

**REMARKS BY THE HONOURABLE PETER UNDERWOOD AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA AT A DINNER TO CELEBRATE THE  
175<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDING OF THE LAUNCESTON  
HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY, LAUNCESTON,**

**THURSDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2013.**

Thank you very much for inviting me to be here this evening. Although I have been the Governor for more than five years now, I don't think that I can ever go to a dinner speaking engagement without it bringing back memories of such an occasion quite a long time ago now, but which didn't work out quite as I had planned. This dinner was held at one of those up market, rather posh hotels. It was a black tie event and the hotel one of those places with a lot of different glasses and a bewildering array of cutlery set out at each place. The main course was roast beef, vegetables and an Idaho potato. Now I don't know about you, but I am rather partial to Idaho potatoes, especially when they are covered in melting butter. So, after the very tall, distinguished and aloof waiter put a pat of butter on my Idaho potato, I asked - very politely, "Please may I have another pat of butter on my potato?" The waiter looked into the distance and said "I am sorry Sir, but I have orders from the kitchen to put only one pat of butter on each Idaho potato." "Please, please" I said, "I would really like two pats of butter on my Idaho potato." Implacably the waiter intoned, "I am sorry Sir, but my orders are only one pat of butter on each Idaho potato." Suddenly, my customary good manners and humility deserted me and I shouted at him, "Look my good man, do you know who I am?" "No, I do not know who you are." he said, without batting an eyelid. So I retorted, "I am the Governor of the State of Tasmania. I am the guest speaker at this dinner and I want another pat of butter on my Idaho potato." "Are you,

Sir?" said the immovable waiter. "And do you know who I am?" "No." I snapped. "Well", he said, staring at a far distant point over my left shoulder, "I am the man who puts the pat of butter on the Idaho potato."

You must all rightly feel pride in the fact that the Launceston Horticultural Society has been continuously in existence for 175 years. Founded on 4<sup>th</sup> July 1838, only 33 years after Lieutenant Colonel Patterson moved his fledgling George Town community to this site that he named Launceston, and just one year before the establishment of the Hobart Horticultural Society, this Society has set an enviable record in Tasmanian history after settlement by Lieutenant David Collins.

I really do appreciate having been invited to take part in this celebration of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Society, for the Governor of Tasmania has a connection with the Society that goes back to its very beginnings. In 1838 one Ronald Campbell Gunn, a botanist and the private Secretary to the then Governor Sir John Franklin, met with pioneer William Henty who had arrived in the colony the previous year, and together they decided that it would be a good idea to form a horticultural society in Launceston.

Three years later the newly formed Society aimed to establish a Botanic Garden in Launceston but the grant of land requested from Governor Sir John Franklin was unable to be made. I am not sure why this was so, but I can assure you that had I then been the Governor things would have been quite different!! However, the Society did secure a 21-year lease of what was then known as Arthurs Green (now City Park) and there developed a garden with walkways and a pavilion where shows were held. Early accounts record that the Society was very

successful right from the beginning, but in 1863 there was a depression which made financial viability impossible. In order to save the gardens, the Society signed an agreement with the Launceston Council to take over the site.

However, this blow did not cripple the Society which has continued its activities right up to the present day. As you know, today, the Launceston Horticultural Society holds monthly meetings, usually with a guest speaker, conducts no less than four flower shows each year, arranges garden visits for its members and publishes a quarterly magazine; not to mention I might add, holds celebratory dinners to mark important milestones in the Society's history. I think all that is pretty good for an organisation that has been in continuous existence through two World Wars, more than one financial depression and survived other financial vicissitudes.

As I was doing some reading with respect to your history, I came across one of those vicissitudes that bedevilled your Society and has bedevilled this island State ever since New South Wales Governor King divided it into two parts at the 42<sup>nd</sup> parallel. The Examiner newspaper for Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> June 1845 repeats an account taken from the magazine "Tasmanian Journal of Natural Science Agriculture and Statistics Vol II No 9." The account goes like this:

"Our readers are aware that for some time past the society has held its monthly meetings on this side of the island, and that its quarterly journal is printed in Launceston. Its members receive no aid from government: the sum sanctioned by the Secretary of State having been

appropriated to the use of an association at Hobart Town, the principal object of which is to rear rare exotics in the government garden for the benefit of 'the Fellows.' We have reason to complain that every colonial administration has shown an undue preference to institutions established in the capital; and while in some instances the pecuniary assistance afforded has been extravagant, the societies in the north have been allowed to rise and prosper, or languish and expire without the official support of the Governor. The Horticultural Society, the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, and the Tasmanian Society, are not honoured by vice-regal patronage."<sup>1</sup>

Well, on this 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Launceston Horticultural Society, I want to assure you that as the Patron of the Society and Governor of Tasmania you most assuredly are honoured by vice-regal patronage and that I consider it a privilege for me to grant that patronage to such a honourable, distinguished and long-standing agricultural society.

To emphasise that point, let me now congratulate you on your longevity and the contribution that your Society has made to the science and practice of growing plants, fruit, flowers and vegetables and invite you all to join with me in a toast to the continued longevity and success of the Launceston Horticultural Society.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/36240315?searchTerm='launceston horticultural society'&searchLimits=1-title=74||sortby=dateAsc||l-category=Article](http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/36240315?searchTerm='launceston+horticultural+society'&searchLimits=1-title=74||sortby=dateAsc||l-category=Article)