



# FOCIS

newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

SPRING 2007



## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

A special thanks to those members who attended the 2007 AGM.

Approximately 5% of financial FOCIS Members attended our recently held AGM, resulting in fewer members volunteering for committee positions.

The 2006/7 Executive Committee was returned. Keith Hocking accepted the position of Vice President.

Thank you to those members who were elected to continue the work of FOCIS.

The AGM program included a thought provoking address by Libby Skidmore, representing the Bass Valley Historical Society. There is much we can learn from a closer relationship with local Historical Societies.

The AGM passed a resolution awarding former President Ann Penaluna **Life Member of FOCIS**. The award is in recognition of Ann's years of dedicated service to the aims and objectives of FOCIS and Churchill Island.

## Point of View

In the winter edition of the FOCIS Newsletter the Executive foreshadowed ordinary committee members form Ad Hoc Working Groups to research and report on the following initiatives:-

1. Museum & Archiving
2. Commemorative Garden, Life Membership and Roll of Honour.
3. Historical donations, Donor records, plaques and Signage.
4. Membership drive

FOCIS has a wonderful opportunity of making and ensuring Churchill Island history lives for the benefit of future generations.

We can and should commit to making Churchill Island's Living Museum and Archival facility a reality.

We have three years in which to research and document our ideas and recommendations for the design of the museum building and the facilities needed, including a suitable location on Churchill Island.

We need to commence researching and developing systems and procedures for receiving, preserving, restoring, documenting and displaying Churchill Island's current and future historical collection.

## Chill Island Music Festival

PINP Management has advised that a proposal to hold a smaller Chill Island Music Festival has been received. The proposed date is Sunday, November 4, 2007 commencing at 12 noon to 8pm.

PINP Management will ensure that all usual protocols are in place to protect Churchill Island's historical precincts.



## FIONA MCCARTHY'S GARDEN REPORT

Singing in the rain, just singing in the rain...

Rain and weeds are wonderful things after the drought. Churchill Island has recovered well. Many lambs have been born and two chicks also hatched out the other day.

The Almond trees are in bloom and the oat crop is reaching for the sun.

For those of you who don't know, Gordon Brown is our new farm manager. Gordon comes to us with a wealth of farming experience and two lively working dogs, Snow and Panda. With Gordon, the dogs will be rounding up four new Indian Runner Ducks over school holidays and at special events.

Many thanks to our "multi-skilled" Garden Lovers who assisted with making 'outfits' for the Ducks! The dogs will also assist with sheep and cattle work.

A lot of projects are underway, including restoring all the picnic tables, stable yard works to keep the horses out of the mud, mulching the native gardens around the visitor centre and clearing the old paint shed for under cover shelter for the sheep during school holiday shearing sessions. The bread oven in Roger's Cottage has been restored; we aim to have scones on the table for the school holidays.

Scott has purchased a new horse called Stella, we now have three horses (Sophie and Matilda still) to help out with the farm work and carriage rides. You may have noticed I'm using the word 'new' repetitively but a lot of 'new' and exciting things are happening.

However one very significant old favorite at Churchill Island is the Norfolk Pine, recently measured to a giddy height of 38.75 metres.

Planning and planting is underway throughout the garden to get ready for the Garden Lovers Festival on 11 November. Get those hanging baskets ready for the Hanging Basket Competition and train your muscles for the Gumboot Throwing Competition this year.

New plant signs are being placed around the heritage gardens near significant and often queried plants and trees. The Garden Lovers still meet once a week to help Fiona. Gordon has a few new maintenance volunteers helping in the work shed.

So all in all our little island is full of activity but the staff are never too busy to say hello to visitors and exchange anecdotes about times gone by with tourists from far and wide.

Keep an eye out for the September Holiday Program which will be out soon and see you in the garden some time.

**A Tussie Mussie and Moist Pot Pouri Workshop** will be held at Churchill Island on 1st November - time to be advised- all welcome-gold coin donation.

**A Working Bee** will be held at Churchill Island by the Herb Society of Victoria on September 15 - all welcome-time to be advised but most of the day.



## BEC'S REPORT FOR FOCIS

Since late July I have been hard at work organising and recording oral interviews to document the oral history of Churchill Island. Thus far I have recorded interviews with five participants. I am indebted to these people for the knowledge they have shared with me about the Pickersgill, Jeffery/Buckley and Jenkins eras of private ownership on the island, and also for their knowledge about the more recent history of Churchill Island as a public place and heritage attraction. If anyone has any suggestions for potential interviewees, or if you would like to participate yourself I would love to hear from you.

As part of the work for my PhD I have also begun a wide-ranging reading program, which will help me place the history of Churchill Island within a broader context. I have been fortunate enough to be loaned material from several people thus far, including books, articles, manuscripts, booklets, newsletters and notes. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for trusting me with your knowledge and material, which I am steadily working through, alongside material from the university and local libraries.

Sincerely,

E. Rebecca Sanders

PhD student, The University of Melbourne

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The following is part of "Churchill Island's Story", written by Pat Baird. It, like the book, is very descriptive of a stormy night in the life of Amy Schulz. This has been included in the newsletter as Pat felt it should be acknowledged and recorded as part of the history of Churchill Island.



## AMY'S STORY

After Churchill Island was acquired by the Victorian Government, in 1975, Carroll Schulz was appointed Manager in Charge of the island. Carroll and his wife Amy lived for some years on Churchill Island, first in a caravan and later in the house built for them. Carroll's partner in all things, Amy worked alongside him and all the tasks of their day were shared. At that time Amess House and the cottages were in very bad repair. John Shaw, who first stayed in old Amess House in very primitive conditions, reported seeing a loaf of bread moving around the table. When poked, a rat scampered out! So you can see why they might have preferred the caravan.



Libby Skidmore with Rebecca Sanders at the AGM

OoOoO

The wind was blowing stronger and stronger as Amy and her dog struggled the last few metres back to the caravan. It seemed such a flimsy shelter against the power of the wind that she wished Carroll had tied it down as he had once jokingly suggested.

The air was streaming with twigs and branches and she could hear the creaks and groans as the trees bent to the wind. One wild branch flew past and flipped itself onto the woodheap. She laughed inwardly at this automatic gathering of firewood and remembered the days she had spent helping her father.

The fragrance of the woodheap always transported her to her childhood - to her father splitting the eucalyptus logs so effortlessly, his axe flashing in the sunlight, the logs falling open to show their red hearts. How he heaped the split wood into the barrow and trundled it up to the kitchen door where her task was to stack it so that it would not tumble down and block the doorway.

She remembered the day he felled a large gum tree, how he cut and wedged and judged with his eye, where the tree should fall. She was almost disappointed when instead of crashing to the earth as she thought it would, it settled gently down between the shed and the back of the house without even disturbing the lemon tree. It was only later that she really appreciated how skilled he was with his axe and his strong arms and his true eye.

Amy pulled open the door of the caravan and struggled to close it behind her. Dot, her trusted guardian, flopped down on the floor not quite at ease, her head raised and ears pricked at each new buffeting. Amy was always a bit nervous on these stormy nights when Carroll was away, but Dot, despite her gentle nature, had a deep and reassuring bark. And she seemed to know when it was needed.

The van was rocking and the wind was screaming through a crack in the window as if it was trying to prise a way in. Telling Dot to sit, Amy ventured outside again to check the stabilisers and the annexe. The wind was tearing at the awning and she tightened it where possible and decided taking it down would be worse than leaving it up and risk losing it to the storm. She felt like saying to the storm - don't rush unless it's a fire or a haemorrhage! As Matron had always said during her nursing days, if she saw the young nurses running.

Amy was a gentle soul. More suited to mothering everyone as she so often did - but that never stopped her from carrying out the more physical tasks that came her way.

Carroll had been gone for over two hours now. Amy wondered whether he had been able to save the life of

the wounded koala he had been called out to rescue. So often when they were hit by cars a limb was broken, but occasionally it was a lesser wound. She hoped this one would be alright. If it was only a slight wound he would bring it home and it would join the band of assorted birds and beasts she had nursed back to health over the years, handling them firmly when it was necessary to apply a bandage or a splint, feeding them each day, or just giving them a place of refuge while they recovered themselves.

Time to prepare something for Carroll's dinner - it was going to be a rough night. She was almost done with putting the meat and vegetables into the pot when the lights went out. Just what she needed! A blackout - on a night like this!

She fought her way out into the flapping annexe again and found the lantern in the darkness and brought it inside, fumbling around until she found the matches and finally got it alight. She hung it carefully from the roof of the van and its wavering light cast looming shadows. The stew was simmering gently on the stove when above the roar of the storm Amy heard a huge crash followed soon after by a rending, tearing sound of timber being separated from itself.

She knew a tree must have fallen, and a big one too but daren't go outside again - if the big trees are falling it would be too dangerous, dangerous even here in the van. But there was nothing to be done. Carroll would surely be home soon.

It was the small hours of the morning when Carroll finally did get back. So many trees blown down he said, he almost had to chop his way home. He ate, and they fell into sleep restlessly in the rocking, shuddering van and waited for the storm to blow itself out.

Next morning dawned clear and still to a sight of a tattered annexe, wrecked trees and bedraggled stock. Amy and Carroll checked the stock first, all present and none injured - but Amy thought how much they must have been spooked at the height of the storm.

She was heartbroken to see that two of the biggest Moonahs on the island had had their tops broken off. Those trees which had withstood storms for hundreds of years had split and broken last night. Once they had formed a grand entrance to Fiddlers Green; now they were shattered and broken, but Amy knew that those determined trees would persist. That growth would spring from their broken trunks to flourish still in the years to come.

But there was no time to grieve over those guardian trees. Hungry apprentices would be here in half an hour - little enough time for Amy to make scones and lunch, and when the boys came, to mend the hearts of those lads who like the wildlife Amy tended, needed a bit of loving.

She recalled all the gatherings they had had, often on the grass outside, with logs and stools to sit on and her miraculously producing an abundance of food for all. It was all part of her life here on Churchill Island - her life of caring not only for the island but caring for all those others who in turn helped her and Carroll in their roles as custodians of Churchill Island.



## EXTRACTS FROM MEETINGS HELD ON 28th. JULY, 2007, C.I. INFORMATION CENTRE

### ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

1. **Present:** 19 Members attended.

2. **Apologies:** 8 Apologies were received.

3. **The President introduced Gordon Brown** the new Farm Manager of Churchill Island and invited him to say a few words.

Gordon said that he was more a man of action than of words and was looking forward to working with FOCIS for the betterment of Churchill Island. He has plans to introduce more "farmlike" activities beginning with a "milking a cow" to "butter production" exercise in the coming September school holidays. The problem of water needed to be looked at and plans were underway to improve the capacity on the island. He added that he would be pleased to come to the occasional meeting to bring us up to date with any progress being made.

The President thanked him and said that FOCIS looked forward to being part of what will be a most challenging time for Churchill Island.

4. **Life Membership conferred on Ann Penaluna.** The President moved that a Life Membership be conferred on Ann Penaluna in recognition of her outstanding service to FOCIS over a period of 14 years. Her willingness to step into the breach when needed should also be acknowledged.

5. **Membership Secretary's Report.** Marje Brophy said that there had been 257 membership applications received so far for the new financial year, 15 of which were new members. She had found the job to be busier than she first thought it would be, but now had her systems up and running. We ended the year with over 400 members.

6. **General Secretary's Report.** Jill Allen said that it had been an interesting and busy year. She thanked all those members who had helped with the many functions held, especially the Working Horse Festival. She had enjoyed The Family Day, because she had the opportunity to meet and talk with Members, something she is often too busy to do. She also thanked her fellow Executive Committee members for their support during the year.

7. **Treasurer's Report:** See detailed Report.

8. **President's Report:** See detailed Report.

9. **Election of Office Bearers and Committee Members:** Keith Hocking took the Chair.

a. President: Fred Allen

b. Vice-President: Keith Hocking

c. Treasurer: Roger Hollingworth

d. Secretary: Jill Allen

e. Membership Secretary: Marje Brophy.

f. Newsletter Editors: Ann Jelly & Peter Jelly

Committee Members: Chesterman Chalmers

Michael Barden

Christine Grayden (P.I.C.S.)

Gaye Cleeland (P.I & D.H.S.)

Irene McKell (F.O.K.S.).

10. **General Business:**

(a) **Pat Baird:** Mary Mitchell asked that acknowledgment be made in the Minutes of the A.G.M. of the contribution that Pat Baird had made to the story of Churchill Island with the publishing of her book "Churchill Island" "History and Her Story" during 2007. She said it was historically correct and that the fiction sections were excellent. This all added to the ongoing knowledge of Churchill Island.

(b) **A.G.M. Date:** Mick Barden suggested that the A.G.M. be held in September each year as this would allow the books to be audited. This suggestion will go to the Executive Committee for discussion at their next meeting. Meeting dates for 2007/2008 are published in this Newsletter as there are some clashes with Australia Day and Easter.

(c) **Membership Subscriptions:** This matter will also go before the next Executive Meeting and will be followed up at the next General Meeting.

11. **Guest Speaker:** Libby Skidmore - Bass Valley Historical Society.

Libby gave an interesting and entertaining talk on the hard work involved in setting up and "keeping going" an Historical Society.

She said that very successful projects were books written on local identities and historical happenings, caring for local cemeteries (very popular with people who have family connections with the district) and placing cairns around the Valley so that visitors could learn more about the area.

Quarterly dinners were held and members encouraged to talk about any project they were currently working on, and guest speakers were also invited to stimulate further interest.

Roger Hollingworth thanked Libby for giving up her Saturday afternoon and said that all present had enjoyed her talk. The Secretary presented her with a bouquet of flowers in appreciation of her visit.

## 123 MEETING DATES 2007/7008

456 22<sup>nd</sup> September, 2007

24th November, 2007

19th January, 2008\*

29th March, 2008\*

24th May, 2008

A.G.M. 26th July, 2008

\*Dates moved because of Public Holidays.



## GENERAL MEETING FOLLOWING A.G.M.

1. **Lace Display Cabinet** now completed and ready for the lace collection.
2. **C.I. Patchwork Banner:** A site has been agreed upon in the Information Centre and it will be installed shortly.
3. **2 Benches on Pathway to "Amess House"** Wonthaggi Woodworkers to be approached re the building of benches.
4. **Fisher's Wetlands:** A request be made to the Game & Field Association for copies of photos and documentation relating to the work they did so that we may include it in our archiving.
5. **Guest Speakers for meetings:** It would be good to have a guest speaker at each bi-monthly meeting. Please forward any suggestions on to the Secretary.

## 6. Honour Boards and Commemorative Garden:

It was felt that a Commemorative Garden would be a more suitable way of acknowledging the work done by so many volunteers over the years as in naming people there was always the danger that someone may be overlooked.

### COMING EVENTS

"Chill Festival"  
Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2007

"Garden Lovers Festival"  
Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2007



## MARKET DAY

Saturday 25th August was a beautiful day for the Farmers Market, the sun was shining and there was no wind. The Island looked an absolute picture, the animals were grazing on the very lush looking grass. The stall holders I spoke to were delighted with the weather and the amount of people who attended on this day, especially as the last market day in July was so cold and wet.

On the way to the Island passing through Fishers Wetland, it was very noticeable that it had indeed returned to being just that. The birds were enjoying the lovely day, and the Cape Barron Geese were very proud of their many chicks, seen paddling in the water. For those of you who have not made it yet to the Farmers Market, I can heartily recommend it. Followed by a superb lunch at Carlos' café.



Splendid weather for the Farmer's Market



## LETTER FROM AN ENTHUSIASTIC GUIDE

Being a guide in the Homestead can bring the most stimulating rewards ! Some weeks ago Judy and Bill Metcalfe from Deniliquin came to visit, and were keen to tell me that they knew Sister Campbell, who moved to Deniliquin after selling Churchill Island to Mr. Classou in 1973. They recall her as a "feisty little lady" with a very bent back, but still energetic. This is the way many people remember her, and one visitor to our Island who used to come as a child, said the house with Sister Campbell and Ted Jenkins here was always full of fun and laughter. What a great way to be remembered.

More recently I was lucky to be on duty when Ron and Lorna Wigg visited. Ron became Dr. Jenkins' apprentice dental mechanic at the age of 18, and they worked together for many years. Following the death of Mrs. Jenkins, Sister Campbell looked after Ted [who was in his wheelchair] both at the Jenkins home in Melbourne, as well as at Churchill Island.

Sometimes on a Friday Dr. Jenkins would ask Ron if he would like the weekend here, so Ron would be sent to a wine store to collect several bottles of wine, and off they would hurtle to San Remo in Dr. Jenkins' beloved

Bugatti, and proceed by boat to the Island. It seemed as if Dr. Jenkins, energy didn't leave much time to sit around and relax, but Ron enjoyed being here. He had great admiration for the skills and tenacity of the older man, particularly when he flew a light plane out from England using rather laid-back navigation methods. He apparently had little fear and Ron described him as "tough" when he had cut his foot badly with an adze, patched it up himself and turned up at the dental surgery as usual next day.



## TREASURER'S REPORT 2006/07

I am pleased to report another successful year for FOCIS with a surplus of receipts over payments of \$1,950.

As expected our major income was derived from member's subscription fees (\$9,000) and bank interest from the CBA Cash Management Account (\$1,168).

Grants from Bass Coast Shire of \$3,000 and Country Victoria Events Program of the Victorian Tourism Alliance of \$3,300 (both including GST) were received by FOCIS and passed on to the Phillip Island Nature Parks for expenditure on advertising and promotion of the 2007 Working Horse Festival.



Cape Barren Geese & Chicks at Fisher's Wetland

On the expenditure side FOCIS again donated \$1,000 to the PINP for the Festival. In addition FOCIS donated a third cast iron seat for Churchill Island (\$880).

The quarterly News Letter cost approximately \$3,800 and administration costs were in the order of \$2,020.

I would like to congratulate and thank Fred Allen for standing in as Acting President following the resignation of Ann Penaluna who has returned to Melbourne to live.

Jill Allen is also to be complimented on her efficient and professional performance as Secretary and Working Horse Festival representative.

We are fortunate to have had Marje Brophy as Membership Secretary and Ann and Peter Jelly as Newsletter team to provide a very effective communication instrument.

I would like to wish the incoming management team continuing success for 2007/08

Roger Hollingworth

Treasurer and Public Officer

25 July 2007



## CANNON BALL

Whilst on duty on a very cold July day, two couples came into the Amess House and handed me a parcel. It was so heavy I almost dropped it. They introduced themselves as members of the Stott family who once owned an adjoining farm on Fishers Wetland, just before the bridge as you come to Churchill Island. They had known the Jenkins and Sister Campbell well and had sold portion of their land to Harry Jenkins to allow him to put in an access road to the bridge he built in 1960.

What they had handed me was a cannon ball, given to them as a souvenir. They decided it was time it came back to its place on Churchill Island. We were all delighted with this thoughtful gift and thought perhaps it might even encourage others to follow suit.

So, many thanks again to all the Stotts from both Sydney and Melbourne, who so generously returned this item to its original place.

Pat Baird



Lots of water in Fisher's Wetland



## MEMBERSHIP

Please remember that if there is an asterisk on your label it means you are unfinancial and this will be the last newsletter to come your way.

Enclosed is the renewal form for your convenience.



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**SPRING 2007**



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