



FOCIS

newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

SUMMER 2001/02

Dear Readers,

A wonderfully rainy spring has given us the greenest island we've had for years, and a garden which is flourishing abundantly, as are the ever present weeds. (See Personality Profile)

Our new visitor centre is nearing completion and looks very exciting although right now the road works are disturbing the calm a bit. New areas have to be set aside for bus and car parking and the old toilet block is yet to be removed. But already the main building sits so gently on the island's landscape I'm sure the end result will be wonderful. The architect and builders have made an exceptional building for us, one of which I am sure you will approve and which will draw people from all over Victoria.

Of course the opening of the interpretation centre will allow the main dining room in Amess House to be restored to its original function. That of course is a bit of a puzzle because it had several different owners who used it for different purposes. But whatever is the final decision it will meld in with what has already been so well done throughout the whole heritage area.

We don't have an official opening date yet but it will be in the new year. In the meantime the furniture has been chosen and it is expected that the

centre will be operating before Xmas. We know you will not find a more serenely beautiful place to have your coffee!

See Sally O'Neil's report for news of an exciting travelling exhibition to be shown here in February. It will feature Matthew Flinders, that most superb explorer, master seaman and maker of maps, and a man who contributed significantly to our early maritime history.



VOLUNTEERS

We are still very short of volunteers in many areas and Keith Hocking is anxious to hear from anyone who would be willing to help with maintenance and restoration of farm machinery. Keith can be contacted at 5821 9189 and I know he'll be delighted to hear from you.



FOCIS FLYER

In discussing the production of a flyer to advertise Focis and its work over the years we came to wonder if there is anyone who has a copy of a previous flyer made some years ago, long before the Nature Park took over the island. Are there any paper hoarders out there with an ancient copy that they'd be willing to share what is now history, with us?

We seem to have approached the end of the year with alarming rapidity. It has been a year of great change on our lovely island and we all hope that the changes are not too great and that with the New Year everything will settle down into its quiet pattern again. I remind you of our charter - "To protect that which is precious" and we must all continue to protect Churchill Island, even more so perhaps as the number of visitors increases.

To all those who love Churchill Island and express that through their commitment, for everyone's help and involvement, during the past twelve



months, and at whatever level, we give our profound and enduring thanks for a job well done.

And may we all enjoy a calm and peaceful Christmas and a similar New Year.

Jocelyn, Peter and Pat (Editorial committee.)



CHURCHILL ISLAND REPORT

Churchill Island is looking a picture at the moment. With one of the best winter and spring rains in five years.

All our wetlands have filled to capacity and nesting wetland bird species are abundant. Our resident Cape Barren Geese have successfully reared, to fledgling stage, six young.

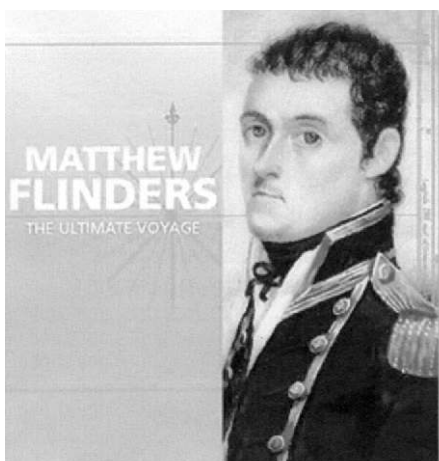
Four Pied Stilts' nests with eggs have been observed in the Churchill island saltmarsh. The abundant birdlife in the Churchill Island area is testament to the installation of good wetlands and an important part, also, is good fox and cat eradication programs.

5,000 indigenous plants and grasses have been planted this winter and spring, mainly in the new wetland area of Churchill Island and with good follow up rains, all plants are growing well.

Our sincere thanks goes to all FOCIS Members who gave up their precious time to help with the planting.

The new Visitor Centre is looking great and will be a very good drawcard for Churchill Island and its visitors.

The paddock in front of the Visitor



Centre has been cultivated up using our two trusty horses, Sophie and Lolly. Three crops have been sown down; maize, sunflower and sweet corn. It is also growing very well.

All in all, we are very busy with everything that is going on.

The garden area is looking superb and the best ever.

We will be starting our hay season soon and any FOCIS volunteers interested in helping to make hay the old way would be very welcome. Contact 5956 7214.

Regards to you all,

SCOTT CAMPBELL and crew.



IN THE CHURCHILL ISLAND GARDEN...

Roses, poppies and forget-me-nots are putting on a pretty show... there are tiny, silver spiders, butterflies and bees everywhere. Fifty baby silk worms have hatched out, after a year of waiting. We are feeding them on fresh mulberry leaves from our heritage tree. A mother duck has a secret nest with 20 eggs and a Copperhead Snake has decided to move into the sunken garden. Wattle birds and New Holland Honeyeaters are busy finding nectar. The orchard is blooming and the Muscovy Duck has just brought out eight ducklings!!!!

The recent 'Basketry with Natural Materials' workshop with Pat Dale was a great success. Everyone made a



wonderful basket using mostly material from the Churchill Island garden. Those who were 'thinking about it, but didn't make it, missed out on a truly glorious day!

LISA BURRELL

Garden Officer



SPECIAL PROJECTS

We will begin installing the exhibition for the new Visitor Centre in late November. New directional and interpretive signage will also be installed.

For over two years, we have been working on landscape design for the visitor centre surrounds with a talented Phillip Islander, Nicola Tragear. Once the parking areas are complete, we will be able to put the plans into action.

The recent archaeological search for Grant's Blockhouse with Heritage Victoria revealed little new evidence - ok we didn't find it - but we know it's out there somewhere!!! It did, however, spark interest in our visible archaeological site - what is currently referred to as a 'sealers site'. Heritage Victoria will come back to work on the site -who knows, it may be the blockhouse we are all looking for... the mystery continues...



Maritime Archaeologist Ross Anderson

Summer is always a busy time on Churchill Island - don't forget to join in on the holiday activities and events. Highlights will include the Bush Dance, Garden Walks, Old Time Living and Sunset Walks.

For several weeks during February, Churchill Island will be hosting a special travelling exhibition - 'Matthew Flinders; The Ultimate Voyage' - from the State Library of

New South Wales. This is the world's first major touring exhibition on Matthew Flinders, the intrepid British explorer, and marks the bicentenary of his epic circumnavigation of Australia (1801-03). For us, just the beginning of what will be an exciting new exhibition space.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and safe and Happy New Year.

SALLY O'NEILL

Project Officer

Those of us who visit Churchill Island frequently, are familiar with the sense of anticipation as we turn off the main tourist road and approach our special Island, but I often wonder how it feels to first time visitors. Peter Royce recently put into words his recollection of the first time he turned off the main road to investigate the intriguing sign.

The Churchill Feeling.

The sign on the main San Remo-Cowes Road said 'Churchill Island' so, we turned on to a small twisting piece of road and passed through the gates. Almost immediately the world changed and we wondered, are we on Churchill Island already? The feeling was so different from the hurly burly of the main road with its abundance of gaudy road signs and traffic noise.

We drove through an area of grassland and low native scrub, then suddenly on the left we saw the salt marsh wetlands. We had to stop and gaze at the prolific bird life. Black swans, ducks of many varieties, grebes and spoonbill to name but a few. It was hard not to be overawed by this quietness and this view of nature at its best - so this is Churchill Island, we said to ourselves.

We continued on, and on the right it opened up into a vast area of marsh land and mangrove swamp with in the distance a view of Newhaven College. Once again an abundance of bird life. Here we saw groups of pelicans and cape barren geese with their chicks. And again that sense of tranquillity.

We drove on and finally saw before us a bridge spanning the waterway and the tranquil form of an island. With all its delights still before us, waiting to be discovered.

Peter Royce.



PERSONALITY PROFILE

Visitors to Churchill Island in recent times have been delighted with the gardens surrounding Amess House, and the charm of the garden is in no small part due to the labours of Churchill Island gardener, Lisa Burrell. Lisa is a country girl, having grown up in Fish Creek on a 100 acre property, which included 4 acres of garden. Her mother and grandmother were both keen gardeners, and much of her skill and knowledge has been acquired from following them around the property as a child. After finishing her education in the country, Lisa studied Art and Design at Prahran College.

Country life called her back, where she has been able to combine her love of painting with her love of horses and gardens. After working for some time in horse studs, she came to Phillip Island, where she worked at a hydroponic farm by day, while waitressing at night. In 1996 she was runner-up in a Garden of the Year competition for her work on her own garden.

Two years ago, for the first time, the position of gardener at Churchill Island was advertised. Lisa applied for the job and despite stiff competition, was appointed. She believes that the garden has a special atmosphere and requires lots of TLC.

After two years of work, removing inappropriate plants and trees, the garden has now reached the stage of requiring constant maintenance, rather than any drastic changes. There is no detailed plan of the original garden as it was, but Lisa has researched the sort of plants that would have been in such a garden. One of the main sources of information is a



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

Size S M L XL (Please circle)

Name.....

Address.....

Town..... Postcode.....

catalogue of plants available in 19th century, as well as specialised journals. The giant Norfolk Island pine presents special problems to a gardener, since it is a distinctive feature of the island, but its current size means that plants once growing under it are no longer able to survive.

Churchill Island has been fortunate in having a gardener who is sensitive to the needs of the garden and the atmosphere of the island. Members of FOCIS perhaps may not realise that they are always welcome to help in the garden, especially in spring when weeding becomes a priority. Those willing to help should contact Lisa to arrange a mutually convenient time - gardeners are always welcome! Jocelyn Bradley.

123 456 YOUR BUNCH OF DATES:

Throughout the last week of December and January, we will have a programme of holiday activities. If you require a copy of this please phone Churchill Island, 5956 7214 and a copy will be posted to you.

December, First week of December - this Newsletter!

December, Second week December, Interpretation Centre operating.

Throughout late December and January, Holiday Programme activities.

5th January, 2002, Bush Dance

19th January, 2002, 1.30pm All welcome to FOCIS meeting in the new centre!

23rd February, 2002, Jazz Happening.

February, 2002 - Matthew Flinders Travelling Exhibition.

17th March, 2002 - Newhaven College Food & Wine Festival.

23rd March, 2002 - All welcome to FOCIS meeting, 1.30 pm.

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

25th May, 2002, 1.30pm, All welcome to FOCIS Meeting.

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



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

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.

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

Card Sent



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ABN 78 667 051 020 Inc. No. A 00219007W