

# Papers and Proceedings of The Royal Society of Tasmania

*Part 1 of Volume 155 has been prepared in recognition of the centenary of The Royal Society of Tasmania, Northern Branch.*



Co-edited by Dr Sally Bryant and Ms Chel Bardell  
and published by the Society

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The Royal Society of Tasmania acknowledges, with deep respect, the traditional owners of this land, and the ongoing custodianship of the Aboriginal people of Tasmania. The Society pays respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge that Tasmanian Aboriginal Peoples have survived severe and unjust impacts resulting from invasion and dispossession of their Country.

As an institution dedicated to the advancement of knowledge, the Royal Society of Tasmania recognises Aboriginal cultural knowledge and practices and seeks to respect and honour these traditions and the deep understanding they represent.

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Cover photograph: The legendary bushwalker and wilderness photographer Fred Smithies, overlooking the Cradle Mountain landscape from the top of The Spire, during the 'Skyline Climb' of 1936. Fred was awarded an OBE in 1946 and served as Royal Society of Tasmania Northern Branch President from 1939–1947. (Photograph courtesy of Margaret Carrington)

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**PAPERS AND PROCEEDINGS OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA**  
**VOLUME 155(1)**

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THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA

Elected Office Bearers, Council Members and Ex Officio Council Members  
from March 2021 to March 2022

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## FOREWORD

One hundred years of continuous operation is a significant achievement for any organisation, and especially notable for volunteers striving to advance the cause of knowledge across a variety of platforms. The lectures presented by the Northern Branch of the Royal Society of Tasmania and articles contributed to the annual journal *Papers and Proceedings* over the years form an important body of work adding to knowledge of natural, historical and cultural aspects of Tasmania. In this special issue, Dr Eric Ratcliff OAM, as incoming Northern Branch President and a member for over 50 years, offers his reflections accompanied by a complete list of Branch Presidents since 1921. Following this, a paper by Lynette Ross provides fascinating insights into the early days of the Northern Branch and the pivotal figures in its formation.

Following the Apology by the Society to Tasmanian Aboriginal people in February this year, we are committed to involving Aboriginal people more in the work of the Society. Dr Patsy Cameron AO, noted researcher and Aboriginal elder, has contributed a paper 'Tyereelore and Straitsmen: The true story of Tasmanian Aboriginal survival' that reveals and explores a nuanced interpretation of Tasmanian Aboriginal histories.

Having grown up in northern Tasmania and been thrilled by childhood visits to the planetarium at the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG), I am delighted that this special volume contains an account by Launceston-based astronomer Dr Martin George of how a small island state became a centre for astronomical research and education recognised worldwide. Some Tasmanian readers of this volume will remember being given 'goitre tablets' as we called them in primary school, containing iodine to combat the deficiency identified in Tasmania in the 1930s, and will read with special interest the article by Dr Paul Richards AM on the Tasmanian thyrotoxicosis epidemic of the 1960s.

The study of natural history has been an important focus of the Royal Society of Tasmania since its inception, and this volume contains an account by Martha McQueen of the many contributions made by the Central North Field Naturalists to improving nature conservation and education in Tasmania. The Northern Branch supported

the acquisition by QVMAG of the nationally significant Lambkin-Knight butterfly collection, and David Maynard explains the importance of this collection to future research. Naturalists will also be interested to learn more about the endemic Tasmanian Digger Wasp in the article by David Maynard and Simon Fearn. On a subject close to the hearts of Tasmanians, Rachelle Hawkins explains how the aquarium industry is making an important contribution to improving the survival of two of the world's most unique marine fish species.

Studying the geological characteristics of Tasmania has been a key focus of the Society; in this volume, Dr Eric Ratcliff OAM continues this tradition by explaining the European uses of dolerite in Tasmania from early colonial times to the present day, and Dr Keith Corbett describes the geological history of the Tamar Valley and Launceston area during the making of Tasmania over 70 million years ago. Finally, Peter King outlines research led by the Australian Maritime College in Launceston to deploy autonomous underwater vehicles delving beneath Antarctic ice shelves to gather vital information about how glaciers change and melt.

On behalf of the membership of the Royal Society of Tasmania, I offer warmest congratulations to the Northern Branch on achieving the important milestone represented by this centenary. Having witnessed firsthand the dedication of the tireless band of volunteers and the thriving program they arrange, I am sure the Northern Branch is well on track for a further 100 years of lively and thought-provoking activities to advance knowledge. Sincere thanks go to everyone involved in the creation of this important special volume of the *Papers and Proceedings* including all the authors, Chel Bardell and the centenary committee, members of the publications committee and the Hon. Editor, Dr Sally Bryant, for their sterling work.



Mrs Mary Koolhof  
President, The Royal Society of Tasmania

THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA  
Northern Branch Presidents 1921 to 2021

**CHAIRMAN**

1921–1922	Mr G.W. Waterhouse	1982	Mr Ron E. Ward
1923–1924	Mr Tasman Shields	1983	Mr Bruce A. Pike
1925	Mr R.O. Miller	1984	Mr David G. Hannan
1926	Mr Herbert H. Scott	1985	Mrs Gillian M. Morris
1927	Mr R.O. Miller	1986	Mr Peter G. Webb
1928	Mr William R. Rolph	1987	Mrs Mary P. Cameron
1929–1932	Mr Tasman Shields	1988	Mr Peter G. Webb
1933–1934	Mr William R. Rolph	1989	Mr Allan T. Orr
1935–1937	Mr Archibald L. Meston	1990	Dr Eric V.R. Ratcliff
1938	Mr Frank Heyward	1991	Mr Allan T. Orr
1939–1947	Mr Fred Smithies OBE	1992–1993	Mrs Mary P. Cameron AM
1948–1949	Mr J.E. Heritage CMG	1994–1995	Mr Elvin Fist
1950–1951	Dr Clifford Craig CMG	1996–1997	Prof. Campbell McKnight
1952–1953	Mr Karl R. von Stieglitz OBE	<b>CHAIR</b>	
1954–1955	Mr R.S. Smith	1998–1999	Mrs Christine Beswick
1956–1957	Mr George H. Crawford	2000	Dr Lachlan Hardy Wilson AM
1958–1959	Mr G. Hawley Stancombe	2001–2005	Position not filled
1960–1961	Dr Clifford Craig CMG	2006	Mr Elvin Fist (Acting Chair)
1962–1963	Mrs I.J. Mead	2007	Dr John C.H. Morris AO MBE
1964–1965	Mr Thomas E. Burns	<b>PRESIDENT</b>	
1966–1967	Dr John C. H. Morris	2008–2010	Mrs Mollie Campbell-Smith AM MBE
1968	Mr J.N. Gee	2011	Dr Eric V.R. Ratcliff OAM
1969	Dr John C.H. Morris	2012–2013	Dr John Paull
1970–1971	Mr J.N. Gee	2014	Dr Eric V.R. Ratcliff OAM
1972–1973	Mr D. Walker	2015–2016	Dr Frank Madill AM
1974–1975	Dr Eric V.R. Ratcliff	2017–2018	Mr David Morris
1976–1977	Mr Peter G. Webb	2019–2020	Dr Frank Madill AM
1978–1979	Mr Harold Stan Payne	2021–	Dr Eric V.R. Ratcliff OAM
1980–1981	Mr D. Walker		

## REFLECTIONS

For any voluntary organisation to maintain continuous activity in the pursuit of its stated aims for a century is cause for celebration in this era of constant change and new ways of communicating knowledge. While contemplating this, I realised that I have been a member of the Northern Branch for over half of its century, which provides some justification for my brief reflection on its achievements.

Past and present members of the Northern Branch, many of them serving on its committee, have been outstanding in the advancement of knowledge; and should a bibliography ever be produced it would record the substantial works and editions by Mary Cameron, Clifford Craig, Campbell McKnight, Frank Madill, Gillian Morris, John Paull, Brian Plomley, John Skemp, Hawley Stancombe, Karl von Stieglitz and Bertram Thomas, and the many papers and chapters published by Archibald Meston, Eric Scott, Peter Webb and John Morris, to name but a few. For example, the extended ichthyological series in the *Papers and Proceedings* by Eric Scott was particularly notable as it laid the foundation for the taxonomic classification of Tasmania's unique fish assemblages.

Other members have been influential in so many ways, such as the 'lantern lectures' of Fred Smithies that opened the eyes of Tasmanians to their scenic mountain ranges, and the pioneering aerial and botanical photography of Herbert King whose work featured in books on Tasmania's natural history and who, as a leading plant collector for *The Endemic Flora of Tasmania*, had a volume dedicated to him. For a time, one of Tasmania's foremost naturalists, the botanist and polymath Thomas Edgar Burns produced 'bulletins' embodying papers delivered at Branch meetings. The Branch has always promoted historical research and the natural sciences, and its learned members have been influential in the establishment of other durable

organisations such as the Launceston Field Naturalists' Club, the Launceston Historical Society, and arguably the National Trust in Tasmania.

Members of the professions in particular, as well as others, have valued the breadth of vision beyond their accustomed fields that was, and still is, provided by our impressive regular speakers. The Branch has also involved itself in publication, notably of the first printing of Thomas Lempriere's *The Penal Settlements of Van Diemen's Land*, a historically significant 1839 manuscript that had previously lain dormant in a Sydney archive for decades. Other achievements have included the marking of significant sites in Tasmania's northern region, such as the observatory that fixed the latitude and longitude of Launceston, and the site of the York Town settlement at Port Dalrymple.

The Branch has maintained a long and valued association with the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in Launceston. Our meetings have been held at the Museum for the greater part of the century, our Branch library is housed there, and several Museum directors have been long-serving secretaries, notably Frank Ellis, Isabella Mead and Chris Tassel.

There was a time in the 1970s when the Branch was less active, but meetings and lectures continued under a small management committee including Patricia Ratcliff and Mollie Campbell-Smith, even when a full Branch Committee could not be assembled.

For a time, the Branch was also referred to as a 'Chapter', but chapters come to an end; branches continue to grow and put out leaves. May this signify our future as we continue into our second century.

*Dr Eric Ratcliff* OAM  
2021 Northern Branch President

