted to open this festival, Australia's southern-most literary festival. It is also delightful to be here in person. It is a relief to resume events that were sidelined by Covid.

There is something special about decamping to an island to conduct business or pleasure! We know that a feature of events hosted in Tasmania is the add-on of exploring parts of our beautiful and pristine island state.

Certainly, there is a little of that add-on in this year's Terror Australis Festival theme, "A Century of Mystery", taking its cue from Agatha Christie's visit to Tasmania one hundred years ago, in 1922. Following that visit, she expressed a desire to return here to live. She was here in the first week of May, accompanying her husband who viewed the "Made in Tasmania Exhibition" at the Hobart City Hall.

He was seeking selections for the upcoming British Empire Exhibition at Wembley Park, London, held in 1924.

This year's Festival sub-theme, if we can call it that, is, I quote: "a celebration of books, writing and community in the glorious Huon Valley, Tasmania."¹ These are very good reasons to be here today and to look forward to this month-long Festival.

Referring back to author, Agatha Christie, some research was done using the wonderful *Trove* newspapers, to see if any historical references to writers living in or near Huonville could be found.

The research, which was a little cursory, was in vain. As I am sure you know, searching digitised old newsprint can lead to inadvertent inaccuracies. But the search did provide some amusement, which I'll relate.

For example, keying in the search term "Huonville author" uncovered a dispute between two local football teams with the matter being investigated by, quote "the Huonville authorities".

That search term – "Huonville author" – then led to the sale of a Pontiac car through a, quote, "Huonville Authorised Dealer".

The next search term "Huonville writer" brought up dozens of phrases along the lines of "our Huonville correspondent writes ..."

The third search term "Huonville book" revealed numerous references to the "Huonville booking office".

Finally, thinking it might be better to use the search term "Huonville poet", as after all, "poet" is a very distinct term. But no. Thanks to smudged 1925 newsprint, the search brought up, quote, "A matter needing attention is the lack of conveniences for people who desire to use the public phone at the Huonville poet office."² (A misspelling of post)

The hopeless search ended at this point, so let me return to Festival matters. As Governor I am very pleased that we offered a copy of *Government House Tasmania: A Remarkable Story* for a lucky masterclass ticket purchaser. The two-volume work was published in May last year. I see LJ's teaser for it is, quote, "Imagine the inspiration between these covers!"³

¹ [Terror Australis Readers and Writers Festival \(terroraustralisfestival.com\)](http://terroraustralisfestival.com), accessed 27 September 2022.

² *The News* (Hobart), Monday 9 February 1925 page 4.

³ [Terror Australis Readers and Writers Festival \(terroraustralisfestival.com\)](http://terroraustralisfestival.com), accessed 27 September 2022.

As it happens the Huonville district did provide some inspired content for this Remarkable Story. Let me share this content with you.

Sir George Strahan was Tasmania's Governor between 1881 and 1886 and an enthusiastic devotee of animal husbandry. His speciality was pig breeding at Government House. During an official visit to this Huon district, he made a point of stopping at a private home. A newspaper account put it this way, and I quote,

"... Before the Vice-Regal party came to Clark's mill [in the Huon Valley] we passed a cottage and orchard belonging to one [Mr.] Jolly ... A short time ago this Jolly, a jolly old Scotchman, took a trip to the capital, and while there decided to visit the Royal Society's Gardens. He set out from town one afternoon with that intent, but, instead of reaching the gardens, he by mistake strolled leisurely into the grounds of Government House, and there he was found by Sir George himself...His Excellency said that as he was there he might look over the grounds.

"It was whilst so engaged that the two came to the piggery, and Sir George pointed out a splendid fellow in one of the styes as something that his companion could not equal. 'But I can, though,' was the sturdy reply. His Excellency explained that the animal before them had taken the main prize at the last show, but the old fellow kept to his assertion, and, as Sir George then contemplated visiting the Huon district, he made a note of Mr. Jolly's address, and promised to test the matter. So it came about that when the Governor passed that way Mr Jolly's pig was ready for his inspection ... The pig was no doubt a grand one, and of proportions scarcely credible in a pig only 16 months old."⁴

End quote.

Well, that is enough from me. May I now congratulate LJ and fellow Festival organisers, volunteers, financial and other supporters, in ensuring that the Terror Australis Readers and Writers Festival is here to stay. May I also predict that you will undoubtedly grow to become a significant regional literary festival in Australia and beyond.

I am therefore honoured to officially launch this 2022 Festival.

Thank you.

⁴ *Government House Tasmania: A Remarkable Story* pages 283, 284.