

ABRIDGED HISTORY OF THE ROYAL NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL AND PASTORAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA

The following is an abridged background of the Society to enable the reader to have an appreciation of the richness of the Society's history since 1833.

However, what is does highlight is the importance of the Society to the community both rural and urban an a whole since its inception.

The Society was originally formed in 1833 under the name of the "Cornwall Agricultural Association" with its inaugural meeting being held at the British Hotel in Launceston.

The Cornwall Association endured periods of recess and several reconstructions until the formalising of the Tasmanian Pastoral and Agricultural Society at a public meeting in 1873.

The first Launceston Show was held on December 2nd, 1834 featuring early imports of Stud Cattle, especially Devons. Combined with the Show was a race meeting. The Show however, lapsed and was not conducted again till October, 1873 on the area we now know as York Park and involved an exhibition of stock, machinery, grains and seeds.

The advent of the railways making it possible to transport livestock much easier and helped the development of the Launceston Show as the premier Show in the region. In 1875 Spring and Autumn Shows were held featuring an exhibition of reaping machines and a steam loom. The Governor become the Society's patron. The Society grew rapidly, starting flock and herd books and continued this role until Breed Societies emerged and took control of their records. The Society had considerable influence of Government policy, advising on the importation of Stud Stock and also acted as the precursor to the Extension and Veterinary Services, now conducted by the Department of Agriculture. Sections for Agricultural machinery and coach making were encouraged.

In 1899 the Society was reconstituted involving Country and City interests. The Show moved to Elphin using 40 acres of ground leased by Mr Alfred Fry from the Estate of Reverent William Dry. The Show ran for four (4) days and included a Sale Day.

1.

In 1903 motor cars were exhibited for the first time and from this time the Society began to lease the ground for wider community use. In recent times

tin excess of 80 community and non-profit organisations have used the ground.

In 1920 the name was changed to the National Agricultural and Pastoral Society of Tasmania and Parliament established the practice of rising during Show week. During the twenties, the show developed very rapidly. The Grandstand and many buildings were erected. The ground became the centre for many Stud Sheep Auctions.

In 1929 the "Made in Tasmania Exhibition" took place designed to keep people in work during the depression.

In January, 1939 the first Interdominion Trotting Carnival to be held in Tasmania was conducted at Elphin. Pacing has been held on the ground for over 60 years.

During the thirties, the freehold of the land was purchased and plans to expand over nearby Elphin Farm were formulated.

In 1949 the Jubilee Show was held successfully with many overseas judges officiating.

In 1956, members of our Horse Committee were the forefront in forming the E.F.A.

In 1973, the Centenary Year, the Show was opened by the Governor-General, Sir Paul Hasluck, who became the society's Patron in Chief.

In 1976, the Society built its magnificent new Horse Complex which has become also the major venue for the Yearling Sales of Thoroughbreds and standard breeds.

In 1981, the Show was honoured with a visit by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II and His Royal Highness, Prince Phillip.

In 1984 as a result of the hard work and preserverance of the then President, Mr Roderick Thirkell-Johnston ably supported by his Council, the Queen approved the grant of the prefix "Royal" and from this date the Society was known as "The Royal National Agricultural and Pastoral Society of Tasmania".

2.

By this time the Society was conducting the largest Agricultural Show in Northern Tasmania with the value of livestock exhibits running into millions of dollars.

The Society's success relies on its unique Geographical area. The 100km radius round Launceston has the greatest concentration of Stud properties in Australia. The area produces the finest wool in the worked and is noted for the excellence of its British Breed Sheep Studs. The area has been prominent in the development of Australian wool breeds, the Polwarth and Corriedale, the Poll Dorset breed of fat lamb and the development of the Tasmanian (Murray Grey) cattle breed. It is a premier vegetable growing area and noted for the excellence of such crops as oil poppies. The Show represents the largest display of livestock held in Tasmania each year.

However, by the late 1980's the Society was beginning to feel the combined effects of tough economic times, ageing facilities, competition from new venues such as the Silverdome and from new events which included Agfest and the Garden Festival.

In 1991 the Show Council of the day under the Presidency of Mr Tom Beaumont, acknowledged the problems and the need for these to be urgently addressed if the long term survival of the Society was to be assured. The commissioned a major review of the organisation, the way it was structured and its manner of operation.

This document, titled "A Blue Print For Survival" contained a number of recommendations. They included a total restructure of how the Society was governed and for the Society's assets to be realised so that the Society's operation could be relocated to site with more commercially acceptable facilities.

This review document was considered and accepted by the Show Council and Society Members.

1997 was the last Show to be held on the Elphin Showgrounds, 1998 saw the Society move the Show to the Inveresk site where the Society hoped to create quality exhibition facilities that Launceston would be proud of and to attract large conventions and exhibitions which are bypassing this State and City.