

History of High Peak

By Carol Bacon

Charles Grant builds High Peak

Charles Henry Grant commissioned architect George Fagg to build a weekend retreat, *High Peak*, for his family at Neika in 1891. Fagg had designed the Tudor-styled Parattah Railway Hotel, *the new hotel and refreshment room at the principal stopping station of the Main Line Railway* in 1889 (*The Mercury* 7 October 1889). Grant was a director of the Parattah Hotel Company which had commissioned the work.

He must have liked the result, which was called "Queen Anne" style at the time, as Fagg designed *High Peak* along similar lines. Fagg called for tenders in January 1892. Quotes to build the house were received from W Smith, £1519, Dunn and Valentine £1526, F Sibley £1527, Duff Bros £1530, S Williams £1648, W H Chovertton £1690, T Roynolds £1634, Stubb Bros £2212 and D Goding £2129 (*Launceston Examiner* 23 January 1892).

Mr Grant was very proud of his mountain retreat and had the dining room, drawing room, library and entrance hall completely furnished with antique and very valuable carved oak furniture of the time of Queen Anne, every piece of which he had himself carefully selected in England (*The Mercury* 13 January 1902). He was known as a generous host, as he *worthily maintained the city's reputation for hospitable treatment of representative visitors* (*Albury Banner and Wodonga Express* 4 October 1901).

Many people were beneficiaries of Charles' hospitality. He drove members of the 1898 Southern Cross Expedition led by Carsten Borchgrevink to *High Peak* the day after expeditioners were entertained to lunch at *Newlands*, the home of the Norwegian Consul Mr James Macfarlane (*The Mercury* 5 December 1898). The expedition established a new record for travelling the farthest south, to latitude 78° 50'S.

Jenico William Joseph Preston, 14th Viscount Gormanston, who was Governor of Tasmania from 1893 to 1900 called in for refreshments at *High Peak* in the summer of 1897. A viceregal party consisting of Viscount and Viscountess Gormanston, Viscount and Viscountess Hampden, Misses Alice and Margaret Brand, Mr Champion, Captain Ferguson and Mr Alex Rawlinson made a stop for tea at *High Peak* during an expedition along the beautiful *Huon Road* in January 1897. Most of the party drove, while Miss Margaret Brand and Captain Ferguson daringly preferred to make use of their bicycles (*The Mercury* 29 January 1897)

Gardeners at High Peak

The garden at High Peak was started as soon as the house was built. An 1898 photograph shows well established hedges lining the driveway and the planting of individual specimen trees. Gardener W Chisholm was at *High Peak* in 1897 but was evidently unhappy with his lot. He placed an advertisement in the local paper: *Practical gardener desires position. Address W Chisholm, High Peak, Huon Road c/- Hon C H Grant's pvt bag* (*The Mercury* 19 October 1897).

Scotsman James Scott (1857-1945) was the gardener at *High Peak* for many years. He arrived in Hobart in June 1887 as an assisted migrant aboard the *SS Coptic* which had sailed from Plymouth in England. His wife Jane Scott 31 and children Robina Margaret 9, James 6, Jane Ann Fiddes 4 and John Bell 1 arrived the following year, on 27 July 1888, also aboard the *SS Coptic*. James was born in the village of Laurencekirk, south of Aberdeen in 1857. He married Jane Ann Bell on 8 June 1877 at Broughty Ferry, near Dundee. Before he emigrated to Tasmania, James was a carter, living in Monifieth, not too far from Dundee. He was working as an overseer and living in Argyle Street Hobart when his third son, Thomas David Scott was born on 5 July 1894. By the time his fourth son, William Scott was born on 25 November 1897, James Scott was working as a gardener, possibly at *High Peak*. When James and Jane celebrated their silver wedding anniversary in June 1902, they were certainly living at *High Peak*. Their address in the announcement is given as *Huon Road*.

James took along a splendid display of palms and 70 varieties of narcissi to the Fern Tree Flower Show in September 1903. He entered exhibits, winning second prize for the best collection of pansies, first prize for the best collection of daffodils and prizes for the best parsnips, carrots and turnips (*Tasmanian News* 1 October 1903).

For the 1909 show James took along *some choice varieties of daffodils, primrose, pansies, tulips, and narcissi in various colours, iris, and specimens of the garnishing kale in different combinations of bulbs and colours* as well as *spinach and ornamental beet and specimens of the noted Malta potato (Sutton's)* (*The Mercury* 27 October 1909).

James Scott scooped the pool of prizes at the 1911 Fern Tree Flower Show, being awarded a special prize for his double dahlias and winning first prize for marigolds and ornamental grasses. The show was opened by the Mayor, Mr T Arnott, who was introduced by Mr C W Grant (*The Mercury* 10 April 1911).

James Scott was promoted to Estate Manager, his title in the 1914 electoral roll. He and Jane must have lived very happily in the gardener's cottage, with their daughter Jane Ann Fiddis Scott running the post office which opened there on January 25 1924. Their elder daughter Robina left home when she married Elias Marriott at Chalmer's Manse on 30 December 1909. James Scott died aged 87 at his daughter Robina Marriot's residence on 26 June 1945.

Robina and Elias Marriott's eldest son Roy James Marriott (1911-1976) became the caretaker and head gardener at High Peak, following in his father's footsteps. He left High Peak in the 1940s to take a job at the newsprint mill at Boyer. RW Smith was then engaged as Head Gardener.