

Further insights into the life and times of Edward Primrose Tregurtha

Introduction

Edward Primrose Tregurtha (EPT) died from a heart attack in 1880 at the age of 77. In July 2014 Juliet Hera Sandison, nee Tregurtha, (8/1/21 - 8/08/18) my Mother asked me while travelling to the Festival of Voices in Hobart to locate her Great Grandfather's grave in Launceston. I did this and more. On route, I met with the author/editor of the *Tregurtha Log* (1983) the delightful historian, (then) 91 year old Dan Sprod (1924-2018) in his beloved Astrolab - *Fine, Old and Rare Bookshop*. - continues to be run by his son Michael Sprod to date. <http://www.astrolabebooks.com.au/>. (NB the Bookshop has since moved to shared premises with Kent & Kent Antiques, 276a Argyle Street Hobart and I believe has copies of the *Tregurtha Log*). Dan and I sat by a sunny window on the first floor of the 19 century Ordnance stores on Castray Esplanade overlooking Salamanca Square and Hobart Harbour and talked about his life and experience penning the *Tregurtha Log*. Dan allowed me to record our conversation, now a pod cast. (edited by my brother-in-law, Alister Robertson) I proceeded to Launceston and the following summarises my research from two trips.

Residential and Businesses Properties

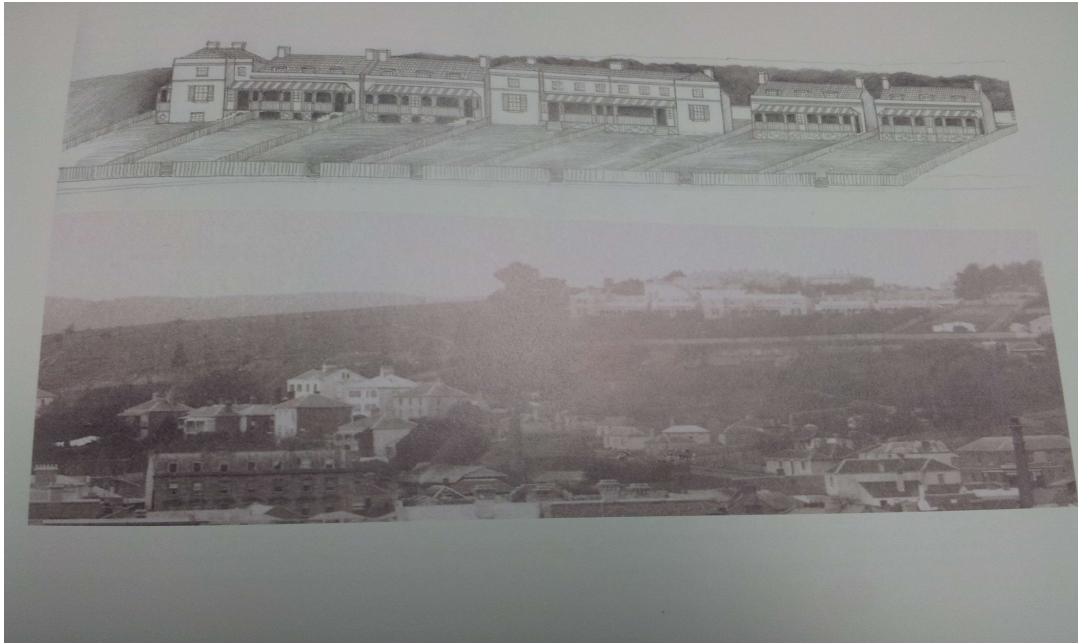
EPT's early days leading up to settling in Tasmania are well documented in the *Tregurtha Log* and archival material. From Launceston Library records, during my first visit in 2015, I noted that he arrived in Hobart in 1831, skippering the *Barque Caroline*. After whaling and establishing a shipwrights business, finally moved and settled in Launceston around 1842. He was engaged as *a master and owner of various vessels until 1839*, including the whaling ship the *Caroline*, *joint owner of the Henry* and *commanded the Gipsy and the first recorded tug boat on the Tamar River*. He had a short unsuccessful stint of sheep farming on Kangaroo Island, South Australia sheep salvaged from the wreck of the *Brig Rhoda*. He transported goods on the *Henry* to Adelaide and Melbourne. (1837-1847) The *Henry* was itself ship wrecked at the mouth of the Tamar River in 1848, EPT was not on board, no lives were lost. His Will identifies his occupation as a Wool and Customs Agent.

He resided with his wife Elizabeth (nee Bussell) four sons and three daughters from 182 in Lyttleton Street and from about 1861 at Lot 55 Victoria Terrace Windmill Hill where he died. From 1858 to his death he was the Shipping Master of the Port of Launceston. One could assume that from this property it provided good advantage to view the flag that announced ship arrivals for the first Harbour Master of Launceston.

EPT rented an office and yard at 7 and 15 Lower George Street in the city. He owned a 500 acre farm in Whitefoord Hills. He served as an 'elder' in the longest established church in Launceston, St Johns Church and I am yet to locate these records.



During my second visit to Launceston in 2017, by good fortune, a young Librarian had, for the first time, correlated Launceston residential street/lot numbers to modern day street numbers as part of his Phd studies. With his assistance, we finally established that Lot 55, 7th house in the row on Victoria Terrace/Avenue is in fact now 13 Welman Street. At that very moment, a second Librarian assisting me, pointed out a large very old photograph of a painting directly behind the Library Reference section clearly showing a row of stately Georgian homes (build and let by James Bennell) on Windmill Hill, looking north from the city above some paddocks. With Architects drawings we established that EPT's home was the last house on the right set back from Victoria Terrace.



Welman Street is now divided to lower and upper one-way streets. The row of houses at the top of this sketch and photograph (by Mr Caxton) in the Launceston Library clearly shows EPT's Victoria Terrace residence amongst the trees on the far right.



13 Welman Street as it is today.



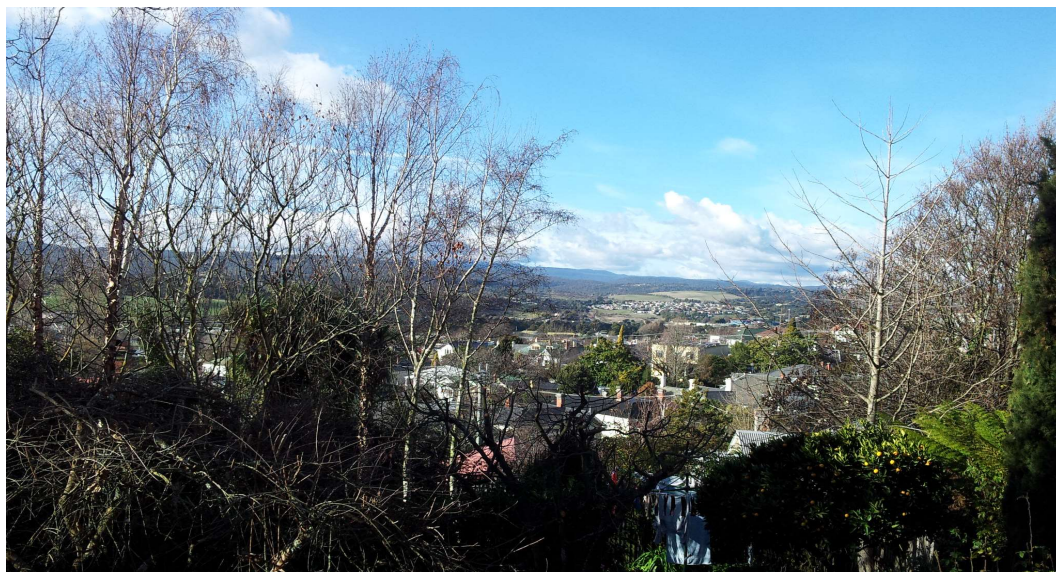
Statutory, business, newspaper and other records indicate, that apart for the Victoria Terrace (13 Welman Street) property, EPT was associated with various sites including; residences, offices and a wool and coal yard at (7&15) Lower George Street, Cameron Street and, around 1842 two residential blocks in Lyttleton Street. With the assistance of the extraordinary helpful Launceston Library staff, we once again correlated lot numbers to modern house number system, I was now able to identify this property as 43 Littleton Street.



It is now named *Lauderdale*, but my research established it was previously called *Whale Bone Cottage*. This certainly makes sense given EPT's earlier whaling career. The stately old stone home is now hidden behind a studio boundary wall. In 2015 I found nobody home, however on my return in 2017, I met a middle aged couple who

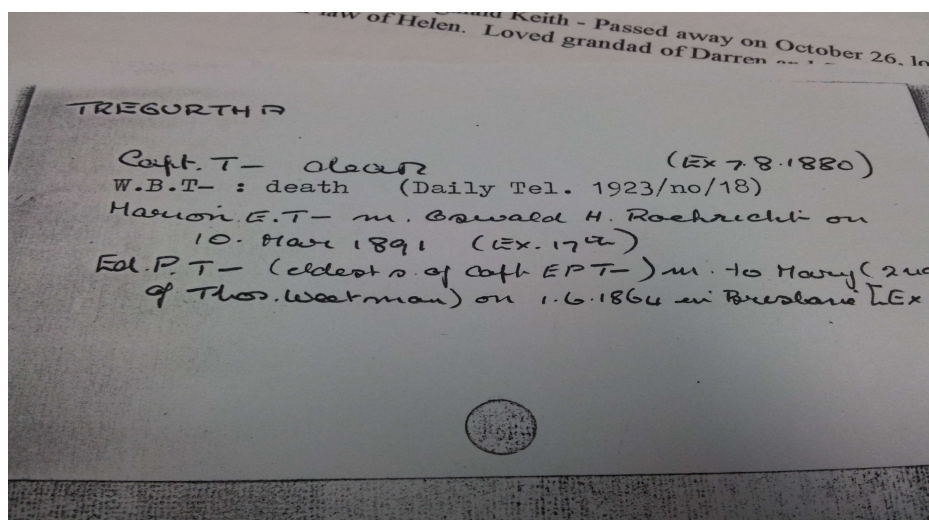
recently purchased the residence and was welcomed. To my surprise, the couple had furnished the once EPT's residence in exquisite furniture from the middle 19th century.

It felt like nothing had changed in 175 years! I imagined the Tregurtha family looking out past the now very old walnut and magnolia trees to the fields and hills beyond.



Grave Site

EPT was buried in Cypress St Church of England Episcopal Cemetery on 9 August 1880. The cemetery was opened in 1823, held over 30,000 graves, was closed in 1906 and decommissioned in 1926. From the Library documents, I was able to establish that EPT's grave was located *precisely 3 Rows from the main path next to Mr Gowrie*.



Families were able to move headstones and remains to the newly commissioned Carr Villa Cemetery from 1905 to 1920. There is no record of EPT's remains being moved to Carr Villa. The Cypress St Cemetery lay neglected until 1953 when it was reclaimed as a recreational area for the then Broadland House School, now Church of England Girls Grammar School ... *and where school children now joyfully romp and play*. Some of the remaining tombstones have been made into a memorial at the original gate site. My Mother Juliet, was grateful to hear this history and that EPT lays where he was buried and delighted that children now play on his grave!

Email from Dan Sprod (dc) author of the *Tregurtha Log*.

From: dansprod@bigpond.com

Sent: Friday, February 27, 2015 3:01 PM

To: rsandison@optusnet.com.au

Subject: RE: (FWD) Fw: *TREGURTHA LOG* - INTERVIEW WITH DAN SPROD

Dear Rob Sandison, Thanks so much for your email forwarded on to me by Astrolabe Books re the Tregurtha project. Sorry for the delay in responding but I had trouble opening up the interview (I am not very good with computers!) but one of my sons helped and I can now get ready access. Yes, you have my permission to attach the interview between you and I to the Tregurtha Project. Thanks for all your enthusiastic work on this project and hope all goes well for your extended family. All best, Dan Sprod

From: Astrolabe Booksellers [mailto:books@astrolabebooks.com.au]

Sent: Sunday, 22 February 2015 3:34 PM

To: Dan & Gleewyn Sprod

Subject: (FWD) Fw: *TREGURTHA LOG* - INTERVIEW WITH DAN SPROD

Edward Primrose Tregurtha 1803-1880



While there are already many published and archival records surrounding Edward Primrose Tregurtha's businesses, employment, explorations, seafaring adventures and family, I am particularly interested in unanswered questions or gaps in the records and would appreciate any ideas that might assist with my future research to contribute to the Tregurtha Project.

I will return to Launceston 2021 to continue to discover more about our fascinating forebear. It has been a great privilege to date.

Robert Andrew Sandison (DOB 1950)

rsandison45@gmail.com

Granite Belt, W.A.

Jilakin crouches,
a couchant hump
against the flat horizon

A giant in the bare paddocks
with the distant hummocks
Aboriginal landmarks
of Weedenin, Wakenin and Yeerekin

Jarrah trees make a dark shade at the
foot of Jilakin
artesian water feeds the roots
in a very old country
with the brooding silence
of antiquity

Home Again

Home again
and I rejoice
in the comfort of ownership
of tokens, small and large
Even the view
the dark silhouette
against the horizon
is mine
New growth in the garden
is mine
outside, inside
verandah cushions
kittens I fed and nurtured
quaint voyagers in the dusk –
all mine

The full moon rises
the house and garden
are bathed in gentle light
and my ebullient spirit
is in retreat

The full moon rises
and the old magic
of the unfolding universe

is all around me
and I shall be glad
if my bones are permitted
to nourish
even the smallest leaf

Juliet Sandison (nee Tregurtha) 1921-2018



Juliet Sandison was born in Narrogin WA and raised with her parents Cyril Tregurtha and Janet (nee Menzies) with siblings Pala (Wenonah), twins Janet and Erica and Noye (Peter). From an early age, she was published as a play-write and later novelist, short story writer and prolific poet. Our Mother passed away grateful for her fortunate life after a fall at age 97. She did not see this final piece of research, but I read my notes to her. Her children published her latest novel, *Jo Dreaming* in February 2020 and will continue to publish her treasure-trove of poetry and short stories. She was a talented, gracious gentle lady and will be missed by her family and friends.