

23 – Launceston

Launceston City Park

The park is a good place to start because it contained the first seat of authority in Launceston. Elizabeth Paterson, wife of the first Lieutenant Governor of the north, had arrived in the new settlement in 1805 (p26). Launceston dates from the following year and the Government Cottage was built in 1807 and used for the next 40 years. It is not entirely clear where the cottage was, but it seems likely that it was in the southwest corner of today's park, where the Crimea cannon now stands. Elizabeth was a keen botanist, so I think she was responsible for the early days of what has become a pleasing public space. There are trees that look as if they could have been planted in her day.

Paterson was the only northern Lieutenant Governor and, after a series of short-term northern Commandants, all authority moved south in 1812. The Government Cottage was used when the Governor visited Launceston from Hobart. It was also available for others. Among the first of these was the Reverend John Youl (p368) and his wife **Jane Stroud Youl** (née Loder, 1793–1877; m1810) when she first joined him with their children from New South Wales in 1819. Eventually they were to have three daughters and six sons – five children were born after Jane's arrival. She was widowed in 1827 while pregnant with her ninth child. How she coped with eight children (a son had gone to England to be educated) under those circumstances we have to deduce, though the family did have land grants and the sons became successful pastoralists.

Occupancy of the cottage could cause friction. It cannot better be exemplified than by quoting from PA Howell's biographical dictionary entry for Judge Algernon Montagu:

In April 1840, on arriving in Launceston to hold a session of the Supreme Court, he found Lady Jane Franklin in residence in the government cottage, which had traditionally been available for judges on circuit. Believing that the court was affronted when its privileges were waived in favour of vice-regal amusements, he wrote petulant letters to Sir John Franklin until rebuked by Lord John Russell [British Colonial Secretary] and persuaded to apologize.

You can see Jane Franklin giving Montagu, known as the 'Mad Judge', short shrift.

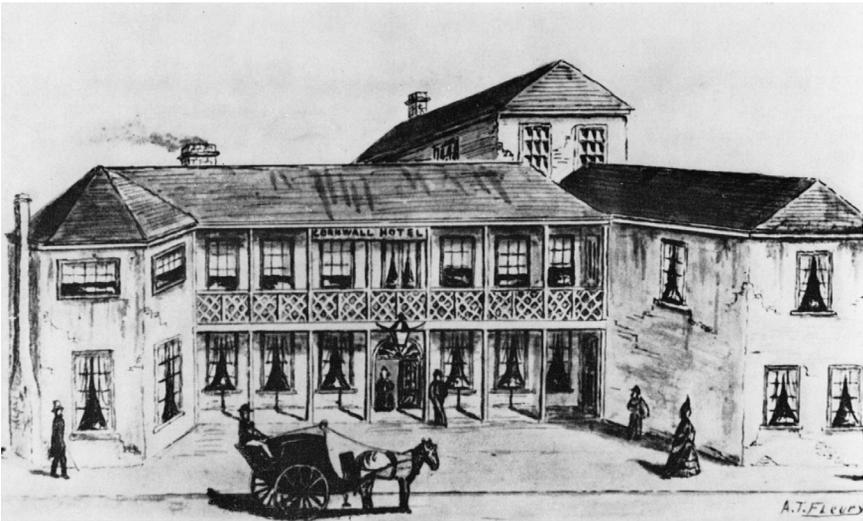
The Albert Hall

To the right of the main gate of the City Park, on the corner of Tamar and Cimitiere Streets, is the Albert Hall (1891), now a cultural and convention centre. There artists such as Nellie Melba (p301), Amy Sherwin (p237),

Adelina Patti and Clara Butt performed. If the doors are locked, which we found, you can admire the Victorian architecture and imagine you hear sweet music.

The Batman Fawkner Inn (Cornwall Hotel)

Back at the park gate and crossing the road, walk a little way along Cameron Street until you see the easily identifiable salmon-and-maize-painted Batman Fawkner Inn. Built between 1822 and 1824 as the Cornwall Hotel (not to be confused with today's Cornwall Boutique Hotel), it is perhaps the most historic of Launceston's women's places, though it is usually described as where Batman and Fawkner planned their incursion into what became Victoria.



49. Cornwall Hotel, an early sketch, from Reynolds, *Launceston*

The first woman to put her stamp on the hotel was Eliza Cobb Fawkner (pp58–9). We left her in 1819, a newly arrived convict assigned to John Fawkner and setting off with him for Launceston. They married in 1822. Although their marriage is registered at St John's Church (p376), its foundation stone was not laid until 1824. There was no earlier church building so, crossing over from the hotel to the Holy Trinity Church opposite, walk along 100 yards to what is now an office block. In 1822 it was a blacksmiths, also known as the Church in the Bush; there the Reverend John Youl (p367) performed the Fawkner and other marriages and held services.

The Fawkners had a number of ventures – a bakery, timber merchants, bookshop, newspaper, nursery and orchard. He did not receive the hotel licence until 1825, the year of Eliza's pardon; it was partly her convict status that held it up, though he was regarded as slightly unreliable. It is clear that she was then as much involved in the hotel as he, starting a run of women

owning and managing it. Although they had no children of their own, they fostered or adopted a number of them, some related.

In 1835, Eliza Cobb Fawkner accompanied her husband, as Eliza Callaghan Batman (pp58, 345–9) did hers, to explore the land and found the settlement on the Mainland that became the city of Melbourne. While Eliza Batman's life was soon to disintegrate, Eliza Fawkner played a role in the family's new businesses – John was to call her his 'guardian angel and true friend'. They were married for 51 years. She was left a rich widow in 1869 and, 15 months later, aged 70, she remarried. Her husband was a barrister aged 44 and father of one of her adopted daughters. She died nine years later, leaving a fortune of £9,000 to those daughters.

By 1836, John Edward Cox was licensee of the Cornwall Hotel; earlier he was licensee of the Macquarie Hotel, Hobart, which he ran with his wife (p246). When he died the following year, he left his widow, **Mary Ann Cox** (née Hall, m1821; d1858), with nine children to support – the last one born and one dying that same year. In spite of all she was going through, Mary Ann took over both running the hotel and her husband's coach service, Launceston to Hobart, which she expanded.

In 1844, one of her coaches was held up at Epping by the bushrangers Cash & Co. (pp96–7) but, as the story is told in *Highway in Van Diemen's Land* (Hawley Stancombe, 1969), 'They robbed the other passengers but spared Mrs Cox because they knew she was a widow.' Following this, Mary Ann employed two guards at 24 shillings a week to protect her cargo and passengers.

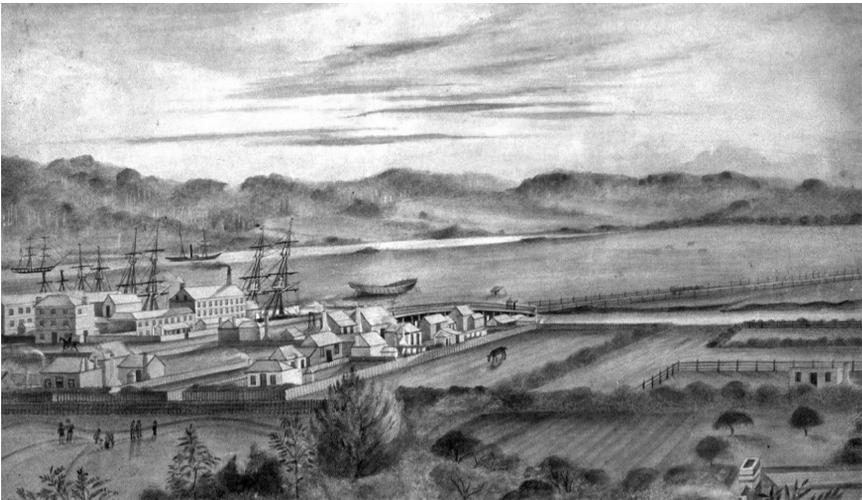
When competition arrived on the Highway (p336), rivals would race, sometimes neck and neck. One of Mary Ann's conveyances was thus upset in 1849 and four passengers seriously hurt, perhaps prompting her to sell the business – seven coaches, 150 horses, and 24 sets of four-horse harnesses – though by then she had been able to educate her children at the best schools.

She must have relinquished the Cornwall Hotel at much the same time – the Anti-Transportation Society of Launceston was formed at a meeting there that year, and she is said to have been involved (p168); indeed, for many years the hotel had been the centre of Launceston activity as well as a hostelry. The Grey family of Avoca stayed there when they first arrived in 1828 (p342). Catherine Grey found it 'palatial' after the confines of the ship. Later, her husband and their daughter Catherine attended a dinner party given by Caroline Denison at the hotel; that may have been the ball for 100 guests Lady Denison gave in 1849. Perhaps because of the Grey acquaintance, in 1850 Mary Ann bought the Avoca property Ormley, both sides of the main road east to Fingal, and retired there with a son and her youngest daughter.

Eliza Marsh (p258) stayed at the hotel when she and her family arrived by boat to visit Tasmania from New South Wales in 1851 just after Mary Ann Cox's retirement. By then, James Butterworth Whitehead, a retired army sergeant and hotelier in nearby Westbury, was licensee. His wife and helpmeet since 1846 was **Bridget Whitehead** (née Cashin). Eliza paints a useful prose picture of Launceston, the hotel and the City Park:

About four o'clock we sighted the town of Launceston, having very much the appearance of a Rhenish town, numbers of boats came alongside the ship to take important passengers on shore. I got Matt [her husband] to go to secure rooms at the only decent Inn here, he did not like going as he says people never understand him. I saw him take a cab and he soon returned. Some difficulty in our landing when the steamer was alongside the Wharf, as the 500 sheep were very obstinate, however Bridget and I scrambled out with the sheep, from which with a little persuasion we were 'drafted out', and drove to the Cornwall Hotel, Matt telling us as we went that as he expected, he was not understood and vile rooms had been shewn him, however when we drove up our numerous boxes, dressing cases etc, must have made an impression on the landlady as she informed Matt she was happy to say she could provide him with better apartments ... our church is opposite the hotel, Puseyite clergyman preached a better sermon than one generally hears in the Antipodes. After luncheon looked into the Horticultural Gardens, which appear small, but well filled with English shrubs and tropical plants, the entrance at the end of the street in which is our hotel, has exactly the appearance of the entrance to the Grand Ducal residence on the Rhine ... the children look rosy, have seen no young women, this community seems to consist of children and old women.

The watercolour by Sarah Ann Fogg (p350) suggests the scene that greeted the Marshes on arrival.



50. Launceston, Tamar Street Bridge area, by Sarah Ann Fogg, courtesy of the Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts, Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office

By 1856, and until 1861, **Mary Anne Lukin** (née Wilkins) who managed her husband's brewery after his death, was licensee. Like Mary Ann Cox, she was left with children to support – eight of them. Women continued to

be licensee, or joint manager with their husbands, including the couple who renamed the hotel in 1981. Today's hotel, of which a woman is joint manager and another joint proprietor, and whose women staff were most helpful in providing me with research material, is in the budget range, but no longer appealing more to a younger clientele.

The Brisbane Hotel (Brisbane Arcade)

Past the Batman Fawkner Inn, turn left down George Street, pausing to admire the Roman goddesses ensconced in the facade of the cream building (1882) on the corner (best seen from over the road).

Turn right into Brisbane Street and the Brisbane shopping arcade is halfway along the next block. It uses the ornate façade of what was the Brisbane Hotel (1824, Elphin Arms, 1888–99 enlarged to Brisbane Hotel). Nellie Melba stayed there in 1907. Some years earlier she had been due to sing in Launceston. As she describes in *Melodies and Memories* (1925), she arrived after a ghastly sea voyage with a sore and inflamed throat. The doctor sternly advised her not to sing and she left immediately to rest in New Zealand. The cancellation was botched leaving ugly rumours to swirl and she was hooted as her train left for Hobart.

When she returned to Australia for a rest in 1907, and to Launceston where she wished to make up for the earlier cancellation, she did not realise the impact of what had gone before. But the impresario responsible for the new arrangements, sensing the ugly scenes that could ensue, braved the local club before her arrival and had it out with members. He succeeded in reversing the ill-feeling and she was able to write of her recital at the Albert Hall (p367):

When I stepped on to the platform at Launceston, in a hall packed to suffocation, without thousands who had not been able to obtain admission standing outside, a roar of cheers broke out which was like the cry of a giant doing penance. At the end of the performance all the flowers of the island seemed to be heaped in front of me. They took the horses out of my carriage and fought to drag me through the streets. And when, eventually, I arrived, tired out, at my hotel, the street was overflowing with a sea of faces, and a universal song of welcome broke from the lips of all who were there.

The Quigleys owned and managed the hotel in the early twentieth century and made it very grand. At some stage, the daughter of the family, **Elvie Quigley** CBE (1886–1962) was, according to Joan Prevost, the ‘famous owner and manager’. She was also chair of the Board of the Launceston General Hospital. Elvie was kind to **Vera Cameron** (d1945) of Kingston when she was aging and suffering from dropsy. She was the daughter-in-law of Kingston's owner Cyril St Clair Cameron, and wife of Ewan whose life had been turned upside down by the First World War; he was often absent. She had been a famous horsewoman. Elvie often stayed at Kingston (p345) and, when Vera died, she thanked her with the bequest of a magnificent emerald and diamond cross.

The Princess Theatre

Go back to the George Street corner, cross over and walk a little way eastwards along Brisbane Street. You cannot miss a sugary pink-and-white building; next to that is the art nouveau Princess Theatre, opened in 1911. Behind the main auditorium is a smaller modern one (1993), known as the Earl Arts Centre, where in 2003 Tasdance performed 'Fair Game' based on the narrative of Carmel Bird (p126). Carmel described for me a childhood incident there:

When I was ten I went to an audition to play Wendy in the production of Peter Pan and was only given a small part as a fairy. Very sad, I stood on the steps of the building, beside a door with panels of bevelled glass, and the director of the play offered to buy me an icecream. Pride forbade me to accept.

But for much of its life, the Princess Theatre was a cinema. Here, for many years, **Amy Corrick** (c1881–1968) played the flute in the silent films orchestra. With her family of mother and father, four sisters and three brothers, she arrived from New Zealand in 1914; her father died that year in Launceston. From 1898, they had toured Australasia and internationally as the Corrick Family of Musicians, also renowned for their stage dresses, some of which were embroidered in silver thread in India and made up and fitted in Paris. They performed in Hobart in 1902, though an older sister, **Alice Corrick** (later, Sadleir 1897–1957), a soprano, had sung at the Town Hall some years earlier. They performed for the last time in 1932. Mother of the family, **Sarah Corrick** (née Calvert 1854–1935; m1876), contralto and cellist, died in Launceston in 1935.

The name Corrick is now best known for films which they had incorporated into their touring performances from 1900, usually opening and closing with one; and they had produced and accumulated a substantial collection of them, presented to the National Film and Sound Archives of Australia in the 1970s.

The west coast mining town of Zeehan's tourist material mentions that Nellie Melba sang there, at some unspecified date, at the Gaiety Theatre built in 1899 with 1,000 seats. She, and other material about her, omit this adventure which led me to question it. But **Ruby Paul** (née Pacey, 1893–1988) was born and spent her early childhood in Zeehan. In her oral account, captured by Christobel Mattingley in *Ruby of Trowutta: Recollections of a Country Postmistress* (2003), Ruby remembers:

Odd concerts we'd get to, if we were lucky, but not very often. Then there was the Corrick family – mother and father and Edie, Elsie and Ruby. Ruby Corrick had beautiful fair hair and she used to play a solid silver cornet.

When Dame Nellie Melba came to Zeehan, the first train after the railway from Mount Lyell was completed brought the miners through for the concert – down to Strahan and then up to Zeehan. Then it took them back and they had to go straight to work.

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery

The walk along Cameron Street, through Civil Square, over Charles Street to Wellington Street and so to the Royal Park and the Queen Victoria is very pleasant – past old and well-cared-for houses and buildings. The museum opened in 1891 to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee. You could well find an interesting exhibition. On my first visit the paintings of the Australian naturalist writer and explorer Ellis Rowan were on display. Conversely, its paintings and artefacts may be on loan elsewhere. And just to compound potential problems, the museum is closed for renovation as I write, and will not be reopened until April/May 2011.

In late 2009, the exhibition 'Tayenebe: Tasmanian Aboriginal Women's Fibre Work' was held in the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, Hobart. Among the borrowed artefacts was a basket woven by Trukanini (p118) for Catherine Mitchell's husband (p282). By then the family, formerly of Port Arthur, was living in the north east. Their daughter, Sarah Mitchell (1853–1946) wrote in her diary, kept from the age of 13 to 93, 'Truganinni the last Aboriginal who lives with Mrs Dandridge gave papa a basket and piece of rope, her own make ...'

The exhibition notes record that 'From October 1836 to March 1838 an experimental weekly market operated on Flinders Island where more than 30 Tasmanian Aboriginal women regularly traded. Trucannini is included in the list of girls and women at Wybalenna ... making it likely that she sold her baskets at the market.'

In 1909, visiting Launceston, Sarah continued the story: 'Went to the museum it is very nice ... promised to lend Launceston Museum Truganini's last basket she made for father.' In 1946, when Sarah was 92, she wrote to the museum:

Are the things I sent together? Is the basket Truganini made with them? Miss Dandridge who took care of her said it was the last basket she made, and it was done for my father who gave her 2/6 [two shillings and sixpence] for it. My sister and I sent her the lily rush by post therefore it is valuable.

In 2002, the museum held an exhibition, 'Strings Across Time', of shell necklaces made by Aboriginal women, drawing on its own collection. It is one of the few aspects of material Aboriginal culture still practised and handed down the generations. Before colonist settlement, women would, for example, smoke 'maireener' shells over a fire, then rub off the coating to reveal the pearly nacreous surface. The necklaces, of various kinds of shells, were worn, given as gifts or traded for ochre and other materials. One of the most important sources of red ochre was Toolumbunner, now in the Alum Cliffs State Reserve west of Deloraine and north of Mole Creek. Settlement brought new methods to the traditional shell preparation and threading. Lucy Beedon (p193) was typical of those whose necklaces survive from the nineteenth century.

A different sort of shell collection is thanks to women such as Jemima Burn Irvine (p102) and **Mary Lodder** (1852–1911) who arrived with her family in 1875 and who originally curated it. The director of the museum wrote: ‘Miss Lodder has done good service to the [Royal] Society [of Tasmania] and has classified the specimens of Tasmanian Shells in the Museum, replacing from her own collection, those which were in bad order.’

In 1907, as Gill Morris relates in ‘The “Quiet” Miss Mary Lodder – Conchologist and Philanthropist’ (2005), a piece for the Launceston Historical Society, Mary settled at 193 George Street, Launceston, and made her books, instruments and knowledge available for the evening classes held at the museum. On her death, she bequeathed to the museum her cabinet cases and collections of shells and other natural history specimens, her microscopic slides and all her books on natural history and travels.

A Chinese temple, or joss house, reassembled in the museum from Weldborough and holding the remaining contents of the Garibaldi and other joss houses from the east coast tin-mining area (p323), links the various Tasmanian Chinese communities. Helene Chung, searching for her maternal forebears (the Gins, who adopted the name Henry), wrote of the temple:

As my eyes fixed on the ornate figures robed in red, gold and green, the intricate carving, scrolls and plaques, I thought of my ancestors out in the tin fields paying tribute. I imagined each man prostrate himself in turn, place sticks of joss before the altar, smell the incense as it burnt and see the smoke rise to the heavens.

Carmel Bird wrote to me in 2008 of a Chung family from the same county as Helene Chung’s paternal forebears:

When I was a child the Chung Gon fruit and vegetable shop in Launceston ... in Brisbane Street near the Brisbane Hotel ... was a magnet for me – it was a location of the exotic (along with the Joss House at the old museum). They had Chinese artefacts for sale as well as vegetables. I used to buy little white china horses, and I bought a satin pin cushion shaped like a pumpkin with little ‘chinamen’ sitting around it. I still have the pincushion. Such things are commonplace now, but then they were quite rare and strange. The silk of mine is very superior to the fabrics of today’s examples.

That was the business started by James Chung Gon who arrived in Launceston in 1878. In 1885 he married **Mei Ying Lee** (Mary, d1919), daughter of a wealthy silkworm-farmer, leaving her in China the following year to return to Launceston. But in 1892 he sent for his family, including twelve-year-old Rose who had been given to the couple as a wedding present and whom they treated as a daughter. They also had twelve children of their own and it was some of them, including **Ann Chung**, **Doris Chung** and **Lily Chung**, who were later involved in the family’s ventures. Ann became well known in the

late 1930s for her work in support of the Chinese Women's Association. In Launceston, Mary had to make her own shoes for her bound feet.

For Helene Chung, the Chung Gons' Pekin Store in Hobart was a magical window on the faraway land of China, which fascinated her, in spite of her mixed feelings about being Chinese.

Although the art gallery is unlikely to have its delicate sketches and watercolours on display, its holdings include Bock's portrait of Jane Franklin, Loetitia Casey's 'Acanthe' (p271), Sarah Ann Fogg's 'Clyne Vale' (p350), and Eliza Cox's 'Low Head' and 'Ben Lomond' (p355).

The Inveresk annexe of the museum is on the other side of the North Esk River, over Victoria Bridge, in the Inveresk Cultural Precinct, perhaps best visited from the City Park and Tamar Street. It contains a portrait of Mrs William Wood of Hawkridge (p88), hand-painted pieces by the potter Alice Mylie Peppin (p284), and a cell door from the Launceston Female Factory (p156) which was demolished in the early twentieth century to build what is now Launceston College, at the western end of Paterson Street (nos 197–119).

Prince's Square

Wiggle your way south. In the middle of Prince's Square is a fountain best described in Carmel Bird's novel *Red Shoes* (1998), in which the main character, Petra, remembers her Launceston childhood, as Carmel does, though I believe her own was more stable than the one she has created for Petra:

Green wooden benches beneath the trees; in the centre of it all a wide and shallow pond, circular, with water lilies and goldfish, and in the very heart a piece of large bronze statuary complete with nymphs, mermen, trumpets, vigorous acanthus leaves and gushing fountains. The semi-nakedness of the figures is both welcomed and ignored, it seems, by adults, whereas alert and knowing children such as Petra are fascinated, entranced by breasts and other suggestive bulges in the group. Larger than life these people, these creatures, recline, entwined, gesturing, waving, smiling, promising loud ecstasies from the middle of the pond.

The fountain is the most elaborate public object in the town, and there is a legend that it was sent here by mistake, that a factory in France muddled its orders, and this little town ended up with a fountain destined for somewhere very grand. The people of the town were so impressed, quite overwhelmed by the sight of such a glorious bronze scene of lust, desire and sexual frolic that they raised the funds to keep it. I don't know how much truth there is in the story.

The truth of the fountain – it was ordered, as is, by catalogue from France – can be found in the learned article 'A Permanent Advantage: The French Fountain in Prince's Square, Launceston' (Eric Ratcliff, 1966). It scotches all myths, including that the pineapple atop the fountain replaced a figure too rude for the 1859 denizens of Launceston. Most of Carmel's novel about a

religious cult whose devotees, attracted through Petra's malign magnetism, wear red shoes is set in Melbourne, but there is enough about Petra's early life in Launceston, and its effect on her, and with a climactic ending at Cape Grim (p390), to make it a valid and engrossing read as you sit contemplating the fountain.



51. Fountain, Prince's Square, courtesy of Carmel Bird

St John's Church

Facing onto the square, on St John's Street, is the church which, in 1824, replaced Youl's Church in the Bush. Here in 1828 Eliza Callaghan (pp58, 345) and John Batman were married; so, four years earlier, were Hannah Pickering and Theodore Bartley (p365), in 1829 Eliza Collins and James Cox (p354), in 1830 the Aborigines Catherine Kennedy and William Ponsonby from Kingston (p348), and in 1842 Eliza Churchill and William Weeks (p155). But not all was happiness in the square: in 1993, a man cold-bloodedly shot dead his former wife during his daughter's wedding.

Churches of other denominations also frame the square. The Presbyterian Church is where Madge Edwards was taken as a child by her grandmother, Ann Hortle Archer (p268). She adds: ‘Most afternoons grandmother and I went down to St John’s Square, bought two Chelsea buns and ate them on a seat near the fountain.’

Morton House

Having originally written in the present tense what follows, I now have to turn it into the past. Diagonally across Prince’s Square from St John’s, at 190 Charles Street (Morton House), was Fee and Me, a restaurant which we have often travelled specially to Launceston to dine at. Fee, the chef, was Fiona Hoskin. But the elegant, award-laden restaurant, unbeknown to me until now, closed in August 2009 after 20 years; Morton House is up for sale. Meanwhile, Fiona and her partner live there and she teaches cooking. Who knows what will follow.

In 1841, the house was a girls’ school run by **Mrs Hudson**. She employed a former ‘governess in Colonel Arthur’s family’ which could have been Jane Clark of Cluny (p330), Sarah Duterreau (p334) or Thirza Cropper (later Parramore) (p240). Mrs Hudson took the school elsewhere in 1845 and the house became St John’s Hospital, run by two humanitarian doctors practising an early version of ‘national health service’. It was here in 1847 that ether, as a surgical anaesthetic (introduced in Boston by Dr WTG Morton), was first used on a young woman with an infected jaw.

Cataract Gorge Reserve

The Queen Victoria Museum stands in a wedge of Royal Park facing the North Esk river to the north, where it joins the Tamar from the east, and to the west the South Esk joins the Tamar at the Cataract Gorge. This is the real place to get away from it all, though others have the same idea on highdays and holidays. A path runs along the river from behind the museum to the gorge, but you may prefer to go on wheels. Once there, you will find a restaurant and café, a chairlift and suspension bridge, a swimming pool, and lookouts and walks either side.

On 24 October 1847, Caroline Denison (p161) described the gorge in a way that would not be so out of place today:

Yesterday afternoon we took a walk to a place called ‘the Cataract’, about a mile and a half from Launceston, where the South Esk seems to have burst through a range of rocky hills, and comes pouring down through a narrow gorge, whose wild beauty exceeds any place I have seen here. Fancy a very narrow valley, so narrow that it has every appearance of a rent made in the hills by some sudden convulsion; and, on the side of these hills, enormous masses of basaltic rock tumbled about in all sorts of forms and positions. These masses look more like a great natural Stonehenge than anything

else I can think of; some stand quite upright, some are planted on such narrow bases, that you almost fancy they must topple over and crush you as you pass by. In the clefts of these rocks and between and above them, on both sides of the valley, are the most beautiful wild flowers and flowering shrubs; one is a sort of little wild geranium, sticking in between the rocks, and growing everywhere; another a large shrub covered with bright lilac or purple, looking at a distance more like English lilacs in flower than anything else, though the flower is not the least like them when you are near it. Hanging in festoons amongst these purple shrubs is a white creeper of the clematis kind, though of a brighter and purer white than the common clematis. There are trees, too, clinging apparently to the steep sides of the valley, and overhanging the rocks; and at the bottom of all runs the river, foaming and tumbling over masses of rock, like those on the sides of the hills; in one or two places it seems to have an interval of rest, and there it expands into a little basin, as still as possible, where men fish, and where you can scarcely see a ripple on the water. A few steps lower, and there is a sudden change; it meets the masses of rock, and becomes a cataract again. Oh, it is beautiful! And I longed for the power of making a sketch of it.

Eliza Marsh had a less happy experience in October 1851, having returned to Launceston to leave Tasmania:

After luncheon walked to the cataracts, a deep ravine through which flows, with two falls, the South Esk; I became giddy and frightened, and was very foolish, really in a perilous situation as a consequence, and made a vow never to go to such a place again. Left my parasol on a rock. Matt went back for it, wondering at nothing I did, for I was still confused.

For Ann Archer it was even worse. Madge Edwards describes how her grandmother's son had been rowing in a small boat with a friend and gone too near the rapids. The boat overturned and Hughie was drowned. Madge continues:

Once or twice we walked a long way for a picnic at the Gorge. I have memories of slippery tracks, foaming waters, terrible heights and depths when we looked down through the iron rails before we finally came out onto the mild green lawns fluttering with pigeons. Grandmother never came with us, because it was in these foaming waters that Uncle Hughie had lost his life.

But the gorge has a much longer history: it was a sacred site of Aborigines of the North Midland people from time immemorial. The Fairy Dell on the far side of the gorge is reserved as a peaceful place; is that the same place Mrs WI Throver calls the 'Mossy Dell' in *Younâb: A Tasmanian Aboriginal Romance of the Cataract Gorge* (1894)?

This is, indeed, a romance – the story of a white three-year-old girl, Keitha St Hill, kidnapped by the Pialumma people whose summer place centres on the Cataract Gorge. Where Beth Roberts' old Aboriginal woman kidnaps a little white girl in *Manganinnie* out of loneliness and bewilderment (p334), here it is for revenge: the white settler family has not only taken their lands in the Ben Lomond area, but they also believe it responsible for 'stealing' the daughter of the chief and his wife.

Makooi, the mother, demands the white child's death; her son, Eumarrah, who has done the kidnapping and formed an attachment to the delicate toddler, persuades her that it is in their interests to teach her their ways and eventually use her as a bargaining chip. This discussion between mother, father and son takes place in the seclusion of the Mossy Dell and there, although Makooi sees the sense of keeping Keitha, or Younâh, as she has been renamed, alive, and gives in, Mrs Thrower suggests her power (p114):

... she had now reached that age wherein the women of the tribe ceased to be regarded as mere drudges made to minister to the wants of the superior sex, and were instead looked upon as oracles of wisdom, whose counsel was sought upon all important occasions, and whose decision was invariably final.

The language and tenor of the novella are of its time – purple and ethnocentric, distasteful, even, though it is a taut little story and historically interesting for its faults. It was serialised in the *Tasmanian Mail: A Weekly Journal of Politics, Literature, Science, Agriculture, News and Notes for Tasmania*. For my copy, expensively obtained on the internet, episodes of *Younâh!* have been collated and put between rough boards apparently by the Throwers' daughter in 1912.

Susan Martin analyses the novella and its context in Australian Aboriginal politics at the beginning of the twenty-first century in 'Captivating Fictions: Younâh!: A Tasmanian Aboriginal Romance of the Cataract Gorge' (2001). She suggests that at least some of the Aboriginal culture **Marian Thrower** (Mary Anne, née Kean, b1841; m1868) depicts relates to what was then known by whites about the Panninher people of the North Midlands nation, whose last members had long since died at Wybalenna, as did the real Umarrah who, coincidentally, also features in Kathleen Graves' *Exile* (p346).

Carmel Bird visits the Cataract Gorge in the childhood memories of Virginia in *The Bluebird Café* (1990), memories which are also her own. There she imagines Mathinna whom both Virginia and Carmel knew then only as a sad picture on the wall; later she was to epitomise for Carmel the fate of the Aborigines:

I would sometimes go up the dry hillside on the other side of the Gorge ... I would take my lunch with me in those days when I was a fat little girl, and a book to read, and I would cross the King's Bridge and go up the steep and dangerous Zig-Zag Path. I liked the name of that path, and the path itself

was so rocky and barren ... when I got to the Giant's Grave, which is a huge jutting boulder, I would sit down and have my lunch and read my book.

Far below me was the troubled water of the Gorge, and the wet hillside on the other side of the water was dark with thick wet trees. It looked, from where I was, like a place of menace and mystery. I imagined that the path snaking along the side of the wet hillside was a primitive track. There in the shadows flitted Mathinna in her red dress and stockings. She danced and ran from cave to cave beneath the feathery fronds of cool, damp ferns ...

In 'This Pretty Prison' (in *A Writer's Tasmania*), Robin Friend, who had, in 2000, lived in Launceston for 20 years, uses the Gorge engagingly to explore her ambivalent feelings about the city.

Scotch Oakburn College (Methodist Ladies' College)

In 1857, **Julia Cowie** (1833–1874) of Brookstead, Avoca (p344) proposed to the district meeting of the Wesleyan Church that a college for girls be established in Launceston, and she offered £500 towards it. When **Eliza Thomson** (née Reibey, 1805–1870) built 'Oakburn' in Elphin Road in 1861, it did not seem that the college Julia dreamed of was much closer to realisation.

Eliza was the daughter of Mary Reibey of Sydney, and sister of the first Thomas Reibey of Entally (p362). In 1821, aged 16, she made the mistake of marrying Thomas Thomson. He had met and courted Eliza in England, where Mary had taken two of her daughters to expand their horizons, and continued on board ship where she agreed to marry him. He ran up enormous debts between 1823 and 1828 and, in 1829, as head of customs and treasury in the north, he was found to have embezzled. His property was seized, and Eliza's with it, and he was thrown into gaol. Her family bailed him out but the couple was left with nothing, and Eliza pregnant with her fifth child; she was to have eight. Fuller details are in Nance Irvine's *Mary Reibey – Molly Incognita: 1777–1855* (2001).

Thomas Thomson died in 1844 and Eliza regained her financial security. She began to accumulate land and, in 1860, received a grant from the Crown on which she built Oakburn. She lived in another property on Elphin Road and may have let Oakburn. Following Eliza's death, as the detailed research provided for me by Scotch Oakburn College shows, Eliza's son, also Thomas Thomson, owned Oakburn, and a Miss Thomson occupied it. In 1884, the Trustees of the Wesleyan College purchased it from a later owner, and the Methodist Ladies' College opened on 8 February 1886 with 45 scholars – too late for Julia Cowie to rejoice.

Today, at 74 Elphin Road in East Launceston, Eliza Thomson's house and the girls' school that took it over, is the Elphin Campus of the Scotch Oakburn College which is a Uniting Church school. This campus includes the Junior School, Early Learning Centre and Boarding House; there are other campuses elsewhere. I don't think there is any objection to you driving in and out to view

the rather grand Victorian main building; we did so during the holidays, which must be preferable for the school. The oak trees Eliza planted are still there.

Early scholars at the Methodist Ladies' College included the Sutton sisters: **Cecil Sutton** (1885–1971), **Elsie Sutton** ('Todge', 1888–1904), **Irene Truganini Sutton** (b1890; m1920) and **Marjorie Sutton** (1895–1988). Their house, Fairlawn, now in private hands, is just down the road from the school. Miranda Morris, in *Placing Women* (1997), describes and mourns how in 1989, the year after Marjorie's death, Fairlawn and its contents were sold separately at auction after 90 years of Sutton residence – the contents were dispersed, losing their context. They included Elsie's diary for 1903, the year before she died of consumption aged 16. Miranda Morris' paraphrase describes how

Elsie would study Euclid before breakfast as well as practising piano, go to school, come back for lunch, return to school, have music lessons, eat, study, sing and go to bed. The largest room in the house was the music room, and guests came for tea and music several times a week. Between them the children played the organ, the cornet, the piano and the violin, and annually entered the Launceston Competitions ... During 1903 we see ... the introduction [at the school] of compulsory drill and physical culture classes.

The year of Todge's diary, **Mary Fox** (1877–1962), aged 26, became head teacher of the college where she herself had been educated until she went to the University of Tasmania. The appointment of this progressive educator of girls is described as the 'beginning of a golden age' for the college, with enrolment numbers growing from 30 to over 300, and the expansion of the school buildings. Mary Fox MBE MA retired in 1941 after 38 years in which she had inspired over 2,000 girls.

Mary Fox is so revered and appears so perfect that a girlhood anecdote, told by Veda Veale in *Women Worth Remembering* (nd), must be repeated: 'Accepting a dare [she] rode her horse up the front steps of the college, and clattered briskly over the shiny brown lino of the corridor and out into the quadrangle!'