

**THE ART SOCIETY OF TASMANIA INC**  
**REMARKS BY**  
**HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC**  
**GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA**  
**DRAWING ROOM, WEDNESDAY 4 OCTOBER 2023**

**[VICE-REGAL SALUTE]**

Good evening and a very warm welcome to this reception to celebrate the 180<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our Lady Franklin Gallery.

I begin by paying 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.

As your Patron, and together with Don, we are delighted to host this event honouring your home base, the Lady Franklin Gallery, originally Ancanthe, opened in October 1843.

Your website states that the Gallery, quote, “is being lovingly looked after by the Art Society for the generations to come.”<sup>1</sup>

I can think of at least two good reasons for you to “lovingly” look after the Gallery. First is that your artistic expression and camaraderie, as fellow artists, found true expression and friendship in the finest of venues.

Second, when Ancanthe was fraught with obstacles to its intended original purpose in the 1940s, you became the permanent lessee and rescued a unique part of our heritage.

On this 180th anniversary celebration of the building, let us wander back through some of Ancanthe’s history.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.artstas.com.au/content.aspx?page\\_id=22&club\\_id=167994&module\\_id=410619](https://www.artstas.com.au/content.aspx?page_id=22&club_id=167994&module_id=410619), accessed 2 October 2023.

In 1843, a Hobart newspaper complained about an unfulfilled government promise to improve the condition of Brown's River Road. The newspaper referred to that road as, quote, "one of the most public in the Island, rendered exceedingly dangerous for the want of a dozen men for a day ... [instead there is] a gang of eighty probationers, with overseers, making a *bush road*, totally uncalled for, to *My Lady Franklin's Museum*."<sup>2</sup>

The same year another newspaper attacked Sir John Franklin's administration, referring to, quote, "That perfect laughing stock of all passers-by, the Harbour-front fortification wall of Government House; [and] the road to Lady Franklin's 'museum', and many other absurdities ..."<sup>3</sup>

Following the recall of Sir John to the UK later that year, his successor, Sir John Eardley-Wilmot proposed changing the name of Sir John's Tasmanian Society, with the approval of Queen Victoria, to the Royal Tasmanian Society. The existing and new members were all to pay a hefty £2 fee, in addition to the annual subscription, as a way to fund the renamed Society.

Some existing members were not happy. At a meeting to discuss the matter, quote, "Much desultory conversation ensued, and a rather growing irritability was visible." One reason for this was, unknown to Eardley-Wilmot, the former Tasmanian Society was quite financially sound. This was because, before her departure, Lady Franklin had gifted to the Tasmanian Society, Ancanthe, with its 400 acres of land, rented out for £50 per annum; and its cottage with annual rent of £25. These enabled, quote, "keeping up the Museum and other purposes of the Tasmanian Society."<sup>4</sup>

In leaving the buildings and land "in trust to the members of the Tasmanian Society", Lady Franklin wrote to Society member, James Bicheno, the Colonial Secretary. She wrote, quote, "The proceeds of the estate, such as they are, and as they may reasonably be expected to become, are to be applied to the maintenance and improvement of the property, and especially to the

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<sup>2</sup> *Colonial Times* (Hobart), Tuesday 13 June 1843, page 3.

<sup>3</sup> *The Austral-Asiatic Review* (Hobart), Friday 15 September 1843, page 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Launceston Examiner*, Saturday 21 October 1843, page 4.

formation of a native arboretum..."<sup>5</sup> and paths and openings to be made between the shrubs and trees.

Those plans were not fulfilled. In 1881, a letter to the *Launceston Examiner*, stated: "I paid a visit to Lady Franklin's Museum at Kangaroo Valley a few days ago. I was hardly prepared, however, for what I found upon arrival at the building. It appears to be used as a hay and produce store by a resident of the Valley, and horses are lodged under the porch. The glass skylight is broken in some places and has been repaired with palings. It is a pity that such a building should be used as it is. It would make an excellent chapel or school-room."<sup>6</sup>

Some 40 years later, in 1924, a *Sydney Mail* newspaper correspondent visited Ancanthe, and described it as a neglected and very dilapidated condition."<sup>7</sup> However, he added, quote, "It is now a pleasing fact to relate that the people have at last been stirred up to a sense of their responsibility in the matter, and recently a largely-attended meeting of local residents and others interested in the restoration of this historic building was held at Lenah Valley at the instigation of the local progress association."

Well, enough from me of the history of Ancanthe. As I said, your rescue mission for Lady Franklin Museum and the creation of art within its walls is a fitting outcome and one that Lady Franklin would surely have endorsed.

Congratulations to your Art Society of Tasmania, and your custodianship of Ancanthe – Lady Franklin's Museum – The Lady Franklin Gallery – and for your happy 180<sup>th</sup> year.

Thank you.

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<sup>5</sup> Letter quoted in the *Sydney Mail*, Wednesday 9 January 1924, page 45.

<sup>6</sup> *Launceston Examiner*, Saturday 4 June 1881, page 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Sydney Mail*, Wednesday 9 January 1924, page 45.