

# **MEDIA RELEASE**

**NEWS FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA**

DATE: WEDNESDAY 28 OCTOBER 2009

ATTENTION: Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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## **The Young Irishlanders: *Exiles in Paradise* website launch**

The University of Tasmania will launch *Exiles in Paradise*, an interactive website about a group of politically-radical Irish convicts, on FRIDAY October 30 at the NEW Gallery at Newnham.

The Young Irishlanders website is the culmination of a 2008 University of Tasmania Community Engagement project whose aim was to bring together community groups, descendants, historians and scholars to consolidate the knowledge that exists in Tasmania and elsewhere about the Young Irishlanders' time and stories here.

*Exiles in Paradise* features the Young Irishlanders' story and an interactive map showing their links to places and heritage sites in Tasmania.

A major purpose of the website is to establish a portal to allow people connected with these 'gentlemen convicts' to exchange information and build a more complete understanding of their activities in Tasmania and abroad. While individuals in Tasmania, Ireland, Canada, the U.S. and elsewhere have pieces of the Young Irishlanders puzzle, there is currently no interactive website facilitating pooling that knowledge.

Dr Tom Dunning, Head of School of History and Classic said: "This is another example of how the global and the local intertwine in Tasmania."

The project has also uncovered an as yet-unpublished memoir of P.J. Smyth, which is now in the hands of descendants, one of whom lives in Launceston. The website features a short, tantalising excerpt from that memoir.

Project manager Beverly Goldfarb said: "Our hope is that those who are interested in the Young Irishlanders—as historians, community leaders or descendants—will

contribute their knowledge so that we can fill gaps in knowledge, correct errors and celebrate their achievements.

“For this reason the website links to an online forum (wiki) that allows everyone to communicate with each other so that we can grow the knowledge community.”

**EVENT:** Exiles in Paradise website launch and public get-together

**WHEN:** 4.30 p.m. Friday 30 October 2009

**WHERE:** The NEW Gallery, UTAS Newnham Campus (near the Library)

### **Young Irishlanders background**

The Young Irishlanders were an eclectic group of Irish radicals active in Ireland during the 1840s. Their agitation for an independent Irish state was recognised as a threat by the British government, and many were arrested and transported to Van Diemen’s Land. Between 1849 and 1855, Tasmania was both the Young Irishlanders’ prison and their home. To prevent the Young Irishlander exiles from conspiring together, the colonial government separated the group by confining them to different regions of the island. Consequently, the story of the Young Irishlanders is dispersed across Tasmania. Elements of this story can be found in Hobart, Campbell Town, New Norfolk, Bothwell, Oatlands, Maria Island and Port Arthur. In addition to these regions, John Mitchel’s escape from Tasmania, facilitated by the Irish nationalist ‘spy’ P.J. ‘Nicaragua’ Smyth, covers much of Northern Tasmania, including Westbury, Port Sorell and Launceston. The Young Irishlanders, upon leaving Tasmania, went on to become senior political figures in different administrations around the world.

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