



*Clockwise from top left:* R2892 The Ferry 'Molly' with Whites Hotel in the Background, pre 1937  
R3549.3 Unknown Beach Goers, 1953  
R5682 Duke and Dutchess of Gloucester Visit, 1947  
R3234 Women Golfers, 1927



### Acknowledgments

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45-47 Stewart Street Devonport 03 6424 8296  
Mon-Fri 10-5 Sat 12-5 Sun & Public Holidays 1-5  
devonportgallery.com artgallery@devonport.tas.gov.au

Above Image: R4846.8 Girls Running Race, Latrobe, 1930  
Cover Image: R4371.1 Unknown Children with Kayak, date and location unknown

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## Coastal: Outdoor Photographs from the Robinson Collection

14 December 2013 – 9 February 2014





## Coastal: Outdoor Photographs from the Robinson Collection

This exhibition celebrates the lives and environs of the people who lived on the North-West Coast of Tasmania when Bert Robinson and his son Albert operated their photographic business in Devonport from 1927 to 1975. The outdoor activities photographed by Bert and Albert ranged from family outings and special events to recreational activities and competitive sporting events.

It is evident from the vast array of sporting images, that Devonport has a long and proud sporting history ranging from various team sports through to croquet, golf, yacht racing, cycling, running, horse racing and swimming. While some of the photographs selected for this exhibition have been previously displayed – as part of the exhibitions *Devonsport* in 2000 or *Onlooking* in 2006 – many of the photographs printed for this exhibition have not been displayed before.

Viewing hundreds of negatives from the Robinson collection in order to make the final selection for this exhibition has been an illuminating experience. It is impossible not to think about the analogue process when handling photographic negatives. Made decades before the digital age, many prior to the advent of television, the negatives have a unique quality – each an artwork in itself. Unlike the majority of today's instant images made on mobile devices and often deleted shortly after being viewed, the Robinson negatives were made as a way of creating a keepsake – a long-term memory rather than an instant update – of a specific moment in time.

It is easy to get caught up in the nostalgia of early life on the North-West Coast when viewing these images – but beyond sentimentality the

photographs prompt us to imagine how things might have been, and how people might have lived in a time when the latest technology involved large-format cameras (or later the box brownie), flexible film and darkroom processing. While photographs cannot 'claim' to tell the truth about an event or person, the outdoor photographs made by Bert and Albert Robinson do allow a glimpse into the region's people, activities and surroundings.

The earlier photographic documentation made by Bert Robinson is of particular interest as it not only demonstrates Bert Robinson's practice of photographing local outdoor scenes, but also illustrates the prevalence of spectatorship, family outings and leisure activities enjoyed by residents in the region. The photographic representation of special events, such as the visit by the Duke and Duchess of Gloucester in 1947, reflects the vast number of locals who would turn out to witness such royal visits. At the same time they provide visual information on the ceremonial procedures and fashion of the day. Other images reflect solitary moments experienced by people fishing, reading or simply purveying the vista before them.

This exhibition highlights the extensive role the Robinsons played in the community, actively photographing people, events and places. What stands out when the photographs are displayed alongside each other is a sense of wonder – of people appearing to revel in the moment, whether it is the everyday or a momentous occasion. Importantly, the photographs demonstrate the level of commitment and enthusiasm the Robinsons had for photography and that very special 'photographic moment' so often dismissed or deleted in our contemporary world of instant, disposable updates.

Ellie Ray, December 2013

*Clockwise from top left:* R2735.1 Bert Robinson Studio, c1930

R1235.5 Air Force Cadets, 1942

R4479 Group Picnic and Train, date and location unknown

R11686.4 Miss Mersey Bluff Contestants, 1956

*Clockwise from top left:* R4889.3 Venetian Carnival, 1946

R3311 Surf Life-Saving Team, 1927-28

R4388.2 The Swift Cycling Shop Road Race, date and location unknown

R3417.8 Devonport High Garden Fete Gymnastics Display, c1940