



FOCIS

newsletter

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

WINTER 2002

Dear Friends,

I am writing this at the end of Autumn 2002, an autumn which, after an overcast December and January, has seemed much more like summer than summer did, with day after day of sunny, calm weather. Now, for the first time this year, there is a cold wind tossing the trees about and flurries of heavy showers sweep across the sea. It is good. I can feel the trees breathing a sigh of relief as they are refreshed and washed by the rain, and their twigs and branches invigorated by the blustery wind.

Ever since the new visitor centre opened in December there has been a succession of festivals, events and a steady stream of visitors to Churchill Island. The staff at the visitor centre have done a magnificent job in coping with new facilities, new menu, altered services and more and more visitors. Hopefully now, with the colder weather, they will have a little respite to draw breath and relax more into their new roles and conditions. Thanks to one and all for a great transition to the new building, through a sometimes difficult and demanding season, culminating in the Working Horse Festival.

Said Festival was an outstanding success, blessed by good weather and a seemingly unending stream of visitors pouring over the bridge. Thanks to our wonderful volunteers, an impressive degree of organization and attention to detail, AND in particular for the central group of organisers, who did an immense amount of work, everything seemed to flow without a hitch. But I know there were a number of bodies who fell into bed on that Sunday night with a sigh of relief which could almost be heard on the mainland. We thank you.

One event which slipped by with hardly a ripple was the official opening of the Visitor Centre. Due to extremely short notice of the Premier's impending visit, it was impossible to inform members other than by telephone, so that in the few days we had there was much frantic organization and we all arrived panting on the morning, whipping off our pinnies and patting our hair into place just in time to welcome a beaming Premier Bracks. The day had dawned bright and sunny and the whole island was showing itself off magnificently. We had hoped for media coverage but they missed out on a wonderful opportunity. Premier Bracks announced a \$250,000 funding grant to promote the Gippsland Coast region in Asia, and certainly seemed to be very impressed with the whole project.



CHURCHILL ISLAND WORKING HORSE & PIONEER FESTIVAL 2002

Many wonderful people concentrated their efforts to make the Working Horse Festival yet another huge success! Volunteers, staff, committee members and their partners,



exhibitors and stall holders, performers and participants, and our incredibly hard working organisers. It was the most wonderful weekend. Saturday started out looking a bit overcast but luckily no rain fell and we attracted a good crowd. Sunday dawned a clear and beautiful autumn day and with the sun the visitors poured onto the island until we thought it might sink, just a little!

So, once more, a heartfelt thanks to all our wonderful volunteers who worked so hard to make the 2002 Working Horse Festival such a splendid success. And a particular thank you to our organising committee who brought together the hundreds of details of organising such a large event and created a satisfying experience for all who participated.



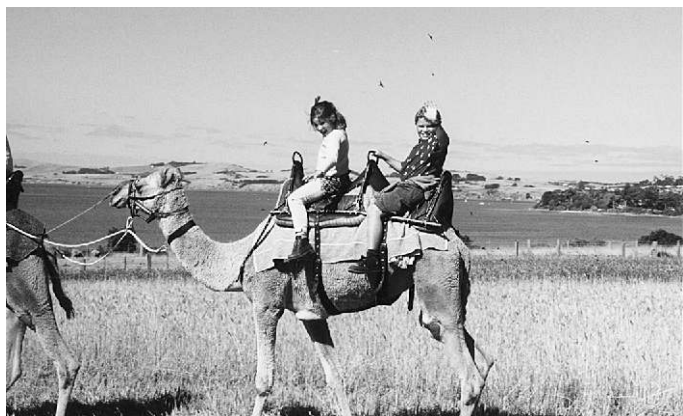
Special Moments....

- A weekend of smiles, families enjoying/exploring the past together, with something for all. The peaceful landscape, Amess House with its treasury of memories, the horses, sheep and cattle, the stable barns and the old machinery, the stall and activities. The children's proud grins as they show us the box they have made, or their painted faces.

- Family picnic groups were scattered all over the lawns. The feeling was one of happiness and contentment. On both days the music provided by the bands was music that both

young and old could sing and dance to. On both days the musicians encouraged everyone to join in to this happy atmosphere. Children played old fashioned games, and encouraged parents and grandparents to join them. At the end of the day, everyone agreed that this had been the happiest of Easters. And we are all looking forward to next year's event on this magical island.

- For a moment I glanced out of the window and saw, framed by the branches of a tree, a bunch of kids leaping up the slope in a sack race. A flotilla of rainbowed bubbles floated above their heads and the voices of their families urged each child to try harder, harder. At the end of the race they tumbled into a heap, not caring who had won but hugely pleased with themselves to have finished the race. What a wonderful moment of childhood innocence this was.



- I leaned on the post and rail fence and watched as a team of huge Clydesdales pushed their magnificent shoulders against their collars, their great dinner plate feet feathered and freshly brushed, lifting and stepping, each to their own rhythm. A halo of sunlit dust followed them across the freshly ploughed paddock.

- Some visitors were intrigued by the butter making in the kitchen. Cherry McFee and Fannie Baird turned and turned the handle of the churn, for hours it seemed, but still the watchers waited and waited for the tell tale slap of the paddle to show that the cream had 'turned'. What better example of a different way of life than the obvious labour involved in making something we take so much for granted today. Some of the watching kids were so intrigued they tasted the butter and even drank the buttermilk!

- The Working Horse & Pioneer Festival brings Churchill Island to life in a way that no other event can. My favourite moment of this year's festival was sitting in Rogers' Cottage having an old time sing along. Visitors were singing



along with Ashley and myself to "I Am Australian" at the top of their lungs! Perhaps not an historic song, but it captured the feeling of how people came together before tv and stereos!

- Another special moment was meeting one of John Rogers' relatives who felt quite overcome by the place. Finally, I would like to thank the volunteer guides who are all special and if you happen to spy Fannie or Cherry churning butter in the kitchen, you have to pinch yourself to remember it's the year 2002!

- The old farming displays were brought to life by a partnership between the Nature Park staff and the Victorian Working Horse Association. The magnificent, strong, yet gentle working horses, with huge and feathery hooves, gave the children a real taste of the pioneering days and were top of their 'hit parade', as was the exciting Pony Gymkhana.

- Towards the end of a marvellous, exciting festival (the best yet), the band played known songs for the children. How they danced! They moved and swayed to the music, each following their own inner dance design! It was such unselfconscious joy; just sheer happiness and togetherness. Watching this impromptu children's dance was such a bonus. Faces lit, revelling in their interpretations of a good strong beat, the children ended our Sunday with a BANG, NOT A WHIMPER. It seemed family fun at its best.

Thank you to all contributors!



President Ann Penaluna & Vice President Keith Hocking



RANGER NEWS:

Head Ranger Scott Campbell is on a well-earned break and is visiting Scotland to celebrate his mother's 90th birthday. We wish him a safe and happy journey. This contribution has been written by Amy Benham who you can read about later in this letter.

Well, what hasn't happened on Churchill over the last couple of months? Not a lot, let me tell you. Well, it certainly feels like that anyway.

Our biggest news is that Churchill is now RABBIT FREE! Yay!

With the rain, we could finally put in our winter oat crop. Now it's in, the cows and parrots are making off with it. Typical! Next it's the potatoes and buckwheat, since we are restoring a horse drawn potato digger and have never grown a crop of buckwheat before.

The work continues around the coast with our weed, rabbit and rubbish eradication. One of us learnt a valuable lesson while ferreting. While you are grabbing the rabbit in the bolt-hole net, remember to put your foot over the bolt-hole to stop the other rabbits from getting away! Now we are cleaning out around Fishers to stop them from coming over the bridge. The car bodies and other rubbish at Chinaman's, featured on the front page of the Advertiser, have also been removed.

Most of you are probably aware that we have a new addition to the Churchill Island family. She is Bonnie, a strawberry roan, 17hh, 16 year old Clydesdale on loan to us. She is an old hand at the farming game and so she is a welcome and valuable member of the team.

The path and boardwalk from the front entrance have been completed and the work on restoring the old car park at Fishers has begun. We are also soon to begin construction on a new hay and machinery shed which should keep us all out of mischief for a while.

Well, I'll have to leave it there. I've got cattle and horses to feed. See ya round 'til next time.

Amy Benham (latest addition to the Ranger team).

Amy joined the team at Churchill Island as a Ranger in March this year. Born in Adelaide, Amy lived her adult life in Geelong where she gained much horse handling and farming experience. She has been riding since she was six years old and this experience was significant in her selection as a ranger on Churchill Island.

Amy thinks working on Churchill Island (as do all of the staff) is the best job in the world. In her own words 'awesome'. She had always wanted to be a ranger and now likes to 'follow Scott, and learn'.

Welcome to the team Amy.



PERSONALITY PROFILE.

This time we are profiling Meg Davis, one of our first Guiding Volunteers.

Following her childhood education in Hawthorn, Meg progressed to nursing and became a Charge Sister at the Alfred Hospital where she met and married her husband Alex, and had two children. Meg is a descendent of the McHaffie family who were the first to settle Phillip Island in 1842. This connection has led her to a lifelong interest in history.

Meg recalls cycling round Phillip Island with her father in the 1940s when she was a teenager, visiting the site of her great grandparents homestead and also Capt. Grossard's grave at Ventnor. This stimulated her interest in her ancestors and was part of the reason for her first visit to Churchill Island in about 1975.



A background in community service throughout her life in many areas such as Girl Guiding, and later Volunteer Guiding in the Royal Botanic Gardens as well as her wide interest in arts and crafts have all influenced Meg in her choice to become a Guide at Churchill Island.

Since Meg and Alex retired to Ventnor her main interest has been the Phillip Island and District Historical Society and through this, Churchill Island, which at one stage was mortgaged to her great grandfather.

Meg says the experience of guiding on that tranquil island has been very rewarding, because of the pleasure of meeting people and helping them to understand the importance of preserving the history and lifestyle of a bygone era.



FROM OUR PRESIDENT:

Our President, Ann Penaluna would like you all to be aware that a review and update of our present Constitution is about to take place. The Constitution of the Friends of Churchill Island Society, as it presently stands, was developed before the Phillip Island Nature Park assumed responsibility for Churchill Island. It does not reflect the current and future roles and functions of our Incorporated Association.

FOCIS has appointed a sub-committee to review and update our Constitution. The new draft Constitution will be presented to members for ratification and adoption at the **Annual General Meeting to be held on Saturday, 27th July, at 2.00 p.m., 2002.** The venue will be The Education Room, Visitor Centre, Churchill Island. The Draft Constitution will be tabled in the Education Room from 12.30 p.m. on that day.

Members wishing to read a copy of the Draft Constitution prior to this time should telephone Ann Penaluna on 59 569 302 or email: penaluna@waterfront.net.au for a copy.

Given acceptance of the Draft Constitution, elections will be held for each of the Office Bearers' and Ordinary Committee members' positions. Nomination forms are available from Ann Penaluna. **All members are encouraged to nominate.**



FROM LISA IN THE GARDEN:

What a beautiful autumn we have had! Looking from the garden out to a glassy sparkling sea, warm still days and crisp cool nights it has been very pleasant indeed, but I guess that winter will be here soon enough. I have seen some flame robins flitting through the paddocks which usually means the cold weather is on its way.

There is not a lot out in the garden at the moment, the bulbs are starting to emerge for their winter display and spring flowering seedlings are filling bare patches in the garden beds. Camellia buds are forming for their lovely winter show, and the leaves have all but gone from the old mulberry, exposing its huge gnarly limbs to the sky.

There has been some produce from the garden used in our 'state of the art' visitor centre -cucumbers, pumpkins and gourds which grew on a tripod in front of the cafe, & lemons, tomatoes and herbs from the vegie garden. Speaking of vegie gardens, I am working on a plan for a refurbishment of the vegie garden area when the old concrete water tank is removed. It will create a larger space for plantings & also a new toolshed work/display area for potting up and storing garden implements. The area will have a tall rustic fence & self closing gates to keep the fowls out & other unwanted creatures from sampling too much!

I have had some great helpers recently with a young team from Greencorp spending a day shifting huge piles of mulch onto the garden, weeding and tidying up, students on work experience helping out and a huge thankyou to Pam Spencer who has decided to spend some time in the garden on Wednesdays doing assorted bits & pieces--there is always something to do!

If anyone would like to spend some time in the garden call in to Churchill Island & see me, you will be most welcome! Please register your name and phone number at the Visitor Centre desk and I shall phone you to let you know appropriate times.

Lisa

p.s I would like to remove some of the roses from the area that used to be the community garden & replace them with heritage varieties, would anyone like to take them or know who planted them, I would say they have been there over ten years now....



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

FOCIS Members:

Staff have requested that Focis members make sure they have their current membership cards with them at all times when visiting Churchill Island and that they show them at the desk on arrival. This will make it much easier for them to monitor who has and has not paid. Thank you.

**123
456**

YOUR BUNCH OF DATES:

27th July 2002, 2.00pm All welcome to FOCIS Meeting AGM.

13th October, 2002, 2.30pm FOCIS Garden Party to welcome new Committee.

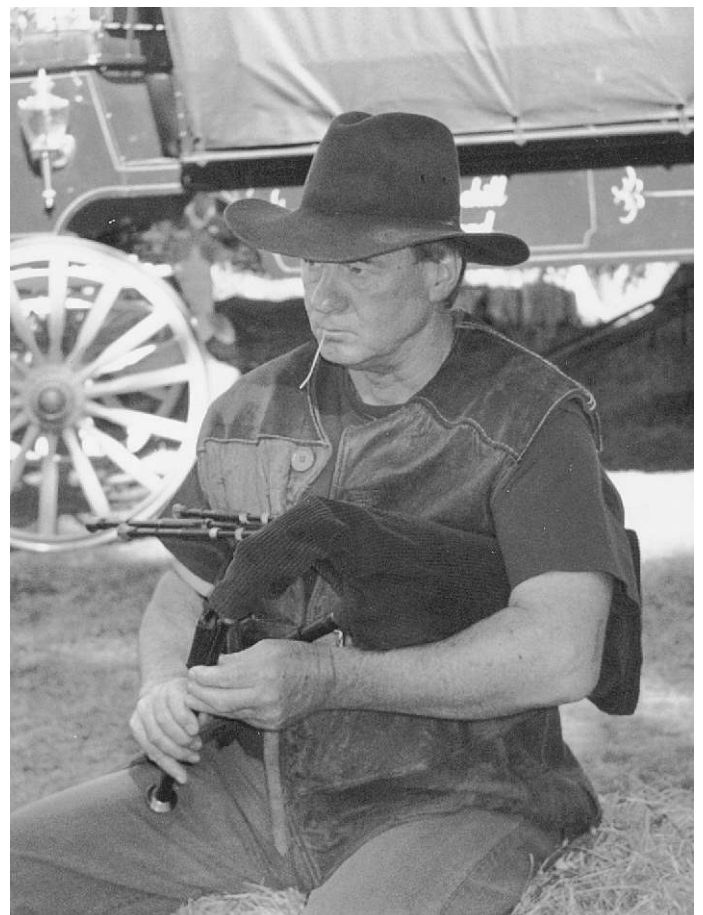
Please note new admittance charges:

\$19.00 per family, \$7.70 adults,

\$5.00 concession, \$3.70 child.

(Group discounts available)

FOCIS discounts applicable as previously.



FRIENDS OF CHURCHILL ISLAND SOCIETY INC.

To: Secretary FOCIS, PO Box 852 COWES 3922, Vic. Aust.

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please Enrol/Renew a FOCIS Membership for

Name

Address Postcode

Phone: Home Business

Email

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.

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



Friends of Churchill Island Society Newsletter
If undelivered return to: FOCIS, PO Box 852, COWES 3922
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WINTER 2002



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