

*Death has taken its toll
Some pain knows no release
But the knowledge of brave compassion
Shines like a pool of peace.*



*May we who come to
this garden
Cherish life for the sake
of those who died
Cherish compassion for the sake
of those who gave aid
Cherish peace for the sake
of those in pain.*

If you want to know more

These publications deal with the events of
28 April 1996:

Margaret Scott — *Port Arthur: A Story of Strength
and Courage*, Random House, 1997

Mike Bingham — *Suddenly One Sunday: the true story
of the Port Arthur tragedy based on an eyewitness account*,
Harper Collins, 1996

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Sunday 28 April 1996

A brief outline of events

Please understand

...that for many people, including staff members at Port Arthur, answering questions about the events of 28 April 1996 can be very disturbing. We prefer not even to use the name of the person responsible.

We want to explain to visitors what happened, but we also want to protect our people from distress.

This account is intended to outline the facts with clarity and simplicity.



One Sunday in autumn

On the morning of Sunday 28 April 1996, a young Hobart man armed himself with three high-powered automatic firearms and a large quantity of ammunition, then drove to Port Arthur.

Just north of the township he entered the home of a local couple he knew. Inside, he shot and killed them both. He drove to the Historic Site and ate a meal on the deck of the Broad Arrow Café. He re-entered the café, which was crowded with lunchtime customers, took a rifle from his bag and began shooting. In the first 90 seconds, 20 people died and 12 were injured.

The man then moved into the adjacent carpark, where he shot and killed four more people and wounded a number of others.

After shooting indiscriminately at people in the grounds of the Historic Site, he got into his car and drove up the former main entrance road to the original toll booth. In this area, seven more people were killed in two separate incidents, during which he stole a victim's car and abandoned his own.

The man then drove north. Outside the General Store he killed one person and

took another hostage. He drove back to the house where the first killings had taken place, firing random shots at vehicles along the route and injuring a number of people.

At the house, the man set fire to the stolen car, then took his hostage inside. Through the afternoon and night, shots were fired at police officers on the scene. At some point during this time, the gunman killed the hostage. In the morning, he set fire to the house and was captured by police as he fled from the burning building.

The man was tried and convicted of 35 counts of murder. On each count he was sentenced to imprisonment for life, with no eligibility for parole.

The devastating events of that day at Port Arthur encouraged Australians to question our laws on the private ownership of automatic and semi-automatic firearms. A vigorous national debate was marked by strongly-held views on both sides.

Eventually, State and Federal Governments passed new gun control laws that are among the strictest in the world.