



# FOCIS

newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

AUTUMN 2006



## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Fun and enjoyment are two of many experiences we'd like FOCIS members to experience!

At our February 2006 meeting, most of the new 'flat structure' committee positions were filled by folk volunteering. A million thanks to you! Spreading the business load will give more time for members' interests in the historic Churchill Island, its working historic farm and beautiful environment. We did just that after a brief business part of the meeting.

Members explored the historic precinct, said "Hi!" to the little piglets, lambs and chickens in the new animal nursery, draught horses, fowls, ducks, sheep and all the other creatures, including the baby peacocks whose mother has assured them that there is no danger from the humans who visit. They've even learnt to tell the time for 'arvo tea at the café! Visitors are enthralled to observe their youthful antics and many photos are taken. Children are entranced.

The FOCIS Volunteer Centre and the site for The Ron Hocking Memorial Blacksmith Shop were visited and productive comments were forthcoming. The centre is close to being finished and the smithy shop should be ready for the WHF on Easter Saturday and Sunday. Your membership has resulted in sufficient funds for these projects to be carried out and PINP is contributing also. Thank you PINP.

Di Spencer has very kindly donated a painting of the front garden and Amess House to FOCIS. Di believed it could be raffled for funds but FOCIS members chose to have it hung in Amess House instead. It shows the excellent restoration and presentation of the house and garden in the 21st century. Given approval from PINP and the National Trust it will become part of the dynamic island history.

Archiving FOCIS material and equipment is a top priority and a great interest to many members. A number of people have given important inputs. Carol and Mary Schultz have been an excellent source of history of Churchill Island. We consider that Museum Australia should be a valuable source of advice. We need an archivist to counsel us and will be seeking government grants in order to help us to archive appropriately.

At our next meeting in March there will be ample time to meander and follow one's interests. We will also have a guest speaker who will have knowledge of Churchill Island and or the Nature Park's involvement in the island.

FOCIS warmly invites members to join us on what in future will be very short meetings and time to experience historic Churchill Island and its living museum.

Ann Penaluna, President.

p.s.

Attendees at Feb. meeting numbered 23 and ten apologies. We were delighted to meet familiar members and members fairly new to meetings.



## ISLAND FARM REPORT

As we draw to the end of the silly season which has been a great success we now move into preparations for this years Working Horse Festival and a list of works for the island.

The first of which will be the erection of the blacksmiths shop set to commence during February and be completed by the end of March.

The ferrets and cocky cage have both had a revamp and the horse watering system is changing over to a pump system that can run without being manned.

All farm gates have been adjusted and the cattle yards have been reworked in an attempt to make them more user friendly and safer for the students.

There will be a new trellis erected outside the kitchen garden for grape vines and the whole garden will be gone over in preparation for WHF.

We have a green corps group of ten coming in for a week from the 20 Feb and then again the week before the WHF who will be gardening and cleaning.

Work for the dole continues to be a success with a new supervisor and a new group starting this year they also will be working on general maintenance and presentation for the WHF.

All produce is now being used through the café and as feed for the livestock. The second cut of Lucerne is now ready.

It has been a successful summer period and our visitation numbers are steadily growing with the addition of the blacksmith shop and the already popular animal nursery we hope this continues.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all members of FOCIS for their support with the blacksmith shop and all the other wonderful things you do for Churchill Island.

Kind regards

Ben, Meredith and Fiona



## CHURCHILL ISLAND'S FOREST

Whilst researching the history of the Phillip Island Conservation Society, which was established in 1968, I came across three entries in the Minutes Book which would be of interest to FOCIS members.

19.5.1973: PICS supports Council's efforts to secure Churchill Island, but with outside funds rather than rates.

14.2.1976: Letter to Premier (Dick Hamer), congratulating government on Churchill Island purchase.

28.7.1977: Keith Grayden reported on tree planting at Churchill Island.

Keith Grayden went on to become a FOCIS Life Member for

his work in eradicating the wall of boxthorn that in those days had invaded the entire west and north coasts of Churchill Island, and for his many donations of machinery and equipment in the early years of government ownership of the island.

However, the 1977 date brought back memories for me. At that time I was 24 years old and even then thoroughly imbued with the conservation ethic and with some four major tree planting days under my belt. But the day we planted the forest on Churchill Island stands out for being the most enthusiastic and least skillful tree planting day I've ever attended!

The day had been widely publicised and it seemed that hundreds of people aged from two to eighty years turned up to plant what has now become the forest from west of the Historic Precinct to half way down to North Point. I remember Professor John Swan (from Chemistry at Monash University), who was at that time heavily involved with the Victorian Conservation Trust which administered Churchill Island in the first years, giving a careful demonstration. He showed the large gathering just how to dig the hole, then place the seedling in its egg carton container gently into the hole, carefully replacing the dirt around the tender roots.

We were roughly organized into parties, then we proceeded to plant the hundreds of seedlings in record time with an extremely broad definition of care in many cases. Keith and I returned some days later and replaced about one third which hadn't actually been planted at all but were sitting in their original soil well above ground level! We must have walked back up the hill with Carroll Schulz shaking our heads and wondering if any of them would ever grow, given the rough start they'd had.

Obviously the enthusiasm and sheer joy at being involved in Churchill Island on that day transferred itself from the planters to the trees, because very few seedlings actually perished! Much water has passed under the bridge since July 1977, with several changes of management and managers, and it is probably very difficult for new FOCIS members to imagine just how charged everyone was in those early days when we finally had something genuinely beautiful and special to cherish that was really our very own. The people of Victoria heartily embraced Churchill Island on that day, and still do, as we see every Easter at Working Horse Festival time.

For Keith and I Churchill Island will always call, since we are direct descendents of the Pickersgills. But I hope all of you also experience that same deep commitment and enthusiasm that those hundreds of Victorians felt the day we planted the forest.

Christine Grayden, 16.02.2006

## **CHURCHILL ISLAND BLACKSMITHS SHOP PROJECT**

The concept sketch for the Blacksmiths Shop to be built between the Amess Coach House and the Shearing Shed has been approved by Heritage Victoria.

Construction of the building will commence mid February and should be completed mid March. It is intended where practicable to use recycled building materials, adding the ambience of historical authenticity. It is intended for FOCIS volunteers to assist in fitting out the Blacksmiths shop. Details of jobs and the skills required will be advised in due course.

We have a variety of Blacksmiths tools and equipment available and we are currently sourcing other items of equipment such as a large cowl/vent, anvils, swage blocks, powered spring hammer and air blower. If you know anyone who has Blacksmiths equipment available, please, Phone/fax Fred Allen (03) 5956 7109 or E-mail:

nellaa32@waterfront.net.au.

A meeting has been arranged with Coal Creek Heritage Village to view the operation of their Blacksmiths shop. Our intention is to have the Blacksmiths shop completed, operational and dedicated in Memory of Ron Hocking and in time for the WHF.

Fred Allen

February 20, 2006



## **PERSONNEL PROFILE**

**YVONNE ROBSON**, one of our new Guides

Descended from a family of Irish pioneers, Yvonne was born in Singapore, youngest of three daughters. Family got caught up in evacuation of Singapore and relocation to India (now Pakistan N.W. border country.) Education continued in India at Convent School in hill district. After end of WW11 returned to England where her education was completed. Her aim was to graduate in Arts but family commitments directed her to employment in government services.

Married Harry Robson an electrical engineer (design office). Happy marriage continued and was further completed by the addition of son Mark, born 1967. Decided to move to Australia as many relatives on both sides were already in Australia. Arrived October 1969 and settled in Doncaster (in the days when it was mostly fruit orchards).

Harry's employment entailed a lot of travelling and long hours away from family. It was decided to go into operating motels and restaurants. Their first endeavour was in the Western district, where the ups and downs of operating a motel were quickly learned the hard way.

As a family unit the Robsons enjoyed the lifestyle of restaurants and motels, the hours were long but compensated by the fact the family spent more time together. They moved on to further motels/restaurants. Unfortunately the happy situation was suddenly curtailed when Harry died tragically at a fairly early age.

Yvonne was devastated by her husband's death but was admirably supported by their son. Only having been at this NSW business for 10 months and not knowing many people, the decision was made to return to Victoria. It was painful for Yvonne to adjust to life on her own and she threw herself into various activities to cushion the pain.

Returning to her original choice of career path, the arts, Yvonne joined the artists society of Phillip Island. Also is involved at the Gallery at the cultural centre in Cowes. A member of Cowes Probus club, an avid reader and now totally committed to guiding at Churchill Island and very aware of the historic significance of Amess House and gardens.

After sailing through some troubled waters in her life, we hope her twilight years will be calm.





## MEMORIES OF CHURCHILL ISLAND

Some months ago some friends took me to Churchill Island. It brought some lovely memories of the happiest years of my life.

In November 1925 my husband saw a notice in the paper for a job as manager on Churchill. So my husband rang Samuel Arness, a solicitor, and made an appointment to meet him and go down for the weekend. My husband was delighted and took the job. It was for two pounds ten shillings per week with all meat, butter, milk, linen and blankets provided, also 10% of all produce sold off the place.

I will never forget the day we landed there by boat from Stoney Point Where a local fisherman took us across to the Island. I was then twenty two, my husband thirty nine, and baby Malcolm was five months old. When we arrived at the house, the day before Cup Day, someone had placed a huge branch of lilac in the sitting room. Whenever I smell lilac it takes me back to Churchill.

We had a boat to row over to Newhaven for the mail etc., but when the tide was out we drove in a wagon; only our horse knew the way. There were thirty cattle, one hundred sheep and about three thousand rabbits on the island - and all fat.

Once we rowed over to take a boy over to stay the night and catch the boat next morning for Melbourne. When we started home the wind came up and the tide was running out. The boat began to take in water. It got dark and we couldn't see the jetty. After a while we found we were stuck on a mud bank, so my husband put the anchor out and carried the baby and me to the shore through the mud etc. He had to swim out the next day to bring the boat in. Many a time, when traveling by buggy, we got caught with the tide, with water up to the seat but we always got through.

My husband and I had a wonderful vegetable garden with twenty one different vegies all the year round. We used to provide butter, meat, eggs, veggies and milk to the guest houses on Phillip Island. We had a lovely flower garden and I used to cart little shells up from the beach to cover all the paths.

We had to leave for a time when I fell pregnant with my second boy but returned when he was a month old.

Every New Year's night Mr. Arness used to put a half pound of black powder in the cannon and fire it and we used to ring the big bell from the Karangi, a boat which went down off Phillip Island. It is now at the Church of England at San Remo.

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The above undated and typewritten letter was found in old documents on Churchill Island in 2005 and has the name below hand written at the bottom of the letter. It would be wonderful if we could trace the lady or her descendants!!

Mrs. I. Busch  
95 Francis St  
Belmont



## STEP BACK IN TIME.

Spend a day in nineteenth century surroundings gardening or guiding.

Anyone interested in helping to care for our beautiful heritage buildings and gardens. We would love to hear from you.

Our friendly team of volunteers of all ages enjoy morning teas, sharing ideas, garden knowledge, activities, tours and generally absorbing the atmosphere of our special Island.

We do one or two days a month in the homestead as a guide or Wednesday morning in the gardens.

Our next meeting is the 3rd April, 10am

We would be delighted to hear from you, please ring Pat or Fiona on 5956 7214 or 5956 7183

## CHURCHILL ISLAND EVENTS

Enjoy food, wine and creativity on Churchill Island.

If you haven't been to the markets on Churchill Island, you are really missing out! Indulge in Gippsland's glorious harvest and experience the region's creativity with the monthly Farmers Markets and Art Markarts.

At the Farmers Market, local farmers showcase food, wine, organic produce, crisp vegetables, juicy stone fruit, tender venison, fresh sour dough breads and free range eggs. Also on offer are home-made sauces, marinated mushrooms, onions, olives, gnocchi, fresh juices, jams, bush flowers, muesli, pates and chutneys.

In contrast, the Art Markart offers a unique range of local art in an atmosphere of live music and summer frivolity. Ideal for gifts for friends and family, come and peruse the unique creations of Gippsland, meet the artists and marvel at the creativity of this 'open air art gallery'.

**Farmers Markets run all year round on the fourth Saturday of each month.**

**Contact Peter Arnold 5664 0096.**

**Art Markarts run on the last Sunday of each month from September to April.**

**Contact Sian Adnam 0418 519 181**

## **123 456** YOUR BUNCH OF DATES - 2006

- 25th March FOCIS general meeting
- 25th March Farmers Market
- 26th March Art Market
- 15th and 16th April Working Horse Festival
- 22nd April Farmers Market
- 29th April Art Market
- 27th May FOCIS general meeting

### **Please note:**

No Art Markets after April until last Sunday in September.  
Farmers Markets are held on the fourth Sunday every month  
FOCIS AG.M. date to be decided.



## **FOCIS COMMITTEE 2005-2006**

President: Ann Penaluna (03)59569302

E-mail penaluna@waterfront.net.au

Vice President: Neil Gladman (03)59566050

E-mail ngl54751@bigpond.net.au

Treasurer: and Public Officer: Roger Hollingworth

E-mail roger.m.hollingworth@bigpond.com

General and Membership Secretary: Jill Fitzroy-Kelly  
(03) 5672 5235 E-mail jillfk@dcsi.net.au

# FRIENDS OF CHURCHILL ISLAND SOCIETY INC.

To: Secretary FOCIS, PO Box 852 COWES 3922, Vic. Aust.

# APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please Enrol/Renew a FOCIS Membership for

Name .....

YEAR .....

Address ..... Postcode .....

Phone: Home ..... Business .....

Email .....

Membership is from 1st July 2005 to 30th June 2006    **ADULT** \$15     **FAMILY** \$25     **CONCESSION** \$10

**Family - 2 Adults & 2 Children under 14 years.    Concession - Australian Pensions Card No. ....**

**Able to volunteer**     **In the Garden**     **As a Guide**     **Doing Restoration**

I understand that a current FOCIS membership entitles me to:-

**Visit *Churchill Island* any time during opening hours plus discount for special events.**

Visit ***Penguin Parade*** and ***Koala Conservation Centre***

during opening hours 2 times a year for ongoing members and 1 times a year for new members,  
10% discount for accompanying visitors, 10% discount on food and souvenirs.

Participate in Churchill Island Projects.

*N.B. Membership card is not transferable. Identification may be requested at any time.*

If elected as a FOCIS member, I agree to abide by the Society's Rules as laid down in its Constitution.



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If undelivered return to: FOCIS, PO Box 852, COWES 3922

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