



# FOCIS

## newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

Number 118 SUMMER 2012

### DATES TO REMEMBER

#### GENERAL MEETINGS

2013

SATURDAY 9 February

Saturday 11 May

Saturday 10 August  
(AGM)

Saturday 9 November

1.30 pm Meeting Room  
Churchill Island Visitors'  
Centre

#### OPEN DAY

Sunday 3 March

#### EASTER FESTIVAL

31 March/1 April

We are on the web. See this issue in  
colour

[www.friendsofchurchillisland.org.au](http://www.friendsofchurchillisland.org.au)

President@

Secretary@

Membership@

Treasurer@

Editor@

[friendsofchurchillisland.org.au](http://friendsofchurchillisland.org.au)

## Sarah Rogers's Bible Displayed to FOCIS

At the General Meeting on November 10, members were able to inspect the Bible given by John Rogers to his wife Sarah in 1880. The Bible records family births prior to this time including that of another John Rogers on Churchill Island in 1870, just before the family left for Brandy Creek. The Bible was brought to the meeting by Anne Shembri and her daughter, Belinda Robbie, who are direct descents of John and Sarah Rogers and owners of the Bible which has been handed down through generations since this time. Christine Grayden, Curator, was able to give some advice on the storage and conservation of the antique volume.



Christine Grayden, Curator, was able to give some advice on the storage and conservation of the antique volume.



Name plate from Dr Harry Jenkins' Collins Street practice donated by Rae and John Peacock. Harry Jenkins owned Churchill Island from 1936-1963.

Please submit copy for the next newsletter by 16 February 2013

#### WORKING BEES FOR 2013

Saturday 6 April (farm machinery)

Saturday 7 September (house)

Saturday 23 November (house)

8-10 am: *Coffee provided.*

#### In this issue:

2. President's Report; Curator's Report
3. CEO's Report
4. Minutes of General Meeting
- 5 Not Your Average Settlement Story
10. Treasurer's Report
11. Working Bee and New Guide

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

### Stella Axarlis AM

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This has indeed been an impressive year for showcasing Churchill Island. From the Community Open Day to the visit of the Governor of Victoria, the Hon Alex Chernov AC QC and Mrs Chernov, many dignitaries, Friends and Tourists, the island has certainly woven its magic.

2013 will begin just as impressively with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra performing on Saturday 2 February 5.30 pm - 7.30 pm, a wonderful program of Classical favourites, followed by the Serenade at Sunset on Sunday 3 February 4 pm - 8pm. The concert will feature the Melbourne City Opera and talented young artists performing popular Opera and Broadway Hits. Please do not miss these events. Ticket holders will have a chance to experience Churchill Island at its best.

On the last General Meeting of the year I was unable to attend due to surgery. I was very sad to miss the last meeting of the year but it was unavoidable. My appreciation to Peter Paul and the Committee for an excellent meeting.

The work on the archives continues. Thank you Christine and Volunteers for your wonderful contribution throughout the year not only in preserving our collection but in encouraging and receiving new contributions. This is an immense job particularly if we wish to maintain our accreditation.

#### Churchill Island Concerts

2 February Melbourne Symphony Orchestra 5.30-7.30 pm

3 February Serenade at Sunset Melbourne City Opera 4-8 pm

Tickets from Nature Park

Further I would also like to acknowledge Matthew Jackson and his team for their continuous support of FOCIS. Their cooperation and willingness to assist me whenever it becomes necessary is most appreciated

As the year draws to an end I wish to acknowledge our Members and Volunteers who contribute to the maintenance of Churchill Island.

Thank you to all our Members who support us and my special gratitude to the Executive Committee. To all of you my best wishes for the festive season and a happy, healthy and prosperous 2013.

Stella

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## CURATOR'S REPORT

### Christine Grayden

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My volunteers and I have been very busy with cataloguing and archiving the collection. We have been provided with 2 second hand 4 drawer filing cabinets which operate somewhat better than the old ones. We now have a spare 3 drawer filing cabinet, but since we have five archive boxes full of documents we won't have any trouble filling the spare drawers. Thanks to Irene McKell and Margaret Geppert for continuing to list all the documents and for help in moving files to new filing cabinets. My post grad student Sandra Kanis had archived our newspaper cuttings collection in chronological order, but since then we have had a significant number of cuttings donated so Irene and Margaret have created another archive folder for them.

Next Monday I go to Museums Australia Victoria to talk to Cassie, one of the two Museums Accreditation Program staff, about requirements for our reaccreditation next year. Sandra will be coming with me.

Between David Maunders, Sandra and I we now have about 150 items on the [Victoriancollections.net.au](http://Victoriancollections.net.au) website. Hopefully we will get some response from experts on historic farm machinery and lace, and can fill in some missing detail. We are using this website as our digital cataloguing system.

We had a very successful

working bee in September with 12 willing FOCIS volunteers. We have another working bee coming up on Saturday 24th November to again clean the house, cottages and contents. Everyone is welcome, and to join in on our very pleasant morning tea afterwards.

Sandra is currently writing a Conservation Management Plan for the Churchill Island historic precinct which will be a very useful tool for us to have. She is also writing metal labels for tagging all of the historic farm machinery as required for reaccreditation. I am very fortunate to have such wonderful helpers. (Continued on p.3)

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## PHILLIP ISLAND NATURE PARK REPORT

**Matthew Jackson, CEO**

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Thank you again for allowing me the opportunity to update you on the Parks operations and I am sorry that I could not attend in person.

Our Annual Report 2011-2012 was approved in Parliament and has been distributed to all key stakeholders and our community. It was a very pleasing result demonstrating our success in balancing our tourism and conservation activities to achieve the maximum results for Phillip Island.

Year to date our visitor numbers are going well with overall visitation to the Parks up 3,500 people. This increase is in both domestic and international markets. My team and I are extremely proud to inform you all that the Nature Parks won the "Small to Medium Services Award" at the Governor of Victoria export awards. This is a fantastic result and demonstrates the Nature Parks international tourism significance to State of Victoria and our region. The Park is now in the Australian export award finals to be held in late November.

I am also proud to announce that the Nature Parks was again a finalist at the Banksia Environmental Foundation Awards for our hooded plover program. This is again a fantastic effort demonstrating the Nature Parks sig-

nificance in the environmental sector as these awards are at National levels.

I am pleased to inform you that our Environment Plan 2012-2017 has been approved by the Department of Sustainability and Environment and is currently being distributed to key stakeholders and our community.

Our Environment Department leads the planning and implementation of this Plan. This is the division's major Five Year Plan specifically focussing on environmental objectives and outcomes for the Nature Parks.

This Plan draws on the Nature Parks extensive environmental understanding developed by our organisation through our scientific research and on-the-ground experience. Our environment staff have worked with our research and education teams, and consulted with specialist advisors, key stakeholders and community groups, to achieve the most comprehensive evaluation of the current status, priority needs and potential threats to the Nature Parks natural assets ever produced.

Further, we are very happy to announce that in line with our Strategic Planning, the "Churchill Island" key area plan will shortly go to tender with the commence-

ment of the strategic review to commence in early 2013. The brief is to review Churchill Island for at least the next 10 years taking into consideration tourism, recreation and conservation planning. The opportunity to discuss asset management and sighting including a Museum space is essential to address current carrying capacity issues with the current Visitors Centre and car parking. An invitation will be sent to the FOCIS committee to be involved in the consultation process of this exciting planning process and I look forward to working with the committee directly.

On the 24th November the Nature Parks will be facilitating an indigenous festival showcasing the Shearwater migration on Phillip Island at the Nobbies Centre. The Nature Parks will also launch its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) at this festival demonstrating its commitment to build meaningful relationships with the indigenous community.

On a final note, the tickets for the MSO event at Churchill Island on the 2nd February 2013 have now gone on sale. These can be purchased at our web site [www.penguins.org.au](http://www.penguins.org.au) and I look forward to seeing you all at the event.

Thank you again for your support and I look forward to working with you over the next 12 months. Wishing you a happy festive season and a successful 2013.

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**(Continued from p. 2)**

Yesterday I attended the Bass Coast Shire heritage groups networking event, held at the Wonthaggi railway station museum. There were five groups there and it is wonderful to hear of the excellent programs they

are all mounting. Some of you may have seen my letter in the Age last week about the terrible conditions under which many community collections are being stored. A classic example came up yesterday with Inverloch Historical Society, which has a large collection being stored in boxes

in people's houses all over the place. Our own storage facilities on Churchill Island are just adequate, but here is hoping that we get our museum extension to the Visitor's Centre, and that it includes an air conditioned archiving and storage area.

## MINUTES OF THE GENERAL MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 10, 2012

Present: Peter Paul (Vice President; acting chair) Christine Grayden (Secretary), Roger & Sue Hollingworth, Tom O'Dea (Treasurer; membership secretary), Ruth O'Dea, David Maunders, Ann & Peter Jelly, Rebecca Sanders (Ph.D. candidate), Gail Bridgeman, Pat Baird, Jan Jonas, Sue Chambers, Di Scukovic, Cora Van Dyke (visitor), Anne Shembri and her daughter Belinda Robbie (visitors)

Apologies: Stella Axarlis (President), Susan Pearse, Gaye Cleeland, Marg & Haagen Geppert, Graeme Clausen, Peter Brookes, Pauline Taylor, Irene McKell, John & Robyn Boldiston, Ian Jonas, Mick and Maureen Barden, Pam Spencer, Bruce Chambers, Will Scukovic, Matt Jackson (PINP CEO)

1. Welcome: Vice President Peter Paul welcomed all members and visitors: Cora Van Dyke (new volunteer guide and house keeper), Anne Shembri and her daughter Belinda, direct descendents of John and Sarah Rogers.



Peter Paul presiding at the general meeting with Christine Grayden

2. Previous minutes Aug 12th 2012 moved Di Scukovic/Roger Hollingworth carried

3. Matters Arising: see General Business

4. Correspondence:

From PI & Dis Historical Society with notice of the Annual Dinner, Sat 24th November

From Dept of Justice re: legal changes affecting your incorporated association (see Tom's report later)

From Gaye Cleeland re: Bass Coast National Trust branch recently hosted a 2-day visit by Sue Hughes,

Natural/Environment Heritage Specialist

From Gaye Cleeland re: forthcoming exhibition at Mornington Regional Gallery: Vision Splendid which is of images of Western Port area

From PI Con Soc - newsletter third quarter

From Elizabeth McNabb, secretary Knox Historical Society, re: Ambleside Park museum

From Mary Mitchell, informing us that she is now residing at Melaleuca Lodge Hostel

From Bev Swift re: ceasing her membership.

From the Cleeland Family - card thanking us for our card after Harry Cleeland's passing

5. PINP CEO Matt Jackson report, read by Christine in Matt's absence (see CEO's report, p. 3)

Matter arising from Matt's report: David suggested that FOCIS needs to define our position on matters such as accommodation and large events on CI. A sub-committee to be convened by Peter Paul to be formed. Members so far = Christine, Pat Baird and David.

6. Curator's report (see p.2).

Matter arising from Curator's report: David reported that John Faine, radio station 774, has an item about a Victorian historical place once per month on Monday mornings. Christine to contact PINP Communications officer Danene and let her know.

7. Treasurer's Report (see attached) Tom O'Dea/David Maunders Carried.

8. Membership Secretary's Report (see attached)

9. Changes arising from Associations Incorporation Reform Act 2012: Tom had attended an information session. Since our constitution does not consist of the Model Rules we do not have to change anything at this stage. The Act suggests that associations take out indemnity cover for office holders. The Act now means that individual c/ee members cannot be sued, but that the association as a whole is sued if that situation arises. The cover costs about \$1200 per year. If FOCIS does not take out the cover, which was felt to be

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## MINUTES (continued)

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too expensive and unwarranted given that such a situation has not arisen in 30 years, if FOCIS c/ee was sued, the society would be wound up and an administrator would be called in to disburse the society's funds. We do not need public liability cover as PINP covers us when doing volunteer work as long as we sign in and out.

"That FOCIS does not take out liability insurance for office holders" Tom O'Dea/David Maunders Carried.

### 10. General Business:

Reprint of Pat Baird's book: Churchill Island: History and Her Story. Pat reported that the book is being printed in China, which created a hitch, the programs here and there being incompatible.

"That FOCIS pays the \$250 account to the information technician for changing the book format" Pat Baird/Anne Jelly Carried

Pat reported on the huge amount of work having been done towards getting the book ready for reprint by Sophie and Peter Maddigan. Members agreed that a gift to the value of \$100 be given to the Maddigans in appreciation.

David reported that the cafe staff told him at lunch time that the CI cafe is no longer giving 10% discount to FOCIS members.

Sue Hollingworth reported that she and Roger had listened to the local information radio on the way in and there was no mention of Penguin Parade or Churchill Island. Christine to write to BCSC and PINP and ask why not.

Cora suggested that *Better Homes and Gardens* be contacted to do a segment about Churchill Island's gardens. The suggestion to be passed on to Isobel Walker, gardener, when she returns from leave.

### 11. Speaker - Belinda Robbie (nee Shembri):

Belinda spoke about and showed the Rogers family Bible, circa 1850, that contained family history information on the Rogers family, and a note from John Rogers gifting the Bible to his wife Sarah. They left copies of the family pages from the Bible with Christine.

### 12. Speaker - Rebecca Sanders: Not Your Average Settlement Story: A Brief History of Churchill Island

Meeting closed 4.00 p.m.

### 13. Next meeting: Saturday February 9th, 2013, at 1.30 p.m.

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## NOT YOUR AVERAGE SETTLEMENT STORY

Rebecca Sanders

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If we were to judge Churchill Island from the landscape we see today, with its homestead, gardens, pastures and remnant native vegetation, it would be easy to think that it was settled in much the same manner as many sites in the Westernport and South Gippsland region, or indeed Victoria more broadly. An analysis of its history, however, reveals a tale of settlement slightly out of kilter of that with its neighbours. The example of Churchill Island suggests a more nuanced and detailed analysis of settler colonialism is necessary- that settlement is not a monolithic process comprised solely of progress, and nor is it one driven solely by thoughts of economic or political improvement. Lastly, the example of Churchill Island suggests that the role of sojourners in making a permanent settlement spaces should be explored in greater detail if we are to obtain a more accurate picture of the settlement process in Victoria specifically and perhaps Australia more broadly.

My thesis traces the history of Churchill Island, how it has been variously imagined, constructed and used during exploration and settlement history, and later memorialised as a heritage site. It is first to last a microhistory; a format that complements the local and regional history work that has preceded it, and which makes use of the subject's peculiarities. Microhistory, under the Italian School, begins from the premise that 'the unifying principal of all microhistorical research is the belief that microscopic observation will reveal factors previously unobserved'. Methodologically then, microstoria, as the Italian School is often called, is characterised not only by its reduction of scale, which is common to all microhistory, but by its practitioners belief that this change in scale will bring 'out those contradictions which appear only when the scale of reference is altered.' This indeed has been the case with my research into Churchill Island's past. Each time I exam-

ined a presumably normative process or event, for example exploration, squatting, land purchase, land use and land valuation, I found that my case study did not fit neatly with commonly held perceptions about these processes. The phrase used by microhistorians to describe such subjects is 'exceptional normal'- a subject that on the surface appears to fit within established conventions, but which on closer examination reveals that it not so much opposes them, but sits slightly at an angle or to one side.

Many have made much of Churchill Island's place in the annals of exploration and settlement. A recent article in the *Age* stated that Churchill Island was Victoria's first farm. The romantic tale of Grant's falling in love with a beautiful island coupled with PINP's presentation of the island as a heritage farm has perhaps helped people to get carried away with the regards to the significance of Grant's actions. A closer analysis of the source material however suggests that while Grant may indeed have fallen in love with this little island, this was not the main reason why he chose to plant a garden on it. The logbook of Grant's sojourn in Western Port certainly does not place any significance upon his decision to plant crops on Churchill Island. His published journal is more expansive, but the reasons given for the decision to plant wheat, Indian corn, potatoes, rice, coffee berries, apple pippins and peach kernels lie in a combination of practical necessity, politics as well as a personal predilection for a very pretty parcel of land. Firstly, the planting of exotic species in the soil of the northern portion of Bass Strait formed part of Grant's orders, the Government at Port Jackson and in Britain were considering adding the area either side of Bass Strait to the colony of New South Wales. Secondly, having been supplied with seeds by his benefactors John Churchill and Lady Julia Percy, it was important that Grant carry out their desires if he was to maintain their favour. These people were not friends of Grant's- they were his social superiors, Grant, however much he may have desired entry into the gentry was not a member himself, and indeed the navy had a reputation for advancing members of the lower orders into more refined spheres. His career marked him as a member of the lower orders, if one of middling rank. The Historical Records of New South Wales, together with the style of Grant's published account certainly suggest that he was a man keen to improve his social standing: he was careful not to side against his superior officer in Port Jackson; requested transfer to more active service, where he stood a greater chance of promotion, and in addition to carefully honouring his various patrons and those in positions of power in his account of his voyages, he also utilised romantic conventions in his writing

to underline his taste and education. Grant however, was under the orders mentioned above- it was a happy occurrence that he could pass off the planting as being in honour of John Churchill, and as Grant's published account alludes, he planted the garden on Churchill Island because he had found no better spot, which rather suggests that his initial visit to the island had merely raised its candidacy for the garden, rather than certified it. It is also likely that Grant did not confirm his naming of the island as Churchill until he had certainty, as Paul Carter noted in *The Road to Botany Bay*, it was common for explorers to wait until they were certain of the landscape before they actually got on with the business of naming its features. The role of Grant's crew has also been glossed over in an effort to simply this aspect of Churchill Island's history for public consumption, and perhaps as way of maintaining the heroic patina it has acquired. The assistance he received from the few professional members of his crew was considerable. Ensign Barralier was responsible for drawing up the chart of the northern coast of Bass Strait, and in this he was assisted not so much by Grant, as by Grant's then First Mate, later Acting Lieutenant John Murray. The contributions of the nameless crew have also been forgotten. Almost all of them were convicts requisitioned from Port Jackson by Grant, whose original crew having previously enjoyed British naval wages refused to serve the Colony of New South Wales for less pay. Thomas Rogers has noted that the role of convicts, and particularly the importance of the labour in Victoria's early history has frequently been overlooked or outright denied, but as with early settlement, the labour of these men were essential in helping to complete the mission of the *Lady Nelson*. These men camped on Churchill Island for nearly the whole of their stay in Western Port, were frightened by the mysterious nocturnal animal that seemed to prowl around them in the dark, and they were the people who actually burnt the area for the garden, erected the blockhouse, and in all probability, planted the seeds Grant had been given.

As you may have noted, I have chosen to use the term garden, rather than farm, and this is because it is very difficult to call the crops planted by Grant, and partially harvested under the orders of his former first mate and successor, Acting Lieutenant John Murray a farm, since there was never any suggestion that they were cultivated with commercial purposes in mind. It is more correct to compare the site planted by Grant's convict crew with the kitchen gardens that supplied most rural homes with their daily needs. This indeed was the word used by the Victorian Conservation Trust, Churchill Island's first management and the body responsible for obtaining its purchase by the state. The VCT made much of this section of Churchill Island's history, as indeed has Valda Cole, stressing the fact that these were the first crops planted in Victoria. In this they may have been following the lead of the Victorian Farmers Union, who erected the cairn that lies on this island's shore. Historical firsts are useful political tools, and offer simple reasons for celebration or memorial, but a first is not always historically significant. The cairn erected by the

Farmers Union may well make claims for Grant and his introduction of wheat to Victoria, but the truth is that Victoria's wheat industry had its genesis in South Australia, many of whom later took up land in Western Victoria. Indeed, in almost every respect, other than Grant's naming of the island, the actions of Grant and his mostly convict crew proved to be little more than a historical dead end. They certainly had nothing to do with the later settlement of Victoria, which occurred because pastoralists from Van Diemen's Land, now Tasmania, had run out of land.

In settlement stories generally, there is an idea that once exploration- with all its attendant practices of naming and claiming has occurred- that the settlement of the landscape is a natural and forgone conclusion. Close analysis of the example of Churchill Island, however, explored as early as 1801 and unsettled until the 1850s at the very earliest, suggests that this is not the full picture. The majority of Western Port's subsequent explorers ignored the island, -most did not bother to include it on their maps, or indeed any of the smaller islands, and Captain F.A. Wetherall refused to even recognise it as an island-reducing its status to that of an isthmus. Grant's Published account, which was translated into Dutch and German, does not appear to have had any circulation in New Holland, and his exploration of Western Port fell out of common knowledge. The names he gave to places in Western Port appear to have been retained only because Flinders had incorporated his and Barrallier's map into his own, and Flinders maps were widely circulated, thus ensuring that Churchill Island amongst others retained the name Grant had given it. It is also worth considering the very large gap between Churchill Island's exploration by the British and its eventual settlement- Certainly, it was one of the last places in Western Port to be settled, with all of the mainland, both the large islands, and even some of the smaller one's preceding its incorporation into the settlement story proper. Whether you consider John Rogers- by dint of his lease of the island from 1854 onwards or Samuel Pickersgill, whose family history tells of his settlement of the island sometime in 1857-1860 to be the island's first settler, it is clear from both accounts that Churchill Island had not been regarded as prime real estate until the lack of any other properties made it worth considering. All of this strongly suggests that with regard to the colonisation of Victoria, Grant's actions did not have much of a lasting effect on the landscape and undercuts the presumed importance of planting a garden on a picturesque island. Indeed, my reading suggest that many presumed that it had been Flinders who had explored Western Port, since his were the maps generally used, not realising that he had incorporated Grant and his map maker Ensign Barrallier's efforts into his own more well know maps.

At first glance, this reading of Churchill Island would suggest a settlement story akin to many in Gippsland- a forsaken place, cut off from the rest of the world only to be settled as a last resort once all the better land has been secured. But such a reading does not hold up to closer scrutiny. Churchill Island may well have been settled much later than many of its neighbours, but in the end, John Rogers chose to move his home, already well-established on Sandstone Island, to Churchill Island, sometime around 1863-4, although he had come under fire for cultivating it as early as 1861. Rogers' eventual preference for Churchill Island was probably at least partially based on its larger size. Of the three islands that had formed the Sandstone Island Pastoral Run, Churchill Island was by far the largest. During the pastoral era of the 1850s, it seems likely that Rogers lease on the run remained fairly secure, but the campaign to unlock the lands in the wake of the gold rushes and the huge influx of migrants it brought to Victoria's shores would have made securing a permanent right to at least some of his land fairly important. Rogers, however, it seems was always keen to secure some kind of purchase on his leasehold. As early as 1854 he applied for the pre-emptive right to Sandstone Island, but unsurprisingly this was rejected, no doubt due to the fact that Rogers had not even held the lease for a year at this point, and the Order in Council that made it possible for pastoral lessees to purchase a portion of their run dictated that they must have held it four fourteen years, although in practice this time was frequently shortened. This early application to purchase land- long before his marriage, suggests that Rogers means were not paltry, but neither do they seem to have been substantial, for he never applied to lease a larger run, and plenty were available at various times in the vicinity. It would also appear that he did not possess enough money to purchase all three of his islands. The decision to move his home to the largest therefore makes financial sense, since experience inevitably taught farming men that more land equaled a greater chance of breaking even, or indeed profit. Perhaps Rogers, perceiving that pastoral leaseholds were likely to become a thing of the past, and having gained more experience in farming, may have decided that Churchill Island was a better place to make a claim for, and moved his family onto the island, with its unfinished housing some three years prior to his purchase of it, possibly with the intention of later claiming a pre-emptive right.

The campaign to unlock the lands however, perhaps caught up with Rogers, and in the end the purchase took place in the form of an auction. The auction of such a piece of land so far from the settled districts was still very unusual at this time, however town allotments in rural areas were being offered up in this manner, and perhaps Churchill Island's small size, or possibly by this point its perceived worth, ensured that it was treated in

the manner of a more valuable piece of land, rather than opened to selection as was most of neighboring Phillip and French Island- if with rather poor retention rates. As a result Rogers instead purchased the island for the upset price of ..., after which all of the improvements he, and undoubtedly the men who worked for him, had made, and ensured perhaps an easier time of it than for the selectors on neighbouring islands, who found themselves failing to meet the conditions of selection such as fencing, making a house or making sure they had cleared a certain percentage of their land all while trying to subsist on it.

Where the Pickersgills fit within this story is difficult to say with any certainty. Pickersgill tradition has it that the family simply moved onto the island and began farming it, but the dates for them doing so are some years after Rogers began leasing it. Laurie Thompson has emphatically rejected the suggestion that they may have worked as labourers for Rogers, although the family according to this same oral history is supposed to have done so on French Island, although I have not been successful in finding any record of their supposed indenture there. For my own part, Rogers' leasing of the island makes it unlikely that they settled Churchill Island in the manner that the family history records. The third possibility is that they came to some arrangement with Rogers, who may have sub-leased the island to them. This of course would have been illegal, and against the terms of Rogers depasturing license for the run, but such things do not appear to have worried Rogers very much. He certainly cultivated Churchill Island in contravention of his pastoral lease- an item which was later used as evidence in s also a record of him being paid for goods and chattels by Edward Linnot in 1856 from Churchill Island- again in contravention of his lease, so it is possible that Rogers sublet Churchill Island during the late 1850s to the Pickersgills. If the Rogers family history is correct in the timing of that family's move to Churchill Island then, and there are some written records to support this assertion, then it cannot have been the Rogers' purchase of the Churchill Island that meant the Pickersgills had to leave. Since the Pickersgills would not have been living on Churchill Island for at least two, possibly three years prior to it being put up for auction I am unsure as to where the story of Samuel Pickersgill gambling a deposit for the island comes from- particularly considering that its sale by auction would have meant that at least two thirds of the price would have been paid immediately, and the remainder only a few months afterwards. The thought occurs that perhaps the story originally related to a later property, and has been confused, but this is only a suggestion.

John Rogers, and his now increasing family did not remain long on Churchill Island after its purchase. The island was sold in 1872, but Rogers had already removed

to Brandy Creek near Buln Buln sometime around 1869 and 1870 under the terms of the Ammended Grant Act of 1869, having selected land there on the recommendation of his Westernport neighbour James Hann. In purchasing Churchill Island Rogers had been able to make his investment in the property secure, but the island was too small to make a comfortable living. Many have speculated that his mortgage of Churchill Island to Phillip Island's leaseholder- John McHaffie in 1867, is evidence of financial mismanagement, and his earlier sale of goods to Stinger does suggest that this is a possibility. His management of his later properties in Gippsland however, suggests that Rogers became a very competent financial manager, and certainly his wiles in cultivating Churchill Island prior to its purchase suggest a certain canniness. Another suggestion is that Rogers mortgaged the property to make improvements to it, which would fit his later career in Gippsland more easily. Rogers efforts to improve Churchill Island may well have been what it took to convince him that there was only so much that could be done with the site, and may well have encouraged him to begin looking for a new property, and perhaps hopeful that clamour to unlock the lands had not dissipated, and might result in another selection act, as indeed turned out to be the case. This time, perhaps with a better idea of Churchill Island's limitations as a site of commercial farming, Rogers chose to leave and select land in Gippsland. Whatever the case, it is clear that Rogers and his family, who placed Churchill Island on the market in 1870, had already left the property when it was purchased by Samuel Amess.

Amess' use of Churchill Island was rather different from that of his predecessor, for although the island continued to be farmed, it no longer needed to make enough profit to fund a growing family. Amess' background, that of very successful and wealthy contractor, meant that he was not merely able to purchase the island, but that he could stock it with animals prized more for sentimental value- such as the Scottish shorthorn cattle, than for their likely rate of return. However, it is clear from the records that farming was not the major reason Amess purchased the property. While the second round of advertising for Churchill Island made much of the site's ability to improve, or at the very least cement the owner's status as a gentleman of quality Amess does not appear to have used the island for this purpose either- indeed, with a large country property to the west of Melbourne Amess had already purchased the kind of estate necessary to establish such credentials, and Churchill Island's very small size would have been arguably insufficient for such a task. Despite what the advertisement proclaimed, it could never be classified as a 'Grand Estate'. What Amess purchased the island for is perhaps unknowable- what he used it for, and how others valued it is documented however.



Amess primarily used Churchill Island as a private seaside retreat. In doing so he went somewhat against the fashion of the day, which dictated that when the wealthy visited the seaside they should do so in the company of other wealthy citizens so as to have a knowing audience who could assess their performance of class. Amess, it seems, may have cared very little for such fashionable dictates, and he built the house which stands near the centre of the island in a style that almost appears to deliberately reference his suburban roots- in a transplanted Italianate villa style. The modest size of the dwelling also seems to hint that Amess felt little need to paper over his humble origins, for although it is possible that Amess here was aiming for what the more established Melbourne gentry thought of as tasteful modesty, Amess' descriptions accompanying Amess' election to Mayor suggest an individual who lacked polish and fine manners, though not good sense.

Amess's use of Churchill Island as a private seaside retreat was rather different to the ways in which we might think about enjoying the seaside today. In the mid nineteenth century, the seaside was a healthful alternative to noisome metropolis' like Melbourne and all their attendant diseases- both physical and mental. Sea air was considered particularly restorative, and the climate of Churchill Island, which can be presumed to be similar to that of Phillip Island was probably considered restful, and just the kind of place where an overworked businessman and his family could recuperate from the stresses of city living. The numerous photographs certainly show Amess and his family enjoying the island's grounds, whether at gun, picking fruit, firing his cannon or simply enjoying the graceful surrounds of the homestead garden. The structure of the house- with its outside corridor cum veranda linking the two wings of the house also suggests that its architect, probably Amess himself, was keen to ensure as much time as possible was spent imbibing the salty air which was presumed to be a major restorative in that era. In this, Amess's retreat on Churchill Island also invoked some of the features of the hill side retreats of areas like Mount Macedon, where similar outdoor pursuits were enjoyed, and similarly for the purpose of imbibing healthy air, although in those cases it was presumed that altitude, rather than salt was the reason for its efficacy.

## Conclusion:

A close and detailed examination of the historical records has suggested that a more complex interpretation of Churchill Island's history is warranted. In this paper I have tried to provide some hint of some of the findings from my thesis, and also to suggest something of my interpretation of Churchill Island's history. It is one that argues that Churchill Island is not a place that is easily compared with others, and that the history of this site is not so similar to that of its close neighbours as might initially be imagined. It is certainly not a site that is comparable to the heroic conventions common to histories of



Rebecca Sanders speaking at the General Meeting

Gippsland, that speak of monumental physical toil in a virtual war against the land in the hope of winning its purchase through selection the goal being the establishment of an economically viable family farm and corresponding close knit community. Churchill Island instead became

a site of leisure for many of its owners, most of

whom, after Rogers hailed from wealthy backgrounds. Its use as a pastoral run during the 1850s may have been normative for land in the vicinity, if a little unusual in terms of its composition in the form of an island run, but its auction is singular, and possibly a direct result of Rogers flouting of his pastoral license which was unusually blatant. Its use as a seaside retreat was also unusual, for it was nowhere near any of Port Phillip's fashionable watering holes, and its lack of grandeur argues that Amess was more interested in pursuing health, than performing class, although it is clear from the photographs that he pursued such gentlemanly pursuits as shooting whilst on the island, and more over suggest that he and his family did not dispense with the help of servants whilst in residence. In addition, few seaside or mountain retreats could have proffered such unusual entertainments as firing one's own cannon. What all of this suggests is that Churchill Island's use during the colonial era

(Continued on p.12)

# Treasurer's Report for the Annual General Meeting 10 November 2012

Tom O'Dea

Assets & Liabilities as at 31 Oct 2012		Income & Expenses as at 31 Oct 2012	
Account	31/10/2012 Balance	Category	1/07/2012-31/10/2012 (4 months)
<b>ASSETS</b>		<b>INCOME</b>	
<u>Cash and Bank Accounts</u>		Donations from Members \$120.00	
CBA Cash Management Call Account		Donations from the Public	\$0.00
ANZ Cheque Account	\$0.00	Grants Received	\$13,000.00
ANZ Savings Account	\$319.37	Interest Income	\$1,138.18
PayPal Account	\$17,515.21	Subscriptions Income	\$2,207.35
President's Advance	\$0.00	Sundry Income	\$0.22
Curator's Advance	\$382.49	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$16,465.75</b>
Curator's Advance	\$547.38	<b>EXPENSES</b>	
RACV Investment Options 01	\$0.00	AGM Expenses	\$0.00
RACV Investment Options 02 <sup>1</sup>	\$30,942.41	Book Costs <sup>2</sup>	\$2,407.00
Cash	\$0.00	Curator's Expenses	\$300.00
TOTAL Cash and Bank Accounts	\$49,706.86	Financial Services Expenses	\$80.35
<u>Other Assets</u>	\$0.00	FOCIS Newsletter	\$517.19
Accounts Receivable <sup>3</sup>	\$300.00	Government Fees	\$0.00
TOTAL Other Assets	\$300.00	Grants Paid	\$13,000.00
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>\$50,006.86</b>	General Office Expenses	\$864.61
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		Post Office Fees	\$0.00
<u>Other Liabilities</u>		Subscriptions Paid	\$0.00
Accounts Payable <sup>4</sup>	\$2,500.00	Taxes	\$0.00
Museum Reserve <sup>5</sup>	\$30,942.41	Web Site Expenses	\$0.00
TOTAL Other Liabilities	\$33,442.41	Sundry Expenses	\$0.00
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>\$33,442.41</b>	<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$17,169.15</b>
<b>NETT ASSETS</b>	<b>\$16,564.45</b>	<b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>-\$703.40</b>

<sup>1</sup> \$30,000 was invested with RACV Finance for 6 months with a maturity date of 20 Aug 2012. The principal plus interest has been re-invested with RACV Finance for a further 6 months at 5.60% interest with a maturity date of 20 Feb 2013.

<sup>2</sup> First payment to the printers for the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Pat Baird's book.

<sup>3</sup> Amount owing from PINP.

<sup>4</sup> Amount owing to the printers for the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of Pat Baird's book.

<sup>5</sup> This is the \$30,000 (plus interest) that has been earmarked for use when the museum is built (minutes of General Meeting held 12 Sep 2009).

## Budget Position as at 31 Oct 2012

Category	Budget for 1/07/2012-30/06/2013	Actuals for 1/07/2012-31/10/2012 (4 months)	Progress Against Budget
<b>INCOME</b>			
Book Sales	0	0	N/A
Donations from Members	\$800	\$120	15%
Donations from the Public	\$120	\$0	0%
Interest Income	\$2,000	\$1,138	57%
Subscriptions Income	\$3,800	\$2,207	58%
Sundry Income	\$50	\$0	0%
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$6,770</b>	<b>\$3,466</b>	<b>51%</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Advertising	\$0	\$0	N/A
AGM Expenses	\$120	\$0	0%
Book Costs	\$0	\$2,407	N/A
Curator's Expenses	\$800	\$300	38%
Financial Services Expenses	\$100	\$80	80%
FOCIS Newsletter	\$2,000	\$517	26%
Government Fees	\$50	\$0	0%
General Office Expenses	\$800	\$865	108%
Post Office Fees	\$25	\$0	0%
Subscriptions Paid	\$150	\$0	0%
Taxes	\$0	\$0	N/A
Web Site Expenses	\$0	\$0	N/A
Sundry Expenses	\$500	\$0	0%
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$4,545</b>	<b>\$4,169</b>	<b>92%</b>
<b>SURPLUS (DEFICIT)</b>	<b>\$2,225</b>	<b>-\$703</b>	<b>-32%</b>

## Membership Report as at 31 Oct 2012

Category	30/06/2011	30/06/2012	31/10/2012	Increase or Decrease
<b>Family Memberships</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>-21</b>
<b>Individual Memberships</b>				
Adult Memberships		28	24	-4
Concession Memberships		58	58	0
<b>TOTAL Individual Memberships</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>-4</b>
<b>TOTAL Paying Memberships</b>	<b>229</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>-25</b>
<b>Number of Life Memberships</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Number of Associate Memberships</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Number of Honorary Memberships</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Number of Other Memberships</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>TOTAL Non-Paying Memberships</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>New Memberships</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Renewals</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>-23</b>
<b>Overdue Memberships</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Unfinancial (Lapsed) Memberships</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>17</b>

## SEPTEMBER WORKING BEE A SUCCESS

A dozen keen volunteers arrived at 8 am on Saturday September 17 to spring clean the Amess House. Under careful direction by Pat Jeffery and Christine Grayden, they removed cobwebs, dusted, swept and cleaned. More working bees are scheduled for 2013. The list is on page 1.



Thanks to Sue and Roger Hollingworth, Maureen de Vries, Graeme Clausen, Pat Jeffery, Di Scukovic and Will, David Maunders, Margaret & Hagen Gepert and Pat Baird who got the morning tea ready.

## NEW GUIDE CORA JOINS THE TEAM

A recent gain for the volunteer guide team is Cora Van Dyke (left) who was mentored by Sue Trist (right). Cora has also contributed to repairing and maintaining costumes and is keen to play a part in FO-CIS, beginning with the General Meeting on 10 August, when she was welcomed.



(continued from p.9)

cannot easily be described as normative-such a description leaves out too many of the island's idiosyncrasies to be considered accurate. By the same token, however, it is clear that Churchill Island's uses during this era do bear some comparison- though not generally amongst its near neighbours. Lastly, its succession of visitors, for none of its explorers or squatters or owners remained very long on the island, nonetheless made substantial changes to the fabric of its landscape, and their actions, though unusual at times, were nonetheless responsible for ensuring that Churchill Island became, like its neighbours, though for

different reasons, part of a settler colonial space. This further suggests that our ideas of just what constitutes settlement, and who settlement is carried out by may need reassessment in light of this case study, which illustrates how the actions of sojourners in a landscape can create permanent or long lasting changes. The example of Churchill Island also suggest that the process of settlement is not as straightforward as is commonly presumed, and that it may involve historical dead ends, such as the planting of a garden, long before any permanent alienation occurs.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

### GENERAL MEETINGS 2013

SATURDAY 9 February

Saturday 11 May

Saturday 10 August (AGM)

Saturday 9 November

1.30 pm Meeting Room

Churchill Island Visitors'  
Centre



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