PORT ARTHUR TALKS

Come to Tasmania the Wonderland: tourism guidebooks and Port Arthur, 1830-1939

presented by Dr Marian Walker

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Port Arthur was a controversial tourist attraction. Views about its merits for visitors ranged from 'beautiful' to 'macabre'. Much of this discourse was reflected in the many attractive tourism guidebooks publicising the site right up until (for the purposes of this paper) World War Two. For tourism historians these guidebooks provide a rich repository of evolving social and cultural thought valuable for historical analysis. This paper will survey a select number of these guidebooks and discuss the prevalent and recurrent themes and attitudes contained therein, concluding that although a variety of emotional attitudes were indicated and expressed about Port Arthur ambivalence was, for the most part, not one of them.

Dr Marian Walker is a consultant historian and an Honorary Research Associate with the School of History and Classics at the University of Tasmania. She has a career background in tourism and specialises in the social and cultural history of travel and tourism. Her research interests include cultural landscapes, public memory, the concept of 'image' as a social and cultural construct and the interpretation of tourist sites. One of her research projects is an annotated bibliography of Tasmanian tourism guidebooks held in the State Library of Tasmania Heritage Collections.

ALL WELCOME!

Thursday 12 May, 2011 at 5.30 p.m.

Junior Medical Officer's Conference Room, Port Arthur Historic Site

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