



*A bit  
about Louisa*

Louisa Anne Meredith is regarded as one of Australia's most talented colonial female writers and artists.

In 1840 she arrived in Van Diemen's Land, aged 28, with her husband Charles and baby son to join the Meredith family at Swansea. Louisa spent most of her adult life living on the East Coast of Tasmania and continued to have her work recognised as she had during her years in Birmingham.

Louisa retained a love of the natural world of England and introduced old world plants to her gardens in Tasmania. She also had a passion for the native flora and fauna of her new island home and produced many beautiful paintings and sketches, and a series of illustrated books of poems and essays. Her two best known publications are *Notes and Sketches of New South Wales* (1844), and *My Home in Tasmania* (1852). Both these books are valued for their detailed picture of colonial life – sometimes portrayed too frankly for the comfort of her fellow colonials. Many of her work are held by the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.

Louisa's life in Tasmania was not as comfortable as she had hoped. Charles, although a charming man, was not a good businessman and many of his ventures failed. They moved house frequently and often had to struggle to maintain the lifestyle they felt suitable to their station. In the Swansea area they lived at Cambria with Charles' father, then at Riversdale, Springvale and later at Plas Newydd. Life became more settled, but still not prosperous, when Charles was appointed a minister of the Tasmanian Parliament.

Despite their poverty the Merediths moved in the best colonial society and were welcome guests at Government House. After Charles'



Louisa Anne Meredith in 1888

by Judie Hastie

death, Louisa was granted a pension of 100 pounds a year in recognition of her work. She maintained her lively mind and interest in new ideas despite advancing age and poor health, and journeyed to England in 1889 to supervise the publication of her last book.

Louisa bore four sons, one of whom died in infancy. She died in Melbourne in 1895, at the age of 83.

*Some of Louisa's beautiful native Tasmanian floral artwork, from My Bush Friends in Tasmania (last series) printed in 1891.*



Tasmanian Laurel



Blandfordia & Box



Kangaroo Apple & Tea-tree with Lady Tortoiseshell



A Sea Shore Group



White-flowering Grass Tree





# Louisa's Houses

## SPRING VALE (CRANBROOK)

Louisa and her husband Charles designed the house at Spring Vale, and it was Louisa's favourite.

*We finally decided on placing our house on a rocky bank facing the south-east, at the foot of which we purposed having our garden, whilst the stabling and outhouses would occupy the higher level ground behind the house.*

*Mr Meredith meanwhile was indefatigably industrious in the improvement and civilization of our new place, "Spring Vale" – so named from the bright spring of pure water rising in the low lands.*



## RIVERSDALE (NEAR SWANSEA)

*The house of Riversdale, which we now occupied, being, with the adjacent water-mill and other buildings, the centre of a large agricultural farm, I had not many nice wild-wood walks near home ...*

*From our side-window ... we look up the public road, through the district. Opposite the entrance to our farm-yard stands our blacksmith's forge, whilst the mill, barn, stack-yard, cow-sheds, stabling, dairymen's cottages, and other buildings, fill up the side-view, and complete the extensive farm homestead.*



## CAMBRIA (SWANSEA)

*The house at "Cambria" commands an extensive view of large tracts both of "bush" and cultivated land; and, across the Head of Oyster Bay, of the Schoutens, whose lofty picturesque outline, and the changing hues they assume in different periods of the day or states of the atmosphere, are noble adjuncts to the landscape.*

*A large, well-built, cheerful-looking house, with its accompanying signs of substantial comfort in the shape of barns, stackyard, stabling, extensive gardens, and all other requisite appliances on a large scale, is most pleasant to look upon at all times and in all places ...*



## PLAS NEWYDD (SWANSEA)

Two large rooms forming an extra wing were added by Charles and Louisa. They gave the house the Welsh name Plas Newydd meaning "New House". They lived there for only three years before moving to Twamley near Buckland. A letter from Francis Cotton of Kelvedon to Mather's in Hobart Town, gave their reason for moving. They had spent so much money on extending the building.



## MALUNNAH (ORFORD)

Charles and Louisa had a new attractive stone cottage built at Orford, completed in 1868. Louisa, called it Malunnah, an aboriginal word for 'Nest'. Malunnah is situated on the main road overlooking the Prosser River.

In 1879 she predicted that Orford:

*... will in all probability cause this part of Tasmania to be chosen as a residence by many of the future emigrants of the middle and upper-classes, whose mansions and villas will find charm and sites.*



## TWAMLEY (NEAR BUCKLAND)

When the Merediths moved into this isolated house, they renamed it Twamley after Louisa's maiden name. The house is situated about four miles north of Buckland and a few miles off the main road. It was set on the side of a hill and overlooked flat plains.

Depressed at having to pack up and leave Twamley, Louisa took her own copy of "My Home in Tasmania" and wrote this: *The evil spell still works. I open the book at this passage whilst packing our little library once more to leave Twamley, and with no fixed destination in view, our seventh move since 1844.*

She wrote it next to the following passage in her book: *I felt as if there were some evil spell upon us, dooming us always to go on wandering, as if for us earth had not a home.*





*Louisa's Books*



*Bush Friends in Tasmania Volumes I & II*



*A Tasmanian Sketch Book*



*Waratah Rhymes*



*My Home in Tasmania Volumes I & II*



*Tasmanian Friends & Foes*

## V A L E

*Joyce Dunbabin*

14TH NOVEMBER 1931 – 15TH JULY 2015

With the passing of Joyce the Glamorgan

Spring Bay Historical Society has lost one of its most valued and well-loved members. Joyce joined the Society in its very early days and has been active and involved in all its aspects ever since.



At different times she held office as Secretary and Vice President and fulfilled those duties quietly and efficiently. She was never ducked a challenge, learning to swim and to use a computer in her seventies. But her special skill was in her ability to oil the wheels, to know who needed a quiet word, a soft-spoken reminder or a message of encouragement or condolence. She was our social secretary in a very real sense.

If I may be allowed to add a personal dimension to this tribute, I would like to tell you about a younger Joyce. We attended the same secondary school, although she was only a name and a face to me then. After she worked in the Commonwealth Social Services Department, as did two of my friends. I heard tales of this kind and friendly girl who was always beautifully dressed and never lost her cool. Then I heard of the handsome boyfriend who was meeting her after work. Of course in those far-off days, marrying the handsome boyfriend meant that she had to stop working, so I did not hear much of Joyce until she and Robert moved to the East Coast. Then it was my mother telling me about her new neighbour, always so pleasant and so beautifully dressed. That was when I got to meet her in person and see for myself what a lovely lady she was.

Eventually she suggested that we rent the cottages on the Dunbabin property and thus she became our landlady, although we were under strict instructions never to use the term. That was when she became a true friend, extending the famous Dunbabin hospitality and helping to integrate us into the local community. And when I had my own troubles, she and Robert were there, not fussing, just there to support. I will never forget her.

Judie Hastie 23-7-2015

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

PETER HUTTEMEIER, SECRETARY

We are pleased to welcome the following new Society members since our last Former Times newsletter: Margaret Toland, Miriam Imms, Jeanie Edwards, Claire Sullivan, Christine McConnon David Hodgson, Tony Hope, Reg Watson, Lorraine Riggall, Peter Swan and Steve Dart.

Society Membership now stands at 82, and we thank all our long standing Members for once again renewing their fees for a further 12 months.

We have an exciting year ahead, with income coming from *Some of My Bush Friends* sales spurring on other publishing projects. It only costs \$15 a year to be a Member of GSBHS which is not much these days, and it really is a bargain for the benefits members get.

*The Glamorgan Spring Bay Historical Society wishes all its members and the community a safe and special Christmas and an enjoyable New Year.*

*The Society will be closed from Friday 18th December and reopen on Tuesday 12th January 2016.*

