From Colonies to Federation

TASMANIA
People and Places
Tasmania was the smallest of the six colonies. At the time of Federation, its population was about 172,000 – less than 5 per cent of the new Commonwealth’s total. Its size and physical isolation played an important part in shaping Tasmanians’ attitudes towards Federation. Tasmania had to be confident that its interests would be protected under a federal system just as much as those of the other colonies.

When the campaign for Federation began in the 1890s, Tasmania had been a self-governing colony for more than 30 years. It was the second-oldest Australian colony and was proud of the progress that it had made since its founding in 1803. Towns and industries had developed, and the mainland colonies bought many Tasmanian products.

Colonial pride was clear in the work of politicians, leading citizens and groups such as the Tasmanian Natives Association. This was an organisation of Australian-born settlers, who promoted the idea of ‘Tasmania for Tasmanians’. At the same time, Tasmania was also proud of its continuing links to Britain. It was part of the British Empire, just as the Australian nation would remain after Federation. Many people still thought of England as their ‘mother country’.

Some aspects of Tasmania’s environment and society also seemed particularly ‘English’. One writer described it in this way:

> Its towns and villages, its country mansions and farmhouses, its highroads and green lanes, its orchards and its hop gardens, are all redolent of the mother country ... All the elements of the picturesque are there—the lofty hedgerows, white with blossom in the spring, and crimson with berries in the autumn; the luxuriant foliage, the winding lane, the sweet breath of the new-mown hay ... and the rustic bridge spanning a brawling brook.

*A Glance at Australia in 1880* by HM Franklyn.

Despite this connection to Britain, many people in Tasmania and the other colonies believed that social and political changes were needed to better suit Australia’s distinct culture. Many also believed that Federation could achieve this. An economic depression in the 1890s made the need for change even more urgent. The challenge was to campaign for a federal system that could ensure the best possible future for Tasmania and the other Australian colonies.

### Investigations

1. What were Tasmania’s towns and rural areas like in the late 1800s?
2. What were Tasmanians like in the late 1800s?
3. Who were some Tasmanians working for change in the 1890s?
4. Who were some other prominent people in Tasmania in the late 1800s?
**Investigation 1**

**What were Tasmania’s towns and rural areas like in the late 1800s?**

By the time of Federation, there were numerous towns across Tasmania. None of these were large in size or population compared to cities in the other colonies. Some were very small rural communities. However, they all provided examples of the colony’s growth and progress during the 1800s in building, establishing industries, using the land and natural resources in a variety of ways, and developing transport and technology.

Today, we can use descriptions from the time and other information to ‘picture’ what Tasmania was like more than 100 years ago.

**Activities**

1. As a class, read the newspaper extracts about Tasmanian towns. Discuss or use a dictionary for words you don’t know.

2. In a small group, use an atlas to locate the towns listed. Record the location of the towns on the map of Tasmania. Classify the towns according to the industries and land use.


4. Using a different coloured pencil for each town, show the route you would travel to visit all of your group members and return home. Use ‘Distances between towns’ to calculate the distance you would need to travel to visit each of your group members.

   A horse could comfortably travel a distance of 50 miles in a day. How many days would it take to visit each of your group members?

5. Write a letter, diary entry or postcard about visiting the towns around Tasmania. Think about the following questions as you write.
   - What did you see?
   - How was the land being used?
   - Were the towns busy and bustling or quiet and peaceful?

Display the letters, diary entries and postcards around your classroom. You might like to volunteer to read your piece of writing to the rest of the class.

**Your task**

Investigate Tasmanian towns and their industries, transport and technology.

**YOU WILL NEED**

- Resource sheet 1
  - extracts: newspaper
  - table: distances between Tasmanian towns
  - map: Tasmania
  - internet access
  - atlas
  - dictionary
What were Tasmanians like in the late 1800s?

Each colony had its own unique identity, which was shaped by its past. The backgrounds of its settlers and the developments that had occurred over the years influenced people’s values and beliefs. Common interests and concerns made people of the colony feel connected to one another.

Tasmania’s history included its beginnings as a British penal settlement, which many wanted to forget, as well as its achievements since transportation of convicts to the island ended. It also included all the work of establishing towns, farms and businesses in an isolated land, and becoming a self-governing British colony. How do you think this would have influenced Tasmanian identity at the time of Federation?

Explore Tasmania’s convict history and the values and beliefs of Tasmanians in the early days of the colony.

Activities

1. As a class, read the newspaper extracts from Launceston’s Daily Telegraph and Hobart’s Tasmanian Mail. Discuss or use a dictionary to find out the meaning of words you don’t know.

2. Divide the class into two groups and complete the following activities.

Group 1
With a partner, discuss the following questions and record your answers regarding Tasmania’s convict history.

- Where did the convicts come from?
- What evidence is there in the extracts that Tasmania had a convict past?
- Make a list of the contributions made by Tasmania’s convicts.
- Which words suggest that the writer believes Tasmania’s convict past is important?
- What evidence still exists today of Tasmania’s convict history?

Group 2
With a partner, discuss the following questions and record your answers.

- What evidence is there that Tasmanians embraced their British heritage?
- Why might the writer be making a link between the early settlers and British heroes? What kinds of qualities do heroes possess?
- How did the people of Ulverstone show their respect for British royalty? Do you think this is an isolated example or common practice? Provide reasons for your thinking.
- What evidence still exists today of Tasmanians being proud of their British heritage?

3. Share your responses with the rest of your group. Combine your group’s responses and share them with the other half of the class.

4. As a class, examine the birthplace and religion census data. Make a list of the most striking or surprising things that you notice when you look at the graphs. Discuss the following questions.

- Would communication among people living in Tasmania have been easy? Consider the language spoken by people born in the different places.
- Would the people of Tasmania have shared similar values and beliefs?
- Would the people of Tasmania have shared similar values and beliefs?

5. With a partner, design an ‘I am Tasmanian’ poster. On one side of the poster write or draw the things that were important and valued by the people of Tasmania in the past. On the other side of the poster, record the things that you think are important and valued by the people of Tasmania today.

Share your poster with your classmates. Provide reasons for the things that you have listed. Discuss what has stayed the same and what has changed over time.
Who were some Tasmanians working for change in the 1890s?

Tasmanian politicians played important roles in making Federation a reality. Some participated in the Conventions held in the 1890s to plan how a federal system would operate. Some actively campaigned to build support for Federation, working to make sure Tasmanians were informed about how it would benefit the colony and all of Australia.

At the time of Federation, only two colonies – South Australia and Western Australia – had granted women the right to vote. In Tasmania, women could not vote or become a member of Parliament, although they campaigned strongly for these rights. In fact, some of Tasmania’s prominent citizens in the 1890s were women, and they played a significant role in bringing about political and social change. Tasmanian women won the right to vote for the Tasmanian Parliament in 1903.

Activities

1. As a class, brainstorm a list of values. The nine Values for Australian Schooling www.valueseducation.edu.au/values/val_values_for_australian_schooling_kit.8758.html may be used as a starting point for creating a list of values. Brainstorm a second list of leadership qualities. It might be useful to have a leader or leaders in mind when creating this second list.

2. Form groups of four. Each group member will be responsible for reading one of the biographies. Your task is to discover your prominent person’s values and leadership qualities. The biography may include all or only some of the values or leadership qualities identified on the class list. Circle significant events and facts.

3. Read your person’s biography to your group. Explain the values and leadership qualities that you have identified. Be prepared to justify your observations if required.

4. As a class, make a list of the possible motivations for Edward Braddon, John Keating, Jessie Rooke and Bolton Stafford Bird for making a difference to the lives of others and the colony of Tasmania. There are no right or wrong answers, but you need to be able to justify your suggestions based on the biographies that you have explored.
Who were some other prominent people in Tasmania in the late 1800s?

Many Tasmanians of the late 1800s were working to improve the lives of others. They were committed to making a difference.

By exploring the lives of some of the colony’s prominent figures, we can learn about how they made a difference to the lives of others and what motivated them to take such active roles in their colony’s social and political life.

Do you think that their values, leadership qualities and motivations as active citizens would have been similar to those that are important today?

Activities

1. Using resources such as books and the internet, research one of the following people: Andrew Inglis Clark, Philip Oakley Fysh, Adye Douglas, Henry Dobson or Neil Elliot Lewis. Gather information about their early life, their challenges and achievements, how their life has made a difference to others and what leadership qualities they possessed. Humorous anecdotes and famous quotes are also great inclusions.

2. Present your research on a series of cards with a question on one side and its answer on the other. These question cards can be placed in a special box that you make. This will be part of your ‘learning centre’. Practise with a classmate to ensure that you can answer all of the questions that you have included in your question box.

3. Prepare your ‘learning centre’. Include a number of props that represent your person’s life. Also include a reference list to show the resources that you used. You might like to dress up and take on the character of your person. Be creative!

4. Organise ‘An afternoon with the prominent people of Tasmania’. With your teacher’s permission, you may want to invite parents, grandparents, friends and other classes to watch your presentations. Talk about your person’s life. Invite people to select cards from the box and ask you questions.

You will need

internet access
library access
Now that you have completed the investigations in People and Places, use your knowledge to explore connections to your life today. Do one or more of the following activities.

1. Think of people who are leaders. They can be people that you know, or people that you read about in the newspapers or see on television. Write the names of three of them. Under each name, list:
   • what they do;
   • their leadership qualities;
   • who they lead;
   • the values they demonstrate through their actions; and
   • how they became leaders.

2. Imagine that you are able to create a robot called ‘perfect leader’. Create a collage using images and words from magazines to show the qualities and values that a perfect leader would have.

3. Consider the community you live in. What unites the people who live there? What gives your community a common identity? Think about:
   • the location;
   • the special places;
   • the environmental features;
   • your sports teams;
   • the architecture; and
   • the various groups of people that live there.

Use the internet or go to your local library to research the history of your community.

Create a poster to attract visitors to your community, advertising what makes it special and unique.
‘Round Tasmania’ – extracts

Scottsdale (population: 636)

... the residents are much pleased to see a building being erected which is to be used as a branch of the National Bank. At present there is no bank and this proves a great inconvenience to the people. A whistle in the distance proclaims the arrival of the midday train bringing the morning papers from Launceston. Shortly after there is a whip crack in the street, the rumble of the coach, and the clatter of horses’ hoofs ...

*Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, 2 October 1901.

Queenstown (population: 5,051)

... the visitor is at once struck by its strange, foreign-looking appearance. Blackened hills arise on every side and even within the town the sides are steep. In every nook and cranny are perched cottages and huts of every conceivable size and shape. Most are covered with iron, painted red or brown to prevent corrosion.

*Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, 6 January 1902.

Launceston (population: 18,022)

The city was larger than I expected to find it; certainly the buildings were higher and better than I anticipated. The city is compact and well built; the streets and paths are well made. It abounds with parks and pretty sites, and the hills on which the residences of the well-to-do citizens are built are high and picturesque ... The town is a busy one; the people are sociable and homely and evince a desire to make visitors welcome.

*Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, 2 February 1904.

Hobart (population: 24,654)

The first thing that strikes one about Hobart is the electric tram system. There are three lines of electric trams, enabling a visitor to obtain a good view of the pretty suburbs ... The number of two and three-storey buildings surprises one who comes from Adelaide; there most of the private residences are only single-storeyed.

*Daily Telegraph*, Launceston, 10 March 1905.

‘Notes from the country’

Huonville (population: 261)

During the season one finds “apples, apples everywhere” ... Recently the writer left Hobart by coach on a tour of the Huon districts with the object of inspecting the orchards, visiting the timber mill, sawmills, evaporating and pulping factories and taking note of other industries ...

*Tasmanian Mail*, 18 April 1903.
Distances between Tasmanian towns (rounded to the nearest mile)

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<th></th>
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<th>Huonville</th>
<th>Launceston</th>
<th>Scottsdale</th>
<th>Stanley</th>
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‘Round Tasmania’ – extracts

**Stanley (population: 484)**

There are many old buildings around Stanley built in the sad old prison days, some of them with histories that should not be allowed to fall into oblivion ... Circular Head is the name by which Stanley is best known, not only because of the far-famed rocky eminence, “The Nut”, rising abruptly on all sides to a height of 450 feet ... [but] also because of its old-time associations, more particularly its famed potatoes. For many years the redskin potatoes ... were disposed of as “Circulars.”

*Daily Telegraph*, Launceston. 4 June 1902.

**Fingal (population: 372)**

In the early days a prison station was established about a mile from the site of the present post office; some of the buildings used as officers’ quarters are still standing and in fair condition but the cells and walls are all in ruins. A great amount of prison labour was done on the road leading to St Marys.

*Daily Telegraph*, Launceston. 11 July 1903.

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‘Notes from the country’

**Ulverstone (population: 1164)**

The streets have been well made; and recently some of the discarded gas lamps from Launceston have been purchased and are utilised for lighting the streets on dark nights ... Following the example set by larger communities [Ulverstone has] also established a permanent memorial of the Queen’s record reign; they have named the street leading from the station after Her Majesty and have planted pine and gum trees along either side from the station right down to the beach.

*Tasmanian Mail*, 25 May 1897.

**Goulds Country (population: 254)**

Goulds Country is three miles on the St Helens side of Lottah ... I was considerably impressed with the endurance the early settlers must have had to face to sufficiently clear the land so as to enable them to make a living on it ... the pioneers must have possessed some of the stuff of which British heroes are made.

*Tasmanian Mail*, 13 June 1903.
Birthplaces and religions of Tasmanians at census of 31 March 1901

Christian 97% (48.5% Church of England)

Non-Christian 3%

Other responses
- Hebrew
- Mahomedan
- Buddhist
- Confucian
- Pagan
- Agnostic
- Atheist
- No religion
- Object to state
- Unspecified

Edward Braddon was born in Cornwall, England. He migrated to Tasmania in 1878 and settled at Leith on the north-west coast. He entered the Tasmanian Parliament the following year and was Premier of Tasmania from 1894 to 1899.

Premier Braddon was especially clever at making sure that government money was not wasted. The money was used to build important roads, harbours and railways. To help raise money for Tasmania, he even arranged for Tattersall’s lotteries to be set up.

When Federation was being discussed, Braddon was very keen for Tasmania to join, but not if it would disadvantage the colony. He was concerned that Tasmania could lose the money raised from the intercolonial tariffs they collected on imported goods. The Tasmanian Government counted on getting this money and desperately needed it. The plan for Federation was that the new federal government would collect all the tariffs and keep the money for its own needs.

Braddon was a Tasmanian representative at the Australasian Federal Conventions and upset some of the other delegates when he insisted at the last moment that the federal government give three-quarters of the tariff money back to Tasmania and the other States. This would have forced the federal government to increase tariffs and so its opponents called it the ‘Braddon blot’. However, he won the argument, and Tasmania received this important income for 10 years after Federation.

Edward Braddon was elected to the first Federal Parliament in 1901, when he was nearly 72 years old. He still holds the record for being the oldest person to enter the House of Representatives.

On the eve of the first Referendum on whether Tasmanians should join the proposed Commonwealth of Australia, Braddon wrote a letter published in the Launceston Examiner. He spoke about his vision for the future and the benefits that Federation would bring to all Tasmanians.

... the opportunity will be presented to you of casting your vote for Australian Federation, and so helping forward that great movement which, if reason prevail, will make this small colony an integral portion of a nation and a sharer in all the advantages that will flow to every province united under the Constitution Bill in the Commonwealth of Australia.

Launceston Examiner, 28 May 1898.
Biography: John Henry Keating (1872-1940)

John Keating was a brilliant lawyer who was born in Hobart. He was always concerned about the rights of others and his way of helping them was by joining various community organisations and becoming a member of Parliament.

First, Keating became a leader of the Australian Natives Association, which was an organisation set up to protect the interests of white people born in Australia. The Australian Natives Association supported the idea of a ‘white Australia’, which meant supporting immigration laws that allowed only white people from British backgrounds to come to Australia. Today people might consider this idea racist, but at the time, many people believed it was in the best interests of Australia and would ensure national unity.

As one of the leaders of the Northern Tasmanian Federation League, Keating campaigned enthusiastically for Federation. He was elected as a senator to the first Federal Parliament in 1901. He was its youngest member.

Some of the things he worked for in the Senate included a special court so that workers would always be fairly treated by their employers, old-age pensions and better quarantine laws. ‘White Australia’ was something he felt was especially important, and he always supported the banning of ‘coloured’ immigration.

Keating used his position as a federal politician to do as much good as he could for Tasmania. One way he could help was by making sure the federal government improved communication across Bass Strait. A daily mail service to Tasmania is just one of the results of his influence as a senator.

Keating was mindful of the needs of Tasmanians when he led some of Australia’s first legislation. He was Chairman of the first Senate select committee, which focused on communication between Tasmania and the other colonies.

As senators are aware, Tasmania is connected with the continent, so as far as telegraphic communication is concerned, by a little cable of 190 or 200 miles in length, which is owned and controlled by a private company ... I think the Commonwealth Government should give its early attention to the desirability of purchasing that little bit of cable, so as to make our telegraph system throughout the union one and undivided.

**Biography: Jessie Spinks Rooke (1845-1906)**

Jessie Spinks Rooke was born in London. She lived in both Melbourne and Sydney before moving to Tasmania in the 1890s. While in Sydney, she married a doctor, Charles Rooke, and joined the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. This was an organisation that worked to uphold moral values in society and wanted alcoholic drinks to be banned. For the rest of her life, Rooke was a leading member of several similar organisations, always working to improve conditions for women and children, especially the poor.

As President of the Burnie Woman’s Christian Temperance Union, she became a leader in the fight for women’s suffrage in Tasmania. Women’s suffrage meant that women would have the right to vote, thus making them equal citizens with men. Then, they would have the opportunity to create laws to improve the lives of women and children.

Rooke was an excellent and forceful speaker, who travelled all over Tasmania, speaking publicly and gathering thousands of signatures on petitions insisting that parliament legislate for women’s suffrage. She even represented Australian women in Washington at a world conference for more rights for women. Tasmanian women won the right to vote in 1903.

In 1896, Jessie Rooke, together with her friend Georgiana Kermode, travelled around Tasmania holding public meetings. At the meetings, she spoke about the need for equality with men. In particular, she highlighted the need for women having the vote as a matter of fairness. Rooke resolved that:

... the franchise be extended to the women of Tasmania as an act of common Justice.

Sourced from *The Companion to Tasmanian History*, edited by Alison Alexander, Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2005.
Biography:
Bolton Stafford Bird (1840-1924)

Bolton Stafford Bird was one of the people who represented Tasmania at the Federal Conventions to plan for Federation. He spoke about his desire for the people of Australia to unite as one nation, and that once united, it would remain so forever more.

He was born in 1840 in England. He moved to Victoria in 1852, then to Tasmania in 1874. There, he bought a block of land in the Huon district. After much struggle and extremely hard work, he had cleared his land of trees, built a large house out of local timber and planted apple trees. He shipped small consignments of apples to England, thus becoming one of the pioneers of Tasmania’s apple export industry.

Tragically for Bird, the Bank of Van Diemen’s Land, from whom he had borrowed the money for his farm, went bankrupt in 1891. The government raffled off all the properties of people who owed money to the bank. Bird’s home was won by a retired Sydney sea captain with a £1 lottery ticket, and Bird and his family had to leave.

Bird was always active in the local affairs of the Huon district. From 1882 until the year before his death in 1924, he was a member of the Tasmanian Parliament.

He represented Tasmania at the Federal Council in 1889, and the Federal Conventions in 1890-91. As a politician, he was described as fair and conscientious.

Bird attended the 1890 Australasian Federation Conference in Melbourne. The Conference established a framework in which future discussions about Federation would occur. Bird spoke about his desire for the people of Australia to unite as one nation, and that once united, would remain so forever more.

I do feel, that I am not here so much as a Tasmanian ... but rather I desire to feel that I am here as one of the people who are about, I believe, to be united in a great Empire which will sway the destinies of countless millions for generations yet to come ... I hope the day is not far distant when every citizen of these colonies ... will soon be joined together in the bonds of a union never to be dissolved ...

Proceedings No. 7, 14 February 1890, Parliament of Australia.