



FOCIS

newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

AUTUMN 2001/02

Dear Readers

What a news packed edition we've got for you! We're so into newsgathering, deadlines and deciding typefaces etc. it's like working on the Herald Sun! We'll have to carry notepads at all times, wear eyeshades and put bios over our right ears!

Since our last newsletter the most significant event has of course been the opening of our beautiful Visitors Centre (see below) which, although not yet officially opened, has been operating all summer. We hope to have a date for the official opening before this goes to the printer but the official party is proving coy about dates.

This subtle building, so sensitively designed by Greg Burgess, has fulfilled all our best hopes and has settled gently into the landscape of our lovely island. The interior display is exciting and original, the shop is filled with unique gifts and the café is serving great food and coffee. There have been a few minor hiccups on the way but nothing that has not been quickly corrected. Staff have done a great job of "getting it all together" in the midst of the Christmas rush, and we're sure you will want to join us in congratulating them on a job well done. Both the staff and visitors alike are delighted to find themselves in such a lovely location. You can proudly bring your guests from anywhere in the world to sit on the verandah and sip a coffee or a chilled wine and prepare to be dazzled by the shimmering views across Westernport Bay.

Sadly, Sally O'Neill who has so ably co-ordinated much of the development on Churchill Island over the past few years, will now be moving to the Koala Conservation Centre. Although Sally will still be involved with Churchill Island we will miss her immediate presence, her cheerful smile and charming ways. We wish her well in her new role and hope to still see her from time to time at Churchill Island, where her efforts have helped to create such a stunning transformation. (see Personality Profile).

Another departure is that of Ray Leivers, General Manager of Phillip Island Nature Park. We have appreciated working with Ray who has always given thoughtful consideration to Focis and its concerns. We wish Ray well in the next step of his career. From the sea to the mountains quite a journey. Best of Luck, Ray.

We have got some stunning events coming up in the next few months more than enough to keep you keenly involved. Coming up soon, the **Matthew Flinders Exhibition** (see below), the **Jazz & Blues Happening**, the **Food and Wine Festival** and of course the **Working Horse Festival**. Dates and all relevant information are in the Events Calendar to follow.



Thanks to everyone who provides us with news and reports. We would be happy to receive any ideas, comments, recollections for inclusion in the newsletter. Please call Jocelyn Bradley, 5956 9241 or Pat Baird 5956 9478 if you would like to contribute. (or you can email Pat on pabobair@waterfront.net.au)

Jocelyn & Pat, Editorial Committee.



RANGER IN CHARGE REPORT:

Just a little update on what's happened and what's going on at Churchill Island and surrounds. The new visitor centre is superb so if you haven't been yet, come along and enjoy. This centre is a great "Focis" for all our visitors and will go a long way in keeping the island afloat financially!

We now have a new entry gate at the tourist road entrance. Nice chunky gates made from cypress pine. The fencing either side of the gate is traditional split post and wire. This gives it a true old farm feel.

The old toilet block has been demolished and the materials kept and stored away. These will be used to construct a new 'old hen house' and a smiddy for blacksmithing and horse shoeing. (smiddy? Is that Scottish or something Scott?)

We have been busy cutting and painting boxthorn, thistle chipping and rabbit control work in the area that runs from the bridge to Churchill Road. This is the area seen across the water on your left as you drive up to the visitor centre. This coastal reserve area is now looking great with lots of native re-growth. Due in total to the removal of box thorn and rabbits.

Sophie and Lolly our resident Clydesdale horses are both going really well with lots of hard work! They were part of the New Year's Eve Parade that required them to be driven through the Cowes main street. After the parade they were driven all the way back to Churchill Island, passed by hundreds of cars on the way. If Lolly could speak she would have called me a few well chosen names!! Not because of the traffic but the distance!

They both also gave carriage rides at the Wonthaggi Show. These public appearances give excellent promotion for Churchill Island.

A new walking/bicycle track is being constructed from the main road tourist road entrance to the Churchill bridge. The track meanders through some very special vegetation types.

Our hay season went well. We cut and baled about 250 small bales. The horse drawn side rake was the best thing since sliced bread. All thanks to Ron Hocking and Jan his wife for their determination in carrying out this very hard restoration.

This spring and summer have so far been the busiest I have seen ever. But I might add, it has not spoilt the serenity of this special place.

Wishing you all a very happy and peaceful 2002.

Regards, Scott Campbell and Crew.

P.S. Anyone who observed Scott and the Crew cutting, baling or scything hay on a 35 degree day will know just how much they contribute to the authenticity of our historic working farm. Ed.

EVENTS CALENDAR 2002.



Wednesday, February 6th, 2002. World First at Churchill Island.

Matthew Flinders Exhibition

Matthew Flinders: The Ultimate Voyage presents stunning 18th century treasures and illustrated displays exploring the drama, tragedy, romance and achievements of this historical hero. This exhibition will stay in place until the second week of March. Full details on display page in this newsletter.

Saturday February 23rd 2002:

Churchill Island Jazz & Blues Happening

Venue: Churchill Island

Time: 2.00pm till 8.00pm

Throw a rug on the lawn and get settled in for a fabulous afternoon in unique surroundings and the company of inimitable talent. Churchill Island boasts the peppery sophistication of the Pippa Wilson Swingtet, the zany but very talented Fabulous Swing Plumbers and the sometimes "hot" and sometimes "bluesy" vibrance of the Merri Creek Jazz Band. All this plus a variety of local foods and wines available. This event guarantees something for lovers of Jazz as well as those yet to discover.....

Cost: Adult \$25; Concession \$20; Children Free!!!

Focis Prices: Adult \$20; Concession \$17;

Sunday March 17th Newhaven College presents:

4th Annual Gourmet Food & Wine Festival

Venue: Churchill Island

Time: 10 am to 4.30 pm

Celebrate the fruits of our region amid the sprawling lawns, sweeping panoramic views and the relaxed ambience of Churchill Island. Gastronomic delights of South Gippsland blended with good music and a family atmosphere.

Cost: Adult \$8; Child \$4; Family \$20; Concession \$6.

Focis prices: Adult \$2.40; Child \$1.40; Family \$2.40; Concession \$2.40

Easter Saturday 30th March and Sunday 31st March.
Friends of Churchill Island Society presents

Working Horse and Pioneer Festival.

Venue: Churchill Island

Time: 10 am to 4.30 pm

Working Horse Association members from all around Victoria will gather for this annual event. Bullock teams, Ploughing, Scooping, Obstacle Courses, Carriage Rides, Market Stalls of food and all things of yester year. Camp Oven Cooking, Music, Working Horse Demonstrations and Guided tours of the Historic Precinct. Don't forget the sprawling Orchard Gardens, idyllic vistas, great bird watching opportunities as well as walking and bike tracks. All this plus a bit extra!

Cost: Adult \$12; Child \$6; Family \$30; Concession \$8.

Focis prices: Adult \$4.50; Child \$2.50; Family \$11.50; Concession \$3.50

Tickets available from any Phillip Island Nature Park venue and Phillip Island Information Centre.



YOUR BUNCH OF DATES:

17th March 2002 Newhaven College Food & Wine Festival

23rd March 2002 1.30 pm All welcome to FOCIS Meeting

30-31 March 2002 Easter Sat & Sun, Working Horse & Pioneer Festival

25th May 2002 1.30pm All welcome to FOCIS Meeting

27th July 2002 1.30pm All welcome to FOCIS Meeting
AGM.



BRIEF HISTORY OF FOCIS.

A quick browse through past copies of FOCIS Newsletters dating back to 1989, and perusal of some photographs and a few words here and there, led me to realise that volunteer work on Churchill Island has been an ongoing event from earliest days.

Those of you who have had a long association with our lovely island will be having a little chuckle at this Jilly-come-lately realisation, but you are the very people I would like to acknowledge.

Churchill Island, Amess House and Rogers' Cottages, the surrounding buildings, the gardens, trees, access paths and roads all owe a debt of gratitude to those who have gone before us.

Since its acquisition by the Victorian Government in 1976 a veritable parade of dedicated workers and volunteers have been committed to and caring of Churchill Island. As I went through the old newsletters the same names appear year after year. There are too many to mention but without the help of these dedicated souls there would have been little left to restore by those of us who came later. I like to think the spirit of this cumulative caring is part of what maintains Churchill Island's tranquil atmosphere.



VOLUNTEERS TODAY:

Today Volunteers are still an integral part of Churchill Island and its historic buildings, gardens and farm machinery. Many who join Focis put down their names as volunteers for special occasions and now is the time to call on them to take part in the running of the Working Horse Festival. Help will be needed with setting up on Friday 29th March, and with traffic and parking and manning the sausage sizzle on 30th and 31st March. If you can give us an hour or two during these three days please contact Ann Penaluna 5956 9302, Maureen Symmonds 5956 6715 or Keith Hocking 5821 9189. The best jobs will of course go to the earliest callers!



IN THE GARDEN:

Churchill Island's garden has not suffered too much so far this summer due to the mild weather and the wonderful rain we have had. Everything is looking lush the Magnolia Grandiflora has had huge citrus-scented flowers and the Jacarandas left a beautiful purple carpet of petals on the homestead pathway in January.

The apples, plums, figs and mulberries are in fruit much to the birds' delight. The silkworms have hatched into moths and are laying hundreds of eggs everywhere!

The Canary Island Smokebush (*Bystropogon canariensis*) flowered abundantly in front of Rogers Cottage and put on a lovely show for the summer visitors.

The Garden History Society recently paid a most enjoyable visit to Churchill Island thus further cementing their ongoing relationship with the historic gardens. Their contribution has been much appreciated.

Planting of indigenous vegetation has begun around the visitor centre. There are a lot more plants to go in if anyone would like to help for an hour or two, it would be greatly appreciated. Call Lisa on 5956 7214.

Lisa Burrell.



PROJECT OFFICER REPORT:

Churchill Island Visitor Centre

The opening of the new Churchill Island Visitor Centre has been a thrill for all of us. I feel that it creates a balance of the natural and cultural values of the island and has become a new 'heart' of the island. It has been a busy summer and everyone has done a wonderful job of rising to the challenge of operating a new venue at such a busy time.

One of the thrills for me has been the return of the 'ancestors' to enjoy the exhibition. This includes members of the Bunurong Aboriginal community, Edith Jefferies who



New Churchill Island Visitor Centre

lived on the island in the 1930's and Arthur and Badie Evans who had a long association with Churchill Island from the 1930's today. We were also lucky to meet Dot Bromley, whose father was the eldest child of Samuel and Winifred Pickersgill first squatters on Churchill Island. She had chosen to celebrate her 90th birthday at Churchill Island and we showed her the display about her grandparents it made her day.



Dot Bromley



VOLUNTEER GUIDES

All FOCIS members should say a big thank you for the wonderful work of our small, but dedicated, team of volunteer guides who maintained a presence in the Historic Area over the summer. The guides, dressed in period costume, add to our visitor's experience. They have also been seen churning butter in an original churn and writing secret letters with a feather quill. Guides are crucial for security and interpretation in the historic areas and we urgently need more guides to offer a day a fortnight or month to ensure the Historic Area is protected and interpreted. You don't have to know everything or take formal tours you can just add a presence to the area for security and enjoyment of visitors. Please consider a small donation of time. If you are interested, call 5956 7214 to register your name and we will get back to you. **Welcome to two new guides, Heather Marshall and Fred Allen.**



ACTIVITIES PROGRAM

The Activities Program over summer was a great success at Churchill Island. Highlights included Yoga on the lawn, Old Time Farming, jewellery making and Bunurong Basket workshop. Members of the Herb Society came down and assisted with Historic Gardens and Herbs walks which were very well received. We even had a 1970's movie night and screened the extraordinary movie 'Summerfield' which was filmed on Churchill Island. We look forward to more Activities and Events over the next few months.



TOWARDS THE FUTURE

Churchill Island has come so far over the past few years, but it has revealed nothing that wasn't already there. The natural and cultural values of the place have always been admired by all who have lived or visited the island and recent works have only served to highlight these.

I have been privileged to be involved in this process and look forward to a continuing involvement. Projects to be completed are landscaping and interpretation of Fishers' Wetland, interpretive sign trail around Churchill Island and soundscapes in the Historic Area. We are also committed to achieving Museum Accreditation over the next few years and have received a grant to achieve this.

In 2002, I am moving to Koala Conservation Centre to work on the new Visitor Centre there as well as other exciting projects being undertaken by the Nature Park. Yet I look forward to still working with you to see these Churchill Island projects through. I would like to take this opportunity to thank many of you for your dedication, support and love of Churchill Island which is one of its greatest assets.

Sally O'Neill.

Please send me Green Polo shirts with Churchill Island pocket. @ \$28 each including postage.

Size S M L XL (Please circle)

Name.....

.....

Address.....

.....



PERSONALITY PROFILE:

Sally O'Neill's transfer to the KCC, in her inimitable mobile office, will be a loss to Churchill Island, but we wish her every success in the new venture. As Project Officer for the last two and a half years, she watched over the transformation of the Island's amenities, the refurbishing of Amess House and the building of the Visitors Centre, and piloted the bi-centennial celebrations to a resounding success.

Sally came to the Nature Park as a Ranger in 1990 and quickly became Ranger in Charge of Education and Interpretation. After a two year interval, working in Kakadu, she returned as Project Officer in charge of formulating a master plan of development for Churchill Island, developing a system of interpretation, and refurbishing Amess House and Rogers' Cottage. She had Miles Lewis's initial report on which to base her planning, but decided to set the refurbishment of the house in a single homogeneous time-frame, and worked closely with the National Trust to achieve it.

She has also set her own agenda with a keen historical eye, collecting a small library of primary materials about the history of the Island, making contact with the early families and the Bunurong Land Council, and unearthing important information that has not previously been on the public record. The excellent arrangement of some of this material in the Visitors Centre speaks volumes for Sally's determination to make the record as complete as it can be. Her one disappointment was the negative result of the weekend search for the foundations of James Grant's fabled "blockhouse". She feels the discovery would be a huge tourist attraction, and is something Heritage Victoria might well work on. "It hasn't really yet been put to bed", she says. She is committed to getting Museum accreditation for the house and the collection, and has dreams of a computer system to manage it.

She has had a major input into the planning of the new Visitors Centre, and was involved in all the site meetings and landscaping plans, as well, of course, as the ingenious signage and displays which are universally admired. Likewise she piloted the fine new stables, which, like everything else, have been worked on in close consultation with Heritage Victoria. Sally's contribution to Churchill Island is by no means over, but already one may say of her: "If you want a memorial, look about you".

But we shall miss, above all, her laughter, her ready charm and skill with people. She has created a fine heritage

display, but, for her, the most enjoyable aspect of it has been meeting the living people. "That's what made it for me," she says.

We hope koalas and the new KCC development will be as much fun. Good luck, Sally!

David Bradley.



COMMITTEE 2001-2002

President: Ann Penaluna (03) 5956 9302

Vice-President: Keith Hocking (03) 5821 9189

Treasurer/Public Officer: Roger Hollingworth

Membership Secretary: Diane McCarthy (03) 5956 8300

Minute Secretary: Jan Fleming

Working Horse Festival - sub committee: Maureen Symmonds, Keith Hocking, Terry Symmonds, Peter Royce and David Graves

Major Projects - Peter Royce, Roger Hollingworth, Maureen Symmonds.

Editorial Committee - P. Royce, J. Bradley P. Baird

PLEASE REMEMBER THAT YOUR ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION IS NOW DUE.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY DIANE MCCARTHY AND ALL AT FOCIS WOULD REALLY APPRECIATE IT IF YOU ENSURE POSTAGE OF YOUR SUBSCRIPTION IN DECEMBER.

APPLICATION FORM ON THE BACK OF THIS NEWSLETTER.

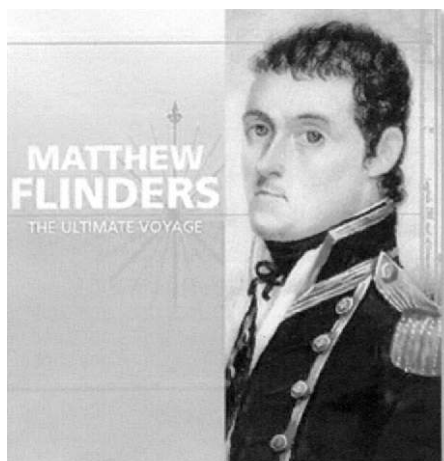
THANK YOU ALL.

It may suit you to order your FOCIS polo shirt at the same time. If so please fill in the above order form, not forgetting to specify which size and how many shirts you require.

Special thanks to the students of Bulleen Heights Special School for their folding and addressing of the last newsletter. Well done, everyone!

FOCIS Members:

Staff have requested that Focis members make sure they have their current membership cards with them at all times when visiting Churchill Island and that they show them at the desk on arrival. This will make it much easier for them to monitor who has and has not paid. Thank you.



WORLD'S FIRST NATIONAL MATTHEW FLINDERS EXHIBITION OPENS AT CHURCHILL ISLAND

The world's first national touring exhibition on the intrepid British explorer, Matthew Flinders, will open at the Churchill Island Visitor Centre on 6th February 2002 to mark the bicentenary of his epic circumnavigation of Australia (1801-03).

The exhibition coordinated by the West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation and Phillip Island Nature Park has been made possible by funding support from the Victorian Minister for Local Government, the Hon Bob Cameron.

Matthew Flinders: The Ultimate Voyage presents stunning 18th century treasures and illustrated displays exploring the drama, tragedy, romance and achievements of this historical hero.

The New South Wales State Librarian & Chief Executive Dagmar Schmidmaier said: "This landmark exhibition will showcase wonderful material relating to Flinders and his significant voyages of discovery that are often overlooked in Australia's history."

In just 23 years, from 1791 to 1814, Flinders transported breadfruit with William Bligh; explored coastal NSW; charted Bass Strait and Tasmania; circumnavigated and named Australia; was shipwrecked; imprisoned at Mauritius; experimented on the effect of magnetism in ships; and wrote a legendary book on Australian exploration.

The epic circumnavigation of Australia aboard the leaky and rotting *HMS Investigator* was an incident packed adventure and resulted in Flinders not only naming Australia, but hundreds of places throughout, such as the Great Australian Bight and Kangaroo Island.

What's most extraordinary is that he did all of this before his early death at age 40.

Visitors can see original items relating to Flinders' life and exploration and chat to curator Paul Brunton, who is touring with the exhibition. He will give public talks and tours of the exhibition (details to come of dates). Original items include: various letters of correspondence between Flinders, Bass, Banks and Thomas Franklin, black and white engravings by landscape artist William Westall, and spoons used by naval officers on the *HMS Investigator*.

Visitors can also explore Australia's rich botanical history through the botanical and zoological drawings and watercolours produced from the Australian continent.

Go to www.slsw.gov.au/flinders/ for digitised versions and transcripts of Flinders' logs and diaries, and a national calendar of events.

Matthew Flinders: The Ultimate Voyage is **FREE** at the Churchill Island Visitor Centre from (6 February) until 10 March 2002.

The Minister for Local Government has intimated a desire to officially launch the exhibition. Media outlets will be circularised with details as soon as the date is confirmed.

Media Contacts:

John Murrell -

Chief Executive Officer, West Gippsland Regional Library Corporation (03) 5622 2849

Sally O'Neill -

Project Officer, Phillip Island Nature Park 0408 101 976



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

To: Secretary FOCIS, PO Box 852 COWES 3922
Please Enrol/Renew a FOCIS Membership for

Name

Address

Postcode

Phone: Home Business

Membership is from 1st January to 31st December

ADULT \$15 FAMILY \$25 CONCESSION \$10

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 4 times a year for ongoing members and 2 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.

Signature

Date

As a member, I am/am not able to offer the Society help with it's projects.

Painting Festivals

Restoration Gardening

OFFICE USE ONLY

Membership No.

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