

Acknowledgements

This history was commissioned by the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania. Thirty years ago, the first truly State-wide MBAT State Council Association was formed but the history of the Association is much longer than this, dating back to 1891. The history of the Association, the master builders and their building firms is closely intertwined and this project has been wider in scope than originally intended. Any history, inevitably, will have mistakes and omissions; every effort has been made to ensure that this history is as accurate and inclusive as possible. The history of the building industry is an important part of our heritage, and I would urge those of you who are the custodians of business records to consider writing your corporate history, as the Williams family has successfully done.

My pleasure in writing this history has been encouraged by the help of many generous people, especially the master builders and their families, whose story this is. I wish to thank all those people who agreed to be interviewed for this project for sharing their memories and experiences with me: Tom Andrewartha; Chris Atkins; Paul Barth; Max Bennett; Dick Bloomfield; Keith Crowe, and his son Michael; Ron Dent; Brian Freeman; John Gretton; Joh Hidding; Gordon Ibbott; Paul Ibbott; Don Mapley; Terry Matthews; Bill Shields; Jan Siejka; David Stubbs; and Reg Walley. I would also like to thank the MBAT for making space available to conduct the interviews, and those MBAT Life Members and Honorary members who opened up their homes. Staff members of the MBAT in Hobart, Devonport and Launceston have been particularly helpful. In Hobart, MBAT Executive Director Chris Atkins, Executive Assistant Sheena Bass and Michael Kerschbaum have assisted in many ways. Much of the information

about the MBAT North-Western Division and Northern Division has been contributed by MBAT stalwarts, Don Mapley in Devonport and Max Seymour in Launceston.

I am indebted to historian Dr Caroline Evans for generously sharing her soon-to-be published comprehensive and insightful history of D. Williams Builder, and for David Williams for granting permission for me to quote from the work.

Unless otherwise stated, the photographs are part of the MBAT collection. For assistance with photos, my gratitude goes to the Archives Office of Tasmania, especially Paul; to Jan Smith and Janet Weaving of *The Mercury*; and Alan Waugh of Photoforce.

My special thanks to Paul Ibbott for the Foreword and Denis Reid for the End Word; to Chris Atkins, Max Bennett, Dick Bloomfield, Paul Ibbott, Denis Reid and Bill Shields, who read and commented on the text; to Paul Ibbott, Graham Keating, Don Mapley, Vic O'Brien, Allan Orr, Max Seymour, Bill Shields and David Stubbs, who provided additional information; to Sheena Bass and Melinda Dickie, in the MBAT office in Hobart, and Judy Partridge in Devonport, who chased up last-minute loose-ends; to Mitchell Snowden for technical assistance; to Sue Mansfield, for proof-reading; to Sally and Georgina from Newprint; to Christine Woods for transcribing, indexing, and her patience; to Trudy Cowley for her technical assistance, proof-reading and much more; and to Cathryn Rogers, just for being there when needed. My family, Tom, James, Alex and Jack Gordon, have patiently put up with another of Mum's projects, and have helped out in many ways. Finally, thanks to Bob, for everything.

Dianne Snowden

Abbreviations

AIB	Australian Institute of Builders/Building
AOT	Archives Office of Tasmania
MBAT	Master Builders' Association of Tasmania
MBFA	Master Builders' Federation of Australia
RAIA	Royal Australian Institute of Architects

Measurement

Currency

12d (12 pence)	1s (1 shilling)	
20s (20 shillings)	£1 (1 Pound) =	\$2
21s	1 guinea	

Length

	1 inch =	25.4 millimetres
12 inches	1 foot	
3 feet	1 yard	
	1 mile =	1.61 kilometres

Area

4840 square yards	1 acre =	.405 hectares
640 acres	1 square mile	

Foreword

Growing up in a building family with a joinery shop in my back yard, I could hardly have escaped being influenced in the choice of my future career.

Equally the influence of my father, Gordon, who is a Past President and Life Member of the Master Builders Association of Tasmania, led me to appreciate the value of an industry association which permitted the bringing together of the collective wisdom of the Industry for the betterment of its broad stakeholders. It was these two major influences which shaped my desire to participate both as a practitioner in, and custodian of, the building and construction industry which I have come to love and respect over my lifetime.

It is a dynamic industry – one which plays a focal role in the development of our nation's essential infrastructure and continues to be a key influence on and driver of our economic wellbeing.

Today's industry participants, and in particular the members of the master builders' movement throughout Australia, can and should be proud of their heritage and of the wonderful achievements of our forefathers during the relatively short life of the industry in Australia.

It was a chance discussion at a Christmas function in 2002 with respected Life Member, Bill Shields, which led me to place before State Council a motion for the compilation and recording of our history in this State. I was particularly concerned at that time at the seemingly rapid ageing of many of the custodians of our history and recognised that, with their eventual demise, much of our rich past would be lost forever.

This book is not merely a composition of the history of the master builders' movement in Tasmania; it is a collective record of much of the history of the building and construction industry in this State and of many of the professionals (and characters) who have been responsible for shaping the industry of today. It is a rich tapestry of the efforts of many, over a long period of time, to develop, construct and maintain the State's infrastructure in all industry sectors: industrial, commercial, housing and civil.

I was very honoured to be requested to compile the foreword for this publication and congratulate the author, Dianne Snowden, on its composition. I know from discussions with Dianne that its compilation has been much more than merely another commission, and that she has enjoyed immensely the opportunity of meeting many of the industry's characters during her research.

I would particularly thank all of those who contributed so willingly to this composition through selflessly providing of their time and personal records for the purposes of compiling this brief but enduring record of our rich and colourful history in Tasmania.

I commend this publication to the State Council of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania as a most worthy project. It is indeed a proud record of the achievements of our Members within this State.

Paul Ibbott
Deputy President
Master Builders' Australia Inc.

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Introduction

The first Master Builders' Association in Australia was formed in New South Wales in 1863, as the 'New South Wales Builders and Contractors' Association'. This original Association dissolved in 1870 but reformed in 1873 as the 'Builders and Contractors' Association of New South Wales'. The first branch was formed at Newcastle in 1874 and the Association saw increasing involvement with contractors in Victoria, Queensland and New Zealand.¹ By the 1890s, the master builders' movement had reached Tasmania. In Tasmania in 1891, the first master builders' association, known as the Builders' and Contractors' Association, formed under trade union legislation; its purpose was to protect the interests of master builders and contractors.

Many of Tasmania's oldest buildings were convict-built; the penal system provided a ready labour supply. When transportation ceased in 1853, a demand for skilled workers was created, and free settlers were encouraged to migrate to fill the gap. Some building families connected to the foundation of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania (MBAT) had come to Tasmania as sponsored free immigrants: the Association's Foundation President, Alfred Dorman, a carpenter and joiner, brought his family out this way, and the First Treasurer, David Williams, arrived with his tradesman father.²

The history of the MBAT is closely intertwined with that of the building industry, in turn affected by the economy and government policy. In the 1890s, depression hit Australia; in Tasmania, in 1891, the Van Diemen's Land Bank

¹ *Building* December 1972 p.18

² AOT, CB 7/12/12 p.15; CB 7/12/5 Book 27. For David Williams, see Caroline Evans, *'Everything Prompt': D. Williams, Builders, 1855-2005*, forthcoming publication.

collapsed, precipitating an economic depression, and increasing poverty and social instability. The *Building and Engineering Journal* of 8 July 1893 noted that the Builders' and Contractors' Association of Tasmania had formed to protect its members from undercutting by cheap, unqualified labour.³ This defensive aim runs consistently through the history of the MBAT.

By the early twentieth century, Federation had been achieved and the 1890s depression had receded. Optimism and opportunities were abundant. However, in 1914, Britain declared war on Germany and the after-shock was felt throughout the Commonwealth. The Great War had a significant impact on the economy and the building industry, limiting manpower and creating material shortages. Recovery was gradual and there was a brief period of economic growth until the Great Depression of 1929. Again, there was a brief period of recovery but this was halted by the onset of World War II. War-time conditions were not conducive to a healthy building industry; consumer demand waned and Tasmania missed out on Commonwealth government contracts. Labour shortages, sales tax on materials and manpower controls added to the difficulties faced by the diminished industry, as did materials shortages which continued well after the end of the war. In August 1945, the Japanese surrendered, bringing the war to an end. Gradually, and largely as a result of the government policy of reconstruction, the building industry recovered, heralding a boom period. By the 1960s, industrial construction – essentially all construction other than schools and private housing – was at the forefront of the industry. Property development had also emerged as an important component of the building industry. But the 1970s brought economic, industrial and political turmoil which deeply affected the building industry for many years. Social and demographic changes also

³ *Building and Engineering Journal* 8 July 1893 p.13

changed the nature of building, as did an awareness of the importance of heritage and conservation. In 2000, the new century brought new economic challenges.

Throughout the highs and lows of the building industry, the Master Builders Association remained steadfast. It responded to economic uncertainty by changing focus, but always with a view to protecting the rights of members. Periods of low membership and apathy were followed by self-examination and analysis resulting in a renewed and vigorous Association. This culminated in the formation of a fully State-wide organisation in 1975, incorporating all three regional groups in one body.

There were originally three Master Builder Associations in Tasmania. As early as the 1920s, the three Associations met regularly for MBA State Conferences and worked co-operatively on major issues facing the building industry. In the 1950s, all three Associations participated in the *Tasmanian Architecture & Building Journal* under the banner of 'The Master Builders' Associations in Tasmania' and shared a State secretariat.⁴ A growing awareness of the need for unity resulted in the North West Master Builders' Association merging with the MBAT in 1961, becoming the North-Western Division of the MBAT. It was followed in 1975 by the Northern group, which became the Northern Division of the MBAT.

Early master builders passed on their knowledge and traditions through apprenticeship training. In the mid-1980s, the MBAT acknowledged the importance of these traditions when it decided to create a museum of heritage items, including tools and equipment.

⁴ *Tasmanian Building & Architecture* January 1955 p.11

Several of the master builders interviewed in the course of this project commented on fundamental changes in the building industry over the last 60 years, particularly in materials and practice. One recalled:

the first house that we ever built we went on site, dug the foundation out by hand, used the ... green framing material to box up the foundations, mixed and poured the concrete by hand.⁵

Ready-mix concrete was one of many developments which changed building practice. Another master builder remembered that, when he began work in the 1940s, concrete was mixed firstly on a flat-tray truck and then in a round drum agitator. He thought that building today was much less physical than when he started, and suggested that there was a loss of tradition and skill as a result of changes in materials, tools and techniques.⁶ He also commented that perhaps the most significant change in building over his lifetime was the change from hand tools to power tools, especially electric saws, electric drills and nail guns.⁷ The MBAT has taken on the role of keeping members informed of changes not only in products and materials but also legislation, regulations and industrial conditions. The Association, too, has encouraged its members to be more service-oriented: the mobile phone is one innovation which has made this easier.⁸

Evans has suggested contemporary 'success in the building trade means the successful management of its many parts rather than the patient acquisition of craftsmen's skills'.⁹ One master builder noted that:

when I first started building, the building contractor virtually had to do probably 80 per cent of the work themselves, where nowadays with the modern technology of building, a lot of the components in housing and commercial work

⁵ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁶ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004 Hobart

⁷ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004 Hobart

⁸ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.67

⁹ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.75

are pre-fabbed, and the builder has become a little bit more of a project manager rather than a building person himself.¹⁰

As contract work became more sophisticated, the skills of the builder diversified. No longer did he do the work himself, but instead co-ordinated the work of others. Another master builder commented that when he started, most builders had their own joinery shop, painters and even plumbers; now, most builders sub-contract: 'they have "framing-up gangs" and "fixing gangs" '. He asked 'if a boy couldn't dig a posthole, then how could he supervise others doing the work?'¹¹

The builder's knowledge, of necessity, has extended beyond his own qualifications and this has given a new focus to the master builders' movement. Obtaining administrative and financial management skills are seen as crucial in order to reduce costs and prevent delays, low tendering, and under-capitalisation.

There has yet to be a female member of the MBAT, although participation is increasing. Some women have been active business partners with their husbands: Betty and Don Dickenson, for example, established DA & BD Dickenson, based in Scottsdale. Don, presented with MBAT Life Membership in 1990, believed that it was Betty who should have received the award: many a Wednesday morning, she travelled to Hobart to meet the deadline to lodge tenders for government work with minutes to spare.¹² Throughout the history of the Association, there have been many dedicated women who have devoted their lives to supporting their building families, in work and Association matters.

¹⁰ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

¹¹ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004 Hobart

¹² Max Seymour, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

Many of the master builders interviewed acknowledged the vital role played by their families, and particularly their wives. One commented that his wife, Valerie, played an active part in his business:

she used to do all my bookwork ... I used to rough everything out and because of her knowledge of the way I worked she was able to put it into order to be sent out – invoices, statements and money matters relating to her knowledge, she could carry out in a very professional manner.¹³

Don Garden, writing about Australian building firm, AV Jennings and its place in the lives of the Australian people, chose words which apply equally to the master builders. From the cradle to the grave, the building industry touches the lives of all, from:

The hospital in which they were born, their family home, the schools and university they attend, the church in which they are married, the shopping centres they patronize, the sporting complexes where they play or go to see their team play, the building in which they work, the hotels at which they stay, the casinos where they gamble [to] the retirement village or nursing home in which they spend their aged years.¹⁴

In 1991, the MBAT celebrated its centenary, a symbol not only of its resilience but also an emerging awareness of the significance of its heritage. The Association is now approaching its 115th anniversary, truly an indication of the strong foundation on which it was built.

¹³ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

¹⁴ Don Garden, *Builders to the Nation. The AV Jennings Story*, Melbourne, 1992, p.2

Chapter One: 1891 Foundation

Minute books and other records from the early years of the MBAT have not survived. Despite this, the reasons behind the formation of the Master Builders' Association are clear. In 1891, the collapse of the Van Diemen's Land Bank precipitated an economic depression. Poverty and social disorder were rife. Undercutting by cheap, unqualified labour was a major concern for builders and contractors.¹⁵ For many builders, the prosperity of the 1880s had dissipated; some, like D Williams, were on the verge of bankruptcy.¹⁶ Using the *Trade Union Act 1889*, a group of prominent Hobart builders and contractors joined together to protect their interests. One of the earliest tasks of the newly-formed association was implementing standard conditions of contract in the State.¹⁷ This has remained the core of the Association's business.

The Builders' and Contractors' Association of Tasmania 1891

On 16 March 1891, following a meeting held in Hobart between leading master builders and contractors, application was formally lodged, under the terms and conditions of 'The Trades Union Act 1889', for the registration of 'The Builders' and Contractors' Association of Tasmania'. The aim of the Association was:

To provide a solid working body for the purpose of protecting its members in the fair and proper execution of such works as they may from time to time contract to execute for their mutual protection and benefit.

Those who made the declaration in support of the application were Hobart contractors Alfred William Condon and Francis David Valentine. They declared

¹⁵ *Building and Engineering Journal* 8 July 1893 p.13

¹⁶ Evans, 'Everything Prompt', pp.11-12

¹⁷ MBAT North-Western Division scrapbook undated clipping c1979

that they were members of the 'Trade Union known as 'The Builders' & Contractors' Association of Tasmania'. Signatories to the documents were GN Seabrook, D Williams, James Hogan, B Gooding, W Smith, AW Condon and FD Valentine. Solicitors to the applicants were Perkins & Dear, Franklin Chambers, Hobart. The comprehensive 'Rules and By-Laws' of the Association, from which the above was quoted, lists:

Registered Office:

The office of Messrs. Seabrook Bros. in Upper Harrington Street, Hobart

Place of Meeting:

Temperance Hall, Melville Street

Entrance Fee:

One Guinea

Annual Meeting:

Second Wednesday of August every year

First officers:

President: Alfred Dorman

Vice-President: Frank D. Valentine

Treasurer: David Williams

Secretary: George Henry Seabrook Jnr.

Committee of 10:

Alfred William Condon

James Hogan

Adolphous William Lee

Benjamin Gooding

James Dunn

George Hawkes

Joseph Hawkes

Robert Duff

George Priest

William Smith

The Trustees of the Association were William Henry Cheverton, James Dunn and Alfred William Condon. William Cheverton was a timber merchant, builder and contractor. He arrived in Tasmania in 1854, on the *Honduras*; with fellow passenger, W Andrews, he set up business as a builder and contractor. He was

described as 'a first-class business man' and it was noted 'there are few movements going on affecting the welfare of Hobart in which he does not exhibit a lively interest'.¹⁸

Temperance Hall: First Meeting Place



Figure 1: Temperance Hall, Melville Street, Hobart 1913
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
Tasmanian Mail 21 August 1913 p.21

The first meeting of the Builders' and Contractors' Association was held in the Temperance Hall in Melville Street, later the site of the Avalon Theatre and Danny Burke's electrical store.

¹⁸ *The Cyclopaedia of Tasmania*, Vol. I, Hobart, 1900 pp.348, 597

The choice of meeting place was in a sense apt. The founding master builders were prominent and morally-upright members of the community, many with strong religious affiliations. David Williams, a deeply pious man who headed his day book with religious scripture, was a member of the Baptist Church.¹⁹ He was also a member of the Temperance Band of Hope, and had taken the Temperance Pledge to abstain from alcohol.²⁰

Founding Members

The founding members of the Master Builders' Association were all builders and contractors of Hobart. Many were prominent business and community leaders, and some had links to local government, a trend which has continued through the history of the MBAT.

Alfred Dorman, First President

Alfred John Dorman arrived in Tasmania from London in 1883 aboard the *Cape Clear* from London. At the time of his arrival, he was a thirty-seven-year-old carpenter and joiner. Born in Devon, he brought with him his wife Susan, and nine children: Alfred, a 15-year-old fruit tree pruner; Emma, aged 13; Eliza, aged 12; Ernest H, aged 11; William A, aged 10; Florence, aged 6; Kate, aged 5; Ada Jane, aged 4; and Annie, aged 2. On arrival, Alfred appears to have been confident in his working skills: he decided to remain in Hobart and choose his own employment, rather than be sent to an employer like many of his shipmates. His religion was recorded as Congregational; some other founding members also had links with non-conformist religions, many of which had a strong work ethic.²¹

¹⁹ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, pp.14, 17

²⁰ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.4

²¹ AOT, CB 7/12/13 p.15

Alfred appears to have left the Association by the 1920s.²² He died at Eaglehawk Neck in 1933. His will, witnessed by William A Dorman, mentioned three unmarried daughters, his eldest daughter Emma Louise, and Rose Eliza and Kate, to whom he left his property at Oakleigh.²³ Alfred was possibly licensee of the Dunalley Hotel, although this may have been his son, Alfred.²⁴

FD Valentine, First Vice-President

Francis David Valentine, known as Frank, was born in Hobart in 1863. As well as being the first Vice-President, he was also secretary for several years.

After serving his apprenticeship with Thomas Rigby of Commercial Road, Frank worked as a journeyman and later foreman for James Dunn, who was to become President of the MBAT. In 1889, Frank formed a partnership with James Dunn. During the three years of the partnership, the firm renovated the Theatre Royal and built several residences in Hobart. They also built the Roman Catholic Church and several business premises in Zeehan.

In 1895, Frank started in business for himself, undertaking substantial work including HJ Brock's residence at Lawrenny, near Hamilton: 'the principal feature in which is the embellishment and decorations of the rooms, certainly among the best work of its kind in Tasmania ... the verandah of the mansion is a fine piece of work finished as it is with marble floor'.²⁵ Frank also erected another substantial Tasmanian property, the residence of solicitor Curzon Allport on Waterworks Road: 'The feature of this building is that Tasmanian hardwood was, with Mr Allport's permission, used in the construction and

²² MBAT Minutes 1920-1930

²³ AOT, AD 960/57 p.144 No.19305: Will of Alfred John Dorman

²⁴ *Tasmanian Mail* 21 June 1902 p.21; *Hobart Town Gazette* 30 May 1899 p.633, 3 December 1901 p.2301

²⁵ *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, p.355

ornamentation with the most satisfactory results, and leading to the same timber being utilised in other buildings'.²⁶



Figure 2: Lawrenny, near Hamilton, c 1900, built by FD Valentine
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT 30/8418

In 1901, in the *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, Frank was recorded as: 'Mr F. D. Valentine, Builder and Contractor of 289 Liverpool Street, Hobart'.²⁷ About this time, he built a 'commodious warehouse' in Collins Street for George Adams:

Although his was not the lowest tender, Mr Valentine was entrusted by Mr Adams with the work, and the manner in which he executed it showed that it was placed in the right hands. The building contains the largest room in Tasmania and is now occupied by G. P. Fitzgerald and Co. as a drapery warehouse. It was erected in the short space of 22 weeks and as many as 100

²⁶ *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, p.355

²⁷ *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, p.354

hands were employed at one time. This we believe is record time in which any building of such dimensions has been erected in Tasmania.²⁸

FD Valentine was a mayor of Hobart and a member of the Tasmanian Rights League.²⁹ He died on 22 May 1941.³⁰

George Henry Seabrook, First Secretary

George Henry Seabrook came from a building family. His grandfather, William Henry Seabrook, arrived in Hobart on the *Thomas Laurie* with his wife and two children in 1832. Four more children were born in the colony, and at least one son, George Smith Seabrook, joined his father in the building trade. George completed his indentures with his father and established his own business at the age of 25. William later became an alderman of Hobart, as did his son, George. Like some other foundation members, the family belonged to the Congregational Church.³¹ William's grandson, George Henry, was born in 1858 in Hobart to George Smith Seabrook, a builder of Forest Road, and Margaret (Reid), a niece of a former Lord Mayor of London.³² It was this grandson who was the foundation secretary of the Association. In the 1920s, R and L Seabrook were also members.³³

David Williams, First Treasurer

A name synonymous with the master builder movement in Tasmania is that of D Williams, Builder. David Williams was one of the original members of the Builders' and Contractors' Association of Tasmania, and was the first treasurer. His father, David Williams Senior, a Welsh carpenter and joiner, arrived in

²⁸ *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, p.355

²⁹ Lloyd Robson, *A History of Tasmania. Volume II. Colony and State from 1856 to the 1980s*, Melbourne, 1990, p.400

³⁰ *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust Record* ID 67514, Section H, No. 27

³¹ AOT, *Correspondence File: 'Seabrook'*; *Cyclopedia of Tasmania*, p.194

³² AOT, RGD 33/7 1858 Hobart No.1557: George Henry Seabrook

³³ MBAT Minutes 12 March 1923; *The Mercury* 23 March 1923

Hobart with his wife and family in 1855 and established himself as a builder in Hobart.³⁴ David, who had been apprenticed to his father, set up in Argyle Street, the site of the present business. He operated as one of the largest builders in Hobart at the time, employing about 60 men. He built the original section of the Magdalene Home, the City Mission, Bishopscourt, the seating in the Congregational and Baptist Church in Elizabeth Street, and many commercial and private buildings.

David Williams was a strong advocate for apprentice education; in 1893, he gave a paper to the Association, titled 'Apprentices', in which he set out guidelines for the relationship between master and apprentice.³⁵

About 1910, David and Leslie, sons of David and grandsons of the original builder, took over the running of the business, continuing to trade as 'D Williams, Builder'. They started a joiners' shop on the premises and had connections with many well-known city businesses, undertaking maintenance and additions. They also began to sell Huon and King William Pine. Leslie served on the MBAT committee between 1920 and 1923, and both brothers attended annual general meetings.³⁶ Many well-known builders worked for 'D Williams, Builder'; their standard was high and their employees were renowned for their loyalty. Harry Gibbons, a cabinetmaker, worked for the firm for over 50 years. Others who served their apprenticeship there were John Jackson and Tom Pilkington. MBAT Life Member, Gerry Walters, was another.

³⁴ Evans, 'Everything Prompt', pp.7-8; *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1976 p.25; *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* p.354

³⁵ Evans, 'Everything Prompt', p.1

³⁶ Evans, 'Everything Prompt', p.24



Figure 3: David Williams signs for apprenticeship, father Doug at right, 1976

In January 1940, Doug, son of David, and great-grandson of the original builder, started with the firm and eventually took over, carrying on the tradition of his father and uncle. Doug was actively involved with the MBAT Apprenticeship Education and Training Committee.³⁷ In June 1976, David, son of Doug, and great-great-grandson of the original builder, signed on as an apprentice.³⁸ David's brother, Greg, was MBAT President from 1993-1995.

Adolphus William Lee, First Committee

Adolphus (or Adolphous) William Lee was born in Hobart in 1858. After working in New Zealand for a few years, he returned to Hobart, where he spent the rest of his life. As well as being a foundation member of the Builders' and Contractors' Association of Tasmania, Adolphus Lee served as MBAT President from 1920-1921 and 1921-1922. He was also Secretary.

³⁷ Evans, *'Everything Prompt'*, p.46

³⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1976 p.25

During additions to the New Norfolk Mental Hospital, he acted as the government supervisor. He was a member of the Derwent Valley Masonic Lodge and an active member of the Loyal Rose of Tasmania Friendly Society. He was also involved with the Tasmanian Trotting Club, the Buckingham Bowling Club and the Northall Park Trotting Club. He died, aged 77, in 1936 at 7 Rupara Street, Hobart.³⁹



Figure 4: House construction c1890
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT NS 1013/801

James Dunn, First Committee

James Dunn was a wealthy merchant; he died in 1935, aged 78.⁴⁰ As well as being a founding member of the Association, James Dunn served as President from 1911-1915 and was the chairman of the first builders' convention held in

³⁹ *The Mercury* 6 April 1936 p.3 col.5; *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust*, Record ID 31231, CE, Section BB No.212

⁴⁰ Robson, *A History of Tasmania*, pp.32, 54, 71

Hobart in 1923. He also served several terms as an alderman on Hobart City Council.

According to his obituary, 'well-known contractor' James Dunn had been for half a century 'one of the most prominent figures in the building trade in Tasmania'.⁴¹ As a senior member of the building firm J Dunn and Son, he completed a number of buildings in various parts of the State, and undertook numerous other large construction works. One of his largest contracts was additions to the AMP Society's building in Hobart. He also built the bridge over which the main road passes at Perth. He retired from business in 1933. Sons Charles, Jack and Frank were also builders and contractors; Charles was also MBAT President.⁴²



Figure 5: Roman Catholic Church, Zeehan, built by FD Valentine and James Dunn
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
Cyclopedia of Tasmania Vol. I 1901 p.557

⁴¹ *The Mercury* 18 March 1935 p.6 col.4

⁴² *The Mercury* 18 March 1935 p.6 col.4; *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust* Record ID 30409, RC, Section C, No.215

Chapter Two: Early Years 1900-1930

The Master Builders' Association of Tasmania 1913

In 1913, the Builders' and Contractors' Association changed its name to 'The Master Builders' Association of Tasmania'. Formal application to change the name was made to the Registrar of the Supreme Court on 26 September 1913 by the Secretary, Frank Harbottle. Notice of intention to alter the name was signed by James Dunn, TW Cuthbertson, Messrs Gillham, M Preese, WA Seabrook and RJ Stabb. The final declaration was made on 16 December 1913.⁴³

During the early years of the Association, the building industry was relatively buoyant until the outbreak of World War I sent it sliding into a trough, made worse by labour and material shortages. Post-war recovery was slow.

Builders like D Williams survived economic instability because of their adaptability and resourcefulness. The firm, for example, undertook projects diverse in size and complexity: 'nothing was too difficult or too small'.⁴⁴ Even this versatile company could not withstand the financial problems caused by the prolonged war years.⁴⁵

Recovery from the Great War was slow. Not only did the builders have to contend with economic problems but they were also faced with an increasingly organised union base. In 1920, the Carpenters' and Joiners' organisations in Australia amalgamated, and management committees formed in each state. The

⁴³ MBAT North-Western Division scrapbook clipping c1979

⁴⁴ Evans, *'Everything Prompt'*, p.19

⁴⁵ Evans, *'Everything Prompt'*, pp.13-21

recently-elected Tasmanian committee, serviced by a full-time secretary, met for the first time at the Trades Hall in May 1920. It proposed to actively organise throughout the State, and hoped to establish branches in the various centres.⁴⁶ When it sought a pay rise in September 1921, the MBAT vehemently opposed it, because 'in the face of the decrease in the cost of living and general depression of trade [it was] quite unnecessary'.⁴⁷



Figure 6: House construction c1910
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT NS 1013/464

By 1923, economic conditions had improved with a flow-on to the building industry. In Hobart, there was an increased demand for the construction of houses and business premises: 'many fine dwellings' were being erected in

⁴⁶ *The Mercury* 11 May 1920. The Committee comprised WC Franklin (Chairman), WC Tucker, B Bellette (Hobart), WM Bowen and G Salmon (Launceston).

⁴⁷ *The Mercury* 2 September 1921

Moonah, Derwent Park and Glenorchy, as well as new shops. They predicted that 'the future of the trade is bright'.⁴⁸ But this was not to be: in 1929, the Wall Street Crash precipitated the Great Depression, and the decade finished on a bleak note.

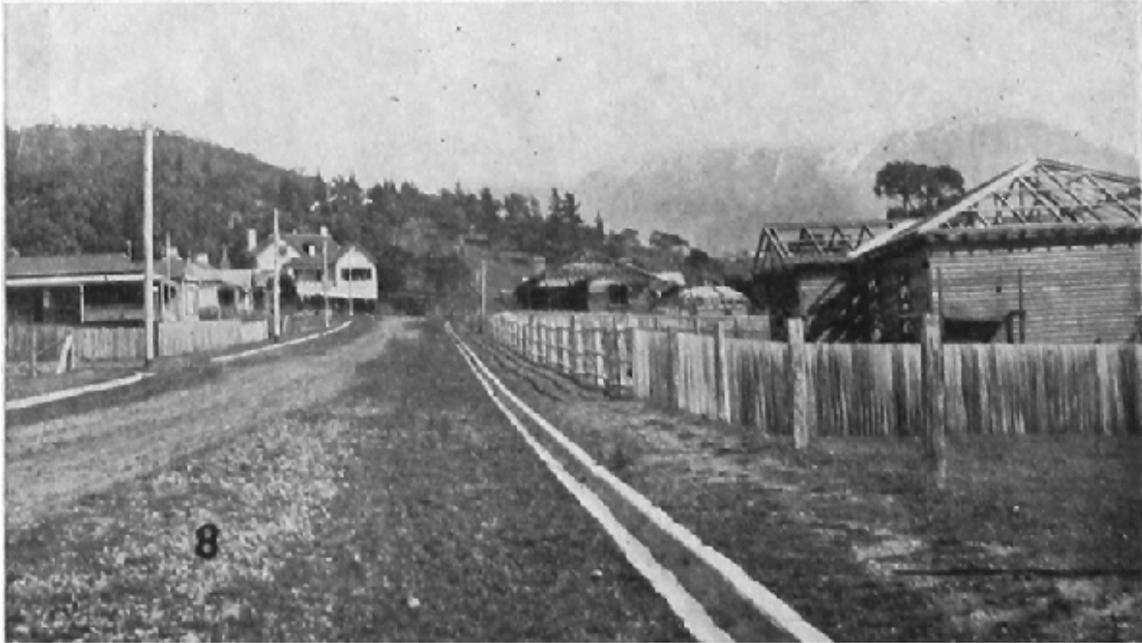


Figure 7: View Street, Sandy Bay, looking towards Proctor's Road, showing 7 new houses under construction

*Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
Tasmanian Mail 9 October 1919 p.17*

The Association

The early years were a period of consolidation, with contracts and tendering taking up much of the Association's business.⁴⁹ By 1909, the Association had twenty members. In 1920, membership of the Association had grown to twenty-six, although attendance at meetings was smaller.⁵⁰ Fourteen members, including several founding members and future presidents, attended the MBAT Annual General Meeting on 21 August 1920. They were: Charles Dunn; AW

⁴⁸ MBAT Minutes 1923

⁴⁹ MBAT North-Western Division scrapbook undated clipping c1979

⁵⁰ MBAT North-Western Division scrapbook undated clipping c1979

Lee; James Dunn; TW Cuthbertson; George Barnes; HW Pease; W Jennings; RJ Stabb; E Monaghan; L Williams; C Gillham; AE Willing; W Gilham; and JF Falkinder.⁵¹ Secretary JS Falkinder urged greater participation:

The attendance of the Association has been fair, though not what it should have been. It behoves every member to consider it his duty to his business and fellow employers to attend regularly and through his attendance and actions make the influence of this Association felt in the industry. Up to the present time we have only skirted on the usefulness of this Association and the time is now ripe that greater advantages should be obtained ... We must realise that unity is strength.⁵²

A prominent member during the early years was James Albert McKenzie, who was MBAT President from 1910-1911. As a builder and contractor, he carried out the construction of several important Hobart buildings, including Mt St Canice, Lower Sandy Bay, and the premises of the Commercial Bank of Australia at the corner of Elizabeth and Collins Streets, Hobart.⁵³

James McKenzie was Mayor of Hobart in 1922 and 1923, and served as an alderman for many years. According to his obituary,

Unassumingly he did a great deal of good work for the city, and was admired as a man of fine character. At different times he was chairman of the Works Committee and the Water and Sewerage Committee. His training as a builder was valuable to the corporation.⁵⁴

He also represented Hobart in the Legislative Council. He had a keen interest in all forms of sport, particularly football. He died in August 1939 at the age of 72 and was buried in the Wesleyan section of the Cornelian Bay cemetery.⁵⁵

⁵¹ MBAT Minutes 21 August 1920

⁵² MBAT Minutes AGM 23 August 1921: 11th Annual Report

⁵³ *The Mercury* 21 August 1939 p.6 col.8

⁵⁴ *The Mercury* 21 August 1939 p.6 col.8

⁵⁵ *The Mercury* 21 August 1939 p.6 col.8

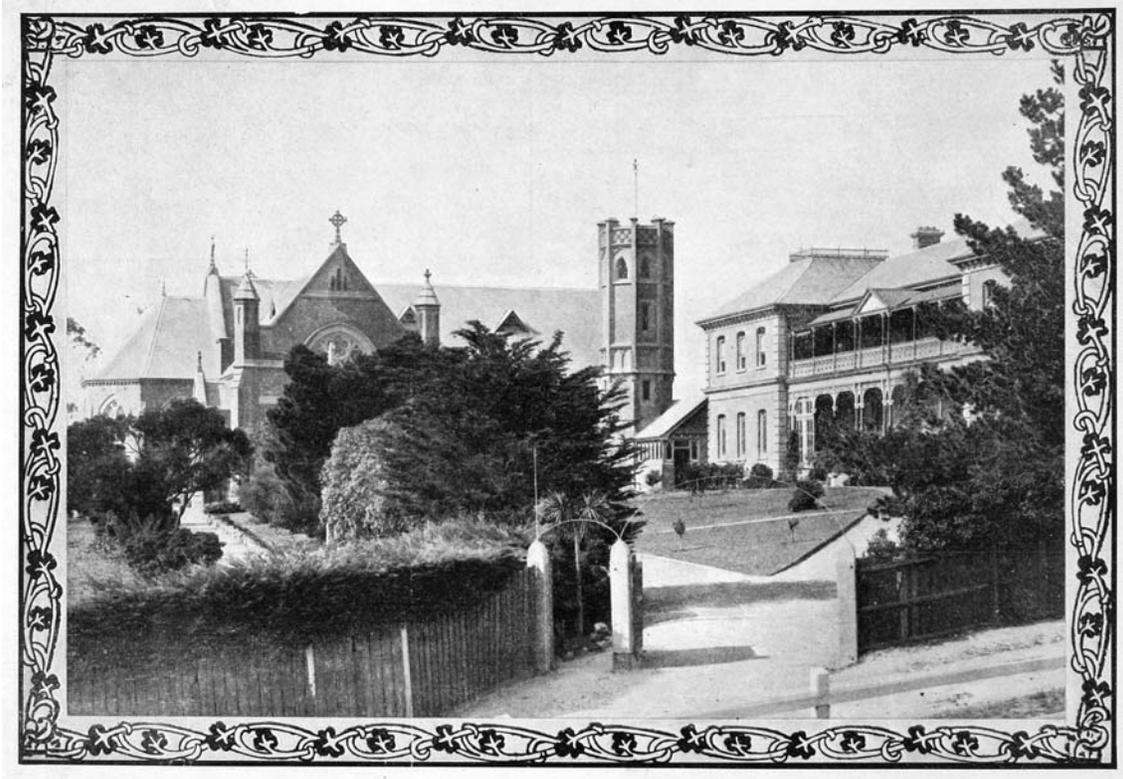


Figure 8: Mt St Canice Sandy Bay
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
Tasmanian Mail 19 August 1915 p.20

Two prominent building families during the early years of the Association were the Dunn family and the Stabb family. James Dunn and his son, Charles, were both MBAT Presidents: James from 1911-1915 and his son, from 1919-1920 and again from 1932-1933. Tom Andrewartha recalled that Stabb Brothers were builders who went 'way back'; his grandfather served his time with them.⁵⁶ Two members of the Stabb family served as MBAT Presidents: RH Stabb, from 1912-1913, and 1922 to 1923, and TJ Stabb from 1915-1916.⁵⁷

Another well-known member at this time was Claude Cooper, who served two terms as MBAT President, from 1926-1927 and 1927-1928. From 1929-1930, he

⁵⁶ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004 Hobart

⁵⁷ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004 Hobart

was President of the Master Builders' Federation of Australia. Son of William Cooper, a leading Hobart builder and businessman, Claude was born in Hobart in 1890. Educated at St. Mary's Boys' School, he joined his father's business in his early teens. He took over the firm in his own name in 1913. For the next 47 years, Claude Cooper undertook works throughout the State and was widely held in the highest esteem for his competency and integrity. His firm built many substantial buildings in Hobart, including the Royal Hobart Hospital and Nurses' Home, the Bursary Building in Elizabeth Street, the old Commonwealth Bank adjoining the GPO, the Strand (now the Odeon Theatre), and also the Launceston General Hospital. Other major projects included works for the Cascade Brewery, the H.E.C., Brownells (now Myer Liverpool Street), FitzGeralds, as well as Princes Wharf and several schools for the Public Works Department.



Figure 9: Commonwealth Bank, Elizabeth Street c1910
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT 30/4950

Like many of his fellow master builders, Claude Cooper was a top sportsman excelling in cricket, football, rowing, yachting and bowling. He was a Life Member of the Mercantile Rowing Club, and a member of both the Tasmanian Cricket Association and Tasmanian Racing Club. Aged 69, Claude died in 1960. Three of his six children were also connected with the building industry: Douglas and Vernon, who carried on the firm he established, and Roderick, a well-known Hobart architect.⁵⁸



Figure 10: Elizabeth Street Hobart, showing Bursary Building in background, c1930
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT PH 40/1/348

⁵⁸ *Building* October 1966 p.14; *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1991, p.19; *The Mercury* 1 June 1960, 4 June 1960 p.4 col.4; *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust* Record ID 48048, RC, T, No.195

William Walter Watson served as President from 1923 to 1925. Tom Andrewartha remembered that WW Watson was a stonemason and that he served as MBAT Secretary for many years. Aged 89, he died in 1963.⁵⁹ Tom also remembered George Barnes, MBAT President from 1918 to 1919, who was a friend of his father, Ron.⁶⁰ Foundation member AW Lee was President from 1920-1922. Mark Creese, another early president, served from 1917-1919.

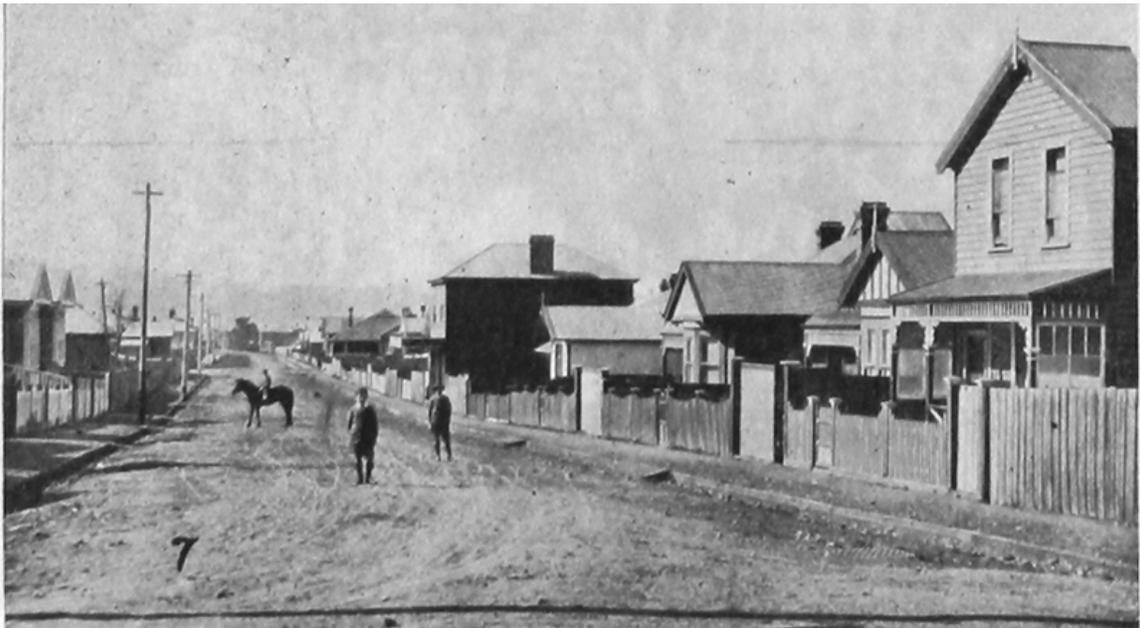


Figure 11: Duke Street, Sandy Bay, looking towards Main Road, showing all new houses
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
Tasmanian Mail 9 October 1919 p.17

Another prominent President in the 1920s was Edward John Monaghan, who served from 1925-1926. A master builder in Hobart for forty years, he died in 1956, aged 73.⁶¹ Allan Penman McElwee, President from 1928-1929, also died in

⁵⁹ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004; *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust* Record ID 75042, CE, CB No.174

⁶⁰ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

⁶¹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1956 p.10; *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust* Record ID 71633, I, No.10

1956; he was 74.⁶² His son, Doug, was MBAT President from 1962-1965 and was made a MBAT Life Member in 1971.

Evans noted that, in the 1920s, due to changed circumstances, D Williams was no longer a big contractor, and consequently had less involvement with the Master Builders' Association, although Leslie Williams served on its committee between 1920 and 1923 and both brothers attended annual general meetings.⁶³ Leslie probably resigned from the committee on 21 August 1923 since the President, RH Stabb, 'wished to place on record his appreciation of Mr L Williams on the committee'.⁶⁴ However, the brothers were still members of the Association in 1930.⁶⁵



Figure 12: Laying the foundations of a house in Lord Street Sandy Bay 1919
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
Tasmanian Mail 9 October 1919 p.17

⁶² MBAT Minutes 20 March 1956

⁶³ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.24; MBAT Minutes, 1920-1923

⁶⁴ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.24; MBAT Minutes 1923

⁶⁵ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.24; MBAT Minutes 1930

The MBAT worked closely with other master builders' groups. In 1923, the Master Builders' Association of Launceston sought affiliation. As the membership of the Southern group was now 40 and that of Launceston nearly 30, it was decided to form a State Executive Committee, consisting of three members from Hobart and two from Launceston, with the presidents of each ex officio:

It was felt that the formation of this committee would relieve most associations of much work, particularly in the matter of watching all industrial matters and arranging any necessary organisation to combat any unfair applications to any industrial courts.⁶⁶

It was also agreed to meet annually, and in 1923, James Dunn chaired the first builders' convention in Hobart.⁶⁷ The Launceston Association appointed FH Haines of Devonport and WE Bowen of Launceston as its representatives while the South selected James Dunn, George Barnes, and M Creese. An affiliation fee, payable to the Federated Master Builders' Association of Australia, was decided upon.⁶⁸



Figure 12: MBAT Annual Dinner Wrest Point 1949
Left to right: NB Davis; TG Neave; C Crawford; TM Lipscombe; Premier Cosgrove;
AB Moore; BL Dechaineux; CK Gillham; AW Luck
Photo courtesy of The Mercury

⁶⁶ MBAT Minutes 20 March 1923: undated newspaper clipping

⁶⁷ *The Mercury* 18 March 1935 p.6 col.4

⁶⁸ MBAT Minutes 12 March 1923; *The Mercury* 23 March 1923

List of Members c1928

TW Holmes	1 Margaret Street, Sandy Bay
James Dunn & Son	217 Liverpool Street
WY Gillham	Grosvenor Street, Sandy Bay
C Gillham	25 Regent Street, Sandy Bay
Messrs Williams Bros.	282 Argyle Street
George Barnes	9 Warwick Street
Mark Creese	191 Melville Street
Messrs AW Lee & Son	Brisbane Street
HW Pease	South British Chambers, Collins Street
TW Cuthbertson	216 Warwick Street
Hon J McKenzie	Collins Street
AP McElwee	57 Warwick Street
EH Crow	High Street, Sandy Bay
C Cooper	Molle Street, 21 Frederick Street
DR Tait	York Street, Sandy Bay
J Andrewartha	Letitia Street, North Hobart
H Cooper	3 Frederick Street
J Toole	Main Road, New Town
Messrs Coleman Bros	Princes Street, Sandy Bay
Messrs. Fyle[?] Bros	New Norfolk

Chapter Three: 1930s

Economic activity in the Tasmanian building industry was severely curtailed shortly after the Wall Street Crash heralded the start of the Great Depression. Unemployment was acute, and wages and salaries for those still employed were reduced. The MBAT noted in its minutes that 1929 was a 'very slack year'; by 1931, the industry was in a 'bad state'.⁶⁹ There was little improvement until 1934.⁷⁰ Slight improvement came in 1935, when interest rates lowered and sales tax was partially suspended.⁷¹ By October 1938, the Association recorded that the industry was thriving; it was a record year for Hobart.⁷² Towards the end of the decade, however, a promising future was yet again thwarted: the brief economic recovery after the Great Depression ended with the outbreak of World War II. The war brought new obstacles for the building industry, which increased dramatically as the war continued. Tasmania received few Commonwealth government contracts, not enough to compensate for the fall in consumer demand. The building industry was stagnant.

Life for Tasmanian builders during the Depression was difficult. In her history of D Williams, Builder, Evans recorded that the firm carried out a lot of 'spec' building in New Town, in an attempt to keep the returned soldiers who worked for them employed: the firm not only bought and subdivided land, but designed and built houses. If the houses failed to sell, they were rented out.⁷³ About

⁶⁹ MBAT Minutes 1929, 1931

⁷⁰ MBAT Minutes 1934

⁷¹ MBAT Minutes 1935; Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.29

⁷² MBAT Minutes 1938-1939

⁷³ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.29

twelve houses were built in Burnside Avenue; others were built in Oldham Avenue.⁷⁴



Figure 13: Construction of multi-storey building Hobart c1930s
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT NS 643/159

Shortly before the war, in 1936, national company Hansen and Yuncken became involved in the Tasmanian building industry. Established in 1918 in Melbourne by Laurits Hansen and Otto Yuncken, who had arrived in Australia in 1885, the company specialised in major commercial and industrial building contracts.⁷⁵ The company came to build the Temperance & General Mutual Life Assurance Society Building, on the corner of Collins and Murray Streets in Hobart.⁷⁶ This was followed by buildings for Australian Newsprint Mills Pty Ltd at Boyer and

⁷⁴ Evans, *'Everything Prompt'*, p.29

⁷⁵ *Building* June 1968 p.17

⁷⁶ *Building* June 1968 p.18

the Wrest Point Riviera Hotel at Sandy Bay. Frank Crowle, then foreman on the job at Wrest Point, later became a director of the company, and president of the Master Builders' Federation of Australia.⁷⁷



Figure 14: Wrest Point Riviera Hotel 1966, site of the Casino

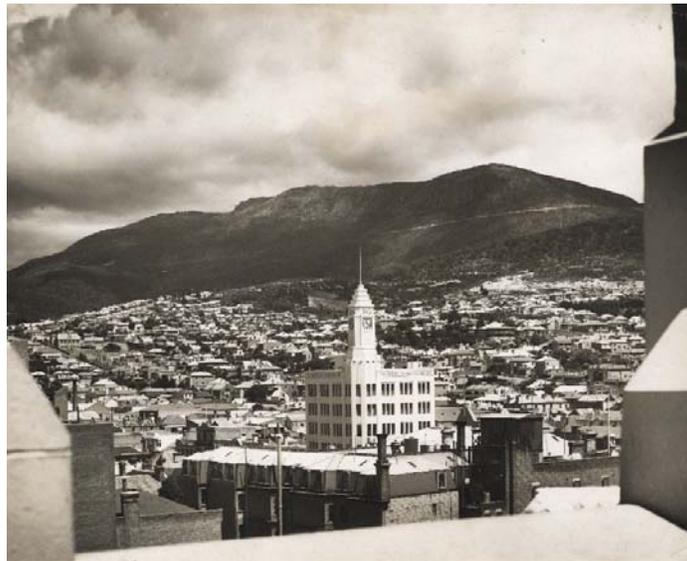


Figure 15: The T & G Building Hobart built by Hansen & Yuncken 1930s
*Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT 30/3446*

⁷⁷ *Building* June 1968 p.18

During the war years, shortages of materials and labour made building difficult. Many of those employed in the industry joined the defence forces.⁷⁸ The war itself produced little work.

The Association in the 1930s

Prominent MBAT member Charles Dunn was the last of a family of master builders. Son of MBAT Foundation Member James Dunn, Charles served as MBAT President from 1919-1920. He was again elected MBAT President from 1934-1937. Charles took over the firm of J Dunn & Sons from his father who had founded it before the turn of the century. Among the memorials to his skill as a builder are the tower on St David's Cathedral, the Perth Bridge, which he rebuilt after it was washed away in 1929, and several churches, including San Carlos (North Hobart), St Theresa (Moonah) and St Francis Xavier (South Hobart). He was also responsible for the construction of the Davey Street public buildings. Like many MBAT members, Charles was well-known as a sportsman: he was an accomplished bowler, cyclist and footballer. He did not retire until 1967 and died in December 1968 aged 82.⁷⁹

Darrell Rupert 'Roy' Tait served as MBAT President from 1930-1932, 1939-1941, and from 1952 until his death in December 1953. At the time of his death, at the age of 60, he had been actively engaged in building for 35 years. He was a MBAT delegate to Master Builders' Federation of Australia (MBFA) conventions. Roy served in the AIF in World War I, and was a well-known member of the

⁷⁸ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.32

⁷⁹ *Building* February 1969 p.13; August 1969 p.15. Charles Dunn was president of the City Bowls Club from 1940-42, and was Club Captain in 1934-35, 1944-45, 1951-52, and represented the State in every capital in Australia. As a cyclist, he won many trophies. He captained the North Hobart Football Club for many years, and was made a life member of the club and the TFL.

RSL. He was a prominent Rotarian, a member of the Committee of the Institute for the Blind and Deaf and was on the Advisory Council of the Hobart Technical College.⁸⁰



Figure 16: Construction of multi-storey building Hobart c1930s
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT 643/153

Thomas Whitfield Cuthbertson served as MBAT President from 1933-1934. He died in 1944, aged 80. A keen yachtsman, he was also a Life Member of the Operative Lodge of the Masonic Order, having been a member for 44 years. A daughter married master builder, Ron Andrewartha.⁸¹ Thomas Cuthbertson was followed as president by William Young Gillham, a long-time MBAT member. He served from 1937-1939, and died in 1960 aged 93.⁸²

⁸⁰ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* December 1953 p.7; *The Examiner* 21 December 1953 p.4 col.6

⁸¹ *The Mercury* 22 September 1944 p.4 col.4

⁸² *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust*, Record ID, CE, Section Y, No.56



Figure 17: Construction of multi-storey building Hobart c1930s
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT 643/152

Chapter Four: 1940s

In December 1941, the Japanese attacked the United States naval base at Pearl Harbour, and the war entered the Pacific. Faced with the threat of invasion, the Australian Government directed all available resources, including labour and materials, to the war effort. By 1942, the MBAT warned that 'the building industry was coming to a standstill'.⁸³ The building industry, particularly the housing sector, continued to suffer from the impact of wartime restrictions. In September 1944, the MBAT welcomed the removal of the tax on materials, hoping that it would make 'a considerable difference to the cost of building'.⁸⁴ In August 1945, the Japanese surrendered, bringing the war to a close.

Peacetime brought enormous problems of social and economic adjustment. The redirection of resources to industry lagged: as early as September 1945, the MBAT impatiently complained that government controls were still too severe, preventing private enterprise, and causing a shortage of labour.⁸⁵ Labour and materials fell well short of demand for some years after the war. Industrial problems contributed to the difficult times: as Garden commented, in post-war Australia, 'unions sought to gain for their members a fairer share of the nation's wealth, or to undermine the Australian economy in order to promote Communism, depending on which interpretation one hears'.⁸⁶

⁸³ MBAT Minutes 1942

⁸⁴ MBAT Minutes 1944

⁸⁵ MBAT Minutes 1945

⁸⁶ Garden, *Building the Nation* p.68

At the end of the war, Australia faced an acute housing shortage. Between 1947 and 1954, Tasmania's population growth was higher than the national average: the combination of the baby-boom and post-war migration contributed to an increase of 52,000 people, exacerbating the housing shortage created by the building slumps of the Great Depression and World War II.⁸⁷ In Hobart, too, many inner city properties had been converted to commercial use.⁸⁸ Some building companies experimented with pre-fabricated materials and mass production of houses, a process which continued into the 1950s and 1960s. Large housing estates also began to appear.⁸⁹



Figure 18: Building pre-fabricated agricultural bank houses
Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT 30/3459

⁸⁷ Caroline Evans, 'Flat-minded? Living and Working at Housing Tasmania's Windsor Court, 1954-2002', Hobart, 2003, p.1

⁸⁸ Evans, 'Flat-minded?', p.1

⁸⁹ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.61

Evans noted that under the impetus of government reconstruction, D. Williams entered a long economic boom,⁹⁰ and this was the case for many Tasmanian builders. Reporting to the Master Builders' Federation at the end of the decade, MBAT President Arthur Moore summarised the position of the building industry as he saw it:

Tasmania, like all other States, is in the centre of an industrial expansion era, but our constructional programme is being frustrated by material and manpower shortages. It will therefore be realised that the main activities have been house construction, the predominant material being wood, but in spite of all the shortages ... good progress is being made.⁹¹

Builders, however, were still hampered by Government control of the distribution of some materials. Moore noted that the Association had successfully resisted the Government move to control cement.⁹² Material shortages continued to be a major problem. In 1949, the Parliamentary Select Committee on the control of certain building materials recommended that the Act continue for another year. Noting that corrugated and plain galvanised iron had been scarce for years, the committee recommended that the government import from overseas not less than 1,000 tons of galvanised iron for roofing for distribution by the Controller of Building Materials.⁹³

Nails were also in short supply: in 1949, according to one Hobart builder, a public works inspector had tried unsuccessfully to obtain nails from him for an urgent job. Hobart's local nail manufacturer was frustrated by short supplies of steel wire from the mainland; eight mainland nailmaking factories absorbed most of the steel wire as soon as it was produced.⁹⁴ There was also a shortage of

⁹⁰ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, p.34

⁹¹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962, 'President's Report – Federation' September 1949

⁹² MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962, 'President's Report – Federation' September 1949

⁹³ *The Mercury* 2 November 1949

⁹⁴ *The Mercury* 11 October 1949

weatherboards and floorboards, because local timber firms also supplied the mainland.⁹⁵ Home-building was also held up by shortages of plaster, galvanised iron, flat iron (for spouting and ridges), water piping, baths, basins and other essential interior fittings.⁹⁶

Speaking at the Launceston MBA Annual Dinner in 1949, North-West MBA President, A Luck, noted that the lack of suitable shipping facilities from New South Wales was delaying home building in Tasmania: it had been four months since any building materials had arrived from Port Kembla, Sydney or Newcastle.⁹⁷ Past President of the MBAT, Cecil Gillham, observed that building costs were soaring, threatening the stability of the industry and threatening the Australian dream of home ownership. He added that it was the duty of each member to see that every individual owned his own home at a price which would not be an anchor round his neck for the rest of his life.⁹⁸ He warned that young people were being forced to build their own homes at week-ends, 'not because they want to, but because they cannot afford to pay a builder the fees which a builder must of necessity charge'.⁹⁹

In the 1940s, the MBAT lobbied for the introduction of builders' registration legislation, arguing that it was not only essential to the trade but that it also protected the owner from the 'unscrupulous, get-rich-quick builder'.¹⁰⁰ Opposition to the move was expressed in a series of letters to *The Mercury*.¹⁰¹ The Builders' Registration Bill, approved by the MBAT, was introduced by Labor

⁹⁵ *The Mercury* 11 October 1949

⁹⁶ *The Mercury* 11 October 1949

⁹⁷ *The Mercury* 26 November 1949

⁹⁸ *The Mercury* 26 November 1949

⁹⁹ *Examiner* 26 November 1949

¹⁰⁰ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962, 'President's Report – Federation', September 1949

¹⁰¹ *The Mercury* 22 July 1949, 30 September 1949, 4 October 1949, 11 October 1949, 17 October 1949, 19 October 1949, 24 October 1949. See also Arthur Moore's reply as MBAT President: *The Mercury* 18 October 1949

member, Mr Hope, as a non-party measure but was defeated in the House of Assembly, when Liberal member, Mr Beattie, moved that the chairman leave the chair, a tactic used to 'kill off' a bill.¹⁰²

The Mercury editorial stated that the House of Assembly had acted wisely in rejecting the bill, arguing that it would establish 'an objectionable precedent' and that furthermore:

Control of the trade by legislation is neither necessary nor desirable. The average man who proposes to build a house takes the elementary precaution of employing a builder of proved reputation. As an additional safeguard he often engages an architect to supervise the work. The reliable master builder is not always a tradesman, and there is no merit in trying to force him to become one by act of Parliament. He is primarily a business man, and his standing in the trade depends upon his business efficiency.¹⁰³

In the 1940s, State awards were determined by the Wages Board; in 1949, there were nearly 60 wages boards, promoting calls for a State Arbitration system.¹⁰⁴ The application of different awards within the building industry caused confusion: in 1949, for example, there was a general misunderstanding about public holidays – bricklayers, plasterers and painters were covered by the State Wages Board determination and were entitled to a public holiday on the first Monday in November. Those receiving above-award rates of pay were not.¹⁰⁵ Carpenters, joiners and labourers were covered by a federal award and were not entitled to the November holiday.¹⁰⁶

In 1949, Arthur Moore noted that, during the previous year, Tasmania had received 'a great deal of attention from militant union leaders who seem to be

¹⁰² *The Mercury* 11 November 1949

¹⁰³ *The Mercury* 11 November 1949 (editorial)

¹⁰⁴ *The Mercury* 10 August 1949, 26 August 1949

¹⁰⁵ *The Mercury* 5 October 1949

¹⁰⁶ *The Mercury* 7 October 1949

making their homes in Tasmania'.¹⁰⁷ Industrial problems had surfaced on the waterfront: 'It is regrettable that, knowing how dependent we are on shipping, we should have more trouble ... at our two main ports; not only does it hold up the goods on the boats, but it means that we will have less vessels entering our ports and so less material and goods from overseas and the mainland.'¹⁰⁸

Tasmanian Agricultural Bank

The government's public housing program was carried out by the Tasmanian Agricultural Bank. In 1948, it had about 90 jobs underway through northern Tasmania. In 1949, AV Jennings Pty Ltd moved to the State.¹⁰⁹ The company and the government negotiated for the company to take over government housing in northern Tasmania. The initial fixed-fee contract, agreed to in January 1949, was £1,500,000 for 1,000 houses and other buildings over three years. Timber and labour were to be brought in by the company, so that the low supplies in Tasmania were not further depleted, but this was later dropped because of local objections. Harold McGonigal, later to become MBAT President, and Bill Crossley established an office and pre-cutting yard in Burnie and began work on the first estate in the Acton area in Burnie. Some of the local men had previously worked for the Agricultural Bank as part of the day labour force and objected to being put under contract. Three were dismissed for starting a go-slow and the rest went on strike. After a week, the matter was resolved and contract and day labour both continued to be used.¹¹⁰

Materials were also a problem. AV Jennings helped set up a plaster works in Devonport, under the name WH Cockram & Sons (Tasmania), and acquired an

¹⁰⁷ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962, 'President's Report – Federation', September 1949

¹⁰⁸ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962, 'President's Report – Federation', September 1949

¹⁰⁹ Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.65, 87-89

¹¹⁰ Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.87-89

interest in the Rainbow Tile Works in Burnie to manufacture roof tiles. Nails and steel reinforcement were imported from Japan. A plumber, G Brand & Sons, was relocated from Melbourne to supply and manufacture plumbing supplies.¹¹¹

AV Jennings struck further problems, when the contract price for the agricultural bank houses proved too low. Between 1949 and 1952, AV Jennings built 1000 houses in Launceston, Devonport, Deloraine, Ulverstone, Wynyard, Burnie and Smithton.¹¹² In mid-1951, Jennings started the large Mayfield estate in Launceston for the Agricultural Bank. Shortly afterwards, it started the Waverley estate, also in Launceston. AV Jennings successfully negotiated with the Agricultural Bank to be allowed to do other housing work and constructed 40 houses at Rosebery for the Electrolytic Zinc Company.¹¹³ In 1954, AV Jennings moved to Hobart, where its first contract was for a group of government houses on Brooker Avenue, Moonah.¹¹⁴

By 1949, the MBAT was negotiating with the Agricultural Bank in an attempt to procure more favourable conditions for contractors in the hope that more master builders would participate in the building of government homes. More than 4,000 homes in and around Hobart were planned under the Agricultural Bank scheme.¹¹⁵

AV Jennings was also involved in construction and large-scale engineering work in Tasmania. In 1953, it established a water supply at Currie on King Island.¹¹⁶

¹¹¹ Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.65, 87-89

¹¹² Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.65, 87-89

¹¹³ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.99

¹¹⁴ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.116

¹¹⁵ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962, 'President's Report – Federation', September 1949

¹¹⁶ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.116

In 1951, the company arranged for English civil engineering company, Lunnicks, to move to Tasmania and Lunnicks (Australia) Ltd, was established, with AV Jennings' assistance. Fifty employees and families travelled by ship to Melbourne and chartered a DC3 to Burnie. Equipment, including two large old traction steam engines, was also brought out. Harold McGonigal was a director of the company, which was eventually absorbed into AV Jennings in 1957.¹¹⁷

About 1945, national building company EA Watts Pty Ltd came to Tasmania to build the Lufra Hotel at Eaglehawk Neck for Reg Ansett.¹¹⁸ It was to play a prominent part in the Tasmanian building industry and the MBAT.

After the war, the building industry became more scientific in its approach. In 1948, the Commonwealth Government appointed the Commonwealth Department of Works, Building Research and Advisory Committee to assist in increasing the effectiveness of building research in Australia. Its membership included architects, engineers, builders and building trade union officials as well as senior officials of Commonwealth research establishments. The Building Research and Advisory Committee advised on aspects of building such as the thermal behaviour of buildings, insulation, summer temperatures, and natural lighting.¹¹⁹

Leading master builders during the 1940s included TG Neave, Cecil Gillham, and Arthur Moore. Thomas George Neave, a well-known Hobart businessman and yachtsman, served four terms as MBAT President: 1943-1944; 1944-1945; 1954-1955; and 1955-1956. In May 1956, while MBAT President, he was elected as

¹¹⁷ Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.99, 117-118

¹¹⁸ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

¹¹⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1953 p.18

a Hobart City Council alderman.¹²⁰ He died suddenly at the age of 63 at his Sandy Bay home in 1960.¹²¹

Cecil Kidder Gillham was also a long-serving MBAT President, completing three terms: 1946-1947; 1947-1948; and 1956-1957. Cecil was born in Hobart in 1910 and was educated at Clemes College. With his brother, NW Gillham of Dynnyrne Road, Cecil took over his father's building firm in 1928. The firm, which closed about 1961, built many buildings in Hobart, including the Masonic Temple in Harrington Street and the Naval and Military Club in Davey Street. Like many of his fellow-master builders, he was a keen sportsman and active in community affairs. He was also a member of the Australian Institute of Builders. Cecil died suddenly in 1963, aged 53.¹²²

Like the Gillham family, the Andrewarthas were dedicated MBAT members. Ronald Henry Andrewartha served as President from 1941-1943, during the difficult war years. Ron was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in 1978. In August 1878, the MBAT journal reported:

Ron wouldn't tell us how old he was but he is a very sprightly old gentleman who took the opportunity to say that we should teach apprentices on the job and commented that "the only way to stop many of today's apprentices hammering their thumbs was to get them to hold the hammer with both hands".¹²³

Ron died in 1988, aged 85.¹²⁴ His son, TJ Andrewartha, was also MBAT President.

¹²⁰ MBAT Minutes 22 May 1956

¹²¹ *The Mercury* 4 October 1960 p.24; *Examiner* 4 October 1960 p.8 col.7. He was also involved with the Sandy Bay Regatta Association and the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania, and was a director of the Kennerley Boys' Home. Survived by his widow, and sons, Barry and David, he was buried at Cornelian Bay.

¹²² *The Mercury* 25 April 1963 p.5 col. 8-9

¹²³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1978 p.27

¹²⁴ *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust*, ID 94856 (cremation)

AB (Arthur Bernard) Moore, who served two terms as MBAT President, from 1948-1949 and 1949-1950, was awarded MBAT Life Membership in 1971.¹²⁵



Figure 19: Builders at St Mary's 1948
Courtesy of Mr. Allan Orr

¹²⁵ *Building* October 1966 p.15; *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1991, p.20

Chapter Five: 1950s

At the beginning of the 1950s, post-war prosperity and expansion augured well for the building industry, for both the housing and construction sectors. Robert Menzies, elected Prime Minister in 1949 and remaining in office until 1966, symbolized prosperity to many Australians. In Tasmania, where Premier Eric Reece filled the same figurative role, the building industry was steadier than in some other States.¹²⁶

By the beginning of the 1950s, housing shortages were critical. The cost of building remained high. Speaking at a building industry congress luncheon in the mid-1950s, Prime Minister Menzies said the enormous cost of building construction was one of the greatest problems in Australia, and one which could not be remedied by the simple formula of a government subsidy.¹²⁷ MBFA President, Tasmanian Tom Lipscombe, suggested that: 'building costs seemed high today because people have started to live, rather than exist'.¹²⁸ The search for material success was a response to the privations of the Depression and war years. High employment levels meant this was achievable for many, and the demand for higher living standards, particularly improved housing, further stretched the housing sector.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.164

¹²⁷ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* May 1954 p.9

¹²⁸ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1955 p.11

¹²⁹ Caroline Evans, 'Flat-minded? Living and Working at Housing Tasmania's Windsor Court, 1954-2002', Hobart, 2003, p.1

Competition for labour in the early part of the decade was acute. *The Mercury's* 'industrial roundsman' predicted further industrial disputes and strikes in Tasmania unless employers – private, Government and semi-Government – adhered strictly to awards and stopped the practice of bidding for labour. He also warned that the practice played into the hands of 'Communist or militant union officials'.¹³⁰ The MBAT fully supported the newspaper's claims.¹³¹ Some employees were being paid above-award rates or were receiving special conditions including overtime. The Agricultural Bank was singled out as a serious offender but was defended by Premier Cosgrove who claimed that the Bank was forced to follow the Commonwealth's interpretation of the carpenters' award in order to retain its workforce and prevent their drift to Commonwealth projects.¹³²

By the end of the decade, the shortage of skilled labour was highlighted by a boom in building. Migration was considered as a solution.¹³³ The MBAT enquired about the possibility of obtaining skilled workers from England as migrants but was advised by the Agent-General for Tasmania, Mr White, that there were few suitable skilled building workers, especially carpenters, bricklayers and plumbers, who wanted to migrate. The MBAT also considered lodging a group nomination for married tradesmen but the idea was shelved because of the housing shortage.¹³⁴

Material shortages exacerbated the problem. The MBAT minute books in 1950 reflect concern with shortages of scantling, cement and glass, made worse by the

¹³⁰ *The Mercury* 7 June 1951

¹³¹ *The Mercury* 8 June 1951

¹³² *The Mercury* 8 June 1951

¹³³ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1955 p.7

¹³⁴ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* April 1956 p.7; *The Mercury* 14 July 1959, 19 August 1959

theft of materials from building sites. The timber shortage continued to be an issue of concern to all the Master Builders' Associations in the State. The MBAT was also worried about the amount of Tasmanian timber shipped to the mainland: about 42 per cent of logs cut were exported. MBAT Secretary JE Braithwaite declared that 'the building industry of this State is being strangled by the inactivity of an apathetic Government'.¹³⁵ In response, the Minister for Forests, Mr Hand, said that the Forestry Commission had no authority to prohibit the export of timber.¹³⁶ The MBAT had previously requested the Minister for Housing to consider raising the price of timber in Tasmania; builders were being forced to import timber because of the acute shortage in the State.¹³⁷ Shortages of timber resulted in an inquiry into the Tasmanian timber industry, which began to hear evidence in January 1952.¹³⁸ Concern was also expressed at the apparent monopoly of resources, and the practice of a company supplying timber floorboards insisting on laying them. While the prices for boards were fixed, the price for laying was not subject to any control. *The Mercury* suggested that the laying price was up to 60 per cent higher than a builder's price.¹³⁹ Master builder Tom Lipscombe was a member of the board of inquiry, although his appointment was not without controversy – the Tasmanian Timber Association objected strongly.¹⁴⁰

In 1955, the MBAT requested Federal government assurance after the shortage of steel had brought several Tasmanian building projects to a standstill. The MBAT argued that large quantities of steel were lying at Port Kembla because of

¹³⁵ *The Mercury* 8 June 1951

¹³⁶ *The Mercury* 9 June 1951

¹³⁷ *The Mercury* 10 April 1951, 20 April 1951

¹³⁸ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1952, p.10; April 1952, p.7; July 1952 p.10

¹³⁹ *The Mercury* 13 November 1951 (editorial)

¹⁴⁰ *The Mercury* 23 November 1951; 30 January 1952; 31 January 1952. The other board members were Chairman, Assistant Under-Treasurer KJ Binns and Forestry Commissioner Alex Crane.

difficulties with shipping.¹⁴¹ The shipping question was complicated: lack of shipping for potatoes from the North West coast often meant a lack of return space for galvanized iron.¹⁴²

Both the labour shortage and the material shortage contributed to the dearth of houses being constructed. Premier Cosgrove promised to address the housing shortage by providing 4,000 prefabricated homes. By June 1950, just over 1,000 homes had been completed under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement, and about 500 more were still under construction. There was a waiting list of 4,000.¹⁴³ Most of the houses being built were in Hobart, but they were also constructed in regional areas including Burnie, Launceston, Penguin, Devonport, Wynyard, George Town, New Norfolk, Latrobe, Cygnet and Ulverstone.¹⁴⁴

The State Labor Government and the Master Builders' Association disagreed over housing construction policy. The MBAT, always a strong advocate for private enterprise, objected to the government's day labour force being used for public works, arguing that the work should be done by contract.¹⁴⁵ AV Jennings' preference for subcontract labour led to industrial action in the State.¹⁴⁶ The MBAT was also concerned that tradesmen employed by the Agricultural Bank were being paid over the award rate.¹⁴⁷ The Minister for Housing, Mr Bramich, criticised the master builders; he 'claimed they did not wish to build for the bank

¹⁴¹ *The Mercury* 18 February 1955

¹⁴² *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* July 1955 p.7

¹⁴³ *The Mercury* 22 September 1950

¹⁴⁴ *The Mercury* 2 June 1950

¹⁴⁵ MBAT Minutes 9 December 1952

¹⁴⁶ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.73

¹⁴⁷ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 8 May 1951

because the conditions were too hard'.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, MBAT members throughout the State participated in the scheme.¹⁴⁹ MBAT Secretary, JE Braithwaite, noted that master builders were also erecting a large number of homes for private individuals and other housing authorities.¹⁵⁰

State Department of Housing 1953

The Housing Department was established on 1 July 1953. Its first priority was to house large families living in inadequate accommodation, and two and three bedroom houses were constructed in outer suburbs. Smaller family groups were accommodated in flats; the first were constructed in Moonah in 1953-1954, followed by larger blocks on Brooker Avenue and Harrington Street.¹⁵¹

By the end of the 1950s, the building industry had improved, but only after a long struggle.¹⁵² In 1949-50, Hobart had record building figures.¹⁵³ However, in June 1952, the Association journal reported that the future of the industry was gloomy, and called for unity within the industry.¹⁵⁴ Statistics showed a decrease in Tasmania's home construction.¹⁵⁵ Two years later, MBAT President Cliff Daw reported a general steady improvement in the building industry after the earlier severe tightening.¹⁵⁶ Despite the expiration in June 1953 of the *Building Material Act*, shortages of materials continued: there was particularly a problem with the supply of galvanized iron to the North West Coast. By January 1954, statistics again indicated a recovery of the building industry, but economic uncertainty

¹⁴⁸ *The Mercury* 1 June 1950

¹⁴⁹ *The Mercury* 2 June 1950

¹⁵⁰ *The Mercury* 2 June 1950

¹⁵¹ Evans, 'Flat-minded?' p.1; *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* March-April 1955 p.15, October 1957, p.10

¹⁵² *The Mercury* 19 August 1959

¹⁵³ *The Mercury* 23 June 1950

¹⁵⁴ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1952 p.13

¹⁵⁵ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1952 p.18, also p.12; *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1952 p.15. See also October 1952, p.1; *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* May 1954 p.9

¹⁵⁶ *The Mercury* 26 August 1954

remained.¹⁵⁷ By March 1954, there were 5,567 employed in the building industry. Of these, 4,448 were working on new buildings, 750 on alterations and additions, and 369 on repair and maintenance work.¹⁵⁸ By November 1954, the shortage of houses was abating.¹⁵⁹ By January 1956, building activities reached an all-time high.¹⁶⁰

From the mid-1950s, there were increasing calls for the compulsory registration of builders, an issue never long off the agenda.¹⁶¹ The MBAT argued that it would provide a degree of protection for owners. As well, it would prevent tendering for jobs by 'small men with little backing', who were unable to complete contracts when marked changes in rates and the cost of building materials occurred.¹⁶² The MBAT unsuccessfully lobbied the Liberal Party over registration.¹⁶³ In an attempt to convince the Liberal Party of the desirability of registration, the MBAT decided to admit any registered builder to the Association.¹⁶⁴ The Building Workers' Industrial Union (BWIU) also continued to strongly oppose the registration of builders.¹⁶⁵

A related issue were those 'week-end builders' who worked on Sunday, a practice prohibited by law. Breaches of the *Sunday Observance Act* were raised repeatedly at MBAT general meetings. In May 1956, the MBAT advised the Commissioner of Police of continued breaches and drew his attention

¹⁵⁷ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* March 1954 p.9; *The Mercury* 29 March 1954, June 1954 p.15

¹⁵⁸ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* August 1954 p.11

¹⁵⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* November 1954 p.9, January 1955 p.16, December 1955 p.7

¹⁶⁰ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* January 1956 p.7

¹⁶¹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* March-April 1955 p.7

¹⁶² *The Mercury* 14 July 1959

¹⁶³ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 16 September 1958

¹⁶⁴ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 21 October 1958

¹⁶⁵ *The Mercury* 12 August 1959

particularly to work on the University project at Sandy Bay and a service station in Harrington Street adjoining the Masonic Temple.¹⁶⁶

In 1959, the MBAT and building trade unions met with Premier Reece and Chief Secretary Dr Gaha to discuss the issue of 'weekend builders'. The deputation requested that appropriate government departments be instructed to police the activities of builders, both professional and amateur, so that illegal activities could be eliminated. It advised that 'fly-by-night' building contractors were employing skilled and unskilled building workers for weekend work in contravention of the provisions of wages boards' determinations, the *Workers Compensation Act*, the *Sunday Observance Act* and union rules. It also stated that the enforcement of these conditions would not curtail the activities of the private home builder nor would it interfere with reputable contractors carrying out work on Saturdays for which full overtime, penalty rates and insurance conditions were observed. The Premier gave his undertaking that the matter would be investigated and a meeting was organised between the members of the deputation and government officers.¹⁶⁷ The meeting was addressed by the Secretary for Labour, Mr V Tuting, and attended by the Master Builders' Association, the Carpenters' and Joiners' Union, the Building Workers' Industrial Union and the Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union. It heard that 'fly-by-night' building contractors were operating on Saturdays and Sundays, employing skilled and unskilled labour at rates lower than those fixed by wages boards' determinations.¹⁶⁸ In the 1950s, too, the growth of the 'owner-builder' was also perceived as a threat by the Association.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁶ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 22 May 1956

¹⁶⁷ *The Mercury* 8 September 1959 p.14

¹⁶⁸ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* September 1959

¹⁶⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1955 p.11

Another significant issue was the 'Rise and Fall' clause in contracts. Contracts had been at the heart of MBAT business since its inception. Increasingly, through the 1950s, the MBAT voiced its concern over 'rise and fall' provisions. The clause had been a consistent contractual item since World War II, because of uncertainty in the cost structure.

Following unsuccessful attempts to discuss the matter with the Premier, the MBAT met with the Leader of the Opposition, and then held two special general meetings to discuss the issue. The first meeting, held in May 1956, resolved:

That a letter be forwarded to the Minister for Land and Works advising that in view of the attitude of the Public Works Department on Fixed Sum tendering and the desire of members of this Association to submit tenders, it is felt that in view of the unsteady economic situation, consideration should be given to the acceptance of tenders on a rise and fall basis with an agreed time limit, and in this regard reference is made to the Hobart High School Science Block, the Latrobe Hospital and the Royal Hobart Hospital jobs which will vary in duration from two to four years. Further, that the rise and fall clause is operating in all other States, in the Commonwealth Department of Works in Tasmania, and other local semi-government bodies.¹⁷⁰

The second meeting, held in May 1956, resolved that tenders for the Hobart High School Science Block comply with the Association's policy of tendering under the 'rise and fall' condition.¹⁷¹ The contract was awarded to MBAT member AE Wright, who advised a special general meeting that he had not been successful in having the 'rise and fall' clause incorporated into his contract and that he had signed the contract on a firm price basis. It was then moved by Cliff Daw and seconded by Tom Lipscombe that the clause be abandoned for jobs south of

¹⁷⁰ MBAT Minutes Special General Meeting 28 May 1956

¹⁷¹ MBAT Minutes Special General Meeting 12 June 1956

Oatlands and that future conditions of tendering be left to the discretion of members. One member, Peter Richardson, dissented.¹⁷²

On 18 August 1956, an intra-state meeting was held to discuss the 'rise and fall' issue. Delegates attending from the south were CK Gillham, TM Lipscombe, TG Neave, AB Moore and JE Braithwaite, who acted as secretary. Northern delegates were R Morice, who acted as Chairman; GR Hutton; G Dell; H McGrath; and L Purse; and from the North-West, M Luck; G Ibbott; S Dowling and L Stubbs. After a general discussion about the need for uniformity in tendering, two resolutions were passed:

1. That the three Associations make earnest endeavors to have the rise and fall Clause reintroduced into contracts on the same basis as that operating between the Victorian Master Builders' Association and the Victorian Chapter of the RAIA and,
2. That in an endeavour to bring about Rise and Fall provisions, all tenders in future should be submitted on a Rise and Fall basis together with an alternative firm price.

The issue lapsed: in 1959, it was again raised, prompted by wage increases and proposed changes to workers' compensation and annual leave, all of which the MBAT argued affected the cost of materials. Of particular concern was the predicted rise in the cost of bricks and possibly timber. The MBAT sought the reinstatement of the clause, approaching the Minister for Lands and Works, Mr Cashion, for his support.¹⁷³

Tenders were often controversial, particularly tenders for government works. In 1955, a Legislative Council Select Committee was established to investigate a tender by HK Fielding of Ulverstone for the foundations of the Devon Hospital

¹⁷² MBAT Minutes Special General Meeting 3 July 1956

¹⁷³ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 14 July 1959

at Latrobe.¹⁷⁴ This had been prompted by a resolution of the North-West MBAT at a special meeting held on 11 February 1955.¹⁷⁵

Caught up in the debate about tendering was the issue of the government day labour force. The State Labor Government and the MBAT disagreed over the operation of the day labour force, which the builders vehemently opposed. In 1952, MBAT President DR Tait was critical of the policy, arguing that it was unreasonable to consider that a public authority could compete against private enterprise in building construction work.¹⁷⁶ The government, on the other hand, argued that the day labour force was much cheaper: 'When private enterprise can undercut our costs we will have to revert to tendering'.¹⁷⁷ The government's argument failed to convince the MBAT.¹⁷⁸

Partly as a consequence of developments during the war, a range of new construction materials and methods were available to Australian builders. The industry was undergoing a subtle change. These changes necessitated revision of building regulations, and, in 1956, the Minister for Lands and Works, Mr Reece, announced that the Commonwealth government had agreed to assist the Tasmanian government in a review of building regulations.

In September 1956, MBAT President TG Neave, in his annual report to the Federation, noted that:

The industry in Tasmania continues to be harassed by the shortage of regular shipping, and by waterside workers' strikes. During the past year, serious situations developed because of the strikes, and personal representations from

¹⁷⁴ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *Advocate* 21 May 1955

¹⁷⁵ North-West MBA Minutes Special Committee Meeting 11 February 1955

¹⁷⁶ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 10 December 1952

¹⁷⁷ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 26 August 1954

¹⁷⁸ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 27 August 1954

the State were made to the Prime Minister to intervene in the crisis. It is regrettable that, because of its isolation, the State's industries should be so seriously retarded when strikes occur.¹⁷⁹

In its annual reports to the Master Builders' Federation of Australia, the MBAT invariably began with a comment about industrial relations activity in the State.¹⁸⁰ In 1956, the report began: 'There has been no industrial unrest during the past year, but the Association has been seriously concerned with the increases in wages that have taken place.'¹⁸¹ At this time, the Association operated under the State Builders and Painters Wages Determination for all employees except builders' labourers.¹⁸²

The MBAT looked to the MBFA for leadership on industrial issues. In 1959, the Federation convention in Melbourne, which was addressed by Prime Minister Menzies, was attended by several Tasmanian delegates, including Arthur Moore, who was elected Federation President. Other delegates were MBAT State President Peter Richardson, Past Federal President Tom Lipscombe, Secretary MS Pritchard, HD McGonigal, JL King, EA Richardson, CK Gillham, FJ O'Loughlin and R Neville. Prime Minister Menzies told the meeting that 'building was both the index and the cause of social prosperity', an idea frequently repeated.¹⁸³ The Federation condemned builders who reached wage agreements through collective bargaining; reaffirmed that the rulings of established industrial tribunals be observed; urged the Government to examine closely opportunities for increased numbers of migrants 'of all types'; and recommended that payroll tax be used to improve training facilities for apprentices, supervisors and executives in industries from which it was derived.

¹⁷⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1956 p.11

¹⁸⁰ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1956 p.13

¹⁸¹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1956 pp.13

¹⁸² *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1956 pp.13-14

¹⁸³ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 17 October 1959

The convention also undertook to organise study tours to improve construction techniques and pledged wholehearted support for the introduction of decimal currency into Australia.¹⁸⁴

The relationship between the MBAT and the building unions was not always one of antagonism. For the most part, there was minimal industrial disruption in Tasmania. In March 1954, a new Builders' Labourers Federation State Secretary was appointed and, as he held the position for nearly 30 years, he figured prominently in the recollections of several master builders. He was WL (William Leslie) Morgan, better known as 'Speed', because of his cycling prowess.¹⁸⁵ On his appointment, the MBAT resolved to 'endeavour to offer co-operation'.¹⁸⁶ Arnold Currie, Secretary of the BWIU, was another union official recalled by several master builders.

In 1952, the building workers formed a new union in New South Wales. The MBAT journal described this as 'a move to free themselves from Communist tactics'.¹⁸⁷ To be known as the NSW Branch of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners of Australia, the new union would be 'controlled by moderates ... it will be an opposition body to the Communist-controlled Building Workers' Industrial Union.'¹⁸⁸ The Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners, registered in the Federal Arbitration Court, was originally founded

¹⁸⁴ *The Mercury* 17 October 1959

¹⁸⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1980 p.15: W.L. 'Speed' Morgan was for many years the Junior Vice-President of the Tasmanian Trades and Labour Council. He was also a member of the Disputes Committee and was the Tasmanian delegate to the International Labor Organisation Conference in Geneva in 1975. In 1977, 'Speed' received the Order of Australia for his services to trade unionism. He was also recognised as one of Australia's leading cycle coaches and managers. As a cyclist, he won every national classic and was the winner of the first 'Mercury' tour. He died in Hobart on 31 August 1980 aged 72.

¹⁸⁶ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 23 March 1954

¹⁸⁷ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* August 1952 p.20

¹⁸⁸ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* August 1952 p.20

in Tasmania; later a branch was established in Victoria.¹⁸⁹ It was not long before the union instituted a log of claims in NSW, asking for a 35-hour week and £30/8/- a week. At the time, the NSW Construction Workers Award was £16/10/- a week plus 15/- a week for fares. The log of claims was greeted with derision in the MBAT journal, under the headline 'Utopia', but nervousness over wage rises increased.¹⁹⁰

Tasmanian awards were approved by Wages Boards, and award increases were rarely welcomed by the MBAT. In 1952, the Builders and Painters Wages Board approved a 30 per cent marginal increase, bringing the marginal rate to 16/- per week. The determination affected carpenters and joiners, bricklayers, stonemasons, plasterers, paperhangers, glaziers and signwriters.¹⁹¹ Announcements of increased wages were invariably accompanied by claims that building costs would increase: in 1959, the Builders and Painters' Wages Board announced a 20 per cent increase, prompting the MBAT to predict a corresponding but snowballing rise in building costs.¹⁹²

The multiplicity of awards in the State, and the two-tiered Federal/State arbitration system caused a great deal of confusion to employers. In 1954, Cliff Daw reported that some builders were perturbed that they were still obliged to pay employees under the higher State determination because there was uncertainty about the legality of the Federal award.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* August 1952, p.20

¹⁹⁰ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1952 pp.1, 5

¹⁹¹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 21 May 1952; *Examiner* 15 May 1952

¹⁹² MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 19 September 1959

¹⁹³ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 26 August 1954 (Annual General Meeting)

On some issues, however, the two groups worked together. In 1955, the Southern BWIU expressed concern about the high number of accidents in the building trade.¹⁹⁴ In August 1955, a labourer died at Bronte Park, and the coroner warned of dangerous practices in the building industry.¹⁹⁵ By the end of the decade, the MBAT was increasingly aware of the need for safety on building sites. The MBAT agreed to supply safety helmets on certain multi-storey building constructions.¹⁹⁶ In mid-1959, colour-coded helmets were introduced: labourers wore grey helmets; carpenters, yellow; plumbers, blue; bricklayers, red; painters, pink; riggers, brown with reduced brim for safety reasons; plasterers, black; electricians, orange; engineers, green with reduced brim; lift workers, navy blue with reduced brim; miscellaneous workers, navy blue ordinary; foremen, trade colours with a white band; executives, white; and visitors, green.¹⁹⁷

As in previous decades, training and apprenticeships were matters of vital concern to the Association, and were a focus for the MBAT Executive, who were 'making every effort to interest youth in building as a career'. Recruitment of apprentices was viewed as a long-term problem 'of vital national importance'; master builders were urged to 'pledge themselves to take their full quota of apprentices as a means of securing a steady flow of craftsmen into the industry into the coming year'.¹⁹⁸ In 1952, the Tasmanian Government held an inquiry into the State Apprenticeship system. The MBAT submission to the State Apprenticeship Enquiry concluded:

¹⁹⁴ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* March-April 1955 p.9

¹⁹⁵ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* August 1955 p.10

¹⁹⁶ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 18 March 1958; MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 9 September 1959

¹⁹⁷ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 27 February 1960

¹⁹⁸ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1953 p.11

there appears to be no fundamental fault to find with the existing apprenticeship system, provided the lad receives preparatory training as outlined and subsequent supplementary technical training is confined to night schooling and that the ratio of wages paid to apprentices be adjusted in view of the facts submitted to keep the cost of his product within reasonable comparison with that of a journeyman. This would result in benefit for the boy by way of more efficient education and benefit to the community by lower cost of the product.¹⁹⁹

A diploma course for building industry cadets, covering all aspects of administrative and technical work associated with the building industry, was introduced at the Hobart Technical College in 1955, following requests from the MBAT and the Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Builders.²⁰⁰

In 1950, the Chief Secretary, Mr White, asked the MBAT to refrain from poaching apprentices from the cabinet-making trade: he had received complaints from cabinet-makers who were unable to keep apprentices because of the higher wages offered in the building trade. It was alleged that some builders were offering apprentice journeymen's wages of up to £10 a week as an inducement to break their indentures.²⁰¹ MBAT Secretary JE Braithwaite denied the claim.²⁰²

The Association in the 1950s

In the 1950s, the three Tasmanian Master Builders' Associations shared a State Secretariat. In 1955, the State Secretary was JE Braithwaite, and the offices were listed as Cowan House, 158 Collins Street, Hobart. Office-bearers for the Southern Association were President, CE Daw; and Secretary, JE Braithwaite. Office-bearers for the North-West Association were: President, S Dowling; and Secretary, RS Thorne. Office-bearers for the Northern association were

¹⁹⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* July 1952 pp.5-8

²⁰⁰ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 18 February 1955

²⁰¹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 10 November 1950

²⁰² MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 11 November 1950

President, G Box; and Secretary, D Mayhead. Premises were located in the Manufacturers Building, Charles Street, Launceston.



Figure 20: MBFA Convention Hobart 1954
L-R: J McDougall (Vic), MBFA President Tom Lipscombe and Lord Mayor Mr Park MHA

Reproduced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
The Mercury 9 November 1954 p.7

In March 1954, the definition of ‘master builder’ in the MBAT Articles of Association was amended to read:

1. Any builder who is qualified by training to control and direct every branch of the Building Trade and is conducting his business as such, and
2. Any manager of a sole trader, or manager partner or shareholder of a firm or corporation who is qualified by training to control and direct every branch of the building trade.

A firm or corporation could nominate two representatives to attend meetings but they were entitled to only one vote.²⁰³

In 1955, the articles of the Association were further amended to allow investigation in the case of a bankrupt member, with a view to a recommendation after a three-month period.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 23 March 1954

At the Annual General Meeting in 1954, MBAT President Cliff Daw reported that membership totalled 60, including 16 associate members. Affiliated association membership in the North and the North-West was 103.²⁰⁵

Membership was not automatic, and applications were investigated by the 'Investigative Committee'. Several were 'deferred'. In 1954, it was suggested that a period of probationary membership be introduced.²⁰⁶ In 1955, the subscription was set at £30. In 1958, a sliding scale of subscriptions was introduced, ranging from £20 for turnover up to £20,000 to £150 for turnover over £150,000.²⁰⁷

Poor meeting attendance was often a problem and was raised at a general meeting in 1954, when only eight members were present.²⁰⁸ At the following meeting, attendance doubled.²⁰⁹ Attendance, however, continued to fluctuate and in August 1957, a special committee, comprising CK Gillham, SJ Henderson and TJ Andrewartha, was appointed to find ways of improving attendance.²¹⁰

During the 1950s, the MBAT increasingly became aware of the need to promote the Association. In 1955, the North-West Master Builders Association enlisted the support of the MBAT to prevent non-members using the words 'master builder' in their advertising.²¹¹ While no action could be taken, it was decided that the adoption of an insignia for members' use might be one way of solving

²⁰⁴ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 1 November 1955

²⁰⁵ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 26 August 1954

²⁰⁶ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 25 May 1954

²⁰⁷ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 11 August 1958

²⁰⁸ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 15 June 1954

²⁰⁹ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 20 July 1954

²¹⁰ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 18 June 1957

²¹¹ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 19 July 1955

the problem.²¹² In 1956, it agreed on a suitable form to be used by members throughout Tasmania.²¹³ The insignia, to be used on baked enamel signs, incorporated the State of Tasmania colours.²¹⁴ Signs, used by members on their building projects, cost 16 shillings each; members were charged £1.²¹⁵

Recognition of builders: the ‘Builder’s Part is an Important One’²¹⁶

In November 1955, Tom Neave, MBAT President, suggested to Treasurer Madden at the Launceston MBA Annual Dinner that the name of the builder should be included on foundation stones as well as that of the architect and Minister performing the ‘stone-laying’ ceremony.²¹⁷

A prominent MBAT member in the 1950s was Harold, or Hal, McGonigal, who was elected MBAT president in 1958. For over thirty years, he worked with Jennings Industries, commencing as a carpenter in the Aberfeldie Housing Commission project in 1945 and rising quickly through the company. He arrived in Tasmania from Melbourne in 1949 to set up operations for Jennings to carry out a 1,000-house contract for the State Government. The company subsequently moved into general and civil engineering contracting and development of private housing schemes. Work was carried out in all parts of Tasmania, including King Island. As Tasmanian Manager, Harold was particularly responsible for the company’s successful establishment in the State.

From 1949 to 1954, Harold was company representative to the North-West Master Builders’ Association. He then came to live in Hobart and joined the

²¹² MBAT Minutes General Meeting 19 July 1955

²¹³ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1956 p.14

²¹⁴ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 22 November 1955, 24 January 1956; *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1956 p.14

²¹⁵ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 21 May 1957

²¹⁶ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* November 1955 p.11

²¹⁷ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* November 1955 p.11

MBAT as an executive member. He was President of the MBAT from 1958-1959, Chairman of the MBAT 1960 Convention Committee, and a member of the Apprenticeship Commission from 1960 to 1963. His many activities included being a member of the State Building Trades Advisory Committee, a member of the Hobart Technical College Building Trades Advisory Committee, and a member of the Federal Council of the Master Builders' Federation of Australia from 1958-1959.

From Tasmania, Harold moved to Sydney in 1964 as Jennings' Regional Manager in charge of New South Wales and Queensland. He represented the company in the United Kingdom and during that period was involved in setting up a migrant advisory service. He returned in 1967 and held several positions with the company until 1980 when he retired. He attended the Australian Institute Building Convention in Hobart in 1981.



Figure 21: HD (Harold or Hal) McGonigal 1981

Harold was a Past President of the Tasmanian and Victorian Chapters of the Australian Institute of Building, and a Past National President of the Institute. He was made a Fellow of the Institute in 1956. The MBAT journal, noting his death in 1984, stated that: 'Harold McGonigal would have to be one of the most respected and well liked identities in the Australian building industry, to which he devoted his entire working life after starting out as a carpenter's apprentice'.²¹⁸

Another leading MBAT member from the 1950s was JT (Jan Thomas) Steen, better known as Tom, who was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in 1978. He joined the MBAT on 25 May 1952 as a representative of Australian Building Corporation Pty. Ltd., also known as ABC Builders. Tom was particularly active in the areas of contract and tendering, and builders' registration, and served on many Association committees. He was MBAT President from 1957-1958. Tom retired in 1976 and died in June 2001, aged 88.²¹⁹

Geoff Holmes, who joined the Association in September 1958 as a representative of GL Holmes Pty Ltd, was another well-known member from the 1950s. He was MBAT President from 1970-1972 and during this period generally served on administrative committees. Following this, he was active on a number of other committees, serving as Chairman of the Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd and also of the Property Development Committee. He was also a Past President of the Tasmanian Chapter of the AIB.²²⁰

²¹⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1984 p.19; Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.65, 122, 183

²¹⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1978 p.27; *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust* Record ID 116492

²²⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1978 p.27

State MBA Conferences

Triangular conferences were held throughout the 1950s. In 1951, the State Conference, held in Devonport, protested that Tasmania's heritage was being robbed by the sale of timber to mainland buyers at prices higher than those fixed by the Tasmanian Prices Branch. It also expressed concern at the practice of the Transport Commission in charging zoning fees on the transport of building materials by builders' own vehicles. The meeting decided to try to improve the supply of glass for housing projects and to ask the Department of Labour and Industry to provide better information at branch offices about rates of pay, as the offices were referring queries to private firms.²²¹ In 1953, the State Conference, held in Launceston, criticized the continuance of the day labour system; called for the abolition of payroll tax; and expressed disappointment at the increase of the basic wage, believing it would result in higher building costs.²²²

In 1959, the annual State Conference in Launceston discussed a range of issues of common concern, including safety. It called for an income tax concession on private money invested in home building. The Housing Department's day labour system of building houses was also criticised; it was argued that the government should revert to the contract system which operated in every other part of Australia. The MBAT argued that private contractors could build homes much faster and at less cost.²²³

The Builders and their Buildings in the 1950s

Shaking off the gloom and privation of the war years, the trend in building was to modernisation, and for bigger, higher buildings. Architect STW Blyth told the

²²¹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 14 May 1951

²²² MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 5 May 1953

²²³ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 25 May 1959

master builders at their annual dinner that building cost too much and suggested that costs could be reduced by constructing buildings to last a shorter period: “We are erecting structures to last for ages, but in 20 years or so people will want different styles, and pull them down,” he commented. He explained that he had formed this opinion by observing buildings currently in use, some of which were more than 50 years old: “They are eyesores,” he said, “and have outlived their usefulness.”²²⁴

Old buildings made way for the new. In 1953, a Launceston landmark, the 135-year-old building on the corner of Charles and Cameron Streets was demolished to make room for showrooms, offices and other installations for GM Jackson Pty Ltd. The building had been used as a bank, a barracks, and a trading depot. Workmen on the job paid tribute to the workmanship of the early builders.²²⁵ In 1954, in Launceston, a number of shops were demolished to make way for an extensive rebuilding of Coles.²²⁶

The scientific approach continued to develop, with a focus on building for Australian homes. In its journal, the MBAT regularly published information on new materials, and techniques, and information from the Commonwealth Department of Works, Building Research and Development Advisory Committee.²²⁷ Asbestos-cement as a building material was introduced as an outstanding advance.²²⁸

²²⁴ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1953 p.9

²²⁵ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* April 1953 p.11

²²⁶ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1953 p.18, January 1954 p.9

²²⁷ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1953 p.18: ‘Notes on the Science of Building’

²²⁸ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* July 1953 p.8

Housing remained a government priority. In March 1954, the State Labor Government announced that it would spend £2,025,000 on housing construction in the next financial year – the biggest single item of expenditure anticipated by the Government in its works program for 1954-1955.²²⁹ The government claimed that its building program had prevented substantial unemployment in the building industry.²³⁰ The MBAT, on the other hand, urged the government to let more designing and building jobs to private enterprise.²³¹

War service and soldier settlement housing continued.²³² In 1952, eligibility for assistance was extended to returned soldiers who had served in Korea and Malaya.²³³ Memorial buildings continued to be erected through the 1950s: these included Westbury Memorial Hospital and Toosey Memorial Hospital at Longford;²³⁴ Winnaleah Memorial Hall and Ringarooma War Memorial.²³⁵

Government-funded houses were erected around the State, in regional areas such as Devonport and Burnie, and on the West Coast. In 1957, the Zeehan Commission approved 60 houses at Primrose, described as a suburb of Rosebery, which was undergoing expansion: 'This decision will carry on a building boom which has seen the erection of a number of big public and private buildings. These buildings include a new domestic science block at the Rosebery school, and a new post office for the town.'²³⁶ Similar building booms were noted in Scottsdale and Bridport.²³⁷

²²⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1954 p.11

²³⁰ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* March 1954 p.11

²³¹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1953 p.9

²³² *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1952 p.7, June 1952 p.10, July 1954 pp.7, 9, December 1952 p.1

²³³ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* July 1952 p.7; December 1952 p.1

²³⁴ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* July 1953 p.9

²³⁵ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* January 1955 p.10

²³⁶ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1957 p.10

²³⁷ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1955 p.10

Many of the government-funded homes were located in housing subdivisions, such as Warrane.²³⁸ Those in Launceston, including Waverley and Mayfield, were built by Jennings Construction Co.²³⁹

The MBAT complimented the State Government on its effort to alleviate the housing shortage, and asked it to call for tenders for the construction of the block of flats it proposed to build in Harrington Street, Hobart.²⁴⁰ The flats, recently demolished, were then an innovation:

They are mostly one and two bedroom flats. A few have three bedrooms. A washing machine, refrigerator, electric stove, hot water system, built-in cupboards, and a chute for the disposal of garbage in an incinerator are features of the flats.²⁴¹

In March 1957, the Minister for Housing, Mr Aylett, announced that the State Housing Department had housed more than 6,300 Tasmanian families in the post-war period. The number of permanent homes and flats built by the Government represented 17 per cent of the total number of houses erected since the war. In addition, more than 1,200 homes had been built with Government loans and aid had also been granted to war service settlers.²⁴²

Schools were also a priority; from the early 1950s, the post-war baby boomers and the migrant children swelled the numbers of school-age children. Many schools were built by MBAT members. On the North West Coast, MBAT member Luck Bros built Devonport School.²⁴³ In October 1954, the government

²³⁸ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* December 1955 p.7, December 1952, p.1

²³⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1957, p.10

²⁴⁰ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962, *The Mercury* April 1954; *The Mercury* October 1954 p.22

²⁴¹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* July 1955 p.10. See also Evans, 'Flat-minded?'

²⁴² *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* March 1957 p.10

²⁴³ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* January 1954 pp.8-9

announced that 38 Area Schools were to be built.²⁴⁴ Other schools built in this decade included the Cressy Area School; Taroona High School; Launceston Technical High School; and Ravenswood Primary School.²⁴⁵ The New Town Junior Technical School had run well over its 1945 estimate of £90,000: nearly ten years later, it exceeded £295,357 and was not completed.²⁴⁶



Figure 22: Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd, Devonport Council Chambers 1952
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

The State Government, in the 1950s, was responsible for university funding. In 1954, plans for the proposed new University at Sandy Bay, Hobart, were set aside, following MBAT representations to the Premier that the building design was far behind that of modern universities in other countries.²⁴⁷

There were several hospital projects in the 1950s, some of which were undertaken by MBAT members. In 1952, builders Messrs TM Lipscombe and Co were the successful tenderers for the service buildings of the Mental Diseases

²⁴⁴ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1954 p.8

²⁴⁵ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1956 p.10

²⁴⁶ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1954 p.9

²⁴⁷ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1954 p.11; January 1955 p.10

Home at New Norfolk, with a tender price of £385,000.²⁴⁸ In 1952, the largest single government project to date was one which involved alterations to the Royal Hobart Hospital, at a cost estimated at £3,700,000. Again, the successful tenderer was TM Lipscombe.²⁴⁹ In 1956, Ulverstone builder HK Fielding was awarded the highest single contract – £770,977 – for the erection of the Devon Hospital at Latrobe. (The previous high was £400,000 for a section of the new Lachlan Park Hospital at New Norfolk built by TM Lipscombe).²⁵⁰ Child welfare clinics were also constructed in the 1950s.²⁵¹ Residences for government officers were also built, renovated and maintained: at Richmond, in 1955, the medical officer's residence was renovated by KR Groothuis, of Blackman's Bay, for £286.²⁵²

There were also other substantial government buildings, especially in Hobart. In 1959, the contract for the new Transport Commission building in Lower Collins Street was let to Cooper Constructions Pty Ltd for £379,944. The new building incorporated a bus terminal on the lower ground floor.²⁵³ The initial call for tenders prompted a heated parliamentary debate in July 1959, in which dishonesty was alleged, and fresh tenders were called for the following month.²⁵⁴ The new Government Printing Office was also built in the 1950s.²⁵⁵

²⁴⁸ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1952, p.9

²⁴⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* March 1952, p.7

²⁵⁰ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* January 1955 p.10, August 1956 p.16

²⁵¹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* January 1955 p.10

²⁵² *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1955 p.9

²⁵³ *The Mercury* January 1954 p.10, 8 October 1959

²⁵⁴ *The Mercury* 15 July 1959, 16 July 1959, 27 August 1959

²⁵⁵ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1954 p.20



Figure 23: Costain, Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd, Cox Bros site Launceston late 1950s
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

In 1959, a major private sector project was completed in Launceston. Described as 'Tasmania's highest and most modern department store', Cox Bros, in Brisbane St, Launceston, was officially opened by the Premier, Eric Reece. Eight floors high, it had 109 shops. More than 400 parliamentarians, civic leaders, business men and wives of the guests attended the opening ceremony. The official party included the chairman of Cox Bros, Sir Frank Richardson, and Lady Richardson; the Premier, Eric Reece; the Mayor, Alderman White and Mrs White; and the Northern Tasmanian manager of Cox Bros, Mr EK Mailer and Mrs Mailer. The store was the only one in Launceston – and one of the few in Tasmania – equipped with escalators. There were many other modern features, including service lifts, carpeted floors, air conditioning and abundant lighting. As well, the store proposed to offer a comprehensive day nursery with a full-time nurse for customers who might need her services.



Figure 24: Costain, Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd, Cox Bros Site Launceston 1960,
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

Building at the time was characterised by height and size: in performing the opening ceremony, Premier Reece said the store was evidence that business houses were realizing they must build bigger and higher:

When completed Cox Bros. would be the highest building in Tasmania, apart from Hobart's Commonwealth Bank. He said the fact that the company had decided to build such a colossal outlet for its goods in Launceston upheld its own contention that Tasmania, and particularly the North, were in for a decade of great expansion.

Sir Frank Richardson, introducing the Premier, said his company had great faith in the future of northern Tasmania.

It would not have spent more than half a million pounds on building and equipment if it had not.

Tracing the history of Cox Bros., he said the firm built its first store in Fitzroy in 1923.

Sir Frank said that trading over the last 20 years had been so good that it was decided to embark on a new Launceston store.

Sir Frank said the man who was most instrumental in the building of a new city store was not here to see the finished product.

He was referring to the late Sir Gordon Rolph, whom he described as "a wise counsellor to me and our company".

Sir Frank said that Sir Gordon had suggested the present site of the building.

“There always seemed to be some reason why we did not get on with the job”, Sir Frank said.

“But Sir Gordon kept needling me and finally when the old property was put up for auction, we heeded his advice and bought the corner for £100,000.”

“In my last conversation with Sir Gordon, I promised him that we would build a store as modern as sunrise for the people of Launceston,” Sir Frank said.²⁵⁶



**Figure 25: Costain, Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd, Cox Bros Launceston 1959
L-R: Eric Mailer, GM Cox Bros, Eric Richardson H & Y,
Sir Frank Richardson Chairman Cox Bros, Bill Shields**

Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

The opening of the Cox Bros store was also notable for bringing to public attention a young construction foreman who was to rise to prominence in the MBAT and the Tasmanian building industry. Bill Shields, later a MBAT Life Member, caught the eye of Sir Frank Richardson:

A young Launceston construction foreman so youthful looking he had been mistaken for an apprentice was yesterday credited by Sir Frank Richardson with “the finest bit of construction work I’ve seen.”

²⁵⁶ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962

Sir Frank, Chairman of Directors of Cox Bros. Ltd., told 400 people at the opening of the firm's new Launceston store yesterday that when he first saw Bill Shields about 12 months ago, he had thought that he was an apprentice.

But Mr Shields, though only 30, has been a foreman with the builders of the store, Costain, Hansen and Yuncken, for six years. On the £500,000 job – his biggest yet – he headed a team of more than 100 men.

Sir Frank said that he had quickly changed his views about the “rosy cheeked Bill”. He would be heading his own construction company some day, Sir Frank said, as he presented Mr Shields with a silver beer mug as a memento of their association.²⁵⁷



**Figure 26: Bill Shields (centre), Construction Foreman, with presentation mug
Cox Bros building Launceston 1959**
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

The private sector also contributed to housing construction. In November 1959, AV Jennings, Managing Director of AV Jennings Industries of Australia Ltd, announced that his company would establish a £750,000 housing estate at Lindisfarne. Earlier, the company had constructed a similar estate at Berriedale.²⁵⁸ Opening a demonstration display home, Mr Jennings said that his

²⁵⁷ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962

²⁵⁸ Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.164-165

company 'regarded a home for young married people as the foundation for happiness and success'.²⁵⁹

Modern structures such as arcades began to appear: in 1953, Richardson's Meat Industries, who owned property in Murray Street between Collins and Liverpool Streets, proposed to erect a 'modern arcade' including a butchery.²⁶⁰ Service stations were another relatively new construction, a reflection of increasing car ownership, and many older buildings were demolished in Hobart to make way for them.²⁶¹ In April 1954, Ampol announced the construction of depots, terminals and service stations worth £500,000.²⁶²



Figure 27: Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd, Sullivan Motors, Don Road Devonport c1962
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

²⁵⁹ *The Mercury* 21 November 1959; Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.165

²⁶⁰ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* December 1953 p.14

²⁶¹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* August 1956 p.10

²⁶² *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* December 1953 p.14, April 1954 p.9

For D Williams, work for oil companies and insurance work were strategies to recession-proof the company.²⁶³

Hotels were also another source of work for master builders: they included the pub at Woodbridge and the Menai Hotel at Burnie, four years under construction.²⁶⁴

There was also growth in some regional areas in the 1950s, primarily as a result of government works but also because of the expansion of private companies. In the George Town region, the location of the Australian Aluminum Commission at Bell Bay had resulted in the construction of businesses, shops, and houses, including 250 'Ag Bank' houses from 1950 to 1953.²⁶⁵ In Burnie, there was 'phenomenal' growth: 1,000 new homes in eight years, including 425 Agricultural Bank houses and more than 250 built under the APPM employees' scheme.²⁶⁶



Figure 28: Hansen & Yuncken, Paton & Baldwin's Woollen Mill Launceston 1957
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

²⁶³ Evans, *Everything Prompt*, pp.69-71

²⁶⁴ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* July 1954 p.9

²⁶⁵ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1952 p.1

²⁶⁶ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1952 p.1

One of the most significant Tasmanian buildings erected in the 1950s was the Commonwealth Bank in Elizabeth Street, Hobart, which opened in September 1954: 'The building is reported as one of the most lavishly equipped in the Commonwealth.'²⁶⁷ At the time, it was also the biggest building in the State.²⁶⁸ The initial estimate of its cost, which was exceeded, was £565,000.²⁶⁹ It was built by Hansen & Yuncken, under manager and MBAT President Cliff Daw. At the time, the company was also building the Hobart Savings Bank Head Office in Liverpool Street.

Clifford Ernest Daw, better known as Cliff, was elected MBAT President in 1954. He was only 49 when he died.²⁷⁰ Tom Lipscombe, MBAT Life Member, and Federal President, was President from 1950-1952, and again from 1961-1962.



Figure 29: Hansen & Yuncken Kraft Foods Scottsdale unloading bricks by hand
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

²⁶⁷ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1954 p.7

²⁶⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1968 pp.17-19

²⁶⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1955 p.10

²⁷⁰ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 20 August 1957; *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* August 1958 p.12

Chapter Six: 1960s

The 1960s heralded a new building boom for Tasmania.²⁷¹ Industrial construction came to the fore. Property development, too, emerged as an important part of the building industry. The decade ended on a high note, with the announcement of several significant industrial developments, including a \$3.4 million woodchip complex and wharf facilities, for Tasmanian Pulp and Paper Holdings at Triabunna, and a new cement plant at Railton.²⁷²

At the beginning of the decade, *The Mercury* highlighted changes to Hobart's skyline. It noted the disappearance of landmarks including the Albion Hotel and Miller's Corner and the speedy creation of replacements such as Edments Pty Ltd, GJ Coles and Co Ltd, Palfreyman's new store, and Myers Emporium. Another development was the proposed new mall, perpetuating the name Cat and Fiddle Alley, which would house a huge new Charles Davis Ltd store. Additional footpath width was included in the new developments to alleviate crowded shoppers, while improved parking facilities were considered essential.²⁷³ Speaking at the MBAT Annual Dinner in 1960, Hobart's Deputy Lord Mayor, Alderman Chesterman, noted that Hobart could 'look with pride at the standard of new buildings gracing its skyline'.²⁷⁴ He added that Tasmania had the biggest percentage of new building in Australia: 'Prosperity in the building industry was a definite measure of prosperity in the country'.²⁷⁵

²⁷¹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 3 August 1962

²⁷² MBAT, newspaper clipping, 7 November 1969, 28 April 1970. GE Walters Pty Ltd was involved in the Triabunna complex.

²⁷³ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 19 February 1960

²⁷⁴ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 23 July 1960

²⁷⁵ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 23 July 1960

The government's strong role in stimulating building continued. In 1961, at the MBAT Annual Dinner, Premier Reece announced a government building allocation of £7 million, of which £6 million was for construction and £720,000 for loans to builders through the Agricultural Bank and building societies, and £400,000 in loans for buildings under the Industries Establishment Act and the Tourist Accommodation Loans Act. Expenditure on major public works, such as the hydro-electric schemes, and the Tasman Bridge, would also continue. He also stressed that the government realised the necessity of restoring as much activity as possible to the building industry: it was 'the barometer industry reflecting general economic conditions'.²⁷⁶

In 1963, the Tasmanian Building Industry Consultative Council was formed, to represent all sections of the building industry.²⁷⁷

MBAT Issues in the 1960s

Tendering and contracts were high on the MBAT's agenda in the 1960s. The Association produced a comprehensive tendering and contract policy statement document, with procedural instructions for its members.²⁷⁸

In May 1960, the MBA State Conference resolved to continue to push for the incorporation of the 'rise and fall' clause in contracts.²⁷⁹ By March 1961, Premier Reece agreed to reconsider the clause in all contracts above £50,000, following a deputation from all sections of the building industry. However, he gave no assurance that it would be approved. A credit squeeze had caused significant difficulties for some builders; three Tasmanian builders were forced to creditor

²⁷⁶ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 22 July 1961

²⁷⁷ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 10 July 1963

²⁷⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1965

²⁷⁹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 23 May 1960

meetings.²⁸⁰ The following month, members of the MBAT tendered for work on the proposed Claremont High School, with the 'rise and fall' clause in their tenders; no tenders were accepted.²⁸¹ The school was a government building priority, and the government threatened to use the day labour force in its construction.²⁸² The contract for the Rose Bay High School was awarded to a northern builder who did not insist on the 'rise and fall' clause.²⁸³ Neither side would back down, and a meeting was held in an attempt to resolve the issue.²⁸⁴ Following the meeting, MBAT President Peter Richardson announced that 'master builders, under duress, had had to succumb to the demands of the State Government rather than see an undesirable Government work force set up'.²⁸⁵ However, shortly afterwards, Premier Reece announced that wage fluctuations and costs associated with them in public works were to be subject to an adjustment in Government building contracts, a move which met with the approval of the MBAT.²⁸⁶

The government tendering system continued to be controversial and did not improve relations between the MBAT and the State government. Work was halted on the Arts Block at the university and fresh tenders were called to finish the job. Similar circumstances arose in connection with the Transport Commission building and the State Library, and the University chemistry block, all contracted to a company which went into liquidation.²⁸⁷ A local union official

²⁸⁰ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *Truth* 1 March 1961, *The Mercury* 23 March 1961, 1 April 1961, 15 April 1961

²⁸¹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 15 April 1961

²⁸² MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 22 April 1961

²⁸³ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 22 April 1961

²⁸⁴ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 2 May 1961, 3 May 1961

²⁸⁵ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 2 May 1961

²⁸⁶ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 5 May 1961, 7 May 1961, 8 May 1961

²⁸⁷ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 1 June 1960, 24 September 1960, 7 April 1960, 22 April 1960, 2 May 1961, 11 May 1961

alleged impropriety by the government in the tendering process and the matter was raised in parliament.²⁸⁸

Through the 1960s, the MBAT continued to push for builders' registration legislation.²⁸⁹ In March 1962, Independent Liberal Member Mr Hodgman introduced a bill but it was rejected.²⁹⁰

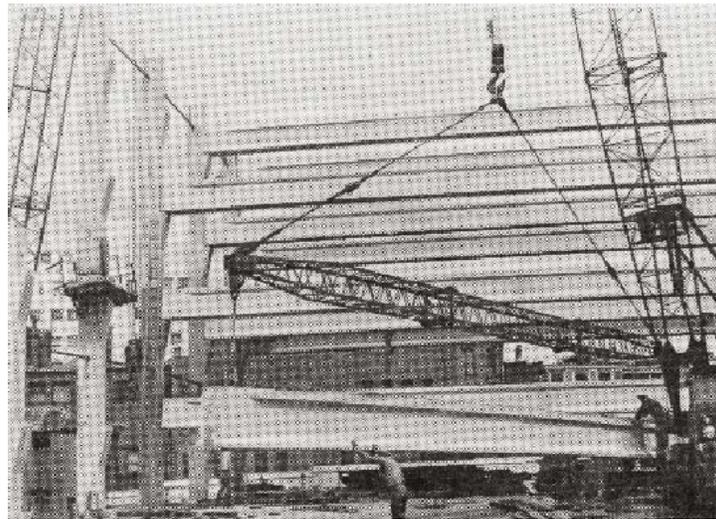


Figure 30: Construction of Tasmania's first multi-storey car park, Argyle Street Hobart 1968

By the beginning of the 1960s, legislation had been introduced to enforce the wearing of safety helmets on all projects over 20 ft high, a move endorsed by the increasingly-safety conscious MBAT.²⁹¹ Legislation was also introduced relating to scaffolding.²⁹² A new *Workers Compensation Act* made employers responsible for providing compensation to employees injured at work.²⁹³

²⁸⁸ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 9 May 1961, 19 August 1961

²⁸⁹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 4 July 1962

²⁹⁰ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 21 March 1962, 12 April 1962

²⁹¹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 18 February 1960, 27 February 1960, 23 May 1960

²⁹² MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 1 September 1960, 2 September 1960, 3 September 1969

²⁹³ *Tasmanian Building* October 1966 p.38

Advances in materials continued, and were regularly featured in the MBAT journal. At the beginning of 1960, Besser Vibrapac Masonry (Tas) Pty Ltd, which manufactured American-style concrete building blocks, opened at Derwent Park. It was expected that the plant would make 6,000 bricks daily.²⁹⁴ Another new material, hailed as the answer to the high cost of building homes, was asbestos.²⁹⁵ In February 1960, in Launceston, the Minister for Housing Mr Madden, opened an exhibition home built of asbestos in just six weeks by the Goliath Portland Cement Co Ltd, of Railton, and Launceston builders Hinman, Wright and Manser. External and internal linings, roof and many interior fittings were all made of asbestos. The house cost £3,450; a similar weatherboard house cost £3,725; brick veneer, £4,000; and solid brick, £4,400.²⁹⁶

In industrial matters, the MBAT continued to follow the lead of the Master Builders' Federation, who supported a 42-hour week and pegging of the basic wage and margins.²⁹⁷ The MBAT feared that industrial demands would unsettle the industry. MBAT President Peter Richardson warned that the current economic stability could be threatened by industrial issues: 'Today, we as suppliers, planners, builders, and sub-contractors cannot afford to listen to the demands being made around us for shorter working weeks, more money and longer holidays'.²⁹⁸ Rivalry within unions increased the MBAT's concern: the Australian Workers Union and the Builders Labourers Federation, for example, argued over who was entitled to work on bridges and work was stopped on the Tasman Bridge.

²⁹⁴ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 21 November 1959

²⁹⁵ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 20 February 1960

²⁹⁶ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 20 February 1960

²⁹⁷ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 7 November 1960

²⁹⁸ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 23 July 1960



Figure 31: Hansen & Yuncken, Geology Building University of Tasmania August 1962

Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

In response to the increased complexity of industrial matters, the MBAT appointed AJ (Tony) Lyden as its first full-time industrial officer in the mid-1960s. Tony remained in this position until accepting a similar position with the MBA of Victoria. He was later employed in industrial positions with the MBA of NSW.²⁹⁹

The decade brought significant changes to the apprenticeship system, particularly the introduction of 'full daylight training' for apprentices, which was a matter of concern to the MBAT because of its cost implications: 'The initial effect of this legislation was to double the amount of Technical College training

²⁹⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1983 p.15

done by apprentices during normal employment hours and thereby involve the employer in higher costs of training each apprentice'.³⁰⁰

The MBAT also expressed concern about declining educational qualifications for apprentices.³⁰¹ The Association claimed the preliminary educational qualifications of boys starting apprenticeships were frequently inadequate: 'only those with an enthusiastic temperament and a good school leaving standard would reach the leading hand class. Others remained just tradesmen or drifted into the ranks of the unskilled'.³⁰²

In an attempt to encourage apprentice numbers and improve standards, the State Government, through the Apprenticeship Commission, awarded four bursaries to outstanding apprentices who had completed their third year of technical training. Two bursaries were valued at £100 and two at £50.³⁰³

The Association in the 1960s

The 1960s saw significant organisational changes within the MBAT. In 1961, the annual meeting of the North-West MBA at Ulverstone recommended the formation of a State MBA.³⁰⁴ With the addition of the North-Western Division, the Association strengthened numerically and in lobbying power. In 1962, membership of the MBAT stood at 105: 38 in the Southern Division, 34 in the North-West and 33 associates.³⁰⁵

In 1973, reflecting on a decade of progress, MBAT President Max Bennett noted:

³⁰⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1965 (Annual Report)

³⁰¹ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 22 September 1960, 22 February 1962, 1 March 1962

³⁰² MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 23 May 1960

³⁰³ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 22 September 1960

³⁰⁴ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 11 May 1961

³⁰⁵ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 27 August 1962

in 1963, our staff consisted of two persons, the Association's full-time secretary and one female. We occupied somewhat unpretentious premises at the back of the third floor in 'Cowan House', Collins Street, consisting of a small Board Room with adjoining office.³⁰⁶

The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd 1965

A major development for the MBAT in the 1960s was relocation to the Tasmanian Building Centre, which was initially leased.³⁰⁷ MBAT President Doug McElwee called the Building Centre the MBAT's 'proudest achievement'.³⁰⁸ It had two main purposes: to provide the Association with improved headquarters and facilities; and to provide a materials display as a service to the public and to promote the Association. The first meeting of the Board of Directors of the Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd was held on 7 April 1965 at 'The Building Centre' at 125 Murray Street, Hobart. At this meeting, Doug McElwee was appointed Chairman of Directors of the Board.³⁰⁹

In April 1965, before the official opening, there were forty-one exhibiting firms, bringing in a rental income of £4,780.³¹⁰ By May, there were fifty-eight exhibitors and seventy-four separate exhibits booked. In the first week, from 27 April to 4 May, there were 770 visitors.³¹¹

In 1965, the MBAT moved its headquarters to the Building Centre, prompted by the need for better facilities and increased space.³¹² It also established the Building Products Display, Small Home Service and other building advisory services, which, according to Max Bennett, 'proved of considerable value in

³⁰⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1973 p.7

³⁰⁷ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 8 May 1967

³⁰⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1965

³⁰⁹ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 7 April 1965

³¹⁰ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 14 April 1965

³¹¹ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 6 May 1965

³¹² *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1973 p.7

establishing the Association's public and corporate image not only within the building public ... but with the building industry generally'.³¹³ Numbers using the Tasmanian Building Centre and the Small Homes Service increased in the aftermath of the 1967 fires.³¹⁴



Figure 32: Tasmanian Building Centre, Melville St, 1968

Days before the official opening, the Board expressed concern that the builders had not completed their contract.³¹⁵ The Board also resolved to employ a 'night watchman' for 7/6 per week; cleaning was arranged for £5 per week.³¹⁶ Telephone installation cost £113.1.0d, with £246.19.2d for six months of calls and rentals.³¹⁷

³¹³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1973 p.7

³¹⁴ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 27 February 1967

³¹⁵ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 7 April 1965, 22 April 1965

³¹⁶ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 7 April 1965, 14 April 1965

³¹⁷ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 16 February 1966

On 26 April 1965, the display at the Tasmanian Building Centre was officially opened by Premier Reece. The centre was open on Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons. Opening on Sunday afternoons resulted in a visit from the local police, concerned that the centre may have been contravening the *Sunday Observance Act*.³¹⁸ The Centre had received approval from Hobart City Council to open on Sundays but the police believed that the Council needed to pass a by-law covering the activities of the Centre. Nothing appears to have come from the police investigation.

Much of the early business of the centre was concerned with advertising and promotion. A 'Building Centre Bulletin' was sent to exhibitors and potential exhibitors. Advertising increased with more newspaper advertisements, distribution of brochures to the public, 'the use of a slide and sound commercial at the Tatler Theatre' and radio spot advertisements.³¹⁹ In September 1965, it was decided to use a professional advertising firm 'to obtain better results in public attendance' and to encourage potential exhibitors.³²⁰ Mr Betlehem suggested, as a promotional idea, the production of a children's game to be given to children visiting the Centre.³²¹

Small Homes Service 1966

The Small Homes Service opened on 17 October 1966. In its first month, it filed 120 enquiries. The Service offered a range of 150 architect-drawn home designs for timber and brick veneer dwellings. All plans were for 15 squares or less, and covered all types of designs from small holiday cottages to four bedroom homes. The service was designed for new home builders who did not wish to engage the

³¹⁸ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 25 July 1966

³¹⁹ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 11 August 1965

³²⁰ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty. Ltd. Minutes 28 September 1965

³²¹ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty. Ltd. Minutes 11 August 1965

full service of an architect. A full set of documents cost \$35, and included five copies of working drawings including site and foundation plan; five copies of specifications; two copies of the agreement form for use between owner and builder; and one interview with a consulting architect if required. The Building Centre also offered a supplementary service to assist with the completion of the project specification and the tendering process. This service cost \$4. Tenders were called only from builders who were members of the MBAT. Other services offered in conjunction with the Small Home Service were those of a colour consultant and interior decoration adviser.³²² At the same time, the Building Centre sponsored an adult education course, of ten lectures, for prospective private home builders.³²³

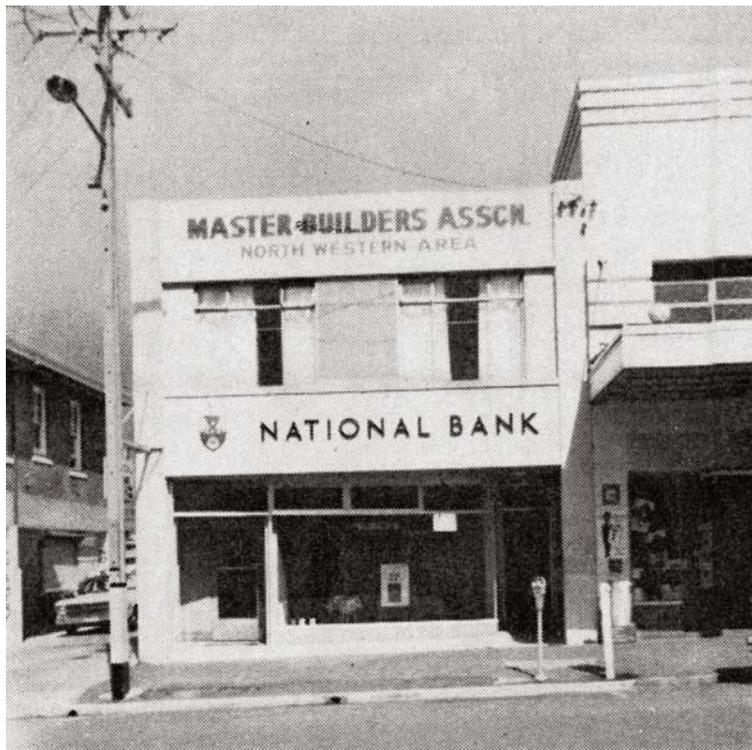


Figure 33: MBAT Premises, Stewart St, Devonport, 1968

³²² MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty. Ltd. Minutes 28 November 1966

³²³ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd. Minutes 28 November 1966

Rising membership and an awareness of an increasing need for localised services led to the opening of the first MBAT office on the North West Coast: in 1968, an office was opened at 5 Stewart Street, Devonport, in rented premises.

State Conference

In May 1960, a Master Builders' State Conference was held at Campbell Town to discuss a range of issues of mutual concern. The State President, Peter Richardson, presided over the meeting, supported by Launceston president, HA Bishop and the North-West president, Royce Neville. The meeting decided to establish a State secretariat to manage the affairs of the Master Builders' Association.³²⁴

Through the 1960s, the Association had five Presidents: PL Richardson, 1959-1961; DR (Doug) McElwee, 1962-1965; TJ (Tom) Andrewartha, 1965-1967; RR (Royce) Neville, 1967-1968; and GE (Gerald) Walters, 1968-1972. The last four were later elected MBAT Life Members. Peter Richardson was DA Tait's son-in-law. He had served in the Australian Imperial Forces and died in 1971 aged 48.³²⁵

Doug McElwee was elected a member of the MBAT on 19 June 1956.³²⁶ According to Tom Andrewartha, Doug McElwee was 'a hard act to follow' as president.³²⁷ Tom came to the position of president at the relatively young age of 36, with 'no airs and graces' and only a trade background.³²⁸ At the 1966 Federal Convention in WA, he had to make three or four speeches, which he thought was

³²⁴ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 23 May 1960

³²⁵ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004; *Southern Regional Cemetery Trust* Record ID 79715 Australian Imperial Forces Arch, Section 10, No.1

³²⁶ MBAT Minutes 19 June 1956

³²⁷ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

³²⁸ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

tough going for someone of his background: he had been educated at Campbell Street Primary School and Hobart Junior Technical School, later completing a Builders' Trade Course, and studying accountancy at night school.³²⁹ Royce Neville, in contrast, was President of the Master Builders' Federation of Australia and went on to become Agent-General for Tasmania in London.

The Builders and their Buildings in the 1960s



Figure 34: 1967 Bushfires, Cascade Cordial Factory with Brewery behind

The 1967 bushfires destroyed many buildings in southern Tasmania, and many MBAT members were involved in the reconstruction process. The government announced that it would replace all burned homes with a weatherboard cottage, or pay the equivalent value towards a home of the owner's choice. AV Jennings was allocated the Snug area, building the first 54 houses in a matter of weeks.

³²⁹ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

For nearly a year, much of their work was bushfire reconstruction.³³⁰ Hansen and Yuncken worked on the reconstruction of the Cascade Brewery. For most builders, this was a boom period.³³¹

The 1960s was the decade when the larger firms, such as EA Watts and Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd, came to the fore of the building industry in Tasmania. An increasing number of mainland companies came to the State, some for specialised contract work but others competing for building contracts with local firms. In his annual report in 1966, State President Tom Andrewartha saw this as a major problem confronting the MBAT: 'It is time we, ourselves, challenged this influx with improved performance and increased technical knowledge to enable us to meet future development in the State ourselves.'³³²



Figure 35: Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd, Devonport Ferry Terminal, c1960
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

The government's hydro-electric policy contributed to the economic and building boom. In 1969, a group of MBAT members travelled to the West Coast

³³⁰ Garden, *Building a Nation*, p.224

³³¹ *Tasmanian Building* January 1968 p.11

³³² *Building* September 1966 p.23

to see the construction of Strathgordon Village, described as an entirely new construction concept.



Figure 36: MBAT Members at Strathgordon 1969

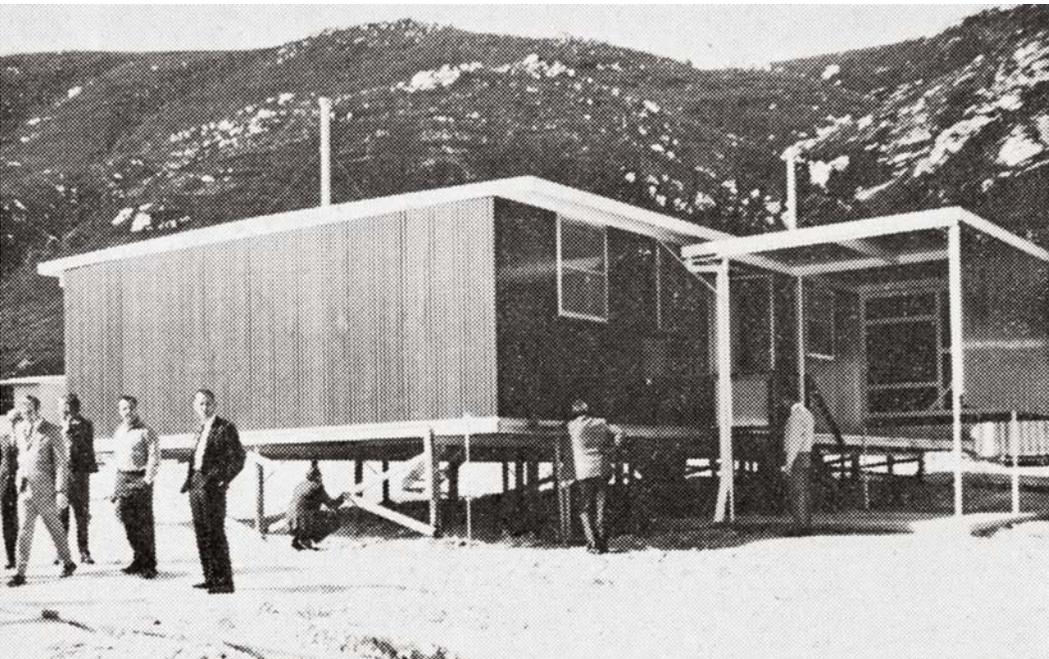


Figure 37: Demountable house, Strathgordon 1969

Strathgordon was developed by CHI (Tas) Pty Ltd, a subsidiary of Consolidated Home Industries Ltd, and a member firm of the MBAT. The village was built to house the workforce engaged on Tasmania's hydro-electric power project, the \$95 million Gordon River Scheme, Stage 1. The plans for Strathgordon comprised 225 homes, single men's quarters for more than 600, a motel, Church, school, shopping centre, sporting and other community amenities – all of which had to be demountable.³³³

Another major government construction project was the new Hobart bridge, the Tasman Bridge; Tom Lipscombe was the local consultant for the British engineering firm contracted to build the bridge.³³⁴

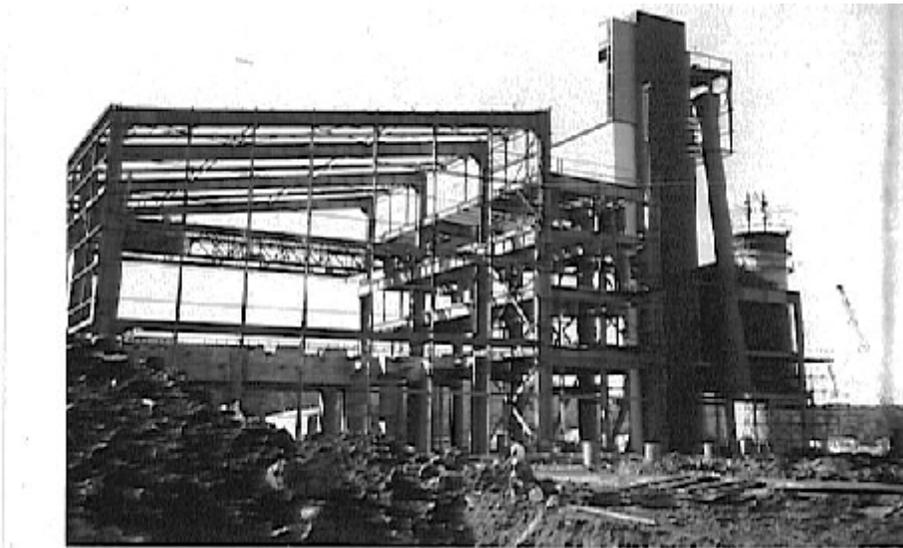


Figure 38: Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd, Bell Bay Power Station, August 1969
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

Like the previous decade, schools were a significant part of the building industry, particularly in regional areas. On the North West Coast, Stubbs

³³³ *Building* October 1969 p.14

³³⁴ MBAT Scrapbook 1949-1962: *The Mercury* 27 November 1959, 23 February 1960, 4 October 1960, 5 October 1960

Construction had several school contracts including Devonport Technical College in Valley Road.³³⁵ The four-storey Hobart Technical College Workshop Block, completed in 1968 by Hansen Yuncken, cost \$1.5 million and housed plant and storage areas and training facilities for metal trades, carpentry, printing, painting and decorating.³³⁶

The focus on high and modern buildings continued. For Hobart, the 1960s marked its entry into an era of multi-storey commercial construction. Many were built by MBAT members. Tasmania's first multi-storey car park opened in Argyle Street, Hobart, in 1968.³³⁷



**Figure 39: Construction of Tasmania's first multi-storey car park
Argyle Street Hobart 1968**

³³⁵ MBAT Scrapbook: *Advocate* 8 October 1969

³³⁶ *Building* August 1966 p.11; December 1968 p.13

³³⁷ *Building* December 1968 pp.24-25



Figure 40: Multi-storey buildings Hobart 1960s

L-R: State Government Offices; AMP Society Offices; Town House Motel; Royal Hobart Hospital NE Wing; Prudential Assurance Co. Offices; Royal Hobart Hospital Clinical School

There was also significant private sector development, with Hansen & Yuncken a major player. In 1968, Hansen & Yuncken celebrated its 50th anniversary. At the time, the company was involved in several large building projects in Hobart: the AMP Society Building, under construction on the corner of Elizabeth and Collins Street in Hobart, at an estimated cost of \$3 million; the North-East Wing of the Royal Hobart Hospital; the Hobart Technical College Workshop Block, the second stage of which was nearing completion, and the new \$4.5 million Link Building at the Royal Hobart Hospital – the largest single building contract ever let in Tasmania. The company also built Hobart’s second drive-in theatre, which could accommodate 320 cars, on the Eastern shore.³³⁸



Figure 41: Hansen & Yuncken Cox Bros Site, removal of crane March 1961
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

³³⁸ *Building* November 1966 p.30; December 1968 p.13; *Building* January 1967 p.26

In Hobart, the landmark Empress Towers building was erected in Battery Point by MBAT member, South Eastern Builders Pty Ltd.³³⁹



Figure 42: Empress Towers Battery Point 1967

The Hobart Town House, an EA Watts construction, was described as ‘undoubtedly Tasmania’s most glamorous and beautifully decorated motel’.³⁴⁰ The \$1 million building had a basement car park, rose 10 storeys and had accommodation of 112 suites.³⁴¹

AV Jennings also continued to operate in the State, balancing its work between housing and construction sectors, and government and private work. By 1963, it claimed to have completed contracts in Tasmania worth £5,717,000. These included a spectacular 5,000 ton ore-bin at Queenstown, the first time slip-form construction had been used in the State. It also built homes at Strahan and Queenstown, and constructed several buildings for Comalco at Bell Bay. In

³³⁹ *Building* July 1967 p.13

³⁴⁰ *Building* December 1968 p.13

³⁴¹ *Building* December 1968 p.13

Hobart, AV Jennings built a new office block for the South British Insurance Co., the Calvary Hospital Nurses' Home, service stations, the Moonah Bowl, the Glenorchy Council Chambers, and the Moonah and New Town Post Offices. It built 'spec' homes in Launceston. One innovative project in Launceston attracted busloads of tourists: the modern A-frame box girder chapel at St Patrick's College. Increasingly, AV Jennings focused on housing estates in Tasmania; the houses were designed locally, mainly by architects Cooper and Vincent.³⁴² In 1967, AV Jennings closed its construction division in Tasmania.³⁴³



Figure 43: Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd, Bell Bay Power Station, August 1969
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

Supermarkets were also becoming an important aspect of private sector building. In the north, Stubbs Construction undertook construction of several Roelf Vos supermarkets, while Neville Constructions built one for Farmers Ltd. at Burnie. GE Walters Pty Ltd constructed the Coles Sandy Bay supermarket.³⁴⁴

³⁴² Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.164-165

³⁴³ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.222

³⁴⁴ Denis Reid, *personal communication*, 31 March 2005

As part of the movement to modernisation, old buildings continued to make way for the new. In 1963, the 120-year-old building at 300 Liverpool Street once used as a Sunday School was demolished to make way for the government-funded Hobart Police Boys Club.³⁴⁵ The AMP Building replaced a Henry Hunter building, dating from the early 1880s and demolished in 1967.³⁴⁶



Figure 44: Henry Hunter building, corner of Liverpool and Argyle Street, demolished c1960
Produced with permission of the Archives Office of Tasmania
AOT 30/5012

³⁴⁵ MBAT Scrapbook : *The Mercury* 19 July 1963

³⁴⁶ *Building* January 1967 p.26

Chapter Seven: 1970s

There could not have been a greater contrast between the 1960s and the 1970s. The economic boom of the previous decade crashed. In 1971, the local economy slumped, precipitated by the world economic downturn. In 1972, Gough Whitlam and his Federal Labor Government began a tumultuous period in office. Runaway inflation, dramatic increases in oil prices and other commodities including labour, and industrial disputes including shipping strikes all contributed to a disastrous period for the building industry. Reduced building activity and untenable prospects of home ownership because of rising building costs and interest rates foreshadowed gloomy prospects for the master builders. Conservation and heritage sensitivity within the community heightened uncertainty.

In 1974, after a lengthy discussion at the May State Council, the MBAT broke its long-standing policy in regard to support for political parties:

it was pointed out that brochures produced by the Association indicate the Association's political non-alignment. However, it was considered that the current state of the economy and the future pressures likely to be applied to the Industry by the present Federal Government made it necessary for the Association to provide behind the scene support for the Opposition Parties.³⁴⁷

In July 1976, retiring MBAT President Gordon Ibbott took stock of the building industry during his two-terms of office. He noted that when he took over in 1974, the industry was in a period of great turmoil:

There was an abundance of work but inflation in the industry was running at an undreamed of figure up to 40%. It was a year of contractors falling with their backs to the wall through inefficient and uneconomic tendering highlighted by

³⁴⁷ MBAT State Council Report 10 May 1974

the unprecedented inflation rate. Clients were unable to find local builders with the necessary resources to fulfill the tremendous workload which was thrust on the industry and, from all this, [there was] a general feeling of mistrust throughout the entire industry in all sectors.³⁴⁸

Many of these problems were overcome by December 1975: 'The builders that survived became perhaps more stable, and some trust started to emerge again'.³⁴⁹ The industry began to steady. According to Gordon Ibbott, the government had not heeded requests for a more evenly distributed spending rate with forward planning and the unrestricted spending rate ended abruptly, plunging the industry into a deep trough.³⁵⁰



**Figure 45: MBAT members Andy Betlehem, Merv Elliott
Gordon Ibbott, Royce Neville, Bill Shields in the 1970s**
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

³⁴⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1976 p.5

³⁴⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1976 p.5

³⁵⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1976 p.5

MBAT Issues in the 1970s

In 1973, MBAT President, Max Bennett, summed up the major issues facing the building industry: 'our industry [is] plagued by industrial unrest, labour shortages, spiraling costs, supply problems and, of course, facing a major changeover to the Metric System of Measurement'.³⁵¹ Three years later, at his first Annual Meeting as President, Bill Shields raised three issues, apart from industrial matters, which he believed were important to the building industry: the need for increased government funding of public works; registration of builders; and the introduction of a building diploma course at the College of Advanced Education.³⁵² The following year, he was able to report that the Neilson Labor government had met the request to finance government works; that the Builders' Registration Bill was awaiting Legislative Council approval; and the building course had been established at the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education.³⁵³

For the builders, the 1970s and early 1980s were difficult times industrially. Among the building unions, especially the Builders Labourers Federation, there was an increase of political and industrial radicalism. Dick Bloomfield recalled 'there was no compromise, the union came in with demands ... the national companies were more prone to industrial unrest than Tasmanian companies'.³⁵⁴ Because of the industrial climate, MBAT President Bill Shields urged members to fully understand the awards and regulations by which they were bound, and their responsibilities and liabilities under the awards. The MBAT was a registered organisation under the *Conciliation and Arbitration Act* 1904. At that time, the building industry in Tasmania was covered primarily by the National

³⁵¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1973 p.7

³⁵² *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1976 pp.7-8

³⁵³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* 1977 p.18

³⁵⁴ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

Building Trades Construction Award 1975 and the Building Construction Employees and Builders' Labourer Award. Both were 'paid rates' awards, which meant that the rates prescribed were maximum rates. If employers paid more than the prescribed rate, they could be prosecuted.³⁵⁵

In 1973, the Federal Minister for Labour, Clyde Cameron, announced the Whitlam Labor Government's policy supporting the introduction of a 35-hour week. The MBAT, concerned at the extent of overtime it might involve, was strongly opposed to the policy. A 48-hour week was believed by many to be the norm in the building industry. The MBAT commented: 'any moves towards the introduction of a shorter working week should be recognised for what they are – thinly disguised attempts to gain substantial wage increases – not a desire by employees for more leisure or recreation time'.³⁵⁶

Concern with union activity was obvious at all levels of the Association. At the Southern Division monthly general meeting in February 1974, a member suggested that there should be a joint effort with other employer organisations 'to curb unrealistic claims' for wages and conditions by Unions.³⁵⁷

In 1972, the MBAT State Council submitted a proposal to the State Government to register builders in Tasmania. Executive Director Ewen Nichols commented that it had been a matter of great concern to most Tasmanian builders that architects, engineers, plumbers, drainers and electricians were required to be qualified and registered but the builder, who was responsible for the ultimate

³⁵⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1977 p.5 - 'President's Message' Shields

³⁵⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1973 p.14

³⁵⁷ MBAT Southern Division monthly general meeting report 19 February 1974

construction of the whole building, needed no qualification or licence.³⁵⁸ The MBAT called for the establishment of a Builders' Registration Board to protect the public against incompetent and unscrupulous builders, ensure higher standards of workmanship by eliminating unskilled operators, guarantee the fulfilment of contractual obligations and give home owners redress to a legislative body. Such legislation would protect the qualified and efficient builder from 'the ignominy of unqualified and unscrupulous builders' as well as engender higher standards and ethics and reduce costs by the elimination of financial instability.³⁵⁹ In 1973, MBAT President, Max Bennett, expressed his concern that the proposed legislation had been pigeon-holed by the State Government.³⁶⁰ In September 1973, the MBAT received a negative response from the Government.³⁶¹ The MBAT, having received an indication of support from the building trade unions, decided to work with the unions in the hope that a united front would change the government's mind.³⁶²

In 1975, the Builders' Registration Bill, prepared in consultation with the MBAT, was introduced into State Parliament by the Labor Minister for Industrial Relations, Doug Lowe; it ultimately became the *Builders' Registration Act 1977*.³⁶³ The Act, which had a sunset clause, lapsed when Parliament was prorogued by Harry Holgate.

³⁵⁸ *Building* July-August 1972 p.8

³⁵⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July-August 1972 p.8

³⁶⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1973 pp.7, 9

³⁶¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1975 p.5: letter dated April 1974

³⁶² *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1975 p.5: letter dated April 1974

³⁶³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* November 1976 p.5, June 1980 p.14

In the early 1970s, not only was there was a rapidly-worsening housing shortage but the increasing cost of materials was pushing up prices.³⁶⁴ MBAT President Max Bennett explained:

There was a time when it was possible for the builder to state a contract price with some certainty that there would be little, if any, variation in construction cost over a given period. However, today, the builder finds himself in a very tenuous position when stating a contract price due to the almost constant and substantial rises in the cost of a wide range of essential building materials. In short, a quoted cost for construction at the outset of a contract will almost certainly fall far below the ultimate cost, and the bare fact arises that the builders' reimbursements for increased construction costs occurring during the term of the contract are completely inadequate.³⁶⁵

In 1977, MBAT President Bill Shields predicted that the cost of housing could increase \$3500, due to the rising cost of materials, the ending of the wage-price freeze and wage demands: the wage factor alone could increase the price of an average \$30,000 house by \$2,000. He added that builders' labourers and tradesmen in the industry had served 24 national building companies with a claim for a \$30 wage increase; this would have an impact on eight major building contractors in Tasmania, and would be passed on to all other companies in the industry. Fearful of the development of a glut of new houses, he also called on the Federal Liberal Government to bring down interest rates to ease the repayments burden for young couples buying their first home.³⁶⁶

Throughout the 1970s, the shortage of skilled tradesmen was also increasingly a concern of the MBAT. In 1973, MBAT President, Max Bennett, succinctly stated that the 'best way to solve the problem of shortage of skilled tradesmen – and to avoid it in the future – is through apprenticeship training'.³⁶⁷ At the instigation

³⁶⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1973 p.12: in 1973, that there were 93,000 public housing applicants (out of a population of 13 million). See also MBAT Scrapbook: *Examiner* 27 May 1977.

³⁶⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1974 p.5

³⁶⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1973 p.12

³⁶⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* February 1974 p.5

of the MBAT, the State Government introduced legislation in an attempt to increase apprentice numbers and reduce the shortage of skilled tradesmen: contractors engaged on certain classes of building works under contract to the State were required to employ an appropriate ratio of apprentices to tradesmen, and to ensure that a similar condition was observed by their sub-contractors. Gordon Ibbott, who was North-Western Divisional Chairman at the time, commented: 'This has been one of the greatest achievements towards provision of tradesmen for the industry in the future that has taken place in this State.'³⁶⁸

In 1970, following a long period of negotiation and pressure from the Association, block release training commenced in four Tasmanian colleges at Burnie, Devonport, Launceston and Hobart.³⁶⁹ The MBAT argued that block release was more time-effective than day training.³⁷⁰

At the Federal level, the Whitlam Labor Government increased the rate of subsidies payable to employers under the National Apprenticeship Assistance Scheme in an attempt to encourage employers to increase their apprentice intakes.³⁷¹

In 1976, the Apprenticeship Commission re-introduced Apprentice Log Books for first-year apprentices, a move welcomed by the MBAT as a means of maintaining an accurate record of training and progress.³⁷²

³⁶⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1973 p.18

³⁶⁹ *MBAT Bulletin* 8 December 1969

³⁷⁰ MBAT Minutes 1965

³⁷¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* February 1974 p.5

³⁷² *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1976 p.5

By the 1970s, the MBAT was clearly recognised as the voice of the industry and were looked to as an authority, particularly in apprenticeship matters. It had achieved a sound level of co-operation with the government in the area of education and training. In 1977, this solid relationship wavered as communication broke down. The MBAT had a representative on the State Building Trades Advisory Committee of the Technical and Further Education Department but it had not met for over a year.³⁷³ Bill Shields, as President of the MBAT, also expressed disquiet at the Australian government's proposal to fund intensive pre-apprenticeship training of unemployed school leavers over twelve months: while the scheme itself was laudable, he argued that neither the details nor the impact on existing apprentice intakes had been thought through. He concluded: 'I understand that the Federal Government Department, Apprenticeship Commission and Technical Education Department are as confused as ourselves at the possible solution of this problem'.³⁷⁴

The 1970s brought 'many lettered proposals' such as 'RED', 'NAAS', 'NEAT' and 'CRAFT', all subsidies for apprenticeship training. The MBAT supported fully subsidised apprenticeship training.³⁷⁵ It also supported a recent statement from the Apprenticeship Commission and State Department of Housing and Construction that union membership for apprentices need not be mandatory, and that the matter should be one for the individual to decide.³⁷⁶

Bill Shields also advocated participation by apprentices during their initial course, and as postgraduates, in the Certificate in Building Course, which the Association had been involved with from its inception: 'I would like to

³⁷³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1977 p.5

³⁷⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1977 p.5

³⁷⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1977 p.5

³⁷⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1977 p.5

encourage members to promote this course to all apprentices, both because it will be of immense value to mature thinking lads and ensure a continuance of fully trained operatives in the industry'.³⁷⁷

The 1970s saw the progressive changeover to the metric system of measurement; equipment, materials and construction units all needed to be altered. MBAT President, Max Bennett, commented that metric conversion was 'without doubt one of the most significant events which has ever taken place in the building industry or indeed Australia'.³⁷⁸ The MBAT, represented on the Sector Committee of the Metric Conversion Board's Building and Construction Advisory Committee, provided its members with information and actively encouraged its members to 'think metric'.³⁷⁹ In 1973, the MBAT urged its members to 'only buy metric' in preparation for the change.³⁸⁰ A comprehensive metric display was set up in the Building Centre in Hobart.³⁸¹ The first State Government all-metric building contract – the St John's Park Hospital Boiler House – was awarded to Hansen & Yuncken (Tasmania) Pty Ltd.³⁸² The changeover to metric for the building and construction industry took place on 1 January 1974, designated 'M-Day'.³⁸³

The Association in the 1970s

The 1970s heralded a period of great change and rapid growth for the MBAT. In 1973, MBAT President, Max Bennett, reflected that it had been a period of unprecedented progress for the Association, in which it had greatly increased its

³⁷⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1977 p.5

³⁷⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1973 p.5

³⁷⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1973 p.7

³⁸⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal*, January 1973 p.18

³⁸¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1973 p.16

³⁸² *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1973 p.32, November 1973 p.34

³⁸³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1973 p.5

'sphere of influence' in industrial and governmental affairs, as well as significantly improved services to members and associate members.³⁸⁴ Larger premises, in Sandy Bay Road, were obtained.³⁸⁵ Importantly, too, the 1970s saw the creation of a truly State-wide organisation.

In 1976, at the end of his term as MBAT President, Gordon Ibbott, stated that the highlights were the establishment of the Northern Division; the favourable assessment of the functions of the Association by an independent consultant; involvement in many State and Federal matters; and the establishment of the new headquarters in Sandy Bay Road.³⁸⁶

In the 1970s, the *Bulletin* noted that outstanding debtors among members had reached an all-time high.³⁸⁷

Keith Crowe was elected MBAT President in 1978. At the end of his two-year term, he noted that, despite the depressed state of the building industry generally, the Association not only continued to achieve worthwhile objectives but maintained a position of leadership in the building industry in the State.³⁸⁸ He welcomed the opening of new premises for the North and North-West Divisional offices as an indication of the advancement of the Association.³⁸⁹ He also believed that there had been significant developments in apprenticeship training, particularly the introduction of pre-selection screening and group training, but was disappointed that the Apprenticeship Commission's enquiry

³⁸⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1987 p.7

³⁸⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1973 p.7

³⁸⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1976 p.5

³⁸⁷ *MBAT Bulletin* 6 March 1970

³⁸⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1980 p.5

³⁸⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1980 pp.16-17

into the effectiveness of trade training in Tasmania had not been completed.³⁹⁰ As a keen golfer and Hornibrook participant, Keith was delighted that the 1979 Hornibrook Golf Tournament was held in Tasmania during his term of office, especially as it was the first time that Tasmania had won the cup.³⁹¹

Premises: 59 Sandy Bay Road Hobart 1976

The move to 59 Sandy Bay Road was a turning point for the Association. A Property Development Committee was formed and undertook a feasibility study, which recommended moving to a new building incorporating all foreseeable requirements. The Property Development Committee was chaired by GL Holmes and included AH Betlehem, MN Bennett, LR Hale, WL Shields, and EA Nichols. JJ Rogerson replaced Max Bennett in 1974. The MBAT purchased a site on Sandy Bay Road, occupying it from July 1976. Alterations and reconstructions were undertaken by Crowe & Dean Pty Ltd.



Figure 46: MBAT Board Room, Sandy Bay Road

The official opening, by MBAT State President Gordon Ibbott on 9 July 1976, was attended by Premier Bill Neilson, the MBFA President FA Hansen, and MBFA Executive Director JM Jorgensen. The large representative gathering at the

³⁹⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1980 pp.16-17

³⁹¹ Interview with Keith Crowe; *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1980 pp.16-17

official opening included MBAT Members, Associate Members, Life Members and Past Presidents, as well as members of government and semi-government departments and building professionals.³⁹²

Premises: 41 Steel Street Devonport 1971

By 1971, the increasingly-active and developing North-Western Division had outgrown the Stewart Street office, which was replaced with a new building at 41 Steele Street. The MBAT Property Development Committee responsible for the new building comprised WL Shields (Chairman), LR Hale, D Saul, GL Holmes, K Crowe, GF Keating, BR Bannon and the Executive Director, EA Nichols. The twenty-square building cost \$130,000, including land, and was built by the Devonport firm of TG Matthews Pty Ltd. It consisted of a reception area, administrative offices and chairman's office, board room, kitchen and storeroom.

The Steele Street office was officially opened by Keith Crowe, State President, on 8 June 1979. Official guests at the opening included the Federal President of the Master Builders' Federation, FE (Frank) Crowle of Adelaide, and the Chairman of the North-West Division, GF (Graham) Keating.³⁹³ Three MBAT Life Members also attended. They were Lou Stubbs, who was awarded Life Membership in 1967; and Gordon Ibbott and Royce Neville, both awarded Life Membership in 1975. In opening the building, MBAT State President, Keith Crowe, stated:

Since the MBA of Tasmania was established in 1891 it has been active in seeking to improve the conditions under which the building industry operates. It is a non-political and non-profit making organisation solely set up to safeguard and promote the interests of its members, to protect them against injustice and

³⁹² *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1973 p.7, July 1976 pp.17-24, January/February 1985 p.18

³⁹³ MBAT North-West Division Scrapbook 'Official Opening of Offices 41 Steele Street, Devonport'; *Advocate* 9 June 1979 p.4

oppression in the execution of their work and to encourage and promote a high standard of workmanship and integrity in the building industry.³⁹⁴



Figure 47: MBAT State President Keith Crowe and NW Divisional Chairman Graham Keating 1979

Premises: 1 York Street Launceston 1977

On 18 April 1977, the new Northern Divisional office opened at 1 York Street, Launceston. A full-time officer, Tony Stephenson, was appointed to service northern members, 'particularly in the fields of contractual and industrial relations'.³⁹⁵

A prominent MBAT member in the 1970s was Geoff Holmes, who was awarded Honorary Membership in 1978, having served as President from 1970-1972. He attended his first meeting on 21 October 1958, and was a Councillor for a number of years before being elected Vice-President in 1969. He was active in committee work, serving as chairman of a number of committees. He also represented the MBAT at the Master Builders' Federation. Born in Tasmania, Geoff was educated at Clemes College, Hobart. He served in the AIF during World War II,

³⁹⁴ *Advocate* 9 June 1979 p.4

³⁹⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1977 p.5

and shortly afterwards, founded his own building firm, firstly as a partnership. About 1962, he established GL Holmes Pty Ltd, concentrating on commercial and industrial building. Projects undertaken by his firm included construction work for the Hydro-Electric Commission, the Department of Mines and the Public Works Department. As well, his firm was responsible for the erection of a number of schools and the '60 and Over' Club, Hobart.³⁹⁶

Bill Shields and Dick Bloomfield, leading members through the 1970s, both joined the MBAT as representatives of large national companies, Hansen and Yuncken and EA Watts, respectively. Bill, who was appointed Tasmanian Manager of Hansen & Yuncken Pty Ltd in 1964, was elected MBAT President in 1976. In March 1970, the MBAT journal noted that Bill had 'ably guided his Company through what may be described as the beginning of the era of multi-storey building in Tasmania. His wide knowledge of the practical side of the industry has proved invaluable.'³⁹⁷ In his first annual report, Bill hinted at his vision for an increasingly-professional organisation:

I see the future of the Association being in the area of professional guidance with the education of members being of prime importance – we need to show a keen interest in Association affairs but look to a competent staff team to handle all Association matters with less and less involvement in committees and meetings by the membership.³⁹⁸

Part of his awareness of the importance of education and training was reflected in his effective use of the journal as a vehicle to inform members through the 'President's Message' column. Wide-ranging issues canvassed in his column in his first year as President included: members and ethics; tendering in the building industry; registration of builders; apprenticeship and education;

³⁹⁶ *Building* August 1970 p.8; *The Mercury* 14 April 1975 p.4

³⁹⁷ *Building* March 1970 p.27

³⁹⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1977 p.18

tolerance in the industry; government contracts, labour and training; the Northern Division office and membership; the Apprenticeship Advisory Committees and Pre-Apprenticeship Training; the Federation's Activities; and industrial unrest and disputation. Always a loyal company man, Bill also included a tribute to the late Frank Hansen.

Bill also saw the value in strengthening relationships with government, and led a number of deputations to the Premier, State Government Ministers and Opposition representatives. In 1977, in his Annual Report, Bill noted: 'I cannot but stress the importance of these activities in obtaining action and developing liaison with those in power in our Legislature'.³⁹⁹ In 1977, Bill was invited to join the newly-formed State Planning Advisory Panel, with a brief to advise 'on significant issues affecting the future of Tasmania'.⁴⁰⁰ Bill also realised the importance of visiting the Divisions, and undertook a 'Presidential Visit' to the North and North-Western Divisions.⁴⁰¹

Dick Bloomfield joined in 1977, when Bill Shields was President. At the time, the Association had undergone a transformation: it had opened offices in Devonport and Launceston, and was looking to relocate and expand its Hobart premises. Dick recalled the first MBAT meeting that he went to was a divisional meeting in Hobart as company representative. He commented: 'that particular era revolved around mainly commercial buildings and commercial builders'.⁴⁰² Dick added that, in his early days of MBAT involvement, the organisation was less egalitarian and there was a preponderance of commercial builders, with fixed

³⁹⁹ MBAT Minutes AGM 11 August 1977, Annual Report 1977, Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 1977

⁴⁰⁰ WL Shields File 1: letter from Premier to WL Shields 6 July 1977

⁴⁰¹ MBAT Minutes AGM 11 August 1977, Annual Report 1977, President's Annual Report for the year ended 30 June 1977

⁴⁰² Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

ideas: “Bang, that’s what happens, that’s how it goes, if you don’t like it, take your bat and ball and go somewhere else”.⁴⁰³

Dick quickly rose through the different levels of the organisation, and, in 1978, was elected Chairman of the Southern Division. As Chairman, he was entitled to sit on the MBAT State Council. He has been on State Council continuously since that time.

While the MBAT has always had its ‘shakers and movers’, there have also been those whose quiet and unassuming participation has contributed to the strength and resilience of the Association. One such member in the 1970s was AH (Andy) Betlehem. In 1970, Andy announced his retirement as Managing Director of South-Eastern Builders Pty Ltd, and with it, his retirement from active participation in MBAT affairs.⁴⁰⁴ At the time of his retirement, he was State Vice-President. The journal, in paying tribute to Andy, noted: ‘For quite a number of years now, Andy Betlehem has been one of the Association’s most conscientious and hard working members. He has always taken a keen interest in Association affairs and in latter years served as a State Councillor and on various committees of the Association’.⁴⁰⁵ His son, Hank, was also a MBAT State Councillor.⁴⁰⁶

The Builders and their Buildings in the 1970s

In 1972, the MBAT expressed concern at ‘the considerable number of valuable building sites in city areas at present occupied by ancient and often dangerous buildings under the protection of the National Trust’.⁴⁰⁷ It conceded that the National Trust performed a valuable role in the preservation of heritage

⁴⁰³ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

⁴⁰⁴ *Building* April 1970 p.16

⁴⁰⁵ *Building* April 1970 p.16

⁴⁰⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1997 p.12

⁴⁰⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* November 1972 p.18

buildings but argued that there were many old buildings that were structurally dangerous or occupying sites which could be used for new building projects. Progress in the city, the MBAT believed, was being impeded: 'It is felt that the National Trust is exceeding its requirements, as an example of which it is noted that in Davey Street, Hobart, alone, the Trust has its 'Don't Touch' signs on some 18 buildings'.⁴⁰⁸ On the other hand, heritage restoration provided work for MBAT members like D Williams, employed by the National Trust to undertake work at Runnymede and 'Islington' in Davey Street.⁴⁰⁹

At the same time, there were attempts to blend the old and the new. In the early 1970s, some older buildings were updated and adapted for modern use: Hansen & Yuncken (Tasmania) Pty Ltd constructed a block of 50 motel units for Innkeepers in the grounds of the century-old National Trust-classified 'Lenna' in Battery Point.⁴¹⁰ The new science/library wing at St Virgil's College, in Barrack Street, Hobart, built by RR Vincent, linked the old building with the new.⁴¹¹

In 1977, 60 per cent of building contracts in Tasmania were for Government works and the MBAT continued to advocate the need for a long-term program of works to bring stability to the industry. Fluctuations in the industry made it difficult to maintain a stable workforce and forced builders to leave the industry. The Labor Minister for Housing, Harry Holgate, promised to plan five-year public works programs⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal*, November 1972 p.18

⁴⁰⁹ Evans, 'Everything Prompt', pp.52-54

⁴¹⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1973 p.13

⁴¹¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1973 p.10.

⁴¹² *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1973 p.12

Major projects in the government sector included the Royal Hobart Hospital North-East Wing completed in 1970, which was officially opened by Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, on 3 April 1970 during the Royal Tour. The building was erected by Hansen & Yuncken. It was the first time in its history that a building constructed by the company had been opened by Royalty.⁴¹³



Figure 48: Hansen & Yuncken, Marine Board building June 1971
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

Another major government building in the 1970s was the 10-storey Marine Board, officially opened by the Premier, Mr Reece, on 6 October 1972. Costing approximately \$2.5 million, it too was constructed by Hansen & Yuncken.⁴¹⁴ Work on the Lands Department Building, a 12-storey State Government office building in Macquarie Street, Hobart, commenced in June 1973. Constructed by Hansen & Yuncken, Stage I was completed towards the end of 1975. Hansen & Yuncken also completed Stage II, at the end of the decade.⁴¹⁵ In Burnie, the multi-storey 'Reece House', which housed government offices, was constructed

⁴¹³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1970 p.24

⁴¹⁴ *Building* October 1972 p.7; *Building* November 1972 p.14

⁴¹⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1980 p.11

by Lloyd-Paulin Construction Co Pty Ltd of Ulverstone, at a cost of more than \$2 million.

In the private sector, there were a number of innovative developments. One of these was the Wrest Point Hotel Casino, constructed at a cost of \$5.1 million by AV Jennings for Federal Pacific Hotels Limited.⁴¹⁶ Local firm, GE Walters Pty Ltd, and its subsidiary company, Steelage, also played important roles in its construction: GE Walters supplied and fitted the opulent blackwood panelling to the Casino's Gaming Room and were responsible for the form and timber work to the Rotunda arches.⁴¹⁷

Schools continued to provide work for Tasmania's master builders. Rosny Matriculation College, the State's first college designed specifically for matriculation students, was completed in 1973. Hansen & Yuncken were awarded the contract, valued at \$2,938,000, in September 1971. The 1970s also saw the introduction of portable temporary classrooms – or Willcroft-Terrapin units – for use by the Education Department: in 1973, there were portable classrooms sited at Launceston, Claremont, Blackman's Bay, Devonport, Smithton, Wynyard, Burnie and Triabunna, and there were another 12 on order. The Tasmanian leader in their production was MBAT member, Laver Construction Pty Ltd, at Kingston.⁴¹⁸

The Commonwealth Government contributed to the building industry with the erection of the Australian Government Centre in Hobart, built on the site of St

⁴¹⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* February 1973 pp22-31; Garden, *Building the Nation*, pp.238-239

⁴¹⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* February 1973 p.31

⁴¹⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1973 pp.8-9.

Joseph's Orphanage, on the corner of Harrington and Collins Street.⁴¹⁹ Started by EA Watts in 1971, it was completed in October 1973 at a cost of \$5,500,000.⁴²⁰

Supermarkets and shopping centres grew in size and sophistication in the 1970s, as developers realised their potential and consumer spending patterns changed. The redeveloped Rosny shopping centre, Eastlands, was, at the time it opened in 1972, the largest fully air-conditioned shopping complex in Tasmania. Costing approximately \$719,000, it was constructed by AV Jennings.⁴²¹ The following year, the K-Mart discount store at New Town, constructed by Hansen & Yuncken at a cost of \$3,500,000, opened.⁴²²

⁴¹⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1973 pp.6-8

⁴²⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1973, pp.6-8, March 1974 p.8

⁴²¹ *Building* November 1972 p.8

⁴²² *Tasmanian Building Journal* October 1973 pp.8-9

Chapter Eight: 1980s

The decade started with a gloomy forecast. The commercial and industrial sector in Tasmania suffered from a chronic lack of private sector and government work. Industrial disputes were increasing, especially shipping and transport strikes, and there was a general lack of business confidence. Competition for the small amount of work was acute and the high cost of finance was further depressing the industry.⁴²³ In 1980, MBAT President, Doug Saul, argued that only a substantial increase in State Government spending on building and construction could stop the building industry in Tasmania 'plunging further into despair and decay'.⁴²⁴

The 1980s saw the growth of the conservation movement in Tasmania. In 1985, in his last 'President's Message' before stepping down, Gerry Verdouw considered the impact of the movement, citing a *Mercury* editorial which referred to the wide range of opinion 'from those with a philosophy on life which few thinking people could disagree to those who believe that any development is only a step away from selling souls to the devil'.⁴²⁵ Gerry was particularly concerned with the latter group, which the newspaper described as believing it had 'a monopoly on wisdom when it comes to the future of Tasmania'.⁴²⁶ Deploring the apathy of 'the silent majority', he wrote:

In our democratic society, nobody would deny these well meaning people their right to speak up for what they sincerely believe in. What is causing a great deal of concern is the influence they seem to be able to exert which is out of all

⁴²³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1982 p.27

⁴²⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1980 p.5

⁴²⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1985 p.3

⁴²⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1985 p.3

proportion to their numerical strength ... caused by the excessive and biased television coverage they seem to be able to attract.⁴²⁷

Elsewhere, MBAT North-Western Division Chairman Paul Ibbott stated that it was sad to reflect on the substantial volume of work lost to the construction industry as the result of the High Court's decision not to permit the construction of the Gordon below Franklin dam.⁴²⁸ By the end of the decade, the hopes of the building industry were again disappointed with the failure of the Wesley Vale Pulp Mill project.

MBAT President, Dick Bloomfield, in his 'President's Message' was frequently critical of the State Labor Government economic and industrial policy, and welcomed the change of government, when Robin Gray's Government was elected in 1982.⁴²⁹ Dick anticipated that a Liberal Government would be more supportive of private enterprise and the building industry.⁴³⁰

Throughout the 1980s, the MBAT actively worked with the State Government in an advisory capacity, regularly meeting with ministers. It was also involved with other representative industry groups. Submissions were regularly made to the government on a range of issues: in 1983, MBAT President Dick Bloomfield summarised some that had been undertaken in a twelve month period, including a 'Proposal for a Scheme of Self-Regulation in the Building Industry'; a 'Review of the Present and Future Role of the Construction Industry'; a submission to the Board of Inquiry on matters related to the 'Service Incremental Payments Scheme'; a report on 'Apprenticeship Training'; and 'The 1985-1987 Triennial

⁴²⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1985 p.3

⁴²⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1984 p.23

⁴²⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1982 p.3; August 1982 p.3

⁴³⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1982 p.3

Planning Submission on Trade Training'. As well, MBAT members were involved in the Development Review Working Group, responsible for identifying and reducing unnecessary delay in granting development and building approval.⁴³¹

The Association in the 1980s

The MBAT constitution was amended in 1983, after a period of review.⁴³²

By 1981, the Association employed several staff including the Executive Director, EA (Ewen) Nichols; Contracts Officer, Norm Crothers; Industrial Officer, RW (Ron) Clegg; Housing Officer, Tas Laughlin; Manpower Development Officer, Tony Smith; Public Relations Officer, Frank Court; and Administrative Assistant, David Wise, as well as an Administrative Officer North-West, Don Mapley and Administrative Officer North Craig Peters.⁴³³ However, in that year, State Council announced as 'a matter of necessity' it had decided to reduce the Headquarters Staff.⁴³⁴ The position of Housing Officer was abolished in 'an effort to reduce the running expenses of the Association' and Industrial Officer, Ron Clegg, was made responsible for Housing Member enquiries.

A leading member during the 1980s was Doug Saul, who was awarded Honorary Membership in 1982. He was elected President in 1980. At that time, Doug was Area Manager, Tasmania, for Dillingham Australia Limited, and resident in Launceston. Doug had just completed two years as MBAT Vice-President and before that was MBAT Northern Division Chairman. He played an active role in Association affairs and was a prominent State Councillor and a

⁴³¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1983 p.3

⁴³² *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1983 p.17

⁴³³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* November 1980 p.4

⁴³⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* November 1980 p.15

member of various committees. Doug spent his working life associated with the building industry and virtually with the same company because his original employer, S Haunstrop & Co Pty Ltd, became part of Dillingham Constructions in 1962 (in recent times renamed Dillingham Australia Ltd). Doug was also President of the Tasmanian Division of the Australian Federation of Construction Contractors.⁴³⁵

In 1988, the MBAT bestowed Honorary Membership upon Eric Deeks on his retirement and in recognition of his many years of distinguished service to the building industry and the MBAT. Eric joined the MBAT in 1973 and served as State Councillor from 1974-1982 and Executive Committee Member from 1975-1982, as well as Treasurer and Vice-President. He also was a member of the Contracts Committee and in 1983 was Chairman of the Development Review Working Group and the Planning Appeals Board.⁴³⁶



Figure 49: Eric Deeks presented with MBAT Honorary Membership by MBAT President John Gretton 1988

⁴³⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1980 p.15, August 1983 p.20

⁴³⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1988 p.14, August 1988 p.22

Economic concerns dominated the early period of the decade. In 1981, the MBAT combined with the Australian Institute of Building (AIB) to organise the AIB National Conference in Hobart, which addressed the theme, 'Economics in Building'. Over 200 delegates attended. The MBAT hosted the Conference Dinner at Wrest Point Hotel.⁴³⁷ Also in 1981, the MBAT organised a 'Building Industry Forum' in Hobart, chaired by MBAT President, Doug Saul, and attended by over 100 people. It was called to focus attention on the extreme distress of the industry and to try to formulate a plan for positive action. Speakers included MBAT members Eric Deeks, Max Bennett and Terry Lincolne. An important outcome of the Forum was the formation of an Action Committee, comprising the five speakers and Hobart architect, KW Shugg.⁴³⁸

MBAT 'Pride in the Job' campaign 1987

In 1987, the 'Pride in the Job' campaign was introduced. Originally a MBAV concept, it aimed to heighten the professional pride of builders and to improve their image and reputation. Posters, colourful T-shirts, stickers and other publicity material were produced as part of the campaign.⁴³⁹

MBAT 'Kidsafe Homes' 1987

The MBAT and the Child Accident Prevention Foundation of Australia launched the 'Kidsafe Homes' project in April 1987, aimed at making homes safer for young children.⁴⁴⁰ In September 1987, Tasmania's first official 'Kidsafe' home, built at Kingston by Laver Pty Ltd, opened.⁴⁴¹

⁴³⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1981 pp.6-17

⁴³⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1981 pp.6-12

⁴³⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1987 p.12

⁴⁴⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1987 p.20

⁴⁴¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* October 1987 p.10

MBAT Bicentennial Bursary 1988

To mark the Australian Bicentenary, the MBAT offered a Bicentennial Bursary Award of \$5,000 for a comparative study of the New Zealand building industry. The winner was 28-year-old John Dingemanse, Director of Combined Building & Maintenance Management Pty Ltd of Launceston.⁴⁴²

MBAT Issues in the 1980s

Contracts and tendering remained firmly on the MBAT agenda. In 1980, the MBAT brought MBANSW expert, John Twyford, to run a training course on 'Contracts and the Builder'.⁴⁴³



Figure 35: MBAT Training Course 1980

⁴⁴² *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1989 pp.14,17

⁴⁴³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1980 p.16

The MBAT also lobbied for a reduction in the amount of administrative 'red tape': as Dick Bloomfield explained, it was 'envisaged that such a reduction would encourage both developer activity and investment interest in the building industry in Tasmania, breathing desperately needed new life into the ailing economy'.⁴⁴⁴

The *Builders' Registration Act 1977* was the product of many years of lobbying by the MBAT. From 1 July 1980, it was an offence under the Act for an unregistered building contractor or sub-contractor to carry out building operations anywhere in Tasmania. But the Act was short-lived and lapsed after only three years. Builders' registration, however, remained a goal for the Association. Unscrupulous builders were still a major concern and, in 1984, an MBAT membership survey clearly established the need for registration of all builders. The MBAT continued to lobby politically.⁴⁴⁵ MBAT President Gerry Verdouw promised, in 1984, that the Association would be working with the State Government on a scheme 'designed to rid the industry of the culprits ... thereby securing the position of the consumer'.⁴⁴⁶ The Government, however, favoured self-regulation through education.⁴⁴⁷ The MBAT noted that during the time that builders' registration was in force, the Builders' Management Course at the Technical College was well attended, but numbers dropped dramatically after registration was withdrawn.⁴⁴⁸ In 1984, MBAT President Gerry Verdouw reported that the issue of builders' registration was still being debated and he

⁴⁴⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1983 p.3

⁴⁴⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1983 p.17

⁴⁴⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1984 p.3

⁴⁴⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1985 p.18

⁴⁴⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1982 p.23

expressed his concern that the State Government was unable to come to grips with the issue and implement a practical, workable scheme.⁴⁴⁹

In October 1981, the MBAT announced the introduction of a Terminating Building Society to be known as MBA No.1 Co-Operative Housing Society Limited. The scheme was wholly financed and administered by the State Labor Government. Two MBAT members, Doug Saul and David Tregaskis, were appointed to the Board of the Society. The \$1,000,000 required to float the Society was made available from the Long Service Leave (Casual Employment) Fund. The MBAT had been asking for some time to have this fund freed to assist the building industry. Initially, the scheme operated only in the north of the State, where it was considered there was the greatest need for assistance. The scheme was designed to benefit those requiring homes in the lower price bracket.⁴⁵⁰ By 1984, six housing societies were in operation.

The MBAT pursued the concept of an indemnity scheme to allow its members to provide a guarantee of its workmanship. On 3 November 1989, the Association launched an indemnity scheme for houses and units constructed by participating members of the Association. It provided a six year cover to a MBAT Member client against structural failure directly attributable to the builder; failure of footings and foundations directly attributable to the builder; and non-completion of the dwelling, due to the bankruptcy, liquidation, death or disappearance of the builder. The Scheme was unique because it was only available through the MBAT and only to approved applicants. Each applicant was required to provide business and credit references, and was subject to a stringent assessment of his

⁴⁴⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1984 p.3

⁴⁵⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* October 1981 pp.3, 18; November 1981 pp.6-8

trade background, technical educational background, practical experience and business expertise.⁴⁵¹

In 1983, the Hawke Labor Government came to power. The Government announced a Committee of Review into Australian Industrial Relations Law and Systems. The MBFA responded to the review on behalf of Master Builders' Associations. One of the recommendations of the submission supported the reduction of the number of unions and in the longer term, the creation of an industry union.⁴⁵² In 1985, the master builders' movement agreed that the MBFA should establish a single authoritative industrial relations council, the MBFA Industrial Relations Council, which met for the first time in March 1985.⁴⁵³

Commenting on the local industrial relations scene, MBAT North-Western Division Chairman, Paul Ibbott, stated:

we have witnessed a continuing incidence of demarcation disputes carrying with them the threat of 24-hour strikes. The awarding of site allowances in this State is an area of continuing concern as is the notice from Unions that they are soon to commence an active campaign in the housing sector. Of added concern is the recent Union proposal to set sub-contract rates for piecework across the industry. The failure of the Union movement to recognise that the industry cannot sustain new and increased costs is of fundamental detriment to the wellbeing and improvement of the industry's economy.⁴⁵⁴

In 1984, all building unions signed a 'Memorandum of Understanding for the Improvement of Industrial Relations in the Building Industry' in return for an agreement by commercial/industrial contractors to make superannuation contributions on behalf of on-site employees. MBAT President Gerry Verdouw hoped this would lead to a new period of industrial harmony, which would in

⁴⁵¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1990 pp.16-17; Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

⁴⁵² *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1984 pp.4-11

⁴⁵³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1985 p.3

⁴⁵⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1984 p.23

turn inspire investor confidence.⁴⁵⁵ The following year, the Builders Labourers Federation called on members to stop work over incidents interstate. Tasmanian building contractors felt they were unfairly targeted in matters over which they had no control.⁴⁵⁶ Shortly afterwards, the Federal Labor Government moved to deregister the BLF.⁴⁵⁷

In 1985, the State Industrial Boards were replaced by the Tasmanian Industrial Commission, established under the *Industrial Relations Act 1985*. The MBAT was granted registration under the Act, allowing it to represent its members' interests in both State and Federal jurisdictions.⁴⁵⁸

In the late 1980s, in response to mounting balance of trade problems, the Australian Government commenced initiatives to re-structure Australian industry. Initially, the initiatives were aimed primarily at the manufacturing industry but later broadened to encompass industry generally. The Building Industry Inquiry began in December 1987. One of the conclusions arising from the inquiry was that the paid rates wage concept in the building and construction industry should be abandoned. In particular, it was determined that the National Building Trades Construction Award 1975 should be reconstructed so as to minimise rates and appropriate levels of supplementary payments. The setting of site allowances by the Commission was discontinued.

The Commission decided that the objective of a single award in the building and construction industry had merit but warned that, as this course would involve a rationalisation of all organisations involved in the industry, the process should

⁴⁵⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* October 1984 p.3

⁴⁵⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1985 p.18

⁴⁵⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1985 pp.14-16, October 1985 pp.10-12

⁴⁵⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1985 p.18

be gradual. Industry parties met through 1989 and working parties were formed for each of the Building Industry Awards. Recognising the importance of understanding restructuring, the MBAT organised a seminar for its members in January 1990.⁴⁵⁹



**Figure 50: Indenture Signing Devonport 1981 Chris McGuire (left) and Tony Denby
L-R: MBAT Divisional Chairman BJ Gretton, K McGuire, Mrs E Denby, Mr E Denby,
MBAT Administrative Officer Don Mapley**

For many years, the MBAT staunchly supported the traditional apprenticeship system. However, increasingly, it realised the need for change. In 1980, the MBAT decided to employ and train a first-year apprentice. This was a pilot scheme aimed at creating additional apprenticeship opportunities.⁴⁶⁰ In 1981, all MBAT Divisions signed apprentices under the scheme. MBAT participants in the south were Suburban Home Builders; Laver Constructions Pty Ltd and Andrewartha Bros Pty Ltd; in the north, Hinman, Wright and Manser Pty Ltd; J

⁴⁵⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1990 p.16

⁴⁶⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1980 p.5

& M Siejka of Continental Builders; and in the north west, AG Ebdon Pty Ltd and Page & Kingston Pty Ltd.⁴⁶¹

The MBAT Group Apprenticeship Scheme was discontinued from 1 July 1993, because of the downturn in the building trade.⁴⁶² However, the Building Industry Training Council took up the concept.⁴⁶³ The Building Group Apprenticeship Scheme was officially launched on 7 March 1984. Funded by the Commonwealth and State Governments, with industry support, the scheme was operated by a non-profit company called the Building Group Apprenticeship Scheme Ltd.⁴⁶⁴

Later still, Tasmanian Group Training, formed in 1988 in Hobart, was a co-operative venture between business and industry, providing an alternative method of training apprentices and trainees.⁴⁶⁵

Tasmanian Building Educational Trust

The Tasmanian Building Educational Trust was established in 1981 as a project jointly sponsored by the MBAT and the Tasmanian Chapter of the AIB. Its purpose was to promote education within the building industry by the provision of scholarships, training grants and other forms of assistance. Foundation Trustees were WL Shields (Chairman, representing the AIB), DR Silver (AIB), EE Deeks (MBAT) and MN Bennett (MBAT).⁴⁶⁶

⁴⁶¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1991 pp.17-18; August 1981 p.18; November 1981 pp.28-29

⁴⁶² *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1983 p.14

⁴⁶³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1984 pp.23-24

⁴⁶⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1984 pp.24-25

⁴⁶⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.25

⁴⁶⁶ Information from Bill Shields, April 2005

The Builders and their Buildings in the 1980s

In the 1980s, there were considerable demographic and social changes in Australian society, which caused a shift in housing needs and demanded a greater flexibility from builders in the housing sector. An ageing population meant that there were older couples with no dependants and often a comfortable disposable income. At the other end of the scale, there were young people for whom the traditional path of marriage and family was only one of several choices: 'This was the era of the Yuppie (young and upwardly mobile) and Dinky (double income, no kids)'.⁴⁶⁷ As Don Garden noted, 'More young adults were choosing to live alone, live together outside marriage, delay marriage and to postpone or not have children'.⁴⁶⁸ Changes in social and employment equality also meant that women had greater economic power; there was a higher proportion of working mothers. Largely as a result in changes to divorce law, there was an increasing divorce rate which contributed to a higher number of single-parent and blended families. There was a greater demand for second and third homes, and consumer needs were much more varied. The traditional style Australian house was changing subtly; there was, for example, a greater emphasis on living space. Building techniques and materials also changed, and there was an expanding home improvements market. 1981 was the 'International Year for the Disabled' and this focused the attention of builders on the provision of adequate building access.⁴⁶⁹

Despite the bleak economic conditions, a number of significant buildings were constructed in Tasmania during the decade. Many of these were funded by the State and Federal governments. Federally-funded projects included buildings at

⁴⁶⁷ Garden, *Builders to the Nation*, p.307

⁴⁶⁸ Garden, *Builders to the Nation*, p.307

⁴⁶⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1982 p.21

the Australian Maritime College in Launceston. Dillingham Australia Pty Ltd was awarded the \$1.15 million contract for Stage II of the Maritime College.⁴⁷⁰ Later, in 1984, Hinman, Wright and Manser undertook the \$2.2 million Fisheries Training Centre and Flume Tank at the Maritime College, the first of its kind in the southern hemisphere.⁴⁷¹ Another major Federal project was the construction of the Commonwealth Law Courts in Hobart, completed in 1984 at a cost of \$11 million by Laver Constructions Pty Ltd of Kingston.⁴⁷² Clad in Lynden Sandstone from Plenty to harmonise with the historic Davey Street streetscape, the complex incorporated the 1840s Trades Hall building.⁴⁷³ Earlier demolition work on the site was undertaken by Watts Construction Division and the foundation stone was laid on 13 February 1981.⁴⁷⁴ In 1981, Hansen & Yuncken were awarded the \$1.6 million contract for the Australian Archives Repository at Bellerive.⁴⁷⁵ In Launceston, in 1984, the Commonwealth Bank on the corner of Brisbane Street and the Quadrant was extensively renovated, at a cost of about \$1.8 million, by MBAT member, Bushby Bros Builders Pty Ltd. Careful consideration was given to the historical façade.⁴⁷⁶ In 1984, Hansen & Yuncken (Tasmania) Pty Ltd undertook the \$11.8 million CSIRO Marine Laboratories complex at Castray Esplanade, Hobart, for the Federal Department of Housing and Construction. An unusual requirement of the development was the retention of the well-known local landmark, the Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania Judge's Box – the finishing line for the Sydney to Hobart yacht race.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1980 p.12

⁴⁷¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1984 pp.8-10

⁴⁷² *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1982 p.16; September 1984 pp.8-12

⁴⁷³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1981 p.15, January/February 1982 p.16

⁴⁷⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1981 p.18

⁴⁷⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* November 1980 p.23

⁴⁷⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1984 pp.12-13

⁴⁷⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1984 pp.4-11

There were also substantial State government construction projects around the State in the 1980s. In 1980, Watts Construction Division in Tasmania completed a \$5 million renovation and construction project at Parliament House in Hobart. It was the first major work carried out on the building in more than a century, and it took more than two and half years to complete. At the peak of the project, 100 men were employed. A quarry not used for 50 years provided stone for the extensions.⁴⁷⁸ Also in 1980, MBAT member Dillingham Australia Pty Ltd completed Phase II of the Hobart Supreme Court buildings. The first stage had been constructed by Hansen & Yuncken and opened in 1975.⁴⁷⁹ In 1981, Arthur B Moore was awarded the \$2.3 million contract for the State Computer Centre in Hobart.⁴⁸⁰ In April 1981, Phase III extensions of the Hobart Technical College, costing \$9,000,000, were completed by Hansen & Yuncken, and were opened by HRH Prince Charles on 21 April 1981. The company had also completed the first two stages in 1966 and 1968.⁴⁸¹ In 1981, Dillingham Australia Ltd were awarded the \$2.5 million contract to build a new laboratory block at the Department of Agriculture's Mt Pleasant complex.⁴⁸² In 1984, Watts Constructions Division Pty Ltd undertook extensive additions and alterations at St John's Park Hospital, New Town, at a cost of \$2.5 million, for the State Government.⁴⁸³ In Launceston, in 1985, the State-government funded multi-million dollar Velodrome was opened by Premier Robin Gray; it was constructed by MKT Constructions Pty Ltd (an acronym for Matthews Keating Construct, the civil engineering contractors, and Trinity Projects, the project managers).⁴⁸⁴ Its counterpart in Hobart was the Derwent Entertainment Centre, a bicentennial design and

⁴⁷⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1980 pp.18-21

⁴⁷⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1980 p.19

⁴⁸⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1981 pp.12-13

⁴⁸¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1981 pp.6-9

⁴⁸² *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1981 p.13

⁴⁸³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* October 1984 pp.4-6

⁴⁸⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1985 pp.8-12

construct project awarded to Hansen & Yuncken. In 1988, the \$6.2 million Police Support Services building in Hobart was constructed by Watts Constructions Division Pty Ltd.⁴⁸⁵



Figure 51: Derwent Entertainment Centre, Glenorchy, Hansen & Yuncken May 1988
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

A joint-venture between the State Government and private enterprise, the 3,700 lot Huntingfield residential estate on 425 hectares near Kingston was officially opened in September 1989. In accordance with the policy of the Gray Liberal Government, the land was developed by the State government and only 10 per cent was reserved for public housing. The MBAT acted as co-ordinator of Stage I of the estate, managing promotion and marketing.⁴⁸⁶ A time capsule was incorporated in Stage I.⁴⁸⁷

⁴⁸⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1988 pp.4-5

⁴⁸⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1988 p.18; October 1989 p.6

⁴⁸⁷ Denis Reid, *personal communication*, 31 March 2005

Government schools continued to be built: Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd successfully tendered for the \$1 million contract to build Hillcrest Primary School at Devonport, completed in 1981.⁴⁸⁸ RT & DJ Fairbrother built the \$7.5 million TAFE Automotive Trades building at Alanvale College in Launceston.⁴⁸⁹

There were also substantial private sector works. In December 1982, the refurbished T & G Building in Hobart was reopened after a \$2,500,000 facelift, completed by Civil & Civic Pty Ltd. During the peak of the project, 70 people were employed in demolition, construction, and providing new services such as plumbing, electrical, elevators, fitting out and painting. The development included five floors of air-conditioned offices, a 413-seat cinema, and six retail shops in a new arcade.⁴⁹⁰ In Hobart, in 1984, a major project was the \$20 million Wrest Point Convention and Entertainment Centre, built by Jennings.⁴⁹¹

Hansen & Yuncken: 50 years of Building in Tasmania 1986

In 1986, Hansen & Yuncken celebrated 50 years of operation in Tasmania at a cocktail party at Wrest Point Hotel/Casino attended by Chairman Max Hansen, Deputy Chairman Peter Hansen and Premier Robin Gray.⁴⁹² Its contribution to the MBAT was also acknowledged by the presentation of a special '50-year' plaque to Bill Shields, Director and General Manager of Hansen & Yuncken (Tasmania) Pty Ltd by MBAT President Don Dickenson. The company joined the MBAT on 10 March 1953. At the time, the company, which formed in 1918, was one of the oldest private building companies operating in Australia. Hansen & Yuncken first entered the Tasmanian Building scene in 1937, when it was chosen to construct the T & G Building in Hobart. Its first office was in the T & G

⁴⁸⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1981 p.27

⁴⁸⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1988 pp.4-5

⁴⁹⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1983 pp.6-9

⁴⁹¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1984 pp.10-12

⁴⁹² *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1987 p.22

Building, and the manager was Clyde Davidson. The company later expanded and moved to Tasma Street, North Hobart. At the time of its 50th anniversary, its most recent construction was the new State Government Executive Building in Murray Street, a \$9.25 million eleven-level development built in association with Fricker Developments. In making the presentation, Don stated that not only was Hansen & Yuncken (Tasmania) Pty Ltd recognised for its achievements as a major construction firm but also for its commitment to the training of apprentices and the encouragement of post-trade courses at technical colleges. He also acknowledged the contribution of the company's Tasmanian representative, high-profile MBAT member Bill Shields, who had served as MBAT State Councillor, President, Vice-President and Treasurer. Bill was also Foundation Chairman of the Tasmanian Building Educational Trust, and a representative on a number of boards and committees.⁴⁹³

At the end of the 1980s, AV Jennings wound down its Tasmanian operation.⁴⁹⁴ Two Jennings office developments in Hobart in the late 1980s were initiated from Victoria: the ten-level Telecom building on the corner of Elizabeth and Argyle Streets, and the Montpelier building in Kirksway Place.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1987 p.22

⁴⁹⁴ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.353

⁴⁹⁵ Garden, *Building the Nation*, p.357

Chapter Nine: 1990s

In the 1980s, MBAT President Dick Bloomfield predicted a recovery, albeit slow, for the industry.⁴⁹⁶ In 1990, another economic recession set in. Economic fluctuations continued to dictate the state of the building industry. It remained a 'rough and tumble business', volatile and characterised by slow growth and intense competition.⁴⁹⁷ As well, new social pressures – described by Royce Fairbrother as 'the anti-development syndrome' – emerged.⁴⁹⁸

At the beginning of the decade, MBAT President, Royce Fairbrother, noted that building was 'potentially a stressful industry' and he argued for increased professionalism and the development of business acumen to reduce the difficulties faced by builders and their employees.⁴⁹⁹ Efficiency, effectiveness and education were keywords. As Royce commented, 'The financial controls and the amount of paper work required to be completed is forever increasing. It is vital that we have a sound knowledge of this and are aware of its importance if our business is to prosper'.⁵⁰⁰ The awareness articulated by Royce was reflected in the operation of the MBAT, which moved into a new era of increased professionalism.

In 1990, an employment survey undertaken by the MBAT demonstrated that all areas of the State were feeling the effects of the downturn in the building and construction industry. Executive Director, Tony Lenthall, commenting on the

⁴⁹⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1982

⁴⁹⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1993 p.31

⁴⁹⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1993: Annual Report 1992-1993

⁴⁹⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1992 p.3

⁵⁰⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.3

survey, stated that 'the industry urgently needs notice of a major development such as a pulp mill to not only provide direct employment but to boost investor confidence'.⁵⁰¹ The building industry, and industry generally, was suffering in the aftermath of the failure of the Wesley Vale Pulp Mill proposal. In 1990, MBAT President Denis Reid argued strongly for the re-establishment of investor confidence in Tasmania, and for unequivocal government commitment to the availability of resources, power and an environment favourable to balanced development. Denis was openly critical of the Green-Labor Accord, arguing that nothing had stifled development more: 'The State's economy relies to a great extent on the contribution made by large industries such as Pasminco Metals-EZ, Comalco, ANM and APPM, not only directly by way of royalties and taxes, but indirectly through the payment of employees and contractors who then impact on housing development and commerce generally. The Green proposals will boost costs to industry, so stifling future development, whilst their emphasis on craft industries has failed to find any investor finance'.⁵⁰²

The MBAT vigorously opposed the Government's entry into private sector tendering, and kept close watch on the number of houses being built by the Department of Construction's day labour force.⁵⁰³ It had argued against the creation of the 'super' Department of Construction from a number of smaller departments, not least for the threat it posed to existing private sector infrastructure, resources and expertise. It urged that proposed cuts to the public service be directed at the Department of Construction rather than health or education.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 p.17

⁵⁰² *Tasmanian Master Builder* May 1990 p.3

⁵⁰³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1990 p.15, June 1990 p.14

⁵⁰⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 p.17

The decade started with one of the younger generation of builders, Royce Fairbrother, leading the organisation. In 1993, he was followed by Greg Williams, another of the younger generation of builders and one with links with the Association's foundation. Greg, asked why his company was a member of the MBAT, stated:

I have discovered the value of being able to attend meetings with fellow builders and learn from the wealth of experience that some of the problems I experience have either been resolved by someone else or the problems are common to us all. The Association has on many occasions been able to act as a united voice for the total industry whether the subject relates to political, technical, contractual, industrial, training or legal issues.

It is through the development of this unity and strength over 100 years the Association has earned the respect and esteem in which it is held.

The topics raised and discussed at our monthly meetings are of vital importance in keeping members up to date on vital issues which impact on viability and profitability. The information disseminated by Associate members at meetings on new products and technical changes provides an ideal opportunity to keep up to date without interfering with time required on the job.

Being a separate Tasmanian Association which is managed by Tasmanian builders has many advantages as we control our own destiny. We have the added value of being a member of Master Builders Australia Inc. on the national scene. Their efforts in successfully lobbying against any increase in taxes on building products and materials plus the commitment from the Government of maintaining the 'status quo' of no intrusion of unionising the housing sector through industrial relations legislation are two intangible benefits achieved.

I am proud to be a member of the Master Builders Association ...⁵⁰⁵

In 1997, in his outgoing 'President's Viewpoint', John De Jong highlighted a number of issues of concern to the MBAT. Foremost among these was government lobbying and liaison: presentation of budget strategies for industry assistance; submission to the Nixon Inquiry, a joint Federal/State initiative; calls for changes to planning legislation, prompted by the stonewalling of key projects such as the Beach Hotel in Sandy Bay and Kings Park in Launceston; the

⁵⁰⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1993 p.3

implementation of the new Building Act; the push for new Long Service Leave legislation, with the possibility of a nil contribution for employers; and over-governing.⁵⁰⁶ He also addressed the need for increased professionalism and outlined measures undertaken by the MBAT in this area: seminars to promote a better understanding of contracts; seminars on occupational health and safety; and a domestic builder's management course. Some of these were run in conjunction with other bodies and most took place with the assistance of Training Board funding.⁵⁰⁷

At the Annual Meeting in 1998, MBAT President, Michael Hardacre, pointed out that the industry encompassed housing, general construction and civil construction, employed approximately 12,000 people, and contributed approximately \$600 million, or 6.8 per cent, in gross state product. He noted that the industry was currently at the cross-roads. He considered a number of projects spoken about but 'not converted to bricks and mortar' including the Kings Park Hotel project in Launceston, the Mt Wellington chairlift, the Beach Hotel in Sandy Bay and the controversial Oceanport project. He noted, too, that in 1998 only 86 apprentices had been taken on in the construction industry, whereas in 1985/1986 there had been 317. Expressing concern that many tradesmen were leaving Tasmania, Michael advocated a balance between Tasmania's clean green image and resource development to provide jobs.⁵⁰⁸

⁵⁰⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.3

⁵⁰⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.3

⁵⁰⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.24; August 1998 p.11

Membership increased substantially in the 1990s: in Royce Fairbrother's opinion, this was due to 'the Housing Indemnity legislation, the promotion of education programmes and the endeavours of various staff officers'.⁵⁰⁹

The MBAT Centenary 1991



Figure 52: MBAT Centenary Cake
L-R: MBAT State President Denis Reid, Premier of Tasmania Michael Field
and MBAT North-West Chairman Anthony Croome

In 1991, the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania celebrated its centenary. A committee of Life Members, chaired by Dick Bloomfield, was formed to coordinate centenary celebrations.⁵¹⁰ The North-Western Division of the MBAT celebrated with a dinner at the Gateway Inn, Devonport attended by 150 people, including the Premier, the Hon. Michael Field MHA.⁵¹¹

⁵⁰⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1993: Annual Report 1992-1993

⁵¹⁰ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

⁵¹¹ *Sunday Examiner* 16 June 1991 p.9; *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1991 pp.18-20



Figure 53: MBA Centenary Dinner Devonport 1991
L-R: MBAT Life Member Bill Shields, Olive Shields,
Janette Bennett, MBAT Life Member Max Bennett
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

Life Members who attended the Centenary Dinner included Gordon Ibbott, Keith Crowe, Don Dickenson, Bill Shields and Richard Bloomfield. Honorary members in attendance were Leo Smith, Ewen Nichols, Vic O'Brien, Bruce Bannon, and John Hendriks.



Figure 54: Opening of the Arboretum 1991
L-R: MBAT Centenary Committee Chairman Dick Bloomfield, Arboretum President David
Richmond, Secretary Stephen King, MBAT State President Denis Reid,
MBAT Regional Manager Don Mapley

A highlight of the centenary dinner was the handing over of the keys of the new Education Centre at Eugenana to the Tasmanian Arboretum Inc. The octagonal-shaped Education Centre, aimed at developing knowledge of botany and timber, was built on a voluntary basis by North-Western Division members of the Master Builders' Association to commemorate the Association's Centenary. It cost over \$65,000 and was built using a variety of Tasmanian timbers. The rafters and outside cladding were made from oak; blackwood and myrtle were used for six side panels; and silver wattle for the pillars. The Centre was officially opened in December 1991, in a ceremony which included the placing of a time capsule beneath the floor by MBAT State President Royce Fairbrother and North-West Regional Manager Don Mapley.⁵¹²

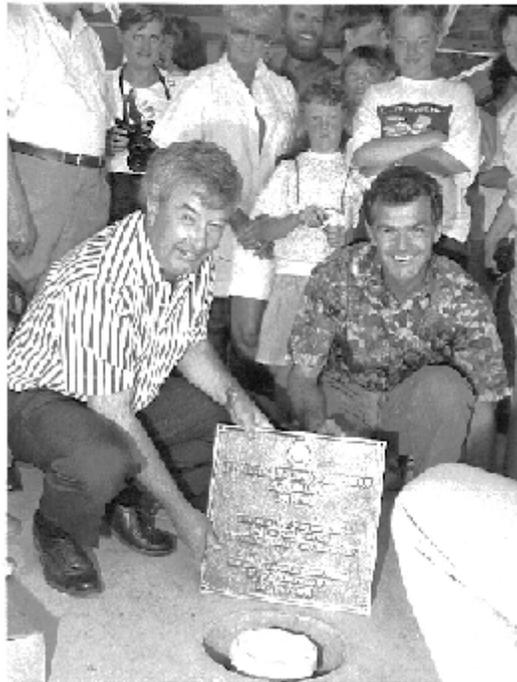


Figure 55: Don Mapley and Royce Fairbrother placing time capsule 1991

⁵¹² *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1991 p.18; *Advocate* 9 December 1991; *Examiner* 16 June 1991, 9 December 1991

Guest speaker at the Centenary Dinner was Gordon Ibbott, past Association President, past North-Western Division Chairman, Association Life Member and founder of Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd. During his speech, Gordon, 'a dedicated Wesley Vale Pulp Mill campaigner', could not resist the temptation to point out to the Premier that the construction of APPM's Burnie Mill in the late 1930s was a construction project which helped the State to recover from the Great Depression'.⁵¹³



[Gordon] entertained an enraptured audience by recounting at length many interesting and amusing incidents and stories associated with his 50 years in the building industry.

Gordon first stole the limelight by suddenly appearing at the lecturn fully equipped with handsaw, hammer, nail bag round the waist, and bib and brace overalls, all, we suspect, dug out of some ancient resting place in the back of a dark closet.

Despite the humour of his discourse, Gordon nevertheless stressed the importance for honesty and integrity at all times as basis for the successful and professional conduct of a building business.

Tasmanian Building Journal July 1991 p.

Figure 56: Gordon Ibbott at the Centenary Dinner Devonport June 1991

Commemorative centenary medals were also struck. A substantial monetary prize was awarded to the best final year Fine Arts student at the University of Tasmania. The Northern Division assisted with the publication of a special edition of the journal, and also undertook a commemorative wine bottling.⁵¹⁴

⁵¹³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1991 p.20

⁵¹⁴ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

The Centenary year ended with the presentation of two final centenary gifts on 12 December 1991: a Speaker's Podium to the people of Hobart and a bronze Coat of Arms to the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. The Speaker's Podium, erected in Franklin Square, was the MBAT's Southern Division Centenary Gift to Hobart. The presentation by MBAT President, Royce Fairbrother, was accepted on behalf of the people of Hobart by Lord Mayor, Alderman Doone Kennedy, who also unveiled the podium before a large gathering of State Councillors.⁵¹⁵

The Association in the 1990s

In the 1990s, the MBAT began to restructure, beginning first with the development of a strategic plan. MBAT President, Michael Hardacre, was charged with the responsibility of overseeing the development of the MBAT Strategic Plan.⁵¹⁶ In line with the increasing professionalism of the Association, a new comprehensive computer system was installed in MBAT headquarters.⁵¹⁷

The MBAT continued to provide advice on contractual issues, and designed and made available to members various documents to facilitate the drawing of contracts. Seminars were also regularly held.⁵¹⁸

The Pride in the Job award continued. The award was judged by industry peers and winners regularly featured in the journal. It served as a promotional tool and comprised three main elements: to show pride in the workmanship of a job well done; to show that consideration was made at all times to safety in the

⁵¹⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1992 p.15

⁵¹⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.24, August 1998 p.11

⁵¹⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1990 p.15

⁵¹⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1992 p.3

workplace; and to show good housekeeping practices on site.⁵¹⁹ One of the most unusual awards went to Laver Pty Ltd, for its reproduction of a timber frieze to match an original handcrafted frieze of complex design, which was part of the altar of St David's Cathedral. Carpenter Peter Klein completed most of the work by hand, using traditional skills and working with another carpenter John Langley.⁵²⁰

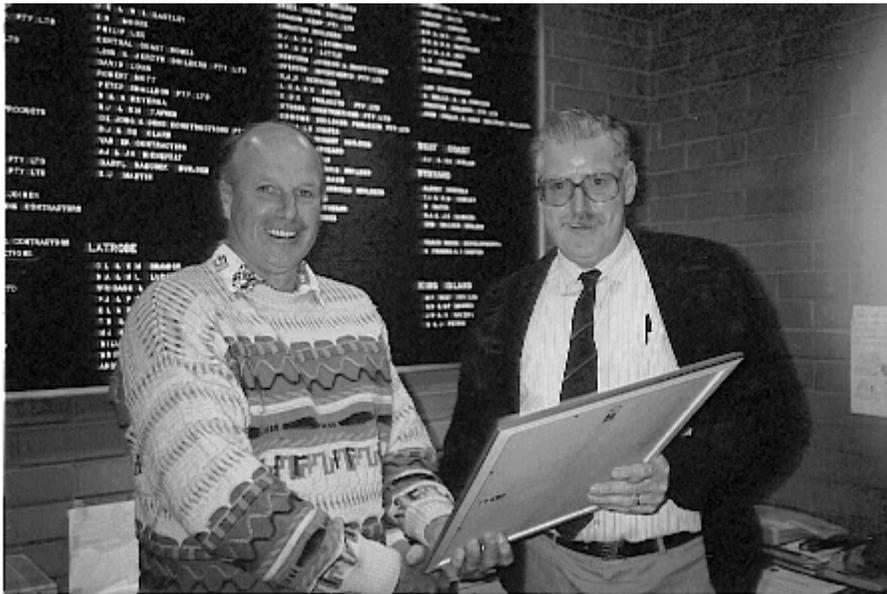


Figure 57: 'Pride in the Job' winner for domestic dwelling March 1995 Ted Martin receiving his award from North-Western Divisional Chairman Ray Tavner May 1995

Another milestone in the promotion of excellence of MBAT members was reached in 1997 with the launch of the MBAT Home Plans Book. The publication featured 50 plans developed by members.⁵²¹ The MBAT also urged members to use the Association logo in their advertising in the 'Yellow Pages' as well as the 'Pride in the Job' logo and 'We Support Kidsafe Homes' logo.⁵²² A novel way of

⁵¹⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 p.14

⁵²⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1990 p.11

⁵²¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* November 1996 p.3

⁵²² *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1990 p.14

promoting the MBAT was demonstrated in 1996, when three MBAT members combined to run 10kms from the Grand Chancellor to the Casino.⁵²³



Figure 58: L-R Don Hayward, Ian Bowman and Ian Mansfield, 1996

Premises: ‘Construction House’ 2000

In 1997, the MBAT purchased the vacant three-storey Besser Brick office building on the corner of Murray and Brisbane Streets, Hobart, formerly the offices of the Department of Labour and Industry. The premises were officially opened in August 2000 by the President of Master Builders’ Australia, Jack Hutchinson.⁵²⁴

MBAT Issues in the 1990s

Many issues carried over from the previous decade. Discussions began between the MBAT and the building unions on the establishment of an industry agreement between employers and unions. Matters reviewed included site allowances, redundancy, occupational health and safety, industry and apprenticeship training and dispute resolution.⁵²⁵

By March 1990, the newly-introduced MBAT Housing Indemnity Scheme had 10 participating members.⁵²⁶ The first house to be registered under the scheme was

⁵²³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* May 1996 p.25; June 1996 p.25

⁵²⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2000 p.9

⁵²⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1992 p.3

⁵²⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1990 p.14

a brick veneer house at Blackman's Bay built by MBAT Member Laver Pty. Ltd.⁵²⁷ In May 1990, the State Government, through its Minister for Consumer Affairs, Fran Bladel, approached the MBAT to discuss a compulsory housing indemnity scheme, but the MBAT pointed out that, for such a scheme to be effective, registration or licensing of builders was essential.⁵²⁸ Nevertheless, the MBAT offered the State Government assistance in drafting appropriate housing indemnity legislation.⁵²⁹ Later that year, the State Government announced that it would not be pursuing builders' registration because of the costs involved.⁵³⁰

The introduction of Housing Indemnity legislation took place after many years of lobbying by the Association. It placed more emphasis on the administrative and financial ability of the builder. The *Housing Indemnity Act* came into effect on 1 July 1993. The Act limited deposits to 3 per cent of the value of the contract. There were penalties of up to \$10,000 for breaches of the deposit requirement or claiming a progress payment in excess of the value of the building work already performed.⁵³¹ The Act was designed to protect the consumer in the event of the builder disappearing, dying or becoming bankrupt.⁵³²

In 1993, MBAT President Royce Fairbrother called for the urgent introduction of the Building Code of Australia (BCA) to replace the Tasmanian Building Regulations 1978.⁵³³ He viewed the successful introduction of this legislation as

⁵²⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1990 p.15

⁵²⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1990 p.15

⁵²⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1990 p.14

⁵³⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1990 p.15

⁵³¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.4

⁵³² *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1997 p.3

⁵³³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1993 p.3

the result of the effective co-ordination of total industry representation.⁵³⁴ In his opinion, liaison within the industry was vital to the success of the Association.⁵³⁵

Building Act

MBAT President John De Jong commented that he believed that the introduction of the *Building Act* was the most important issue that the industry had faced in many years.⁵³⁶ Development of the *Building Act* began in 1994 but took a long time to come to fruition. In December 1996, an Issue Discussion Paper on the proposed Building Act was released. It incorporated many of the points raised by the MBAT including capping the liability at 10 years; and a system of accreditation for building operatives: the MBAT strongly argued that a standard of entry level must be introduced and maintained for building operatives. In 1997, the MBAT urged the State Government to introduce legislation under the *Building Act* to place a time cap of six years on the liability of all participants in the building process.⁵³⁷

In June 1996, Stubbs Construction of Burnie achieved Quality Assurance Accreditation. At the presentation ceremony, MBAT Executive Director Des Hodgman said that the Association was proud of the company's achievements over the past 50 years and more so with attaining accreditation for Quality Assurance (QA). He added that Stubbs Construction took the steps to achieve QA because of the State Government policy that tendering on civil construction work in excess of half a million dollars could not occur unless the QA system

⁵³⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder*, September 1993: Annual Report 1992-1993

⁵³⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder*, September 1993: Annual Report 1992-1993

⁵³⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* January/February 1997 p.3

⁵³⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1996 p.3

was in place. Des added that the State Government was moving to have all builders on QA by December 1997, for projects of more than \$250,000.⁵³⁸

Under the Liberal Government and Housing Minister, Ian Braid, the day labour force – always a thorn in the side of the MBAT – was reduced.⁵³⁹ The MBAT also welcomed the reduction in the number of local councils from 46 to 29 because of the elimination of duplication and better use of resources.⁵⁴⁰ As well, the State Government introduced a ‘Fast Track’ system of development approval.⁵⁴¹

The MBAT lobbied the Liberal State Government on a range of issues including a phasing-out of payroll tax, which the Association argued was a major inhibiting factor in business development and employment: it called for a reduction of 2.5 per cent in the level of contributions with a phasing-out by 1997. MBAT President Royce Fairbrother argued that the building and construction industry was further hit by having to pay payroll tax for non-employers: that is, sub-contractors who owned and controlled their own businesses.⁵⁴²

In 1997, Liberal Premier Tony Rundle delivered a ‘Direction Statement’, which was wholeheartedly endorsed by the MBAT State Council. MBAT President, John De Jong, said the proposed reforms were ‘a breath of fresh air’.⁵⁴³

In 1999, the Tasmanian Industry Audit for the building and construction sector was released. Many issues of concern to the MBAT were identified as part of the

⁵³⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1996 p.24

⁵³⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1993: Annual Report 1992-1993

⁵⁴⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1993 p.3

⁵⁴¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1993 p.3

⁵⁴² *Tasmanian Master Builder* May 1993 p.3, June 1993 p.3

⁵⁴³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1997 p.21

audit including the State's planning system: the MBAT supported the standardisation of planning throughout the State.⁵⁴⁴ MBAT President Denis Reid, in his column, argued that the opportunity for development had been curtailed by controversial planning decisions and refusals: 'vocal minority groups are not allowing balanced progress'.⁵⁴⁵

Nixon Inquiry: Commonwealth State Inquiry into Tasmanian Economy 1997

The MBAT made a submission to the inquiry, which addressed a number of issues which the Association believed might alleviate the decline in building activity and improve the long term economy of Tasmania. It strongly recommended the establishment of a 'Building Industry Policy and Strategy Unit' within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. It proposed that the unit would have responsibility for policy and procedural issue of public building asset management, and that it would liaise with the building industry on strategic planning. It also suggested the development of incentives to attract business to Tasmania through use of Crown Land for 'industrial estates' based on a low payment lease agreement. It urged the Commonwealth Government to use Tasmania as a permanent agency base for various departments, similar to the Ansett National Reservation Centre in Launceston. It also advocated the promotion of Tasmania as an international education and training centre, and the introduction of practical educational/training programs, with funding assistance from the Commonwealth, to develop special projects.⁵⁴⁶ The submission also supported further reduction of local government authorities,⁵⁴⁷ and wider investment of superannuation funds in Tasmania. MBAT President John De Jong commented that 'there has to be united political support in Tasmania to address

⁵⁴⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1997 p.7

⁵⁴⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1990 p.3

⁵⁴⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* March 1997 p.3, July 1997 p.3

⁵⁴⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1997 p.3

the prime objective of creating a viable economy in Tasmania which is sustainable to provide employment opportunities for our current and future workforce'.⁵⁴⁸

Concern was raised fewer skilled workers were being trained.⁵⁴⁹ Apprentice numbers declined. In 1988, there were 988 apprentices in training in Tasmania. This fell to 592 in 1994, rising again to 651 in 1996.⁵⁵⁰ In 1996, the State Government announced the abolition of the requirement to employ a ratio of apprentices/trainees as a requisite to tender for government jobs. This was said to be because of difficulties in administration. Both the MBAT and building unions supported the previous policy. MBAT President John De Jong argued that: 'without a preference policy for tenderers who commit time and costly resources in training and educating our future tradespersons and business leaders, we will witness a decline in the level of skills and ultimately the quality of the end product'.⁵⁵¹

In 1994, the Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Training Board predicted a chronic shortage of skilled workers if the problem of declining apprentice numbers was not tackled, and announced that it would conduct a major study into problems with the industry's apprenticeship and traineeship system.⁵⁵² In 2002, after significant MBAT lobbying, the new State Government education and training policy was finalised: tenderers seeking State-funded projects worth more than \$250,000 were required to employ one apprentice for

⁵⁴⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* March 1997 p.3

⁵⁴⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1997 p.8.

⁵⁵⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1996 p.3

⁵⁵¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* May 1996 p.3

⁵⁵² *Tasmanian Master Builder* January/February 1994 p.32

every five people employed on the project, applied across all trades. The move was welcomed by the MBAT.⁵⁵³

In 1993, MBAT President Greg Williams pointed out that 33 per cent of young people between 16 and 25 in a number of key population centres in Tasmania were unemployed. This was, he stated, 'a socially devastating statistic that we as an industry have a social and moral obligation to address'.⁵⁵⁴ He urged changes in the apprenticeship system, including the introduction of 'an all up fixed cost training wage' without sick leave, leave loading or superannuation.⁵⁵⁵

In 1998, David Murray, an estimator with RT & DJ Fairbrother, was the first Tasmanian to graduate from the Bachelor of Construction Management (Building), through the University of Newcastle.⁵⁵⁶



Figure 59: David Murray, of RT & DJ Fairbrother, first Tasmanian graduate Bachelor of Construction Management (Building)

⁵⁵³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Autumn 2002 p.5

⁵⁵⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1993 p.3

⁵⁵⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1993 p.3

⁵⁵⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1998 p.27

The Builders and their Buildings in the 1990s

Despite the flagging economic environment at the beginning of the decade, major construction projects continued. In the 1990s, there was a marked trend towards bigger houses: the first home buyer market, traditionally interested in building small houses, were now renting or buying smaller established houses or townhouses.⁵⁵⁷

The State Government's Building Construction program continued to fund public facilities: in 1993-1994, the program provided \$52.7 million for hospital and health services, schools and other projects such as the Hobart magisterial courts Stage 1 (\$6.5 million); Mt Pleasant Laboratories (\$1.2 million), and conservation works on Maria Island (\$0.9 million).⁵⁵⁸

The new corporate headquarters for Forestry Tasmania, costing \$7 million, incorporated two heritage-listed buildings on a site which once housed Risby's sawmill and later the State Emergency and Fire Service. A distinctive feature of the Robert Morris-Nunn designed building was the high precision wood and glass dome created by Tasmanian Timber Engineering and Barrengers Glass. Recycled 1920 Federation buildings were connected by a high tech timber engineered dome spanning 22 metres. Timbers from the old site were used throughout, together with the latest applications in medium density fibreboard and regrowth eucalypt crown-cut veneers. Project managers were Civil & Civic

⁵⁵⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1990 p.7

⁵⁵⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1993 p.30

while Laver was the main building contractor. The project started on 9 June 1996 and finished on 14 July 1997.⁵⁵⁹

Hansen and Yuncken were successful tenderers for the \$21.6 million Commonwealth Government Centre Stage II Project in Collins and Harrington Streets, Hobart. It was the largest single monetary value contract undertaken by Hansen and Yuncken in its 53 years of construction in Tasmania.⁵⁶⁰ This was surpassed when the company was awarded the \$35 million design and construct lease-back building for the Australian Taxation Office in Collins Street.⁵⁶¹



**Figure 60: ANZ Building, 103 Macquarie Street Hobart
‘the perfect marriage’ of the old and the new**

⁵⁵⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 pp.5-14,18-19

⁵⁶⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1990 p.9

⁵⁶¹ Bill Shields, *personal communication*, 2 April 2005

The ANZ Building, built behind a sandstone heritage building in Macquarie Street, Hobart, commenced in August 1990 with a budget of \$30 million. A design and construct project undertaken by Fletcher Construction Australia, it took 21 months to build and was hailed as 'the perfect marriage' for preserving the past and building for the future.⁵⁶²

From the mid-1990s, the building industry began to improve, especially in Hobart. In 1997, the MBAT reported that Hobart was in the grip of a \$140 million building boost. Major projects included the Hobart Aquatic Centre, the Salamanca Quarry housing development, the Roberts Wool Store development at Wapping, a \$30 million facelift for the Royal Hobart Hospital, the Hobart Magistrates Court, Wrest Point Casino's boardwalk, the Vacluse Retirement Village in South Hobart and the New Town Purity supermarket.⁵⁶³

One of the most successful MBAT builders in the 1990s was Royce Fairbrother. During this period, his business expanded rapidly. He opened offices in Hobart and Launceston, in addition to his head office in Devonport. He also opened an office in Sydney to cater for his increasing workload on the mainland, and undertook a number of projects outside Australia.⁵⁶⁴

In the 1990s, development on the North West Coast received a boost with the announcement of the new ferry: in 1993, a McDonald's fast food outlet was built by Laver in Devonport; the stern loading ramp dockside at East Devonport was upgraded by the Port Authority for about \$1 million; and quality

⁵⁶² The building featured in the *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1993

⁵⁶³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1996 p.8

⁵⁶⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1996 p.1

accommodation, Devon Villas, was constructed by Fairbrother Pty Ltd.⁵⁶⁵ At the same time, Burnie Port Authority announced plans to spend \$23 million on a new wharf and large container crane. The level of investment over an 18-month period was predicted to be almost \$90 million. Other projects planned included \$25.5 million for the new Burnie hospital, \$6 million for the new Medical Services Centre in Burnie, \$2 million on a new nursing home at Wynyard, \$5 million at APPM Burnie, and \$3.2 million on the new Devonport Community Health Centre.⁵⁶⁶

In 1997, Laver Pty Ltd was taken over by Vos Nominees Pty Ltd. At the time, CB & M Laver was widely regarded as Tasmania's leading construction company, directly employing 150 people and supporting 800 subcontractors throughout the State. It had an annual turnover in excess of \$60 million and a payroll of \$5.5 million.⁵⁶⁷

Members of the MBAT continued to be prominent as builders of projects nominated for RAI A Architecture Awards: in 1993, for example, Frank Sikkema was awarded for Bevan Rees' award-winning Cayzer House in the Coal River Valley; Chris Luttrell, for a Barry McNeill house at Kettering; Stubbs Construction, for the Strahan Visitors' Centre; MJ & EM Salmond for the CSIRO Research Centre; and Andrewartha Brothers for the Penitentiary Chapel and Criminal Courts.⁵⁶⁸ In 1999, MBAT member, Tasmanian Antiquity Builders, won a National Award for Heritage Restoration for Millhouse on the Bridge at Richmond.⁵⁶⁹

⁵⁶⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.2

⁵⁶⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.2

⁵⁶⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1997 p.8

⁵⁶⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1993 p.20

⁵⁶⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2003 'Excellence Awards' p.7

MBAT Women's Group

The first official meeting of the MBAT Women's Group was held at the MBA headquarters in Sandy Bay on 12 December 1991. Eight women attended. Mrs Sue Mansfield of IC & SD Mansfield Builders Pty Ltd, was elected chairperson and Miss Kim Chandler of James Hardie & Co Pty Ltd was elected secretary.⁵⁷⁰



Figure 61: Inaugural meeting of the MBAT Women's Group, 12 December 1991
STANDING: Cheryl Winter; Annelies Van Beelen; Sandra Eggins
SEATED: Valda Burt; Sue Mansfield (Chairperson); Kim Chandler (Secretary)

The second meeting, held on 19 February 1992, was addressed by Hank Betlehem, Chairman of the MBAT's Manpower, Education & Training Committee, who spoke about house construction. Meetings were held around the State, at Hobart, Ross and Launceston. Topics discussed included 'New Tontine Insulation' and the Housing Indemnity Scheme.⁵⁷¹

⁵⁷⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1992 p.16

⁵⁷¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* March 1993 p.21

Chapter Ten: A New Century

The MBAT began the new century with Paul Ibbott at the helm. Paul had been associated with MBAT management for 25 years and believed that transformation was necessary if the Association was not only to survive but thrive in the changed business environment of the 21st century. Major tasks included the re-shaping of the constitution into a contemporary document; creating a business plan to support the aims of the MBAT; and working closely with the State Government on the introduction and implementation of the new building legislation. At the end of his term as President, Paul stated that he believed that the MBAT was ‘well-placed to properly wear the mantle of the pre-eminent building and construction representative body in this State with full representation of all stakeholders’.⁵⁷²

The Association in the New Century

The Association underwent a major restructure and adopted a new constitution which aimed to be fully inclusive: as MBAT President Paul Ibbott stated, ‘providing scope for all stakeholders to have an influence, while, importantly, precluding domination by any single individual or interest group’.⁵⁷³ Regional Manager North, Max Seymour, explained, ‘the new constitution was framed to ensure every facet of the building and construction industry had a voice in the management and operations of the Association’.⁵⁷⁴

The new State Council comprised the three regional chairmen: David Moody (South); David Gray (North); and Neville Bingham (North-West). As well, there

⁵⁷² *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2001 p.5

⁵⁷³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2001 p.5

⁵⁷⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.6

were six representatives from the combined General Contractor/Housing Contractor membership: Chris Jerzyk (North-West); Mark Nichols (South); Graham Keating (South); John Rosevear (South); Ian Dent (North); and Michael Hardacre (North). There were two representatives from the Trade Contractor/Trade Supplier and Service Provider categories: Richard Bloomfield (South) and Paul Ibbott (North-West). A third position was initially not filled. There were also three representatives from across the general membership categories: Tim Holmes (South); Denis Reid (South); and John De Jong (North-West).

The MBAT State Council also established a working party to examine the structure and function of the various committees. The working party comprised the three Regional Chairmen under the chairmanship of John Rosevear.⁵⁷⁵

The new century brought new technology and ideas. The MBAT website was launched in December 2002. In August 2003, the MBAT conducted a survey of members. It showed that the main reasons stated for joining were 'representation', 'credibility', 'camaraderie', 'networking' and 'prestige'.⁵⁷⁶ Denis Reid commented that 'it is fair to say that today's members of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania have a bond and are proud to call themselves Master Builders, whatever category of membership they hold. We strive for quality members, not just quantity'.⁵⁷⁷

In his 28 years on State Council, Dick Bloomfield has seen some major changes to the MBA and the industry generally:

⁵⁷⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.6

⁵⁷⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Summer 2003 pp.2-3

⁵⁷⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.2.

the industry itself has certainly had a different focus to it ... [in the late 70s] there were a lot of interstate builders in Tasmania ... there is only one national company now operating in Tasmania [Hansen & Yuncken] and it is no longer a member of the MBAT.⁵⁷⁸

Dick commented that the MBAT used to be referred to as 'the old boys club', relying heavily on half a dozen commercial builders, most of whom have retired.⁵⁷⁹ According to Dick, a significant change since the 1970s has been the greater inclusion of housing members.⁵⁸⁰ This was largely a reflection of changes within the industry.⁵⁸¹ In Dick's opinion, this change had an impact on the organisation itself, particularly on the MBAT's industrial relations policy: 'housing members, generally, have little contact with the unions.'⁵⁸²

Another significant change since the 1970s has been the greater strategic direction: 'there was a need to change our focus from being all things to all people to an organisation capable of looking forward ... it's been a hard grind ... the agenda is to become more self-reliant'.⁵⁸³

In 2005, the membership of the MBAT is approximately 485, including one student member. The category of student membership was introduced in 2000.⁵⁸⁴

MBAT Issues in the New Century

The *Tasmanian Building Act* became operational from 1 July 2004. It requires all building practitioners to be assessed against defined criterion to allow them to be accredited. Transitional provisions were allowed for existing builders. Those

⁵⁷⁸ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart: Hansen & Yuncken withdrew its membership of the MBAT in the mid-1990s, after Bill Shields retired.

⁵⁷⁹ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

⁵⁸⁰ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

⁵⁸¹ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

⁵⁸² Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

⁵⁸³ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart

⁵⁸⁴ Interview with RG Bloomfield 12 July 2004 Hobart; Denis Reid, *personal communication*, 31 March 2005

seeking accreditation after 1 July were required to have an academic qualification and experience relevant to the scope of works they wished to undertake. The Act introduced mandatory continuous professional development; for builders, this was 12 points per year, 1 point equating to 1 hour. The MBAT had earlier introduced its own accreditation requirements for members. On 8 December 2004, MBAT member John Beswick became the 1000th builder to register.



Figure 62: John Beswick, 1000th builder to be accredited, December 2004
Photo courtesy of The Mercury

MBAT President, Graham Keating, saw the move towards full accreditation of builders and construction companies as one of the most significant steps for the building industry in modern times.⁵⁸⁵ The MBAT was recognised as a leader in the field of accreditation and continuing professional development, also known by its abbreviated form 'CPD'. It lobbied hard to have its own system of accreditation used as the Tasmanian standard under the new *Building Act*. MBAT Executive Director, Chris Atkins, stated that it was pleasing to note 'that the true value of the Association's own accreditation system was highlighted

⁵⁸⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.5

during the implementation of the Act, when members seeking registration found that the hard yards had already been done during their MBA accreditation process'.⁵⁸⁶ He added that it was also pleasing to see the Association's own accreditation system being endorsed by the Tasmanian Compliance Corporation which accepted MBA accreditation as sufficient to meet the transitional requirements for accreditation under the new Act.⁵⁸⁷ By mid-2004, the Tasmanian Compliance Corporation, the body authorised to accredit building practitioners, had accredited approximately 600 builders.⁵⁸⁸

In 2003, the CFMEU was pushing for mainland parity on wages and a 36-hour week. MBAT President, Graham Keating, warned that this would seriously undermine the recovery of the construction industry in Tasmania and that it was too simplistic to push for wage parity when cost structures, living costs, and profits were far from equal.⁵⁸⁹ MBAT Executive Director, Chris Atkins, predicted that the union move, if successful, would add between 11 and 14 per cent to the cost of construction in the State.⁵⁹⁰

In 2004, the skilled labour shortage continued to constrain the Tasmanian construction industry. MBAT Executive Director, Chris Atkins, suggested that the apprenticeship system needed a complete overhaul if it was to remain relevant and productive:

Deeply rooted in centuries of traditional practices, the system has served us well, but it is also relatively inflexible and often too slow to respond to the rapidly changing needs of our industry. The system also runs counter to normal economic cycles: apprentices are generally employed when times are good

⁵⁸⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.3

⁵⁸⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.3

⁵⁸⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.5

⁵⁸⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Autumn 2003 p.6

⁵⁹⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Autumn 2003 p.7

which creates a glut when the harder times are around, but they are not employed in harder times, leaving a 'black hole' when the good times return. It is a dilemma needing some 'out of the square' thinking to resolve and it is high time it was properly addressed.⁵⁹¹

He also suggested the establishment of a northern training facility, at least for first year apprentices.⁵⁹² Denis Reid also advocated reform of the apprentice training structure: 'We support less off-the-job training and sensible block-release training ... We also need a structure for the transition from completion of apprentice training to the next stages for those that have the will to set the next step in their career path, to achieve their highest goals in the chosen industry'.⁵⁹³ The MBAT developed a Cadetship training structure, which several building companies had adopted.⁵⁹⁴

Since its formation in 1891, education and training were consistently high priorities of the master builders' movement. In the new century, education and training remained high priorities, and were incorporated in the business plan through continued professional development of members; working with government and other industry bodies to develop strategies to maximize the number and placement of new apprentices; and through participation in Vocational Education and Training programs.

MBAT Executive Director, Chris Atkins, also suggested that partial steps, such as a migration incentive program, were necessary to address immediate labour needs:

⁵⁹¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.3

⁵⁹² *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.3

⁵⁹³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.2

⁵⁹⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.2

Expatriate Tasmanian builders continue to work on the mainland despite the fact that many would probably return tomorrow with some form of financial support for their relocation and re-establishment costs.⁵⁹⁵

The MBAT suggested that the Tasmanian government offer discounted travel and relocation grants to Tasmanian builders and tradespeople returning home.⁵⁹⁶

Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry

MBAT Executive Director, Chris Atkins, advised that the Association had sought leave to contribute to the Royal Commission into the Building and Construction Industry when it met in Hobart in late October 2001.⁵⁹⁷ The Royal Commission handed down its findings in a 23-volume report.

The Presidents in the New Century

GF (Graham) Keating MBAT President 2001-2003

Graham Keating was born in 1945 in Devonport, and was educated at Devonport Primary and Devonport High Schools. He started his building career with TG Matthews Pty Ltd in 1962 as a trainee estimator, continuing with the Devonport builder in estimating and construction management until 1969. From 1969 to 1973, in partnership with Neil McLean, Graham operated the building consultancy Associated Building Services Pty Ltd. In 1974, he returned to TG Matthews Pty Ltd as assistant manager, then in partnership as Matthews Keating Construct Pty Ltd and briefly as MKT Constructions, the joint venture company set up to design and build the Launceston Velodrome.

⁵⁹⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.3

⁵⁹⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.3

⁵⁹⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.4

From 1985 to 1991, with Brendon Layton, Graham established Keating Layton Constructions Pty Ltd. Originally Devonport-based, it expanded to Hobart in 1988. Keating Layton Constructions Pty Ltd was involved in a wide range of refurbishment and fit-out work throughout Tasmania. The firm also had a joinery workshop based at 27 Don Road, Devonport. One of their major projects was the design and construction of a portable forward support base for the Royal Australian Navy, which was built in Devonport and transported to Cairns. In September 1990, Brendon Layton was killed in a car accident, while returning from a work-related visit to Hobart.⁵⁹⁸ In 1991, Keating Layton Constructions and Burline Constructions merged to form CDC Management Pty Ltd; it operated from Camdale (Somerset) and Hobart. Major projects undertaken by CDC Management included the Burnie Water Treatment Plant; extension and re-fit of ABC Hobart Headquarters; Ulverstone Senior Citizens clubrooms; Risdon Prison Bakery; Douglas Parker Rehabilitation Centre; Calvary Hospital theatres; the Menzies Centre; and refurbishment of the Reserve Bank in Hobart.⁵⁹⁹ In 1994, CDC Management split into Hobart-based CDC Management Pty Ltd, managed by Graham and Sally Keating, and Camdale-based CDC Projects Pty Ltd. Major projects undertaken by CDC Management Pty Ltd included the Cape Barren Island administration centre and workshops; refurbishment of the Ordnance Store in Battery Point; a major refurbishment of the Derwent Entertainment Centre in 1999; and the Hobart Islamic Mosque.⁶⁰⁰

In 2001, after almost 40-years of involvement in the building industry, Graham was elected MBAT President. Graham first became involved with the MBAT in 1974. Originally a Devonport member-company representative with the North-

⁵⁹⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1990 p.15

⁵⁹⁹ Graham Keating, *personal communication*, 18 March 2005

⁶⁰⁰ Graham Keating, *personal communication*, 18 March 2005

Western Division, Graham has held virtually every elected position with the Association, including Divisional Chairman, both in the North West and the South, State Council member and Association Vice-President. After moving to Hobart to consolidate his business interests, Graham re-established his links with the MBAT in 1994 and was elected Southern Division Chairman in 1997 – a position he held until 2000.⁶⁰¹ In an interview for the journal, Graham commented: ‘I have always believed in what the MBA stands for, and I feel it is important to give something back to the Association’.⁶⁰² He said the need to remain relevant, focused and to provide increased member benefits during difficult times were the three major challenges that the organisation faced:

The re-definition of our strategic plan has been an important step in all those arenas. Our new Constitution, for example, allows us the flexibility to represent a wider cross-section of the industry which, in turn, will strengthen our arm in dealings with the regulators and governments.⁶⁰³

Graham also believed the provision of better information to members and ensuring that membership provides value for money were important: ‘I believe we have all the right ingredients in place, it is now a matter of working with them to ensure the Association retains its position as the pre-eminent body in Tasmania.’⁶⁰⁴

Denis Reid MBAT President 2003-2005

Denis Reid grew up in Lenah Valley, and attended Lenah Valley Primary School and New Town High School. In 1967, at the age of 15, he commenced work as an apprentice carpenter and joiner with MBAT member, Gerry Walters, at GE Walters Pty Ltd in Glenorchy. The company worked throughout southern and eastern Tasmania, and undertook extensive works at Pasminco EZ (now Zinifex)

⁶⁰¹ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook undated clipping 1971; *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.25

⁶⁰² *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.28

⁶⁰³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.28

⁶⁰⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.28

and Cadbury Schweppes. It also constructed the Point Home Lighthouse, Triabunna Chip Mill, Triabunna Fish Meal Plant, Coles Sandy Bay supermarket, Granada Tavern, as well as other commercial and residential projects. Denis became an estimator in 1970 and a director in 1983. After the death of Gerry Walters, Denis and his wife Ruth bought the company and changed the name to DJ Reid Construction Management Pty Ltd. The company currently provides commercial and residential construction, design and construction, and maintenance facility management.

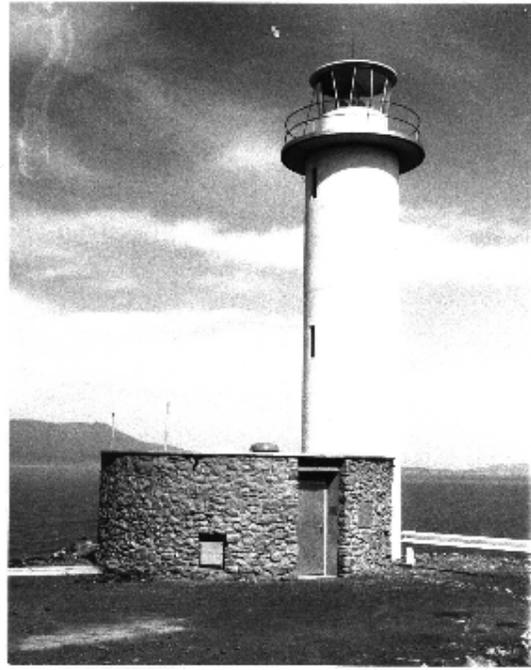


Figure 63: Point Home Lighthouse
Photo courtesy of Denis Reid

Introduced to the MBAT by Past President Gerry Walters, Denis was company representative in 1983. He has since served in a number of positions, including Chairman of the Contract and Tendering Committee, Southern Division

Chairman and State Councillor. He was MBAT President from 1989-1991, and was again elected in 2003. From 1991-1993, he was the MBAT representative to Master Builders' Australia, serving as Executive Member. He is currently Chairman of the National Housing Advisory Committee.⁶⁰⁵

The Builders and their Buildings in the New Century

In 2005, the building industry is characterised by innovative and adaptive development, recognised by the MBAT Annual Awards for Excellence.

In 2001, the MBAT Awards for Excellence, announced at the Annual Dinner, attracted a record 79 entries. Award judge, Dick Bloomfield, commented that: 'Despite the acknowledged departure of construction skills to mainland centres, construction in this State remains in excellent hands if the examples of workmanship offered up this year are any indication'.⁶⁰⁶ MBAT Executive Director, Chris Atkins, noted that the encouragement of continuous improvement was one of the major reasons behind the establishment of the Awards.⁶⁰⁷ In 2004, in the Year of the Built Environment, the MBAT Annual Awards for Excellence celebrated its tenth year and again attracted record entries: there were 231 nominations.⁶⁰⁸

Several Tasmanian winners went on to become winners at the Australian Master Builders' National Awards for Excellence. As already mentioned, one of these was MBAT member, Chris Fahey, of Tasmanian Antiquity Builders, who won a National Award for Heritage Restoration for Millhouse on the Bridge at

⁶⁰⁵ Denis Reid, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

⁶⁰⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.29

⁶⁰⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.4

⁶⁰⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 p.6 & 'Excellence Awards' supplement pp.1-35

Richmond.⁶⁰⁹ Others included DS Gray Pty Ltd in 2001, in the category of 'Alterations & Additions', for The Granary at Cressy; in 2002, Fairbrother Pty Ltd in the category 'Commercial under \$10 million', for the EcoCentre at Scottsdale, and Crisp Bros Pty Ltd & Bells Construction & Technologies Pty Ltd in the category 'Civil Construction under \$10 million' for the Tahune Airwalk at Geeveston.⁶¹⁰ In 2003, two MBAT members won national recognition: Blueprint Homes of Burnie won the National Project Home of the Year up to \$150,000 and Bells Construction and Technologies were awarded a high commendation in the MBA National Lifestyle Housing for Seniors Awards for construction of the Glenara Lakes complex at Franklin Village near Launceston.⁶¹¹

National award winner, David Gray of DS Gray Pty Ltd, reflected on changes in the building industry over the last thirty years, particularly its increased professionalism:

the days of running a business from the back of a ute are well and truly numbered ... turning up to a site in a banged up old van, with glue all over your overalls and making the first task of the day to turn the radio up to full volume and put the kettle on doesn't impress a client who's paying for a professional job.⁶¹²

David, who followed his father and uncle into the building trade, added that builders have traditionally been seen as people who earn money with their hands, but the industry today is much more one of earning money with the head.⁶¹³

⁶⁰⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2003 'Excellence Awards' p.7

⁶¹⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004 'Excellence Awards' supplement pp.9, 11

⁶¹¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Summer 2003 pp.15-17

⁶¹² *Tasmanian Master Builder* Summer 2001 p.18

⁶¹³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Summer 2001 p.18

Premier Jim Bacon

In the *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2004, the MBAT acknowledged the contribution of former Labor Premier Jim Bacon, describing him as 'a friend of the construction industry'.⁶¹⁴ Jim had formerly been Secretary of the Builders Labourers Federation, having taken over on the death of Speed Morgan in 1980.⁶¹⁵ Many of the master builders had stories about Jim, as they had about his predecessor; all acknowledged his contribution as Premier.



Figure 64: Premier Jim Bacon opening offices of Hansen Yuncken 1998
L-R: Retired HY Tasmanian Manager Bill Shields, HY Tasmanian Manager Bruce Maher, Premier of Tasmania Jim Bacon, HY CEO Peter Kennedy, HY Managing Director Peter Hansen

⁶¹⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.2

⁶¹⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1998 p.16

Chapter Eleven: State Council

In 1961, the first MBAT State Council was formed, when the North-West Master Builders' Association joined with the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania. The North-West Association became the North-Western Division of the MBAT, and a Southern Division was also formed. The State Council consisted of delegates from both divisions, each division having its own chairman of executive. In 1975, master builders in the north joined the MBAT; the Northern Division formed and became part of the State Council. At this time, there were four delegates from the North-Western Division, four from the Northern Division, and eight from the South.



Figure 65: MBAT State Council 1968-1969
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

The MBAT State Council has met monthly in Hobart since 1975. According to Don Mapley, who attended State Council as a staff member, it was truly a State organisation, not divided by regional interests: 'We all dealt with our own problems individually within the divisions and then finally when it got to a stage where we couldn't handle it, we'd take it there'.⁶¹⁶ State Council was particularly effective in solving issues at a government level, and providing a forum for members to 'make their voice heard'.⁶¹⁷

Reg Walley, who served as a State Councillor for about eight years, recalled that the main topics discussed at State Council were financial matters, the selection and approval of new memberships, and other business matters.⁶¹⁸ In his opinion, State Council meetings worked well: 'the aim of the State Council [was] for all areas to be represented and their viewpoints put and try to come up with a situation where everything was in line with the MBA feeling'.⁶¹⁹

In 1986, MBAT State President, Don Dickenson, reflected upon the make-up of the State Council:

Without a doubt, when you look around the Council table and see these men, you cannot but wonder at the great wealth of knowledge and expertise that they have, and which they are willing to share with their industry. What motivates these men? Men who are senior executives of major companies; some who operate their own small family business and others who specialise in perhaps one branch of the building and construction industry. I believe that it is that great something which makes farmers, farmers or fishermen, fishermen; it is that great challenge to see something grow or be created. Whatever it is, these people persist and carry on through good times and bad.⁶²⁰

⁶¹⁶ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁶¹⁷ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁶¹⁸ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁶¹⁹ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁶²⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1986 p.3

In 1989, when Chris Atkins joined the MBAT as Executive Director, the Association was 'very heavily structured' with numerous committees, and State Council itself was 'very formal, very staid' – everybody wore collars and ties.⁶²¹

In recent years, the MBAT State Council has undergone a series of reforms: 'the strategic planning process determined that it was better to ensure that there was a representative from individual membership sectors as opposed to regional sectors. We haven't gone totally away from that. There are positions reserved for the Chairman of each region and also for a regional representative to be on State Council'.⁶²² In the early days, associate members had no voting rights: 'It was only builders that actually could vote or have an executive position or be on Council. We have changed that totally'.⁶²³ The State Council has shifted to be more representative of the industry as a whole, rather than just of the builders' sector.⁶²⁴

MBAT Executive Director Chris Atkins suggested that the State Council strategic planning process was the outgoing wish of President John De Jong, and was initially overseen by President Michael Hardacre. The Strategic Planning Committee included Paul Ibbott, John De Jong, Dick Bloomfield and Graham Keating, with Chris Atkins; it is currently overseeing the implementation of the plan. The cornerstones of the plan were membership accreditation; constitutional change to ensure all members had a voice; changes to staffing structure, providing senior staff with the opportunity of obtaining greater job

⁶²¹ Interview with Chris Atkins 21 February 2005 Hobart

⁶²² Interview with Chris Atkins 21 February 2005 Hobart

⁶²³ Interview with Chris Atkins 21 February 2005 Hobart

⁶²⁴ Interview with Chris Atkins 21 February 2005 Hobart

satisfaction by being responsible for state-wide activities as opposed to regional activities; and to make the MBAT a truly State-wide organisation.⁶²⁵

State Administration

In 1961, the MBAT not only acquired its first permanent office but also its first permanent full-time staff member. Before this, the secretary was part-time. For many years, JE Braithwaite served as secretary before resigning in May 1957, when he wound up his accountancy practice. He was also secretary of the Fibrous Plaster Manufacturers' Association of Tasmania.⁶²⁶ His replacement, L Rooney, commenced in June 1957 at a salary of £260 per year; he was also Secretary of the Employers' Federation.⁶²⁷

Executive Directors

MR (Merv) Elliott

The first permanent full-time staff member was MR (Merv) Elliott. After eight years with the MBAT, Merv resigned as Executive Director in April 1970 to take up the post of Executive Director of the Northern Territory Master Builders' Association. At a farewell presentation at a North-Western Division social evening in Ulverstone, Divisional Chairman, W Paulin, paid tribute to Merv, and mentioned in particular that during his time, the MBAT had developed to the stage where it incorporated the North West Coast.⁶²⁸

⁶²⁵ Interview with Chris Atkins 21 February 2005 Hobart

⁶²⁶ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 16 April 1957; *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* May 1957 p.11

⁶²⁷ MBAT Minutes General Meeting 21 May 1957; *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* June 1957 p.10

⁶²⁸ *Building* April 1970 p.17; *MBAT Bulletin* 6 April 1970; MBAT, North-West Division, scrapbook: newspaper clipping 24 April 1970



Figure 66: Merv Elliott, first full-time staff member

HR (Harry) Houlgrave

Harry Houlgrave commenced as MBAT Executive Director in May 1970. Before joining the Association, Harry was Senior Administrative Officer for the Hydro-Electric Commission's Strathgordon project. He arrived in Tasmania in 1967 from South Australia, where he held a senior administrative post in the Commonwealth Department of Supply at the Weapons Research Establishment, Salisbury. Harry resigned in May 1971, and was replaced by Ewen Nichols in an acting capacity.⁶²⁹

EA (Ewen) Nichols

Ewen Nichols first joined the MBAT as Administrative Officer in November 1965. He was appointed Executive Director in May 1971 and remained in that position until he officially retired on 30 April 1982. As senior staff officer, Ewen was responsible for the general administration of MBAT affairs and for the supervision and conduct of the Hobart headquarters and Divisional offices in Launceston and Devonport. Ewen represented the Association through regular liaison with and deputations to local authority and government, and had been

⁶²⁹ *Building* May 1970 p.18; *MBAT Bulletin* 13 May 1970, 28 May 1971

associated with countless Association and building industry-oriented committees. In addition, his duties regularly took him interstate to represent the Association at national level in Canberra, and at conventions, conferences and meetings.

In 1973, Ewen was made an Associate Member of the Tasmanian Chapter of the AIB; he served several years as Chapter Secretary. In this role, he contributed to the expansion and improvement of educational facilities for industry training in Tasmania.

In 1982, after seventeen years with the Association, Ewen Nichols was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership.⁶³⁰



Figure 67: EA (Ewen) Nichols

NR (Norm) Crothers

Norm Crothers joined the MBAT in November 1973 when he was appointed MBAT Contracts Officer. He played a key role in the Association's continuing negotiations with government and other tendering authorities, and represented

⁶³⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1982 p.18

the Association in industry disputations. Following the retirement of Ewen Nichols, Norm acted as Executive Director. In March 1983, State Council confirmed this appointment and he held the position until July 1985.⁶³¹ He then resumed his original status as MBAT Contracts Officer.⁶³² Norm passed away in August 1998.⁶³³



Figure 68: NR (Norm) Crothers

Tony Lenthall

Tony Lenthall was appointed MBAT Executive Director in August 1985. A London-born civil engineer and Pentecostal pastor, he came to Tasmania from Port Hedland.⁶³⁴ Tony resigned on 20 March 1992, after seven years with the Association, to travel to Romania where he planned to spend the next twelve months as a voluntary aid worker.⁶³⁵

Des Hodgman

In 2000, Des Hodgman retired after nearly nine years as Executive Director. He joined the MBAT from the Master Builders' Association of Queensland. On his

⁶³¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1983 p.16

⁶³² *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1985 p.14

⁶³³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1998 p.6

⁶³⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1985 pp.14-15

⁶³⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1992 pp.3, 15

retirement, his expertise in complex industrial relations issues and contractual matters, and his ability to help members understand these issues, was acknowledged by the MBAT. He had worked tirelessly on many committees allied to the industry, such as TasBuild, a private trustee company administering the construction industry's long service leave scheme in Tasmania, and in areas such as planning and training. Much of his work took place behind the scenes and so was often not noticed. Described by Don Mapley as a 'workaholic and capable leader', Des was recognised for his willingness to assist members on an individual basis as well as contributing to their business professionalism. He also regularly attended meetings around the State.⁶³⁶

Chris Atkins

Chris Atkins joined the Association in 1989. Educated at Devonport High School, Chris completed an apprenticeship as an electrical mechanic, receiving his A Grade licence at the age of 19. He was recruited by the Australian Customs Service and was originally based in Melbourne as a Preventative Officer. He returned to Tasmania in 1980 when the international air link between Hobart and New Zealand was established. He progressed through the ranks of the Customs Service, reaching the position of Senior Inspector in the Bounties Program, before joining the MBAT as Executive Officer. Chris is a Fellow of the National Institute of Accountants; a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors; and has an Associate Diploma in Business Studies (Accounting) and a Graduate Diploma in Construction Law, from the University of Melbourne.

During Chris' tenure as Executive Director, there have been a number of significant issues which the MBAT has had to face. One of these was the collapse

⁶³⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* May/June 2000 p.8

of HIH, which threatened the livelihood of approximately 70 per cent of MBAT members, who were not able to start new domestic projects. Another important issue was the introduction of the Association's own indemnity scheme. The Royal Commission on the Building Construction Industry, and its Tasmanian hearings, required substantial involvement over a long period. Within the Association, constitutional amendments and subsequent changes to membership representation as well as member accreditation were particularly important. Changes to the MBAT staffing structure and the implications of the introduction of the *Building Act 2000* are another two major issues that have arisen during Chris' period as Executive Director.⁶³⁷

The Association has also employed a number of administrative staff, in Hobart, Devonport and Launceston. The first receptionist, Miss Arthur, was paid £12.5.0 per week.⁶³⁸

The Journal

The first MBAT journal, in the 1950s, was *Tasmanian Architecture & Building*. Printed in black ink on white paper, it was printed in Launceston; advertising was organised through Melbourne and Sydney. The next version, titled *Architecture and Building*, was first published in October 1963. Its first annual turnover was the equivalent of \$5,427. By 1988, it was more than \$72,000.⁶³⁹

In 1988, MBAT President John Gretton acknowledged the work of journal editor Frank Court, who had reached a 25-year milestone of service to the Association. John noted that:

⁶³⁷ Chris Atkins, *personal communication*, 1 April 2005

⁶³⁸ MBAT, The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty. Ltd. Minutes, 28 September 1965

⁶³⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1988 p.3

The Association has much to thank this very conscientious, loyal and supportive member of our staff who has been a significant part of the image of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania ...⁶⁴⁰

The MBAT made a special presentation to Frank at the October 1988 State Council meeting in recognition of his 25 years of service.⁶⁴¹



Figure 69: FC (Frank) Court, Journal Editor

As Journal Editor, Frank was responsible for the production of the Association's monthly journal publication, including preparation of editorial, design, layout, advertising space sales, advertising design, and photography.⁶⁴² Frank's job specification, when he was appointed on 22 August 1963, not only included responsibility for the production of the journal but also field work, recruiting, public relations and promotion, and the organisation of social functions and activities. John noted:

From those very early days when Frank shared a desk with the then Executive Director, Merv Elliott, in a small room in Cowan House in Macquarie Street,

⁶⁴⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1988 p.3

⁶⁴¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* October 1988 p.14

⁶⁴² *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1980 p.22

Hobart, he has seen many changes. For example, the opening of the Association Headquarters at 125 Murray Street, incorporating a building products display and information centre. It is a matter of interest that, when the appointed centre manager resigned some months later, Frank took over the reins on temporary basis. He was still doing this 'temporary' job when the Association moved to its headquarters at 59 Sandy Bay Road in 1976 and the Building Centre was closed.⁶⁴³

In 1966, the journal dropped 'Architecture' from its title and for a short time was known simply as *Building*. In 1971, it became the *Tasmanian Building Journal* and in February 1993, the MBAT State Council decided to change the name of the journal to the *Tasmanian Master Builder*.⁶⁴⁴ As the Association grew, so did the journal, improving in design and presentation, including the adoption of four-colour covers in May 1987.

An invaluable educational tool, the journal continued to publish a range of articles as well as providing intra-industry advertising and information about Association activities. From time to time, there were special features, reflecting current issues of concern: in the 1980s, for example, the journal ran a series called 'Contracts Casebook' written by Norm Crothers, MBAT Contracts Officer. There were also regular segments from the Australian Institute of Building and the Master Plumbers' Association. The Master Painters, Decorators and Signwriters also participated for a time in the 1970s. At the beginning of 1990, the journal published a series of articles on 'Builders and Computers'.⁶⁴⁵ In 1990, MBAT President Denis Reid paid tribute to journal editor, Frank Court, and described the journal as the MBAT's 'flagship'.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1988 p.3

⁶⁴⁴ MBAT Minutes State Council 12 February 1993; *Tasmanian Master Builder*, March 1993 p.12

⁶⁴⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1990 p.10

⁶⁴⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1990 p.18

In 1992, Wesley Phillips took over from Frank Court as editor. In April 1993, the revamped colourful journal had a subscription of 800.⁶⁴⁷ In 1998, reflecting on his six years in the job, Wesley Phillips noted that much of the material was computer-generated, on disks or CD-ROMs; the Association was about to trial electronic cameras and photos on disk.⁶⁴⁸ But the content of the journal was basically unchanged: it remained primarily an educational and information resource, advising new developments, materials and techniques, and encouraging best professional and business practice.

TASMANIAN
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The content of the journal was frequently of a serious and formal nature. However, in 1984, it found space to reprint a draft letter to the *Examiner*, under the heading 'Who wants to be a builder!!!!', found amongst the papers of master builder Thomas Orr who died in 1976:

⁶⁴⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1993 p.2

⁶⁴⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1998 pp.3, 22

Sir – In case ‘Son of the Soil’ contemplates a change of occupation I should like to inform him of some trials he may encounter, should he take up building.

In the first place, he will need the qualification of a public relationist, quantity surveyor, estimator, accountant, financier, organiser, supervisor, diplomat, pay clerk, tax collector and form-filler.

He will have on his back council inspectors, factory inspectors, scaffold inspectors, apprentice inspectors and union trouble-makers, all out to detect some breach of the multiplicity of regulations that control his industry.

He will spend hours working on the cost of various projects without guarantee of remuneration and for little thanks. If his tender is accepted, he will be required to sign a contract definitely loaded in favour of the client.

If there is a shortage of work, he will be hard put to keep his staff employed; if too much, he will be harassed by impatient clients.

A lawyer or doctor will each be paid for professional advice; an experienced builder will be expected to offer his gratis.

If he escapes the many contingencies that can put him in the bankruptcy court, he may console himself with the thought that he has contributed something enduring to the common weal which will make his name honoured in history.

He may indulge the thought until he notices the lettering on some stone or plaque informing posterity that some Minister of the Crown (who happened to be in favour at that time) had taken that honour, or until he remembers that it is the architect’s name that goes down in history.

Their names are remembered whilst those of the men who dug the foundation, made the bricks, carved the stone, shaped the timber, decorated the building, together with the name of the man who co-ordinated their trades and so made possible the politician’s self-aggrandisement, and gave substance to the architect’s dream, are lost in obscurity.

So, Son of the Soil, you had better continue to produce potatoes lest you be out of the frying pan into the fire. – CHIPS.⁶⁴⁹

⁶⁴⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* October 1984 p.19

Chapter Twelve: The Regions

THE NORTH WEST

North-Western Division of the MBA 1961

In August 1961, the North-Western Division of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania was formed from the North-West Master Builders' Association, established in 1946. The MBAT State Council was formally constituted, consisting of delegates from the Southern Division and the North-Western Division, each division having its own Chairman of Executive. A separate organisation continued in the north until 1975.

North-West Master Builders' Association 1946

The North-West Master Builders' Association was formed in June 1946. At its inaugural meeting in Burnie, Devonport identity, Harry Haines, was elected President and Jack Harris was elected Secretary. The Association was formed at a time when most builders were struggling to meet increased overheads, exacerbated by rapidly increasing material costs caused primarily by post-war shortages. It was widely believed that an association was needed to assist builders in securing a better supply of building materials and also to make them aware of future trends in the industry.⁶⁵⁰

Monthly meetings were held at Penguin because it was centrally located. Quarterly general meetings were rotated between coastal towns. One of the first

⁶⁵⁰ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook, undated newspaper clipping; *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.21; Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004

duties of the new committee was to devise a constitution, rules and by-laws for the Association. These were introduced in August 1947.

Major building contractors operating on the North West Coast when the North-West Master Builders' Association was formed in 1946 included Carter and Pease (Burnie); Luck Bros (Devonport); JC Hales (Penguin); Tattersalls (Burnie); W Williams (Devonport); H Jones & Son (Wynyard); Ulverstone Woodworking Factory and Alec Hensby (Ulverstone).



Figure 70: AJ (Alec) Hensby of Ulverstone

Many of these contractors played an active role in the North-West Master Builders' Association and later the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania North-Western Division. Well-known Ulverstone builder Alec Hensby, for example, was made an Honorary Member of the North-West Master Builders' Association in 1951. H Tattersall was a North-Western Division Associate Member for many years and a President of the North-Western Tasmanian Master

Builders' Association. He resigned from the MBAT State Council on his retirement in 1969.⁶⁵¹

In 1958, the Association lost two long-serving executive members: in April, Secretary RS Thorne died after eleven years in office and in July, Treasurer EG Stokes died after nine years in the position.⁶⁵²

Many of the issues voiced by the North-West Master Builders' Association echoed those of the MBAT. In 1953, AW Luck MHR, a former builder, speaking at the Annual Dinner of the North-West Master Builders' Association called on the Government to give more consideration to the building industry in the State, especially on the North West Coast. He expressed his concern at declining numbers of building industry employees, exacerbated by the pinch Tasmania was feeling as the result of the lack of controls over building materials. He also criticised the State Government's use of a day labour force rather than contract labour, pointing out that, in 1953, 781 were employed under day labour: 'Contract work is the cheapest, and the Government should call tenders for all work and let contracts'.⁶⁵³ Mr Luck was one of the original members of the North-West Master Builders' Association and he stated that one of the reasons for establishing the Association was to get a fairer deal for the Coast in obtaining building materials. He believed that the formation of the Association coincided with the development of the North West Coast.⁶⁵⁴

As was the case elsewhere in the State, tenders were often controversial. In 1956, a Legislative Council Select Committee was established to investigate a tender by

⁶⁵¹ MBAT *Bulletin* 5 November 1969; *Building* November 1969 p.10

⁶⁵² MBAT North-West Division scrapbook, undated newspaper clipping

⁶⁵³ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook: *Advocate* 20 July 1953

⁶⁵⁴ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook: *Advocate* 20 July 1953

HK Fielding of Ulverstone for the foundations of the Devon Hospital at Latrobe.⁶⁵⁵ This had been prompted by a resolution of the North-West MBA at a special meeting held on 11 February 1955.⁶⁵⁶ In July 1955, the Association called for a change in the present government system of accepting the lowest tender whether or not the tenderer could guarantee sufficient labour and materials. The Minister for Housing, Mr Madden, promised contractors a 'fair go', stating that jobs would not be awarded to those likely to do an inferior job because of lack of materials or labour.⁶⁵⁷

Early North West Builders

David Stubbs, whose father Lou was a prominent North-West builder and later Life Member of the MBAT, grew up with the MBAT and knew many of the early members:

Names that come to mind are Gordon Ibbott from Devonport, Worrell Vertigan from Smithton, Luck Brothers from Devonport, Wilkins Gray and Dowling from Latrobe, Hensbys from Ulverstone – they were the names that I remember most. Poposkis from Smithton is another name that always kept being mentioned, they were a couple of brothers.⁶⁵⁸

David, said that in the early days, versatility was essential: most coastal builders, 'just about did whatever was available ... they could be doing a classroom at Sprent or Railton or they could be building a series of houses for the Housing Commission ... all the builders were predominantly multi-disciplined [and] pretty much still are'.⁶⁵⁹

⁶⁵⁵ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook: *Advocate* 21 May 1955

⁶⁵⁶ North-West MBA Minutes Special Committee Meeting 11 February 1955

⁶⁵⁷ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook: *Advocate* 13 July 1959

⁶⁵⁸ Interview with David Stubbs 16 May 2004 Burnie

⁶⁵⁹ Interview with David Stubbs 16 May 2004 Burnie

Luck Brothers Pty. Ltd

Luck Brothers Pty Ltd celebrated fifty years of service to the North West Coast in 1970. The company's history dated back to 1840, when William Luck, a young carpenter, arrived in Hobart Town and later settled on the North West Coast. Three of his sons – John, Alfred and George – founded the partnership of Luck Brothers. Alfred Luck's sons – Mervyn, Norman and Aubrey – carried on the partnership. In 1970, the firm employed nearly 300 people. The Luck brothers retired in 1968.⁶⁶⁰

Roland Young of Luck Bros

In 1968, AR (Roland) Young of Devonport retired after many years of service to the building industry. He commenced work with his father at Burnie in 1919, and worked in the Burnie area until 1937 when he accepted a position as Senior Superintendent with North-West Constructions, then trading under the name of Luck Bros. In 1956, he transferred to Devonport, on his promotion to manager, and was elected a director of the company in 1959. The company, under the leadership of the Luck brothers, and later Roland Young, erected many substantial buildings, and carried out varied construction works, including hospitals in Ulverstone and Burnie, schools at Wynyard, Smithton, and Devonport; food processing factories at Devonport, Ulverstone and Scottsdale; and more than 1,000 in Devonport and throughout the State. Reminiscing over the past 50 years, Roland noted that 'the changes in creative ideas in architecture, construction methods, and materials have been challenging, but very rewarding in the industry's service to the community'.⁶⁶¹

⁶⁶⁰ *Building* May 1970 p.10

⁶⁶¹ *Building* February 1960 p.18

Stubbs Constructions Pty Ltd

Stubbs Construction Company was established by North West Coast builder Lou Stubbs as LT Stubbs Pty Ltd in 1937. It changed its name in 1961. One of the first jobs that Lou worked on was the Redpa Primary School. He went on to build many more schools for the Education Department: Stowport, Riana Area, Sprent Area, Yolla Area, Brookland, Montello, Havenview in Burnie, Burnie High, Smithton, and on the West Coast, Queenstown. One of the largest contracts in this period was Marist College, which commenced in 1958 but continued beyond 1961.

In 1952, Lou employed Vic O'Brien, who had completed an apprenticeship with the Agricultural Bank in Hobart. Vic started in Lou's joinery shop at Dooley Street, Penguin. In late 1960, Lou introduced Vic to construction projects under the leadership of Zyg Sikora. Vic's first managed project, in October 1962, was the building of the Ulverstone Catholic Church, from site works to completion of fit out, including church pews. In 1962, Vic was appointed construction manager and Lou concentrated on the development of the hardware division of the company, established in Penguin in 1951 and later in Burnie in 1962.

Major contracts completed during the period 1961-1985 were Valley Road Technical College in Devonport; Burnie Technical College; Savage River School; Parklands High; Latrobe High; Motors Pty Ltd Burnie; Fitzgeralds Development, Burnie; Penguin Council Chambers; Burnie Fire Station; the T & G Building Burnie; 'Woolnorth' manager's residence and bridgeworks; Lake Barrington Rowing Course; Table Cape Butter Factory; and Devonport Municipal Library. Major civil works were also carried out in Wynyard and Somerset for sewerage, roadworks, and treatment plants. The company also did a lot of sewerage,

stormwater and subdivision work in the early days: 'it was just something you needed to do with a dumpy level and a theodolite ... apart from the engineers, a builder was probably the only one that knew what a theodolite was'.⁶⁶²

The largest and most difficult contract in the 1970s, undertaken in the notoriously variable West Coast weather conditions, was the development of two sub-divisions for EZ at Rosebery, which included all roadworks, services, houses and units. According to Vic O'Brien, one of the most rewarding projects from 1970-1986 was the design and project management of all 20 Roelf Vos supermarkets across the north from Scottsdale to Smithton. A challenge, in 1981, were site works, services and construction of the distribution centre at Prospect, a joint project for Roelf Vos and Statewide Independent wholesalers. Lou's son, David, suggested that Tioxide and APPM were the company's lifeblood: 'we always had men working in both those places and enjoying the luxury of the canteen ... a hot meal for two bob at 12 o'clock!'⁶⁶³

Vic O'Brien served Lou Stubbs and the company from 1952-1985, when he decided to retire as a result of ill-health. During this time, he had a break from the company for 18 months, between 1953 and 1954.

Vic was Stubbs Constructions MBAT representative for many years. Lou Stubbs introduced Vic to the MBA in 1960, and in 1961, after the North-West MBA joined the MBAT, Vic served as Divisional Chairman from 1966-1968 and also as State Councillor. Vic was committed to the training of apprentices to ensure numbers of future tradesmen. He established a program which saw 90

⁶⁶² Interview with David Stubbs 16 May 2004 Burnie

⁶⁶³ Interview with David Stubbs 16 May 2004 Burnie

apprentices train with the company. As a result of a newspaper advertisement in May 1979, Vic wrote a submission on behalf of the company stressing concern at the general apathy of employers and their failure to take responsibility in training matters. This concern was also aired by the AIB directly to the government.



Figure 71: Lou Stubbs receiving MBAT 20 year award from Gordon Ibbott

Lou, a member of the AIB, encouraged Vic to join. He became President of the Tasmanian Chapter 1984-1985 and 1985-1986, and received the Chapter Honour Award in 1992. Vic was recognised with Honorary Membership of the MBAT

and Fellowship of the AIB. He received an AIB Honour Award before his retirement in 1985.⁶⁶⁴



Figure 72: Vic and Betty O'Brien, Northern Dinner 1996

Since Vic's retirement in 1985, the company has been managed by David Stubbs, who undertook major restructuring during the recession.⁶⁶⁵

Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd

Shortly after he returned from World War II, Gordon Ibbott established Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd. The firm grew to be a well-respected State-wide building and civil engineering business: 'We did projects all over the state from Strathgordon [to] Kingston ... to Flinders and King Island'.⁶⁶⁶ On the islands, over a period of three years, the firm constructed 'the two power stations for the HEC, diesel power generating facilities', as well as school buildings.⁶⁶⁷ The firm also undertook extensive civil and engineering works, especially on the West Coast. Gordon did a substantial amount of work at Savage River, providing the

⁶⁶⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.6; Vic O'Brien, *personal communication*, April 2005

⁶⁶⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.6

⁶⁶⁶ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe; Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

⁶⁶⁷ Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

financial foundation for the development of the company.⁶⁶⁸ While working with the Americans on the Savage River mine buildings, he noted that the American there with the highest salary only had carpentry qualifications. When Gordon queried this, he was told it was because the man was 'a doer' and that carpenters were born that way. Engineers were 'tuppence a dozen' in the United States but the carpenter had special skills which were valued.⁶⁶⁹



Figure 73: L-R Ron Allison, Barry Smith, Geoff McCall, Gordon Ibbott, c1955
FK Roberts' house, Victoria Parade, Devonport
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

Major clients included Australian Paper, Tioxide, Temco, Comalco, Goliath and the Hydro-Electric Commission. Hydro projects included various works on all the power stations on the Mersey-Forth scheme in the North West and the Pieman-Henty scheme on the West Coast; the company had also started

⁶⁶⁸ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe; Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

⁶⁶⁹ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

preliminary work on the aborted Gordon-below-Franklin scheme. Another project was the wharf at Stanley.⁶⁷⁰

The firm also undertook a number of building projects for GJ Coles on the North-West Coast and Launceston. According to Gordon, the biggest project was probably the K-Mart at Burnie. This was also a project which gave him a lot of personal satisfaction, because not only was it challenging but it was also useful to the central Burnie community.⁶⁷¹



Figure 74: Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd 1990
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

Gordon's son, Paul, joined him in the building industry. Three years into his apprenticeship, Paul moved into the office, firstly as a cadet estimator and project administrator, then working his way up to General Manager about 1985, before becoming owner of the business in the late 1980s.⁶⁷² In November 1992, as part of a significant restructuring process, the Ibbott Group of Companies relocated to the Spreyton/Quoiba area of Devonport, in what was considered a

⁶⁷⁰ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe; Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

⁶⁷¹ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

⁶⁷² Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

bold move during a recession. As well as completing a major redevelopment of their new premises, the company completed substantial construction projects including the redevelopment of Edgells-Birds Eye production facility in Ulverstone (\$2.8 million); the redevelopment of the East Devonport Primary School (\$1 million); several other school projects; and new offices and workshop for Temco.⁶⁷³

In 2000, Paul decided to restructure the company:

Through the 90s ... commercial times were pretty hard. We were deep in recession as a State right through ... it was a very, very difficult time for people all over the industry.⁶⁷⁴

At that time, the company group existed as a small hardware shop called Terminal Traders, 'situated just down the road from the dead centre in Devonport [the cemetery], so it wasn't a particularly inspiring name'.⁶⁷⁵ While the building and civil construction business, Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd, was the flagship of the company group, Paul had also developed another business, Tasmanian Fire Doors, a principal supplier of fire doors, metal door frames, architectural doors and associated products. In 2001, the building company closed and Tasmanian Fire Doors was sold as a going concern to an ex-employee. Paul explained: 'we shifted from the site, reinvested our capital in another hardware enterprise, called Ibbott Hardware Pty Ltd, [trading] today as Ibbott's Home Timber and Hardware in Devonport'.⁶⁷⁶

Paul noted that the business had a lot of long-term employees: 'it is a very proud aspect to the company's history that it can actually boast 16 employees that have

⁶⁷³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.5

⁶⁷⁴ Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

⁶⁷⁵ Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

⁶⁷⁶ Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

served in excess of 25 years'.⁶⁷⁷ Perhaps the most notable long-serving employee was Robert 'Nipper' Walters, described as 'a bit of a legend in his own time up there'.⁶⁷⁸



Figure 75: Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd 2000
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

According to Paul Ibbott, it is a proud reflection of the company's commitment to training that it indentured 133 apprentices and trainees during its time in existence, many of whom won various State training awards and went on to operate their own building businesses.⁶⁷⁹

During its years of operation, the company completed many significant projects throughout the State and the Bass Strait islands. These included K-Marts at Burnie and Devonport, Coles supermarkets at Devonport, Burnie and Mowbray,

⁶⁷⁷ Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

⁶⁷⁸ Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

⁶⁷⁹ Paul Ibbott, *personal communication*, March 2005

Pivot bulk fertilizer depots at Devonport and Longford, waste water treatment plants at Devonport and Blackman's Bay, students residential blocks at Burnie, Devonport and Alanvale TAFE colleges, the original building and subsequent additions for the TT Line ferry terminal at Devonport, Tasmanian Institute of Sport facility in Launceston, water treatment plants at Ulverstone and Penguin, aged care facilities at Penguin (Corroneagh Park), Devonport (Meercroft) and Launceston (Masonic Peacehaven), Launceston General Hospital Maternity and Renal facility, the CMAX Cinema complex in Devonport and the Devonport Cultural Centre.⁶⁸⁰

The company won many project and industry awards, including the MBAT 'Pride in the Job' awards for the Child Health Clinic in Devonport, the TT Line Administration Complex in Devonport and Visyboard factory in Devonport. In later years, it figured prominently in the MBAT Excellence Awards, winning in 1997 with a Multiple Density Dwelling Units project in Devonport, in 1998 with the UMT Administration Centre at Spreyton, in 1999 with the TAFE Burnie refurbishment, in 2000 for the Devonport Cinema Complex and, in 2001, its last year of operation, for the Devonport Cultural Centre. It also won a Tasmanian Government Workplace Health and Safety Award in 1996 for Management Systems.⁶⁸¹

On 11 June 1999, the company was presented with a special MBAT bronze plaque, commemorating 50 years of service to the MBAT.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸⁰ Paul Ibbott, *personal communication*, March 2005

⁶⁸¹ Paul Ibbott, *personal communication*, March 2005

⁶⁸² Paul Ibbott, *personal communication*, March 2005

North-West Master Builders' Association Officebearers 1946-1961

1946

President: FH Haines
Secretary: J Harris
Treasurer: HE Hill

1947

President: LT Stubbs
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: HE Hill

1948

President: LT Stubbs
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: HE Hill

1949

President: AW Luck
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1950

President: AW Luck
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1951

President: H Tattersall
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1952

President: LT Stubbs
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1953

President: SW Dowling
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1954

President: SW Dowling
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1955

President: MA Luck
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1956

President: MA Luck
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1957

President: GG Ibbott
Secretary: RS Thorne
Treasurer: EG Stokes

1958

President: GG Ibbott
Secretary: LE Dick
Treasurer: B Lyons

1959

President: RR Neville
Secretary: LE Dick
Treasurer: LT Stubbs

1960

President: RR Neville
Secretary: LE Dick
Treasurer: LT Stubbs

1961

President: RR Neville
Secretary: LE Dick
Treasurer: LT Stubbs

Master Builders' Association of Tasmania North-Western Division 1961

In August 1961, the North-West Master Builders' Association joined the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania, adopting the name Master Builders' Association of Tasmania North-Western Division. By this time, nationally, there had been significant changes to the building industry and it was believed that the system of three regional associations was ineffective and outdated. The affiliation of the North-West Master Builders' Association to the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania was the result of long and detailed negotiations over three years. As Don Mapley explained:

The builders on the North West Coast ... realised that [the MBAT] was such a success in Hobart ... they got together at a meeting in Burnie ... and they decided that they too ... should have a voice within the industry but located on the North West Coast. Henceforth, they decided that they would form a North-West Divisional Branch of the Master Builders' movement, subject to the approval of the State Council of the MBA and they ... didn't do anything different to what we do today.⁶⁸³

The President of the North-West Master Builders' Association at the time of affiliation was RR (Royce) Neville, of Neville Construction Pty Ltd. In 1965, Royce was elected President of the Master Builders' Federation of Australia. At the completion of his term as Federal President, Royce served as State President of the MBAT from 1967 to 1968 before being appointed Tasmania's Agent-General in London. He received Life Membership of the MBAT in 1975.

⁶⁸³ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

As well as Royce Neville, foundation members of the North-West Master Builders' Association included Gordon Ibbott, Terry Matthews and Mac Wright.⁶⁸⁴

Major building contractors operating on the North West Coast when the North-West Master Builders' Association affiliated in 1961 included Stubbs Construction, TG Matthews Pty Ltd, Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd, Joinery Products, Kingston Builders from Burnie, and Max Briggs Construction.⁶⁸⁵



**Figure 76: N-W Division Chairman's Trip to King Island 5-6 October 1983
L-R: Peter Youd, NW Chairman Paul Ibbott, Pat Sullivan**

The North West Coast suffered economically for many years. In 1969, the MBAT called on the Government to increase spending on housing and public works

⁶⁸⁴ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook, newspaper clipping September 1969; 12 September 1969; *Examiner* 12 September 1969; *Advocate* 16 September 1969

⁶⁸⁵ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

programs in the North West.⁶⁸⁶ The North-Western Divisional Chairman at this time was W Paulin.⁶⁸⁷

In recognition of the number of new members and growing interest in the area, the North-Western Division met at Smithton in March 1993. Forty members attended the meeting, presided over by Divisional Chairman John De Jong.⁶⁸⁸



Figure 77: MBA Smithton Meeting 31 March 1993
BACK: Robert Carson; Mark Portues; Abram Nes; Daryl Eastley; Wayne Greene;
Vern Little (partly obscured); Larry Newman.
FRONT: Nick Reyenga; Gary Wells; Anthony Croome; Brian Joyce

Administration

Administration of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania North-Western Division was initially undertaken from the Association's Hobart office, with the assistance of MR (Mac) Wright. Mac, a semi-retired North West builder, handled day-to-day matters.

⁶⁸⁶ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook, newspaper clipping 12 December 1969; press release 12 December 1969

⁶⁸⁷ MBAT *Bulletin* 11 August 1969

⁶⁸⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* March 1993 p.21

MR (Mac) Wright MBAT Honorary Member 1969

A foundation member of the North-West Master Builders' Association, Mac had also been President of the North-West Association and had acted as councillor and chairman. Mac had been associated with the building industry for most of his life. On his resignation from the MBAT State Council in 1969, Mac received Honorary Membership of the Association 'for services rendered as a member in the past 22 years'.⁶⁸⁹ He was the first North-Western Division member to receive the award.⁶⁹⁰ It was only the third time the award had been made.

In 1970, after forty-four years' residence in Devonport, Mac and his wife moved to Burnie. Both had been actively involved in community service in Devonport.⁶⁹¹

Mac was succeeded as Administrative Officer by Barry Gibson in August 1969. Barry was previously a contract administrator for Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd.⁶⁹² Barry resigned from this position in February 1976 to work with Kauri Timber in Devonport.⁶⁹³

Don Mapley MBAT Honorary Member 2000

Don Mapley was appointed administrative officer of the MBAT North-Western Division in March 1978.⁶⁹⁴ Born and educated in Hobart, Don said that he came to be involved with the MBAT purely by chance, although he had some knowledge of building as two of his uncles were builders. Don began work with

⁶⁸⁹ MBAT Bulletin 16 September 1969; *Building* September 1969 p.11

⁶⁹⁰ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook newspaper clipping *Examiner* 12 September 1969, newspaper clipping 6 September 1969; *Examiner* 12 September 1969; *Advocate* 16 September 1969; *Building* September 1969 p.11

⁶⁹¹ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook newspaper clipping 5 February 1970 'New Home at Burnie'

⁶⁹² *Building* August 1969 p.11; Paul Ibbott, *personal communication*, March 2005.

⁶⁹³ *Building* March 1 1976 p.16

⁶⁹⁴ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

Papermakers Ltd, Burnie, a subsidiary of APPM Ltd, as secretarial assistant in 1963 and held that appointment until appointed administrative officer with the Master Builders' Association.⁶⁹⁵ At the time he took up the position, there were about 16 MBAT members on the coast, of whom about 11 were domestic builders.⁶⁹⁶

For two years, Don was secretary of the 'Tasmanians for the Future Group', chaired by MBAT Life Member Gordon Ibbott, which lobbied unsuccessfully for the multi-million dollar Wesley Vale pulp mill project. Don was also MBAT's Housing Officer and for a decade, he represented the Association as a director of 'The People Source' (formerly North-West Training Group). Don was also instrumental in co-ordinating and raising \$120,000 in cash and kind as sponsorship from suppliers and contractors to build the hexagonal Education Centre at Eugenana, near Devonport, a major MBAT Centenary project in 1991. Don also organised various social activities for members, including interstate trips and golf events. As Secretary and Life Member of the MBAT Social Golf Club, he takes great pride in organising such gatherings as the Ulverstone Annual Golf Day. He is also curator of the MBAT's museum display which includes industry memorabilia and old photos housed in the Devonport office.⁶⁹⁷ Then the longest serving staff member, Don retired in 2000 after 22 years with the MBAT. On his retirement, he was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership. His contribution to the fellowship of the Association in business and sport was particularly acknowledged.⁶⁹⁸ Don signed off with the following words of wisdom:

⁶⁹⁵ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook undated clipping [1971]

⁶⁹⁶ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁶⁹⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.21; *Tasmanian Master Builder* May/June 2002 p.17

⁶⁹⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* May/June 2000 p.9, 17

If a man has good corn or wood or boards or pigs to sell, or can make better chairs or knives or crucibles or church organs than anybody else, you will find a broad hard beaten road to his house, though it be in the woods.⁶⁹⁹

MBAT Honorary Members from the North-Western Division

As well as Mac and Don, the North-Western Division has had several other MBAT Honorary Members.

BJ Hensby and NA Hensby MBAT Honorary Members 1970

North-Western Division members Bern and Neil Hensby received MBAT Honorary Membership in 1970, for services to the Association and the industry.⁷⁰⁰ The Hensbys were a well-known building family based at Ulverstone. Their father, Alec Hensby, a stalwart of the North-West Master Builders' Association, was made an Honorary Member of that Association in 1951.⁷⁰¹

Bruce Bannon MBAT Honorary Member 1985

Bruce Bannon, a member of the MBAT for over 21 years and a past Divisional Chairman and State Councillor, was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership shortly after announcing his retirement in 1985.⁷⁰²

Paul Ibbott recalls Bruce as one of the true characters of the industry: 'Bruce was a cheerful, albeit dry, individual who always had a good yarn or two to tell. He was a member of MBAT's social golf club for many years and a great advocate of MBAT membership within the building community'.⁷⁰³

⁶⁹⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* May/June 2000 p.8

⁷⁰⁰ *Building* September 1970, p.19.

⁷⁰¹ *Building* September 1970 p.19; *MBAT Bulletin* 8 September 1970

⁷⁰² *Tasmanian Building Journal* November 1985 p.14

⁷⁰³ Paul Ibbott, personal communication, March 2005



**Figure 78: Bruce and Zeta Bannon June 1981
MBAT North-Western Division Annual Dinner, Devonport**

Russ Richards Honorary Member 1984



**Figure 79: N-W Divisional Chairman Paul Ibbott presenting Russ Richards (right)
with his MBAT Honorary Membership**

Russ Richards, a member of the North-Western Division for 20 years, was made an MBAT Honorary member on his retirement in 1984. He was presented with his award at the North-Western Division Annual Meeting in 1984.⁷⁰⁴

Vic O'Brien MBAT Honorary Member 1985

At the MBAT State Council meeting in May 1985, Vic O'Brien was awarded Honorary Membership of the Association. Vic had given a lifetime of service to the building industry, and played a prominent part in Association affairs over a number of years. He served as MBAT North-Western Chairman and State Councillor. Always interested in the educational aspects of the building industry, he was an active member of the Australian Institute of Building. At the time of his award, Vic was President of the AIB, Tasmanian Chapter. Not long after receiving his Honorary Membership, Vic retired from Stubbs Constructions Pty Ltd of Burnie, where he was a senior executive and a long-time employee.⁷⁰⁵



Figure 80: Vic O'Brien (centre) being presented with his Honorary Membership Certificate by MBAT President Gerry Verdouw with N-W Division Chairman Royce Fairbrother at left

⁷⁰⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1984 pp.18, 22

⁷⁰⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1985 p.15-16; July 1985 p.18

Leo Smith MBAT Honorary Member 1989

Leo Smith, a house and light commercial builder in the Devonport area for over 35 years, joined the MBAT as a Builder Member in September 1974. For several years prior to his retirement, he undertook the maintenance contracts for Government housing in the North West. Leo was always a staunch supporter of MBAT within the community, and was responsible for the recruitment of a number of members. He had an excellent record for meeting attendance. Leo was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in 1989.⁷⁰⁶



Figure 81: MBAT President John Gretton, MBAT Honorary Member Leo Smith, Stewart Ingles N-W Division Dinner 1989

Elvin Dick MBAT Honorary Member 1996

Elvin Dick was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in 1996 in recognition of his contribution to the Association and the building industry in general over 43 years. Elvin served as Divisional Chairman from 1988 to 1990 and was a State Councillor for many years, as well as serving on various State Committees.⁷⁰⁷

⁷⁰⁶ Paul Ibbott, *personal communication*, March 2005; *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1989 pp.18-19

⁷⁰⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.24



Figure 82: Elvin Dick accepting MBAT Honorary Membership 14 June 1996 Burnie, MBAT President John De Jong to his left.

Ray Tavner MBAT Honorary Member 1997



Figure 83: MBAT President John De Jong presenting Ray Tavner with Honorary Membership. Terry Byrne in background.

Ray Tavner, described as a MBAT stalwart, received MBAT Honorary Membership in 1997, after being forced to retire due to ill-health. Divisional Chairman John Beswick paid tribute to Ray, noting that he had been 'a staunch member for 24 years'.⁷⁰⁸ Ray served on the North-Western Division Management

⁷⁰⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.26

Committee, Housing Committee, State Council and Executive, and was Divisional Chairman for two years from 1995.⁷⁰⁹

Len Reasons MBAT Honorary Member 1997

Len Reasons from Smithton joined the MBAT on 12 September 1969 and operated in the Circular Head district from that time until his retirement. While he did not serve on any MBAT Committees, he regularly participated in Association activities, especially in the earlier years of his membership. He was a long-standing member of the MBAT Social Golf Club and a regular player at the Hornibrook Golf Tournaments. MBAT President, John De Jong, in presenting Len with his certificate, paid tribute to his contribution to the industry, particularly in the Circular Head district.⁷¹⁰



Figure 84: Len Reasons (left) receiving MBA Honorary Membership from MBA State President John De Jong

⁷⁰⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.26

⁷¹⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1997 p.29

Len, who had an excellent reputation as a building contractor, was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in 1997, shortly after announcing his retirement.

Don Mapley noted:

I've got to say that the work that Len Reasons turned out was equal to anything I've ever seen ... he'd adapt so easily that, at the time, around about 1980, that bricklayers were scarce and Len had never laid a brick in his life and he had to get on with this house, quite a big house and he taught himself how to lay bricks and you couldn't tell the difference between the way that he did it – the quality of his work – ... as opposed to an ordinary bricklayer.⁷¹¹

Maurice Best Honorary Member 2002

Maurice Best, who lived and worked on King Island, was awarded Honorary Membership of the MBAT in 2002 for his contribution to the building industry, particularly on King Island. He was described as 'one of the Association's staunchest supporters' and it was noted that 'no award has been more thoroughly deserved'.⁷¹² Originally from Ulverstone, Maurice was recognised as a 'very reputable member [and a] great ambassador of the Association on King Island. [He was] highly regarded as a builder ... both commercially and domestic'.⁷¹³

MBAT State Presidents from the North-West Division

North-Western Division members elected as State President of the MBAT include Royce Neville (1967-1968); Gordon Ibbott (1974-1976); John Gretton (1987-1989); Royce Fairbrother (1991-1993); John De Jong (1995-1997) and Paul Ibbott, son of Gordon (1999-2001).⁷¹⁴

⁷¹¹ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷¹² *Tasmanian Master Builder* Summer 2002 p.5

⁷¹³ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷¹⁴ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

Royce Fairbrother, MBAT State President 1991-1993

Don Mapley recalled the outstanding success of local builder Royce Fairbrother, from a North West farming family:

Royce Fairbrother, well, he's quite a fairy tale story ... when I first joined the MBA, Royce was [a] quite small domestic builder and then [he won] his first big commercial job ... he always wanted to become a commercial builder but he took his time about it and won a contract to build the Ulverstone Civic Centre. And Royce said, "Well, that will be my front door", he wanted to do a good job of that, and then to put his name before the Government ... and as a result ... he did a very good job ... they are still excited about the [building] ... that was the start of something big for Royce. He is now, I think, regarded as the biggest builder in Tasmania ... it wasn't a rags to riches story but it was certainly a rise to the top.⁷¹⁵

RT and DJ Fairbrother have won numerous awards including a MBAT 'Pride in the Job' for the International Hotel in Launceston in 1990.⁷¹⁶

John De Jong, State President 1995-1997

John De Jong grew up in a building family before graduating from university as an architect. His parents emigrated from Holland and settled in Ulverstone, where his father Theo and Theo's brother John, established 'De Jong and Sons'. John later established his own building company, known as 'John De Jong Builder'. Theo continued to operate as 'De Jong and Sons,' and was joined in the business by his son, John.⁷¹⁷ John continued to operate the family business following the retirement of his father Theo.

⁷¹⁵ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷¹⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 p.16

⁷¹⁷ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport



Figure 85: MBAT North-Western Division Dinner 1994
L-R MBAT N-W Divisional Chairman John De Jong, State Executive Director Des Hodgman,
MBAT State President Greg Williams

According to Don Mapley, there were several Dutch builders on the North West Coast over the years:

They used to call Ulverstone ... 'Dutch Town' ... the Dutch people were pretty entrepreneurial and when they bought their furniture out from Holland, they were in these big pine packing cases and out of those packing cases, they would get ... a lot of their materials to build a house. And, in fact, there still exists today over West Ulverstone, the exterior cladding ... built from these packing cases, commonly called a weatherboard ... they were the original entrepreneurial builders at Ulverstone.⁷¹⁸

Paul Ibbott, State President 1999-2001

Paul Ibbott, son of MBAT Past President Gordon Ibbott, was elected State President in 1999. At the time of his election, Paul was Managing Director of Devonport-based building company Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd⁷¹⁹

⁷¹⁸ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷¹⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1999 p.9



Figure 86: Gordon Ibbott, State President 1974-1976, with son Paul, State President 1999-2000

During his term in office, Paul was a strong advocate of the increased professionalism of the MBAT and its members, and was responsible for overseeing the implementation of the first formally adopted Strategic Plan which included accreditation requirements for the membership. He also initiated substantial remodelling of the MBAT Constitution, aimed at making the MBAT a more inclusive industry organisation, representative of the total industry constituency.⁷²⁰

Quiet Achievers

Don Mapley suggested that many of the North-Western Division members were 'quiet achievers', happy to support the Association but not seek office. One such quiet achiever was Elvin Dick, formerly of Burline Constructions, who was later awarded honorary membership of the Association. Michael Sims and Lee

⁷²⁰ Paul Ibbott, *personal communication*, March 2005

Holland, of Sims and Holland, commercial and domestic builders who used to do a lot of work for Goliath Cement, were also 'quiet achievers'. Another was Len Reasons from Smithton.⁷²¹

Yet another in Don Mapley's long list of North-Western Division 'quiet achievers' was Trevor Cowley, a 'valued and popular member' for over 23 years. Don Mapley recalled that, 'he had a good reputation as a domestic builder in Wynyard. He was a quiet achiever, an innovative builder'.⁷²² During that time, Trevor trained a number of apprentices, some of whom later became MBAT members. Prior to his death in 1996, he was an active member of the MBAT Social Golf Club, and, according to Don Mapley, he 'always enjoyed a bet'.⁷²³ Malcolm Robertson was another North-Western Division quiet achiever, who retired after 50 years in the industry. At the North-Western Division Annual Dinner in June 2003, David Stubbs, Managing Director of Stubbs Constructions, acknowledged Malcolm's service to the industry. At the age of 15, in 1954, Malcolm started work with MK Parnham of Zeehan. In 1956, he moved to Ulverstone and completed his time with Maurie Best. He then moved to Stubbs Pty Ltd in Penguin as Head Foreman and progressed to No.1 Project Supervisor. As Apprentice Master, he was instrumental in changing the lives of many apprentices; about 150 boys passed through his hands, many of whom later became members of the MBAT. Wayne Licht, currently Construction Manager at Stubbs, was one of the apprentices he trained. Malcolm set up the Service Recognition Club at Stubbs.⁷²⁴

⁷²¹ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷²² Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷²³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1996 p.25

⁷²⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2003 p.12

Robert 'Nipper' Walters



Figure 87: Nipper Walters of Latrobe
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

In 1990, Devonport-based construction firm Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd acknowledged 40 years continuous service by employee Robert 'Nipper' Walters. 'Nipper' recalled many changes to the building industry 'since opening his first pay packet of 22 shillings and sixpence and sixpence (about \$2.25), which included a 4 'bob' (shilling) tool allowance'.⁷²⁵ He noted:

Having seen the benefits to the State and the Industry of significant developments during this period, many in which he had been actively involved, he is sincere in his regret that there has been no middle ground in the current furore over utilisation of our natural resources which would permit balanced development to continue in a sustainable and environmentally acceptable manner. Without these developments, opportunities for employment and, most importantly, training, shall wane, to the most severe detriment of the State and Nation as a whole.⁷²⁶

Described as 'an industry legend', 'Nipper' retired in 1996 at the age of 62, after 47 years with Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd. 'Nipper' spent his early childhood at

⁷²⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1990 p.18

⁷²⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1990 p.18

Bothwell before moving to Devonport, where he did his apprenticeship training, which in those days, was done at night. The MBAT journal recorded:

Mr Walters, of Latrobe, has finally hung up his overalls after a lifetime in the building industry. For the past 20 years, he has been Ibbott's construction manager, overseeing the 'nuts and bolts' of the company's jobs. He left school at 15 to begin an apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner with Gordon Ibbott in 1949, and he remained there. He was the company's first apprentice and is the second longest serving employee in the company's 25-year club behind founder Mr Gordon Ibbott. Mr Walters has seen the company grow from a relatively small house building company to a major construction entity in Tasmania. He has been the company's 'apprentice master' for the past 20 years and assisted in training 120 apprentices. Managing Director Paul Ibbott said Mr Walters' retirement would be a loss for both the company and the industry.⁷²⁷

Paul Ibbott added, 'He has been a great mentor and colleague to me personally and to the many employees and apprentices he has been involved with'.⁷²⁸ As the company's Apprentice Master, 'Nipper' trained about 120 apprentices, including State award winners of industry prizes. Some of the major projects with which Nipper was involved included the development of the original Wesley Vale Paper Plant; development of Coles Supermarket, K-Marts and Woolworths stores in Burnie and Devonport; water treatment plants at Ulverstone and Penguin for the North-West Region Water Authority; coal handling and boiler installation at APPM Burnie; power stations on King and Flinders islands; development of Savage River Mine; new maternity facilities at the Launceston General Hospital; and the new Visyboard factory in Devonport. The projects took 'Nipper' to all parts of Tasmanian from Strathgordon in the south, to King & Flinders islands in the north and anywhere in between, including East and West Coasts and Central Highlands: 'His average of

⁷²⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1996 p.10

⁷²⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1996 p.10

50,000km per year in supervising the Company's projects would take a lot to beat'.⁷²⁹

Paul Ibbott, the Company's Managing Director, noted:

Nip, of course, started with the company before I was born so I have spent all of my working life learning from him about many of the industry's secrets and mysteries. He has been a great mentor and colleague to me personally and to the many employees and apprentices he has been involved with over the years. I dare say he has taught a few architects and engineers a thing or two also. Nip has been widely acclaimed for his knowledge and is highly respected by his colleagues throughout the industry.⁷³⁰

Harold Neville, Special Award 1988



Figure 88: Harold Neville, with wife Phyllis, with his MBAT Special Award July 1988

In 1988, a special MBAT award was given to Harold Neville in recognition of his contribution to the building industry over 46 years. Harold's entry into the building industry was as a mill hand at Mount Barrow Timber Mill for FH Haines. At 21, he moved to Burns Creek Mill and remained there as manager until 1937. While at Burns Creek, he met and married his wife, Phyllis. He moved to Devonport in 1938 to work for FH Haines Pty Ltd and in 1951 was

⁷²⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1996 p.10

⁷³⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1996 p.10

promoted to Sales Manager. He moved to the Don Road site where he continued as Manager, working for Luck & Haines, and then Gunns Timber until his retirement in March 1979. At the time of the award, Harold's son was a local building contractor and his grandson, Brad, was a carpenter working for his father.⁷³¹

Patrick Halley 'Service to Industry Award' 1990

In July 1990, Patrick Halley, retired Director of Burline Constructions, was presented with the prestigious 'Service to Industry Award' in recognition of his 47 years of service to the building industry on the North West Coast. Pat commenced his working life with WM Williams & Son and completed his technical education under Horace White. In presenting the award, Divisional Chairman Elvin Dick noted that Pat would always be remembered for his ability to devise ways of solving problems and for his competitive nature: 'When employed by Kelly & Ryan after the war, Pat completed 13-6 light window frames in one day, a record which we understand he stills hold'.⁷³² Pat was responsible for the supervision and construction of numerous building projects on the North West Coast, including the fitters and welders shop at APPM, the Ulverstone Hospital, the Savings Bank of Tasmania at Devonport, the Smithton Police Station, the Tasmcats Beef Processing Work at Camdale, the Top of the Town Hotel, the Plaza Arcade, the Shearwater Condominiums and City Square.⁷³³

Neville Bingham, Order of Australia 2002

North-Western Division Chairman, Neville Bingham, was recognised in June 2002 for his community service when he was awarded an Order of Australia

⁷³¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1988 p.22

⁷³² *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 p.18

⁷³³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 p.18

Medal. At the time of the award, Neville, an Association member of long-standing, was Vice-President and member of the Investment Committee. He had been awarded life membership of the Tasmanian Volunteer Fire Brigades Association and was also an active member of the Devonport Uniting Church.⁷³⁴



Figure 89: MBAT Life and Honorary Members, North-Western Division Dinner 1985
BACK (L-R): Max Bennett, Ewen Nichols, Bill Shields, Keith Crowe, Vic O'Brien, Mac Wright, Doug Saul
FRONT: Gordon Ibbott, Aubrey Luck, Gerry Walters, Jan Hendricks

The Builders and their Buildings on the North West Coast

Members of the North-Western Division have been involved in a wide range of building projects.

T.G. Matthews Pty. Ltd.

Terry Matthews, the son of a jeweller, was born in Latrobe on 15 July 1923. After attending school in Latrobe and Devonport, Terry began a building apprenticeship with Mr Claude Priest, completing it three years before the outbreak of World War II. He joined up, spending three and a half years

⁷³⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Winter 2002 p.5

overseas. He completed his apprenticeship with Jack Harris and worked with him for about two years, and also with Gordon Ibbott learning cottage work. After marrying, Terry decided to 'go out on his own'.⁷³⁵ His father had Italian prisoners-of-war on his orchard, and Terry formed a company, Matthews Zolati, with an Italian concrete worker. The partnership lasted about three or four years before it mutually dissolved. Terry then formed TG Mathews Pty Ltd, concentrating on industrial buildings and working on projects such as the Forth River Weir and Treatment Plant, APPM, Wesley Vale and Goliath. A major challenge was the APPM Pump Station on the Mersey River, 'where we had a bit of a problem with explosive left in the rock'.⁷³⁶ In January 1970, the business suffered a major setback when its Devonport depot was destroyed by fire.⁷³⁷

According to Terry, his firm proudly maintained a tradition of keeping their employees for long periods: 'we ... looked after them ... and set the example ... Graham Keating was about the only key person we ever lost'.⁷³⁸ Company loyalty was very important. Many employees had started doing their apprenticeships with the firm, rising through the ranks to become estimators: 'carpenters or tradesmen make the best estimators'.⁷³⁹

Terry continued to work long after he needed to, because he enjoyed working:

I wonder what I'd do if I didn't have it. But, you know, I don't kill myself workwise but overall I keep ... a good overall eye on everything ... I don't get involved in tenders and details but just to make sure that everything runs right and people do the right thing ... that's the experience you gain over the years. The young people tend to rush in without a thought and, "we'll do this, we'll do

⁷³⁵ Interview with TG Matthews 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷³⁶ Interview with TG Matthews 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷³⁷ MBAT North-West Division scrapbook: *Advocate* 27 January 1970

⁷³⁸ Interview with TG Matthews 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷³⁹ Interview with TG Matthews 15 May 2004 Devonport

that", but over the years, you find that from experience you are able to make decisions.⁷⁴⁰

Terry advised young builders to join the MBAT: 'I think the MBA in their own field have done mighty job. Chris Atkins is a good mentor ... a necessary part of the industry really. Don't need to say much more [than that]'.⁷⁴¹

Another well-known North West building firm was Calder Carpentry and Joinery. Don Mapley recalled:

George Calder, a little bit of a story there. George was an Englishman came to live in Burnie – no, a Scotsman I think he might be. And George did a job, answered an ad in Forth for the ... part restoration of a very old house ... one of the oldest homes in Forth, and he gave a quotation to stay for a fortnight and he stayed ... on the job for 11 months. ... some of the fitting-out he had to [do] was of architraves ... in the old days of course, they were all hand-planed, and he didn't have the profile to do the job and he came here and found one in our museum ... he borrowed that ... he was very good at restoration work.⁷⁴²

Joinery Products, too, according to Don Mapley, were 'quite a success story':⁷⁴³

they were ... formed by ... Rex Imlach and Alan Kelly ... the two fathers, invited their sons into the business ... Brian Imlach and Chris Kelly, and they now are one of the biggest joiners in the State and have done lots of work in Sydney, Melbourne, kitchens and those types of things, and also fitting out hotels and motels.⁷⁴⁴

Another notable North West builder was John Gretton, of John Gretton Construction, who was Divisional Chairman from 1980 to 1982 and MBAT State President from 1987-1989. He was awarded MBAT Life Membership in 1999.⁷⁴⁵

⁷⁴⁰ Interview with TG Matthews 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷⁴¹ Interview with TG Matthews 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷⁴² Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷⁴³ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷⁴⁴ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁷⁴⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1999 p.9

North-Western Divisional Chairmen

RR Neville	1961-1962
MR Wright	1962-1964
ND Luck	1964-1966
VW O'Brien	1966-1968
W Paulin	1968-1970
BJ Cleaver	1970-1972
GG Ibbott	1972-1974
MA Briggs	1974-1976
BR Bannon	1976-1978
GF Keating	1978-1980
BJ Gretton	1980-1982
PR Ibbott	1982-1984
RT Fairbrother	1984-1986
CJ Kelly	1986-1988
E Dick	1988-1990
AM Croome	1990-1991
J De Jong	1991-1994
R Tavner	1994-1996
John Beswick	1996-1998
Neville Bingham	1998-2003
Wayne Licht	2003-

REGIONS: THE SOUTH

Southern Division of the MBAT 1961

The Southern Division of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania was created in 1961 when the North-West Master Builders' Association merged with the MBAT. Initially, the Southern Division provided eight delegates to the MBAT State Council and the North-Western Division, four.

The history of the Southern Division of the MBAT has been inexorably linked with that of the State Association.

MBAT Honorary Members from the Southern Division

Les King MBAT Honorary Member 1968

In May 1968, the Master Builders' Association conferred Honorary Membership upon LJ (Les) King, well-known throughout the Tasmanian Building Industry for many years as the Manager of EA Watts Pty Ltd. Les came to Tasmania in 1952 and was an extremely active and conscientious member of the Association. At the time of his award, he had been recently promoted and transferred to the Melbourne office of EA Watts. In presenting Les with his award, MBAT President, Royce Neville, complimented him on his loyalty to the Association and on his continued interest in Association affairs, both official and social.⁷⁴⁶

Ewen Nichols MBAT Honorary Member 1982

Ewen Nichols, as already noted, was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in 1982.

⁷⁴⁶ RG Bloomfield, *personal communication*, 25 March 2004. See also Journal June 1968 p.10.



**Figure 90: Ewen Nichols being presented with MBAT Honorary Membership 1982
by RG Bloomfield**

Keith Hewitt MBAT Honorary Member 1984

Keith Hewitt was presented with MBAT Honorary Membership at the State Council Christmas luncheon on 14 December 1984.⁷⁴⁷

Brian Freeman MBAT Honorary Member 2001

Brian Freeman was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in August 2001, the year he retired. His involvement in apprentice training was especially noted.⁷⁴⁸

Brian was born in Hobart on 10 June 1935. His father was an engineer with the Zinc company. Brian's family had always been involved in boats and he was drawn to boatbuilding. He completed an apprenticeship as a boatbuilder with Max Creese at Battery Point, studying carpentry and joinery as there was no technical college course for boatbuilding. At the time, wooden boats were being phased out in favour of fibreglass boats. Max built a boat in his backyard at West Hobart. He moved into commercial and residential works, when he was

⁷⁴⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1985 p.14

⁷⁴⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.7; *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1993 p.20

asked by Jack Bridge, a builder working for Max Creese to help on a war service home, in Morton Place in Sandy Bay, in 1957. This was the start of Bridge and Freeman Pty Ltd, who did mostly residential and a mixture of commercial building. Later, the company built eight-storey units on Marieville Esplanade. One of the biggest projects undertaken by Bridge and Freeman was the Port Huon Cool Stores. Jack Bridge retired about 1975. One of Brian's favorite buildings, the Queen Victoria Home, was completed just before he retired. He also worked on the refurbishment of the west wing of Government House and restoration of cottages there. ⁷⁴⁹

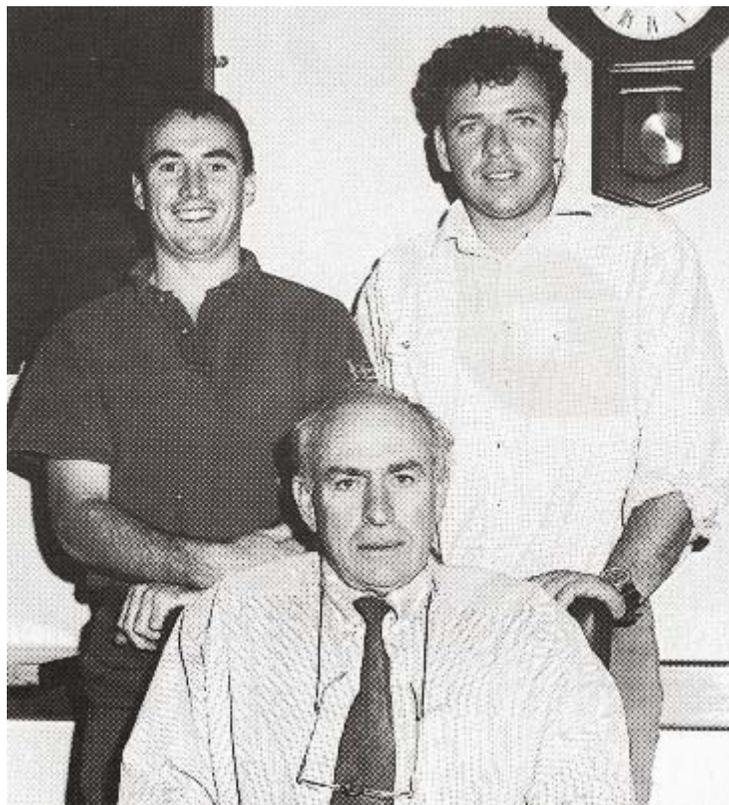


Figure 91: MBAT member Brian Freeman (seated) with two of his apprentices Paul Burnell (left) and Julian Freeman (right) Hobart Technical College Award night May 1993

⁷⁴⁹ Interview with Brian Freeman 3 May 2004 Hobart

Brian, then managing Director of BW Freeman Pty Ltd, was named winner of the Hobart City Council Australia Day Citizen Award in 1984. Brian won the award for his services to youth, particularly in hockey and yachting with the Derwent Sailing Squadron. He was also active in raising money for disadvantaged children.⁷⁵⁰

Quiet Achievers

Arthur Franz, a MBAT member for over 31 years, died in 1999. Arthur successfully ran A and B Builders, operating in the south and specialising in the domestic construction area. He was remembered for his dry sense of humour, quick wit and strong will.⁷⁵¹

⁷⁵⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1984 p.11

⁷⁵¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1999 p.8

Southern Divisional Chairmen

TM Lipscombe	1961-1964
TJ Andrewartha	1964-1965
MN Bennett	1965-1967
WL Shields	1967-1969
LR Hale	1969-1971
K Crowe	1971-1973
GJ Verdouw	1973-1975
JJ Rogerson	1975-1976
DJ Wiss	1976-1978
RG Bloomfield	1978-1980
GE Walters	1980-1981
M Wyatt	1981-1983
TV Talbot	1983-1985
DJ Reid	1985-1989
GD Williams	1989-1991
IC Mansfield	1991-1993
IE Bowman	1993-1995
AL Winter	1995-1997
GF Keating	1997-2000
DA Moody	2000-2003
JA Rosevear	2003-

REGIONS: THE NORTH

Northern Division of the MBAT 1975

The Northern Division of the Master Builders' Association was formed on 12 September 1975. Before this, there was a separate northern association, believed to have started in 1918.⁷⁵² The original northern association was known as the Master Builders' Association of Launceston. The northern group remained separate when the North-West Master Builders' Association, established in 1946, affiliated with the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania in 1961.

Grattan R Hutton, who died in 1958, was a Life Member and Foundation President of the northern association. He was also a President of the Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Builders. He joined J and T Gunn Pty Ltd as an apprentice and became manager of the building section in 1926. On the formation of J and T Gunn Builders Pty Ltd in 1950, he became manager and director, retiring as manager in 1955. He was also chairman of Hutton Bricks Pty Ltd, which he formed with his brother, Stan, in 1946.⁷⁵³

Thomas Orr was a member of the northern master builders' association in Launceston in the 1930s, but his membership lapsed. His firm joined the statewide organisation in the 1970s.⁷⁵⁴

⁷⁵² Max Seymour, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

⁷⁵³ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* August 1958

⁷⁵⁴ Interview with Allan Orr 7 June 2004 Launceston

Northern Division of the MBAT 1975

After many years of unsuccessful negotiation, the northern Tasmanian builders' association decided in 1975 to affiliate with the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania after a membership recruiting campaign in the north of the State. Reg Walley became involved with the Master Builders' Association at this time

I first got involved with the MBA when there was a notice came round for a meeting to be held at the Masonic Club in Launceston to meet a delegation of MBA members from the Devonport Master Builders ... I can remember going to that meeting ... it was chaired by Mr Gordon Ibbott and some of his associates.⁷⁵⁵

Reg said that he went to the meeting because of his interest in the building trade:

Periodically I came across articles about the MBA Tasmania through journals that were available at that time and reading some of those articles ... I just became interested in the activities.⁷⁵⁶

On Friday, 12 September 1975, the State Council of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania resolved to form a 'Northern Division'. Council agreed to the formation following the acceptance into the MBAT of some 30 major north and north-eastern builders.

The inaugural meeting of the Northern Division of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania was held in Launceston on Wednesday, 18 February, 1976. Launceston builder, Paul Barth, was elected Foundation Chairman; Doug Saul, Vice-Chairman; and Committee Members were LE Smith; RE Dent; J Siejka, TJ Vimpany and DA Dickenson. Councillors appointed to represent the Northern Division at State Council Meetings were P Barth, LE Smith, D Saul and RE Dent.⁷⁵⁷

⁷⁵⁵ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁷⁵⁶ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁷⁵⁷ *Building* March 1976 p.17

The first regular meeting of the Northern Division was held in Launceston on Wednesday 24 March 1976, and the first Annual General Meeting was held on 28 July 1976. The first regular meeting place was the Colonial Motor Inn and the first Annual Dinner was held there on Friday 10 September 1976.



Figure 92: Don Dickenson, MBAT Northern Division Chairman, with prospective members Steve Cherry (left) and George Rowlings

In 1984, the Northern Division of the MBAT, recognising the membership potential of the East Coast, held a recruitment meeting at St Helens. A number of Northern Division members were living or working on the East Coast, including Northern Division Chairman, Don Dickenson and MBAT Honorary member Len Smith. Other Northern Division members who attended the meeting included Jan Siejka of J & M Siejka Continental Builders, David Tregaskis of Hinman Wright and Manser Pty Ltd; Tom Vimpany, of TJ & B Vimpany & Son; Noel Pattie, of Bushby Bros. Builders Pty Ltd; Barry Hall, of BC

& GL Hall; and Joh Hidding and Fred Bosveld, manager and foreman of M & T Hidding.⁷⁵⁸



Figure 93: Jan Siejka, Joh Hidding, Len Smith, John Barnett, Steve Cherry, Tom Vimpany, George Rowlings, MBAT Recruitment meeting St Helens June 1984

MBAT Northern Division Administration

In 1977, Tony Stephenson was appointed Administrative Officer. In May 1979, after Tony's resignation, Craig Peters filled the position. He was followed by MJ (Max) Seymour, appointed in May 1983. Max was later Regional Manager.

Max Seymour

On 27 July 1983, Max, the son of a builder, joined the MBAT from William Adams & Co., steel distributors and merchants. Max held several positions with that company, including branch accountant, and inventory and distribution manager, responsible for three outlets in Tasmania. He recalled that when he first joined the industry, his accounting background proved invaluable: 'my first

⁷⁵⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1984 pp.22-24

exposure to some of the changes in the industry was the Prescribed Payments System, or PPS, introduced in 1983; I was able to assist many members understand this new regime'.⁷⁵⁹

When Max joined the Association, membership was low and meetings often lacked a quorum. In 1993, the journal wrote about Max:

Under the guidance of the then Chairman, Don Dickenson (later State President & Life Member), Max has been responsible for bringing together many of the younger and older members of the Division. Monthly general meetings have been real highlights due to his ability to arrange timely advice for members on many aspects of Building Industry changes. Likewise who will ever forget the Annual Dinners – they became so large the Albert Hall was needed to hold the functions. The balloons, the speakers and acts. Yes, it was a Harley leaving the hall that night!⁷⁶⁰

In 2004, members of the Association gathered at a special function in Launceston to mark Max's contribution over 21 years of service to the MBAT. In an earlier interview, Max recalled:

Over the period I have seen many ups and downs, boom and bust, for which the industry is known. I first joined the Northern Region as Administrative Officer. At the time Don Mapley, from Devonport, had assisted the Northern members for some two years when no officer, only an office receptionist, maintained the open doors. Don and the Chairman of the time, Don Dickenson, helped me understand what the industry was about – you certainly meet some characters in the industry.

The Association has always had its place at the table in many industry related committees, forums etc. Shortly after joining the MBA, I was appointed as its representative to the TAFE College Council in Launceston, eventually becoming its Chairman for some five years before the formation of the current format of one TAFE Board for the whole state.⁷⁶¹

At the time that Max joined the MBAT, it operated a Group Apprenticeship Scheme among its members, as many other Master Builder Associations did

⁷⁵⁹ Max Seymour, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

⁷⁶⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1993 p.33

⁷⁶¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.6

around Australia. Two apprentices under the scheme completed their time late in 1983. The Launceston City Council, as part of its youth program, investigated a similar scheme in 1985; Lance Barnard, an alderman at the time, was instrumental in its formation. Max was asked to participate because of his accounting and wage expertise; he was appointed to the Board in 1987 and elected Chair in 1996, a position he currently fills. In 1998, he was elected Chair of Group Training Australia, a collective of 150 group training organisations employing some 39,000 apprentices. He held this position until 2004.⁷⁶²

Max, a talented athlete, football player and umpire, was a professional runner and Tasmanian representative. In 1972, at the Stawell Easter meet, he won the 220-yard race. In December the same year, he also won the Devonport Gift, a 400 metre race, followed days later by the Burnie Gift on New Years Day 1973: the first to achieve such a feat.⁷⁶³

MBAT Honorary Members from the Northern Division

There have been a number of MBAT Honorary Members from the MBAT Northern Division.

Len Smith MBAT Honorary Member 1981

LE (Len) Smith was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in 1981.⁷⁶⁴ Active in the Association for many years, Len resigned in 1980 upon his retirement from building. He had a long association with Hinman, Wright & Manser Pty Ltd in Launceston, and was the firm's representative on the MBAT.⁷⁶⁵

⁷⁶² Max Seymour, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

⁷⁶³ Max Seymour, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

⁷⁶⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* October 1981 pp.20-22

⁷⁶⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1980 p.14



Figure 94: Len Smith congratulated on MBAT Honorary Membership by Divisional Chairmen David Tregaskis (Northern, left), John Gretton (N-W, second from right) and Malcolm Wyatt (South, right) September 1981

Len started work as an apprentice carpenter with Hinman, Wright & Manser Pty Ltd in 1938. In 1940, he joined the AIF and saw active service in New Guinea and Bougainville. On his discharge in 1946, he returned to his apprenticeship. He completed his Builders' Trade Course at the Launceston Technical College. Continuing with Hinman, Wright & Manser Pty Ltd, Len was promoted to leading hand in 1947. He was job foreman from 1948-1958, working only on large projects; projects co-ordinator from October 1958; and Building Department Manager in 1959. At the time of his retirement in 1980, he was Managing Director.

Len joined the MBAT in 1976 and was a State Councillor at the time of his retirement. He had previously been President of the Launceston Master Builders' Association from 1968-1970. As a supporter of education in the building industry, he was an active member of the Australian Institute of Building, joining in 1965 and attaining Associate status in 1974. He was Vice-

President of the AIB Tasmanian Chapter from 1976-1978 before serving two years as President. He was also elected a Fellow of the Institute. Putting his belief in education for builders into practice, Len completed courses in Supervision I and II and Management I at the Launceston Technical College. In 1956, he was invited to join the College Council. He served as Chairman from 1968-1969, and was still on the Council when he retired. He was also appointed to the Board of Technical Education from 1969-1970. Len joined Launceston Legacy in 1960, and was President of the Fly Fishers Club of Tasmania from 1972-1974. Now 85 and in good health, Len remains an active golfer and fly fisherman, enjoying his weekly golf at St Helens, and regular fly fishing trips to the Lakes.⁷⁶⁶

Bill Shegog MBAT Honorary Associate Member 1987

At the December 1987 meeting of the MBAT State Council, Councillors unanimously agreed to the recommendation of the Northern Division that Bill Shegog be conferred MBAT Honorary Associate Membership in recognition of his long association with the building industry in Tasmania. Bill, Northern Manager of Laminex Industries, retired on 22 December 1987. He was also a stalwart of the MBAT Social Golf Club.⁷⁶⁷

Paul Barth MBAT Honorary Member 1990

Paul Barth was born in 1926 in Zurich, Switzerland, and trained as a building technician. He migrated to Launceston in 1949 and started building in 1950, working on his own initially. He started building 'spec' houses in Kings Meadows before moving on to house building. He eventually made connections with architects' offices, which enabled him to diversify. About 1960, he was well

⁷⁶⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1980 p.20; Max Seymour, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

⁷⁶⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1988 p.14

enough known to tender for projects other than houses, including classrooms (Scotch Oakburn College), the completion of the chapel at Scotch Oakburn, nursing homes (Salvation Army Home in Prospect Presbyterian Homes for the Aged at Norwood), churches (Free Reform Church; Lutheran Church in St John's Street) and commercial buildings and retail premises in the city. Paul's most challenging construction was the St Andrew's Kirk extension as the design needed to match the existing building. Paul liked having input into design, and was able to achieve this with some inner city redevelopment buildings.

Paul was initially involved with the Launceston Master Builders' Association in the 1950s, and became President about 1962-1963. He initiated the change of name to Northern Tasmanian Master Builders' Association.⁷⁶⁸

Doug Saul MBAT Honorary Member 1983

Doug Saul was awarded MBAT Honorary membership in 1983. Doug first became involved with the MBAT in the 1950s as representative of S Haunstrup & Co Pty Ltd. The company became part of Dillingham Australia Ltd and when they renewed their membership of the MBA in 1972, Doug officially assumed an active role in the Association. He became a member of the Industrial Committee in 1972 and was elected as a Southern Division Councillor in 1973, continuing to serve State Council until his retirement in 1982.

When the MBAT formed a Northern Division in 1975, Doug, a resident of Launceston, transferred his membership to that Division. He was elected Northern Division Chairman in 1977-1978 and 1978-1979, and Association

⁷⁶⁸ Interview with Paul Barth 9 June 2004 Launceston

President in 1980-1981. He also served as a Federal Councillor of the MBFA and as the Associations' representative on the National Industrial Council and as a member of the State Building Trades Industrial Board.

In 1983, he was appointed Director of the Australian Federation of Construction Contractors in Tasmania. An engineer, Doug loved his weekly game of golf and most weekends he spent sailing. At one stage, he was Commodore of the Tamar Yacht Club. He died on 4 January 2000.⁷⁶⁹



Figure 95: Doug Saul

Allan Orr MBAT Honorary Member 1993

Allan Orr was awarded honorary membership of the Master Builders Association because of his contribution to the Association and the building

⁷⁶⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* February/March 2000 p.8; *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1983 p.16

industry generally.⁷⁷⁰ His retirement in June 1993 ended 107 years of the Orr family building in Tasmania.⁷⁷¹

Reg Walley MBAT Honorary Member 1997

A builder's son born in 1931 and educated at Glen Dhu, Reg Walley did his apprenticeship with J & T Gunns Builders in Launceston. Just one week after completing his apprenticeship, Reg left Gunns and went into partnership with his brother, Max, for about four years. Reg then worked on his own for five years. He then joined EA Watts for twelve months, but resumed working on his own, in partnership with his wife, Valerie. Reg planned to retire in 1993 but instead took on a job as maintenance carpenter at the woodchip plant at Long Reach, remaining there nearly ten years. His building was about 60 per cent commercial, and he worked primarily as a building contractor.⁷⁷²



**Figure 96: Northern Division Dinner 1996
L-R: Reg Walley, Allan Orr, Julie and Mike Hardacre**

⁷⁷⁰ Interview with A Orr 7 June 2004 Launceston; *Tasmanian Master Builder* November/December 1993 p.26

⁷⁷¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* November/December 1993 p.26

⁷⁷² Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

Reg worked on several projects for Launceston City Council, including the Killafaddy Abattoirs, which Reg considered his most challenging: it was

a contract ... to reconstruct the whole of sheep killing area and because of the location the abattoirs had to be shifted to another location which meant we were on a strict time limit and to carry out the project there was a lot of organizing and keeping to time. Because of the conditions of the contract if I ran a day late I was on a penalty of \$500, which was a lot of money back in those days. But we completed on time.⁷⁷³

He worked on projects for Lilydale Council, including the Mowbray Swimming Pool, extensions, and the new depot at Rocherlea. Reg also did a lot of work around the State for Boral Gas Company, foundations for major gas installations and associated works.⁷⁷⁴ In 1990, RA & VJ Walley was awarded a MBAT 'Pride in the Job' award for the reconstruction of the National Trust classified buildings at the Launceston Gas Works.⁷⁷⁵

Reg was a foundation member of the Northern Division of the Master Builders' Association and, in 1989, was elected Chairman of the Northern Division for a two-year term. He recalled that when he joined the Association it was dominated by commercial builders and nearly all the office-bearers were members of building companies, mostly construction, 'which was a little bit daunting for young house builders because they more or less took over the role of running it and everything concerned the construction industry which a lot of us young members weren't interested in.'⁷⁷⁶ This later changed so that the division between commercial and domestic builders was more balanced. In 1996, in his Annual Report, Northern Division Chairman, Tom Vimpany, paid

⁷⁷³ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁷⁷⁴ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁷⁷⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 p.17

⁷⁷⁶ Interview with Reg Walley 7 June 2004 Launceston

tribute to his 'very dear friend Reggie', who, after 20 years, had 'at last decided to hang up his administrative nail pocket and not sit on management again'. Tom continued: 'Reg Walley has been a tower of strength to this Division as a Foundation Member (one of three left) and past Divisional Chairman and State Councillor'.⁷⁷⁷

MBAT Northern Division Quiet Achievers

Tom Vimpany

A northern stalwart, Tom was a foundation member of the MBAT Northern Division in 1975 and served in many positions within the Division, including Divisional Chairman. Founder of TJ Vimpany & Sons Pty. Ltd., Tom was also President of the MBA Social Golf Club.⁷⁷⁸



Figure 97: Bev and Tom Vimpany Northern Dinner 1996

⁷⁷⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.21

⁷⁷⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.24, June/July 1999 p.8

Ron Dent

Another northern stalwart, Ron Dent was born in St Marys in 1914. He left there at the age of 10, and moved to Launceston, where he undertook a carpentry apprenticeship. After working with J & T Gunns for about 12 months, he moved to Melbourne and worked for EA Watts. From there, he moved to New Zealand, where there was an acute shortage of carpenters in the post-war years. He then returned to Launceston about 1950 and worked again for Gunns for about a year before going out on his own, as RE Dent & Co. He built 65 houses in the north, as well as shearing sheds from Campbell Town to Westbury. During the war, he was involved in construction work for a security project on King Island. He also recalled air raid shelters being built in Launceston. Ron formed a partnership, Petterwood and Dent, with Ian Petterwood. They built the Adina Court in York Street, and also worked on additions to the Longford hospital, the church at Beauty Point and various factories. Ron retired at the age of 70. He initially joined the Launceston MBA but with a small group of other builders – Jimmy Clarke from Bushbys, Jan Siejka, Doug Saul, Len Smith and Paul Barth – was encouraged to join the MBAT. His son, Ian, is an active MBAT member.⁷⁷⁹

MBAT State Presidents from the Northern Division

Northern Division members elected as State President of the MBAT have included Doug Saul (1980-1981) and Don Dickenson (1985-1987).

The Builders and their Buildings in the North

Like their regional counterparts, members of the Northern Division have been involved in a wide range of building projects. Many building firms have been long-term family businesses.

⁷⁷⁹ Interview with RE Dent 7 June 2004 Launceston

The Orr Family

The Orr family have been involved in the building industry for many years, since the arrival of Peter Orr from Scotland in 1888. Peter worked for H.T. Russell, a Launceston building and sawmilling firm, and PJ Dell before going out on his own as a builder. He then worked as a maintenance man at the Launceston hospital for 40 years, until he was in his eighties. Peter Orr built the Mine Manager's residence at Gladstone.



Figure 98: Queen Street Invermay built by Peter Orr early 1900s
Photo courtesy of Allan Orr



Figure 99: 18A Maitland Street, Launceston, built by Peter Orr c1907 and later demolished
Photo courtesy of Allan Orr

He was followed in the trade by his son, Thomas, and grandson, Allan. Thomas Orr was apprenticed to PJ Dell and shortly after completing his apprenticeship, he started out on his own. His first big contract, when he was only 24, was St. Paul's Church Hall, at Sandhill, in 1923. This helped establish him as a builder.⁷⁸⁰

Thomas Orr built a little country school at Quamby Bend in the 1920s, and rebuilt the school at Gladstone after it burnt down.⁷⁸¹



Figure 100: St. Paul's Mission Hall (now St. Mark's) built by Thomas Orr 1923
Courtesy of Allan Orr

Alan Orr joined his father in January 1940, when he was fifteen. The first job he worked on with his father was a new house at Richmond Hill. Thomas Orr was asked to help restore Franklin House when it was acquired by the National Trust. From this time, the Orrs began to collect cedar and artifacts from buildings being demolished in Launceston. These were later used in renovation work, including work on Malahide at Fingal.

⁷⁸⁰ Interview with A Orr 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁷⁸¹ Interview with A Orr 7 June 2004 Launceston: the Quamby School was later moved to Hagley Farm School.



Figure 101: Malahide, Fingal, alterations by Thomas Orr
Courtesy of Allan Orr



Figure 102: Malahide, Fingal, restored
Courtesy of Mr. Allan Orr

Thomas Orr died suddenly in 1976, and his son Allan formed a partnership with two men who had been working with him for many years. He later decided to go out on his own, retiring in 1993, thus ending an association with building in Launceston which had lasted over 100 years. After his retirement, Allan Orr was made an Honorary Member of the Master Builders' Association.⁷⁸²

Jan Siejka OAM

Jan Siejka OAM was born in Poland in 1929 and arrived in Australia in 1949. In 1952, with his wife, Mirosława (known as 'Mary' or 'Marie'), Jan Siejka

⁷⁸² Interview with A Orr 7 June 2004 Launceston

established the building company J & M Siejka of Continental Builders. Over nearly fifty years, the company constructed all types of buildings, but it is best known for its specialization in government projects, schools and the building of churches and other religious institutions. These buildings included the Launceston Magistrates Court; Stage 1 Ravenswood High School; Kings Meadow High School; Cameron Street Carpark; the science and library block at Riverside High School; Prospect Government Offices; Launceston Supreme Court extensions; Queechy High School; Scottsdale High School; sections of Sacred Heart College and St Patrick's College, Launceston; Launceston Secondary College; sections of Launceston Grammar School; sections of Scotch Oakburn College; St Mary's Catholic Church; Perth Baptist Church; Commonwealth Bank Kings Meadows; St Helens High School; and the construction of the spire to the Church of the Apostles. During this time, a significant part of the company's workforce was drawn from the migrant community.



Figure 103: Order of Australia presentation, 1995
L-R: Irena Blissenden, Jan Siejka OAM, Lucy Brewster, Marie Siejka

As managing director of the company, Jan Siejka represented the building industry as a MBAT State Councillor for 15 years. He was also a President of the Northern Division from 1979 to 1981. Both Jan and Mary Siejka have been actively involved in the Polish community and government migrant and multicultural bodies. In June 1995, Jan was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for Service to the Polish Community and the Building Industry.⁷⁸³ John Siejka, a Civil Engineering graduate from the University of Tasmania took over as Managing Director of Continental Builders.⁷⁸⁴

The Hidding Family

The Hidding family is another well-known name in Launceston building circles. In 1956, Max and Therese Hidding and their four children migrated to Australia from Holland, settling first in Melbourne. In 1959, at the invitation of a local church group, they moved to Launceston, where another three children were born. Max Hidding 'slowly but surely' got into the building trade, after working on a farm at Evandale. In the mid-1960s, with a friend named Schipper, Max started building houses. Max later worked as a supervisor for a building company which provided cheap housing and was building about 70 houses annually. By the 1970s, Max had moved to building 'spec' houses in the Prospect area of Launceston and was so successful that he recruited his son, Joh, to help. Joh, the eldest of the family, had worked for J and T Gunn Pty Ltd in a retailing position for about five years, but was ready for a change. In the first year when Joh worked with his father, they built a house a month but this rapidly increased over the next few years. Most of the building was 'spec' houses, but there were

⁷⁸³ Interview with Jan Siejka 9 June 2004 Launceston; *Sunday Examiner* 18 August 1996 p.8

⁷⁸⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* November/December 1997 p.7

also contract jobs as well.⁷⁸⁵ In 1990, Hidding Builders opened a substantial new factory at Legana using a new range of structural laminated timber beams, Hyspan, which were to be sold from the factory.⁷⁸⁶ In that year, too, Hidding Trading Pty Ltd won a 'Pride in the Job' award for an adaptable building on a difficult block at Kings Meadows.⁷⁸⁷

Northern Divisional Chairmen

P Barth	1976-1977
D Saul	1977-1979
J Siejka	1979-1981
D Tregaskis	1981-1983
DA Dickenson	1983-1985
NL Pattie	1985-1987
RA Walley	1987-1991
A Streefland	1991-1994
T Vimpany	1994-1997
M Hardacre	1997-1999
I Dent	1999-2000
D Gray	2001-2003
Craig Burleigh	2003-

⁷⁸⁵ Interview with Joh Hidding 7 June 2004 Launceston

⁷⁸⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 pp.4-7

⁷⁸⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1990 p.17

MBAT Presidents



Figure 104: JA McKenzie
1910-1911



Figure 106: J Dunn
1911-1915



Figure 105: RH Stabb
1912-1913, 1922-1923



Figure 107: TJ Stabb
1915-1916

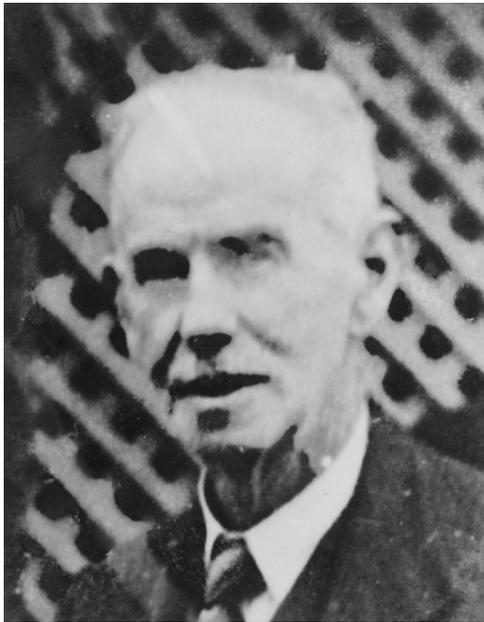


Figure 108: M Creese
1916-1918



Figure 110: G Barnes
1918-1919



Figure 109: C Dunn
1919-1920, 1932-1937

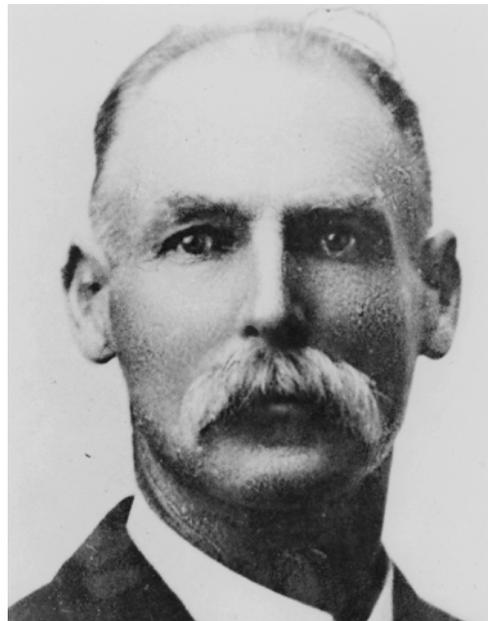
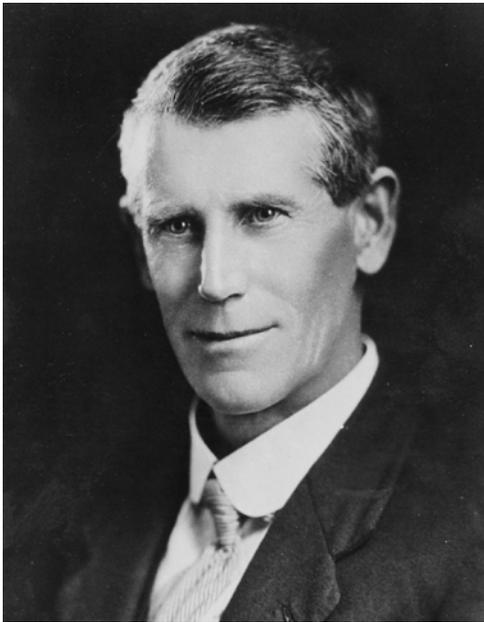


Figure 111: AW Lee
1920-1922



**Figure 112: WW Watson
1923-1925**



**Figure 114: E Monaghan
1925-1926**



**Figure 113: C Cooper
1926-1928**



**Figure 115: AP McElwee
1928-1929**



Figure 116: TW Holmes
1929-1930



Figure 118: DR Tait
1930-1932, 1939-1941, 1952-1954



Figure 117: TW Cuthbertson
1933-1934



Figure 119: WY Gillham
1937-1939



**Figure 120: RH Andrewartha
1941-1943**



**Figure 122: TG Neave
1943-1945, 1954-1956**



**Figure 121: AE Wright
1945-1946**



**Figure 123: CK Gillham
1945-1948, 1956-1957**



Figure 124: AB Moore
1948-1950



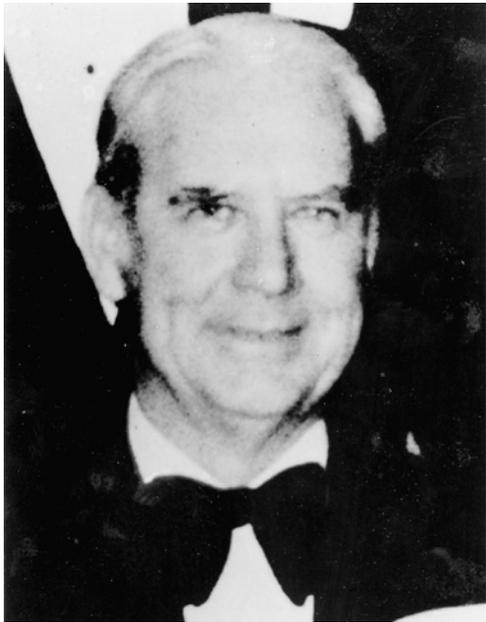
Figure 126: TM Lipscombe
1950-1952, 1960-1961



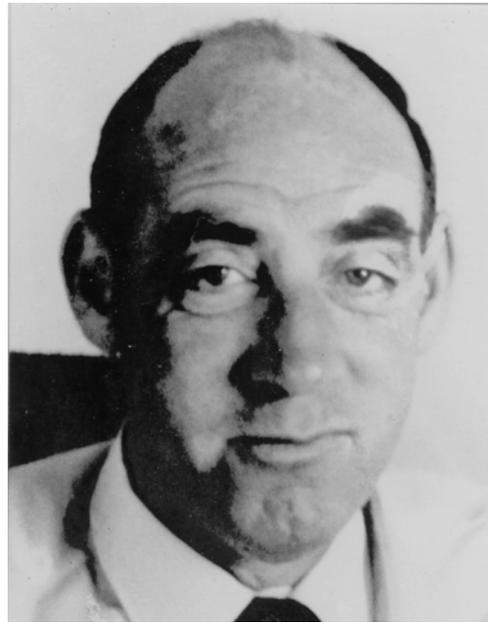
Figure 125: CE Daw
1954



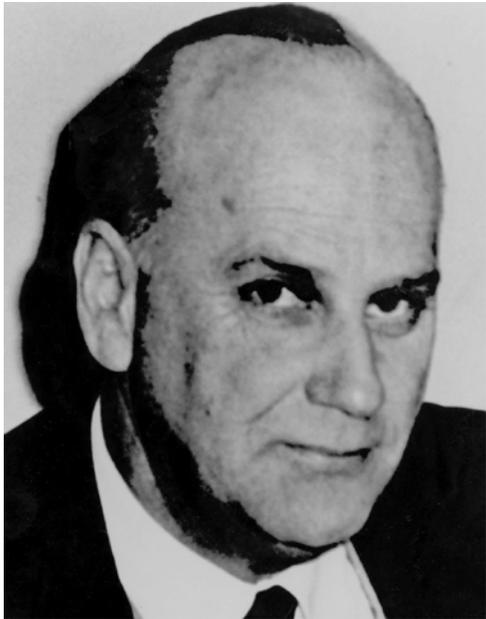
Figure 127: JT Steen
1957-1958



**Figure 128: HD McGonigal
1958-1959**



**Figure 130: PL Richardson
1959-1961**



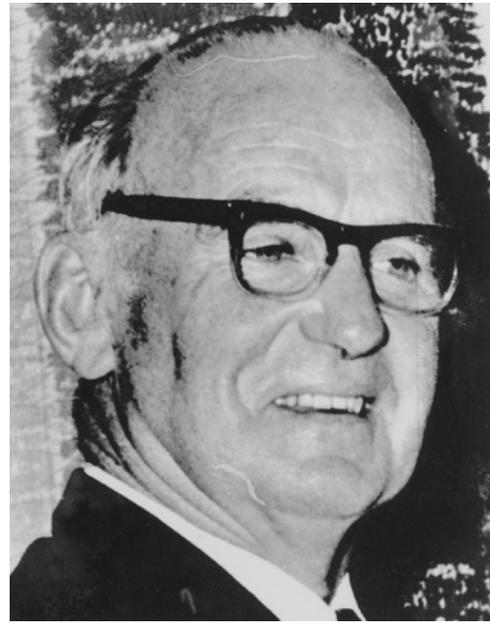
**Figure 129: DR McElwee
1962-1965**



**Figure 131: TJ Andrewartha
1965-1967**



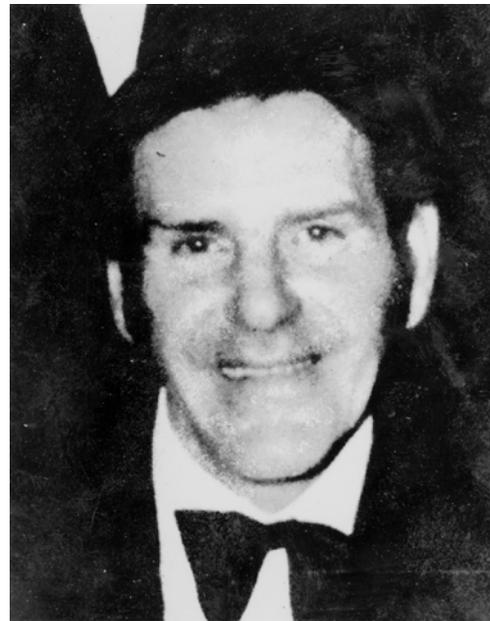
**Figure 132: RR Neville
1967-1968**



**Figure 134: GE Walters
1968-1970**



**Figure 133: GL Holmes
1970-1972**



**Figure 135: MN Bennett
1972-1974**



**Figure 136: GG Ibbott
1974-1976**



**Figure 138: WL Shields
1976-1978**



**Figure 137: K Crowe
1978-1980**



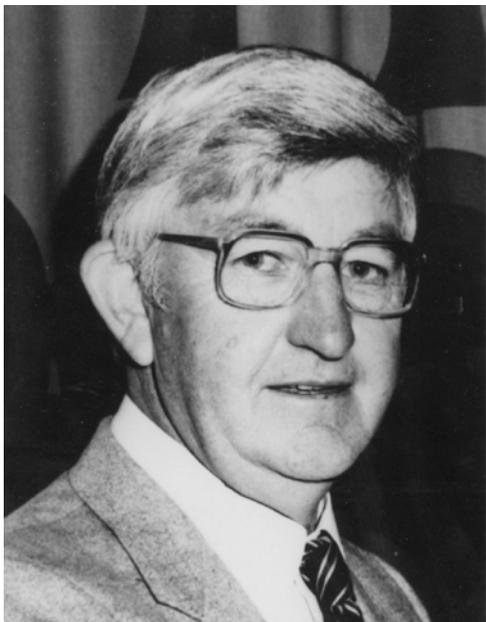
**Figure 139: D Saul
1980-1981**



**Figure 140: RG Bloomfield
1981-1983**



**Figure 142: GJ Verdouw
1983-1985**



**Figure 141: DA Dickenson
1985-1987**



**Figure 143: BJ Gretton
1987-1989**

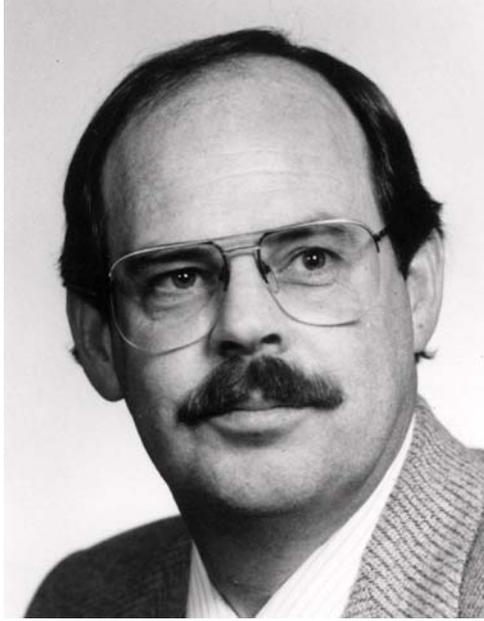


Figure 144: DJ Reid
1989-1991, 2003-2005

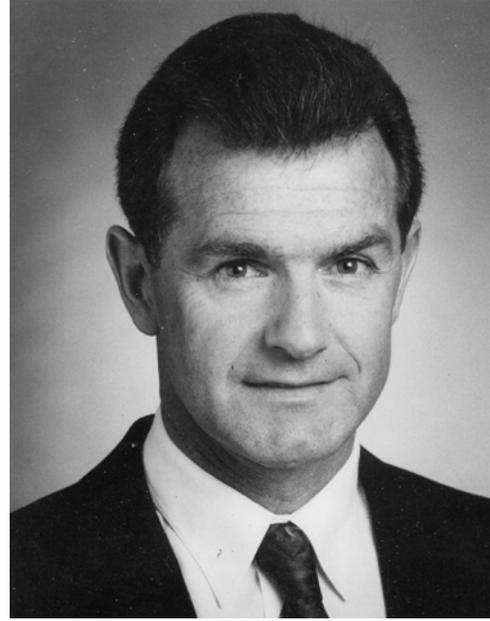


Figure 146: RT Fairbrother
1991-1993



Figure 145: GD Williams
1993-1995

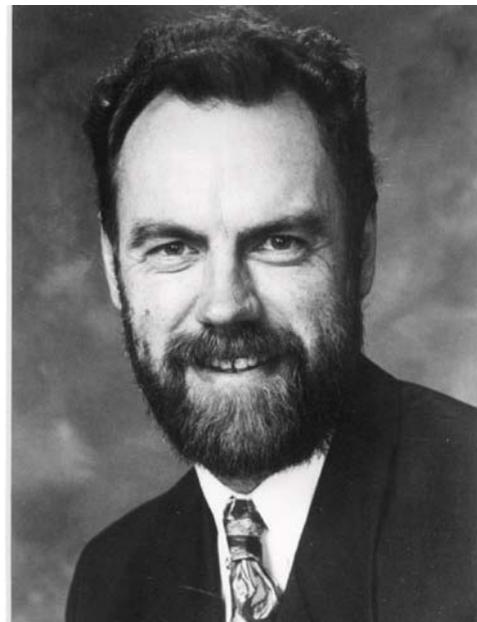
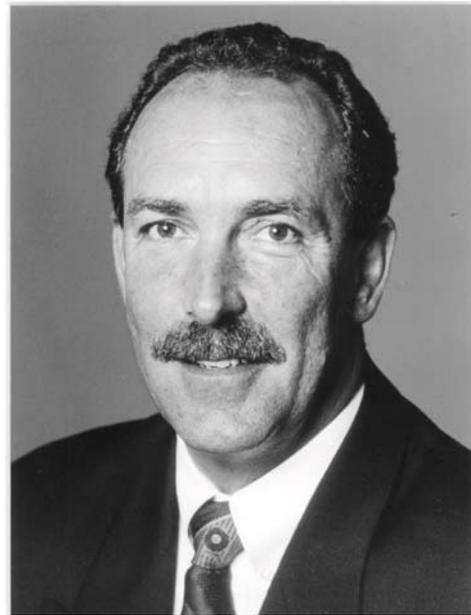


Figure 147: JM De Jong
1995-1997



**Figure 148: MR Hardacre
1997-1999**



**Figure 150: PR Ibbott
1999-2001**



**Figure 149: GF Keating
2001-2003**



**Figure 151: DJ Reid
Current President**

In 1973, the MBAT Annual Dinner honoured Past Presidents at a special table. Eight Past Presidents attended the dinner, including father and son, Ron and Tom Andrewartha. Those who were present included TM (Tom) Lipscombe (1950-1952, 1961-1962); JT (Tom) Steen (1957-1958); H (Hal) McGonigal (1958-1959); DR (Doug) McElwee (1962-1965); TJ (Tom) Andrewartha (1965-1967); GE (Gerry) Walters (1968-1970); and GL Holmes (1970-1972).⁷⁸⁸



Figure 152: MBAT Annual Dinner 1973 Hobart

STANDING (L-R): Tom Steen, Geoff Holmes, Doug McElwee, Tom Andrewartha, Gerry Walters
SEATED (L-R): Tom Lipscombe, Hal McGonigal, MBAT President Max Bennett, Ron Andrewartha

Traditionally, the outgoing MBAT President has handed his successor a specially handcrafted wooden gavel.

⁷⁸⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1973 p.11



Figure 153: Doug Saul (left) receiving the gavel from Keith Crowe



Figure 106: Incoming MBAT State President Greg Williams, retiring MBAT State President Royce Fairbrother and former MBAT President Denis Reid, AGM, August 1993

Apprentices

MBAT ANNUAL BUILDING TRADES APPRENTICESHIP AWARD



Figure 154: State President TJ Andrewartha presenting Garth Tevelein with inaugural MBAT Apprenticeship Award, 1966

At the April meeting of the State Council in 1966, it was resolved that an amount of \$150 be allocated to a proposed new award to a final year apprentice in Building Trade Courses.⁷⁸⁹

The MBAT Annual Building Trades Apprenticeship Award was established to encourage apprentices to attain the highest technical and practical standard of training and to promote awareness of opportunities for apprentices in the building industry. In 1993, the name of the award was changed.⁷⁹⁰

⁷⁸⁹ *Building* May 1966 p.10

⁷⁹⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.31



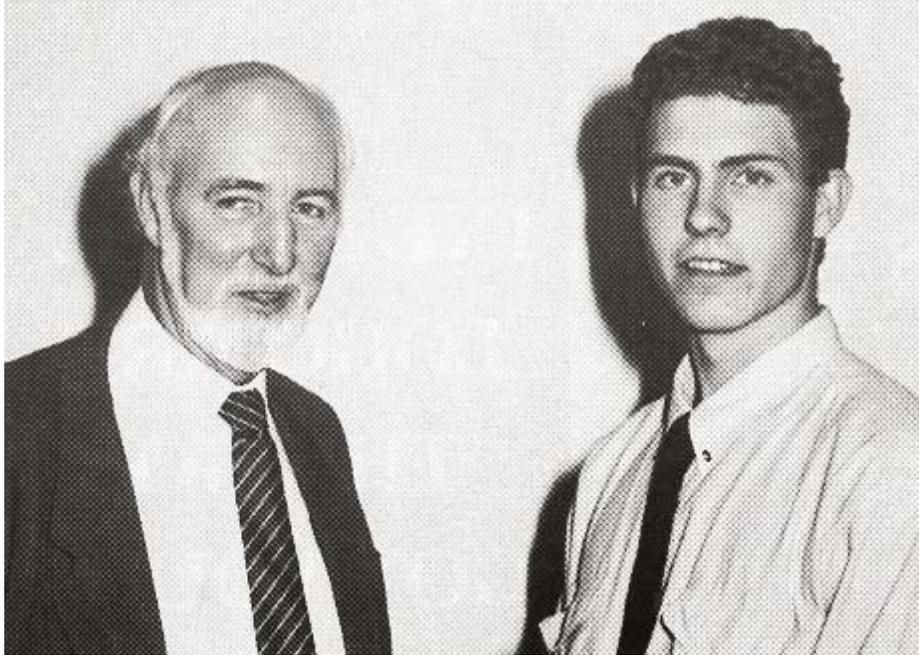
Figure 155: Apprenticeship Awards 1967
Apprentices BH Rumley & WJ Harback with MBAT State President TJ Andrewartha

In 1998, award winner was 25-year-old Chris Wilson, who completed a Bachelor of Environmental Design – Architecture Degree in Launceston before joining RT & DJ Fairbrother as an apprentice carpenter and joiner.⁷⁹¹



Figure 156: Apprenticeship Award 1980 Richard Colbeck and MBAT Past President Max Bennett

⁷⁹¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1998 p.10



**Figure 157: Tasmanian Training Authority of Tasmania Award night 1993
MBA Executive Officer Des Hodgman and MBA Apprentice Award winner Robert Firms**

As well as the MBAT Apprentice of the Year, the MBAT has also sponsored other apprenticeship awards. In 1993, at the Training Authority of Tasmania Apprenticeship Awards, the MBAT Prize for best building apprentice was awarded to Robert Firms, who commenced his training with Northern Group Training (NGT) on Flinders Island. NGT transferred Robert to Launceston at the beginning of his second year; he was placed with three MBAT members undertaking joinery, construction, maintenance and cottage work.⁷⁹²

Master Builders' Australia National Apprentice of the Year Award

Two years in a row, a Tasmanian apprentice took out the prestigious Master Builders Australia Building Apprentice of the Year. In 1992, David Gates from Wynyard won the award. In 1993, it went to Colin Bosveld of Wynyard, who worked for his father Albert Bosveld, a well-known North West coast builder

⁷⁹² *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1993 p.32

and long-standing member of the MBAT. Colin's brother, Michael, was a previous winner of the State Award.



Figure 158: MBAT State President Greg Williams with 1993 Master Builders Australia Apprentice of the Year, Colin Bosveld of Wynyard

In 1999, Peter Overton from Cunic Constructions was National Apprentice of the Year.⁷⁹³ In 2002, Adam Carr from Tascon Construction Pty Ltd was National Apprentice of the Year and was also a winner in the carpentry WorldSkills Competition in Adelaide in 2001.⁷⁹⁴

⁷⁹³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2003 'Excellence Awards' p.7

⁷⁹⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Autumn 2001 p.34; Spring 2003 'Excellence Awards' p.8

In 2003, Adam Ritson of Burnie, was named Australian Apprentice of the Year, making it the third time in five years that a Tasmanian had taken out the award. Adam completed his apprenticeship with Fairbrother Pty Ltd and was also a winner in the carpentry WorldSkills Competition in Newcastle in 2002.⁷⁹⁵

Max Seymour commented that the MBAT had, in the past, been criticised for adopting the so-called 'old methods' of skills training in Tasmania, but success at the national awards vindicated Tasmania's training methods.⁷⁹⁶

⁷⁹⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Summer 2003 pp.15-17

⁷⁹⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Autumn 2001 p.34

MBAT Annual Building Trade Award Winners

1966:	Garth Tevelein	Page & Kingston, Burnie
1967:	WJ Harback	RE Howell, New Town
1968:	Stephen James Williams	Ken Smith of Mill Lane Glenorchy
1969:	Christopher John Kelly	Joinery Products Pty Ltd Devonport
1970:	Gregory John Smith	Gary Steward Joinery Devonport
1971:		
1972:		
1973:	John Athol Mercer	Joinery Products Pty Ltd Devonport
1974:	Geoffrey Daking	State Housing Department
1975:	Johnnie A Arnold	State Housing Department
1976:	Wayne Higgs	
1977:	Anthony Norman Warren	Hansen Yuncken Pty Ltd
1978:	Rodney Jones	TG Matthews Pty Ltd Devonport
1979:	Christopher Hogarth	Devonport
1980:	Richard Colbeck	B.E. & J Packett Devonport
1981:	Phillip Bigg	Watts Constn Div. Pty Ltd Glenorchy
1982:	Brendan Baynes	RT & DJ Fairbrother Pty Ltd
1983:	Rodney Bassett	Bushby Bros. Bldrs Pty Ltd Launceston
1984:	Stuart Reid	Bennett & Moore Pty Ltd Hobart
1985:	Craig Edmunds	Bushby Bros. Bldrs Pty Ltd Launceston
1986:	David Rosevear	Dickens Construction Launceston
1987:	Michael Bosveld	Albert Bosveld
1988:	Peter Rose	Graeme Bell, Launceston
1989:	Chris Lewis	Launceston
1990:	Ian Parry	Goliath Portland Cement Company
1991:	David Gates	NWGT Tasmania
1992:	Colin Bosveld*	Albert Bosveld
1993:	Kristen Dadson	Hansen Yuncken Pty Ltd
1994:	Mark Gardner	Hansen Yuncken Pty Ltd
1995:	Adrian Deput	NGT Tasmania
1996:	Jason Wagner	Fletcher Australia
1997:	Lindsay Rolle	Hansen Yuncken Pty Ltd
1998:	Chris Wilson,	RT & DJ Fairbrother Pty Ltd
1999:	Peter Overton*	Cunic Constructions
2000:	Adam Carr*	Tascon Construction
2001:	Dean Harding	T&G Glass
2002:	Nick Freeman	NGT Tasmania
2003:	Adam Ritson*	Fairbrother Pty Ltd
2004:	Dylan Graham*	Fairbrother Pty Ltd

* also National Apprentice of the Year

MBAT Life Members

Life Membership is granted by the MBAT State Council in recognition of distinguished, exceptional and unremitting services to the Association and the industry.



**Figure 159: MBAT Life Members medallion presentation 8 July 1988 Hobart
STANDING: Gordon Ibbott, Bill Shields, Dick Bloomfield, Max Bennett
SEATED: Tom Andrewartha, Gerry Walters, Keith Crowe**

In 1988, the MBAT decided to have Life Medallions struck and presented to current and future Life Members. The first presentation was held at a special luncheon in July 1988. Those Life Members present were Gordon Ibbott (1975); Max Bennett (1978); Gerry Walters (1980); Bill Shields (1982); Keith Crowe (1985);

Tom Andrewartha (1987); and Dick Bloomfield (1987). Royce Neville (1975) was living interstate and was not able to attend.⁷⁹⁷

At the Centenary Dinner in 1991, eight out of a possible nine Life Members were in attendance. They were Gordon Ibbott (1975); Max Bennett (1978); Gerry Walters (1980); Bill Shields (1982); Keith Crowe (1983); Tom Andrewartha (1987); Dick Bloomfield (1987); and Don Dickenson (1990).

⁷⁹⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1988 p.14

TM (Tom) Lipscombe

Life Member 1962

Tom Lipscombe served three terms as MBAT State President and two terms as Southern Division Chairman (1962-1964). He was also MBFA President from 1953 to 1954, and was awarded Federation Life Membership in 1963.⁷⁹⁸ He was also a Life Member of the Australian Institute of Building.

Born and educated in Hobart, Tom Lipscombe served his apprenticeship with Gillham Bros from 1923 to 1928, and then became a journeyman and foreman with this firm until 1936 when he started his own business. Serving with the Army until 1945, Tom retired with the rank of Major.

Tom joined the MBAT in 1937 and was appointed a committee member in 1938. In 1949, he was elected Assistant Treasurer of the MBFA and went on to hold all Federation positions. He was acknowledged as one of 'the band of men who pioneered the Federation'.⁷⁹⁹ Tom represented the Australian Building Industry in Geneva in 1956 as a member of the Building, Civil Engineering and Public Works Committee.

Many of Hobart's leading buildings of the day, including the Scottish Union Insurance Building (then Hobart's highest building), the Magistrates' Courts, GJ Coles' main Hobart store, and many warehouses and homes were built by his firm. He was a member of the partnership which constructed the Tasman Bridge, and was also involved with Granton Brick Ltd.⁸⁰⁰

⁷⁹⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1991 p.34.

⁷⁹⁹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* November 1955 p.10.

⁸⁰⁰ *Building* October 1966 p.14; *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1991 pp.19-20; *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* September 1955 p.18

LT (Lou) Stubbs

Life Member 1967

Louis Theodore (Lou) Stubbs, better known as Lou, was born on 9 April 1912 in Penguin to JT and AM Stubbs. His father was a butcher and farmer. Lou was educated at Penguin State School and Devonport High.⁸⁰¹

At the age of 16, in February 1927, Lou commenced his apprenticeship with Thomas Wilson, prominent builders, joiners and sawmillers, in Ulverstone. His indenture papers are on display in the Devonport office of the MBAT. In the early 1930s, when Wilson's business failed, Lou went to work for Harry Jones of Wynyard, and completed his time there. He also did part of his training with another company in Wynyard. His son, David, recalled:

[Building] must have been in his blood ... his mother [would] ... talk about [how] he used to do odd jobs around the house ... he extended their house ... he always enjoyed being a carpenter ... early photos actually show him at the family house where he set up business and commenced his career as a building contractor at his own home address in Penguin.⁸⁰²

During the next eight years or so, he worked on projects in Smithton, Stanley, Queenstown, Strahan and Gormanston. He was then employed by Carter & Pease of Burnie for about two years before taking up a position as foreman with BH McKenna.

In February 1937, at the age of 25, Lou started his own business 'in and around Penguin, odd jobbing, repairs, painting and minor government contracts and eventually graduated down the West Coast for some years of contracting.'⁸⁰³

⁸⁰¹ Interview with David Stubbs 16 May 2004 Burnie; *Building* November 1967 p.11; *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1988 pp.16-18. His name was also spelt Lewis.

⁸⁰² Interview with David Stubbs 16 May 2004 Burnie

⁸⁰³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.5

In 1939, Lou married Dorothy Wilson from Redpa and settled in Penguin. Lou and Dorothy Stubbs founded 'LT Stubbs, Penguin', which specialised in building, painting and paperhanging. In July 1951, Lou Stubbs opened his first hardware store in Main Street, Penguin. The Burnie store was opened in rented premises in 1958; it later moved to 10 Mount Street, Burnie. A ground floor building was erected and over the years was extended by the purchase of an adjoining property and the addition of a second storey. Stores were opened in Upper Burnie and Smithton. Stubbs Hardware joined the Australian-wide 'Mitre 10' chain in 1972. In the 1950s, Lou also established Supreme Joinery, which eventually grew to two stores, the second in Wynyard. In 1986, Solid Builders and Stubbs Windows were established.

In the early 1960s, Lou Stubbs handed over to Vic O'Brien, who managed Stubbs Constructions for 25 years. Since Vic's retirement in 1985, the company has been managed by David Stubbs.

Lou was a foundation member of the North-West Master Builders' Association, formed in 1946. He served as President from 1948-1950 and 1952-1953, and held other positions within the Association. When the North-West Master Builders' Association joined the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania in 1961, becoming its North-Western Division, Lou was elected a MBAT State Councillor and continued to serve in that role for a number of years.

A keen golfer, Lou was instrumental in the formation of the MBAT Social Golf Club in 1971. He remained a regular player and supporter, and represented the State at a number of MR Hornibrook Tournaments. He was a Hornibrook 20-

year badge holder, and was made a Life Member of the MBAT Social Golf Club in 1978.

Lou also served on the Building Appeals Board and was a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Building. He received an AIB Honour Award a week before he passed away.⁸⁰⁴ He successfully stood twice for election to Penguin Council, and was appointed a Justice of the Peace in the early 1950s.

When the Penguin Surf Club reformed after World War II, Lou was its first president; he directed and assisted the club's growth, including the erection of a club house. He was made a Life Member in 1969. He was a foundation member of the Penguin Lions Club and was an active member until his resignation in 1974. Lou was also actively involved with the establishment of the Penguin Youth Centre and was the supervisor and manager of the Building Committee during its construction. He was acknowledged by the local council with a special 'Certificate of Merit' in recognition of his community work.

Some achievements of which he was particularly proud included the Penguin Football Club new grandstand which he and his first foreman, Ray Good, designed and constructed in 1948; the Wynyard Sewerage Treatment Plant working with engineer RM 'Dickie' Foster & Associates of Devonport; his life membership of the MBAT; his fellowship of the Australian Institute of Building (Tasmanian Chapter); his honour award by the AIB; and recognition by social clubs and local government for services to the community.⁸⁰⁵ His personal notes

⁸⁰⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1988 p.23

⁸⁰⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.5

recorded that 'over the years [I] have seen many builders come and go due to difficult and cut throat competition and so far have survived'.⁸⁰⁶



Figure 160: Lou and Dorothy Stubbs

The MBAT was an important part of David Stubbs' life from an early age:

I can still remember growing up, all his trips to Hobart. It seemed to be, from Mum's point of view anyhow, he was off to Hobart with Gordon Ibbott just about every Friday. I'm sure it wasn't but it seemed to be that he spent a lot of his time talking MBA business and being associated with their activities ... there was always suppers, after dinner drinks at Mum and Dad's and this is while we were growing up so we got to know these people and they were all pretty much family names.⁸⁰⁷

Gordon Ibbott recalled his friendship with Lou Stubbs:

Great mates. It was a great loss to me when he went. We were vicious competitors but great mates. If you were tendering for a job, going through it and you'd say, "Oh Lou, did you notice so and so, that's a bit sticky. How are we going to do that?" – he'd say, "How are you going to do it?" and we'd

⁸⁰⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.5

⁸⁰⁷ Interview with David Stubbs 16 May 2004 Burnie

exchange our views before the tenders closed ... but there was never any collusion, it was just may the best man win. But if anyone – either of us – learnt anything you’d pass it on [to] the other one. You know, you’d say, “Did you see how so and so was doing that when you were in Melbourne,” or something, you know, that sort of thing, which was very good for the industry. And we were good mates ... we used to do a lot of fishing together. Poor old fellow, he used to love to go away in the bush and go way down the West Coast, crayfishing ... But those days are gone, unfortunately. I think Paul [Gordon’s son] gets on very well with his son, or sons – he’s got one of his sons in the hardware business and David’s running the building. Poor old David, when he started off, he used to ring me up and say, “What do you think Dad would think about this?” Now, it was really good that he’d rely on me to tell him – [I’d] tell him the best that I knew about what his father would do.⁸⁰⁸



Figure 161: Lou Stubbs, Life Membership Award, 1967
MBAT Members AH Betlehem, RR Neville, Lou Stubbs (centre), GE Walters, MN Bennett

In June 1987, Lou Stubbs was honoured at the MBAT North-Western Division Annual Dinner with a presentation of a plaque in recognition of his 50 years in the building industry.

Lou and Dorothy had three sons, Richard, David and Patrick. Lou died in Penguin on 25 February 1988.

⁸⁰⁸ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

DR (Doug) McElwee

Life Member 1971

Doug McElwee served three terms as MBAT President, from 1962-1965. He was also President of the Australian Institute of Building (Tasmanian Chapter) from 1971-1972. Doug joined the MBAT on 19 June 1956.⁸⁰⁹ In April 1965, at the first meeting of the Board of Directors of the Tasmanian Building Centre Pty. Ltd., he was appointed Chairman of Directors.⁸¹⁰ In 1968, Doug was elected President of the Australian Institute of Building (Tasmanian Chapter).⁸¹¹ According to Tom Andrewartha, Doug McElwee was 'a hard act to follow' as president.⁸¹²

AB (Arthur) Moore

Life Member 1971

Arthur Bernard Moore joined the MBAT in 1942 and served two terms as MBAT President, from 1948-1949 and 1949-1950. He was a Member of the State Council of the MBAT since its inception in 1961 and was Treasurer for a number of years. He was President of the MBFA from 1959-1960. A Fellow of the Australian Institute of Building, he was Foundation Member and Past President of the Tasmanian Chapter.⁸¹³

Arthur was educated at Moonah School and at Clemes College, Hobart, and was apprenticed to George Crowe of Hobart. He commenced his own business before World War II, and his first major job was the building of 25 houses for the Government in Gore Street, South Hobart.

⁸⁰⁹ MBAT Minutes 19 June 1956

⁸¹⁰ MBAT The Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd Minutes 7 April 1965

⁸¹¹ *Building* May 1968 p.10

⁸¹² Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004 Hobart

⁸¹³ *Building* October 1966 p.15; *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1991 p.20



Figure 162: Arthur Moore (right) being presented with MBAT Life Membership June 1971 by MBAT Immediate Past President Gerry Walters. Also pictured (second from left) Minister for Education R Mather and Gordon Ibbott, Vice-Chairman of MBAT North-Western Division.

Arthur B Moore, founder of Arthur B Moore Pty. Ltd, died in Hobart in April 1981 aged 68. At the time of Arthur's death, Arthur B Moore Pty Ltd was the largest Tasmanian-owned building company. Not long before his death, Arthur was the co-ordinator of the Australian Institute of Building National Conference held in Hobart.

Arthur was responsible for building the Royal Hobart Hospital Outpatients Department, the State Government Printing Office in Salamanca Place and the University of Tasmania Arts Block. He also completed extensions to Princes Wharf for the Marine Board.

Arthur relinquished his interest in the company in 1971 when he retired from active business. He was a past director of several Hobart companies including GF Brewster & Co Ltd (1958-1971). He served as a Director of Kemp & Denning from 1961 to 1972; was Chairman of Directors from 1963 until 1967; and played a prominent part in the merger of the company with the Hobart Brick Co Ltd in 1963. At the time, he was the only person outside the Kemp family to occupy the position of Company Chairman.

Arthur was also a leading member of Apex and was a Life Member of the Hobart Apex Club. He was also a former member of the Hobart Rotary Club. As a young man, he was a prominent cyclist and a member of the Capitol Amateur Cycling Club (CACC). His achievements included winning the Colac to Melbourne road race, and the CACC 25-mile events in 1933 and 1935. He also played cricket and league football, with the former New Town Club, and in later years turned to lawn bowls, playing with City, Sandy Bay, and Royal Hobart Bowling Clubs. He represented Tasmanian builders in several interstate James Wall Cup Bowls Tournaments

Arthur Moore died in Hobart in April 1981 aged 68.⁸¹⁴

RR (Royce) Neville

Life Member 1975

RR (Royce Robert) Neville was a founding State Council member of the MBAT in 1961 and had previously served as President of the North-West MBA. He was MBAT President from 1967-1968, and MBFA President from 1965-1967. Prior to his election as Federal President in 1965, he had been Vice-President of the

⁸¹⁴ *Building* October 1966 p.15; *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1981 p.21, August 1991 p.20

MBAT and had just entered his sixth year as Federal Representative. A Fellow of the Australian Institute of Builders, he was a member of the Federal Council of the AIB in 1964-1965.⁸¹⁵



Figure 163: Royce Neville receiving MBAT Life Membership from Bill Shields 1975
Photo courtesy Bill Shields

Born and educated in Launceston, Royce completed a course in Building Construction and Architectural Drawing at the Launceston Technical College and served his apprenticeship with the Launceston building firm of WE Bowen & Co. Foreman for a number of years with Pierce & McGrath, Launceston, he joined the Air Force during World War II, attaining the rank of Squadron Leader. In 1946, he became a district supervisor for the Agricultural Bank, later joining North-West Construction Pty Ltd, Burnie.

Royce commenced his own business, Neville Construction Pty Ltd, in 1954. His firm was responsible for the construction of many domestic, commercial, industrial and institutional buildings. His activities extended to the building of bridges, dams, slipways, reservoirs and other civil engineering works and a

⁸¹⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1991 p.20

number of contracts for group housing with the Housing Department. His company also manufactured plaster sheet and joinery, and was well-known for its research into new building materials: about 1970, it successfully introduced the manufacture of polyurethane insulation paneling and flooring, the first Tasmanian firm to make the product.⁸¹⁶

In August 1970, Royce Neville was appointed Tasmania's Agent-General in London. In announcing the appointment, Premier Bethune noted that Royce Neville was well-qualified for the post, which focused on the promotion of Tasmanian trade and industrial development.⁸¹⁷ Royce retired to New South Wales and died in Canberra on 25 October 1997, aged 83.⁸¹⁸



Figure 164: L-R: MBFA President Frank Hansen, MBAT President Bill Shields, MBAT Life Member Royce Neville 1975
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

⁸¹⁶ *Building* August 1970 p.9

⁸¹⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1991 p.20; MBAT North-West Division scrapbook, newspaper clipping 14 August [1970?]

⁸¹⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1997 p.2

GG (Gordon) Ibbott

Life Member 1975

Gordon Ibbott, son of a carpenter, was born on 21 November 1923 at Latrobe. He attended Spreyton State School then Devonport Primary School. Gordon's father, Vic, was a carpenter, who ran a very small building business. Vic was also an Anzac, and:

he did all the hard yards in the Depression, worked in the initial days of the Hydro development in Tasmania at places like Tarraleah ... building power stations and tail races and so forth. So yes, he had considerable exposure in the industry over a long, long period of time too.⁸¹⁹

Gordon served his time with well-known local builder, FH Haines, a friend of his father. After completing his apprenticeship, Gordon worked for a time with Luck Bros on the Burnie mill and Smithton High School. Luck Bros were probably the major builders on the North West Coast at the time. Gordon then joined the Army, serving in New Guinea for 3 years. At the end of the war, Gordon returned to Devonport and started a small business with an army acquaintance, Allan Bascham.⁸²⁰ The following year he commenced business on his own and in 1948 formed the company Gordon Ibbott Pty Ltd.⁸²¹

The acute shortage of building materials after the war, particularly on the North West coast, prompted Gordon and his building colleagues to form a master builders' association in Devonport. Gordon was instrumental in getting the North-West Master Builders' Association to join the MBAT in 1961. Gordon served as MBAT President from 1974-1976. He was also President of the Australian Institute of Building (Tasmanian Chapter) from 1971-1972. When he

⁸¹⁹ Interview with Paul Ibbott 9 December 2004 Richmond

⁸²⁰ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

⁸²¹ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

took the Chair as President of the Association in 1974, retiring MBAT President Max Bennett said of Gordon that he had been a 'dedicated and tireless worker' for the Association. Gordon took over at a particularly difficult time for the Association and the building industry generally. He argued that 'complete unity among all members and loyalty to the Association would provide the combined strength to fight the forces which are currently threatening the building industry'.⁸²² Gordon's term as President was notable for two significant events in the MBAT's history: the formation of the Northern Division, thus making the MBAT a truly State body; and the establishment of substantial new MBAT headquarters in Hobart. Gordon was made a Life Member of the MBAT in 1975.

Gordon attended several Federal conferences, especially on education, as a Tasmanian representative. His strong advocacy of education stemmed from his belief that a modern builder needed to be an educated businessman. Gordon suggested that his major achievement as State President was the 'greater recognition of the need for training in all spheres within the industry, right across the spectrum'.⁸²³ He was involved with the Group Apprenticeship Scheme and then the Tasmanian Group Apprenticeship Scheme: 'many of the old builders, probably quite rightly so ... in their own minds, did not support it; they were still of the old-time opinion that the only way to train an apprentice was on the job and to have a hard master'.⁸²⁴ The North West Coast master builders had a tradition of innovation, and were very active, possibly because at that stage they were 'more isolated and had to fight for [themselves] more'.⁸²⁵ The North West group was instrumental in forming the State body and Gordon

⁸²² *Building* August 1976 p.5

⁸²³ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

⁸²⁴ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

⁸²⁵ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

later played a significant role in persuading the northern body to join the MBAT.⁸²⁶

According to Gordon, changes in design and standards, brought about as a result of education, as well as liaison with appropriate government ministers and close co-operation with local government, were a significant development in the industry. He believed it was important to work with politicians to achieve change. In his years as a master builder, he found some politicians were more supportive than others: Dame Enid Lyons, 'a marvellous lady', was always approachable as were Aubrey Luck, a former master builder, and Wilf Barker from Penguin.⁸²⁷

Gordon is well-known for his contribution to the industry and the community, particularly in relation to education. He served as an employer representative on the State Building Trades Wages Board for many years and was a member of the MBAT and MBFA Industrial Committees.

He was a foundation member and Fellow of the Australian Institute of Building serving on national committees and the Council for many years. He was awarded the AIB Tasmanian Chapter Honour Award in 1980.

Gordon's interest in training and education led him to serve as a member of the Devonport Technical College Council for about 20 years; he was Chairman for many years. He was an inaugural member of the North West Council of Community Education and served on that body for a period of 2 years.

⁸²⁶ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

⁸²⁷ Interview with Gordon Ibbott 16 May 2004 Latrobe

In addition to his time as a Councillor and Deputy Warden of the Latrobe Municipality, he was a Foundation Member of the Rotary Club of Devonport South-East.

Gordon's son, Paul, followed him into the building industry and the MBAT. Paul served as MBAT State President from 1999-2002 and is currently Deputy President of Master Builders' Australia Inc.

MN (Max) Bennett

Life Member 1978

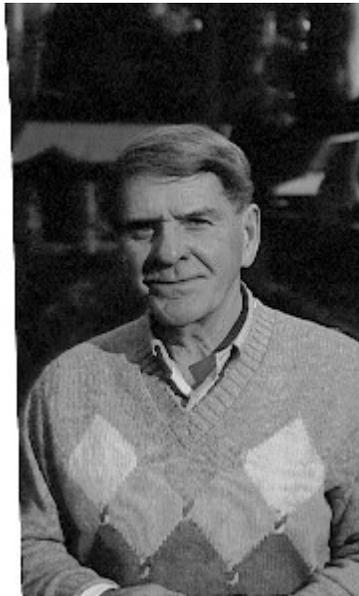


Figure 165: Max Bennett
Photo courtesy of Max Bennett

Max Bennett was born in Hobart on 27 February 1930. He was educated at Campbell Street School and then Technical College. He served his time with Arthur Moore. About 45 years ago, Max Bennett formed a partnership with fellow builder and cabinetmaker by trade, WJ Moore, starting out in a small way

constructing houses but then changing direction to focus on industrial and commercial building, including the Ampol service stations in the Hobart area. Max was also involved in building for Kemp and Denning and was approached by Andrew Kemp to see if he would be interested in building a hardware store on the corner of Melville and Murray Streets. Bennett & Moore Pty Ltd went on to build other Kemp & Denning buildings, including the new brick kilns in Forster Street, the mill at Austin's Ferry, and the new hardware store on the Melville and Murray Streets site. Max has been a director of Kemp & Denning for the past 30 years. Max retired from building about six years ago.⁸²⁸



Figure 166: Max Bennett (right) receiving MBAT Life Membership from Bill Shields 1978
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

Max Bennett joined the MBAT on 16 February 1960 as one of two company representatives for Bennett & Moore Pty Ltd. Bill Moore was the other representative. Max was elected to MBAT State Council in August 1964 and served continuously until 1992. He served as Chairman of the Southern Division from 1965-1966 and 1966-1967. Max served two terms as MBAT President from

⁸²⁸ Interview with Max Bennett 30 April 2004 Hobart

1972-1973 and 1973-1974. His son also served as a member of the MBAT State Council.

Within the MBAT, Max was actively interested in apprenticeship education, believing apprenticeships to be the key to the survival of the industry.⁸²⁹ From 1964 to 1992, he was the MBAT Representative on the Apprenticeship Commission (later the Training Authority of Tasmania). He also served on the Advisory Committee of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) from its inception. For 15 years, Max was Chairman of the MBAT Apprenticeship, Education and Training Committee. He was also involved with a number of other committees, including the Tasmanian Building Centre Pty Ltd and the Property Development Committee in its initial years.⁸³⁰

Max's son, Andrew, served his apprenticeship as a carpenter and joiner with Hansen & Yuncken, and is currently a MBAT State Council member.

GE (Gerry) Walters

Life Member 1980

Gerry Walters served four terms as MBAT President from 1968-1972. He was a member of the inaugural MBAT State Council in November 1961.⁸³¹

Gerald Edward Walters served his apprenticeship with his father's firm, EG Walters Pty Ltd, between 1928 and 1933. He then worked for a number of building firms before establishing his own business in 1946. In 1950, he became

⁸²⁹ Interview with Max Bennett 30 April 2004 Hobart

⁸³⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1992 p.14

⁸³¹ Interview with Max Bennett 30 April 2004 Hobart; *Tasmanian Building Journal*, August 1978 pp.24-25, September 1980 p.20; *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1996 p.25

Managing Director of GE Walters Pty Ltd. Gerry later established a subsidiary firm, Rosetta Plumbing Pty Ltd, and purchased a steel fabricating firm, trading as 'Steelage'.⁸³²



Figure 167: G.E. (Gerry) Walters receiving MBAT Life Membership from MBAT President Keith Crowe 1980

Gerry joined the MBAT in 1959, as company representative for GE Walters Pty Ltd. First elected to State Council in 1964, he served as Association Vice-President from 1966-1967 and again from 1967-1968, and was elected State President in 1968, serving two terms until 1970. During this period, he was also the Association's representative to the MBFA and a member of the Federal Contracts Committee. An active committeeman, he made a significant contribution to the MBAT Contracts and Tendering Committee, which he

⁸³² *Building* September 1968 p.11

chaired. After a brief break, he was re-elected to State Council in 1979 and again became active in the Contracts and Tendering Committee. At the time of his Life Membership award, he was MBAT Southern Division Chairman.⁸³³

Many members were close friends, and MBAT fellow Life Member Max Bennett used to affectionately call him 'Dad' because of their close association during Association activities.⁸³⁴ Former MBAT President and fellow Life Member, Gordon Ibbott, noted that Gerry was instrumental in convincing Northern members to join with the North West and the South to make a stronger combined Association that would be more objective and speak with one voice on industry and government business.⁸³⁵

Gerry Walters died on 4 May 1996, aged 81. MBAT members were among many family and friends who attended Gerry Walter's funeral, and Gordon Ibbott delivered the eulogy on behalf of the industry.⁸³⁶

WL (Bill) Shields

Life Member 1982

William Leslie Shields, better known as Bill, was educated at Hobart High School. A carpenter by trade, he worked his entire life in the building industry. He joined construction company Hansen & Yuncken (Tasmania) Pty Ltd in 1949. In 1959, he was construction foreman on the Cox Bros multi-storey building in Launceston (now Myer) but moved back to Hobart in 1961. In June 1963, he was

⁸³³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1980 p.21

⁸³⁴ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1996 p.25

⁸³⁵ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1996 p.25

⁸³⁶ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1996 p.25

appointed to the position of Construction Manager of Hansen & Yuncken. In June 1964, Bill, was appointed Acting Manager, when EA Richardson resigned as Managing Director; this appointment was confirmed in November 1964. In 1967, Bill was appointed Associate Director of Hansen & Yuncken and, in 1969, Managing Director.



Figure 168: Bill Shields presented with MBAT Life Membership by Dick Bloomfield 1982
Photo courtesy of Bill Shields

Bill was first elected to State Council in 1965. Elected MBAT State President in 1976, he served in all MBAT executive offices and divisional offices. He was chairman of a number of committees. In March 1982, the MBAT State Council conferred on Bill the honour of Life Membership of the Association. Speaking in response to the presentation, Bill said: 'Progress is like a wheelbarrow – you have to continually push or it stops'. He continued:

Membership of any organisation is made up of four 'bones'. There are the 'wishbones' who spend all their time wishing someone else would do the work. Then there are the 'jawbones' who do all the talking and very little else. Third are the 'knucklebones' who knock everything that anyone else tries to do.

Finally, there are the 'backbones' who get under the load and do the work. I guess, one way or another, we all fit into those categories.⁸³⁷

Bill served as a Councillor of the Master Builders' Federation of Australia and represented the MBAT on the MBFA National Contracts Committee. Bill was a member of the Building Appeal Board and the Building Trade Wages Board for many years, as well as the Building Regulations Board and the Building Industry Contractors Registration Board.

Bill is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Building and served as President of the Tasmanian Chapter. He was also a member of the National Council and its Standing Committees. In 1996, Bill was elected an Honorary Life Fellow of the Institute.⁸³⁸ He represented the Institute on the Advisory Committee of the Department of Environmental Design at the College of Advanced Education and was instrumental in the establishment of the Building Diploma Course at the College. For his dedication, Bill received the Chapter Honour Award in 1984. Bill was also a Foundation Fellow of the Institute of Arbitration, Australia, and Chairman of the Tasmanian Building Educational Trust.

In 1985, Bill was appointed Honorary Adviser for Tasmania to the Shadow Minister for Housing and Construction, Michael Hodgman, Federal Member for Denison.⁸³⁹ Bill retired from the construction industry in 1995 at the age of 65 years and enjoys life with his thoroughbred horses on a small property at Sorell in South-East Tasmania. He regrets that Hansen Yuncken are no longer members of the Association.

⁸³⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1982 pp.17-18

⁸³⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.1

⁸³⁹ W Shields, File 1: 1930-1977; *The Mercury* 8 June 1964; *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1985 p.14; *The Mercury* 13 August 1986 p.8; *Tasmanian Master Builder* June 1996 p.1

Keith Crowe

Life Member 1983

Keith Crowe joined the MBAT in 1963 as a Builder Member and later served as MBAT President for two terms, from 1978-1980. Keith was awarded Life Membership in 1983, for his many years of service to the MBAT. He had served in most Executive capacities and on countless committees. From 1967, Keith was a member of the Conditions of Contract and Tendering Committee, and was a delegate that year to the MBFA Convention in Canberra. He was a long-term Federal Councillor. He was elected to the MBAT State Council in 1968 and served as State Treasurer. He was Chairman of the Southern Division from 1971-1972 and again from 1972-1973, as well as Southern Division Treasurer. Keith was also Chairman of the Housing Committee for many years.⁸⁴⁰



Figure 169: Ewen and Betty Nichols, and Joan and Keith Crowe Centenary Dinner, Devonport, June 1991

Among the many projects Keith worked on were the MBAT premises in Sandy Bay Road. He also undertook several jobs at the Hutchins School, from the mid-

⁸⁴⁰ Interview with K Crowe; *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1983 p.171; *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1983 p.19

1960s until he retired. In 1981, his firm, Crowe and Dean Pty Ltd completed \$650,000 additions to the Hutchins School.⁸⁴¹ During his term in office, Keith saw the opening of both the new North-Western Division office in Devonport, and the Northern Division office in Launceston. He was a keen participant in the MBAT Social Golf Club and the MR Hornibrook Tournament for many years.

LR (Leon) Hale

Life Member 1986

LR (Leon) Hale, better known to MBA members as 'Stick', was awarded MBAT Life Membership in 1986 in recognition of his long and continuous service and valuable contribution to the Association and industry, particularly in the house building sector. He was presented with his certificate by MBAT President, Don Dickenson, at the Annual Dinner on 25 July 1986.

'Stick', who had been house building for some years, joined the MBAT as a Builder Member in November 1964 and quickly became actively involved in Association affairs, joining a number of committees. In 1965, he was elected to State Council and served continuously until his retirement in 1986. 'Stick' served a term as Association Senior Vice-President and was also a member of the Executive Committee of Council for a period. He remained active in both Divisional and House Building matters. 'Stick' was Southern Division Chairman from 1969-1971. A member and later Chairman of the House Builders' Committee, he was also a member of the MBAT Property Development Committee, which was responsible for establishing the MBAT State Headquarters in Sandy Bay Road, Hobart, and the Divisional office premises in Devonport and Launceston.

⁸⁴¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1981 p.25

Always a keen supporter of social and sporting activities, 'Stick' was a foundation member and Life Member of the Association's Social Golf Club. His continuing support as a player and administrator contributed to its success. With his wife, Joan, 'Stick' attended most of the MBAT social functions since joining in 1964. He became a member of the Australian Institute of Building in 1972.

On receiving his Life Membership, 'Stick' commented that it had been a pleasure to be part of a team that, over the years, had seen the Association become a truly State-wide organisation with buildings and offices in all divisions.⁸⁴² He died on 10 March 1988.⁸⁴³

TJ (Tom) Andrewartha

Life Member 1987

Thomas James Andrewartha was born on 25 April 1929. His father, Ron, was also a builder. Ron started off in the office of Walch and Sons, and then worked with Hobart City Council, before joining his father in the building industry as James Andrewartha and Son. Tom's mother was the only daughter of TW (Thomas Whitfield) Cuthbertson, the son of a bootmaker, and MBAT President in 1933-1934. She had seven brothers, most of whom were involved in the building industry in one form or another: Sid, the eldest, took over his father's business in West Hobart. Tom recalled playing in his grandfather's joinery workshop as child.⁸⁴⁴

⁸⁴² *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1986 p.17

⁸⁴³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1988 p.18

⁸⁴⁴ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

Tom was apprenticed to Gillham Bros. Cecil Gillham, who served as MBAT President from 1946-1948 and 1956-1957, asked Tom to join the Association.⁸⁴⁵ Gillham's had a large joinery shop and also undertook some industrial work. Tom worked on projects for the Agricultural Bank at Derwent Park and for other government sector housing projects. Many of the houses had corrugated asbestos roofs, since replaced. Tom also worked at Huonville for a time, boarding there because of distance and transport. Tom recalled that 'framing-up' competitions were held in the 1940s.

After James Andrewartha's retirement, his son Ron took over the family firm. It was forced to close during the war because of the shortage of labour. Ron then took a job with the Public Works Department until his retirement. After he finished his apprenticeship, Tom left and started TJ Andrewartha. About twelve months later, when his brother finished his apprenticeship with Hurburgh, he joined him in the business, and they changed the name to Andrewartha Bros. The business continued until 1991.⁸⁴⁶

Thomas James Andrewartha and Robert Edwin Andrewartha, trading as Andrewartha Bros, were admitted to MBAT membership on 1 December 1953.⁸⁴⁷

When Tom attended his first meeting, there were only about six builders present. He recalled that he was 'put on a committee', and gradually became more involved. This was particularly so in 1954 when TG Neave was MBAT President, and the Master Builders' Convention was held in Hobart. Tom's wife was also actively involved in organising MBAT social activities at this time.

⁸⁴⁵ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

⁸⁴⁶ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

⁸⁴⁷ MBAT Minutes 1 December 1953.

Tom was particularly concerned about membership and worked to eliminate the perception of elitism amongst the old guard of the MBAT. He encouraged other housing builders to join, including growing numbers of migrant house builders such as Tom Steen, a principal in ABC Builders at Kingston, Hank Betlehem and SE Builders. A number of smaller firms had grown up in the 1950s, and, while they were competitive when it came to tendering, they remained good friends.

According to MBAT State President, Don Dickenson, Tom was instrumental in the formation of the MBAT State Council.⁸⁴⁸ He was a member of the State Council from its inception in 1961 until 1970. At the time he received his Life Membership in 1987, he was the longest standing Southern Division Member. He served as Divisional Chairman from 1964-1965 and as MBAT President from 1965 to 1967.

As well as being a State Councillor, Tom was a member of the Apprenticeship, Training and Education Committee, General Committee, Housing Committee, Membership Committee, and Contracts and Tendering Committee, and of the joint MBAT/RAIA Committee. He was convenor of the Intrastate Conferences in 1954, 1960 and 1966. In particular, Tom's contribution in the area of training and education was acknowledged by his fellow MBAT members.⁸⁴⁹

During his time as a builder, Tom particularly enjoyed working on historical restoration, and undertook some significant work at Port Arthur. He also worked on the Royal Engineers Building in Hobart and the windmill dome at

⁸⁴⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1987 p.21

⁸⁴⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1987 p.21

Oatlands. This was a less profitable, but socially significant, form of building; many projects had limited funds and were undertaken in stages. To achieve authentic restoration, Tom needed to use old building techniques and tools, and relied on his father for help and advice. One of the projects in which he was involved won the Lachlan Macquarie National Award for restoration. His involvement in heritage work also involved maintenance work on heritage buildings, and challenging projects such as the bells at Trinity Church in Hobart.

In awarding Tom MBAT Life Membership in 1987, Don Dickenson stated that 'He has displayed the qualities and high ideals in following the footsteps of his father, Ron Andrewartha.'⁸⁵⁰ Ron was MBAT President from 1941-1943 and was awarded MBAT Honorary Membership in 1978.⁸⁵¹

RG (Richard) Bloomfield

Life Member 1987

Richard Bloomfield, better known as Dick, was born in 1942 in Victoria. In 1958, after finishing his schooling, he joined national building company EA Watts Pty Ltd. In the 1960s, he came to Tasmania to work for the company on the Queen Victoria Hospital in Launceston. From there, he went to Burnie to start the excavation and piling of the hospital there. At this time, he was still living in Victoria. In 1967, Dick moved to Queensland to help with the setting up of a branch of EA Watts Pty Ltd, and to oversee project administration of the new T & G Building, a 27-storey office block in the heart of Brisbane and the first in the city to exceed 20-storeys. Dick, who said that he was fortunate to work for a company which encouraged advancement, was promoted to Construction

⁸⁵⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1987 p.21

⁸⁵¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1978 p.27

Manager of the Southern Queensland Operation in 1972. In 1976, he was again promoted, this time to Tasmanian State Manager, a position which he held for 18 years. During this time, despite many takeovers, the company continued to grow. According to Dick, 'if you look around the Hobart skyline, you will see buildings in that period that are still predominant today ... the Police headquarters, the ABC Building, Legal and General, the Telecom Building, Parliament House, ANZ Centre, to name but a few'.⁸⁵² In 1994, after 38 years with the same company, Dick decided to change direction and established his own business as a building consultant.



Figure 170: Presentation of MBAT Life Membership to Dick Bloomfield (left) by MBAT President Don Dickenson 1987

Dick joined the MBAT in 1976 as a company representative. He first attended State Council in 1977 and served two consecutive terms as President, from 1981-1982 and 1982-1983. In 1987, Dick was awarded MBAT Life Membership.⁸⁵³ In presenting Dick with his Life Membership, MBAT President, Don Dickenson,

⁸⁵² Interview with RG Bloomfield, 12 July 2004

⁸⁵³ RG Bloomfield, Scrapbook, 1987: Letter from MBAT to RG Bloomfield 15 May 1987

stated that Dick's 'deep commitment and dedication to the growth and direction of the Association has been clearly displayed'.⁸⁵⁴ Don continued:

The Association acknowledges his invaluable support not only as a State Councillor but also as a member of the Contracts and Tendering Committee as well as the Industrial Committee. His expertise and knowledge have been of enormous benefit to other builder members and to the staff and the Association in general. As a committee member on the Investment and Executive Committee, Dick has instilled a sense of trust and has gained the respect of other members in overseeing the management of the assets of the Association as well as for administering management policies.⁸⁵⁵

Dick served as Chairman of the Southern Division of the MBAT between 1978 and 1980. He was also Chairman of the MBAT Industrial Committee from 1978-1980; Chairman of the MBAT Contract and Tendering Committee from 1981-1983; and the MBAT Industrial/Commercial Committee from 1983-1985. According to MBAT Life Member Tom Andrewartha, 'Dicky' Bloomfield was 'a financial guru'.⁸⁵⁶

At the time he received his Life Membership in 1987, Dick also represented the MBAT on a number of government and industry committees, including the State Construction Safety Committee, the Registration of Builders Committee, the Senior Level Advisory Group on General Construction Matters, and the RAI/MBA Consultative Committee. He was also a representative on the Master Builders' Federation Contracts Committee, and a Trustee of the Tasmanian Building Educational Trust.⁸⁵⁷ Furthermore, he represented the MBAT on the State Construction and Advisory Committee (1983-1985); the Contract and Tendering Committee; the Senior Level Advisory Group (Housing),

⁸⁵⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1987 p.21 ; RG Bloomfield, Scrapbook, 1987

⁸⁵⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1987 p.21 ; RG Bloomfield, Scrapbook, 1987

⁸⁵⁶ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

⁸⁵⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1987 p.21; RG Bloomfield, Scrapbook, 1987

from 1981 to 1988; the Senior Level Advisory Group (Construction), from 1981 to 1988; Long Service Leave; and Procurement Procedures.

As MBAT Treasurer, Dick often attended meetings in the MBAT office in Launceston, where he frequently admired a display chair made of horizontal scrub. On one visit the chair was no longer there and, in response to Dick's plea, 'Where is my chair?', MBAT Regional Manager Max Seymour 'borrowed' one from a local craftsman. The story of 'King Dick' and his royal throne, shown below, have since passed into MBAT legend.



Figure 171: MBAT State Treasurer Dick Bloomfield 1993

In 2005, Dick remains an active MBAT member and representative. He has been a continuous State Councillor since 1977. In 2000, he was appointed Deputy Chairperson of Building and Construction Industry Council, by the Premier. In

2001, he began a three-year term as a government-appointed member of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee.

Dick is also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Building, and a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Management, as well as an Associate Member of the Institute of Arbitrators Australia. He has also been involved with the community co-operative housing projects over many years and is a Director of the Co-Operative Housing Society.

Summing up his long involvement with the MBAT, Dick commented:

any organisation is only as good as its members and I am a firm believer that if you are in an industry and you enjoy what you are doing, then [the benefit] is twofold. I have been active with the MBA and numerous committees over the years. During this time, my wife has supported me, has been very tolerant and understanding. The MBA has continued to provide me leadership opportunities and, as my children were growing up, they observed my participation and professionalism, and I can see many of these attributes in them now.⁸⁵⁸

Dick is currently State Treasurer, Chairman of the Investment Committee, Chairman of the Accreditation Committee, a member of the Executive Committee and a member of the Strategic Planning Committee. He is also a member of the Southern Division Management Committee.

DA (Don) Dickenson

Life Member 1990

Don Dickenson was awarded Life Membership in 1990 in Hobart. Don, a Past President, was a hard-working and respected Builder Member of the Association's Northern Division for many years. In partnership with his wife, Betty, he established DA & BD Dickenson, based in Scottsdale. The business

⁸⁵⁸ Interview with RG Bloomfield, 12 July 2004

concentrated on cottage and commercial projects in the North East. Don joined the Association in 1967, and was an inaugural member of the MBAT Northern Division in 1975. He was elected to State Council in 1982. He was elected Chairman of the Northern Division in 1983 and served as Chair until 1985, when he was elected MBAT State President. He served two terms, until 1987.

The Dickensons trained over 20 apprentices in the Scottsdale area, many of whom have gone on to become members of the MBAT. As Max Seymour commented, this was a big commitment in a small community. Both Betty and Don were well-respected members of the Scottsdale community; Don is a Life Member of Apex, Past President of Rotary, a Paul Harris Fellow, and Life Member of aged care facility Northbourne Park. Betty and Don were both drivers for the Ambulance Service in the early days. In 1990, Don presented a radio talk-back session on northern ABC radio on Friday afternoons, increasing the profile of the MBAT. He also was the presenter on a Tasmanian Timber Board promotional video about the use of timber in house building.

Don moved to St Helen's in the 1980s for health reasons; Betty suffered from emphysema and died in August 1990. Don later remarried and returned to Scottsdale, where, in 2005, he continues to have an interest in the building industry through his design work.⁸⁵⁹

⁸⁵⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1990 p.15, June 1990 p.16; Max Seymour, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

BJ (John) Gretton

Life Member 1999

John Gretton joined the Master Builders' Association about 1968. Born in Birmingham, England, John migrated to Tasmania in 1951 with his family as a teenager. In 1952, he commenced his apprenticeship with the Hydro-Electric Commission at Bronte Park; in 1954, he continued his apprenticeship in Devonport with Ken Titmus, a former MBA member. Having completed his apprenticeship, John formed a partnership with Len Pullen. After about twelve months, the partnership dissolved and John worked as a contract builder before forming his own company, John Gretton Constructions Pty Ltd, in 1972. John was invited to join the MBAT about 1968 and became increasingly involved in the Association. In 1974, he was elected to the Management Committee of the MBAT.⁸⁶⁰ He was the first North-West Coast State President who was a house builder.⁸⁶¹ John was always a keen advocate for supporting and encouraging young apprentices, following the career path of many as they matured into successful builders.⁸⁶² At the time of his retirement in 1999, John had contributed 31 years to the MBAT: he had served on the Housing Committee for 20 years; the Management Committee for 25 years; and the Manpower, Education and Training Committee for 16 years. He served as MBAT State President from 1987-1989 and as Divisional Chairman from 1980 to 1982.⁸⁶³

⁸⁶⁰ Interview with John Gretton 15 May 2004 Spreyton

⁸⁶¹ Interview with Don Mapley 15 May 2004 Devonport

⁸⁶² *Tasmanian Master Builder* August 1993 p.20

⁸⁶³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* September 1999 p.9

MBAT Honorary Members

HD (Harold) McGonigal	1963
JL (Les) King	1967
MR (Mac) Wright	1969
BJ Hensby	1970
NA Hensby	1970
AH Betlehem	1971
BJ Cleaver	1972
RH (Ronald) Andrewartha	1978
GL Holmes	1978
JT (Tom) Steen	1978
AE Groombridge	1979
J (John) Hendriks	1979
LE (Len) Smith	1981
EA (Ewen) Nichols	1982
D (Doug) Saul	1983
RT Richards	1984
K (Keith) Hewitt	1984
BR (Bruce) Bannon	1985
VW (Vic) O'Brien	1985
RE (Ron) Dent	1986
WJ (Bill) Shegog	1987 Honorary Associate Member
EE (Eric) Deeks	1988
LJ (Leo) Smith	1989
P Barth	1990
M (Max) Briggs	1992
AM (Joe) Hollingsworth	1992 Honorary Associate Member
AJ (Allan) Orr	1993
EA (Elvin) Dick	1996
LA (Len) Reasons	1997
RJ (Ray) Tavner	1997
RA (Reg) Walley	1997
DF (Don) Mapley	2000
BW (Brian) Freeman	2001
Maurice Best	2002
Hendrick Betlehem	2003
Robert Bushby	2003

Community Activities

Members of the MBAT have contributed significantly to the community. In 1967, they undertook extensive fire reconstruction work. They have also raised funds for a number of charitable organisations.⁸⁶⁴ In 1955, for example, the MBAT decided to sponsor an entrant in the 'Miss Australia Quest'.⁸⁶⁵ In the 1960s, the newly-formed Ladies' Division of the MBAT was operated as a social group and to raise funds for charity. In her Annual Report for the year 1965-1966, the Chairman of the Ladies' Division, Mrs TJ Andrewartha, commented that the Division had achieved to a great degree its ambition to meet and become friendly with other members:

During the year we continued our charity work which I feel has definitely helped our making new friends as well as doing something worthwhile. Fundraising during the year has enabled us to complete the provision of fly-wire screens for the men's section of the Strathaven Home for the Aged.⁸⁶⁶

Other charity gifts mentioned in the report were a donation of crockery and cutlery to Clarendon Home, and finance for the construction of a floor to ceiling wardrobe at the Bethany Boys' Home.⁸⁶⁷ In 1969, in Devonport, members constructed a Santa Claus workshop for the Christmas Parade.⁸⁶⁸

In the 1970s, the MBAT sponsored the construction of the 'House of Hope', a 15 square home offered as a prize for a major state-wide raffle organised by the Miss Tasmania Quest Committee. The project received substantial support in the form of donations of materials and labour from a number of trade associations. The house was erected in Lanena Street, Bellerive and was a solid block masonry

⁸⁶⁴ *Building* September 1969 p.11

⁸⁶⁵ MBAT Minutes 16 August 1955

⁸⁶⁶ *Building* November 1966 p.10.

⁸⁶⁷ *Building* November 1966 p.10.

⁸⁶⁸ *Bulletin* 5 November 1969

house with concrete slab floors, steel deck roofing and aluminium windows. It was estimated to be worth about \$25,000. On completion, it was on public display for about three months. The winning ticket, drawn from the barrel of a Readymix cement truck, belonged to Brian Brodie, a cleaner with the Hydro-Electric Commission.⁸⁶⁹

In February 1988, a strong MBAT team participated in a fundraising 'city to surf' run for 'Caring Parents', to enable the group to provide facilities and services for severely and multiply-disabled people. The 60km run was from Low Head to Launceston. The MBAT 'Pride in the Job' team was managed by Northern Division Administrative Officer Max Seymour – as a former elite runner, he was well-qualified for the job. The team comprised Royce and Glen Fairbrother, Dave Chettle, Michael Walley, Adam Clayton, Jim Murray, Peter Bellchambers and Ian Mansfield. Dave Chettle, 1976 Montreal Olympic Marathon runner, was a joiner with RT & DJ Fairbrother. 'Caring Parents' had already built two houses in Launceston; they were designed by MBAT Associate member Jim Dickenson and constructed by Builder Member, Glenwood Homes.⁸⁷⁰

In the 1990s, the MTAT Southern Division participated in the City of Hobart Christmas Pageant, raising thousand of dollars for charity.⁸⁷¹ In 1996, the MBAT Southern Division float, coordinated by Peter and Debbie Baier, won Best Private Enterprise Award for its 'Santa's Workshop'.⁸⁷²

⁸⁶⁹ *Building* January 1970 p.10, February 1970 p.19, August 1970 p.9, October 1970 p.7

⁸⁷⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* March 1988 pp.20-21

⁸⁷¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* July 1997 p.25, November/December 1996 p.23

⁸⁷² *Tasmanian Master Builder* November/December 1996 pp.23, 35

Social and Sporting Activities

Social functions have been an important link between Builder Members and Associate Members, allowing both groups to meet in an atmosphere conducive to establishing friendly personal relationships: 'this social meeting must ultimately be to the benefit of both parties in the conduct of any future business transaction.'⁸⁷³

According to Tom Andrewartha, the 1960 Federal Convention held in Hobart was pivotal in changing the nature of the MBAT, particularly regarding its social fellowship. Many of the members' wives became involved at this time because they were encouraged to entertain the wives of interstate delegates. A very strong Ladies Committee emerged. Tom remembered that Mrs Andrewartha and Mrs McElwee were particularly involved, as were Mrs Lipscombe, Mrs Neville, Mrs Walters, Mrs Holmes, and Mrs Bennett. From this time, there were more social activities, including dinners and a dance at Christmas. This enabled the members, and their families, to get to know each other better, and this ultimately strengthened the Association and increased its membership.⁸⁷⁴ Sporting activities also became increasingly important.

In 1966, a properly constituted committee under the chairmanship of TR Hawes was appointed to organise and administer sport and social activities. Other members of the committee were GJ Jackson, LR Hale, JL Marshall, LA Hallam, GB Smith and FC Court (secretary). At its inaugural meeting in December 1966, the committee proposed a full program of events, starting with a Picnic Golf Day

⁸⁷³ MBAT *Bulletin* 28 May 1971

⁸⁷⁴ Interview with TJ Andrewartha 9 March 2004

at Elderslie, the Annual Cricket Match at Campbell Town in February, and a family picnic outing at Richardson's Beach in March.⁸⁷⁵ In 1969, the North-Western Division of the MBAT organised a March long weekend hunting and fishing trip to the Arthur River. In 1970, social and sporting activities included the annual interdivisional cricket and golf tournament at Campbell Town in February; a fishing trip to Flinders Island on the long weekend in March;⁸⁷⁶ the Southern Division Buffet Smoke Social at the Waratah Hotel in April; the Southern Division Ladies' Night Dinner Dance in May;⁸⁷⁷ and the North-Western Division Ladies' Night Dinner Dance.⁸⁷⁸ Fishing trips were regularly arranged through to the 1990s.⁸⁷⁹

MBAT Annual Dinner

The MBAT Annual Dinner has been a long-established tradition and highlight of the MBAT Social Calendar. In August 1973, the journal reported:

We have it on good authority that one stalwart MBA member, a resident of the Eastern Shore and no doubt beguiled by the splendid night, rowed himself across the Derwent to a landfall below Wrest Point. Whereupon he attended the Annual Dinner ... at a wee small hour in the forenoon of the following day, he offered a distinguished guest the passenger seat for the return voyage. On the offer being declined, said member stepped jauntily into his dinghy, unshipped oars, and with dinner suit glistening in the reflected light from the casino, paddled off into the night, homeward bound.⁸⁸⁰

MBAT Ladies' Dinner

For many years, the MBAT Ladies Dinner was held in association with the men-only MBAT Annual Dinner. This was also the pattern for regional dinners: in 1977, for example, the journal noted that the North-Western Division Ladies' Annual Dinner had taken place and that, at the conclusion of the meal, 'the ladies

⁸⁷⁵ *Building* January 1967 p.10.

⁸⁷⁶ *MBAT Bulletin* 8 December 1969

⁸⁷⁷ *MBAT Bulletin* 6 March 1970

⁸⁷⁸ *MBAT Bulletin* 13 March 1970

⁸⁷⁹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1990 p.17

⁸⁸⁰ *Tasmanian Building Journal*, August 1973 p.11

retired to the home of Mr and Mrs D Stubbs, where they were later joined by the menfolk'.⁸⁸¹ In 1984, the Association – in a departure from previous strictly adhered to procedure – decided to extend invitations to the Annual Dinner to 'member's ladies'.⁸⁸² Over 200 people attended the dinner.⁸⁸³ In 1988, however, a separate Ladies' Dinner was held at the same venue as the Annual Dinner.⁸⁸⁴



Figure 172: MBAT N-W Division Ladies Dinner held in conjunction with N-W Division Annual Dinner June 1980
L-R: Betty O'Brien, Dot Stubbs, Joan Crowe, Jo Stubbs, Sally Keating

Regional Annual Dinners

The MBAT North-Western Division Annual Dinners have been a feature of MBAT activity on the North West Coast for many years, and have been well-supported by MBAT Life and Honorary Members.⁸⁸⁵ The first Southern Division

⁸⁸¹ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1977 p.19

⁸⁸² *Tasmanian Building Journal* June 1984 p.16

⁸⁸³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* August 1984 pp.17-20

⁸⁸⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1988 p.14

⁸⁸⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* July 1992 p.20

Annual Dinner was held in August 1987.⁸⁸⁶ According to Max Seymour, when he joined the Association, the average attendance at the Northern Division Annual Dinner was about 75. The Division has built a reputation for its annual dinner, which at times has had over 300 attend, as well as its other social functions with often outrageous entertainment:

I am sure a certain State Councillor can still hear the roar of a Harley Davidson in the Albert Hall at the conclusion of an act. We have also had pink concrete trucks in the middle of Mowbray Race Course.⁸⁸⁷

In his role as Membership Services State Manager, Max has been involved with organisation of the Annual Excellence Awards Dinner, a highlight of the MBAT year.⁸⁸⁸



Figure 173: Southern Division Cocktail Party
L-R: Ewen Nichols, Betty Nichols, Dorothy Keast, MBFA President Reg Keast, MBAT Southern Division Chairman and host Dick Bloomfield, Joan Crowe, Keith Crowe, hostess Eileen Bloomfield

⁸⁸⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* September 1987 p.17

⁸⁸⁷ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Spring 2001 p.6

⁸⁸⁸ Max Seymour, *personal communication*, 23 March 2005

Annual Cricket Match



Figure 174: MBAT Annual Cricket Match Campbell Town 1960s
Ibbott family in foreground, McElwee family behind
Photo courtesy of Paul Ibbott

An interdivisional cricket match was contested annually during the 1960s, usually at Campbell Town, with Members, Associate Members, their employees, families and friends participating – on one occasion, even local kids were conscripted. The MBA Shield was awarded for this fiercely-contested event.⁸⁸⁹ In 1969, it was won convincingly by the North-Western Division. For the first time, a golf tournament was held in conjunction with the match to cater for non-cricket playing members.⁸⁹⁰ In 1970, in Campbell Town, about 40 children attended with their parents and ‘thoroughly enjoyed a number of races in which they participated and the prizes of chocolates which were liberally distributed

⁸⁸⁹ *Building* April 1969 p.12

⁸⁹⁰ *Building* April 1969 p.12

together with cordials all round. Many also made the most of the opportunity to swim in the nearby pool.⁸⁹¹

Attempts to resurrect the cricket match took place in 1989. There are two versions of the outcome: the first states that the match lapsed for lack of support and the second is that the northerners forfeited – although the north claimed this was simply a ruse by the Southern Division to claim victory. In 1990, the event was successfully revived; the emphasis remained on fun and family participation but the inter-divisional rivalry was just as intense.⁸⁹²



Figure 175: MBA Southern Sunday Cricket Match and Family BBQ 1997
L-R: Pioneer Manager Peter Cooper, Rod Scott from Besser Tasmania, Greg Williams from Pioneer Concrete, Wes Phillips MBAT Journal Editor, Chairman of Southern Division Tony Winter

The MBAT Southern Division also held annual cricket matches in the 1990s, played between MBAT Builders and MBAT Associates.⁸⁹³

⁸⁹¹ *Building* February 1970 p.20

⁸⁹² *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1990 pp.16-18

⁸⁹³ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1997 p.17

In the 1960s, MBAT members participated in the MBA James Wall Lawn Bowls competition, held annually interstate from 1923.⁸⁹⁴

MBAT Social Golf Club

The first social golf day, organised by the Southern Division Sports and Social Committee, was held at Elderslie Golf Course on 22 December 1966. Members, Associate Members and families participated in the picnic tournament. Over 20 players contested a four-ball best ball stableford over 18 holes; MV Reed and NA Geer were the winners.⁸⁹⁵

The MBAT Social Golf Club was formed in 1971 in Hobart. Lou Stubbs and Eddie French were instrumental in its establishment. In 1968, Lou and Eddie organised the first MBAT Trade Golf Day, held by the North-Western Division of the MBA. Both participated in the MR Hornibrook Golf Tournament, an interstate competition for master builders, in 1968, and they then encouraged Bill Shields and Max Bourke to take part. This was the catalyst for the formation of the Social Golf Club. MBAT Members and Associate Members involved in the foundation of the Golf Club included Bill Shields, Lou Stubbs, Eddie French, Leon 'Stick' Hale, Geoff Holmes, Albert Groombridge, Ray Vincent, Harry Simpson, Denis Jones, Glen Kirkwood and Max Robison.

The Social Golf Club was launched at a special general meeting held at the Building Centre on 27 April 1971. Lou Stubbs was elected Foundation President and Max Robison (Hobart Plumbing Supplies) was elected Captain. Committee members were Eddie French, Harry Simpson (Pioneer Concrete) and Bill Shields.

⁸⁹⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* January/February 1992 p.15

⁸⁹⁵ *Building* November 1966 p.10

Mike Lowe (Associated General Contractors Insurance Co) filled the position of Honorary Auditor. MBAT staff member, Tony Lyden, was appointed Honorary Secretary.

The first golf day was held on Wednesday 2 June 1971 at the Tasmania Golf Club, Barilla Bay. The Social Golf Club is conducted under a constitution, is self-supporting financially and administratively, but operates with the support of the MBAT. Above all, the MBAT Social Golf Club highlights the benefits of fellowship and goodwill, and maintaining contact with other sections of the industry.

Club Tournament

Because of the geographic split-up of the MBAT, each Division conducts Club Tournaments through out the year.⁸⁹⁶

Continental Cup

The Continental Cup, sponsored by Jan and Marie Siejka of Continental Builders, began in March 1987 at the Launceston Golf Club. On Jan and Marie's retirement, their son, John Siejka, who formed a new company called Continental Builders Pty Ltd, continued the family tradition of sponsorship. In 1990, the Continental Cup was played for the first time on the North West Coast.⁸⁹⁷

In April 1998, the MBAT Social Golf Club held an appreciation luncheon for its Life Members, former long-serving committeemen, the 1st Club Secretary and 1st Club Captain. Fourteen stalwarts were able to attend the lunch.⁸⁹⁸

⁸⁹⁶ MBAT Social Golf Club, Book 1

⁸⁹⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1987 p.16; May 1997 p.28; July 1990 p.16

⁸⁹⁸ *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1998 pp.23-24

Life Members MBAT Social Golf Club

1976 AJ Lyden
1978 WL Shields
1978 LT Stubbs*
1978 GL Holmes*
1979 EA French
1979 LR Hale*
1985 AM Bourke
1985 K Crowe
1986 GE Hale*
1986 DJ Jones
1989 HB Burnett*
1991 DF Mapley
1997 IC Mansfield
1998 R Cashion
2003 KR Weeding
2003 C Heron
2003 TJ Vimpany

* deceased

Happy Golf Reunion

1968 – 1998

The Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania was the delightful setting for the MBA Social Golf Club to hold a Reunion Luncheon. More importantly, the Club wanted to honour the original members who laid the foundations for good fellowship and good golf some 27 years ago. The club today is thriving, and unlike the economy, it's in the black. Special story on page 23.



Photo at RYCT at the Appreciation Dinner for foundation members shows L-R Eddie French and Max Robison . . . good food and drink and good memories of GOOD GOLF.



Historic photo shows L-R back row at RYCT, Tony Lyden, Ian Mansfield and Max Robison; front row L-R veteran Eddie French and Reg Jackson. Mr Jackson was praised for many years of sponsorship thru his successful firm Jacksons Transport Services.



Plenty of golfing talent here L-R back row Ron Casbion, Bill Shiels and seated L-R are stalwarts Keith Crowe and Geoff Holmes.



Welcome to the Stirrer's Club - even the Editor got a serve during this bappy session; L-R back row champions are Harry Burnett putting a half Nelson on Dennis Jones, with front row L-R Jack Williamson, Big Maxy Bourke and Gordon Hale.

Figure 176: *Tasmanian Master Builder* April 1998 p.29

Annual MR Hornibrook Golf Tournament

Named after prominent master builder, Sir Manuel Hornibrook, the annual MR Hornibrook Golf Tournament, for master builders, was first played in 1958.⁸⁹⁹ MBAT members Lou Stubbs, Eddie French and Owen Bird, all from the North-Western Division, participated in the MR Hornibrook Golf Tournament in 1966 on a non-State basis. In 1968, for the first time, Tasmania fielded a full team at the Mr Hornibrook Golf Tournament. The Tasmanian team included LT Stubbs, S Dyson, E French, O Bird (captain), R Speed, T McKay, W McKay, W Livingstone and R Vincent.⁹⁰⁰ At the 42nd tournament, it was acknowledged that Eddie French of Tasmania had attended 35 of the 42 tournaments.⁹⁰¹ In all, Tasmania has hosted the Hornibrook Tournament six times.

15th Annual MR Hornibrook Golf Tournament September 1973 (Hobart)

The first MR Hornibrook Golf Tournament to be held in Tasmania took place in September 1973. The tournament coincided with the opening of the Casino.

21st Annual M.R. Hornibrook Golf Tournament September 1979 (Hobart)

In 1979, Tasmania, the host State, won its first tournament.

27th Annual M.R. Hornibrook Golf Tournament October 1985 (Hobart)

In October 1985, Tasmanian again hosted the event.⁹⁰²

33rd Annual M.R. Hornibrook Golf Tournament 1991 (Hobart)

MBAT, celebrating its centenary, hosted the 33rd Annual MR Hornibrook Trophy in October 1991.⁹⁰³ The MBAT fielded a large team, captained by Keith Crowe.

⁸⁹⁹ *The Queensland Master Builder*, 12 December 1974 p.32

⁹⁰⁰ *Building* September 1968 p.18

⁹⁰¹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Autumn 2001 p.34

⁹⁰² *Tasmanian Building Journal* November 1985 pp.18-24

⁹⁰³ *Advocate*, 28 September 1991

39th Annual M.R. Hornibrook Golf Tournament 1997 (Launceston)

The 39th Hornibrook was based in Launceston from 5 October 1997 but golf was played at Launceston, Ulverstone and Riverside Golf Clubs. Tournament Manager was Don Mapley.⁹⁰⁴

Tasmania last hosted the event in 2003. Tasmania has won the coveted Hornibrook trophy twice, in 1979 in Hobart; and in 1994 in Sydney at the 36th tournament.



Figure 177: 39th MR Hornibrook Golf Tournament Sydney 1994, Championship Team

L-R: TOP: Len Reasons, Ted Goggins, Don Mapley, Jim Laycock, Tom Vimpany, Gary Linton, Carl Donnelly. CENTRE: Paul Almond, Paul Ibbott, Ken Weeding, John Erends (Vice-Captain), Tony Winter, John Pretyman, Col Heron. FRONT: Ron Smith, Eric Slater, Ron Cashion (President), Ian Mansfield (Captain), Harold Priestley, Eddie French

⁹⁰⁴ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1997 p.28; *Tasmanian Master Builder* October 1997 pp.6-8

Master Builders' Federation of Australia

The peak-body of the Master Builders' Associations is the Master Builders' Australia, originally called the Master Builders' Federation of Australia (MBFA).

In 1950, Tom Lipscombe was elected Treasurer of the Federation at the Federation's Convention held in Newcastle.⁹⁰⁵ In 1954, the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania hosted the Federation conference, which stressed the need to change with the times:

Many of us joined the industry before concrete mixers were used on the job, and now we are leaving that great invention behind to buy from the central mixing plants to keep up with the march of progress. Therefore, we must adjust our Federation to the changing times and strengthen it, to meet the Union strength, the Socialist Government strength, and other forces who are not in agreement with private enterprise.⁹⁰⁶

In 1955, Arthur Moore was appointed to the Federal Executive as Treasurer; in 1959, he was elected Federation President.⁹⁰⁷ In 1960, Tasmania again hosted the annual convention of the Master Builders' Federation of Australia, this time under Arthur Moore's presidency.⁹⁰⁸ At this meeting, the Federation expressed support for a review of the concept of the basic wage and resolved to support moves for a 42-hour week and pegging of the basic wage and margins for four years.⁹⁰⁹ It also announced that the Federation was setting up an advisory service for the construction industry.⁹¹⁰

⁹⁰⁵ *The Mercury*, 10 November 1950

⁹⁰⁶ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building*

⁹⁰⁷ *The Mercury* 17 October 1959.

⁹⁰⁸ *The Mercury* 23 May 1960

⁹⁰⁹ *The Mercury* 7 November 1960

⁹¹⁰ *The Mercury* 12 November 1960

The 1960 convention was also a significant social occasion, with delegates' wives accompanying them and participating in a range of events: Mrs PL Richardson, wife of the MBAT President, opened her Margaret Street, Sandy Bay home for a musical afternoon and there was also a ferry trip to New Norfolk, morning tea in the Botanical Gardens, and a trip to the theatre while the delegates attended the convention dinner. The Convention Ball, with its 'gay Parisienne red, white and blue' theme, was a highlight.⁹¹¹

In 1960, two MBAT members, JL Cooper of Cooper Constructions and L King of EA Watts, participated in an overseas study tour arranged by the Master Builders' Federation of Australia. The study tour investigated the latest trends in building management and building methods, and visited India, Thailand, the United Kingdom, the Continent (Europe), the United States and Canada.⁹¹²

In October 1966, the Master Builders' Federation of Australia held its 60th Convention in Hobart, with 117 interstate and 84 Tasmanian visitors and delegates attending.⁹¹³ In accordance with long-standing tradition, retiring President, Royce Neville of Burnie, was presented with a beautifully-designed gavel by the incoming President as one of his first official duties. Made up of wood from all States, metal bound and inscribed with the names of every past president of the Federation since its inception in 1890, the gavel was one of 24 made by Tasmanian builder and contractor, Tom Lipscombe, a former president of the Federation.⁹¹⁴

⁹¹¹ *The Mercury* 8 November 1960

⁹¹² *The Mercury* 29 April 1960

⁹¹³ *Building* November 1966 pp.13-17, 24, 28 (President's gavel: Lipscombe)

⁹¹⁴ *Building* November 1966 p.28



Figure 178: Tasmanian delegates, 62nd Master Builders' Federation National Convention, Canberra, 1968

STANDING: VW O'Brien, K Crowe. SEATED: D Williams, A Betlehem, MR Elliott, GE Walters (State President), RR Neville

In 1969, Tasmanian delegates to the Master Builders' Federation National Convention were GE Walters (State President, MBAT), AH Betlehem, RR Neville, LT Stubbs, and GL Holmes. The Executive Director of MBAT, MR Elliott, also attended.

The MBFA had a long record of consultation with government. In 1961, the MBFA first took part in the Economic Consultations with Cabinet; more recently, under the initiative of the MBFA, Ministerial Advisory Councils were established to review and monitor activity levels and recommend policy options for the industry.⁹¹⁵

⁹¹⁵ *Tasmanian Building Journal* April 1983 p.8

In the 1980s, the MBAT continued to closely follow and strongly support the activities of the Federation, particularly after the election of a Federal Labor Government under Bob Hawke. The MBFA was seen as a vehicle for lobbying Canberra. Dick Bloomfield, as MBAT President, was cognizant of the continuing efforts of the Federation at national level to improve conditions in the industry. This was largely through submissions such as the substantial one to the National Economic Summit Conference in 1983. The Federation also held its own summit meetings: the Master Builders' Australian Housing Council was held in Melbourne in March 1983, and reviewed the impact of the new government policies. In 1985, the Master Builders' movement agreed that the MBFA should establish a single authoritative industrial relations council, the MBFA Industrial Relations Council, which met for the first time in March 1985.⁹¹⁶ The MBFA also lobbied the Federal Government on a range of other issues, including the need for a substantially increased migrant intake.⁹¹⁷

In 1988, the MBFA underwent a major re-organisation, which included the change of name to 'Master Building Construction and Housing Association Australia', as well as the restructuring of its advisory divisions and an overhaul of its industrial relations services. Under the new structure, five industry sector groups were formed, representing general construction, housing, specialist trade construction, engineering construction and materials manufacture and supply.⁹¹⁸

In October 1999, MBAT State President, Paul Ibbott, was elected Treasurer of Master Builders' Australia. The organisation had recently undergone significant structural changes, including a name change to 'Master Builders' Australia' in

⁹¹⁶ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1985 p.3

⁹¹⁷ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1988 pp.6-8

⁹¹⁸ *Tasmanian Building Journal* March 1988 p.14, May 1988 pp.6-7

1993.⁹¹⁹ The Master Builders of Australia's Federal Council met in Hobart in February 2003, the first meeting of the Council in Tasmania for several years.⁹²⁰ In November 2003, Paul Ibbott was elected to Deputy President having held the office of Treasurer for 4 years.

MBFA Presidents from Tasmania

There have been four MBFA Presidents from Tasmania:

Claude Cooper 1930

TM (Tom) Lipscombe 1953-54

Treasurer 1949, Federation Life Member

Arthur B. Moore 1959-60

RR (Royce) Neville 1965-1967

⁹¹⁹ *Tasmanian Master Builder* December 1999 p.9, August 1993 p.2

⁹²⁰ *Tasmanian Master Builder* Summer 2002 p.4

Australian Institute of Building

The Australian Institute of Builders, later known as the Australian Institute of Building (AIB), was formed in Sydney in 1951.⁹²¹ Prominent members of the MBAT were active in the Institute, with several serving as President of the Tasmanian Chapter. Tom Lipscombe, of Hobart, was a foundation member.⁹²²

The institute, which has chapters in all States, is the professional body for people engaged in the management, technical and administrative aspects of the building industry. Its basic aim is to promote the study of and advance the science and practice of building. It has been active in the establishment of building courses at universities, technical colleges, and colleges of advanced education.

Some members of the MBAT received the AIB Chapter Honour Award, a biennial award to a current Chapter Member in recognition of a significant contribution to the practice and science of building. Gordon Ibbott FAIB, John J Rogerson FAIB, Bill Shields FAIB and Lou Stubbs FAIB were all MBAT recipients of the award.⁹²³ Bill Shields is the only person in Tasmania holding the position of AIB Life Fellow, and only one of 13 in Australia.

⁹²¹ *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* October 1952, pp.5-6, 24; *Building* February 1970 pp.39-42; *Tasmanian Building Journal* December 1981 pp.30-31

⁹²² *Tasmanian Architecture and Building* February 1952, p.5, July 1954 p.11

⁹²³ *Tasmanian Building Journal* May 1988 p.23

END WORD

Our forebears achieved lifetimes of successful activity for the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania, the community and members.

How different has it been through the years, than for today's members? Probably not a lot: the same pressures and logistics applied, just different technologies.

The ideals of quality and industry advancement were the prime goals of their activities. The same demands of time and effort on behalf of members for our association and the building industry would have been similar to today.

We owe all previous members, office holders and staff our respect, gratitude and admiration for the longevity of the Master Builders' Association of Tasmania.

A lasting legacy.

Our actions, re-actions, initiatives and attitudes today are the basis for tomorrow's history.

Denis Reid
President
March 2005

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