

INSIDESTORIES

BONUS

Stunning start
to wedded bliss

DAYS like this only happen once every five years in Tasmania," observed one

of the 80 guests at a wedding at Brickendon near Longford last Sunday.

Whether he was alluding to the sublime weather, or the magical setting of one of Tasmania's most treasured complex of colonial buildings, or the diversity of the gathering that comprised friends and relatives from far-flung places such as Scotland via Afghanistan, the mainland capitals and distant Tamworth, the nation's home of country music, or the palpable feeling of excitement and bonhomie, or a combination of all of these I can't say. But it was without a doubt one of my most memorable moments in Tasmania.

The bride's family migrated from Lebanon to New England in New South Wales. The groom's family is from Sydney, though his parents do pretty much what I do, divvy up time between here and there.

The choice of Tasmania as a venue for the nuptials may have seemed like opting for neutral territory, a decision taken so as not to offend either group of relatives, just as another close friend of mine from Scotland and his Aussie bride elected to wed in Bali, a midway point, they argued, that allowed her to dress in traditional white tulle and he in a kilt, both barefoot.

But I sense that Sunday's couple simply wanted the most romantic place they could think of.

The chapel at Brickendon is tiny, a pre-shrunk version of your stock country church, apricot brick with the wooden bargeboards unpainted since they were put in place.

Close family could just squeeze into its narrow pews. The rest of us sat outside in the shade of ancient trees and listened to the simple, non-denominational service.

All brides are beautiful but this one was especially so, slender as a willow in a ravishing tube of cream lace by, a fashionista friend informed me, Collette Dinnigan, her hair drawn back into a bun and stuck with two white roses, Audrey Hepburn reincarnated.

The ceremony was short, the words so beautiful and true that even the blokes shed a manly tear.

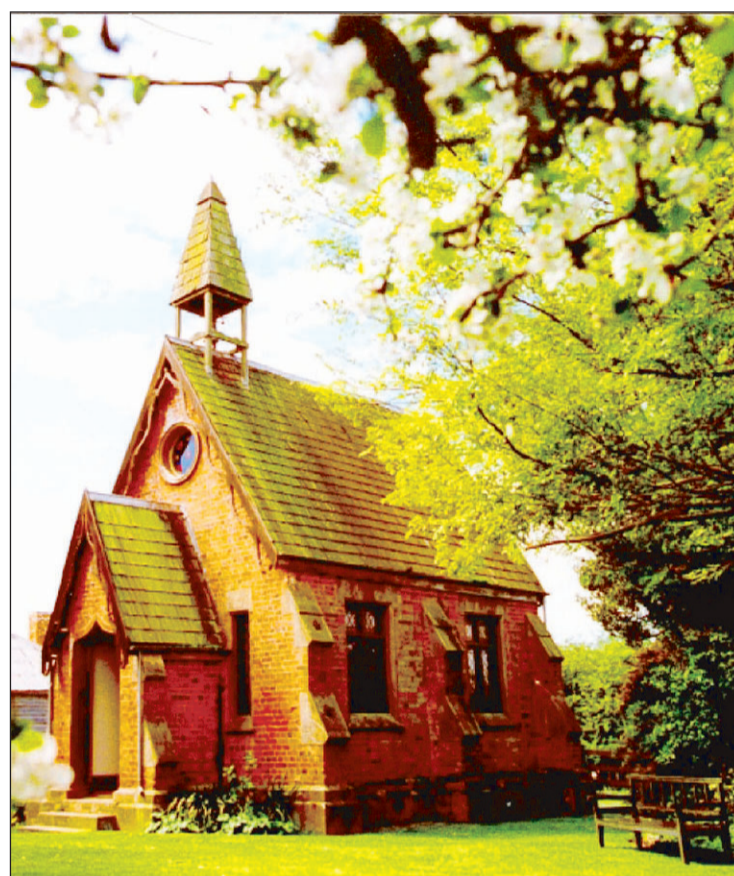
Out came the newlyweds, their smiles as bright as the sun, for a huddle and cuddle with all the guests. Tassie wine flowed.

And an hour after the final tear had been wiped from the corner of an eye, we headed for the adjacent barn, simply decorated, the placements perfect, the food a celebration of this island's bounty, oysters freighted up in refrigerated van from Bruny Island, bubbly from the Tamar Valley, local trevalla and beef.

Nothing had been shipped in from across Bass Strait. Notably absent was anything made or marketed by Gunns-associated companies. And there was exuberant and abandoned dancing, led by a gorgeous young Lebanese girl who acted as ring-minder during the service.

my
Tasmania

LEO SCHOFIELD



QUAINT: The church in the grounds of Brickendon.

It might have been easy to get a Melbourne or Sydney "events company" to stage the show, but the bride and groom arranged it all themselves, and what they couldn't manage — flowers and the simple triple-tiered wedding cake — they had delegated to Launceston and Longford locals.

The interstate visitors were gob-smacked. Some, particularly those for whom Tasmania was virgin turf, stayed on for a week to take deeper breaths of the crystal air and take in the beauty of a landscape improbably verdant.

As that chap said, days like this don't often happen in Tasmania. Or anywhere else for that matter.

THE National Trust has issued a list of what it or its apparatchiks have deemed to be our 2009 Heritage Icons. I don't know what they could have been on when they drew up this daft document.

Firstly, I loathe the word "icon", which has been bastardised so that its proper meaning has been entirely obliterated. An icon is a religious work of art, though in a broader context it has come to mean a symbol, name, face or building, easily recognised and with powerful associations or significance.

The Eiffel Tower might reasonably be called an icon, as can the Sydney Opera House. But since when have Tasmania's cool-climate wines taken on "iconic" status? And what makes them more "iconic" than cool-climate wines produced in other cool climates?

Yet this is one of the 2009 "icons".

Ditto trout fishing in the Central Highlands. Perhaps some National Trustee could explain why trout fishing in the Great Lake is superior to the identical activity in Scotland? Or Canada?

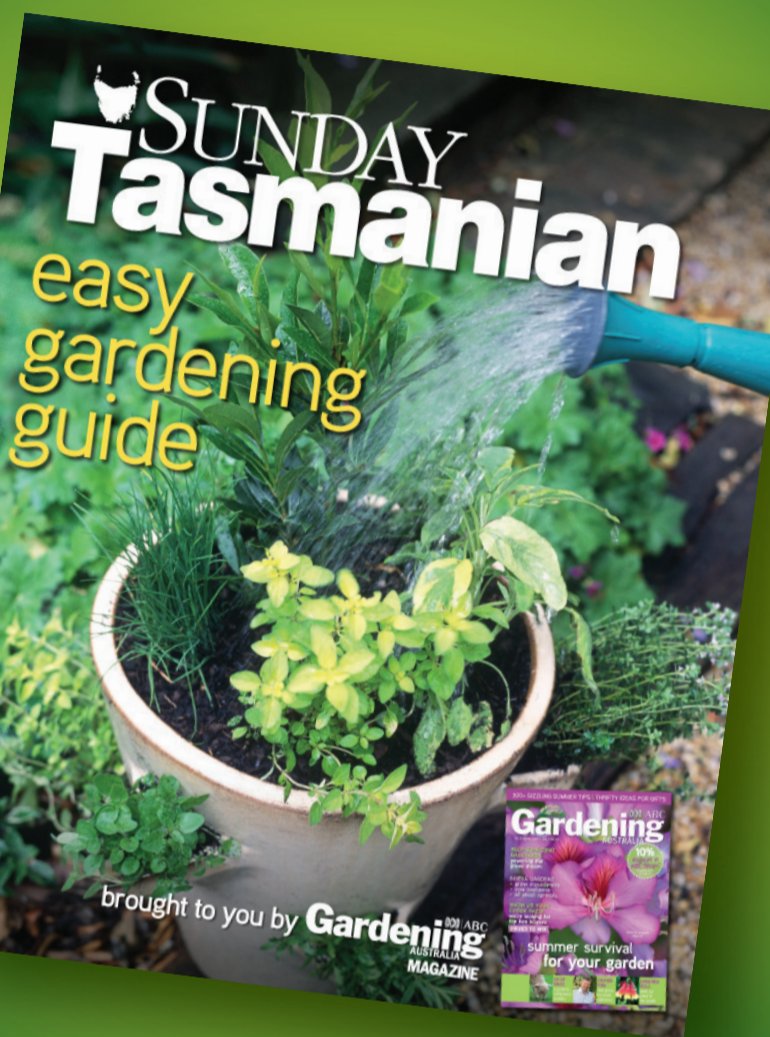
According to the Trust, Longford's New Year's Day Race Meeting trumps the Melbourne Cup, the Kentucky Derby and the Grand National in the "icon stakes". Since when?

A spokesperson for the Trust declares these to be "worthy of recognition and preservation as part of our heritage". Bull-dust.

This state contains some 5500 houses, churches, bridges, public buildings, even outhouses, allegedly protected on the Tasmanian Heritage Register, and more than half are in rotten condition. The National Trust could better spend its time and energies activating for their preservation than drawing up risible lists of icons.

Why were they so silent when the grotesque and highly controversial plan to cantilever a multi-storey tower over Macquarie House sailed through the now-neutered Resource Management and Planning Appeals Tribunal?

Perhaps they see it as a future icon for Hobart, when most feel it will be a future eyesore. Yet another one!



GET OUT INTO THE GARDEN

Spring is here and whether you are a beginner gardener or a seasoned green thumb it's time to get into the garden.

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