

**OPEN THE 44<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
OF INNER WHEEL AUSTRALIA INC.  
BY MRS FRANCES UNDERWOOD  
COUNTRY CLUB TASMANIA, LAUNCESTON  
THURSDAY 18<sup>TH</sup> OCTOBER 2012**

Good morning everybody.

May I extend a very warm welcome to you all, delegates to the 44<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of Inner Wheel Australia.

I understand that the Conference was last held in Tasmania ten years ago and this is the first time it is being held in Launceston, to which I say, you are in a beautiful part of our island State. And it's really pleasing to see that so many tours have been arranged for the five days that you are based here in Launceston. Let me assure you that, in keeping with your International Theme "Be a Friend", you are bound to find genuine island friendliness here in Tasmania.

As this is my first encounter with Inner Wheel, I thought it only right that I bring myself up to speed on your story and so I began, logically, with your history and through the good offices of Government House discovered some very interesting early newspaper accounts, a few of which I would like to share with you today. They are historical records but also give us a little insight into society back then – including what we today are likely to find somewhat amusing.

I'm sure many of you are well aware that in the early days there was some opposition to the formation of Inner Wheel clubs. Well, here is what

*The Northern Miner* newspaper, published in Charters Towers, Queensland, reported on Thursday the 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1954, on its front page, and I quote:

**Too many organisations had set out to give service, but had “left it to the women.”**

**Reverend. A. Trafford Walker said this at the Rotary conference in Mackay.**

**Rotarian Walker was discussing the formation of Inner Wheel Clubs, of Rotarians’ wives.**

**Many of these clubs had been formed in Great Britain.**

**“Rotarians are the ones who should be giving service, not their wives,” he said.**

**He warned about the danger of Rotary resting back on its traditions. Tradition had buried too many movements.**

**Mackay Rotarians asked Rotarian H. T. Thomas, representing Rotary International, questions on the formation of Inner Wheel Clubs.**

**Rotarian Thomas said there was a danger of many of the Inner Wheel clubs formed in Great Britain almost supplanting Rotary.**

**“Rotary Internationals’ Board of Directors cannot see its way clear to officially recognising Inner Wheel Clubs,” said Rotarian Thomas. “The clubs are welcome, but be careful that Rotary remains a men’s organisation,” he added.**

Such sentiments did not at any rate deter us here in Tasmania, for on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1946 the Hobart Mercury under the headline “New Women’s Club” stated:

**Very popular in Great Britain, and functioning with considerable success on the Main Land, is an organisation known as “Rotary’s Inner Wheel.” Composed of the wives, daughters, or sisters of Rotary club members, the**

**organisation primarily came into being to develop and foster a friendly spirit among the women of Rotary.**

**Such a club has come into being in Hobart, and an enthusiastic inaugural meeting was recently held in Rotary's rooms.**

**The members will receive full support from their parent body but they are not constitutionally bound to it, and will help any deserving fund or community cause as the need arises.**

And on Thursday the 26<sup>th</sup> October 1950 both the Mercury and the Launceston Examiner had a piece stating:

**Wives and daughters of Launceston Rotarians met at the Brisbane Hotel, Launceston, yesterday to discuss the formation of a Launceston Rotary "Inner Wheel" club.**

**The president of the Launceston Rotary Club (Mr. J. C. Murray) presided. The president of the Hobart Inner Wheel Club (Mrs. G. Park) outlined the aims and constitution of the club.**

**A past president of the Hobart Rotary Club (Mr. G. Park) also spoke. Other Hobart visitors were Mrs. H. J. Ralph and Miss P. Scarr.**

**Those present formed a committee to discuss the formation of a club.**

**A meeting will be held on November 9 at the home of Mrs. D. Barratt.**

Fundraising became an immediate activity. But there was fun too. The Mercury of Monday the 7<sup>th</sup> of October 1946 reported on a successful social occasion, under the then entirely innocuous headline, "Gay Rotary Ball at Continental Hotel" – the report being as follows and I quote:

**"Masses of double pink flowering cherry decorated the Continental, Hobart, on Saturday night for the Rotary ball, which was a gay affair, the**

lovely dance frocks giving a pre-war atmosphere to the scene. Nearly 400 people attended. Proceeds are for the Clarendon Children's Home.

The Governor and Lady Binney [my predecessor by 11] were present. Lady Binney danced in a dark green taffeta frock on which she wore a corsage of pink roses.

Mrs R. Kemp, who was secretary for the ball, chose a charming bouffant frock of pale pink silk brocaded taffeta, with which she wore a lovely marquise fob watch.

A committee of Rotarians and members of the Inner Wheel organised the ball. Those on the committee were Mr and Mrs McIntyre, Mr and Mrs R. Kemp, Mesdames E. Freeman, O. Burrows, J. Hammond, G. Park, Messrs K. Goyne, and G. Henty.

And here's a final quote from a Tasmanian newspaper that I'd love to share with you because it goes to the heart of how your own predecessors operated in their time. It's from October 1953, the event was an Inner Wheel Fair with proceeds in aid of the Women's and Children's Memorial Centre, Hobart.

The enticement to the reader was to, quote, "Save money on weekend foods with bargains at every stall."

Each stall had a name, followed by its produce. Thus:

**"Miladys Stall" sold fruit, cakes, used clothes and footwear, used books and magazines.**

**The "Child Welfare Stall" sold fancy good, sweets, jams, and writing materials.**

**The "Creche Stall" sold fresh eggs, meats, cordials, groceries and vegetables.**

**And the “Children’s Playground Stall” sold art treasures, jewellery, handbags, knick-knacks and novelties.<sup>i</sup>**

Ladies, fast forward 60 years from that year, 1953, and what do you have? The next Coin for a Cord Day, on Friday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 2013. It seems extraordinary, but again is a sign of the times, that Inner Wheel fundraising has moved from the simplicity of home baking and hand-me-downs to the sophistication of cord blood grants researching the rich source of blood-forming stem cells used in the treatment of childhood diseases.

And yet this is where Inner Wheel Australia is today, with this one fundraising initiative alone nearing the \$2 million dollar mark since its inception in 2001.

This is hugely impressive and in the words of Anne McGill, your National Coordinator of the Cord Blood Project:

“The promotion of cord blood to the public by our organisation is being acknowledged by all the researchers we are supporting. They also acknowledge that without our help they would not have been able to achieve the success that they are having. Cord Blood Research has achieved great steps forward and we should be very proud of our contribution to this progress. Our efforts were acknowledged at the International Inner Wheel Convention in Turkey in April this year with the success of our project held up as an example for Inner Wheel Clubs around the world to follow, in their support of a children’s charity. Those of us who were there, felt very proud to represent you, the members, who work hard at making our project so successful.”<sup>ii</sup>

I would like to conclude by mentioning a few more names.

Congratulations are in order to your current national president Margaret Whitchurch. Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth this year approved the awarding of a National Emergency Medal to President Margaret. The Medal is in recognition of sustained services rendered during a national emergency. She was awarded the Medal for her work with Lifeline Community Recovery during the Queensland Floods and severe Tropical Cyclone Yasi in 2010 – 2011.

Congratulations also to those Members recognised as Paul Harris fellows for 2012-13.

Finally, I would like to make reference to our own Phyll Lawrence, who joined the Inner Wheel Club of Launceston in 1975 and became an Honoured Active member in 1999. She held the position of Club Correspondent for over 20 years from 1980 until 2003. She enjoyed modelling at the Annual Lunch and Fashion Parade from 1983 until she appeared one last time in 2006, aged 95 years old. Although recently moved into care, she remains an Inner Wheel member at the ripe old age of 101.

I am sure she typifies much of the spirit of Inner Wheel, your ideals of true friendship, personal service and the promotion of international understanding.

Thank you.

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<sup>i</sup> The Mercury Thursday 29 October 1953 page 28.

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.innerwheelaustralia.org.au/ftp/readthered.pdf>, accessed 11 October 2012.