

**THE ROYAL COMMONWEALTH SOCIETY  
(NORTHERN TASMANIAN BRANCH) INC  
PLATINUM JUBILEE TREE PLANTING  
SPEECH BY  
HER EXCELLENCY THE HONOURABLE BARBARA BAKER AC  
GOVERNOR OF TASMANIA  
FRANKLIN HOUSE, YOUNGTOWN, THURSDAY 21 APRIL 2022**

Good morning and thank you very much for inviting me to officiate at this Platinum Jubilee commemoration event.

I pay my respects to the traditional and original owners of this land: the palawa people. I acknowledge the contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community. I recognise a history of truth, which acknowledges the impacts of colonisation upon our First People. I stand for a future that respects and acknowledges Aboriginal stories, culture, language and history.

May I acknowledge among us:

- The Honourable Michael Ferguson MP, Deputy Premier of Tasmania;
- Bridget Archer MP, Federal member for Bass;
- Margaret Duggan, Royal Commonwealth Society Northern Branch President;
- Scott Carlin, National Trust of Australia in Tasmania Managing Director;
- Julie Dineen, Franklin House Committee Chair.

The planting of this tree at Franklin House is a Platinum Jubilee event marking seventy years of the reign of Her Majesty The Queen. Queen Elizabeth the Second has the unique achievement of ruling for longer than any other Monarch in British history.

Princess Elizabeth, then aged 25, acceded to the throne on Wednesday the 6<sup>th</sup> of February 1952 on the death of her father King George the Sixth.

The young Elizabeth, in Kenya at the time, was proclaimed Queen by her privy and executive councils in London. This was shortly after the death of King George.

On the night of the King's death, Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh had been staying in a treetop lodge in a remote part of Kenya. Another guest wrote this in the treetops guest book:

“For the first time in the history of the world, a young girl climbed into a tree one day a Princess and after having what she described as her most thrilling experience she climbed down from the tree next day a Queen.”<sup>1</sup>

The Queen's Coronation took place on Tuesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1953 at Westminster Abbey in London. This was to allow the new Monarch to settle in, as it were, and also because of the detailed planning involved in such a momentous ceremony.

Many of you might have noticed in the Government House Ball Room at the rear, there are two blue-grey chairs with Crowns. Each has a number and are two of the hundreds of chairs made, specially for the Coronation. These two were purchased for Government House by Governor Sir Ronald Cross, soon after the Coronation, as a permanent memento in Tasmania of the Coronation.

The Queen has visited Tasmania on seven occasions: in 1954, 1963, 1970, 1977, 1981, 1988, and 2000. Other members of the Royal family have also visited and many of these Royal visits to Tasmania have been recognised with special and recorded tree plantings in the grounds of Government House. These visits have been welcome and remind us of our links to our Westminster form of constitutional democracy. Also, the Office of the Governor of Tasmania through our Official Secretary has regular communication with Buckingham Palace.

May I return to Her Majesty's first visit in 1954, just eight months after her coronation. According to one newspaper: “When the 27-year old sailed into Sydney Harbour on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of February she practically stopped the nation.” The Queen and Duke spent nearly two months in Australia, visiting 57 cities and towns.

---

<sup>1</sup> [The day Princess Elizabeth became the Queen: what happened on Accession Day | Tatler](#), accessed 14 April 2022.

In Tasmania, their five-day official program was relentless. The archives at Government House have many original documents associated with the visit. May I mention just one particular letter, which interestingly links our island to the monarchy in the United Kingdom.

The highlight of the Tasmanian visit was a Garden Party at Government House. There were formal investitures at the same time, and the grounds were overflowing with almost four thousand guests. In addition, very many people who had not received invitations wrote to Government House pleading to be invited.

This included the “one particular letter” from two Launceston sisters, who were descendants of James Bennell. He was, as many of you may know, the builder of many of Launceston’s fine early buildings.

The sisters wrote, and I quote:

“Our grandparents settled here in 1819. Our grandmother brought with her the latest thing in bonnets, which she lent to the ladies of Hobart Town, to call on the Governor’s Lady ... Our maternal grandfather, James Bennell, proclaimed Victoria Queen in 1837.” End of quote. But what could that reference to Queen Victoria mean?

It was this. In 1837, the Launceston Sheriff, W. G. Sams, asked James Bennell to be one of a group accompanying him when the formal proclamation of the accession of Her Majesty Queen Victoria to the throne was made. Sams read it out in the centre of Launceston. So, this was the claim of the granddaughters of James Bennell to be directly associated with the coronation of Queen Victoria.

They dearly wanted to attend the Garden Party of Queen Victoria’s recently crowned great-great-granddaughter Queen Elizabeth. A small historical link but, I think, worth mentioning here today.

James Bennell did not build this Franklin House, but his Launceston legacy is significant, as can be seen on the Heritage Register of the National Trust in Tasmania. So, it is fitting that this Platinum Jubilee Planting of a Flowering Cherry Tree, to mark seventy years of Her Majesty’s rule, takes place here at this historic Franklin House.

My thanks to you all.