Location: From the St Patricks River near Nunamara to Launceston

Owner: Esk Water

The plaque is located at the fountain in Prince's Square, Launceston

The scheme
This economical gravity scheme brings water to the city from the St Patricks River about 18 km east of Launceston and is still operating.

The plaque describes the components of the scheme.

Mr W R Falconer, the Director of Public Works in Hobart, was appointed to design and superintend the construction of the scheme. Mr William Huttley was appointed by the Council to act as Resident Superintendent of Launceston Waterworks, to assist Mr Falconer.

The tunnel excavated through a saddle is some 154 metres long, with additional cut and cover sections taking the overall enclosed length to 210 metres. Construction of the tunnel was contracted to a Mr Henry Newman.

The 300 who attended the opening ceremony in 1857 witnessed a bottle of champagne broken against the dam wall, a 21 gun salute and the Mayor opening the sluice gates before sitting down to lunch.

The new scheme replaced sometimes brackish or muddy water delivered in barrels. The social benefits were enormous as it provided clean water, better hygiene, street flushing and public drinking fountains. A water-borne sewerage disposal scheme became possible.

Upgrades
As you would expect over such a long period, there has been some expansion and upgrading. Additional trunk mains to the city were installed. The diversion dam on the St Patricks River was replaced with a concrete gravity weir in 1888 and the tunnel was lined with concrete in 1912. A water treatment plant was installed in 1925. Then, after 110 years of service, the water race was rebuilt as a concrete-lined channel to increase its capacity.

The plaque was awarded on the 150th Anniversary of the scheme.