

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC,
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA OPENING THE
KEMPTON FESTIVAL, SUNDAY 17th MARCH 2013**

Good morning everybody. May I say what a great pleasure it is for me to be here today and to have been asked to open the 2013 Kempton Festival. It is the first time that I have been to the Kempton Festival and for me that makes this morning a special occasion. However I have to tell you that being asked somewhere for the first time always takes me back to a country Fair in the North of the State that I was asked to attend for the first time not long after I had been sworn in. I had just begun my opening remarks when the PA system failed

Now, because this is my first Kempton Festival, I thought I had better inform myself about it through the words of some of the organisers. Mr Tim Johnson, President of Green Ponds Progress Association which plans and manages the Festival, has written that, "The Kempton Festival has grown from its humble beginnings in 1996 when a small group of people decided to add their efforts to the annual Gymkhana by developing the largest garage/ boot sale in Southern Tasmania. [And out of that humble beginning] we now have a festival that is an important annual Southern Midlands Council activity with the aims of promoting Kempton, providing an opportunity for local groups to raise funds, and assisting local businesses."ⁱ

And committee member Mr John Jones, on whose property parts of the Festival is held, writes:

“The Kempton Festival Committee, which operates under the auspices of the Progress Association, aims to add to the social cohesion of the village by showcasing traditional rural values, experiences and produce. The by-product of these lofty goals is the raising of funds, thereby contributing to new village facilities while also supporting local organisations including Kempton Primary School, Melton Mowbray Rodeo, the Kempton SES and local farmers. And this year the Committee is also proudly supporting the Tasmania Bushfire Appeal by donating half of the gate entry fees received during the day from the festival.”ⁱⁱ

Those are terrific goals and clearly the amalgamation of the boot sale and the gymkhana has been a real success and a commendable achievement. Country shows and Festivals like this one play an important part in the lives of those who live in the surrounding communities. They bring people together to socialise and catch up on local news. They generate the all-important social cohesion that promotes community spirit, goodwill and mutual support. I am sure that you will agree that a strong community spirit is clearly present this morning at the 2013 Kempton Festival. One reason for this is that your community spirit is built on a long and proud local tradition. In fact I would like to share with you a description of a Kempton Gymkhana from no less than 91 years ago.

Listen to this charming article that appeared in the Hobart Mercury on Monday 13th March 1922; it was headed “Kempton Gymkhana — A War Memorial Effort — Fair and Sports” and it reads as follows:

“When Green Ponds folk set their minds upon a thing, they are not easily deterred, and cold winds and occasional showers did not prevent them from making a big success of the fair and gymkhana held at Kempton on Saturday to augment the funds for their war memorial. The function was run in a very carefree, happy-go-lucky style — or so it seemed to the outsider — but nevertheless it realised between 80 and 100 pounds in a very little time. There were no formalities, nor were there any protests. Competitors, old and young, decided at the last moment that they ‘might as well have a go’, paid their nomination fees, discarded coats and boots, tucked their trousers inside their socks, and took their places on the mark. When the starter was quite sure no one else either desired to take part or could be cajoled into doing so he got his fields away. Many old warriors in the pedestrian events found that their lungs and legs were not as efficient as in days gone by, but plodded home happily. The competitions in sheaf-tossing and ball throwing were entered by all and sundry and the distances achieved varied considerably, the winner in each case putting up a very fine performance. The equestrian and cycling events were both interesting and exciting. Splendid business was done at the afternoon tea booth, and at the various stalls on the ground. The display of produce was large and comprehensive, and it was said that practically everyone in the

district had responded freely to the appeal for donations of this character.”

Well, that’s the account in the newspaper which also printed a roll call of the stallholders on that day in 1922, with many surnames still very familiar in the district: Jones, Hamilton, Blake, Mason, Graves, Cairns, Gorrings, Ellis, Bisdee, Page, Johnson, Sibley, Cooley, Garland McKinlay, Taylor, Propsting, and Curles.

I see there is sheaf-tossing today. Well, back in 1922 there were 25 competitors in the same event and a Mr Eric Johnson won, tossing the sheaf, and I quote, “the remarkable distance of 54 feet 6 inches over a 12 foot bar, for which he was warmly applauded.”

Ladies and gentlemen and boys and girls before I formally declare this Festival open I would like to say to you that the Progress Association is heavily indebted to all its members and volunteers who work throughout the year and on the day to present this Festival. Mention has been made of Mr Johnson and Mr Jones. Other organising committee members are Carolyn & Ron Bassett; Jo Whelan, Gabrielle Watkins, John & Sandra Hay; Wayne & Joy Smith; Jo Whelan; Sherrie Jewson; Julie Cooke; Fran Cook; Roxy Loxton; D Duckett; Pam Barham; Gaye Watts; Martine Batt; and Jackie Whelan. To all of you I say congratulations and well done.

And of course The Green Ponds Progress Association itself has been a local champion, being recognised twice in recent years in the Keep Australia Beautiful - Tidy Town Awards. The next cab off the rank, if I can put it that way, is the completion of the The Horse Drawn Heritage Centre which will become another attraction of this marvelous, historic town.

So the future for Kempton is a bright one and on that happy note I now have much pleasure in declaring open the 2013 Kempton Festival.

ⁱ <http://kemptonfestival.blogspot.com.au/#!/2012/09/some-of-festival-history.html>
accessed 12 February 2013.

ⁱⁱ Email to David Owen dated 7 February 2013.