



FOCIS

newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

Number 110 SUMMER 2010

Merry
Christmas to
FOCIS members



Museum Plans Revived

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We are on the web. See this issue in colour

www.friendsofchurchillisland.org.au

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At the November General Meeting, it was decided to review and re-submit a proposal for a museum at Churchill Island. The meeting was addressed by Pat Baird and Christine Grayden (right). Pat explained that the previous proposal was based on a series of steps or periods in the history of Churchill Island. These were the Aboriginal and Explorer period, The Pickersgills and Rogers, the Amess family, the Jenkins-Campbell period and the time of government ownership.

Christine Grayden, who has attended a number of conferences and workshops on modern museum design, explained that there were different types of museum. Many involved hands on experience which could involve dressing up for children and others. This could include interactive displays, touch screens and simulations. Traditional display cases could be appropriate for the collection of lace from the Amess family in the possession of FOCIS and for display of documents (perhaps as copies). Special effects, such as Pepper's Ghost (a hologram) could be appropriate to Churchill Island.

The meeting agreed to establish a

Correction

In our last edition, we named the Chairman of FOCIS who helped re-establish the Woolly Scottish cattle on



planning committee to be convened by Christine Grayden and to meet on 29 November. This should investigate sources of grant funding, the form of the museum and gain agreement from the membership on the FOCIS approach. Funds have been set aside to engage a consultant to prepare a concept and business plan. A list of assets will have to be prepared and thought given on how to exhibit them and how to market the project.

FOCIS invites any and all members to contribute their views on the form, content, location and approach of the museum. Views may be sent to Christine at

cgrayden@waterfront.net.au

Churchill Island as John Bradley, when in fact he was John Bailey. Our apologies. (ed.)

News from Churchill Island— Reports to the General Meeting on 13 November 2010

Farm Report - Ken Meek

Ken reported that 900 had attended the Open Garden Show and many purchased plants on sale. New signs have been provided to the visitors' centre, wallabies etc and movable signs made for the farm tours. Sophie gave birth to a foal, *Nellie* 6 weeks old at the time of the report. A new sound system has been delivered to improve dem-



onstrations in the farm yard. Rape and turnips were being sown for feed in the fallow paddock. Roads and tracks were in good order but some manna gums have been lost in the storms. Cattle and sheep are in fat condition and have been complimented by the public.

Nature Park Report— Nicoletta Giurgiu

PNIP is preparing for summer checking beaches, infrastructure and hiring summer staff. A new animal hospital has been approved and will be built between January and June. The TV series *Penguin Island* has attracted a lot of interest. Oprah Winfrey will visit PINP including Churchill Island on 9 December with an

audience of 300. International tourism has increased. A means of electronic feedback has been established and feedback on Churchill Island is most positive.

The wishing well has been removed. The Churchill Island café has new owners, Rob and Inga and a new menu is anticipated.



Sophie and Nellie Photo: Ed.

Members' Day 2011

At the General Meeting on 13 November it was agreed to arrange a members' social day to be held on May 7th or 14th, 2011. Christine Grayden is to convene a small working party to plan the day. It is anticipated that lunch will be included and activities arranged for children and older

members. This will provide an opportunity for members to find out more about the society and to provide suggestions about its future activities and agendas. At this stage it is hoped that further information will be available about the museum submission.

Planners anticipate developing communication between members, particularly those who do not live close to the island and are not able to volunteer as guides or gardeners. FOCIS needs to explore ways of engaging members to maintain a commitment to the island's historical heritage.

Editorial — MP3 and beyond

Many things are happening at Churchill Island. We have an MP3 player self guided tour. At \$20 it is excellent value, and covers all parts of the Nature Park. Unfortunately the version we test-drove tended to cut out now and then. In spite of efforts by FOCIS to ensure historical accuracy and the commentary's statements about the importance of research, some errors about Churchill Island are included: Rhyll is repeatedly pronounced *Rile*; the myth about the origin of the cannon is perpetuated (see NL Winter 2010); Samuel Amess 1 used the island as a weekender (impossible in 1872); the Amess family owned the island for over 30 years (nearly 60, see p.6,7); Buckley owned the island over 10 years

(6, see p.7); Samuel Amess introduced Scottish cattle into Australia (Lord Glengarry, 1841, see NL Spring 2010).

FOCIS has an important role in investigating and educating about the historical significance of Churchill Island. Many of our executive members have given long and useful service to this end. Many including the treasurer, secretary and membership secretary have indicated they will not continue after this year. Our president needs to move from Phillip Island and is unsure about continuing. We applaud the work they have done and cannot expect them to continue for ever. But if the society is to remain an influence in making Victorians aware of the history of

Churchill Island, we need to extend our membership and to engage new executive members. With electronic communication, we need to explore ways of effectively involving those who do not live on or close to Phillip Island. The executive has started by initiating ways for electronic payment of membership via PayPal.

Our members' day will hopefully contribute to the renewal. The current museum submission, if successful, will extend the explanation of and interest in the history of Churchill Island. Christine Grayden has attended many conferences and presentations on modern museum design and the emerging concept will need to be developed professionally.

TREASURER'S REPORT November 2010

Roger Hollingworth, Honorary Treasurer and Public Officer

I am pleased to report that our financial status continues to be strong. Below is a brief synopsis of where we are today compared to the same 3 months period last year

Year to date (July 1 - 31 Oct 2010)

INCOME	\$4,857
	(Nov 2009 - \$2,978)
EXPENSES	\$1,922
	(Nov 2009 - \$1,053)
SURPLUS	\$2,935
	(Nov 2009 - \$1,925)
AVAILABLE FUNDS	\$46,312
	(Nov 2009 - \$45,800)

A sum of \$30,000 has been quarantined for the establishment of an Archives facility within the proposed Museum Project planned for Churchill Island sometime in the future.

I have been Treasurer and Public Officer for the past 11 years and I have advised the Executive of my decision to not renominate for the position for 2011/2012. I am indicating my decision to the Membership at this early stage hopefully, to encourage someone to stand for the position prior to the next Annual General Meeting.

It is not a demanding function and requires only a rudimentary

understanding of book keeping. Computer skills are not essential, as the current book keeping system is manual but could be easily computerised.

The position of Treasurer is one of 5 members who sits on the FOCIS EXECUTIVE

I am more than happy to explain further details of the job to anyone who feels they would like to take over from me.

My contact details are as follows:

Tel 98027996

Mobile 041930 8324

Email: rogerm13@bigpond.net.au

Look and Don't Touch (Teacher's mantra)

By Mary Mitchell

Volunteer Guides in the Homestead frequently have school groups coming through on excursions to Churchill Island. The value of these visits depends enormously on the quality of the preparation done by the school and we recently had a primary school group of very well-behaved children who were keen and enthusiastic, had good background knowledge and asked worthwhile questions. They came from Upwey South Primary School and the name rang a bell immediately as I could recall the same school coming previously with the same excellent behaviour. They send a bus every two years with grades 3 and 4, ready with a set of questions to be asked about Churchill Island. The staff divided them into small groups and praised the questions as they wrote down the answers I could give them. Their keenness was infectious and they went home ready to write full answers on our history. What fortunate kids!

Their teachers had kindled a genuine interest in their day out and discipline was not an issue. The children wanted to soak up all they could and politely thanked me before moving on. If the whole school runs in this warm and caring manner, by secondary school they will be reaching out to learn more. Thank you to the teachers and Principal of Upwey South and please come back again.

Mary Mitchell is a long-time FOCIS member and volunteer guide. She recalls meetings in the kitchen and sitting on hay bales. She has also helped train many other guides. Unfortunately, for reasons of age, Mary is no longer able to attend meetings and has halved her guide commitments. She writes: I believe we have achieved a great deal in "preserving that which is precious". Churchill Island needs FOCIS as a guardian.

Darebin BUG ride the Islands

Members of the mid-week riders group of the Darebin Bicycle Users' Group spent two days on Phillip and Churchill Islands in October. The riders are mostly in their '60s, '70s and even '80s. On their first day they circled Churchill Island and rode on to the Koala



The group paid respects to the woolly cows

Reserve via the Rhyll Swamp. On foot they had a tour of the Homestead and farmyard. On the second day they rode through Cowes to the Nobbies and on to the GP track but were not able to ride round it due to active motor cycles.

Staff and Volunteers Outing July 9, 2010

No one knew the destination when Staff and volunteers gathered early in the morning to meet the bus for the annual outing. We soon realised that we were headed for the hills. This year the destinations were the Old Cheese Factory at Berwick and the Rhododendron Gardens at Olinda. The journey was enlivened with pass-the-parcel games and other entertainment. The Cheese Fac-



found a covered site for the generous and filling lunch. Many thanks are due to Pat Jeffrey and Meg McCarthy for the planning and Pam, Naoko, Trevor and others for helping out. A good time was had by all.

tory has Heritage buildings as well as gardens and coffee was followed by a brief talk on the management. The site houses a range of activities including classes and playgroup. Unfortunately, the heavens opened as we reached the Rhododendron Gardens and most people did a quick circuit only. Organisers



Brief Guide to the History of Churchill Island

By Rebecca Sanders

Rebecca is completing her PhD at Melbourne University on the history of Churchill Island. She contributed this brief guide to assist the development of the museum submission. It is useful to guides and others to have a handy summary.

Rebecca has identified the following possible historical themes and interpretations for Churchill Island history. We will outline these in more detail in our next newsletter:

- Indigenous history
- Exploration history
- Squatting history
- Settling history
- Farming history
- Leisure history
- Health and environment history
- Domestic labour history
- Gardening history

Chronological History

Below follows a synopsis of Churchill Island's history from 1788 to 2000

1788 Penal colony established at Sydney

1798 Surgeon George Bass explores and names Western Port, at that time Sydney's furthest harbour to its west.

1801 Lieutenant James Grant, Captain of the HMS Lady Nelson, explores Western Port in greater detail. Under Grant's orders a blockhouse is erected and a garden planted on one of the bay's small islands. Grant names the island Churchill after one of his benefactors who supplied him with seed to plant in the new colony. His first mate, John Murray, assists Ensign Francis Barrallier in drawing a chart of the bay, which includes a dashed outline marking the area where ground was cleared for the blockhouse and garden on Churchill Island.

1801-2 Acting Lieutenant John

Murray returns the following summer to Western Port to finish the survey for Bass' Strait' northern coastline and islands begun under Grant. During his stay in Western Port, Murray records his return visit to Churchill Island, where he noted that the corn and wheat planted earlier that year under Grant's orders has matured and ripened and the garden and blockhouse as it was left.

1802-1842 Churchill Island is variously depicted as an island in its own right, as an isthmus or left off maps produced by both British and French explorers during this time.

1842 Lewis Roper Fitzmaurice, assistant surveyor to John Lort Stokes surveys Western Port. The map Stokes produced from Fitzmaurice's survey shows Churchill Island as wooded, with the exception of two small portions in its centre, most likely due to the fact the island was not explored on foot, but only from a small boat. No sign of Grant's garden appears on the map.

1854 John Rogers acquires the pastoral lease for the Sandstone Island Run and becomes a squatter (The accepted term at the time and since for a lessee of a pastoral run is a squatter). The run originally comprised Sandstone, Elizabeth and Churchill Islands. Evidence suggest that Elizabeth Island became a run in its own right in 1855, and Churchill Island in 1860. Until 1863 Rogers paid £10 per annum for the privilege of de-pasturing each separate Run. Thus Sandstone and Churchill Island cost Rogers £10 jointly till 1860, and £10 each from 1860-1863. From this point onwards the Churchill Island run cost Rogers only £2, 10. How early Churchill Island was used by Rogers is difficult to pinpoint. His pastoral returns for the island in 1854 and 1860 show no stock de-pastured on the island, but parliamentary debates in 1861 record that Rogers was illegally cultivating his island pastoral runs, including Churchill Island against the terms of

his de-pasturing licence. Georgiana McHaffie's diary suggests that Rogers continued to cultivate illegally, despite the notice he had attracted in parliament. How long Rogers used Churchill Island for agricultural purposes is unknown.

1860 Date the Pickersgills began living on Churchill Island according to their oral records. Under this history the island is deserted and the Pickersgills occupy it in their own right, later sharing it with the Rogers.

1861 Rogers releases a small number of thrushes, pheasant and skylarks on Churchill Island and Sandstone Islands for acclimatisation purposes

1862 First records livestock at Churchill Island recorded under Rogers pastoral lease account in the Government Gazette. The cows were probably a supplement to Rogers' main use of the island at that time which evidence suggests continued to be agriculture.

1863-4 According to Rogers oral history records John and Sarah Rogers moved their home from Sandstone to Churchill Island, prior to Rogers' purchase of the island.

1865 Rogers purchases Churchill Island as a special lot at auction at the upset price of one pound ten shillings per acre, for 140 acres. (Not as a pre-emptive right or as a selector)

1865-1872 Rogers and his family continue farming Churchill Island. Sheep are depastured in large numbers and agriculture appears to continue. This suggests that like most small landholders Rogers ran Churchill Island as a mixed farm (ie sheep, agriculture and a small scale dairy)

1869 First series of advertisements for the sale of Churchill Island. The island fails to sell.

1869-72 John Rogers selects land at Buln Buln.

1872 Second series of advertisements of the sale of Churchill Island. This second series is grandiose and appeals to those desirous of obtaining rural landholding to improve their social position (Large rural landholdings were at this point still an important factor in gaining, and maintaining a position in the upper echelons of Melbourne society).

1872 Samuel Amess purchases Churchill Island. The island is not his first rural holding, and indeed joins an already considerable list of holdings in Melbourne's north west, suggesting the island was not purchased in order to improve Amess' social position simply by merit of its rural location. Writings from the 1880s and 1890s strongly support the contention that Samuel Amess used the island as his private rural seaside retreat. According to the understanding of the time, the fresh sea breezes brought Amess 'perpetual instalments of health'. Fresh, preferably dry, mountain or salt laden sea air, was a popular curative at the time for a range of maladies, and it is likely that Churchill Island, with its tranquil surrounds would have been viewed as possessing a sedative climate ideal for the overworked who needed to recuperate their mental as well as physical health. In line with this theory of health, much of the time spent at Churchill Island would have been spent out of doors, as recorded in the photographs from the 1880s. Amess is recorded as introducing horses, quail, pheasants, rabbits and Highland cattle to Churchill Island, and photographs show spaniels accompanied Amess on the island also. Farming continued on the island, though, due to Amess' considerable wealth and the property's primary function as a seaside retreat, with less economic imperative than under Rogers.

1873 Parish Rates for Churchill Island increase from £30 to £50, suggesting that considerable improvements were made at this time, most likely the construction of the main

portion of the homestead.

1879 Samuel Amess transfers the title of Churchill Island to his son, also Samuel Amess, but records dating from 1888 indicate he continued his use of the island, and that it continued to be seen as belonging to the elder Samuel Amess.

1898 Samuel Amess senior passes away. If Samuel Amess the younger had not yet assumed full control of the island by this time, he would now have taken over.

1919 Samuel Amess the younger dies and control of the island passes to his son, also Samuel Amess

1929 Samuel Amess, grandson of the first Amess owner sells Churchill Island. As Amess was charged with bankruptcy it seems likely that this was the reason for the island's sale.

1929 Gerald Neville Buckley purchases Churchill Island. Under Buckley the island is run as a dairy farm. Buckley leaves the management of the island to brothers Bob and Ted Jeffrey.

1932 Jeffrey brothers win the better farming award for their work on Churchill Island

1935 Gerald Buckley dies

1936 Churchill Island purchased by Edward Henry 'Harry' Jenkins. Jenkins purchased the island for his son, Ted, who had been incapacitated due to a sporting accident. Prior to the war the Jenkins family used the island as a weekender, leaving its care to Eve and Ern Garratt. During the war years it seems that Ted Jenkins and Margaret Campbell, his nurse, ran the island themselves as a dairy farm. Before and after the war the island was run as a hobby farm, and in addition to the dairy, included the sale of turkeys and passionfruit. Sister Campbell cared for Ted Jenkins until his death in 1960

1959 The first bridge from Phillip Island to Churchill Island is built, although its construction was

marred by the death of one of the contractors hired to build it.

1963 Harry Jenkins dies and leaves Margaret Campbell Churchill Island. Eve and Ern Garratt returned to the island under her employ to help her manage it. During this time the island was used as a primary home by its owner for the first time since the 1860s.

1973 Margaret Campbell sells Churchill Island after illness reduces her capacity to manage it. Although the newly formed Victorian Conservation Trust are interested in the property, and enlist State Government aid to purchase it, they are outbid at the auction by Alex Classou.

1976 After some years of negotiation with Alex Classou, the Victorian Conservation Trust, with the aid of the Hamer State Government purchases Churchill Island as a heritage and natural conservation site. Carroll Schulz works as the site's first manager in 1978. Restoration work is carried out on the cottages, but not in accordance with heritage guidelines, which it seems the Victorian Conservation Trust, and the Churchill Island Restoration Group may have been unaware of at the time.

1983 Victoria Conservation Trust hands over the management of the island to Victorian National Parks.

1985 Churchill Island management changes to the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment

1996 Phillip Island Nature Parks is given management of Churchill Island

2000 Restoration work is completed on the homestead, this time in accordance with ICAMOS and the Burra Charter heritage guidelines. The National Trust loans period furniture to furnish the homestead and cottages.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

The Society collects, uses, discloses and holds information of members in accordance with the Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988. The Society collects personal information about members in order to:

1. Maintain a current membership list.
2. Inform members about the Society's activities.
3. Publish details of members, with their consent, in the FOCIS Newsletter or other Society publications.

Members' personal information will be kept confidential and secure and will not be accessible for unauthorised use, amendment or disclosure. Members may seek access to and lodge any complaints about their personal information by contacting the Society.

The Society will strive to ensure that the personal information of members is accurate, up to date and complete. Members may assist the Society in this task by providing correct information and advising when details have changed

GENERAL MEETINGS FOR 2011

Saturday 12 February

Saturday 14 May

Saturday 13 August (AGM)

Saturday 12 November

1.30 pm Meeting Room Churchill Island

Visitors' Centre

Check our website

www.friendsofchurchillisland.org.au



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