



Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

General Meeting

Minutes

1:30pm, Saturday 12th Feb 2022

Visitor's Centre Churchill Island

1) Welcome and Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the traditional owners of this land, the Bunurong/Boonwurrung people, and pay our respects to their elders past, present and emerging and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in our community today.

2) Attending: Graeme Clauscen, Tom & Ruth O'Dea (via zoom), Jeff Cole, David Maunders, Pauline Taylor (via zoom), Leah & Warwick Tempny, Allan Thompson, Don Johnstone, Sue Trist. Christine Grayden (via zoom).

Apologies: Terry Holman, Peter & Glenys Paul, Lynne and David Lumsden, Coral & John Bourke, Richard & Margaret Farrell, Trevor Little, Diane Scukovic.

3) Minutes from previous Annual General Meeting – August 14, 2021
Jeff Cole/David Maunders *Carried.*

4) Executive Reports:

a) President Graeme Clauscen's Report:

I hope that since our last Meeting you have been well and able to enjoy some sort of normal activities.

As you would be aware F.O.C.I.S. and some members have been very busy over past months, with the completion of two major projects in January.

22nd January 2022

Launch of the 3rd Edition of Pat Baird's Book

CHURCHILL ISLAND HISTORY AND HER STORY

The revision was the work of Christine Grayden and David Maunders who have done a magnificent job. They invested many hours, blood, sweat and tears over the past year and again we sincerely thank them for their efforts and the wonderful book they've produced. We also thank those people who helped Christine and David with contributions to make this book the success it is.

The launch was held at Churchill Island, outside, under marquees on Fiddlers Green just past Rodger's Cottage. We were fortunate to have some special guests on the day. Pat and Bob Baird's son John with his wife Amanda Proctor, Amanda contributed a number of the beautiful drawings in the book. Also in attendance were

members of the Jeffery and Thyssen families and Ellen Lyall who provided information relevant to their particular eras on Churchill Island.

By special invitation the official launch was carried out by

Sally O'Neill.

Sally has a long history with Churchill Island and has carried out many roles as part of her involvement in the development of Churchill Island as we know it today.

Sally. Our grateful thanks for a wonderful launch.

LAUNCH OF THE TIPPING DRAY.

Jeff Cole and his P.I.N.P. volunteer helpers, Clive, Tim & Brian took a pile of decaying timber and rusty metal objects, found out in the back blocks and transformed them into a working Tipping Dray. Jeff and his helpers have in my opinion performed a minor miracle.

On the day, the dray was out for inspection and was officially launched by a member of P.I.N.P. Churchill Island staff, **Chloe Dann.**

Chloe launched the dray with a bottle of VB instead of Champagne.

More appropriate for a working vehicle!!

My thanks also go to the Committee for their combined efforts to make these two projects happen and the launch day such a success.

And finally, special thanks to the Nature Parks Churchill Island staff, for their support and help throughout the project, from providing the Amess Barn work space to setting up and cleaning up after Launch day. It made such a difference.

Don't forget copies of the book are on sale today with special prices available for in-person purchases.

I'm not sure 2022 can top the wonderful achievements of 2021 but we are looking forward with excitement at the possibilities and thank you all for joining us on this wonderful ride.

Graeme Clausen
President.

b) Treasurer's & Membership Secretary's Report by TOD (via zoom with poor connection)

\$11,000 is available for heritage projects.

\$61,000 is in the ANZ savings account earning 0.01% interest – suggestions for better interest-bearing accounts most welcome.

The Heritage fund balance is \$11698.13 with donations totalling \$592 from 17 members. The expenses come from JC's reimbursement claims for the dray restoration. Funds are available for next restoration.

Income at 31st Jan 2022 stands at \$2918

Expenses total \$2131

Leaving \$787

The current stock of books is valued at \$3572.25
The successful grant sees a contribution of \$3670 (Note the notice of grant approval incorrectly stated a larger amount.)

Memberships have decreased by 6 over the last seven months.

Moved Tom O'Dea/ 2 Don Johnstone *Carried*

5) PINP Report from Kate Adams, read by LT:

We have had a reasonably good Summer peak period across all sites given the challenges with staffing and COVID-19 and visitor numbers have been healthy over the school holiday period. With everyone back at school and work, we are now seeing an expected drop in visitor numbers and the team will appreciate some downtime and getting back to other work as we prepare for our next peak period at Easter.

Rodney Branch has joined the tourism operations team as Facilities Manager and his focus will be implementing the asset management framework across all sites, rolling out the preventative maintenance plans which includes all heritage assets at Churchill Island.

Delyce Colin has joined the team in the Commercial Manager role. Some of you may remember Delyce as she worked for Nature Parks 4 years ago in the same role. Delyce will be looking after the retail and ticketing teams.

Stephanie James has moved into the F&B & Events/Conferences Manager role, and she will be working closely with Melissa Cashman to promote Churchill Island as key site for conferences and events.

Delaware North have recently announced that they will be exiting the business as food and beverage providers with a transition around May 2022. Steph will be working on what's next for this area of our business and we will share more information on this as planning progresses.

We are currently recruiting the Farm Supervisor position to ensure we have an experienced leader for the team at Churchill Island. Chloe and Pete have been doing an fantastic job maintaining smooth operations over the peak period and I'd like to thank them for stepping up in support of the business. We will announce the appointment once finalised.

As part of a reshuffle of the tourism operations management team, my focus is now moving to the Penguin Parade, so Peta Wittig is now managing the site and team at Churchill Island apart from heritage management activities. I will still manage tours, education and interps at the site and maintain the heritage related functions. The Museum Curator role will continue to report to me directly and Andrea and I will work together on all heritage related matters including the relationship with FOCIS.

We collected visitor data over the peak period with some very positive results. We saw an increase in visitation to Churchill Island and the top 3 factors for visiting Nature Parks attractions were:

- To get outdoors (after lockdown/travel restrictions)
- To see wildlife in their natural habitat
- To have educational experiences

We have continued work on the Farm Play Project and have now completed the Cultural Heritage Management Plan and Archaeological Report for the Heritage VIC permit application. Jarvis Weston is taking the lead on this project with a handover this week. Once we are granted the permit from Heritage VIC, this can take up to 4 weeks, ground works can commence.

Congratulations on the recent Book Launch and Tipping Dray reveal, from all reports it was a hugely successful event with everyone enjoying some splendid weather on the day. I look forward to reading the revised edition.

6) Curator Report from Churchill Island curator Andrea Cleland, read by Graeme Clausen:

What an incredible past six months since we last met at the FOCIS AGM in August 2021 that was held online! It was wonderful to recently attend in person the launch for both *Churchill Island History and Her Story* and our beautifully restored tipping dray. A deepfelt congratulations to Christine Grayden and David Maunders and FOCIS on this wonderfully revised edition that continues to add depth and knowledge to our understanding of Churchill Island. The book also retains the beautiful direction of Patricia Baird's vision and writing. A hearty congratulations to Jeff, Tim, Clive and Brian and all involved in the restoration of the tipping dray which has been an excellent point of interest and activity at Amess Barn. It was a fitting smashing by Chloe of the bottle of beer against the dray to give official thanks to this wonderful project. It was so lovely to meet so many of you and those who have had a deep involvement with our beautiful Churchill Island and thank you to all who shared their great memories with me. It really made the pages of the book and history of the island come to life! An amazing effort by Leah and everyone involved to put this fabulous event together.

With so many lockdowns now behind us, we are so excited to see visitors return to enjoy Churchill Island. In the periods where we were closed, I took the opportunity to continue the hands on care of our collection (linen change over, cleaning, and ongoing stocktake in Amess House). Updating of the catalogue on Victorian Collections also continues and we were recognised as 'highly commended' for our efforts for a second year running in the 2021 Victorian Museums and Galleries for *Excellence in Museum Cataloguing*.

The idea for an exhibition on Sister Margaret Campbell has evolved into developing a small display that connects closely with the revised edition of *Churchill Island History and Her Story*. I have begun planning for the display in the large display case in the Visitor's Centre to engage with the theme of "Through Her Story" to celebrate the book and engage with the contribution of women's stories connected to Churchill Island.

I look forward to what the next six months brings and thank you greatly for all your support.

7) Correspondence by LT

Don Johnston/DM carried

8) Business Arising from Previous Meeting

a. Working Bees by LT

b. Newsletter Editor by GC

9) General Business

a. Churchill Island History and Her Story Book Launch and Dray Reveal, Report by Secretary Leah Tempny

In his opening remarks, Graeme outlined both the dray reveal and the book launch, and I have been kindly invited to say a bit more.

After 2 weeks of hair-greying COVID restriction changes & weather watching, our setting in late January on Fiddler's Green turned out to be simply beautiful. 38 FOCIS members and honoured guests, along with some interested chickens, ducks and a peacock gathered to hear

- Christine Grayden and David Maunders speak and whet our appetites for more,
- Sally O'Neill officially launch the third edition of Churchill Island History and Her Story,
- and Jeff Cole review the tilting dray restoration.

The launch celebrated the culmination of a great deal of work; a valuable resource; a very readable and significantly updated local history that is unavailable elsewhere. And I sensed that those who attended were proud to have some small part to play in its fruition. Personally, I feel honoured to now be able to place faces and people with some of the names and stories written of in the book.

Thank you, Christine and John, for making the effort to attend and set the tone for the gathering. It wouldn't have been the same without you.

Thank you, David for your clear and thoughtful overview of the event and for pitching in wherever needed.

Thanks also to Sally for her enthusiastic and loyal support.

The second portion of the event was to celebrate the tipping dray restoration. In 2021 when Jeff took us out to see what was left of the decaying pieces of dray, we did our best to see his vision of what it could be restored to. Jeff's vision coupled with his competency in pulling this project together can't be understated. And once others caught a little of his vision and the momentum of his efforts, they also wanted to help. Christine researched the dray's provenance. Trevor prepared and upgraded the electricals in the Amess Barn for a workspace. Peter black-smithed parts no longer available. Tim, Clive and Brian joined Jeff's hands-on team. Too many to mention contributed and as a result, visitors have enjoyed watching the process, and all attending the launch shared Chloe's joy as she christened the dray with a bottle of VB. Thanks to Jeff and everyone for bringing the dray back to life before our eyes.

Both projects brought us together through a very isolating and difficult year, and the chatter and sociality of the celebration was rewarding.

My thanks go to NP Kate and Andrea for their support, farm staff who set up the magical venue and Carolina of Delaware North Catering for the delicious afternoon tea and fending off our scone-loving peacock.

Thanks to Eleanor McKay for covering our event for a newspaper article.
Thank you, Graeme for not succumbing to my anxiety and remaining the wonderful President and host that you always are.
And finally thank you to FOCIS for seeing these projects through to a wonderful conclusion.
If you're interested you can see photos on the FOCIS website gallery, or read about the event, in the Feb 1 edition of the PI & SR Advertiser.
Thank you

b. Tipping Dray Restoration Report and beyond by Jeff Cole

As a result of new manager and new technology, worn axle boxes will be sprayed and ground to function as new, and it will become a working dray again.

Until the next project is begun, the dray has a few loose ends to work out and one Friday per month JC and team will do cleaning and maintenance around the farm.

Other possible restoration projects are:

- An offer has been made to NP to build a new gun carriage for the cannon as it is in poor condition.
- Sulky needs new upholstery on the seat – low priority
- There was talk last year of converting the shed behind the barn into a woodshop – JC has donated some tools. – possibly there's a need to build benches etc.

c. Amess House 150th Anniversary by Graeme Clausen

This year is the 150th anniversary of Amess House and we are in the early stages of talking to NP about us assisting them with some kind of recognition. Christine Grayden has made some great suggestions for possible activities. It was agreed that simplicity will be the key.

National Trust's Australian Heritage Festival this year runs from April 1st to May 31st. (7 to 15 weeks away.) If we were to run our event within this period, we could register it with the festival and

- expose us to a wider audience
- give a nod the partnership between the CI Heritage Farm and the National Trust.

One suggestion was that over 4 weekends, we do some small and simple activities.

DM – felt CGs suggestions, particularly dramatization/vignettes are a good idea.

DM also suggested something to correct the misconceptions about the cannon could be useful.

JC suggested we could serve tea in the parlour again.

Sue Trist suggested volunteers dress up and talk about their life – perhaps from different periods of Churchill Island.

“Curiosity” is the theme of the National Trust festival this year. Perhaps a scavenger hunt for the house/farm.

JC reminded us that the education branch of NP have a set of old time games – quoits, skittles etc.

Calendar:

July 16th - General Meeting

March 5th 8am – Working Bee

April/May – Possible Amess House 150th anniversary recognition.

SPEAKER: Myth-buster and committee member, David Maunders, shared some background to the cannon at the front of Amess House, one of the four most significant moveable heritage items on the island. David hopes that the myth of the cannon being from the Confederate raider ship the *Shenandoah* has been thoroughly trounced! David's talk described the research by him and many others that has revealed that there is no way the Amess cannon came from the *Shenandoah*.