

**GRANDE VUE HOTEL GARDEN
OFFICIAL OPENING SPEECH BY
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA
8 MONA STREET, BATTERY POINT, SATURDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2024**

Thank you. [following HE's introduction]

I begin by acknowledging the Muwinina people upon whose Country we gather, who flourished on Country as part of the South-East Nation of Aboriginal people. We honour them, and today's Tasmanian Aboriginal Community, as ongoing custodians of Country. I recognise their enduring culture and continued connection to land, sea, and waters.

I am very pleased to have been invited by Ashley and Brock to attend the launch of the new Garden here at the delightful Grande Vue Boutique Hotel. This is an historic setting. Your revitalisation of this garden is important for both heritage and aesthetic reasons. It is wonderful that you have been able to use some of the sandstone and red convict bricks that were left in the backyard. So, well done to Ashley and Brock and all others who have contributed to the revitalisation.

Ashley has said, and I quote him: "Upon taking ownership of Grande Vue, we were presented with a blank canvas in the backyard – a simple grassy slope and a stone retaining wall. Our aspiration was to create a space that seamlessly extends the hotel's essence. The terraced design, featuring sandstone stairs leading to a grassy area and a charming harbour, evokes a sense of tranquillity and elegance..."¹ End of quote.

And may I add, the views of the river and kunanyi are outstanding.

May I mention the historic significance of the house. It was built nearly 120 years ago, in 1906, in the style of a Queen Anne mansion. It was built for Charles Joseph Fox and his wife Florence and their children. They named the property Coolangatta.²

¹ Ashley Fleming 15 February 2024 email to David Owen.

² Critic (Hobart), Friday 22 October 1915, page 5.

Charles Fox was a manufacturer's agent – importing clothing and suchlike into Tasmania. We presume that he was paid well to have afforded to build such a significant private home. Perhaps he was also of good reputation because in 1902, he was invited to give evidence to a Federal Select Committee taking evidence about improved steamship services to and from the mainland.

Charles Fox advised the Committee and I quote him: "There should be more frequent communication between Tasmania and the mainland, say tri-weekly if daily service was not practicable."³ End of quote.

On *Trove*, the digitised newspaper service of the National Library of Australia, there are a few other interesting snippets about the property.

In 1919, this World War One notice appeared: "Mr and Mrs Charles J. Fox of Mona Street, Battery Point have been officially notified that their only son, Sergeant-Major Eric C. Fox, fifth Field Artillery Brigade, has returned by the transport *Nestor*, and is now in Sydney. Sergeant-Major Fox gained the Military Medal for conspicuous gallantry at Halle, near Peronne [in France]."⁴

Later, in 1921, this notice appeared in a Hobart newspaper: "A pleasing little function took place at His Majesty's Theatre on Monday evening, when Mr. N. J. Humphreys, the Tasmanian manager of Australian Films, was presented with a magnificent gold chronometer, as a wedding gift from some of his friends, who wished him health, wealth, and prosperity. On the following day [at St. George's Church] Mr. Humphreys was married to Miss Rita Fox, youngest daughter of Mr. Charles J. Fox, of Battery Point. Afterwards the bride's parents entertained a few intimate friends at a wedding supper."⁵

Charles Fox died in 1941 and his wife put the house up for auction, described as an "attractive Brick Residence situate No. 8 Mona Street, Battery Point, most substantially built on solid stone foundations, containing 10 main rooms and usual offices, with extensive verandas and balconies. Situate in one of Hobart's

³ *Examiner*, Wednesday 15 January 1902, page 5.

⁴ *World* (Hobart), Wednesday 9 July 1919, page 8.

⁵ *Critic*, (Hobart), Saturday 5 March 1921, page 3.

picked positions, commanding a marvellous view. Splendid proposition for 3 residential flats, guest house, hospital, or private home.”⁶

A rest home transpired, and St. Martin’s Rest Home relocated here from West Hobart later in 1941 and was in business for about ten years. The famous Tasmanian artist Mabel Hookey lived here in her later years, and in the *Mercury* in 1951, there is an interesting image of her in one of the rooms. I have a copy of the image here. St. Martin’s Rest Home was put up for sale in the early fifties, becoming the Tan tallon Guest House, later Tantallon Lodge. Which brings us almost up to date! In 2004, Annette and John McIntosh purchased what was a run-down lodge and transformed it to the Grande Vue Hotel.⁷

And so here we are at another milestone in this gracious and historic property. I am now very pleased to officially declare open the new Grande Vue Hotel Garden for Ashley Fleming and Brock Gardner.

Thank you.

⁶ *The Mercury*, Friday 11 April 1941, page 9.

⁷ Keryn Nylander 22 December 2023 email to Paula Chatwood.