

HAMILTON LITERARY SOCIETY ANNUAL LECTURE 2023
REMARKS BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
GOVERNMENT HOUSE, THURSDAY 6 JULY 2023

Good afternoon. I warmly welcome you all to the Hamilton Literary Society Annual Special Lecture. Today's lecture will be delivered by eminent Australian Poet, Sarah Day.

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 enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea and waters.

This lecture is always a powerful reminder of the history of this place. Lady Teresa Hamilton and her literary society members used to meet in this Drawing Room. So, I would like to make brief mention of her.

Reference is made in some of your publications to a *Sydney Morning Herald* obituary of Lady Hamilton in 1932. In England the *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*¹ ran the full piece, under the headings: "Patron of the Arts – Influence of Lady Hamilton in Tasmania – A tribute to the influence of the late Lady Hamilton, of Bath." I shall quote some of it:

"Lady Hamilton, who died at her residence at Combe Park, Bath... was the wife of former Governor of Tasmania, and her influence on the intellectual life of Hobart from 1887 to 1893 still remains.

"The literary society, afterwards called the Hamilton Literary Society, which she founded in 1889, is the oldest existing one of the kind in Australia, being formed ten years before the Australian Literature Society, Melbourne, was established.

The article goes on to say: "The first Australian painter was William Charles Piguenit, who was born at Hobart. Returning after one of his trips inland, he gave a lecture on the beauties of the highland scenery. In the audience was Lady Hamilton, and it was

¹ *The Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette*, Saturday 1 October 1932, page 14.

at her suggestion that the monochrome paintings illustrating the lecture were purchased by the Government by a special vote for £100.

Coincidentally, we have a Piquenit hanging in this Drawing Room, “Lake St Clair” 1893.

Back to the quote, also, Lady Hamilton “... was the first president of the Launceston Art Society and was actively interested in the establishment of the Art Gallery in Hobart.

The *Sydney Morning Herald* obituary concludes:

“Lady Hamilton’s daughter, who became a doctor, died some years ago, while her son, who has lived near her home, was private secretary to Lord Aberdeen, when he was Lord Lieutenant of Ireland. Lady Hamilton was the second wife of Sir Robert Hamilton, an able and industrious Civil Servant.”

End of quote. And it does seem appropriate to give Sir Robert that single sentence, because as your 2016 “Short History” pamphlet notes, in Sir Robert’s wordy *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry, she earns just one line.

Fast forward to 2023 and, as some of you will know, Hobart is aiming to proudly showcase its literary credentials. We have a formal submission to be considered a UNESCO City of Literature. This UNESCO program commenced in 2004 as a global Creative Cities Network fostering cultural diversity.²

There are currently 42 Cities of Literature, with just one in Australia, Melbourne. Our Hobart bid is a joint initiative of the Hobart City Council, University of Tasmania, Libraries Tasmania and TasWriters. Our bid has significant support in the literary community.

If the bid is successful, the Hamilton Literary Society, as the oldest in the country, will figure as part of this recognition.

On that note, I’ll hand over to David. Thank you.

² [About Us | citiesofliterature](#), accessed 5 July 2023.