



# FOCIS

newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

SUMMER 2007



## PRESIDENT'S POINT OF VIEW

Somewhere between the skeptics and the doomsday pessimists, there is the truth about Global Warming?

Secretary Jill and I attended the 12th Biannual Conference of the Victorian Environment Friends Network - Supported by Parks Victoria.

60 delegates representing a broad spectrum of Victorian Friends' Groups attended the conference.

Conference highlights included learning about the work and achievements of Friends' Groups and the support provided by Parks Victoria

Keynote speakers included Dr Barrie Pittock, of CSIRO Atmospheric Research, he spoke about Global Warming. Professor Nancy Millis, Microbiologist, provided a fascinating overview of water quality, water recycling and water desalination.

Other speakers covered topics such as Digital Photography, Weed Maps, VCAT and Newsletters. Delegates participated in guided walks to various locations.

John Sampson from Victoria Naturally, provided a disturbing talk highlighting the loss and devastation of Victorian wetlands, grasslands and forests and the urgent need to restore biodiversity and a bio-links across Victoria.

Attending the conference was an important learning experience, which offers the opportunity of networking with other friends' groups and historical societies.

We have since attended functions and established contacts with the members of the Bass Valley Historical Society, Wonthaggi Historical Society and we are seeking a closer liaison with the Phillip Island & District Historical Society.



## OBITUARY

It is with sadness that we learn of the death of Gordon (Gordie) Sutherland. Visitors including many Probus Groups will remember Gordie for his welcome and his conversations about his beloved Churchill Island.

In the Autumn 2007 FOCIS Newsletter, we were moved to include a photograph of Gordie against the

backdrop of Amess House. Gordie's personal profile stands testimony to an outstanding volunteer and a man whose warmth and enthusiasm touched the lives of all who met and talked with him.

Our heartfelt sympathy and condolences to Gordie's family.



Gordon (Gordie) Sutherland



## GORDON BROWN, CHURCHILL ISLAND FARM MANAGER

For those members who do not have the opportunity to come to meetings on a regular basis, I thought it would be an idea to let you know a little about Gordon Brown.

Gordon took up the position of Farm Manager in July, he comes to us with an impressive list of achievements.

These include horse training and breaking in, dog training to work with sheep and cattle, also the training of bullocks.

As well as getting many first places for pasture management and grain competitions along with dog trials,

Gordon is well versed in farm management as he grew up at Inverell N.S.W. on the family farm on which the previous two generations have lived.

Gordon is very enthusiastic about his long term plans for Churchill Island, feeding the soil to improve nutrition for the stock so the animals are in the best of condition and look healthy and happy.

Some of the highland cattle have been agisted on farms on Phillip Island so the land has a chance to recover from the dry conditions.

The oats that had been planted earlier this year by ranger Scott Campbell have been cut, and some of it will be chaffed for stock the rest stored in containers to keep it safe from the mice. This means that the costs of the island can be reduced as the farm will become almost self sufficient.

As well as the very popular highland cattle, on the island there are Suffolk sheep, three with lambs. Tabitha the Jersey cow, has an adopted calf called Rose, she is a great attraction during the school holidays as she is milked by the children under the strict supervision of Gordon. Then the milk is separated and churned to show the children how butter is formed.

The animal nursery is very popular with the children as they are able to touch and feed the babies. There are two hutches for the chickens, one hutch for the hens to sit on the eggs and another when the chicks hatch for them to be safe with the mother, and then they are able to run free in the nursery when they are old enough.

There are many plans that Gordon has for making your visit to Churchill Island interesting and fun. With the new vegetable patch, he has the intention of bottling the produce to be available for people to purchase and to sample farm grown food. This also applies to the orchard fruit, so as you can see we are in for some treats.

The island is also being used for weddings and other social occasions.

FOCIS is sometimes asked to donate or contribute to repairs necessary to equipment, such was the case recently, when we were able to organize the repair of a harness for the horses when doing carriage work, so making it much safer to use.

Churchill Island is becoming much more well known as it has already been featured on Postcards the TV programme, and will be shown on Totally Wild (Queensland) and Talk to the Animals, so keep your eyes open for these programmes.

Editor



## UPDATE FROM THE CHURCHILL ISLAND RANGERS

What a busy spring! Churchill Island has been a flowering, productive, fertile and active 57 hectares.

The highlights in brief:

- 2 Ayrshire cows have calved.
- Panda, Gordon's short haired border collie, has had pups, 5 bitches and 1 dog Snow being the proud father.
- Our oat crop has been harvested and stacked.
- Lavender crop is blooming and due for harvest.
- Gordon's Indian Runner ducks have been a great hit and have starred in both TV and print, including a shot of them wearing their football colours pre grand final.
- Tabitha and her foster calf Rose, have been very popular bringing crowds to view the milking, cream separating and butter churning though the school holidays.
- Roger's Cottage chimney has been restored and was successfully used to bake 500 scones for the school holiday program baking session.



Gordon Brown separating the cream for butter with his vintage hand driven separator.



Gordon Brown supervising a young milker. Milk provided by Tabitha, the Jersey cow.

- Carriage rides were one of the popular holiday activities, Sophie, Matilda and Stella taking it in turns to be up front.
- 6 Merino wethers have been purchased for shearing and dog trials.
- An extensive new vegetable and pumpkin patch has been developed near the lavender, new fencing erected to protect the area.
- Many of our resident Cape Barren geese have had chicks.
- Many of the Churchill Island Highland cattle remain on agistment, kindly donated by Phillip Island land owners
- The 2007 garden Lovers Festival was a huge success. The weather was kind with a 'blooming' marvelous day and lots of new activities, demonstrations and record numbers of stalls and visitors.
- The Victorian Herb Society visited for a day and planted about 12 new 'old' herbs appropriate to a turn of the century herb garden.
- Royal Botanic Gardens Plant Craft Group visited for a day, instructing our garden group in the crafts of Tussie Mussie and Moist Pot Pourri.

Of course there have been many other progressive day to day changes. Lovely touches in the garden are the new 'seats of repose', two garden benches. Two birdbaths have been purchased and positioned in appropriate places with National Trust approval. Star performers in the flower beds over spring have been the Foxgloves, Calendulas, Artichokes and magnificent green blooms of the Euphorbia wolfenii.

Churchill Island will have a full program for the Christmas Holidays and through January. Make the most of your membership and visit us, bring a friend...better still be part of the action and join our active volunteers working on the farm or in the garden.

Merry Christmas from the all Churchill Staff and a safe but fun filled New Year.

Fiona McCarthy

**In the nursery:** Tabitha, 3 year old Jersey cow; Rose, Tabitha's 2 month old foster Ayrshire calf; Tiger, 1+ year old goat; Fluffy, Butch (mustard) & Ralph (black) 2+ year old guinea pigs; Charlotte & Wilbur, about 1 year old miniature pigs; black lamb, 2 months old; white lamb, 1 month old; and lots of chickens.

**In the stable:** Sophie, 12 year old Clydesdale horse (our oldest resident); Matilda, 8 year old Clydesdale; Stella, 12 years old & our newest Clydesdale.

**The sheep pens & paddock:** 6 merino wether sheep; 32 Suffolk sheep; 18 Highland cattle.



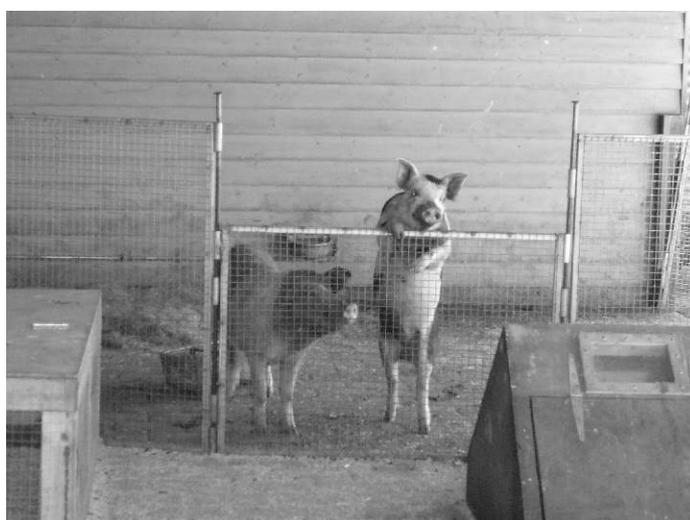
Panda, "herding" the Indian Runner ducks



Tabitha, the milking cow with foster calf Rose.



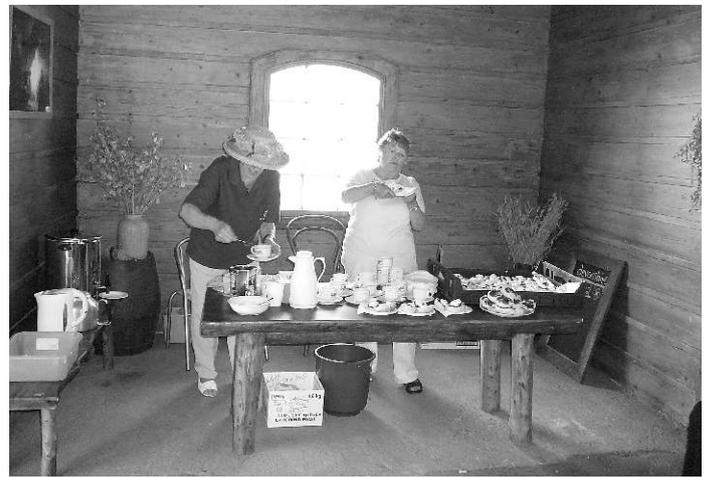
Six healthy pups, first born on the island for many years. Parents - Panda & Snow, Gordon Brown's working dogs.



Charlotte & Wilbur - we want our dinner!



Two new seats donated by FOCIS - made & erected by Wonthaggi Woodcrafters



Rogers Cottage - preparation for Devonshire teas (yum!)



## EXTRACTS FROM GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 22ND SEPTEMBER 2007.

1. **Present:** 15 Members attended.

2. **Apologies:** 3 Apologies were received.

3. **Reports:**

**President:** "Point of View" Column.

**Treasurer's Report:** Roger advised that the following:  
July-Sept Income \$2,934.93 & July-Sept Expenditure \$535.46. Cash in Bank 15/08/07 \$38,037.69

**Membership Secretary:** Marje advised that there were 315 financial members, 50 having been paid since the last Newsletter. Those members still unfinancial will not receive any further reminders or Newsletters and will be removed from Membership Lists.

**Newsletter Editor:** Ann said there had been a good response to the last Newsletter and she would like more input from members to keep the Newsletter interesting.

4. **General Business:**

a. **New Benches:** Wonthaggi Woodcrafters provided a quote for the provision of 2 benches to be placed on the pathway to "Amess House". Their quote of \$250 per bench, made and laid, was accepted.

b. **Attracting New Members:** Some discussions took place on ways to attract new members. It was suggested that the local schools could be a starting point. Ongoing.



## GARDEN FESTIVAL 11TH NOVEMBER 2007

I would like to thank Ann Jelly, Tonia Luther, Maureen Symmonds, Peter Jelly, Sue Chambers and Fred Allen

for their efforts in providing Devonshire Teas to a very hungry and thirsty public last Sunday.

We took on the job at fairly short notice and it was a good learning curve for all of us. The late arrival of the scones caused some panic but with the help of two PINP trainees Lauren McDonald & Marnie Scott, we managed to get our act together!

It was well worth the effort as we raised \$460 for FOCIS.

Thanks also to Christine Grayden for manning the FOCIS Tent.



## WORKING HORSE FESTIVAL 2008 Easter Saturday & Sunday 22nd & 23rd March 2008.

The paperwork was sent out this week to all the Exhibitors, Demonstrators and Working Horse Guys & Gals, so the ball has started rolling for the Festival.

It would appear at this stage that FOCIS will provide volunteers in the usual areas of catering, traffic management, FOCIS Information Tent etc, very much as we have done in the past.

The timetable and forms will be included in the Autumn Newsletter which will require a quick turn around of forms as there will only be a fortnight between receipt of Newsletter and the event.

I would ask you to give some thought to your availability, so that you can reply quickly when the forms are available. Even if you can offer only a couple of hours over the 2 days, it would be greatly appreciated, as this means we can give a break to those volunteers who are there all day (and in some cases, night!). Thanks in anticipation.

JILL ALLEN. Secretary.

## 123 MEETING DATES 2008

456 19th January, 2008 \*

29th March, 2008\*

24th May 2008

A.G.M. 26TH July 2008

\* Dates moved because of Public Holidays.



## BEST WISHES

The Committee thanks all members for your continuing support and encouragement and we extend our best wishes for a safe and joyous Christmas and New Year.



## YOUR SAY

Your committee encourages all members of FOCIS to express their personal point of view about matters of concern and/or ideas for improving FOCIS meetings, activities and projects.

We would prefer written submissions by mail; P.O. Box 852 Cowes 3922, Fax; 5956 7109 or email; nellaa32@waterfront.net.au



## COMMEMORATIVE GARDEN

We have discussed the need to put in place a Commemorative Garden Setting on Churchill Island, a special place where friends and family can reflect in quiet remembrance.

The committee asks members to consider and put forward ideas and/or design concepts for the Commemorative Garden Setting.

Special considerations should be given to the location and positioning of a Commemorative Garden.

The Committee would appreciate hearing from members willing to form an Ad Hoc Committee to steer this important project to completion.



## MEMBERSHIP FEES & BENEFITS

Your committee is in the process of reviewing the FOCIS Membership fee structure and member benefits.

FOCIS is currently holding substantial uncommitted funds. However, we are presently contemplating two new major projects; 1) Establishing Churchill Island's Museum and Archiving Centre; 2) Rebuilding the existing shearing shed and holding yard suitable for



PINP pretty dairy maids Fiona McCarthy and her assistant churning butter.

public demonstrations of sheep shearing and wool spinning. The development may include replacing existing holding yard fencing with more traditional post and rail fencing.

The committee will be working to have both projects jointly funded by PINP and FOCIS. It is too early and impractical to estimate the amount of the FOCIS contribution.

We would appreciate hearing from members, if you have a particular point of view on the matter of FOCIS Membership fees or Member benefits.

## **BEC'S UPDATE FOR FOCIS ON CHURCHILL ISLAND.**

Having recently presented two short papers on my research to date, I am looking forward to completing my first draft chapter. The thesis as a whole will focus on the way the landscape of Churchill Island has been appreciated, used and understood throughout its history. This will include looking at the views and actions of owners and occupiers, as well as visitors or outsiders.

Churchill Island, by virtue of having had so many owners, occupiers, managers, visitors and interested parties (including FOCIS) that have affected the way

the land has been used and appreciated, is an exemplary place to talk about the way landscapes have been understood in the modern and post-war period. By trying to understand how and why the landscape has been used for various types of farming, gardening, conservation, holidaying, entertaining, as a home, as a retreat, as a tourist destination, as a public space, and even as a place of inspiration (artistic or otherwise), I wish to show how attitudes towards land use have changed or remained the same over time. Hopefully this will help us to appreciate how we come to our current understandings of the value of Churchill Island, and places like it.

## **THE GARDEN FESTIVAL**

Once again the Garden Festival was a great success, the day was sunny and warm the island looked lovely due to all the hard work of the Nature Park people and their band of volunteers. FOCIS manned a Devonshire tea stall located in Rogers Cottage. It was hard to believe how busy we were, the scones were large and yummy, everyone seemed to enjoy them and did not mind the wait while more were jammed and creamed. Walking around after having lunch it was great to see people enjoying the day. The guest gardener this year was Vasili Kanidiadis, celebrity



Three satisfied customers with Devonshire teas.

gardener from SBS TV, he was very popular with all who enjoyed his talk. Congratulations to the three ladies who won the hanging basket competition, they were Betty Keller, Joy Summerfield and Peta Shandley. This festival is proving to be a wonderful annual event and looked forward to by people far and wide.



## UPDATE ON COMMITTEE

As you will have noticed from the last newsletter, the AGM saw the installation of the committee for the year 2007/08. We were having trouble finding someone to be vice president, but a long time member Keith Hocking stepped forward to fill the gap. Keith has been involved with the island since 1982 and with FOCIS from the outset, and has made a very valuable contribution over the years. We are grateful to him for again showing his commitment to FOCIS, especially as he lives in Shepparton, for Keith to come to the meetings and participate is something for which we all say thank you.

Garden Festival - Hanging Basket prize winners with SBS TV celebrity gardener Vasili Kanidiadis.



## FOCIS MEETING

The last meeting on the 24th November featured guest speaker Dr. Robbie Brown, he gave us a most interesting talk on his travels world wide to capture with his camera, beautiful birds. Robbie involved the members in the slide show by asking who could identify the birds, he was impressed by the knowledge of some of the audience. It was fun and those who attended enjoyed the afternoon. We would like to thank Robbie for his time and for making our meeting fun.

Editor

Below: Dr. Robbie Brown's talk and slides on birds.





The Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc. Newsletter  
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**SUMMER 2007**



**The Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.**

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