In Search of "Progress": The Northern Branch of the Royal Society of Tasmania, 1853-1953.

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INTRODUCTION

On 14 October 1843, the first Royal Society established outside of Britain was formally inaugurated in Hobart by Tasmania's new Governor, Sir John Eardley-Wilmot.[1] Building upon the foundations inherited from the Tasmanian Society, which had been established by the previous Governor, Sir John Franklin, Wilmot sought to raise this new organisation "above the status of a horticultural society" to become "the leading colonial scientific society".[2] Since 1843, the Royal Society has conducted regular meetings, and since 1844, has produced an unbroken string of publications.[3] Over the years, the Society has had several names, but in 1911, the name was changed for the final time to "The Royal Society of Tasmania".[4] The aims of the Royal Society, like its name, have also shifted over the years. With the group's inauguration, it was decided that, "...the leading objects of the Society shall be to develope [sic] the physical character of the Island, and illustrate its natural history and productions".[5] In 1907, these aims were amended to, "the objects of the Society are the prosecution of the study of Science in its various branches, and more especially the development of a knowledge of the physical characters and natural history of Tasmania and the neighbouring States."[6] In 1914, however, its aims were amended for the final time to "the object of the Society is the advancement of knowledge."[7] This much has been well-documented by historians, as has the first century of the Royal Society of Tasmania's history.[8]

However, there remains a conspicuous gap in the historical record pertaining to the Society's two distinct Northern Branches that were formed in Launceston over the course

1 J. Somerville, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1943', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society for the year 1943* (Hobart, 1944), p. 199.
2 Gillian Winter., "'For the Advancement of Science": The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1885', unpublished Honours thesis, History and Classics, University of Tasmania, 1972, p. 15.
3 Somerville, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1943', p. 199.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 200.
5 Royal Society Collection, RSA/A/22, 'Rules of the Botanical and Horticultural Society of Van Diemen's Land, As Established at the Original Formation of the Society in October, 1843'.
6 RSA/A/22, 'Rules of the Royal Society of Tasmania [As made by the Fellows at a Special General Meeting duly convened in that behalf under the Authority of Section 12 of the "Royal Society Act" (18 Victoriae, No.4), and held in Hobart on the twenty-third day of December, 1907.]'.
7 Somerville, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1943', p. 200; RSA/A/22, 'Rules of the Royal Society of Tasmania'.
8 See, for example, Winter., "'For the Advancement of Science": The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1885'; Edmund Leolin Piesse, 'The Foundation and Early Work of the Society; with some Account of Earlier Institutions and Societies in Tasmania', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1913* (Hobart, 1914), pp. 117-174; Somerville, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1943', pp. 117-74.

of the Society's history. The first Northern Branch was formed in 1853, but encountered significant barriers to its success and by 1860 had effectively collapsed. In 1921, the Northern Branch was re-formed, and to this day remains an active community institution. These Northern Branches have been largely ignored by historians, except where their activities were implicated in those of Hobart. However, the Northern Branch deserves closer scrutiny.

This thesis argues that over its history, particularly in the twentieth century, the Northern Branch of the Royal Society drew together a group of disparate, yet highly-professional, men and women of middle class origins who exemplified the intellectual and social trends that were circulating both in Launceston and Australia at the time. As as result, the members of the Northern Branch made outstanding contributions to the social and intellectual fabric of northern Tasmania. The twentieth century Northern Branch was a highly-significant presence in Launceston, as numerous members of the Branch went on to hold positions of considerable responsibility within other influential northern (and even some southern) organisations. All these factors contribute to making the Northern Branch worthy of serious consideration. This thesis, therefore, attempts to redress the lack of scholarship in regard to the history of the Northern Branch's formation and membership over its two distinct phases, by explaining the nature of the ideas, trends, and people that constituted its activities.

The first chapter will introduce the Northern Branch that emerged in 1853, explaining the many circumstances that made it unsustainable. It will demonstrate how the failure of this first Northern Branch to sustain itself was primarily rooted in demographic disparity between the intellectual classes in Hobart and those of Launceston. It will suggest that in contrast to Hobart, Launceston at this time did not possess a social climate that was conducive to the sustainability of a Northern Branch, and that this was the main reason for its collapse by the early 1860s.

The second chapter will chronicle the re-emergence of the Northern Branch in the twentieth century, explaining how the demographic circumstances, which previously had only been present in Hobart, had finally become manifest in Launceston. These changed circumstances resulted in an intellectual climate that was now ripe for the sustenance of an organisation like the Royal Society. It will demonstrate how the catalyst for the re-formation of the Northern Branch stemmed largely from the work of two men: William Robert Rolph, proprietor of Launceston's *Examiner* newspaper, and John Moore-Robinson, Publicity Officer at the Premier's office in Hobart. It will show how these two men rallied

the intellectually-starved, professional middle classes of Launceston, to inspire the formation of the second incarnation of the Northern Branch, which persists to the present day. It will discuss how Progressivism, which was a pervasive influence in the early decades of the twentieth century, played a seminal part in the Branch's re-formation.

The third chapter will examine the intellectual trends that underpinned the renaissance of the second Northern Branch, and influenced its activities and ideas. It will investigate the lecture programs that were part of its agenda, particularly in the area of historical enquiry. It will contextualise these activities by explaining how they fit into the wider social, intellectual and political agenda of the Northern Branch.

The fourth chapter will demonstrate the importance of the interconnectivity between the Northern Branch and other northern bodies, which emerged in its wake. These included the Cradle Mountain Reserve; the Launceston Field Naturalists Club; the Launceston 50,000 League; the Scenery Preservation Board; and the Tasmanian Society. It will also discuss the importance of the relationship between the Northern Branch of the Royal Society and the Queen Victoria Museum, which ultimately became the Branch's headquarters in 1937.[9] The relationship between the Northern Branch and these groups varies: in several cases, the Northern Branch was the indirect progenitor of these groups; in other cases, prominent Northern Branch members held positions of influence on their committees. This chapter will demonstrate that the ultimate contribution of the Northern Branch to Launceston society was that it acted as a nexus for gathering a significant portion of Launceston's bourgeois community into a collective that not only matched the vitality of the parent Society in Hobart, but in some respects, outmatched it.

Finally, the conclusion of this thesis will contrast the development and achievements of the Northern Branch of the Royal Society from 1853 to the 1860s with the Branch's re-emergence in 1921. It will demonstrate how the activities of this later Northern Branch distinguished it as an important and influential body in the social and intellectual fabric of northern Tasmania. It will restate the argument of this thesis that the advent of the 1921 Northern Branch was a highly-significant event in the state's history, in that it fostered the development of northern Tasmania's cultural and intellectual capital as well as categorically fulfilling the aim of the Society as a whole: "the advancement of knowledge."

9 'Northern Branch: Annual Report, 1937', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1937* (Hobart, 1938), p. 159.

CHAPTER 1: THE EARLY YEARS OF THE NORTHERN BRANCH, 1853-1860.

> *The great evil of these colonies is the absence of scientific men. Many of the settlers have had some education, but there are few or none in this colony who can fairly be called men of science, and the consequence is that the half-educated, with but a smattering of knowledge, are able to lead the more ignorant by the nose.*[1]

On 5 October 1853, the first Northern Branch of the Royal Society was formed in Launceston, ten years after the Royal Society of Tasmania was formally inaugurated in Hobart.[2] This Northern Branch emerged out of the period of social ferment in Tasmania that had culminated in the official cessation of convict transportation on 28 December 1852.[3] In August 1853, this milestone event was commemorated in union with the island's fiftieth anniversary of settlement.[4] Against this celebratory backdrop of colonial endeavour, several prominent members of the Launceston community, assisted by Royal Society members who lived in northern Tasmania, gathered the following month on 26 September 1853 to form a Northern Branch.

The 1853-1860 incarnation of the Northern Branch has largely been treated by historians as a tangential event in the history of the Royal Society. Recent historian of the Royal Society, Gillian Winter, continues this trend by noting in her work that, "space precludes any examination of [Royal Society Northern Branch] activities and they do not receive any significant treatment by the main body in its Minutes or Reports."[5] Winter rightly identifies the dearth of intellectual endeavour in this Branch. However for the purpose of this thesis, its unremarkable existence does serve as a useful barometer of the intellectual vitality of Launceston at the time compared to Hobart and serves as a point of comparison with the Northern Branch that re-formed in 1921.

Few primary sources remain that directly chronicle the original Northern Branch. Perhaps the most well-known account of the group comes from Henry Button's

1 William Denison, 'Sir William Denison to Mrs. Charlotte Denison: Van Diemen's Land, January 18, 1849', in Richard Davis & Stefan Petrow, eds., *Varieties of Vice-Regal Life (Van Diemen's Land Section)* (Hobart, 2004), p. 102.
2 Royal Society Collection, RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 5 October, 1853.
3 Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania Volume I: A History of Van Diemen's Land from the Earliest Times to 1855* (Melbourne 1983), pp. 505-6. The final convict ship to arrive in the colony, the *St. Vincent*, arrived on 26 May 1853.
4 *Ibid.*, p. 506.
5 Gillian Winter, '"For...the Advancement of Science": The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1885' unpublished Honours thesis, History and Classics, University of Tasmania, 1972, p. 29.

autobiographical sketch *Flotsam and Jetsam*, published in 1909.[6] He recalls, for example, that the group met at Franklin Lodge, to the "right-hand side" of what was, by that time, the Launceston City Park.[7] He describes how, on 26 September 1853, "a number of gentlemen met in the Lodge to consider the propriety of establishing a society for the promotion of science."[8] Among those who attended the meeting were prominent solicitor William Henty and naturalist Ronald Campbell Gunn. According to Button, the meeting resolved to form a branch of the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land, and the chairman, "was requested to correspond with the Council of that institution for the purpose."[9] Button recalls,

> I rather think nothing came of that movement, but nine or ten years later a few residents of Launceston obtained permission to form a Northern Branch of the Royal Society. I think we mustered twelve or fifteen members, including Mr. Cleveland, Mr. T. Stephens, and myself, and we held monthly meetings in an unoccupied upper room of the newly-erected Public Buildings.[10]

Button's account contains much useful information about the personalities associated with the first Northern Branch. The association of Ronald Campbell Gunn with the Northern Branch warrants particular examination. Gunn, a professional naturalist and botanist, arrived in Hobart in 1830, and became a founding member – and the first Secretary – of the Royal Society of Tasmania in 1843.[11] Gunn exhaustively studied the flora of Van Diemen's Land (renamed Tasmania after 1856) throughout his life, until his death in Launceston in 1881.[12] As Button's account corroborates, Gunn was also a leading figure, "in the inauguration of the Northern Branch of the Royal Society in 1853."[13] Gunn's

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6 In a curious historical parallel, Button became the sole proprietor of the *Examiner* newspaper in 1887, as well as being an original member of the first Northern Branch. In this, his profile is similar to that of William Robert Rolph, who became sole proprietor of the *Examiner* in 1916, and was an original member of the reformed Northern Branch in 1921. See, J.C. Horner, 'Button, Henry (1829-1914)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/button-henry-3131, accessed 24 August 2013; S.M. Dent, 'Rolph, Sir William Robert (1864-1948)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rolph-william-robert-8262, accessed 19 July, 2013.

7 Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam: Floating Fragments of Life in England and Tasmania: An Autobiographical Sketch with an Outline of the Introduction of Responsible Government* (Launceston, 1909), p. 314.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 315.

9 *Ibid.*

10 *Ibid.*

11 T.E. Burns & J.R. Skemp, 'Gunn, Ronald Campbell (1808-1881)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/gunn-ronald-campbell-2134, accessed 24 October 2013; Winter, '"For...the Advancement of Science": The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1885', p. 7.

12 Burns & Skemp, 'Gunn, Ronald Campbell (1808-1881)'.

13 Winter, '"For...the Advancement of Science": The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1885', p. 7.

contributions to botany saw him elected as the first Tasmanian citizen to be elected as a fellow of the Linnean Society of London in 1850 and of the Royal Society in 1854.[14] Gunn's profile was significant, and his association with the Northern Branch no doubt increased its early appeal amongst northern intellectuals.

The chairman that Button refers to was William Henty, from a prominent northern-based family. The Henty family had emigrated from England in the early 1830s.[15] William Henty was the last of his family to arrive in the colony. After his arrival in 1839, he set up practice as a solicitor.[16] His formative role in the Northern Branch is mentioned by Button, who recalls that Henty drafted a letter proposing the formation of a Northern Branch at the first meeting held on 26 September 1853. Royal Society council minutes for 5 October 1853 discuss this letter. They state that Mr. W. Henty of Launceston proposed, "to hold regular periodical Branch Meetings of the Society there and [is] soliciting pecuniary aid in carrying out their scheme."[17] The proposal was accepted, and on 9 November, Henty submitted a letter naming, "15 gentlemen... members of the Royal Society in Launceston."[18] On 23 January 1854, it was further decided to allocate, "£50 yearly" to the Northern Branch to facilitate their activities.[19]

Despite Henry Button's assertion that he, "rather thought nothing came of that movement," the Northern Branch did meet with some initial success.[20] On 10 December 1853, for example, *The Examiner* reported on a "Launceston branch" meeting of the Royal Society in which Ronald Campbell Gunn acted as Chairman, and "there was a large attendance of members."[21] This was a pattern of Northern Branch meetings over the next several years, with "good attendance" often reported.[22]

Before long, however, the Northern Branch began to slip into decline. Although fifteen northern members had been nominated on 9 November, 1853, only five were nominated the following month, on 14 December 1853.[23] This pattern continued unabated.

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14 Burns & Skemp, 'Gunn, Ronald Campbell (1808-1881)'.
15 Marnie Bassett, 'Henty, William (1808-1881)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/henty-william-2246, accessed 21 October 2013.
16 *Ibid.*
17 RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 5 October, 1853.
18 RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 9 November, 1853.
19 RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 9 January, 1854.
20 Henry Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam: Floating Fragments of Life in England and Tasmania: An Autobiographical Sketch with an Outline of the Introduction of Responsible Government* (Launceston, 1909), p. 315.
21 'Royal Society', *The Examiner*, 10 December 1853. However, this article reports on a meeting which took place on 25 November 1853. The reason for this considerable gap between the meeting and the newspaper report is unclear.
22 See, for example, 'Royal Society', *The Examiner*, 14 February 1854; 23 March 1854; and 16 August 1856.
23 RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 14 December, 1853.

On 1 February 1854, only four northern members were nominated; on 8 March 1854, two members were nominated; and on 5 September 1855, only a single northern member was nominated to the Royal Society.[24] Henry Button recalls the difficulty securing members in *Flotsam and Jetsam*:

> ...Occasionally a paper on some scientific subject would be read, followed by an interesting interchange of opinions, but the community was too limited to supply a sufficient number of members to keep up the interest. Ere long the fervour of first love declined; meetings lapsed from want of attendance, soon they were entirely discontinued, and the Branch withered.[25]

Edmund Piesse, writing in 1914, notes that in 1857 the Northern Branch, "...had about thirty members."[26] Clearly, the majority of these members were evidently not deeply committed to the group – at least financially. On 28 January 1857, the Royal Society council discussed twenty-two members of the Society resident in and near Launceston whose membership subscriptions were deeply in arrears.[27] The meeting resolved that a communication be made to the Northern Branch treasurer requesting explanation.[28] Further evidence of Northern Branch somnolence can be found in the Royal Society minutes for 1858. A letter was read before the Royal Society council on 28 January 1858 from Mr. St. John E. Brown of Launceston. The letter, dated 25 January 1858, complained that "the Branch Society there has held 'no periodical meetings for the last 12 months & upward' and that he would in consequence discontinue being any longer a member."[29] Further, 1858 minutes notes that, although the Northern Branch had been contractually obligated to hold regular meetings, "...meetings have not been held so periodically, minutes of proceedings have not been furnished and papers if read at any meeting held in Ln. have not been supplied to this council...".[30] It was recorded that, "the Branch in Ln. has in fact been a drag upon the operations of this Society by the amount of subscriptions which have been paid to the Local Treasurer instead of being formally remitted to Hobart Town."[31]

Barely four years after its inauguration, it is clear that the Launceston Branch of the

24 RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 1 February, 1954; 8 March 1854; 5 September 1855.
25 Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, p. 315.
26 Edmund Leolin Piesse, 'The Foundation and Early Work of the Society; with some Account of Earlier Institutions and Societies in Tasmania', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1913* (Hobart, 1914), p. 153.
27 RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 28 January, 1857.
28 *Ibid.*
29 RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 28 January, 1858.
30 *Ibid.*
31 *Ibid.*

Royal Society was imploding. It is difficult to ascertain the date of the original Northern Branch's actual collapse. The *Daily Telegraph* later reported that the original Northern Branch, "went to sleep about the year 1857," and that, "no mention was made in the reports of the society after 1860."[32] Piesse also notes that from 1860 onward, the Northern Branch no longer appeared in reports.[33] The Northern Branch, however, does receive several notable mentions in Royal Society minutes after 1860, and Henry Button intimates in *Flotsam and Jetsam* that the main chapter of the original Northern Branch began, "nine or ten years" after 1853.[34] Furthermore, the only surviving minutes of the original Northern Branch also came from post-1860, detailing three Northern Branch meetings in 1862.[35] A single Northern Branch membership nomination was also noted in Royal Society council minutes for 1862.[36] Nonetheless, whatever functionality the Northern Branch may have had post-1860, it was clearly limited. The group quickly fell into obscurity, and by 1863, the Northern Branch ceases to appear in Royal Society council minutes with any reference to current activities.

Why, then, did the Northern Branch fail? First of all, the formation of the Northern Branch in 1853 intersected with a number of circumstances that were unfavourable to supporting a such a body in the north. John Gascoigne argues that Sir William Denison's succession to Eardley-Wilmot in 1847 had led to "the elevation of the Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land to the most active scientific body in Australia," a factor that may well have been conducive to the propagation of the Society more widely.[37] However, Gascoigne argues that this lead had effectively been lost by the mid-1850s, with the conclusion of Denison's term as governor in 1854.[38] Simultaneously, the burgeoning mainland gold rushes in the early 1850s were prompting emigration from the island.[39] Further, between 1840-1880, Tasmania's "Great Depression" was adversely affecting Royal Society

32 'Scientific Research: Royal Society of Tasmania: Inaugural Meeting of the Northern Branch: The Governor Presides' *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 June, 1921.

33 However, both Piesse and Somerville note that the original Northern Branch receive mentions in Walch's Almanac until 1878. See, Piesse, 'The Foundation and Early Work of the Society', p. 153; J. Somerville, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1943', p. 207.

34 Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, p. 315.

35 Launceston Reference Library, LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes, 10 January 1862, 25 March 1862, 17 June 1862. Unfortunately, these minutes do not discuss any significant administrative matters, and therefore give no insight into the condition that Northern Branch members perceived the group to be in at that time. Some matters discussed include the possibility of expanding their private collection of specimens housed in the Public Buildings, and some discussion of geological samples.

36 RSA/A/.3, Royal Society Council Minutes for 2 September 1862.

37 John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 94.

38 *Ibid.*

39 *Ibid.*; John Reynolds, *Launceston: History of an Australian City* (Melbourne, 1969), p. 75.

membership statewide.[40] Stefan Petrow notes that between 1855 and 1900, membership in the Royal Society of Tasmania dropped from 330 to 111.[41]

However, while wider state-and-national concerns doubtless had their place, the primary deficiency of the original Northern Branch was the demography of Launceston. In *Flotsam and Jetsam*, Button observed that in Launceston, "the community was too limited to supply a sufficient number of members to keep up the interest" in a Northern Branch.[42] During the re-formation of the Northern Branch in 1921, the editor of the *Examiner* newspaper, Stanley Dryden, similarly echoed that that sentiment. In 1853, he suggests, "the place was then too small to keep such an institution going."[43] Both of these arguments implicitly suggest that Launceston's population was too small to sustain such a branch owing to the dearth of intellectuals in Launceston at that time. As Brian Plomley later recorded in his unpublished history of the Queen Victoria Museum, "...the Branch did not flourish. There were too few people living in Launceston having the interest or the educational background needed to make a scientific society viable there."[44]

The simultaneous existence of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute with the Royal Society's first Northern Branch is noteworthy, since this organisation functioned as the primary node of scientific education in Launceston at the time.[45] However, there remained a significant difference between the intellectual focus of the Mechanics' Institute and the Royal Society. Whereas the former was largely concerned with the elevation of the working class through practical scientific education, the Royal Society was traditionally an exclusive gathering of individuals who, broadly speaking, could already be counted amongst the intellectual and professional elite in the colony, and sought to congregate with other like-minded individuals.[46] Herein lay the problem. In an era when education was synonymous with an elite class of gentlemen, Launceston had little that resembled one, at least in numbers sufficient to maintain a Northern Branch. The Royal Society of Tasmania was an elite group traditionally composed of gentlemen scientists (a precedent stretching back as the formation of the Royal Society in 1660) yet, as Denison noted, formed in a

40 *Ibid.*, pp. 72, 75.
41 Stefan Petrow, *Going to the Mechanics: A History of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute 1842-1914* (Launceston, 1998), p. 160n91.
42 Button, *Flotsam and Jetsam*, p. 315.
43 'Royal Society: A Local Branch' in *Examiner* (Launceston, Tas) Thursday 28 April, 1921, p. 4.
44 Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, CHS 53: 35/1, Norman James Brian Plomley, *The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery 1891-1950*, unpublished, p. 1.
45 Petrow, *Going to the Mechanics*, p. 4.
46 *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5; Colin Finney, *Paradise Revealed: Natural History in nineteenth-century Australia* (Melbourne, 1993), p. 52.

penal colony that possessed few well-educated "gentlemen".[47]

Men such as Ronald Campbell Gunn and Joseph Hooker notwithstanding, by the late 1860s, as Stefan Petrow argues, "few members [of the Royal Society of Tasmania] could claim impressive scientific credentials...".[48] This was largely because these nineteenth-century elites were heirs to a culture of amateur scientific inquiry.[49] Science in this era was essentially an elite leisure activity – an "alternative to art, music and cultivation of literary taste."[50] Joan Clarke notes that the Royal Societies throughout Australia, "...regarded science as an accessible cultural activity like any other."[51] Part of this was due to Tasmania's peripheral nature as a colony. As Roy Porter argues of Enlightenment England, scientific practice emerged in regional parts of the country as "provincial elites were attempting to bring Enlightenment to their own doorsteps."[52] In essence, antipodean science was an attempt to bring modern ideas to the periphery of civilisation, and this was the purpose that the Royal Society of Tasmania ultimately came to embody.

In the formation of an intellectual body like the Royal Society, Hobart possessed a distinct advantage over Launceston. Hobart – as the seat of government and the main government departments – attracted the genteel, intellectual classes.[53] Launceston, by contrast, was largely a commercial and industrial hub in the nineteenth century, and thus attracted comparatively few individuals that resembled Hobart's intellectual strata. Indeed, when it was suggested that a branch of the Royal Society should be formed in Launceston to supervise the activities of the Queen Victoria Museum, the reply was that, "in Launceston people were, as a rule, absorbed in business pursuits, while in Hobart there

47 Stefan Petrow, 'The Last Man: The Mutilation of William Lanne in 1869 and its Aftermath', *Intellect and Emotion: Perspectives on Australian History: Essays in Honour of Michael Roe*, p. 34; John Cannon, ed. *The Oxford Companion to British History* (Oxford, 1997), p. 825; William Denison, 'Sir William Denison to Mrs. Charlotte Denison: Van Diemen's Land, January 18, 1849', in Richard Davis & Stefan Petrow, eds., *Varieties of Vice-Regal Life (Van Diemen's Land Section)* (Hobart, 2004), p. 102.

48 Stefan Petrow, 'The Last Man: The Mutilation of William Lanne in 1869 and its Aftermath', *Intellect and Emotion: Perspectives on Australian History: Essays in Honour of Michael Roe*, p. 34.

49 Colin Finney, *Paradise Revealed: Natural History in nineteenth-century Australia* (Melbourne, 1993), p. 61; Jim Endersby, *Imperial Nature: Joseph Hooker and the Practices of Victorian Science* (Chicago, 2008), pp. 2-3.

50 Thomas Andrew Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types* (New York, 1993) p. 234.

51 Joan Clarke, 'Scientists as Intellectuals', in Brian Head & James Walter, eds., *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (Melbourne, 1988), p. 92. However, it is worth noting that this elite paradigm was not restricted to the antipodes. In 1836, prominent English writer Bulwer Lytton observed that, "In England, the higher departments of science are pursued by a few who possess an independent fortune... in England, the cultivation of science is not a profession." See Bulwer Lytton, *England and the English* (London, 1836), pp. 247-8.

52 Roy Porter, 'Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England' *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 3:1 (1980), p. 26.

53 Lloyd Robson, *A Short History of Tasmania* (Melbourne, 1985), p. 36.

were gentlemen with more leisure time at their disposal."[54] The fundamental barrier to the formation of a healthy Royal Society Northern Branch in Launceston, then, was the lack of a perennially, "at-leisure" class to fill its ranks.

The examination of the original Northern Branch, ostensibly peripheral to the wider Royal Society of Tasmania, can still yield a considerable amount of useful historical information about the intellectual climate of early Tasmania. Through its contrast with the Northern Branch which re-formed in 1921, the decline of the original Northern Branch clearly demonstrates the degree to which the growth of social and intellectual forces apparent in Launceston in the twentieth century were crucial to the formation, and, ultimately the success of the Royal Society's northern renaissance.

54 Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, CHS 53: 35/1, Norman James Brian Plomley, *The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery 1891-1950*, unpublished, p. 7.

CHAPTER 2: THE RE-FORMATION OF THE NORTHERN BRANCH, 1921.

> *The new branch commences its career under the happiest auspices. We can only express the hope that it will realise the expectations of its founders. It is seventy years since the first attempt at a northern branch of the Royal Society was made. It was long before its time. The branch soon withered and died. The conditions now are very different. What in 1853 was impossible should today be quite easy of accomplishment. And so we believe it will be found.*[1]

In order to understand the renaissance of the Northern Branch of the Royal Society in 1921 it is essential to examine the prevailing social, cultural and economic conditions that permeated the fabric of society in Launceston at this time. In the early twentieth century the conditions were clearly ripe for the gathering of an otherwise-disparate group of professionals into an active, energetic Northern Branch of the Royal Society. This is despite John Reynolds' observation that the years 1914-1945 in Launceston were "the unsettled years."[2] In many ways, the social problems that constituted the social landscape of northern Tasmania at the time contributed to the currents that produced the intellectual climate ripe for the Progressive-minded members of the Royal Society's Northern Branch to re-form. The "sizable and permanent under-class that lived in entrenched poverty, long term unemployment, insufficient educational opportunities and high rates of both preventable diseases and infant mortality" in Launceston constituted a challenge for intellectuals interest in the social uplift of society.[3]

In the years after World War One, a profound intellectual shift was taking place in Tasmania, and Launceston in particular. Ronald Mallett argues that, "'scientific' approaches to the new challenges of the industrial age had only just begun to filter into the collective consciousness of Launceston's middle classes."[4] Spurred on by the Progressive ideals imported from the United States, this professional, educated, bourgeois segment of Launceston's population was increasingly feeling the need for an intellectual outlet in the community. In 1919, Meredith Atkinson in her book *The New Social Order* railed against the cult of the technical college, and espoused instead the value of the humanities towards

1 'The Royal Society', *The Examiner*, 28 June, 1921.
2 John Reynolds, *Launceston: History of an Australian City* (Melbourne, 1969), p. 148.
3 Ronald Alan Mallett, '"A Model Among Towns?": A Study of Progressivism in Launceston During the Interwar Period', unpublished PhD thesis, History and Classics, University of Tasmania, 2011, p. v.
4 *Ibid.*

the betterment of human life:

> One of the greatest dangers of today is the so-called practical man, the man who always wants to know what use a thing is going to be; who cares only for technical education, and grows impatient when one talks of ideals and humanities; who would rather have cheap clerks than good citizens...[5]

Atkinson's polemic was indicative of wider thought currents amongst members of the intellectual elite of Australia in the inter-war years that privileged a broad education over a curriculum based on utilitarian practicality. In 1921, these conditions reached critical mass in Launceston, and the long-disbanded Northern Branch of the Royal Society of Tasmania was re-formed, to great fanfare.

Two figures loom especially large as the driving forces behind the re-formation of the Northern Branch. These men were John Moore-Robinson, a Hobart-based civil servant, and William Robert Rolph, the proprietor of Launceston's *Examiner* newspaper.[6] John Moore-Robinson had been a member of the Royal Society since 1919, and was elected to the council of the Royal Society in April of 1921.[7] The year 1921 was also the year in which Robinson became Australia's first official archivist.[8] In September 1921, Robinson was also instrumental in the re-formation of the Royal Society's Historical Section.[9] Robinson's rise within the Royal Society was rapid; the following year, in 1922, Robinson was appointed Treasurer.[10] Outside of his work in the Society, Robinson was the librarian and publicity officer at the Chief Secretary's Department in Hobart, which saw him oversee government records and newspapers stored in the vaults of the Supreme Court.[11]

Robinson was intensely interested in Tasmanian history, and sought to collect archival records from across the island for collection and archiving. In early 1921,

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5 Meredith Atkinson, *The New Social Order: A Study of Post-War Reconstruction* (Sydney, 1919), p. 131.

6 In a curious historical parallel, this was a similar partnership to the one that resulted in the first Northern Branch in 1853. In 1921, William Robert Rolph was a prominent Launceston resident and John Moore-Robinson a prominent member of the Royal Society who had been largely based in Hobart. Their partnership in re-forming the Northern Branch recalls that of William Henty (a prominent Launceston resident), and Ronald Campbell Gunn (a prominent member of the Royal Society who had been largely based in Hobart) in 1853.

7 For unclear reasons, Moore-Robinson was elected the month after the other council members, who were all elected in March. See *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1921* (Hobart, 1922), pp. 211, 213.

8 Peter Biskup, 'J. Moore-Robinson: A Trader in Records', *Papers and Proceedings of the 7th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, inc.* (Hobart, 1989), p. 49.

9 Stefan Petrow, 'The Antiquarian Mind: Tasmanian History and the Royal Society of Tasmania 1899-1927', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Volume 137* (Hobart, 2003), p. 70.

10 *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1922* (Hobart, 1923), p. 84.

11 Petrow, 'The Antiquarian Mind', p. 70.

Robinson travelled to Launceston in order to ascertain the nature, and amount, of historical material that lay untouched "in certain stores of old records".[12] He was enthused by the considerable volume of surviving historical material, and wrote a letter to the editor of the *Examiner*, published on 28 April 1921, proclaiming that he was "struck by the magnificent field for historic research," and claimed that the city would be perfect for the formation of a Northern Branch of the Royal Society primarily concerned with matters of history.[13] The current editor, the Progressively-minded Stanley Dryden, capitalised on Robinson's letter, no doubt in collaboration with Rolph, and responded favourably to Robinson's suggestion to re-form the Northern Branch.[14] Dryden moved quickly to placate potential concerns regarding the sustainability of such a group, explaining that when the first attempt at a Northern Branch was launched, Launceston was, "too small to keep such an institution going."[15] However, in 1921, Dryden argued that,

> The position today is very different. Launceston is a city of close to 30,000 people... It is the commercial centre for the most populous half of the island. It is the natural metropolis for the Tasmanian mining industry. There is thus every reason for supposing that if an attempt were made to get a branch of the Royal Society it would meet with success. Among the residents of Launceston today there is, we understand, quite a decent sprinkling of members of the Royal Society. There are scores of others who, we should imagine, would be only too glad to identify themselves with its activities if there were a local branch. The council of the Royal Society, we have no doubt, would welcome the advent of a northern section.[16]

The idea to re-form the Northern Branch was indeed taken up enthusiastically; not just by Royal Society members who resided in the north, but also by other prominent Launceston citizens who were not already members. A letter was quickly drafted and sent to the Royal Society council in Hobart after the publication of Robinson's letter, proposing the formation of a history-focused Northern Branch of the Royal Society. Barely six weeks

12 'Historical Research (To The Editor).' *The Examiner*, 28 April, 1921.
13 *Ibid.*
14 'Royal Society: A Local Branch' *The Examiner*, 28 April, 1921. It is worth noting that the *Examiner* newspaper was a mouthpiece of Progressivism even before Rolph acquired it in 1916. Ronald Mallett argues that the influence of the *Examiner* newspaper, "in promoting Progressivism, within the confines of the city of Launceston, cannot be underestimated." He notes that there was, "... a remarkable continuity in the editorial tone of the paper across the wider Progressive era between 1890 and 1940", led largely by the two senior editors who held the post during that period, F.J. Pritchard and Stanley Dryden. See, Mallett, '"A Model Among Towns?": A Study of Progressivism in Launceston During the Interwar Period', pp. 52-3.
15 'Royal Society: A Local Branch' *The Examiner*, 28 April, 1921.
16 *Ibid.*

after Dryden's proclamation in the *Examiner*, a Royal Society council meeting was held in Hobart on 13 June to discuss the letter.[17] Permission was granted for the formation of a Northern Branch, along with the resolution, "that a letter be written to Mr. W.R. Rolph thanking him for the work he had done in connection with the establishment of a Northern branch."[18]

Rolph's contribution was indeed significant. William Robert Rolph (1864-1948) had become the sole proprietor of the *Examiner* newspaper in 1916.[19] He then renamed the business W.R. Rolph & Sons, collaborating with his son Gordon Burns Rolph (1893-1959).[20] William Robert Rolph was involved in a number of community bodies, among them the Equitable Building Society, Launceston Public Library and the Launceston General Hospital, to name just a few.[21] However, Rolph was also the most influential and tireless northern-based figure in advocating the re-formation of the Northern Branch in 1921. While Rolph himself was not a member of the Royal Society prior to 1921, his association with Robinson existed prior to the Northern's Branch's re-formation. Robinson corresponded with Rolph, discussing the prospect of a Northern Branch devoted to history prior to the publication of his letter in the *Examiner*. In a letter to Rolph, dated 26 April 1921, Moore-Robinson reported to Rolph that,

> In the matter of a Society in Launceston for the purpose chiefly of dealing with Historical matters, I have made enquiries from the Secretary of the Royal Society here, and find that there will be no difficulty at this end in establishing a section of the Society in Launceston.[22]

This letter indicates the scope of Robinson's association with Rolph prior to the formation of the Northern Branch, which Rolph no doubt valued. In the lead-up to the formation of the Northern Branch, Rolph used his position at the *Examiner* extensively, publicising news of the development of proceedings related to the coming formation of the Northern Branch earnestly in his newspapers, as well as sending letters of invitation to numerous prominent figures in the Launceston community seeking their involvement.[23]

17 'Royal Society: Northern Branch to be Formed' *Mercury*, Tuesday 14 June, 1921.
18 *Ibid.*
19 S.M. Dent, 'Rolph, Sir William Robert (1864-1948)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/rolph-william-robert-8262, accessed 19 July, 2013.
20 *Ibid.*
21 *Ibid.*
22 Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Unclassified, Royal Society (Northern Branch) Collection, 'John Moore-Robinson to William Robert Rolph, 26 April 1921' in folder, 'Royal Society – History of Foundation [1921 etc.]'.
23 Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Unclassified, Royal Society (Northern Branch) Collection, various letters of invitation, in folder, 'Royal Society – History of Foundation [1921 etc.]'.

On 18 May 1921, Rolph hosted a preliminary meeting at the Mechanics Institute to discuss the possibility of forming a Northern Branch.[24] This meeting was attended by a prominent cross-section of the northern community, with representatives across a broad range of professional, political and theological capacities. John Moore-Robinson was also in attendance, and was reported to have said that, "although he was not a citizen of Launceston, he desired to see the whole of the people of Tasmania engaged in useful pursuits."[25] He was also apparently, "impressed by the representative gathering," at the Mechanics' Institute, which indicated to him the hunger of the Launceston community for the establishment of a Northern Branch.[26]

Robinson's observation about the "representative gathering" of northern-based individuals merits further examination. The highly-professional make-up of these individuals reflects significant growth of the educated middle class in the years between the first Northern Branch in 1853 and the re-formation of the group in 1921. The individuals in attendance at the 18 May meeting was reported in the *Examiner*, and provides considerable insight into the constitution of the Northern Branch's initial membership base.[27]

From this list of invitees, a considerable amount of information can be drawn about the most prominent early members of the Northern Branch. Fifty-three individuals were personally invited to attend the meeting at the Mechanics Institute. Of these fifty-three invitees, thirty attended. Of these thirty attendees, only four were members of the Royal Society of Tasmania at the time. Three of these individuals were Launceston residents, the fourth being John Moore-Robinson himself, who was a resident of Hobart. The Launceston residents were Clive Loftus Hills (a government geologist who was elected to the Royal Society in 1913); Gustave Heuse Hogg, (a doctor and chairman at the 18 May 1921 meeting, who was elected in 1918); and G.W. Waterhouse, (a solicitor, who was also

24 'Royal Society of Tasmania: Proposal of a Northern Branch', *The Examiner*, 19 May, 1921.
25 *Ibid.*
26 *Ibid.*
27 The *Examiner* noted that, by invitation, the following individuals were present. These were, "Dr. G.H. Hogg (chairman), Hon. Tas Shields, his Worship the Mayor (Alderman A.W. Monds), Miss M. Fox, M.A., Drs. A.O. Tymms, W.K. McIntyre, Rev. E.G. Muschamp, Messrs. H.H. Scott, Loftus Hills, G.W. Waterhouse, A.G. Horner, J.E. Heritage, W.D. Weston, L.S. Bruce, F.J. Heyward, J.R. Forward, W.R. Rolph, R.J. Strike, C. Eberhard, W. Miller, A.E. Evershed, H. Eyre, W. Wright, V. von Bertouch, Wm. Hogg, W.D. Reid, R.S. Padman, A. Hill, S. Spurling jun, and J. Moore-Robinson (Hobart). Apologies were received from Mrs. Justin Brown, Revs. J.W. Bethune, G.M. Baird, and F.C. Crotty, Dr. R. McClinton, Messrs. R. Lewis Parker, R.O.M. Miller, J. Roughan Clarke, F.J. Holmes, C.A. Wright, Claude James, A.G. Waterworth, F.R. Unsworth, Wm. C. Oldham, Ernest Whitfield, F.B. Jackson, C.V. Brooks (Director of Education), W.L. Grace, S. Dryden, J.A. Birchall, A.H. Masters, and Drs. A.E. Panting and L. Clarke Webster."

elected in 1918).[28] While these three individuals were notable for being the only Launceston residents who were already members of the Royal Society, they were clearly far from the only individuals with an active interest in the group. Of the twenty-six remaining attendees, only two did not join the Northern Branch after its formation on 27 June 1921. These were A.W. Monds, Mayor of Launceston, and William Dubrelle Weston, a local theologian.[29]

Moreover, fourteen out of the twenty-three individuals who professed inability to attend the 18 May 1921 meeting also joined the Royal Society in 1921, bringing the total new membership arising from this meeting alone to thirty-eight. Most significantly of all, however, the Northern Branch also attracted a considerable membership from outside the immediate circle of invitees at the 18 May 1921 meeting. The Northern Branch annual report in the Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society indicate that by the end of the year, the Northern Branch comprised sixty-three members.[30] The "List of Members" section of the same Papers and Proceedings lists a host of new, Launceston-based members having joined the Society in 1921.[31]

As a group, these invitees act as a telling cross-section of the state of intellectual vitality in the north of the state. While these individuals were a motley collection in some ways – from clergy to lawyers, school teachers to diplomats – they shared one common characteristic, in that they were all professional men and women. With very few exceptions (one notable exception being Loftus Hills, the geologist) none of their careers were defined by research qualifications or activity in the fields of science or history. These individuals had an active interest in inquiry into these fields, but such interest was outside of their professional lives.

This membership information also sheds light on demographic contrasts between the 1853 and 1921 Northern Branches. As noted previously, scientific discourse within the Royal Society had traditionally been conducted by semi-idle, wealthy males and "gentlemen-at-leisure", both in the antipodes and the metropole, in the nineteenth century. The 1853 Northern Branch of the Royal Society was predominately composed of members

28 'List of Members', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1921* (Hobart, 1922), pp. 204-213.

29 'Obituary: Mr. W.D. Weston' *The Examiner*, 6 November, 1948. This was deduced from cross-referencing the list of invitees against the 'List of Members' section of the *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1921*.

30 'Branch Reports: Northern Branch. Report, 1921', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1921* (Hobart, 1922), p. 216.

31 'List of Members', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1921* (Hobart, 1922), pp. 204-213.

of this class, with Ronald Campbell Gunn being a typical example. However, although the invitees to the 1921 meeting were undeniably bourgeois individuals, there is not a single "gentleman-at-leisure" among them.

Among the thirty-eight invitees who joined the Northern Branch in 1921, the three most highly-represented occupations were teaching (nine persons), medicine (six persons), and law (four persons). Clearly, these were individuals whose professional lives placed them squarely within the elite realm of the community.[32] These men and women joined the Northern Branch out of personal interest and a desire for intellectual stimulation, not to stave off idleness, but as a supplement to their professional lives.

The official inauguration of the Northern Branch was conducted on Monday 27 June, 1921. Rolph's *Examiner* was, unsurprisingly, less than detached in its reporting of this development, boasting that, "the official opening of the northern branch of the Royal Society of Tasmania, performed by the State Governor last evening, was an event of no small importance."[33] It adds bluntly, "It is quite time Launceston had a society of this kind."[34] *The Daily Telegraph* was more circumspect, reflecting that the Northern Branch was not, in fact, a new body in Launceston, but "a body which had been in such a peaceful slumber for 60 years."[35]

The elected Northern Branch committee reflected an occupationally-wide, yet highly-educated membership. The 1921 committee included Dr. Gustave Heuse Hogg, Rev. J. W. Bethune, Dr. C. W. Atkinson, Herbert Hedley Scott, Clive Loftus Hills, Frank Heyward, F.M. Littler, W.D. Reid, J.R. Forward (who became the first Secretary and Treasurer) and G.W. Waterhouse (who was elected chairman).[36] Reiterating the sentiments of the Hobart members earlier that month, the Northern Branch report declared that, "this meeting decided to record its appreciation and thanks to Mr. Rolph for his work leading to the formation of a Northern Branch of the Society."[37]

In order to understand how and why the Northern Branch of the Royal Society re-emerged with such enthusiasm and vitality in this particular time and place, one must examine the intellectual climate in which it emerged. First, it must be noted that the re-

32 This information was taken from various obituaries, membership lists in Royal Society Papers and Proceedings, and a limited amount of personal correspondence.
33 'The Royal Society', *The Examiner*, 28 June, 1921.
34 *Ibid.*
35 'Scientific Research: Royal Society of Tasmania: Inaugural Meeting of the Northern Branch: The Governor Presides', *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 June, 1921.
36 'Branch Reports: Northern Branch. Report, 1921', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1921* (Hobart, 1922), p. 216.
37 *Ibid.*

formed Northern Branch emerged at the tail end of an intellectual era. Joan Clarke argues that there were three successive types of organisations which aimed to encourage and facilitate scientific endeavour throughout Australia's history.[38] The Royal Societies that emerged in the various Australian colonies in the nineteenth century (starting with Tasmania in 1843) were typical of the "first" type of group, which were "formal organisations that promoted interactions between 'scientists' (as they existed) and interested lay persons and amateurs."[39] Clarke also notes that, "those who set them up and who joined them tended to have some professional interest (as professors, teachers... doctors), or were members of the educated public..."[40] This classification rings true of both the 1853 and 1921 Northern Branches, presenting one aspect of continuity between the two otherwise-distinct incarnations of the same group.

However, unlike the members of the original Northern Branch, the bourgeois men and women of the re-formed 1921 Northern Branch were profoundly influenced by the contemporary social currents of "Progressivism". Imported from the United States, Progressive ideas found considerable purchase in Australia in the early decades of the twentieth century. Progressivism in Australia has been well examined by historians such as Michael Roe, who suggested that the movement was essentially limited to the educated bourgeois classes.[41] Progressivism embodied, "...an array of secular, transnational reform coalitions which emphasized government interventionism and reliance on expertise, when attempting to solve the largely urban problems presented by industrialization."[42] Stefan Petrow argues that Progressivism, "sought to make society 'organic, integrated and purposeful' and placed 'the general good' ahead of individual good."[43] Progressivism emerged in the final decade of the nineteenth century against a backdrop of economic unrest, and reached its zenith by the end of the First World War.[44] The Great Depression of the 1930s also effected a resurgence of Progressive ideals.[45] Progressive ideology was a

38 Joan Clarke, 'Scientists as Intellectuals', in Brian Head & James Walter, eds., *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (Melbourne, 1988), p. 92

39 Royal Societies emerged in Tasmania in 1843, South Australia in 1853, Victoria in 1860, New South Wales in 1866, Queensland in 1884 and Western Australia in 1913. See Clarke, 'Scientists as Intellectuals', p. 92.

40 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

41 Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960* (St. Lucia, 1984), p. 12.

42 Mallett, '"A Model Among Towns?": A Study of Progressivism in Launceston During the Interwar Period', p. v.

43 Stefan Petrow, 'Progressivism in Australia: The Case of John Daniel Fitzgerald 1900-1922', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society* 90:1 (2004), p. 53.

44 Mallett, '"A Model Among Towns?": A Study of Progressivism in Launceston During the Interwar Period', p. v.

45 *Ibid.*

clear influence on the individuals who constituted the re-formed Northern Branch. Ronald Mallett argues that, "although diverse in nature, Launceston Progressives during the interwar period shared a common belief that by re-shaping the the lower orders in their own image, they could rescue them from ignorance, poverty and disease."[46]

In his seminal work *Nine Australian Progressives*, Michael Roe examines the lives and exploits of nine notable exemplars of the Progressive ideology. These Progressives were, "influential in the public service, the professions, law courts, universities, and opinion shaping."[47] Peter Haeusler has argued that Progressives, "looked to foster and harness what they saw as the fruits of modernisation: organisation, science [and] expert authority."[48] Roe further argues that Progressives,

> ...were emphatic (some of them, fanatic) in their confidence in *applied* learning. Not only science in the specific sense, but any and every aspect of scholarship and enquiry could only justify itself through capacity for problem solving. The way to do this was itself "scientific": Progressives were ardent collectors of data concerning natural and human phenomena. Thence must comes guides for effective action, to be pursued by bureaucratic and other elites.[49]

Roe uses his nine individuals as a representative cross-section of the Australian Progressive movement more widely. The characteristics he outlines are highly salient to understanding the processes of the re-formed Northern Branch. Since 1914, the Royal Society of Tasmania's avowed aim had been "the advancement of knowledge", with the implicit aim of improving the human condition through intellectual inquiry, a quality that Progressives also embodied.[50] Indeed, Mallett observes of Launceston that, "during the interwar period, the Progressive charge was led by the professional elite of the city."[51] Furthermore, the career tracks that Roe argues were particularly notable in the Progressive movement were especially well-represented in the Northern Branch. Some notable "public servants" included Tasman Shields, K.C. (who, in addition to being an eminent lawyer in the Launceston community, was also a member of the Legislative Council), Leonard Stanthorpe Bruce (long-time Secretary of the government Labour Bureau), and Frank

46 *Ibid.*
47 Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives*, p. 1.
48 Peter Haeusler, 'Progressivism and the Janus Face of "Efficient Citizenship": Meredith Atkinson and Australian Democracy', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 42:1 (1996), p. 25.
49 Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives*, p. 10.
50 J. Somerville, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1943', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society for the year 1943* (Hobart, 1944), p. 200; Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives*, pp. 1-2.
51 Mallett, '"A Model Among Towns?": A Study of Progressivism in Launceston During the Interwar Period', p. v.

Josias Heyward (Launceston alderman) to name just three.[52] Furthermore, the vast majority of the members of the re-formed Northern Branch were professionals in various fields, such as architecture, teaching, medicine, business and pharmacy. Four of the thirty-eight invitees who became members in 1921 were lawyers or solicitors, a figure that represented more than ten percent.[53]

In conclusion, the significance of the Northern Branch of the Royal Society is that it facilitated the unification and cooperation of the bourgeois intellectual class of Launceston who, until that time, were a disparate group of individuals. The Branch allowed them to further not only intellectual progress in the north of the state, but also social uplift for the disadvantaged. For Progressives "'Uplift' became an important motto, having both economic and moral implications for society as a whole and the lower classes in particular."[54] Broadly speaking, the history of the Progressively-inclined Northern Branch parallels the development of Launceston as a place of intellectual and social maturity by the mid-twentieth century. Where the nineteenth century had seen Hobart unequivocally serve as the cultural, intellectual and social hub of the state, the twentieth century saw Launceston begin to catch up, spawning numerous incarnations of organisations that had existed in Hobart for decades – often with Royal Society Northern Branch members at the helm. Other Northern Branch members went on to become highly-significant figures in organisations outside of Launceston, further disseminating the Progressive agenda. In this way, the social cohesion that Northern Branch membership facilitated for Launceston's Progressive men and women definitely contributed to the intellectual development of Launceston and beyond, as well as furthering the stated aim of the Royal Society itself: "the advancement of knowledge".

52 Reynolds, *Launceston: History of an Australian City*, p. 157; 'Obituary: Mr. L.S. Bruce: Long Service with Tourist Bureau' *Mercury*, 9 September 1940; 'Obituary: Mr. Frank Heyward', *The Examiner*, 2 July 1942.

53 This information was taken from various obituaries, membership lists in Royal Society Papers and Proceedings, and a limited amount of personal correspondence.

54 Haeusler, 'Progressivism and the Janus Face of "Efficient Citizenship"', p. 25.

CHAPTER 3: THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NORTHERN BRANCH.

> *...the connexions between provincial urban growth, popular aspirations and the emergence of science are still inadequately understood; and why we lack a differentiated and discriminating history of the rise of science in the provinces, is that historians have too often ignored provincial consciousness.*[1]

With the Northern Branch re-formed and comprising an active Progressive membership, the impetus now turned to producing an active lecture program. Six papers were organised and presented before the Northern Branch in 1921.[2] In the initial few years after the Northern Branch's re-formation, however, there was difficulty in attracting members to present papers. The Annual Report for 1924 notes that although monthly meeting attendance remained fairly constant, "the natural nervousness, or apathy, or lack of energy which prevents the great majority of members from submitting papers for the edification of their fellows, still forms a marked feature of the Northern branch."[3]

In the initial years, the re-formed Northern Branch did not encapsulate the historical focus that Robinson and Rolph had envisaged. Speaking through the *Examiner*, on 28 June 1921, Rolph had declared that, "...what the branch will take up with most enthusiasm depends largely upon the types and the tastes of its membership."[4] This membership clearly reflected the members' predominately scientific interests. Although Rolph had declared that, "in the selection of a committee, the aim was, and wisely, to make it as thoroughly representative as possible of the varying interests", the scientific bias was clearly evident.[5] Hence, for the more historically-minded members, the content of the papers delivered before the Branch in its early years reflected a distinctly scientific focus.

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1 Roy Porter, 'Science, Provincial Culture and Public Opinion in Enlightenment England' *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 3:1 (1980), p. 25.

2 The papers were as follows: on 27 June, "The Application of Science to Warfare on the Western Front" was delivered by Clive Loftus Hills. On July 22, "The Application of the Stereoscope to Science" was delivered by H.H. Scott. On 13 August, "Glimpses of Evolution" was delivered by Dr. W.K. Gregory. On 21 September, "What Astronomy Teaches About the Sun" was delivered by A.T. Kirkaldy. On 21 October, "The Emotions and James' Theory" was delivered by R.O.M. Miller; and on 28 November, "Wonderful Java" was delivered by H.D. Flanagan. See, 'Branch Reports: Northern Branch. Report, 1921', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1921* (Hobart, 1922), p. 216.

3 'Branch Reports: Northern Branch. Annual Report for the year 1924', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1924* (Hobart, 1925), p. 157.

4 'The Royal Society', *The Examiner*, 28 June, 1921.

5 *Ibid.*

Of the six papers given at the Northern Branch in 1921, for example, five of them concerned scientific subjects, and the sixth, entitled "Wonderful Java", presented by H.D Flanagan, was evidently a travelogue of Flanagan's exotic holiday.[6] This pattern continues unbroken for the next two years. In 1922, only one of the six lectures delivered before the Northern Branch was directly concerned with history, and this was a paper delivered by John Moore-Robinson, entitled "Discovery and Settlement of Northern Tasmania".[7] In 1923, out of four papers and two lectures, only one paper (delivered by G.W. Waterhouse, entitled, "The Settlement of the North-West Coast of Tasmania by the Van Diemen's Land Company") appeared to have a historical focus.[8] By the time the 1923 Annual Report was published, the historical focus which Rolph and Robinson had envisioned for the Northern Branch was not evident. Nonetheless, there were still numerous Northern Branch members who felt that Launceston required an arm devoted to historical enquiry. It was not long before these members began to campaign for the formation of a northern-based body resembling the Historical Section attached to the parent Royal Society in Hobart. Once more, John Moore-Robinson was at the forefront of this effort.

On Friday 23 July 1926, a meeting was held at the Launceston Mechanics Institute to discuss the possible establishment of a Historical Section of the Royal Society in the north, following "an interesting lecture by Mr. J. Moore-Robinson" delivered to the Northern Branch two days before.[9] The Friday meeting was attended by representatives from both the Northern and Southern Branches of the Royal Society, as well as the Historical Section in Hobart.[10] Prominent Northern Branch members, including W.R. Rolph, H.H. Scott (Director of the Queen Victoria Museum) Tasman Shields (the current President of the Northern Branch) and J.E. Heritage (an eminent lawyer) were also in attendance.[11] The chairman, Mr. L. Rodway of Hobart, agreed that "...the time was ripe for

6 The papers were as follows: on 27 June, "The Application of Science to Warfare on the Western Front" was delivered by Clive Loftus Hills. On July 22, "The Application of the Stereoscope to Science" was delivered by H.H. Scott. On 13 August, "Glimpses of Evolution" was delivered by Dr. W.K. Gregory. On 21 September, "What Astronomy Teaches About the Sun" was delivered by A.T. Kirkaldy. On 21 October, "The Emotions and James' Theory" was delivered by R.O.M. Miller; and on 28 November, "Wonderful Java" was delivered by H.D. Flanagan. See, 'Branch Reports: Northern Branch. Report, 1921', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1921* (Hobart, 1922), p. 216.

7 'Branch Reports: Northern Branch. Report for 1922', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1922* (Hobart, 1923), p. 99.

8 'Branch Reports: Northern Branch. Reports for 1923', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1923* (Hobart, 1924), p. 181.

9 'Historical Research: Royal Society Discussion: Proposal for Northern Adjunct', *The Examiner*, 24 July, 1926; 'Historical Research', *The Examiner*, 21 July, 1926.

10 'Historical Research: Royal Society Discussion: Proposal for Northern Adjunct', *The Examiner*, 24 July, 1926.

11 *Ibid.*; Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Unclassified, Royal Society (Northern Branch) Collection, 'Northern Branch Committee Members, 1921–'.

the formation of an historical section of the Royal Society in the North. There was much work such a branch could perform, and he regretted that steps had not been taken earlier."[12] This viewpoint was echoed by prominent Launceston-based attendees, including Shields, Padman, and Heritage, who all agreed on the necessity for a Historical Section of the Northern Branch.[13] Tasman Shields made the point that it would difficult for a historical society to survive in Launceston independent of the Royal Society, and this was another reason for a Historical Section to be established, a sentiment echoed by Clive Lord, the Secretary of the parent Society.[14] However, the meeting itself devolved into squabbling over the cost of subscriptions should such a group form as a subsidiary of the Northern Branch.[15] Nonetheless, this episode indicates the degree to which many Northern Branch members were openly prepared to prioritise historical inquiry over science – and this was a divisive theme that would become more stated in the Northern Branch as the group progressed.[16]

Even though the Northern Branch Historical Section never eventuated, as time went on, more papers with historical content were presented. The preservation of historical documents and records, for example, became a recurrent theme. This was something of a new development in Tasmania. As Peter Biskup notes, "disregard for official records has been a part of Tasmania's way of life for most of the island's history...".[17] He notes that many records had, "...simply vanished, [been] destroyed by fire, vermin, mould or human hands."[18] The Northern Branch sought to preserve history by archiving all the documents that were available. Members lamented that, "a great number of Tasmanian records had gone out of the state" and that, "No amount of future study will restore the material that is

12 'Historical Research: Royal Society Discussion: Proposal for Northern Adjunct', *The Examiner*, 24 July, 1926.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.* Shields and Lord would later be profoundly validated in this belief. In December 1929, John Moore-Robinson, determined as ever, became the first President of the newly-formed Historical Society of Tasmania in Launceston (see 'Historical Society Formed at Launceston', *Mercury*, 5 December 1929), which arose out of a suggestion made at a meeting of the Launceston 50,000 League. In February 1950, the Historical Society went into recess, and transferred the entirety of its property and assets to the Northern Branch, a total of £5. 15. 9. See Northern Branch Council minutes for 16 February 1950.

15 'Historical Research: Royal Society Discussion: Proposal for Northern Adjunct', *The Examiner*, 24 July, 1926.

16 *Ibid.* The proposal for the formation of a Northern Historical Section came on the eve of a difficult time for the Historical Section in Hobart. In 1927, the Section received a crippling indictment from an article published in *The Daily Mail*, criticising the quality of the historical lectures. Stefan Petrow notes that after this episode, "the Historical Section in Hobart seems to have fallen into abeyance," and that, "individual members continued to give papers on historical subjects, but not as members of the section." See Stefan Petrow, 'The Antiquarian Mind: Tasmanian History and the Royal Society of Tasmania 1899-1927', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Volume 137* (Hobart, 2003), p. 72.

17 Peter Biskup, 'J. Moore-Robinson: A Trader in Records', *Papers and Proceedings of the 7th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, inc.* (Hobart, 1989), p. 50.

18 *Ibid.*

lost and so the first object must be to preserve what is left. Once preserved it can be worked on at any time, to-day, tomorrow, or a century hence."[19]

Insofar as methodology can be identified, the early historical tendencies of the Northern branch were effectively "monumental". Friedrich Nietzsche argued that monumental history served as a way for people to idealise the past and forge it into something desirable.[20] This was a mode that privileged only the parts of history that were perceived as desirable, while "whole segments of it are forgotten, despised, and flow away... only individual embellished facts" survive.[21] Indeed, in its initial years, the Northern Branch was an active participant in the sanitation of what most people considered to be Tasmania's most taboo legacy: that of convictism. Tasmania's convict stigma was pervasive, and lamented by many of the island's inhabitants. Don Barker notes that this distaste even extended to the archivists of convict records.[22] In 1900, famed Tasmanian photographer John Watt Beattie was grudgingly allowed access to archival material related to Port Macquarie after he emphasised that he would not use the information, "in any way detrimental to the interests of the colony".[23] In 1936 Basil Rait, the founder of the historically-focused Tasmanian Society, maintained that Tasmania's convict image was, "a hideous stain upon the pages of our history".[24]

Much of this concern over Tasmania's convict heritage was related to a sense of image and identity.[25] As Nietzsche suggested, individuals often conflate their own identity with the history of their geographical space: effectively "the history of his city becomes... the history of himself..."[26] In an island state with a dark history of convictism and Aboriginal mistreatment, the actual *presentation* of history was central to maintaining a positive perspective of oneself, as well as one's inherited historical legacy. For the Tasmanians of the early twentieth century, there was only selective moral inspiration to be

19 '"Best Year in History": Northern Branch of the Royal Society' *Mercury*, 21 May, 1940.'; Launceston Reference Library, LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes, 'Tasmanian History' proposal, September 1948.

20 Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', *Untimely Meditations* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 68-71.

21 *Ibid.*, p. 71.

22 Don Barker, 'John Watt Beattie and the Beattie Collections', unpublished Honours thesis, History and Classics, University of Tasmania, 2012, p. 17.

23 *Ibid.*

24 'Archives Office of Tasmania, NS 314/4, Speech by Basil Rait, 12 September 1936', cited in Stefan Petrow, 'Conservative and Reverent Souls: The Growth of Historical Consciousness in Tasmania 1935-60, p. 136.

25 For more information on the interplay of image and identity in Tasmania's history, see, Marian Walker, '"Memories, Dreams and Inventions": The Evolution of Tasmania's Tourism Image 1803-1939', unpublished PhD thesis, History and Classics, University of Tasmania, 2008.

26 Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', p. 73.

drawn from the state's European ancestors. Although the Royal Society branches of the twentieth century typically lamented the tragedy that befell the Tasmanian Aborigines, convict matters were typically either discussed obliquely or avoided altogether.[27] As Lloyd Robson argues, Tasmanians were, "determined to live down their past and pervert their history by stressing respectability."[28]

The widespread Tasmanian adoption of "monumental" historical practices in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries contributed to a sanitised version of the island's history. The historically-inclined members of the Northern Branch were initially active collaborators in this process. Like their southern counterparts, the northerners typically, "...took an uncritical approach to their subjects and were celebratory, nostalgic and preservationist... they were interested in celebrating but not challenging the status quo."[29] They "sought to create a positive version of the past and largely ignored darker deeds."[30] In July 1926, for example, the Northern Branch council decided, "to express its regret at the proposal to film 'The term of his Natural Life'" on the grounds that "...such a production would be a very bad advertisement for Tasmania."[31]

By the mid-twentieth century, however, there are indications that this attitude towards Tasmania's convict past was changing within the Northern Branch. Historical perspectives within the group began to change into an "antiquarian" model. Unlike monumental history, Nietzsche argues, the antiquarian historian "likes to persist in the familiar and the revered of old."[32] Unlike monumental history, antiquarian history claims little "rulership" over history.[33] On 4 March 1947, amidst state government consideration of the preservation of historic buildings, the Northern Branch, "decided to recommend that convict built bridges and waterchannels, many of them very fine examples of such works, be noted with a view to their ultimate preservation".[34] Although such structures were in many ways a positive legacy and benign reminder of Tasmania's convict history (in a way that, for example, the prison buildings at Port Arthur were not), these "bridges and waterchannels" nonetheless embodied a legacy that many Tasmanians had been eager to forget. The fact that they were considered worthy of preservation indicates a shift in

27 Stefan Petrow, 'The Antiquarian Mind: Tasmanian History and the Royal Society of Tasmania 1899-1927', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, Volume 137* (Hobart, 2003), pp. 68, 71.
28 Lloyd Robson, 'Tasmania: A Personal Reflection', *Meanjin* 37:2 (1978), p. 222.
29 Petrow, 'The Antiquarian Mind', p. 73.
30 Petrow, 'Conservative and Reverent Souls', p. 131.
31 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 26 July, 1926.
32 Nietzsche, 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life', p. 72.
33 *Ibid.*, pp. 70-1.
34 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 4 March 1947.

historical thinking among the Tasmanian intelligentsia.

This shift in the Northern Branch towards acknowledging Tasmania's true past was further evident in events of the following year. In September 1948, two official reports were prepared by the Northern Branch Secretary, Brian Plomley, formally proposing Northern Branch research into Tasmania's biology and history. Initially, Plomley's discussion of convicts in early settlement is carefully managed. He argues that transportation,

> ...provided not only the criminal, upon whom unnecessary emphasis is laid, but also brought here a military government and a number of persons convicted of social offences. The military caste had a strong influence upon social development, something of which is still to be felt. Many of the transportees were men of initiative whose influence on our development was valuable...[35]

However, while Plomley was clearly privileging the influence of the more respectable classes in Tasmania's development, he then laments that,

> ... there has been since the cessation of Transportation a real or passive wish to forget everything relating to the past, hastening the present day by a universal indifference to anything "old" and its classification as junk, to be got rid of as soon as it obtrudes into one's consciousness.[36]

By drawing attention to the selective memory of the Tasmanian people, Plomley implicitly suggests that rather than forgetting Tasmania's convict past, the state ought to reconcile with it. Plomley's two reports, both scientific and historical, were adopted unanimously.[37] The rest of Northern Branch council was clearly satisfied with Plomley's treatment of the matter, since, "it was resolved that the Council's appreciation of the work of the Secretary (Mr Plomley) in preparing the statements be recorded."[38] The council gave their blessing to the submission of these proposals, having, "resolved that Mr Heritage (Chairman), Dr. Craig and Mr Plomley should take any action considered necessary in connection with the matter."[39]

In contrast to their slow change in attitude towards convicts, the twentieth century Royal Society, and its Northern Branch, were largely sympathetic towards Tasmanian

35 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes, 'Tasmanian History' proposal, September 1948.
36 *Ibid.*.
37 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 8 September 1948.
38 *Ibid.*
39 *Ibid.*

Aborigines from the outset. The Royal Society of the nineteenth century had a distinctly negative history with the Tasmanian Aborigines. The mutilation of William Lanne's corpse in 1869 by Dr. William Lodewyk Crowther and Dr. George Stoker presents one grisly example, as does Truganini's exhumation for "scientific purposes" in 1878.[40] However, in the twentieth century, particularly from the 1920s onwards, the Royal Society branches in both the north and south typically treated the Aborigines with respect in their scholarly endeavours, and encouraged greater public education of their history.[41]

In November 1946, Archibald Lawrence Meston delivered a paper before the Northern Branch entitled, "The Tasmanians and their Culture", a largely anthropological lecture on the Tasmanian Aborigines. The lecture discussed, "...the history of the contact of the aboriginal with the white man..." as well as physical characteristics, "...habits and customs, his tools, weapons and utensils... all aspects of his life and culture...".[42] Following this lecture, J.E. Heritage noted that there were a large number of Tasmanian Aboriginal stone implements available for study stored at the Queen Victoria Museum.[43] These were, he argued, "evidence of a high stone culture and would make a good subject for children of the State schools to follow up."[44] Furthermore, Heritage also noted that the Queen Victoria Museum held, "a fine collection of stone implements" which might also facilitate public awareness of Tasmanian Aboriginal history and culture.[45] It was resolved at the council meeting held the following month that a letter be written to the Minister for Education recommending the adoption of this suggestion.[46]

Archibald Lawrence Meston (1890-1951) was a Tasmanian-born teacher and later Headmaster, who joined the Northern Branch in 1921.[47] Meston went on to become a prominent "educationist, historian and anthropologist" within the Royal Society.[48] Indeed, John Reynolds dates his influence to as far back as the re-formation of the Northern Branch, arguing that "a group of members under the leadership of Archibald Meston, a

40 For more information on both of these episodes in Tasmanian Aboriginal history, see, Tom Wise, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Aborigines in the Nineteenth Century', unpublished Honours thesis, History and Classics, University of Tasmania, 2003, pp. 35-6; Stefan Petrow, 'The Last Man: The Mutilation of William Lanne in 1869 and its Aftermath', *Intellect and Emotion: Perspectives on Australian History: Essays in Honour of Michael Roe*, p. 18.

41 Petrow, 'The Antiquarian Mind', p. 71.

42 'Northern Branch Annual Report, 1946', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1946* (Hobart, 1947), p. 142.

43 'Suggests School Study of Tasmanian Blacks' *Mercury*, 27 November, 1946.

44 *Ibid.*

45 *Ibid.*

46 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 9 December 1946.

47 Norman James Brian Plomley, 'Meston, Archibald Lawrence (1890-1951)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/meston-archibald-lawrence-7563, accessed 30/10/2013.

48 *Ibid.*

leading educationalist, laid the foundations of modern historical research in Northern Tasmania."[49] Meston's more notable contributions included the publication of several books of Tasmanian history and anthropology, and his work with the Cradle Mountain Reserve Board, of which he was appointed Chairman in 1932.[50] As well as serving as the President of the Northern Branch from 1935-1938, Meston was on the Royal Society Council in Hobart for ten years, and served as Vice-President in 1942-43, 1949 and 1950.[51]

Meston's work within the Royal Society also brought him into the orbit of Brian Plomley, who would later become a significant and influential figure in Australian historical circles. Plomley graduated from the University of Sydney in 1935 with a Bachelor of Science, and arrived in Tasmania in 1938.[52] However, like Meston, Plomley also developed a great personal interest in the Tasmanian Aborigines, and produced an influential corpus of work on the subject. In 1966, Plomley published what is arguably his magnum opus, the seminal *Friendly Mission*. In this text, Plomley chronicled the previously-unexamined diaries of George Augustus Robinson, a pivotal figure in the history of European encounters with the Tasmanian Aborigines. Eminent Tasmanian historian Lloyd Robson commended Plomley's work as, "advancing the knowledge of the Aborigines by more than 100 per cent at one bound", and credited Plomley himself as, "the foremost student of the Aborigines".[53] The interest shared by Meston and Plomley in the Tasmanian Aborigines was clearly a factor in their friendship. Fifteen years after Meston's death in 1951, Plomley's dedication in *Friendly Mission* reads, "For A L Meston. In affectionate memory of a friendship".[54] In recognition of his services to historical research, Plomley received the Order of Australia in 1979, while the Royal Society of Tasmania saw fit to bestow upon him the Clive Lord Medal in 1983.[55]

Whilst serving as the the acting Secretary of the Royal Society and Director of the Queen Victoria Museum for six months of 1938, Plomley used his position to publicly call

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49 John Reynolds, *Launceston: History of an Australian City* (Melbourne, 1969), p. 148. However, Reynolds mistakenly notes the year of the Northern Branch's formation as 1923. In this light, it is unclear as to whether he argues that historical enquiry within the Northern Branch began in 1923, or with the actual year of formation, that is to say, 1921.

50 Norman James Brian Plomley, 'Meston, Archibald Lawrence (1890-1951)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/meston-archibald-lawrence-7563, accessed 30/10/2013; 'Obituary Notice: Archibald Lawrence Meston, M.A. (1890-1951)', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society, Volume 86* (Hobart, 1952), p. 161.

51 *Ibid.*

52 Norman James Brian Plomley ed., *Friendly Mission:The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834* (Launceston, 2008), p. x.

53 Lloyd Robson, *A Short History of Tasmania* (Melbourne, 1985), pp. 12, 45.

54 Norman James Brian Plomley ed., *Friendly Mission:The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834* (Launceston, 2008), p. vii.

55 *Ibid.*, p. x.

for the preservation of any documents related to early settlement in Tasmania, highlighting the growing connection between the Northern Branch and the Queen Victoria Museum. On 27 May, Plomley wrote a letter to the editor of the *Examiner*, declaring that:

> ...the Royal Society of Tasmania, northern branch, would be willing and glad to receive books and documents relating to the early history of Tasmania. The northern branch now has a permanent home in the new wing at the Queen Victoria Museum with library space, and the council feels that the society should become a permanent repository here in the north of all such records. Those who donate or bequeath books and papers to the society would be assured of their permanent custody, and would know that by so doing they were preserving for all time invaluable historical records.[56]

The year 1939 saw the largest influx of new members in Northern Branch history, prompting many to call it "the best year in the history of the branch".[57] It was also a year, however, in which priorities were re-evaluated, and the dichotomy of science and history was increasingly played out within the ranks of the Northern Branch. The appropriately named J.E. Heritage was a prominent figure in this debate. Heritage was a lawyer by profession, and an original member of the Northern Branch, having been present at the meeting at the Mechanics Institute on 18 May 1921.[58] He had also become a Board member of the Launceston General Hospital in 1922, and was a prominent figure in the Northern Branch push for a dedicated northern Historical Section in 1926.[59] Heritage was an intensely patriotic individual – though it was Tasmania, not Australia as a whole, which commanded his allegiance.[60] Heritage was a life-long advocate for the preservation of Tasmanian (and particularly Northern) history. In Heritage's eyes, it was the duty of the Royal Society to safeguard the historical record. In 1940, the *Mercury* published an article in which Heritage argued that, "people should realise that the Royal Society was an historical body, and the proper custodian of any historical records, books, and documents available."[61] This situation had undoubtedly been exacerbated by John Moore-Robinson, who had been a prolific seller of records during his time working for the Archives Office of

56 'Early Records of Tasmania Sought by Royal Society Branch', *The Examiner*, 27 May, 1938.
57 '"Best Year in History": Northern Branch of the Royal Society' *Mercury*, 21 May, 1940.
58 'Royal Society of Tasmania: Proposal of a Northern Branch', *The Examiner*, 19 May, 1921.
59 Clifford Craig, *Launceston General Hospital: First Hundred Years, 1863-1963* (Hobart, 1963), p. 16; 'Historical Research: Royal Society Discussion: Proposal for Northern Adjunct', *The Examiner*, 24 July, 1926.
60 Craig, *Launceston General Hospital*, p. 16. Stefan Petrow notes that the Tasmanian Tourism Board, "...wanted to foster 'Love of country' and 'Patriotism' through the study of history". This recalls these qualities in Heritage, who was himself deeply fascinated by history. See Petrow, 'Conservative and Reverent Souls', *Public History Review* 11 (2004), p. 136.
61 '"Best Year in History": Northern Branch of the Royal Society' *Mercury*, 21 May, 1940.

Tasmania throughout the 1920s.[62] On 1 June 1943, the *Mercury* published a further plea from Heritage, who advocated that the Northern Branch and the Queen Victoria Museum should collaborate in the preservation of historical material. "The museum, he said, should retain its archives, and he hoped persons who had records of historical interest would send them to the Society for preservation."[63]

However, despite Heritage's assertions that the Royal Society was fundamentally a historical group, the Northern Branch, nonetheless still had a heavily scientific focus. Indeed, the papers delivered before the Northern Branch in 1940 were largely of a scientific nature.[64] In the mid-1940s, the President of the Northern Branch, Fred Smithies, recognised the contrasting interests of members, and sought to reconcile them. On 26 March, 1946, Smithies issued a memorandum to all members proposing to re-assess the scope of the Northern Branch's activities. "Your Council feels that the Branch should interest itself actively in a programme of research relating to Northern Tasmania."[65] He continued,

> Many people here in the North are interested in local history, and they should find that your Council's proposal that the Branch should concern itself with the preservation of books and documents relating to Northern Tasmania and carry out research into its history, will give them great scope not only to follow up a subject in which they are interested but to perform a public duty of great value in preserving data of historical importance.[66]

Smithies also acknowledged the interests of the scientifically-inclined members of the Northern Branch, suggesting that,

> Other members who are interested in some branch of science will find

62 Peter Biskup, 'J. Moore-Robinson: A Trader in Records', *Papers and Proceedings of the 7th Biennial Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, inc.* (Hobart, 1989), pp. 47-48.

63 'Historical Records: Retention Urged', *Mercury,* 1 June, 1943.

64 The Northern's Branch's annual meeting for that year had been on 20 May, the day before the *Mercury* article with Heritage's assertion was published. Rev. Lewis E. Barnard had given a talk on "the history of Tasman's peninsula." It seems likely that Heritage's assertion was obtained this evening – and that he spoke too soon. The next paper delivered before the Northern Branch was on 24 June, and entitled, 'Recent Researches on Fishes' by Eric Scott. On 15 July, Dr. R.Y. Matthew (the "Medical Officer in Charge" at the Commonwealth Health Laboratory), discussed his work; and on 19 August, J.D. Valentine lectured on the properties and usefulness of flax. The next two papers were ostensibly histories, but relating to scientific and technological advancements. On 16 September, Dr. A.N. Lewis gave an illustrated lecture on 'Tasmanian Physiographical History', and on 21 October, H.J. King gave a short lecture entitled, 'Colour Photography'. See 'Northern Branch: Annual Report, 1940', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society for the year 1940* (Hobart, 1941), pp. 86-88.

65 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 26 March, 1946.

66 *Ibid.*

> great possibilities for constructive work in the proposal to carry out a scientific survey of a locality in Northern Tasmania. The results of this work will be written up, forming a permanent record concerning the area.[67]

Smithies' memorandum presages a grander purpose for the members of the Northern Branch than as simply a gathering of individuals with a casual interest in science and history. The year after Smithies memorandum was delivered, a meeting was held at the Queen Victoria Museum on 15 April 1947 to discuss the Branch's work. At this meeting, one member, a Mr. Doe, proposed that "the Branch should be an active society engaged in scientific and historical research and not exist merely to listen to the lectures which might be arranged from time to time."[68] On Tuesday 11 June, 1946, it was decided that the scientifically-inclined members would engage in, "the collection of plants in the Tamar Valley to provide information on flora in connection with the revision of Rodway's Flora of Tasmania...", while the historians would investigate, "the history of the semaphore in Northern Tasmania."[69] In a further indication of the growing entanglement of the two institutions, it was also decided that, "the Queen Victoria Museum should be the centre for the work and that all material, data, reports, etc., should be deposited there."[70]

This agenda was very different to those which Joan Clarke argues characterised the "first" wave of scientific bodies in Australia. This included amateur groups like the Royal Society, whose members, she argues, were typically professionals who worked in other fields, but participated in science as a leisure activity.[71] Indeed, Clarke argues that the "second" type of scientific organisations which emerged in Australia for the advancement of science were, "more specialised professional institutions... created to satisfy and promote the specific interests and functions of practitioners of particular fields of science in major discipline areas."[72] She includes in this analysis organisations such as the Australian Chemical Institute, the Institution of Engineers and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (which would go on the become the CSIRO in 1949).[73] While

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67 *Ibid.*
68 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 15 April 1947.
69 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 11 June 1946. Unfortunately, several months later, it was discovered that another individual, one W.E. Masters, was already working on a "detailed account of the semaphore system in Tasmania". The Northern Branch semaphore project was dropped, and "an investigation into the history of the industrialisation of the Tamar Valley" was commenced in its place. See minutes for 11 June and 26 November 1946.
70 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 11 June 1946.
71 Joan Clarke, 'Scientists as Intellectuals', in Brian Head & James Walter, eds., *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (Melbourne, 1988), p. 92.
72 *Ibid.*, p. 93.
73 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

Smithies' program of historical and scientific research was hardly as focused as the aims of these groups, it did nonetheless elevate the Northern Branch above the qualities of the "first" wave of organisations, indicating that the membership of the group was shifting into a distinctly more learned group.

Indeed, it is clear that by the mid-century, the Northern Branch was no longer composed mainly of amateurs whose professional occupation was outside the usual scope of the Branch's activities. In 1946, Chief Justice Sir John Morris presided at Archibald Lawrence Meston's lecture on Tasmanian Aborigines. Morris commented on the learned nature of the members in attendance. Although he expressed "... his pleasure at being able to preside at the meeting, the Governor said he felt somewhat out of place among so many scientists".[74] This was a far cry from an era where observers like Bulwer Lytton proclaimed that, "...the cultivation of science is not a profession."[75]

74 'Governor at Royal Society Meeting' *The Examiner*, 27 November, 1946.
75 Bulwer Lytton, *England and the English* (London, 1836), p. 248.

CHAPTER 4: THE CONNECTIVITY OF THE NORTHERN BRANCH.

An important feature of the re-formed Northern Branch of the Royal Society was the social and intellectual connectivity of the organisation with other entities in northern Tasmania. The Progressives of the Northern Branch were deeply involved in a host of various northern institutions, many of which formed in the wake of the Northern Branch. These institutions often had committees composed of Northern Branch members. These organisations at large embodied a more focused, singular agenda than the Northern Branch, whose scope had traditionally been intentionally broad. Yet, in many ways, the narrower focus of these groups served as a way for Northern Branch members to engage more meaningfully with their own individual interests. This chapter will examine a selection of the most important examples of this trend, and note their connectivity with the Northern Branch.

Natural history had been a focus of the Royal Society of Tasmania since 1843, when it was then called "The Royal Society of Van Diemen's Land for Botany, Horticulture and the Advancement of Science".[1] Tasmania's natural environment captured the minds of many individuals in the Society throughout its history.[2] With the re-formation of the Northern Branch in 1921, perceptions towards the natural world were tempered by Progressive ideals, which sought to reconcile human mastery over nature with conservationist tendencies.[3] As Philip and Roger Bell argue, Progressives, "sought to rescue industrial society from the evils of industrial and urban change without threatening either capitalism itself or the privileges of the new middle classes."[4] As Michael Roe explains, a feature of early twentieth century Australian Progressivism was the seemingly-contradictory, yet parallel, concern for not only the advancement of science, history, and technology, but also for the preservation of the natural world.[5] As Roe explains, "it was

1 John Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 93.
2 Sally Kohlstedt argues, for example, that the American "Nature Study" curriculum that was imported to Australia in the early twentieth century was adopted in Tasmania with particular enthusiasm. See, Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, 'Nature Study in North America and Australasia, 1890-1945: International Connections and Local Interpretations' *Historical Records of Australian Science* 11:3 (1997), pp. 439, 449.
3 The emergence of zoos in Australia serve as a particularly salient example of this. Sydney's Taronga Zoo, for example, was opened in 1916, shaped by "internationalist and nationalist ideals that encompassed scientific, educationalist, conservationist, entertainment and engineering pursuits." See, Natalie Lloyd, "'Among Birds and Beasts": Environmental Reform, Racial Preservation and Australian Progressives at the Zoological Gardens', *Journal of Australian Studies* 84 (2005), p. 44.
4 Philip Bell & Roger Bell, *Implicated: The United States in Australia* (Melbourne, 1993), p. 39.
5 Michael Roe, *Nine Australian Progressives: Vitalism in Bourgeois Social Thought, 1890-1960* (St. Lucia,

part of progressivism's appeal, not any denial to legitimacy, that simultaneously it invoked liberation and order, democracy and elitism, change and continuity, welfare and ascetism, worship of both technology and Nature."[5] For Roe, Progressivism's "ultimate tension was to claim the virtues of rationality, but at heart to be emotive and mystical."[7]

In this way, Progressives perceived that spending time in nature was conducive to the improvement of human morality, even as they typically lived in, worked in, and sought to improve, the urban sphere. Sarah Mirams argues that Progressives saw national parks playing an important role, "in counteracting the perceived physical, moral and spiritual degeneration that resulted from urban life."[8] Natalie Lloyd argues that growing empathy for humans and animals alike was symptomatic of this neo-Romantic, Progressive shift towards preservation of natural habitats. For Lloyd, "...progressive projects to conserve and protect Australian species intersected with discourses of population, health education and model environments."[9] She maintains that, "this notion was perceived to be integral to the scientific progression towards moral improvement and an ideal civilisation."[10] For the scientifically inclined, bourgeois Progressives of the Northern Branch of the Royal Society nature was less about its exploitation and more about its preservation – with an aim towards securing its psychological benefits. For Progressives, "conservation was a significant principle."[11]

The formation of the Cradle Mountain Reserve serves as one example of how the Royal Society and Progressivism were inextricably intertwined. A particularly towering figure in Tasmanian conservation was Hobart-based architect Clive Lord, who John Reynolds argues was at the forefront of the movement, "...which secured the scenic reservation of the Lake St. Clair-Cradle Mt. Area."[12] Born in 1889, Lord trained as an architect, but found his passion in natural history, devoting his life to its examination and becoming an active member of the Tasmanian Fields Naturalists' Club.[13] Lord also held the position of Secretary of the Royal Society of Tasmania from 1918 until his death in 1933.[14]

1984), p. 13.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 Sarah Mirams, "'For Their Moral Health": James Barrett, Urban Progressive Ideas and National Park Reservation in Victoria', *Australian Historical Studies* 120 (2002), p. 249.

9 Natalie Lloyd, "'Among Birds and Beasts": Environmental Reform, Racial Preservation and Australian Progressives at the Zoological Gardens', *Journal of Australian Studies* 84 (2005), p. 50.

10 *Ibid.*

11 *Ibid.*, p. 44.

12 John Reynolds, 'In Memoriam: Clive Errol Lord' *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society for the year 1933* (Hobart, 1934), p. 101.

13 Janet Fenton, *A Century Afield:A History of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club* (Hobart, 2004), p. 53; Reynolds, 'In Memoriam: Clive Errol Lord', p. 99.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 102.

Lord's concern for the environment led him to participate in a number of conservationist campaigns throughout his life. These included the campaign for the preservation of Cradle Mountain. Lord's influence, however, tends to overshadow the contributions of Northern Branch individuals who played a considerable role in the preservation of Tasmania's natural world.

Important Northern Branch members involved in conservation and preservation were Frederick Smithies, Archibald Lawrence Meston and Frank Heyward. All had become members of the Northern Branch in 1921, and each had held either the post of President or Chairman in succession with each other.[15] Smithies in particular had a deep love of the Cradle Mountain region. Meston was a "mountaineer associate of Fred" and long-time committee member of the Northern Branch, holding the position of President from 1935-1937.[16] Heyward was "a prominent Launceston architect", and long-time friend of Smithies, as well as being among the first round of councillors elected in the Northern Branch in 1921.[17] Heyward, like Clive Lord, trained as an architect, while harbouring a great personal interest in natural history.[18] All three men had a considerable history with the Cradle Mountain region prior to 1921, and were frequent and enthusiastic visitors to Gustav Weindorfer's Waldheim chalet at Cradle Mountain. Smithies visited Waldheim Chalet at Cradle Mountain sixty times between 31 October 1920 and 7 April 1950.[19] Heyward wrote a glowing panegyric in the Waldheim visitors' book regarding his experience at Waldheim, in which the final passage reads, "is there anything better in Australia? Why do Tasmanians wander elsewhere when we have the Cradle Country and its glories and wonders in easy reach – here surely is a great possession in the shape of a national park all ready to hand..."[20]

Heyward in particular personified the Progressive tension between binaries that Roe discusses. Heyward's love of Waldheim and Cradle Mountain contrasted with his

15 Meston served as President of the Northern Branch from 1935-38. Heyward served as Chairman in 1939, a year in which no President was elected. Smithies served as President from 1940-44, then as Chairman in 1945-46, then back to President in 1947 and 1948. For more information, see, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, as well as Council Minutes in Launceston Reference Library, LMSS120.

16 J.G. Branagan, *A Great Tasmanian: Frederick Smithies, O.B.E. Explorer, Mountaineer, Photographer* (Launceston, 1985), p. 14; *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1935* (Hobart, 1936), p. 201; *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1936* (Hobart, 1937), p. 103; *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1937* (Hobart, 1938), p. 160.

17 Branagan, *A Great Tasmanian*, p. 8.

18 'Obituary: Mr. Frank Heyward', *The Examiner*, 2 July 1942.

19 Waldheim Visitors' Book, 31 October 1920, as cited in Katrina Ross, 'Progressives in Nature: The Visitors of Waldheim Chalet', unpublished Honours thesis, History and Classics, University of Tasmania, 2009.

20 *Ibid.*, 14 February, 1921, as cited in Katrina Ross, 'Progressives in Nature: The Visitors of Waldheim Chalet', unpublished Honours thesis, History and Classics, University of Tasmania, 2009.

professional life as an architect. He combined these separate spheres of urbanity and nature in his ongoing efforts to introduce efficient town planning to Launceston. In 1925, Heyward delivered a lecture before the Northern Branch on "Town Planning".[21] Together, Meston, Heyward and Smithies represent three exemplars of the Progressive aspects of the Northern Branch in relation to the natural world. In a further indication of this, all three men were appointed to the Cradle Mountain Reserve Board in 1938.[22] As Haeusler notes, Progressives shared, "...the idea of the superiority of life on the land."[23] The attraction of Cradle Mountain as a place of convalescence led to the preservation efforts in which Clive Lord, but also Smithies, Heyward and Meston, became particularly notable characters.

A further indication of the Progressive interest that the Northern Branch held for the natural world was their involvement in the formation of the Launceston Field Naturalists Club in 1949.[24] This was the was the northern incarnation of a body that had existed in Hobart since 1904.[25] The Northern Branch minutes for 4 October 1949 note that, "it was decided to promote the formation of a Field Naturalists Club in the North," and to organise a meeting for that purpose.[26] The Northern Branch Secretary was authorised to spend £5 on expenses relating to this meeting.[27] The meeting was held, "at the Public Library (Class Room) on October 21 1949."[28] Northern Branch minutes for April 1950 report the successful outcome of this effort:

> The Secretary reported that a public meeting had been held on October 21 1949 with a view to forming a Field Naturalists' Club. Mr. J.E. Heritage was in the Chair and 35 members of the society and others were present, including the President (Mr K. Aves) and 3 members of the Hobart Field Naturalists' Club. Speakers emphasised the importance of making field studies in Tasmania. The desirability of getting young people interested was stressed. By unanimous resolution of the meeting the Launceston Field Naturalists' Club was formed and Dr. W.K. McIntyre elected its first President.[29]

McIntyre's election as President is particularly significant. He was one of the invitees to the Mechanics' Institute meeting on 18 May 1921, and became one of the

21 'Branch Report: Northern Branch. Annual Report for 1925', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1925* (Hobart, 1926), p. 243.
22 'Cradle Mountain Reserve', *The Examiner*, 29 June, 1938.
23 Peter Haeusler, 'Progressivism and the Janus Face of "Efficient Citizenship": Meredith Atkinson and Australian Democracy', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 42:1 (1996), p. 35n8.
24 Janet Fenton, *A Century Afield:A History of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club* (Hobart, 2004), p. 29.
25 *Ibid.*, pp. 1-5.
26 Launceston Reference Library, LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 4 October 1949.
27 *Ibid.*
28 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 16 February 1950.
29 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 4 April 1950.

original members of the re-formed Northern Branch that year.[30] McIntyre was also a notable figure in Tasman Shields' drive to raise funds for the underprivileged children of Launceston in 1935. The impetus for this drive was spurred on by a survey published by McIntyre and V.A. Downie (a truant officer), indicating that "a startlingly large number of half-naked children were attending Launceston schools".[31] Later, in 1948, McIntyre served as the Executive of Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (ANZAAS), a leading Australasian scientific body formed in 1930 by Archibald Liversidge, who has been described as "the greatest organiser of science that Australia has ever seen".[32] In this way, McIntyre serves as yet another exemplar of those members of the Northern Branch who were privileged, bourgeois Launceston citizens, but who also possessed an active social consciousness, concerned themselves with the natural world, and aimed not only to advance knowledge, but civilisation itself.

The Launceston 50,000 League serves as another prime example of the spread of Progressivism in the north of the state in the early-to-mid twentieth century. Formed in 1926, the aim of the League was to increase the population of Launceston to fifty thousand, and more widely, to "promote the growth and prosperity of Launceston in specifically and Tasmania generally."[33] One meeting of the League decided, for example, that they should attempt to attract , "...the settlement of retired British officers, many of whom were now seeking new countries in which to settle", most of whom were officers with pensions, "...from £300 to £1000 a year."[34] This dual concern with population growth

30 'Royal Society of Tasmania: Proposal of a Northern Branch', *The Examiner*, 19 May, 1921; 'List of Members', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1921* (Hobart, 1922), p. 209.

31 Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania Volume II: Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980s* (Melbourne, 1990), p. 439.

32 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 4 December 1948; Joan Clarke, 'Scientists as Intellectuals', in Brian Head & James Walter, eds., *Intellectual Movements and Australian Society* (Melbourne, 1988), p. 93; D.P. Mellor, 'Founder of Australian Chemistry: Archibald Liversidge', *Proceedings of the Royal Australian Chemical Institute* (1957), pp. 415-22.

33 Marian Walker, 'Launceston 50,000 League', *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/L/Launceston%2050000%20League.htm, accessed 20/10/2013. E.A. Beever observes that during this period, the population of Hobart hovered at around fifty thousand people, lending the possibility of a parochial agenda to the Launceston's 50,000 League's formation. See E.A. Beever, *Launceston Bank for Savings 1835-1970: A History of Australia's Oldest Savings Bank* (Carlton, 1972), p. 139.

34 'Launceston 50,000 League: Interesting Discussion at Weekly Luncheon' *The Examiner*, 14 September 1926. The League's aim of attracting this type of retiree was often carefully calculated. As Michael Powell notes, "Retirees were often targeted not only for settlement but also for investment 'opportunities' that had the potential to lead to retirement on income-bearing properties. After all, most colonial retirees were not aged but relatively active people in their middle to late middle age seeking a 'constructive' retirement." Attracting relatively wealthy, enterprising, healthy retirees who could make investments in the city – typically in orchards down the Tamar River – was one way the League sought to promote the "growth and prosperity" of Launceston. See Michael Powell, *Woodward of Mahinda: Cultural and Religious Themes in the life of Frank Lee Woodward* (Colombo, 2001), p. 313.

and prosperity put the group squarely in the Progressive camp.[35] The interwar economic slump in Tasmania (and Launceston in particular) made it ripe for the adoption of Progressive social agendas. In this light, it is hardly surprising that the Northern Branch, as a powerful cross-section of Launceston's Progressively-minded bourgeois, held positions of influence within the League. Fred Smithies, for example, served as vice-President of the League "for many years".[36] While the group was ultimately disbanded with the accomplishment of their eponymous goal in 1954, the Launceston 50,000 League nonetheless serve as an indicator of pervasive social currents among the "leading citizens" of Launceston who comprised its membership.[37]

Through Fred Smithies, the Northern Branch also exercised considerable influence through the Scenery Preservation Board. Smithies served as Chairman of the group from 1941-1971.[38] This served as another node for the group's antiquarian tendencies, as demonstrated by their entanglement in the acquisition of Entally House in 1948. Entally had been built by Thomas Reibey in 1820 using convict bricks, which were manufactured on the site of the homestead.[39] The suggestion to preserve Entally came from the Chairman of the Scenery Preservation Board, Mr. C.M. Pitt, in November 1947.[40] In May 1948, the Northern Branch council also drafted a proposal to equip and administer Entally as a historic house. This proposal was approved by Fred Smithies and brought to the attention of the Scenery Preservation Board.[41] When Entally was acquired by the Board six months later, Northern Branch minutes report that, "...Entally had been acquired by the Government as an Historic House. It was agreed that the Northern Branch should actively associate itself with the project."[42] In April 1949, "...four members of the [Northern] Branch had been appointed advisers for the development of Entally: Dr. C. Craig and

35 Another clear Progressive aspect of the League was their interest in nature. At the same meeting, the notion of promoting Mount Barrow as, "one of the city's principal assets" and "beauty spots" was discussed, recalling the Progressive reverence for nature and their proclivity for pilgrimages to such locations. It was decided, "that the league should arrange a picnic [on Mount Barrow] and take from 200 to 300 people, so they could see the facts for themselves."

36 Branagan, *A Great Tasmanian*, p. 19.

37 Marian Walker, 'Launceston 50,000 League', *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/L/Launceston%2050000%20League.htm, accessed 20/10/2013.

38 Ann G. Smith, 'Smithies, Frederick (1885-1979)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/smithies-frederick-8495, accessed 12 October 2013.

39 Stefan Petrow, 'Conservative and Reverent Souls: the Growth of Historical Consciousness in Tasmania 1935-60', *Public History Review* 11 (2004), p. 149.

40 Archives Office of Tasmania, AA 264/3, Minutes of the Scenery Preservation Board, 13 November 1947, as cited in Stefan Petrow, 'Conservative and Reverent Souls: the Growth of Historical Consciousness in Tasmania 1935-60', *Public History Review* 11 (2004), p. 148.

41 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 11 May 1948.

42 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 6 October 1948.

N.J.B. Plomley (furniture and art) K.R. Von Stieglitz (history) and F.R. Dowse (gardens)."[43]

Both the northern and southern divisions of the Tasmanian Society had considerable overlap with the historical aims of the Northern Branch. Taking its name from the group that preceded the Royal Society of Tasmania, The Tasmanian Society was formed in Hobart on December 1935, at a public meeting convened by the Lord Mayor of Hobart, Joshua Jennings Wignall.[44] The group's objectives were, "...to achieve the marking of the historical sites in Tasmania, to preserve and perpetuate the historical traditions of the state, and generally to create a 'Tasmanian Sentiment' amongst the people."[45] Like the Northern Branch, the Tasmanian Society had a conservative historical perspective, and engaged with an antiquarian agenda. In this way, it is hardly surprising that a Launceston Branch was formed in 1937, and that many of its committee members were also on the Northern Branch council at the time, including W.K. McIntyre, Fred Smithies and Archibald Lawrence Meston.[46]

Northern Branch members who were not members of the Tasmanian Society sometimes collaborated on certain matters of mutual interest. Indeed, Stefan Petrow observes that, "Northern members were especially interested in saving historical buildings."[47] On 12 October 1937, for example, the Hon. Secretary of the northern division of the Tasmanian Society, Miss T.S. Smales wrote to Basil Rait, concerning the imminent destruction of the Oatlands Gaol.[48] Smales reported that the gaol, "...is gradually being pulled to pieces by anyone who wants material..." and that she had, "written to the Council Clerk asking him to stop this..."[49] Smales advised that she had also contacted Alan Wardlaw, the Secretary of the Northern division of the Tasmanian Society, asking the same.[50]

The Oatlands Gaol episode served to unify many sectors of the intellectual community in the state. The episode also served as an important example of the interconnectivity between the Northern Branch and other Tasmanian institutions. Frank Heyward, for example, was a Northern Branch member who was particularly involved in the efforts to prevent the destruction of Oatlands Gaol, and sought to rally as many

43 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 7 April 1949.
44 Petrow, 'Conservative and Reverent Souls', p. 134.
45 Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, NS 2481/1/1, pamphlet, 'Tasmanian Society'.
46 NS 2481/1/1, 'Tasmanian Society (Northern Division) Secretary's Report, Nov. 1937'.
47 Petrow, 'Conservative and Reverent Souls', p. 139.
48 'Preservation of History: Tasmanian Society's Annual Meeting' *The Examiner*, 30 November, 1937.
49 NS 2481/1/1, Correspondence, 'T.S. Smales to Basil Rait, 12 October 1937'.
50 *Ibid.*

potential allies as possible. In personal correspondence with Basil Rait, the state Secretary of the Tasmanian Society, Heyward argued that it would be "a frightful blunder to destroy this rather remarkable piece of masonry, one of the most outstanding in the State...".[51] He asserted that, "Mr. Goss, of the Tourist Bureau, entirely agrees with me, as does the Council Clerk of Oatlands...".[52] Heyward reported that he had also, "been in touch with Mr. Meston" (the current President of the Royal Society, Northern Branch) to rally his support, and declared that, "the Royal Society here [in Launceston] would back you up" if any action was taken to save the gaol.[53] On 21 October 1937 the Director of the Tasmanian Tourist Bureau received, "a telephone message from Launceston... saying that Frank Heyward is strictly opposed to the demolition of the Oatlands Gaol...".[54] This was also passed on to Basil Rait, with the intention that he might raise the matter at the next meeting of the Tasmanian Society.[55]

Heyward suggested that the gaol's destruction might be avoided if it could be transformed into a tourist asset. He also suggested that if sufficient money could be raised, the gaol could simply be purchased in order to avoid its destruction.[56] However, Alan Wardlaw was less than enthusiastic with Heyward's interference. In a letter to Basil Rait, he intimated that the Tasmanian Society, "should be very careful in regards to this matter," and that ultimately, they should, "...let the matter drop. I hope nobody will rush into print regarding this matter. Both the Police and the Government have been wonderfully helpful to us and I, personally, would not be a party to worrying them in any way."[57] Ultimately, most of the gaol buildings were destroyed in 1937, and in 1954, the yard was converted into a municipal swimming pool.[58]

The Oatlands Gaol episode highlights the degree to which Northern Branch individuals came to embody Progressive tensions, in this case, between urbanity and nature, and futurism and antiquarianism. As discussed above, Heyward (like Smithies and Meston) had an enduring love of the natural world, even though his occupation as an architect saw him embrace the urban sphere. Stefan Petrow notes that Launceston became

51 Petrow, 'Conservative and Reverent Souls', p. 134; NS 2481/1/1, Correspondence, Frank Heyward to Basil Rait, 5 October 1937.
52 NS 2481/1/1, Correspondence, Frank Heyward to Basil Rait, 5 October 1937.
53 *Ibid.*
54 NS 2481/1/1, Correspondence, Director of Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau to Basil Rait, 26 October 1937.
55 *Ibid.*
56 NS 2481/1/1, Correspondence, Alan Wardlaw to Basil Rait, 19 October 1937.
57 *Ibid.*
58 Southern Midlands Council Website, 'Oatlands Gaol', http://www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au/oatlands-gaol/, accessed 16/10/2013.

imbued with a "town planning consciousness" in the 1930s.[59] Heyward pre-empted this trend, embodying the Progressive concern with rationalism and efficient structuring of cities as early as 1925, when he delivered a lecture before the Northern Branch entitled, "Town Planning".[60] As Haeusler notes, "As part of a growing middle class, these professionals largely welcomed urban-industrial development".[61] By contrast with his Progressive tendencies, Heyward's proclivity towards antiquarian reverence of disused, historical structures like Oatlands Gaol serves as one more illustration of the complexity of ideas and concerns that permeated the Progressives of the Northern Branch.

The relationship between the Queen Victoria Museum and the Northern Branch is somewhat different to the relationship between the Northern Branch and other bodies. This is because the Museum pre-dated the existence of the Northern Branch. The association between the Northern Branch and the Queen Victoria Museum is important to understanding the history of the Royal Society's Northern Branch. The Royal Society of Tasmania had long been associated with the Tasmanian Museum, prompting Somerville to note in 1943 that, "the development of both the Society and the Tasmanian Museum have been just as closely linked as in the earlier days when the Museum was directly administered by the Society."[62] Although the Museum had since become independent in 1885, the Royal Society had nonetheless maintained the right to retain enough space to house its library and publications in perpetuity.[63] Part of the reason that this relationship has remained so successful, Somerville argued, was that, "since 1885, with the exception of one or two short breaks, the administrative head of the museum has also been Secretary of the Royal Society."[64]

The association between the Tasmanian Museum and the Royal Society in Hobart effectively mirrors that of the Queen Victoria Museum and the Northern Branch. As early as the inaugural meeting of the Northern Branch in 1921, the *Daily Telegraph* reported that, "the work of the society was intimately bound up with the museums, both north and south."[65] Herbert Hedley Scott served as Curator and later Director of the Queen Victoria

59 Stefan Petrow, 'Continued Improvement and Beautification? Town Planning in Launceston 1930-1945', *15th International Planning History Society Conference, 15-18 July 2012,* Sao Paulo, Brazil.

60 'Branch Report: Northern Branch. Annual Report for 1925', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1925* (Hobart, 1926), p. 243.

61 Peter Haeusler, 'Progressivism and the Janus Face of "Efficient Citizenship": Meredith Atkinson and Australian Democracy', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 42:1 (1996), p. 25.

62 J. Somerville, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1943', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society for the year 1943* (Hobart, 1944), p. 205.

63 *Ibid.*

64 *Ibid.*

65 'Scientific Research: Royal Society of Tasmania: Inaugural Meeting of the Northern Branch: The Governor Presides' *The Daily Telegraph*, 28 June, 1921.

Museum for an impressive forty-one years, from 1897 until his death in 1938.[66] In 1921, Scott became one of the first members of the re-formed Northern Branch, and served as a committee member from 1921-1926.[67] He declined to return in 1927, when "the pressure of other duties" prompted his resignation – a decision that was noted regretfully by the Northern Branch council in its annual report for 1927.[68]

The year 1938 was a transitional year for the Queen Victoria Museum. From that year, the connection between the Northern Branch and the museum grew considerably. Although Herbert Hedley Scott's tenure as Director of the Museum was coming to an end with his imminent retirement, his mantle was to be picked up by his son, Eric Oswald Gale Scott. However, the younger Scott was to travel overseas for six months in 1938, and neither his role as Secretary of the Northern Branch nor his current position as Assistant Director of the Museum had temporary replacement.[69] It was at this point that Brian Plomley first began his association with both the Museum and the Northern Branch. In his unpublished *Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery 1891-1950*, he records that,

> By a lucky chance, N.J.B. Plomley, a young science graduate interested in natural history, was visiting Launceston in January 1938, and he offered to take the position [of Eric Scott]. This was agreed to and Plomley began duty a week or two before Eric Scott left on his trip. He had been gone olny [sic] about a week when H.H. Scott died suddenly on 1 March 1938. It was decided that Eric Scott should continue with his tour and that Plomley should take charge during his absence.[70]

It was under these circumstances that Plomley filled in for Eric Scott as acting Director of the museum, as well as the Secretary of the Northern Branch, while Scott travelled overseas between January and September.[71] Plomley admitted that his standing in

66 Norman James Brian Plomley, 'Scott, Herbert Hedley (1866-1938)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/scott-herbert-hedley-8368, accessed 24 October 2013. Though they held the same meaning, the title "Director" replaced "Curator" in 1922. See J. Somerville, 'The Royal Society of Tasmania, 1843-1943', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society for the year 1943* (Hobart, 1944), p. 205.

67 'Branch Report[s]' in *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society*, 1921-27.

68 'Branch Report: Northern Branch. Annual Report for 1927', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1927* (Hobart, 1928), p. 230.

69 Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, CHS 53: 35/1, Norman James Brian Plomley, *The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery 1891-1950*, unpublished, p. 39.

70 *Ibid.*

71 *Ibid.* Plomley's dual appointment to the positions of Director of the Queen Victoria Museum and as Secretary of the Northern Branch set a precedent in Launceston that already existed in Hobart, where the positions of Director of the Royal Society-affiliated museum and Secretary of the branch were filled by the same person. After H.H. Scott's death, the Directors of the Queen Victoria Museum until end of the twentieth century were as follows. Brian Plomley (1938) and Eric Scott (1938-42). The Directorship of the Queen Victoria Museum was vacant between 1942-46, before being taken up Plomley again (1946-51); then Isabel Thomson (1951-1954); Bill Currall (1954-55); Frank Ellis (1955-78) and Chris Tassell

for the younger Scott in 1938, "could be no more than a holding operation, and... no substantial changes could be effected before Eric Scott returned."[72] However, Plomley was not idle, and he used this time to re-organise the Museum archives. He recalls that, upon examining the haphazard archiving of records and collections, that, "making a start on arranging the reserve collections and paving the way for the satisfactory registration of the whole of the collections would be a worthwhile activity."[73] In this endeavour, Plomley, "...spent the next six months in removing rubbish and generally clearing up so that the essential procedures of storage and registration of the whole of the collections could be begun on Eric Scott's return."[74] As his calls for historical material in 1938 indicate, however, Plomley was not solely concerned with the organisation of existing archives during his "holding operation" in 1938. Rather, Plomley was also active in the accumulation of new historical material to fill the archives. His aim was to consolidate Tasmanian history as well as to categorise it.[75] As the first Secretary of the Northern Branch to hold the Directorship of the Queen Victoria Museum, Plomley's "holding operation" was, in fact, a central development of the Northern Branch.

In conclusion, the Northern Branch of the Royal Society was demonstrably entangled in numerous institutions throughout northern Tasmania ever since its re-formation in 1921. Through the Northern Branch's various connections – embodied in the interpersonal and inter-institutional relationships of its members – the Branch came to influence a host of other organisations throughout the north, and sometime south, of the state. This circulation of ideas and individuals in the Northern Branch served to disseminate the group's agenda – be it Progressive, antiquarian, or both – and, in doing so, served to actively shape the future of the state, and the people who inhabited it.

(1978-2006). Of these Directors, only Currall did not concurrently serve as the Secretary of the Northern Branch of the Royal Society in the twentieth century. This indicates the degree to which the Queen Victoria Museum and the Northern Branch formed a close working relationship after Scott's death.

72 *Ibid.*

73 *Ibid.*

74 *Ibid.*

75 'Early Records of Tasmania Sought by Royal Society Branch' *The Examiner*, 27 May, 1938.

CONCLUSION: INTO THE FUTURE:

In the late 1940s, the Northern Branch embarked upon an extended campaign of self-determination. With the expansion of the Northern Branch into the realms of independent historical and scientific research, it was felt that greater autonomy was necessary. A series of reforms within the Northern Branch of the Society were spearheaded by President Fred Smithies. On 2 April 1947, it was decided that a proposal be sent to the Launceston City Council suggesting that public lectures be held at the Queen Victoria Museum, with the aim of attracting new members.[1] It was also increasingly felt by Northern Branch members that the Branch was deserving of a greater degree of autonomy from the parent society. The Northern Branch Council minutes for 3 June 1947 list several aims for the near future, including that "the first essential was to reach finality with the parent body concerning the autonomy of the Branch and its right to hold property."[2] A week later, a further council meeting agreed that, "... property acquired by the Northern Branch, while remaining the property of the Royal Society, should be housed in Launceston in perpetuity. It was also thought desirable that the Branch should have some degree of autonomy within the Society."[3] These proposals resulted in some concessions from the parent Society, including the right of the Northern Branch to permanently retain any records donated in the north of the state, and a slightly increased allocation of funds to the Northern Branch.[4]

By the end of the 1940s, as a result of their research work, community outreach and rapid growth in membership, the Northern Branch began to reach new heights of vitality. Echoing the influx of new members a decade earlier, in 1948, Northern Branch membership rise from four life members to nine, and from thirty-five "ordinary" members to fifty-seven.[5] The following year, Northern Branch membership grew again, comprising, "...nine Life Members and seventy-three Ordinary Members, an increase of sixteen over last year."[6] In the wake of the concessions made by the main body of the Royal Society in 1947, this vitality led to proposals for the Northern Branch to split from the parent Royal Society altogether.

On 4 April 1950, the Secretary of the Northern Branch submitted proposals "... for

1 Launceston Reference Library, LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 6 May 1947.
2 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 3 June 1947.
3 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 9 June 1947.
4 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 22 August 1947.
5 *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1948* (Hobart, 1949), p. 163.
6 *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the Year 1949* (Hobart, 1950), p. 283.

the Constitution of the Branch as a self-governing body within the Royal Society of Tasmania."[7] The following day these aims were elaborated, and it was proposed to ask the Society to give the Northern Branch, "power to conduct its own affairs, to own property and to control its funds."[8] The proposal was moved by the Chairman and carried unanimously.[9] A letter was sent to the parent Society in Hobart, and was received on 11 April 1950.[10] The response was polite, firm, and in the negative.[11] Most of the proposals were outright refused, while others (such as the publication of Northern Branch annual reports in the Royal Society Papers and Proceedings) were already provided for under their existing arrangement.[12] Interestingly, the officer who signed off on Hobart's negative response was Archibald Lawrence Meston, then Vice-President of the Royal Society in Hobart.[13] In this way, it was an original member of the re-formed Northern Branch who signed the letter refusing the Northern Branch greater autonomy.

Although this bid for independence from the parent Society ultimately came to nothing, it serves to indicate how far the Northern Branch had evolved since its early days. The Northern Branch's research work, their active representation at scientific conventions and their active involvement in various institutions throughout northern Tasmania, indicate that the Northern Branch had increasingly come to assume its own identity. The implication that the Northern Branch's activities were actually hampered by their place in the administrative shadow of the parent Society indicates, at least, that by the mid-century, the Northern Branch had definitively attained a sense of its own capacity and importance within the Royal Society. By 1950, the early hurdle noted in the early Annual Reports – that, "the natural nervousness, or apathy, or lack of energy which prevents the great majority of members from submitting papers for the edification of their fellows..." – could no longer be said to be a feature of the Northern Branch.[14]

In 1953, the centenary of Launceston's Northern Branch came and went unacknowledged, overshadowed by Tasmania's own sesquicentennial celebrations. The Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society make no note of the occasion; no members were noted to have raised the importance of the year in council or general meetings, and no

7 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 4 April 1950.
8 LMSS120, Northern Branch Council minutes for 5 April 1950.
9 *Ibid.*
10 Royal Society Collection, RSA/A/.9, Correspondence, 11 April 1950.
11 RSA/A/.9, Correspondence, 23 May, 1950.
12 *Ibid.*
13 *Ibid.*; 'Royal Society of Tasmania: Proposal of a Northern Branch', *The Examiner*, 19 May, 1921.
14 'Branch Reports: Northern Branch. Annual Report for the year 1924', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the year 1924* (Hobart, 1925), p. 157.

newspapers acknowledged this landmark. Perhaps this was understandable; there had been, after all, a hiatus of six decades between the formation of the two very distinct incarnations of the Northern Branch. However, for northern Tasmania, the hundredth anniversary of the Branch's formation marked a significant milestone in the region's history. A century of progress and Progressivism had seen Launceston thrive – socially, culturally, and intellectually – and these evolving conditions ultimately shaped the city into a place that was highly conducive to the sustainability of an intellectual body like the Northern Branch. The Branch, in turn, exerted considerable influence upon the social, cultural and intellectual fabric of northern Tasmania. From 1921 onwards, the city of Launceston and the Northern Branch sustained, nurtured and shaped each other for three more decades, to the point where the Northern Branch was fully prepared to separate itself from its progenitor. The great importance of the Northern Branch of the Royal Society, therefore, was that it acted as a node of communication, unification and, ultimately, cooperation, for the intellectually-starved and professionally disparate Progressives of northern Tasmania. In this way, the advent of the 1921 Northern Branch was a highly-significant event in Tasmania's history, in that it fostered the development of northern Tasmania's cultural and intellectual capital as well as categorically fulfilling the aim of the Society as a whole: "the advancement of knowledge."

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