

Friends Of Churchill Island Society Inc.

# FOCIS

## NEWSLETTER

ABN 78667051020 Inc. No. A 002 19007W

### Dates for your diary 2019:

*General Meetings: All Saturdays and all start at 1.30 p.m. in the Function Room of the Churchill Island Visitor Centre. Working bees TBA*

9<sup>th</sup> February; 11<sup>th</sup> May; 10<sup>th</sup> August;  
9<sup>th</sup> November.

### Speaker for the next GM.

FOCIS secretary Christine Grayden will speak to a Power Point presentation on: "A solid Melbourne citizen: Cr Samuel Amess". There are so many facets to Samuel's life that it's hard to compress it into one talk! Come along and find out more about this most interesting person.

Thanks to gardener Kate Wills and her volunteers, the Churchill Island gardens are looking magnificent!





## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT SUMMER 2019

Hello and welcome to 2019. I trust that you all find this year rewarding and satisfying in all that you set out to do.

### December 2018

December 2018 on Churchill Island was certainly pleasing for those of us who were able to make it to the Amess House working bee on the 8<sup>th</sup> December. It is certainly rewarding to come together as a team and take an active part in the ongoing preservation of Churchill Island. December also saw a picnic lunch provided on Churchill Island in the middle of the month by the Phillip Island Nature Park, for all the parks' volunteers. Both days showed Churchill Island as being the jewel in the crown of PINP.

### Roger's Cottage

Roger's Cottage has a refreshing new look to the outside now that the air gap to increase the underfloor air flow has been installed to the base of the walls. Another improvement has seen the installation of support props for the limbs of the old Mulberry Trees.

### Historic Farm Machinery Shed

This year, (2019), will see the ongoing development of the historic farm machinery precinct which will include the extension to the shed housing historic farm machinery. The works will start straight after the summer holidays.

Curator Melissa and PINP Interpretations officer Ailsa are working on the signage for the machinery and will meet shortly with FOCIS members Christine and Jeff to finalise the signage wording. FOCIS is giving \$2,200 towards the signage, having already given \$10,000 of FOCIS funds plus a \$5,000 Bass Coast Shire community grant for the building.

### The Year Ahead

Please make sure that you take time to be an active part of the ongoing preservation work and support of FOCIS throughout the year ahead. If you are not sure where or how you can contribute, then contact our Secretary, Christine Grayden. Christine will assist you on how to best apply your talents on Churchill Island.

Looking forward to another exciting year with FOCIS

Terry Holman

Vice President



## **FRIENDS OF CHURCHILL ISLAND SOCIETY**

### **MINUTES OF**

**MINUTES of the GENERAL MEETING SATURDAY 17<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2018, 1.30 P.M.**

**AT CHURCHILL ISLAND FUNCTION ROOM, CHURCHILL ISLAND**

**1. Welcome & Acknowledgement**

2. Present: David Maunders, Tom O'Dea, Ruth O'Dea, Christine Grayden, Terry Holman, Graeme Clauscen, Jeff Cole, Irene McKell, Peter Brookes, Stephen Paul, Jolenta Paul, John Ballantyne.

3. Apologies: Pauline Taylor, John Eddy, Jan Jonas, Marianne Cassar, Robyn Holman

4. Minutes of the previous meeting 18 August 2018 Graeme Clauscen/Irene McKell *Carried.*

5. Report on PINP and Churchill Island activities - see elsewhere in newsletter

6. Matters arising from last meeting:

a) Farm machinery display extension of shed: We are hoping that this project will be commenced very shortly and finished before the Christmas season. PINP is without a builder's team at present and will have to contract out the building.

b) FOCIS brochure revised and reprinted. Available for visitors from the A Frame at Amess House.

**7. President's report**

a) Negotiations over farm machinery shed extension have continued. Thanks to curator Melissa Hayes for her help with this. FOCIS is contributing \$10,000 of our own money and \$5,000 of a Bass Coast Shire community grant.

b) I recently had a wander around Churchill Island and informal discussion with PINP Board chair Liz Stinson.

c) I did similar with Ailsa Batey, the new Interpretation and Visitor Engagement officer. On both occasions I discussed FOCIS aims and objectives.

**8. Treasurer's/Membership Secretary's Report**

Our two term deposits are soon coming up for renewal. One has \$\$8,109.69; the other \$38,453.95. Committee has decided to roll both over. The second amount has increased by around \$8,000 worth of interest since 2012.

Operating fund balance 31.10.18: \$20,903. Heritage Fund balance 31.10.18: \$8,483.09

Total paying memberships: 147; total paying members: 257.

"That lapsed members be considered to have resigned from the society after three months in arrears and no further correspondence entered into with them." Tom O'Dea/Terry Holman *Carried.*

"That the treasurer's report be accepted" Tom O'Dea/Graeme Clauscen *Carried.*

9. Curator's Report – see elsewhere in newsletter.

10. Correspondence – Inwards:

Almada College Photo walk – referred to PINP

Shirley Egan BCSC grants officer telling us that provided the intention is still to build the shed extension they are happy for the project to run late.

PINP with digital copy of Strategic Plan 2018-23.

Kate Adams, PINP Manager, Visitor Experience, re responses to questions from meeting with David Maunders

Roslyn Greenhill re missing membership payment

Bonnie Taylor re furs to donate

Local History Grants Program survey of unsuccessful applicants

Helena Clark asking to be removed from mailing list

Tom O’Dea, treasurer, re PayID

Bass Coast Shire – nominations invited for Bass Coast Citizen of the Year and Young Citizen of the Year.

Outwards:

Referring Con Baltas, Almada College, to PINP

Shirley Egan, BCSC grants officer re holdups with extension to machinery shed

David Maunders to Kate Adams re meeting notes

Bonnie Taylor with suggestions for where to donate furs.

11. General Business

a) Q: Can you please elaborate on the bathing box idea raised in discussion with Kate Adams?

A: This was mentioned by Marjorie Amess in a letter to a newspaper in 1907, when she wrote that they had four bathing boxes on Churchill Island. We do not know if they were fixed or on wheels. They would not have been able to use them very often due to the tides. The idea is to build one and have it on display in the historic precinct, not down on the shore where it would quickly deteriorate.

b) “That Terry Holman be appointed Vice President” Irene McKell/Ruth O’Dea *Carried.*

c) Christine suggested that each member of the PINP Board be given a copy of Pat Baird’s History and Her Story. All agreed.

d) Christine suggested that we once again offer four of Pat’s books for the special price of 4 for \$20 over the Christmas period. All agreed.

e) Dates have been set and booked for 2019 meetings: 9<sup>th</sup> February; 11<sup>th</sup> May; 10<sup>th</sup> August; 9<sup>th</sup> November.

**Kate Adams,  
Visitor Experience Manager, Phillip Island Nature Parks**

REPORT ON ACTIVITIES AT PINP:

*PINP report for 17.11.18*

*Machinery shed construction* Waiting for permit from Heritage VIC, expecting it next week. Operations have secured contractor to build with work to start early December and completion by Christmas.

*Playground* Concept design has been finalised and we're waiting for total costing from consultant. This will support development of a Business case for consideration by the Board in February 2019. Expected to start construction in June/July 2019.

*Events* Planning is underway by a major music event called Ocean Sounds on Saturday 19 January 2019 (expected 2000 people). It will be in the paddock in front of the café and will include entry to cultural precinct and farm so we'll talk about opportunities to promote heritage values over the next few weeks.

*Rogers Cottage work* The final restoration work behind Rogers Cottage will be completed before Christmas as we're expecting to receive the permit from Heritage VIC in next 2 weeks.

*Fence* Construction of a fence along road edge in top paddock (near overflow car park) has commenced, due for completion prior to peak period. This will ensure visitors can view Highland cattle safely and we can use this paddock for grazing of stock.

*Glamping products* We're offering two glamping experiences over Dec to February:

Family glamping – overnight in PI Glamping tents with ranger guided activities (3 nights over Dec and Jan)

Island secrets (couples) glamping – overnight in PI Glamping tents with catering and Ranger guided tour (3 nights in February)

*Ticketing gate* The gate has been installed and IT are currently testing software with the ticketing system. We need to fix access issues (gaps either side) and emergency button function. Planned to be completed and up and running by Christmas.

## *Churchill Island, Curator's Report - Melissa Hayes*

I have been well supported by FOCIS and other volunteers since starting in the role of Curator at Churchill Island, which means great progress has been made with collection management activities.

The Churchill Island archive is taking shape with the project to catalogue approximately 2000 photos. Commenced by Christine and Margaret Geppert and continued with the consistent work of Lin Stark, many photographs have been sorted into twelve archival quality albums. We are now beginning the long task of identifying the images and cataloguing them to ultimately make them more accessible for researchers on our Victorian Collections cataloguing webpage. Lin has also helped Rachel, the Volunteer Coordinator to photograph, label and organise the volunteer costumes.

On Saturday 13 November, a FOCIS working bee in the machinery shed resulted in several pieces of historic farm machinery being cleaned in preparation for the machinery shed extension. Much of the cleaning was removal of bird droppings, so I am investigating if bird proofing can be added to the new shed as a preventative measure. Jeff has also been in, working intently on some of the machinery pieces which is also important preparation for the new display. Though the build of the machinery shed has been delayed, work on the display layout and interpretation signage is underway.

Christine, Cheryl Overton and I attended a Museum Australia Disaster Preparedness Workshop at Coal Creek on 16 October. This gave us updated resources and hands-on experience in the recovery of water-damaged collection items. The training and resources are valuable for updating our Disaster Preparedness material, and for conducting staff training in the New Year.



*Photo shows Rhyll resident Cheryl Overton with a variety of objects that had to be "saved" at the hands-on Disaster Preparedness Workshop: books, 45 rpm record, water color painting, photos, etc.*

“INSITE” MUSEUMS MAGAZINE ARTICLE 12.1.2018  
CHURCHILL ISLAND HERITAGE FARM  
FARM WORKERS WITHIN A MUSEUM CONTEXT

While farm demonstrations are nothing new in Australia, combining them with an accredited museum is definitely different. Many attendees at the Museums Australia (Victoria) 2016 annual conference will remember Churchill Island Heritage Farm as the bucolic setting for the Thursday evening event. Beautiful vistas, historic gardens, original settlers’ cottages and the restored homestead all exist harmoniously alongside sleek farm animals, café and retail space, and a visitor centre featuring historic information.

Churchill Island is located approximately 90 minutes from Melbourne and is connected to neighbouring Phillip Island via a single lane bridge spanning a mangrove inlet. Visitors often feel as if they have stepped back in time as they enter the historic Amess house and Rogers’ cottages, thanks to the period furnishings (1860s-1890s). The beautiful gardens and well-weathered outbuildings complete the picture of a heritage farm, but these elements are not the only recipes for success.

The fact that Churchill Island is so highly regarded as a visitor destination is due in no small part to the people that bring the farm to life every day; Farm Coordinator Trevor Heywood and his two Farm Assistants Toby Degoumois and Peter Officer. When Trevor arrived nine years ago he brought not only considerable experience in farming life, but also ideas about how to truly engage with visitors whose origins are much more urban than rural. Daily farming demonstrations soon began with two machine shearing demonstrations, hand cow milking, whip cracking and working dogs. Visitor numbers increased dramatically and now the island has over 137,000 visitors per year.

Each of these farm workers brings a unique background to their roles. Trevor hails from a farming family and has worked as a shearer as well as event manager specialising in weddings. Toby has been a station manager, horse breaker, mine worker and shearer, while Peter started his farming career as a jackaroo before moving on to work as a shearer, stock and station agent, sheep and cattle auctioneer, farm manager and water diviner.

The skill sets these men bring all contribute to the effective running of the island. When the shearing demonstration area was set to undergo a rebuild, Trevor, Toby and Peter joined forces to enhance the visitor experience.

After completion of the shed to bring the entire area under cover, Toby completed the steel fabrication for the new tiered seating, and Peter restored and installed the old shearing machinery plant, then built the seats, yards and gates.

## Farm Workers within a Museum Context contd....

There are also typical farm duties in the mornings such as feeding and watering the animals, changing animal bedding, fencing, making gates, collecting and delivering livestock, animal husbandry and pasture renovation.

Visitors come from Asia, Europe, UK and North America, many of them on coaches as part of a tour to Phillip Island which often includes the Koala Conservation Centre, the Nobbies and the Penguin Parade. However, the experience they get at Churchill Island is very different from the other venues.

Trevor says: "It's important to have the interactive side of the demonstrations. Visitors can milk the cow and try their hand at whip cracking. They can handle the greasy wool straight off the sheep's back, and pat the Clydesdale horses. They can really get a feel for rural Australia, both past and present and feel that they are part of the experience."

It is the interaction with the visitors which the farm workers like best about their jobs. To see the amazement on the visitors' faces when milk spurts from the cow; when the newly shorn fleece is thrown in one piece onto the skirting table; when a visitor achieves a resounding whip crack – these make the hard work all worthwhile.

"On Churchill Island we are keeping the old skills alive and sharing them with the public. It's important for us to share our knowledge and show visitors something of Australian rural heritage and bush culture. This is life before the mobile phone and plastics, and many of our visitors have never seen anything like this before."

Churchill Island Heritage Farm is managed by Phillip Island Nature Parks and is open from 10am until 5pm daily (except Christmas Day 2-5pm).

Christine Grayden, curator. With Roland Pick, Communications officer. Approved by staff mentioned in article.



*Shearing shed, Churchill Island*



## CHURCHILL ISLAND 1938 MEMOIRS OF ARTHUR EVANS

The island was set up as a dairy farm. The milking shed had four stands for the cows but all milking was done by hand. The separator was also hand operated and the copper used to provide hot water was heated by a wood fire. Mechanical milking machines were not installed for many years. Initially there were about six milking cows – soon after this was increased to 12. All Dairy Shorthorns.

There was no telephone and no electricity. Water was from tanks of which there were plenty. The dairy, the barn and the tractor shed all had large square riveted tanks (approx. 5' x 5' x 5'). The house had large tanks at each end and also the big underground cement tank (outside the kitchen) took the surplus from the house tanks.

There was a high tankstand in the orchard that was filled from the big dam using the windmill. This tank was used on the vegetable garden and the orchard.

A small tank over the bathroom was filled by using the hand pump on the wall of the Rogers cottage – the water coming from the underground tank. Later when the Jenkins installed a septic tank system this was also fed from the bathroom tank. A chip heater in the bathroom provided hot water for the bath and shower – pine cones were the preferred method of heating the water.

There were rabbits everywhere but the main colonies were on the cliff faces to the west, north and north east. The shoreline was covered in Boxthorn bushes and these provided excellent cover for the rabbits. The north point was completely covered in the bushes.

While there were some fruit trees in the orchard it had obviously been badly neglected. The Olive tree and the Mulberry tree however were thriving. The garden to the front of the house was very run down and covered in weeds. The two camellias however were healthy and about seven feet high. The cannon with the pile of cannon balls stood rather neglected under the Norfolk pine.

The fences to divide the paddocks were in a mixed state – some good but others with broken wires and stumps where the cattle had broken through. The dairy fences were solid however. The Rogers Cottages area was very run down and the tractor shed had a bad lean.

Lighting was by Gloria lights in the ceiling of the three main rooms (kitchen, dining and lounge) fed from a tank outside the lounge room door. Candles were used in the bedrooms.

There was a lot of machinery around everywhere. Most looked a thought it had not been used for a long time. The square riveted water tanks were rusty and leaked quite a lot. Some were repaired but in the main most had gone beyond repair.

Access to the island was from the end of Churchill Road. Visitors just left cars parked there and were picked up by a dingy from the island. There were the remains of an old jetty there and a channel had been dug that was usable at high tide. On the Churchill Island side there was quite a good jetty and a small shed to store a dingy. At extreme low tide you would wade across but the bottom was soft muddy and gritty.

summer 2019  
summer 2019



*Arthur Evans with Alma Tinkler, Churchill Island 1950.*



The Friends of Churchill Island Society  
Newsletter

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Friends of Churchill Island Newsletter

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