



# FOCIS

newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

SPRING 2001

Dear Readers,

Like most people who are members of FOCIS, whenever I drive onto Churchill Island I am bathed in a special feeling that I am in a place that has been somehow protected from the strife and troubles of the world.

Spring came early to Churchill Island this year. I visited one day in the middle of June and was astonished to see a pair of masked lapwings with three chicks! Now, I know lapwings are inclined to be first cab off the rank, but the middle of June! Global warming does seem to be scrambling the codes a bit.

On a later visit during July I took a look at the work in progress at the new interpretation centre, designed by eminent architect Greg Burgess. The building is well under way with the most of the roof in place and cladding almost completed. I spoke to Daryl Purvis, the builder responsible for the construction. Although a busy man, he kindly took me on a short tour of the site, pointing out some of the challenges and difficulties of constructing a building as different and original as this one. I've often heard it said that architects present builders with unique problems but of course, to achieve a building of distinction and style, it's necessary to employ an architect. I got the feeling that despite the challenges, Daryl will successfully see this project through to a superb conclusion. And I hope his skill and professionalism is well rewarded.

We hope you approve of our new look Newsletter more pics and news of projects, volunteers, garden, guides and other snippets inside.

Regards, Your Editorial Committee.



## RANGER'S REPORT

We have recently had some tree-planting days in the new wetland. The first day, over 1000 trees were planted by FOCIS volunteers, and on the second day, a further 2500 were planted by Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Fences have been removed in this area and we are aiming to return it, as far as is possible, to its original state so plantings have consisted of moonahs and boobialla, with rushes and grasses in the fringe area.

Over 30 lambs have been born this season with the loss of only two that died, and two that were taken by a fox. The fox crew hunted Fishers Wetland and the marsh, but could find no trace of the fox.

We have acquired a splendid new wagon to transport visitors in groups of up to twenty. At present, Melbourne Best Tours visitors are picked up near Fishers wetland and taken by wagon over the bridge to the homestead where they enjoy a tour followed by tea and scones. The wagon seats 20 passengers on padded, comfortable seats and it also has a canopy. It really gives visitors an experience of arriving at Churchill Island, 'the old-fashioned way'. The wagon was built by Castlemaine Carriage Co., at a cost of \$19,000. It is painted burgundy and appropriately decorated with pinstripe designs. Its good looks are enhanced by more up-to-date safety features such as disk brakes and a tight turning circle. Lolly and Sophie are responding well to their task and pull the wagon and passengers with enthusiasm. The daily work is good for them, it builds muscle and keeps them fit.

Neville Johnson, Ranger.



## FROM THE GARDEN

Recently, Sophie was also used to help us pull the hand held tiller and to rip up a section of roadway at the top of the existing carpark. It worked very well. But the exciting thing was that in the process we unearthed what seems to have been a rock edging and a shellgrit pathway. It looked very old. We have left the pathway revealed as another original garden remnant. This area will be mulched and revegetated with indigenous plants for a screening effect in line with our overall landscape plan.

The garden is down to its winter 'bare bones'. The leafless trees and winter sun make it much more open than in summer but it is still looking good. All of the preparation is done for Spring when the garden will be at its best. We are now working on plans for the kitchen garden and fowl yard which will be erected when the water tank is removed.

On Sunday 9th September, we are planning another tree planting day. Any members who can spare an hour or two to help will be greatly appreciated. It's quite a sociable activity and very rewarding. Volunteers who have previously taken part can tell you it gives great satisfaction to see the trees you have planted growing and flourishing lasting evidence of your commitment to Churchill Island.

We are looking forward to our basket workshop with Pat Dale in October. Please book early for this see display ad.

FOCIS helpers are most welcome during the week and we are happy to receive ideas for the upcoming kitchen garden.

Lisa Burrell, Garden Officer



## SPECIAL PROJECTS

All projects are progressing well. The Visitor Centre construction is working to schedule and looking very exciting. We are currently working with David Lancashire Design on the permanent exhibition inside the centre and for signage around the island. The exhibition will be completed and installed in line with the building schedule so that we anticipate a grand opening in December, providing all goes well, as it has up to now.

Our application for Museum Accreditation is being processed and the National Trust continue their association with us through their generous loan of furniture for Amess House and Rogers' Cottage. The cellar will be complete this summer and the southern cottage, (the one nearest Amess House) will have

furniture in place. We have already lined the walls with calico and wallpaper and the cottage will be set up as servants and visitors quarters.

Our volunteer guide program is going well but we certainly need more participants. Recently we went on a field trip to Briars Historic Park on the Mornington Peninsula where we were greeted warmly by their enthusiastic guides. We are working on formalising the guide program but our task would be much easier if we had more guides. The present group of about ten thoroughly enjoy their roles of undercover agents. On festival days they not only act as sources of information to visitors (where's the toilet? when was Amess house built?) but provide very necessary security against petty theft. Pat Baird who dresses up in 1860s outfit says it hasn't been necessary to rugby tackle anyone yet! We really need about another ten volunteer guides. The amount of information one has to remember is not too difficult to assimilate and you'll probably enjoy the process of learning it. You don't have to dress up unless you want to, and the commitment is mainly for an hour or two on festival days. The more volunteers the less hours. Please consider. Ask your friends. Churchill Island is always such a lovely place to be, any involvement is rewarding.

At the March celebrations this year, Heritage Victoria announced an archaeological search is to be made for Grant's Blockhouse and will get underway this year. The cannon is undergoing restoration and presently we are waiting on results from timber samples being analysed by CSIRO.

Everything seems to take a long time but with the opening of the Centre at the end of this year I think we will be able to really appreciate the great progress which has been achieved since Churchill Island was taken over by the Phillip Island Nature Park only five years ago.

Sally O'Neill, Project Officer.



## 123 YOUR BUNCH OF DATES:

456

9th September, 2001 Come along to Tree Planting, 10-12am or 2-4pm

22nd September, 1.30 pm All welcome to FOCIS Meeting, Staff Room, Churchill Is

27th or 28th October, Superb Basketmaking with Pat Dale, 5956 7214 to confirm.

24th November, 1.30 pm All welcome to FOCIS Meeting, Staff Room, Churchill Is.

Next Newsletter

December - Interpretation Centre Opening. Date to be advised

19th January 2002 1.30 pm All welcome to FOCIS Meeting. See next Newsletter.

5th January 2002 Bush Dance

23rd February 2002 Jazz Happening

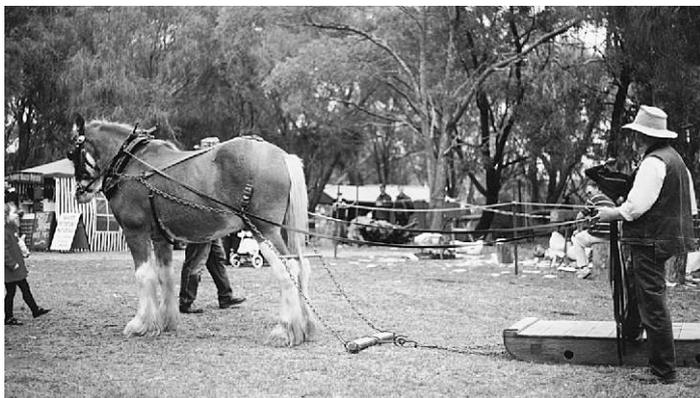
17th March 2002 Newhaven College Food & Wine Festival

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



## PERSONALITY PROFILE

Each Newsletter we are going to provide a profile of a person who has some connection with Churchill Island, whatever that connection may be. A good place to begin is with 'Big Kev' the youngest of six children born to Charles Douglas Grayden and Elizabeth Agnes Pickersgill.

Born in 1929 in Wonthaggi, Kevin Grayden was educated at Cowes and later Euroa where the family had moved for his father's health. Kev completed his education in Euroa and spent his younger years working in Ventnor, Euroa, Sunshine and following his wanderlust.

At the end of 1955 Kev returned to Phillip Island and worked for Evans Quarries until his retirement in 1984. During this time he no doubt also grew to know Phillip Island's beautiful beaches really well particularly Ventnor where he daily walks his dogs Prince and Sacha. Kev can often be seen on the beach there and following a lifetime of familiarity, no doubt he knows this beach like his own hand.

Kev's great grandparents, Samuel Pickersgill and his wife Winifred Jane Nealis took up residence on Churchill Island in 1857 and possibly lived in Grant's blockhouse until 1866 when the island was selected by John Rogers. During those years several children were born to the Pickersgills.

It is difficult to imagine the hardship of life in those days and but the pioneering spirit they displayed in their life is reflected in their great grandson, and in his deep connection to Ventnor and the place where he was born and raised.

**Urgent Notice;** Some subscriptions are overdue. If you find a red sticker on your Newsletter we would be pleased to receive your subscription asap.

Phillip Island Nature Park  
Churchill Island presents:

*Basketry with  
Natural Materials  
A Workshop With  
Pat Dale*



**Make a rustic basket in the tranquil  
surrounds of Churchill Island's historic gardens.**

**WHEN:** Saturday October 27th OR Sunday October 28th  
10am - 4pm  
**COST:** \$70.00  
**BOOKINGS:** Phone 5956 7214



Pat Dale is well known for her achievements as a creative basket maker and is the author of 'Basketry and Weaving with Natural Materials'.

Our A.G.M was held on Saturday the 28th July. Office bearers and committee members were returned or elected as follows, with much appreciation of their past work and future commitment. (see President's annual report to follow)



## COMMITTEE 2001 - 2002

**President:** Ann Penaluna

**Vice-President:** Keith Hocking

**Treasurer/Public Officer:** Roger Hollingworth

**Membership Secretary:** Diane McCarthy

**Minute Secretary:** Jan Fleming

**MEMBERS:** Jocelyn Bradley, David Graves, Pat Baird, Maureen Symmonds, Peter Royce, Pauline Taylor, Barbara Stephens, Cherry McFee - Phillip Island & District Historical Society Inc., Julie Box - Friends of Koalas Society Inc., Jan Beale - Phillip Island Conservation Society Inc.

**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:** Peter Royce, Jocelyn Bradley, Patricia Baird.



## FRIENDS OF CHURCHILL ISLAND SOCIETY - ANNUAL REPORT 2001

The 2001/2001-year has been one of review and organisational change to better serve our membership by improving our processes. Structural changes will continue this coming year.

In 2000/2001, 318 (252 financial members this calendar year) assisted FOCIS to achieve its Vision - "To preserve that which is precious". We continue to keep memberships at a low cost.

### CHANGES TO FOCIS PROCESSES:

- Separation of function of Subscription Secretary and Minute Secretary;
- Establishment of a sub-committee structure Working Horse and Pioneer Festival, Major Projects and Development, Newsletter;
- Move to establish FOCIS as an incorporated association with tax deductibility status;
- Minutes of Committee meetings recorded, printed and disseminated at meeting;
- Participation of Phillip Island Nature Park staff in sub-committees;
- Change of format and content of future newsletters,

managed by an editorial sub-committee to relieve pressure on one editor;

- Sub-committees work to present recommendations for ratification by Committee;



## BICENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

We celebrated the 200th year anniversary of Lt. Grant's voyage in the "Lady Nelson". Lt Grant anchored off Rhyll, and visited Churchill Island where he planted a range of grains and constructed a blockhouse. He recorded his feelings in these words "There is no place on earth I would rather call my own than this little island." Mrs. Margot Mansfield, a direct descendent of Lt. Grant, travelled from Perth, to join us in the celebrations as did a party from the Royal Australian Navy. A representative from the Bunnerong people gave us a symbolic welcome and Premier Bracks officially opened the restored historic precinct. Nature Park staff had the island groomed to its very best and it was altogether a wonderful day. It was a great privilege to have the "Lady Nelson" take part in the re-enactment and we thank the Nature Park for its support of this significant anniversary.



## ANNUAL WORKING HORSE AND PIONEER FESTIVAL

The annual festival just keeps getting better! Committee and I thank Keith Hocking, Festival Coordinator, and his sub-committee for their passion, ingenuity and hard work, which ensures that each year the festival increases its range of activities and attractions. FOCIS thanks, especially, the Working Horse Association of Victoria, the Phillip Island Nature Park, the Wonthaggi Wood-Turners Club, the Patch-Workers and the increasing number of contributors and stall-holders.

We are grateful to the FOCIS members who, in historic costumes, acted as guides and "minders" of Amess House and surrounds for the two days. The Sausage Sizzle cooks once more were magnificent, likewise the sellers of raffle-tickets, and the new bridge "Traffic Controllers".

This year saw the inclusion of local children's pony clubs

in the festival. Their events were exciting and challenging for the girls, who participated. Their competition was a great visual spectacle. Next year we hope to extend the role of horse and pony clubs to two days. We will ensure that there is more advertising and publicity given to the young people.



## STABLES

Our major donation of twenty thousand dollars (matched by the Phillip Island Nature Park) for the construction of the stables for Sophie and Lolly eventuated in an excellent replica building adjacent to the historic precinct. Our Clydesdales are delighted with their posh home! And it was marvellous to watch the blacksmith putting on their new shoes. The stable design and construction received admiration from all visitors. We thank the Nature Park for its management of this project.



## THE HISTORIC PRECINCT

FOCIS thanks the Phillip Island Nature Park for its wisdom and leadership in obtaining the best advice for the restoration of the historic precinct. FOCIS is grateful for the opportunity given it to proffer advice for the restoration. Work completed, a visit to the historic precinct is an excellent experience.

The historic island working farm is the first site of the planting of grain by Europeans in Victoria. Churchill Island is a state and national treasure.

The role of Dr. Miles Lewis, Mrs. Phyllis Murphy, the Historical Garden Society and the National Trust in the restoration of Amess House and Rogers' Cottage and gardens are commended. The historic precinct no longer looks unloved and dilapidated. The National Trust has loaned furniture and fittings, which are excellent. What a thrill it is to visit now! Thanks to Sally O'Neill, Ranger, who has and is coordinating the Churchill Island Project. We have valued working with her.



## TREE PLANTING

FOCIS has participated in some tree planting this year, though the shortage of rain has curtailed this voluntary work. The trees planted on the north-western

and south-western areas of the island are doing well. More tree planting will be undertaken next year. (See dates)

## THE ISLAND HISTORIC WORKING FARM

Scott Campbell, Senior Ranger in-charge of Churchill Island Precinct, is congratulated for his leadership, enthusiasm and efforts in the ongoing work of the farm. He cooperates wonderfully with FOCIS and we appreciate his counsel. Ranger Neville Johnson ably assists Scott. Neville is keen and a wonderful worker, especially with FOCIS.



## VOLUNTEERS

This year thanks to the fine work by Dianne McCarthy, our Subscription Secretary, FOCIS has collated all members' subscription information. Early in our new year, 2001/2002, we will approach members to assist with tasks, for which they have advised they will assist.



## NEWSLETTER

A special thanks to Pauline Taylor, who single-handedly, edited our newsletter. We are grateful for the enormous amount of work undertaken by Pauline. Committee considered that we need to communicate more frequently with our members and that means far more work! So we've established an Editorial Sub-Committee. There will be a different newsletter in the near future. We'll ask members for feedback on the new format and content.



## MAJOR PROJECTS & DEVELOPMENT

The newly established sub-committee has prepared a range of prioritised projects and activities for FOCIS in its coming year. We will communicate the nature of projects and where members are able to participate. In future, there will be increased opportunities for volunteer help from our members. Our newsletter will provide an important link with members.

Finally, I am very appreciative of the keen assistance given to FOCIS by all Committee members. We believe we have a new and re-energised group of people to act on behalf of all members. Next year will be an exciting one. The new Visitor Centre will be completed before Christmas 2001. We plan to offer more 'hands on' assistance at the Churchill Island precinct of the Phillip Island Nature Park.

Thank you to all members, who continue to support the Friends of Churchill Island Society. We value and appreciate your participation and look forward to your ongoing membership of our society in 2002. Ann Penaluna, President.

**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

To: Secretary FOCIS, RMB 1 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.*

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

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. ....

Paid to ..... Receipt No. ....

Cheque/Cash Received .....

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Friends of Churchill Island Society Newsletter

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**SPRING 2001**



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