

# Foreword

*The story of Oatlands has been one of faith and confidence by its people in the future of their district and service to Tasmania and the Commonwealth.*

*Local Government marked a turning point in the history of the State and the enthusiasm of the people of this Municipality in marking its Centenary Celebrations demonstrates their belief in the benefits it is conferring on them.*

*I would like to thank all those who are assisting to celebrate a noteworthy event, and express my appreciation of the many personal kindnesses I have received.*

W. A. WEBSTER,

*Warden,  
Municipality of Oatlands.*

## OATLANDS MUNICIPAL CENTENARY

### *Programme of Events*

NOVEMBER 24th:

*Tunbridge:* Children's Fancy Dress Ball.

*Mt. Pleasant:* Centenary Ball.

NOVEMBER 25th:

*Oatlands:* 10.30 a.m. Official Opening of Memorial Gates.

11.00 a.m. Procession of Decorated Floats.

1.00 p.m. Sports Meeting and Gymkhana.

NOVEMBER 26th:

Church Services.

*Lake Dulverton:* Angling Competition.

NOVEMBER 27th:

*Oatlands:* Children's Fancy Dress Ball.

NOVEMBER 28th:

Play by Oatlands Drama Club, Town Hall.

NOVEMBER 29th:

*Oatlands:* 11.00 a.m. The Enactment of Proclamation of Municipality.

12.30 p.m. Official Lunch in presence of Governor of Tasmania, The Lord Rowallan, KT., K.B.E., M.C., and Lady Rowallan.

12 noon: Exhibition of Curios and Arts and Crafts.

8.00 p.m. Cavalcade of Oatlands in Town Hall.

NOVEMBER 30th:

Exhibition of Curios, Arts and Crafts.  
Open Day at the Area School.

*Tunnack:* 4.00. Sports and Barbecue, Tunnack Sports  
Sports Ground.

DECEMBER 1st:

*Oatlands:* Times Ball and Presentation of Debutantes to  
Lord Mayor of Hobart (Mr. Basil Osborne).

DECEMBER 2nd:

*Stonor:* Sports, Fair and Ball.

DECEMBER 3rd:

*Oatlands:* Gun Club Centenary Shoot, at Racecourse.  
Water Ski-ing, Lake Dulverton.  
Church Services.

A FAMILIAR MIDLANDS' LANDMARK



THE OLD FLOUR MILL AT OATLANDS

# The Oatlands Story

*CENTENARY OF TASMANIA'S  
FIFTH OLDEST RURAL MUNICIPALITY*

1861 - 1961



By BASIL W. RAIT



*Published by approval of the Minister for Tourists, (Hon. A. C.  
Atkins, M.H.A.)*

## THE OATLANDS STORY

The commemoration of the centenary of the Oatlands Municipality, fifth oldest of Tasmania's rural municipalities, is an event of unique importance. The Oatlands Story dates back to the very first years of the settlement of the colony, and its growth has been influenced by pioneers and settlers, who have in their turn played a major role in the story of Tasmania.

Oatlands was proclaimed a rural municipality on November 29th, 1861, and by a strange coincidence the Warden of the centenary year, Mr. W. A. Webster, is a kinsman of the first Warden, Mr. J. L. B. Tabart, elected 100 years ago. By an even stranger coincidence Mr. Webster's ancestor was the first person in Tasmania to give hospitality to Governor Lachlan Macquarie, of New South Wales, on his historic visit in 1811.

The first election of Councillors took place on January 9th, 1862, and Messrs. J. R. Roe, J. L. B. Tabart, T. Burbury, J. Lord, G. Wilson, Jnr., and W. Barwick, were elected the first Council. Mr. J. L. B. Tabart was elected Warden at £100 per annum, and Mr. Z. W. Davis was appointed Council Clerk.

Since that time the successive Wardens have been: Messrs. J. L. B. Tabart (1861-68); J. R. Roe (1868-70); T. Littlechild (1870-71); J. R. Roe (1871-73); A. T. Pillinger (1873-75); J. R. Roe (1875-77); G. Wilson (1877-78); R. D. Lord (1878-79); A. T. Pillinger (1879-80); J. C. Lord (1880-83); T. Littlechild (1883-86); E. Archer (1886-87); W. Burbury (187-93); G. E. Butler (1893-95); G. Nettlefold (1895-97); W. Jones (1897-1903); A. T. Gibson (1903-05); R. Harrison (1905-07); G. Nettlefold (1907-1910); J. N. Propsting (1910-13); T. J. Burbury (1913-15); H. Fisher (1915-17); W. M. Lester (1917-19); A. J. O'Connor (1919-21); T. J. Burbury (1921-23); W. M. Lester (1923-27); J. Weeding (1927-31); W. M. Lester (1931-42); A. R. Fisher (1942-58); D. L. Burbury (1959-60) and W. A. Webster, the present occupant of the office.

Successive Council Clerks have been: Messrs. Z. W. Davis (1861-65); W. Gerrard (1865-73); D. McPherson, Jnr. (1873-80); F. L. T. Bowden (1880-83); J. L. B. Tabart (1883-91); L. E. Chambers (1891-99); G. Burbury (1899-1913); W. Rust (1913-1931); W. J. B. Temple (1931-1937); D. G. Dudgeon (1937-41); (On War Service); G. H. Waterworth (acting) 1941-44; D. G. Dudgeon (1944-48); G. H. Waterworth, the present Council Clerk, who was appointed in 1948.

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Today, Oatlands is presided over by a Council consisting of Messrs. R. C. Nettlefold, J. V. Early, W. Dunbabin (Tunnack), W. A. Webster, D. R. Greeg, D. L. Burbury Tunbridge), M. K. H. Taylor, A. R. Harris, R. J. Fish (Dulverton). Mr. G. H. Waterworth is Council Clerk, having held the position since 1948. Altogether, he has served local government for almost a quarter of a century.

The Council of 1861 had a heavy responsibility. The Police Force of the district was placed under it. Mr. Edward Cole was the Superintendent of Police, and he also was Watch House Keeper. At the outset the police were under the direct control of the Warden.

The Council had to assume responsibility for such properties as the Police Stations at Tunbridge, Melton Mowbray, Spring Hill and Antill Ponds. Other properties, which came under control of the Council were the racecourse and the Bluff Watch House.

So from this nucleus Local Government developed. Space does not permit of adequate reference for tributes to the many men who, without thought of reward, have given their services voluntarily to the Council.

### OATLANDS BEGINNING

The real beginning of Oatlands has been lost in obscurity, and the Council hopes that a search can be made for the early records of the settlement.

*One of the first white men to penetrate the area was Hugh Germaine, a Marine of the days of Lieut. Governor David Collins. He went exploring with a copy of the Bible and the Arabian Nights, and named the places discovered alternately out of each book. Hence such names as Jericho, Bagdad, River Jordan and Jerusalem, now Colebrook. His grave may still be seen in St. David's Park in Hobart, and it would make a worthy addition to Jericho's landmarks if it was placed at that township.*

In 1807 Lieut. Thomas Laycock, of the New South Wales Corps, made the first journey overland between Port Dalrymple and Hobart Town, as it was then, and he would have crossed through the Oatlands district.

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The first of the notorious bushrangers, Richard Lemon, roamed the area between 1806 and 1808, that is why Lemon Springs is so called. Lake Tiberias was once known as Lemon's Lagoon, and Lemon Hill was another place name recalling the desperado.

Lemon was taken in 1808, and his head was brought to Hobart Town. Scantling was another escaped convict, an associate of Lemon. His name was perpetuated in Scantling Plains, re-named by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1811, 150 years ago this month, as "York Plains" in honour of the then Duke of York.

When Macquarie came to Tasmania in November, 1811, the settlements were just beginning to spread out. There had been earlier visitors to the district, but as yet not a great deal has been discovered to give a lead to the origin of some of early place names.

"Spring Hill," mentioned in Macquarie's Journal, was named very early, possibly after a colonist of that name. "Constitution Hill" is also of early origin.

*Macquarie, the real founder of Oatlands, arrived at Hobart Town on November 23rd, 1811, and began his journey north early in December.*

On December 3rd, he stopped at a place he called "Governor Macquarie's Resting Place," 4½ miles from Spring Hill. His Journal mentioned the naming of "Prospect Hill," and the entries for December 5th record the naming of "York Plains," "Antill Ponds" after Capt. Antill, of the 73rd Regiment, "Mt. Henrietta" after his wife, and "Macquarie Springs," or "Governor Macquarie's Second Resting Place." On December 6th, "Epping Forest" was named.

This same year saw the first journey overland from Hobart Town of Port Dalrymple of the pioneer Chaplain, the Rev. Robert Knopwood.

Mosquito, a New South Wales aborigine, was transported to Tasmania in 1813, and he was assigned to a Mr. Kimberley at Antill Ponds, from where he broke away on a wild rampage which ended up on the gallows.

In 1814 the Rev. Robert Knopwood made a second journey to the North, this time with a cart.



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After Macquarie's visit in 1811, James Meehan, the Surveyor, who had accompanied him, was sent to Tasmania to survey a line of road between the two settlements of Hobart Town and Port Dalrymple. It is to his credit that except for some deviations, including the Bridgewater Causeway in place of the ferry at Austin's Ferry, his original route has been closely followed.

Lieut. Edward Lord, second in command at the founding of Hobart Town, had stockmen in the Oatlands area as early as 1813. This is borne out by evidence taken before the Rev. R. Knopwood, J.P., from Cpl. T. Feutrill, of the 73rd Regiment, and Pte. W. Merry, of the same Regiment, in August, 1814. This told of a journey from Launceston to Hobart Town, and of clashes with bushrangers at Epping Forest.

Blackman's River, on which Tunbridge now stands, was mentioned, as also a meeting with Lieut. Edward Lord's stockmen at York Plains, where two tents had been erected. His overseer was named Yorke. It was at the Ovens in the Oatlands area that an encounter took place with bushrangers under the notorious Michael Howe. It is interesting to note that this bushranger sent his famous message to the Lieut-Governor as "Governor of the Ranges" from Scantling Plains in 1817. He was taken in 1818.

The Main Road was completed as far as Bridgewater or Black Snake in 1819, but another 13 years were to pass before a coach could run to Launceston.

1821 was the year of the naming of Oatlands. Governor Lachlan Macquarie came on his second visit in April, 1821. On the way North by carriage, which he had brought from Sydney, he stopped at a hut at Jericho Plains on the first stage of the journey. It was on the occasion of this second visit that he named "Tin Fish Holes" Sorell Springs, Mounts Stewart, Roebuck and Wylde's Hill. Wright's Farm, where he stayed on his return journey at the beginning of June, was renamed "Meadow Bank" at his suggestion.

Oatlands was named on June 3rd, 1831. In his journal, Macquarie wrote:—

"This is a very eligible situation for a town, being well watered and in the midst of a rich fertile country. I afterwards named a pretty valley, connecting Westmorland with Woodford Plains, Gordon Valley in honour of the late Countess of Westmorland's maiden name."

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He also spoke of the appalling road down Spring Hill.

Oatlands was so called because the fine open plain reminded Macquarie of his native Scotland and the grain, which grew there. Some years were to elapse before any attempt was made to found the town, although Bent's Almanac of 1825 mentioned a military detachment being stationed there.

As late as 1827 Oatlands was still a site, with a board bearing the name given by Macquarie. In the meantime, Jericho had developed, and it is known that by the early twenties pioneer grants included Meredith, Pike, Hudspeth, Gregson, Cogle and Page.

*Three early grants were listed for the Oatlands district. These were those of Messrs. Weeding, Salmon and Mackersey. The William Pike referred to came to Jericho soon after his arrival in 1823, and he became the local Catechist. The Church had developed sufficiently for the Rev. Samuel Marsden to hold a service at Jericho on February 23rd, 1823.*

Mr. George Lindley, who was tutor attached to Mr. Pike's family, became the teacher of one of Oatlands' first private schools.

Mr. J. M. Hudspeth, an ancestor of Canon F. Hudspeth and the late Mr. Wilfred Hudspeth, of Hobart, also came to Jericho to found Bowsden about 1823.

Mr. T. G. Gregson, who was destined to become one of the first Premiers of Tasmania, had already taken up his grant at Northumbria.

Much could be written of these early settlers, but this is the story of Oatlands Municipality, and the emphasis must be kept on that aspect.

Dr. Francis Desailly, an early Medical Officer in the district, arrived from England in 1821. He was granted 300 acres at Jericho, which he later exchanged for land at Bagdad. Returning in 1824, he entered into partnership with Mr. Peter Harrison, and they had a public licence granted to them in 1824. They separated after two years, and doctor turned his attention to the Eastern Marshes.

Mr. Peter Harrison arrived from England in 1822. He was one of the first hotel pioneers in the Municipality. He was

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surpassed possibly by Mr. William Presnell, who had an inn at Sorell Springs as early as 1820, and it was the by-passing of this by alterations to the road, that he was led to build the White Hart at Antill Ponds in 1830. This is better known as the Halfway House. This historic Georgian building has been ravaged by vandalism. It was raided by bushrangers five times.

At the time when Lieut.-Governor Arthur began to take an interest in the future of Oatlands there were a number of settlers in the area. Mr. James Weeding, of Surrey, England, arrived in Tasmania in 1823, and he obtained his grant known as "Weedington" soon afterwards, and it is claimed that his family is the only pioneer family still occupying the original grant.

Mr. Thomas Anstey, who landed at Hobart Town in 1823, was given a grant of 2,000 acres on a tributary of the River Jordan, about three miles from the lagoon, known as Lake Dulverton. Stones from his original homestead are being used to build the Centenary Gates and Wall for the Recreation Ground. One of his servants, and afterwards a field policeman, was the celebrated Jorgen Jorgenson, ex-convict king, who made himself Lord Protector of Iceland.

In 1826, when Arthur divided Tasmania into Police Districts, he resolved on the founding of Oatlands, and appointed Mr. Thomas Anstey as the first Police Magistrate.

Under Arthur's orders men were sent to mark out streets and generally clear the site. For their protection he sent along a detachment of the Royal Staff Corps, under Lieut. Wilford, to protect road parties and the farmers from attacks by roving bushrangers and blacks. The military tents were situated close to where the old flour mill now stands.

Under the supervision of the military the early buildings were erected. After the completion of these works the military were withdrawn, and the corps was disbanded. Many of the soldiers returned to live at Oatlands.

An account of a visit to Van Diemen's Land by Widowson, published in 1828, contains interesting references to Jericho and Oatlands. In regard to Jericho he referred to the prison built before 1825, and the fact that the guard of soldiers occupied huts with the Commanding Officer in a weatherboard cottage. References were made to the homes of Dr. Desailly, Messrs. T. G. Gregson, J. and E. Bryant and Grove House, an

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inn. The famous Mudwalls of Jericho are the remains of the old Probation station, which once adorned the roadside.

Behind the tier of hills, Widowson mentioned the grant of Thomas Anstey. In regard to Oatlands, he wrote:—

*"The original road runs through the township of Oatlands, a few sod huts mark the site of the place. Only a few soldiers are to be seen, and a miserable gang of prisoners working in chains."*

"To the right of this place is an extensive country called Blue Hills, where the cattle of Mr. David Lord principally browse. Eleven miles from the township, passing for a few miles over short stony hills and an immense plain, you arrive at Tin Dish Holes; the plain is known as York Plains . . . to the right of these plains are the grants of Mr. Russell, Mr. J. Lord and others."

Widowson also spoke of "Presnell's Inn." This was the White Hart at Antill Ponds. Mr. J. H. Wedge, the surveyor, mentioned a visit there in 1824, but this was possibly on the earlier site.

By this time Mr. Robert Harrison was occupying his grant at Woodbury, and a Mr. Kimberley still had a property on the road to Tunbridge at Blackman's Bridge. By this time, there were several houses at Tunbridge, and a bridge, 100 feet long.

In 1829 Dr. James Ross, the pioneer printer, wrote of a journey to the North. Of Oatlands he said:—

"Oatlands is 52 miles from Hobart Town. It is on the borders of a fine lagoon, now called Lake Frederick, which is about four miles round with a small island in the centre. But the water, although deep, is overgrown with rushes, giving it the appearance of a verdant plain. Several cottages are already erected, also an excellent soldiers' barracks and officers' quarters. These were built by the Royal Staff Corps, and a church and gaol are in progress."

"Mr. Anstey is the Police Magistrate of this district. His residence, Anstey Barton, is about three miles to the west of the township. Near it are the stock farms of Mr. Mackersey, Mr. Weeding and Mr. Salmon.

"To the east of Oatlands is a rough road leading to a large extent of open country, called the Eastern Marshes and Blue Hills. However, the distance of the fine tract of country is too

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far from the Hobart Town Market for it to be used for anything but grazing. Mr. David Lord, Mr. Bisdee, Mr. Earle, Mr. R. W. Loane, Mr. Bryant and Mr. Hobbs all have huts for stockmen at this place.

"From Oatlands the traveller has the choice of two roads to Launceston. The new road through St. Peter's Pass and the old original road that goes to the right and for two miles is very hilly. The dividing range between Hobart Town and Launceston crosses the island at this point, the waters running North and South from this same hill. A few miles to the right are the sources of several streams that find their way into the eastern sea at Oyster Bay. Two miles from Oatlands the beautiful tract of country called York Plains is entered. This is thinly wooded country with picturesque groups of trees in the midst of verdant lawns. Conical shaped hills covered with grass to the summit may be seen, the principal one being called the Handsome Sugarloaf. Mr. Murdoch has a grazing farm at the foot of the hill, and Mr. Benjamin Nokes has an inn at the Northern end of the plain.

Meehan's road left Oatlands at the Red Rocks, and passed through Weedington and Springfield, now part of the St. Peter's Pass estate to the Big Hill then to Sorell Springs and Antill Ponds. To the west the old road from Jericho and the Lemon Springs Hotel passed to Anstey Barton. The present St. Peter's Pass deviation was the last undertaken.

By 1829 a brewery was being built in Oatlands. The Military buildings were almost completed, and a hotel was being built. Weedington was in course of construction. Applications were coming in for household sites and for shops.

The year in which the first coach ran to Launceston, 1832, saw the first proper survey of Oatlands undertaken by Surveyor W. Sharland. He was certainly an optimist for he predicted a brilliant future, visualising Oatlands growing into a city. He had an extensive acreage marked out with many miles of streets. Sharland's map indicated the Gaol, Court House, Church and Inn at the corner of High and Church Streets. The latter was called the Kentish Hotel.

By 1841, when Surveyor Sprent came, Oatlands had a Police Office, Officers' Quarters, Superintendent's Quarters, Sentry Box, Stocks and a sundial all in the one block between High Street and the Lake.

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Most of the major development of Oatlands took place during the thirties. The gaol was built in 1834. The old flour mill, known as "Callington Mill," was built by John Vincent, and the first school, "The Albany Academy," was opened by George Lindley in 1833. Courts of Quarter Sessions were being held here in 1836. A post office was operating under Mr. Edward Anstice at a salary of £26 per annum, and Mr. Thomas Salmon was Chief Constable at £75 per annum, with two Div-Constables, 11 Special Constables and 22 ordinary Constables under him.

Dr. F. J. Park was listed as Assistant Surgeon at £4/15/- per annum. An Agricultural Society was formed in 1839. The churches had begun to grow.

St. Peter's Church of England was begun in 1838 and was completed in 1839. The plans were drawn by Mr. John Lee Archer, but the church was not officially dedicated until 1844, when the ceremony was performed by the first Bishop of Tasmania (Dr. F. R. Nixon).

The first Rector was the Rev. George Morris. He was appointed by Archdeacon W. G. Broughton, of New South Wales, at a time when the church was still a part of the Diocese of Calcutta.

The committee for the building of the church included many well-known pioneers—Messrs. Thomas Anstey, James Weeding, Robert Harison, James Maclanachan, Peter Murdoch, W. Berthon, Daniel O'Connor, of St. Peter's Pass, Thomas Browne and William Nicholls.

The first Presbyterian Minister was the Rev. Thomas Dove, who arrived in 1837. The first church "Campbell's Free Church," was opened in 1856. Subsequent faults in construction led to the rebuilding in 1859.

The first Catholic Church of St. Paul's was begun in 1850, the foundation stone being laid on April 10th of that year.

A Methodist Chapel was built at Oatlands in 1841, and another at Tunbridge in 1865.

Such in brief are highlights of Oatlands early years.

The town was well served by a Road Trust and the Council until the establishment of Local Government in 1908.

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In sport, Oatlands had the distinction of being the venue for the first North v. South cricket match in 1850, when the North won by 12 runs. A Victorian eleven played at Oatlands in 1851.

*On the Waverley Estate may be seen the grave of "Assyrian," winner of the 1882 Melbourne Cup, who was bought by Mr. C. S. Agnew.*

It is not well known, but the Tasmanian Turf Club was formed at Jericho in 1826. Mr. James Cox presided, and it was the first official use of the name "Tasmanian" to a colonial society.

Colourful events and historic happenings have highlighted Oatlands' hundred years.

One of the strange identities of the early town was Solomon Blay, the public hangman, whose services were used both in Hobart Town and Launceston.

Two of the early Canadian rebels transported to Tasmania in 1838, were located at Oatlands, as was Mr. Kevin O'Doherty, the Irish exile. Meetings between the exiles took place under the bridge at Tunbridge.

Of Oatlands' many public benefactors, space does not permit of adequate reference so an early opportunity will be taken to refer to the pioneers of the school, the Area School, the Hospital, the Country Women's Association, and other bodies through the medium of the local press.

Oatlands has been represented in three wars, and many of her sons have risen to fame and distinction.

*The late Sir Thomas Nettlefold, former Lord Mayor of Melbourne, gave the Municipality a wading pool in memory of Mary Fisher's devotion to his mother.*

Mr. A. T. Pillinger served in two Ministries as Minister for Lands and Works, and his name is perpetuated in the Pillinger Drive on Mt. Wellington.

Mr. James Maclanachan, who died in 1882, had a distinguished political career.

Messrs. John and James Lord also became stalwarts of the political arena.

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Oatlands has many historic landmarks worthy of being listed as Tourist attractions, and the colourful story of Samuel Page, who ran the coaches between Hobart and Launceston in competition with Mr. Thomas Burbury, is one, which could be given great prominence, particularly if one of the old coaches could be returned to Oatlands.

Samuel Page was owner of the Oatlands Hotel in 1839, and he started his coach service from Oatlands in 1845, and in 1848 took over Mrs. J. E. Cox's service to Launceston. At one stage he owned Northumbria, Stonehenge, Anstey Barton, Trefusis, Kelvin Grove, Forton, Woodlands, Ellenthorpe and Fonthill. His flocks were estimated at about 63,000 sheep.

He is said to have employed 300 horses for his coaching service, each coach being driven by six and the journey is said to have been made twice daily between Hobart and Launceston. The rivalry between the two coaching services brought the fare down to £1 between the two main centres of Hobart Town and Launceston.

*Let us on the occasion of the centenary pause for a moment to reflect on the achievements of the past and take stock as we plan anew for a new centenary, confident in the knowledge that Oatlands' future is safe in the hands of good men and true.*