

Friends Of Churchill Island Society Inc.

FOCIS

NEWSLETTER

ABN 78667051020 INC. No. A 002 19007W

Dates to remember:

Annual General Meeting:

August 14th, 2021

General Meeting:

November 13th

Working bee:

October 9

FOCIS photos 1980 to 2020 needed for a short commemorative documentary for our celebration and our YouTube channel. If you have any at home you would like to share with us they can be scanned and image emailed to producer Christine grayden email : cdgrayden@gmail.com. Or contact Christine

Letter from our President

Dear Members

I hope you are all well and enjoying a more normal lifestyle.

FOCIS has now begun some activities as Churchill Island has continued to reopen. As a result, there has also been a pleasing increase in visitor numbers.

We had a FOCIS information booth at the P.I.N.P. Community Open Day which attracted some interest and several new members. I've set in motion plans to procure a display of some sort for these kinds of events to attract more attention and show our activities.

Christine and David are working on the revision of Pat Baird's Book and now have a complete first draft which they are currently reviewing.

Jeff continues work on the FOCIS dray rebuilding project. You can read about progress inside this newsletter.

A hearty FOCIS welcome to new curator Angela Cleland. You can read about Andrea elsewhere in this newsletter.

So I welcome you all back to Churchill Island and encourage all to get involved and enjoy this wonderful place.

Stay well.

Graeme Clausen
President



**Needed
New
FOCIS
Newsletter
Editor**

See page 10

FRIENDS OF CHURCHILL ISLAND INC.

General Meeting Minutes

8th May 2021, 1.30 P.M.

Churchill Island

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.

- 1) Present: Graeme Clauscen, Tom and Ruth O’Dea, Jeff Cole, David Maunder, Pauline Taylor, Leah, Warwick & Daniel Tempny, Don Johnstone, John Ballantyne, Di Scukovic and Gaye Cleeland.

Apologies: Terry and Robyn Holman, Richard Farrell, Margaret Farrell, Peter Paul, Jill Massey, Christine Tompkins, David and Carolyn Van Dort, Anne Davie, Peter Brooks, Margaret and Hagen Geppert

- 2) Minutes from previous General Meeting – January 30, 2021

Moved: Ruth, Seconded: Pauline, Accepted

- 3) PINP Report from Kate Adams (Visitor Experience Manager) read by LT (*See page.....*)

- 4) Business Arising from Previous Meeting:

a) FOCIS 40th Celebration. Possible venues are currently being sourced. A report from Christine Grayden regarding video was read by LT. A request was made for any photographs of FOCIS activities, gatherings, memorabilia etc. Report attached.

b) Pat Baird’s Book. Edition 2 is sold out. Edition 3 (revision) is progressing with text nearing proof reading stage, and illustrations and layout to begin soon after. (*see page.....*)

c) Working Bees

Next working bee is scheduled for July 17th

Start time will be advised at least 2 weeks prior.

- 5) President’s Report read by Graeme Clauscen (*see page 1*)

- 6) Treasurer’s and membership Secretary’s Report

RACV investment to be reinvested (at call return rate)

The 2nd edition of Pat Baird’s book is sold out having made a total profit of \$38

Heritage Fund total assets stands at \$11,716.71 with approximately ½ coming from the donations box and ½ from member direct donations.

We are currently living within our means (covered by subscriptions) and membership rates are relatively stable.

In summary, total nett assets grew by \$169 from \$27,784 as at 30 June 2020 to \$27,953 as at 30 April 2021.

During the last 10 months we spent \$685 on Heritage activities with a total of \$46,056 spent on Heritage activities over the last 10 years.

We have now sold all remaining copies of the second edition of Pat Baird’s book and the final figures show that we will achieve a surplus of \$30.28.

Membership numbers fell by 1 from 126 paying memberships as at 30 June 2020 to 125 paying memberships as at 30 April 2021. The total number of paying Members as at 30 April 2021 was 235. Analysis of our running costs shows that we are living within our means with \$3,543 of regular income and \$1,637 of regular expenditure for the current financial year.

Moved: Tom, seconded: David, Accepted

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- 1) Correspondence list accepted by the committee and available on request.
- 2) Correspondence list accepted by the committee and available on request.
- 3) General Business
 - a) Curator Position Update – The position is not yet filled but very close. We look forward to welcoming our new curator. (*Now appointed*)
 - b) Tipping Dray Project

The tipping dray is a suitable project from a heritage and practical point of view and is expected to cost about \$1500 (without the wheel set which are of unknown cost at this stage). FOCIS expects to fund the project and work has begun in the Amess Barn.

- 4) Next Meeting: Annual General Meeting – August 14 2021

Our thanks to Jeff Cole who finished off the meeting with an informing presentation outlining the deterioration and current condition of the dray, the aims of the project, and an overview of progress so far and plans going forward. Our thanks to the PINP staff who have provided a home for this project to take place, Christine for her background knowledge and Jeff, the hands and head behind the work. We look forward to pitching in under your guidance, Jeff.



In the centre you can see the old part with the paint, and the new wider one just about completed. Of Course the old dray was built to Imperial measure (feet and inches) and the metric timber had to be cut down to original dimensions to fit the old metal parts, and be faithful to the original.

The wooden parts of drays did not last very long being largely unpainted and hard used, and as this one was, built of eucalyptus hardwood. The metal parts show signs of being used on at least one earlier dray and possibly more. Some round holes have been drilled, but many square ones have been punched in the red hot metal by a blacksmith.

Kate Adams PINP Report for General Meeting 8/5/21

Budget and Business Planning

Nature Parks undertook a review of the Strategic Plan 2018-2023 in response to the impacts on the business from the Coronavirus Pandemic and we now have a revised business plan for 2021-2023 which has been approved by the Board of Management.

Key focus areas for the next 2 years include:

- Deliver high priorities from the 5 year Conservation Plan and 30 year Conservation Vision
- Place Making – community assets and visitor amenity
- Product for new and future markets
- Diversify into conferences and events
- A new approach to marketing and sales
- Identify alternative funding sources
- Establish organisational governance structures and practices
- Foster a safe and inclusive culture for staff, volunteers, contractors, community and visitors

Visitor Experience Initiatives

- Churchill Island has a new blacksmithing demonstration and work continues on the Nature Play project. We're about to engage a consultant to undertake a Cultural Heritage Management Plan for the works as this is a requirement under the Heritage VIC permit process. Once the CHMP is complete, we will apply for a permit from Heritage VIC to carry out the works. The play objects will now be located in the paddock below the heritage precinct (where the pumpkin patch is currently) paddock below where we do the working dog shows but this in the investigative stage at this point.
- We've completed the Native Seed Station at the Koala Conservation Reserve and commenced building of the Nature Play area. We expect to have that finished by June and are also looking at the F&B offering at this site to compliment the play area.
- We're undertaking recruitment for Volunteers in a number of different roles including CI farm, maintenance, heritage and visitor experience roles and we have created a visitor experience role at the Penguin Parade as well which is very exciting.
- We've undertaken an audit of all interpretative signage at Koala centre and Churchill Island and hopefully with approval of budgets we'll be able to upgrade and replace some of the signs that are tired, outdated and damaged at these two sites.
- We created a Churchill Island dedicated Facebook page early in the year and we've seen a great response to the stories featuring the animals and staff and volunteers. With close to 1000 followers, hopefully this will continue to promote this site to locals and visitors.

Operations

- Stage 2 of bridge works are planned for next financial year (if Board approved)
- Swipe card access will be installed in the visitor centre and on bridge over next few months – Visitor experience volunteers will be issued cards
- Emergency exercise with CFA has been completed.
- Wallabies are now gone – they were relocated to the Otways

Museum Curator recruitment

- We interviewed two applicants on Tuesday 4 May and are currently undertaking referee reports for them both. I hope to have made a decision early next week but the good news is that both can start straight away. (The new Curator has been appointed)
- The focus for this role over the next 1-2 years will be management of the collection (cleaning and maintenance), continue to get the items listed on the Victorian Collections database, digitising of images, and working with FOCIS and supporting Heritage Volunteers.

Have a great meeting, I'm sure everyone will enjoy being back on the Island. Any questions? - I'm happy to follow up.

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc

A taste of the revision of Pat Baird's book: Churchill Island , History and Her Story. Here is an excerpt from draft chapter about the final Amess era in Pat Baird's book revision, written by Pat Baird, Christine Grayden and David Maunders.

Samuel and Jane's daughter Margaret Amess (Maggie) and their granddaughter Minnie Laurence were frequent visitors who used their time at Churchill Island to pursue their passions for painting and wood carving. Margaret was known as a first-class china painter of her era and Minnie probably collected Moonah pieces and tea-tree for her wood carving, which was at that time considered a suitable artistic expression for a middleclass lady.

Samuel and Jane's second daughter, Mary Jane, was born in 1850 before they left England. In 1869 she married James Black Lawrence, from Aberdeen. In 1903 he listed his occupation as 'agent'. They had five children, the second and last of which died shortly after birth. The loss of their fifth child led Mary Jane to depression and she took her own life in 1879. The three surviving children were James Adam (1870), Maggie Ethel (1872) and Mabel Jane (1874).

James Black Lawrence married 21-year-old Sarah Antekell in 1881 and they had one child, Myrtle Maria Elizabeth in 1882. Myrtle remained unmarried until her death in 1978.

Official records say nothing of Minnie so it is probable that she was Maggie Ethel also known as Ethel Maggie, Margaret Ethel, Ethel and other combinations of the above, and is also recorded as both Laurence and Lawrence. Minnie was probably a nickname – perhaps to distinguish her from Maggie Amess, her aunt.

Minnie, her sister Mabel, their brother James and his wife Flo, were regular visitors to Churchill Island before and after the turn-of-the-century. In 1903 James wrote in the Visitors' Book, on behalf of Flo and Molly (Mary) their daughter:

This was the best holiday we three ever had together.

Mabel was a nurse at the Women's Hospital and Minnie listed herself as a musician in the 1903 electoral roll. She completed a year of the Diploma of Music at Melbourne University in 1905. In 1906, they sailed to Ceylon in the company of Maggie Amess, their aunt. On arrival, Mabel married Reverend Charles Ward, a Methodist missionary, who had also been on board. They had two children, Charles (1907) and Dorothy (1909).

Mabel was principal of Ripon Girls College in Negombo from 1907 to 1909 and was assisted by her sister Ethel. The sisters then moved to Newstead College where both in succession became principals, and boarding houses 'Ward' and 'Lawrence' were named after them.

The family returned to Australia in 1917, though the Wards returned to Ceylon to work in missions until 1936 when Mabel died. Minnie (Ethel) remained living in Brighton, listing her occupation as home duties until her death in 1963.

Imagined letter from Minnie Lawrence (Maggie Ethel) Mabel, her sister.

Written by David Maunders in style of Pat Baird.

1924

20 Oak Grove,

Brighton

My dear Mabel,

I must tell you what a delightful two weeks I had on Churchill Island. Aunt Maggie was there and we spent hours together painting. I finished an oil landscape of which I'm quite proud. Of course I have included the beloved old Moonah we played under for so many years of our childhoods! I think I shall give it to dear Aunt Maggie to have in Tynfield as a little memento of our beautiful island while she is home here in Brighton.

Cousin Sam is a gracious host but not the jovial, generous man his father was. I have such happy memories of our holidays there before we went to Ceylon, sketching and playing cards with Mrs. McKrist. You and I, James, Flo and little Mollie. I do so miss James. When he passed away so young at 37 we had little time to grieve did we? So busy we were teaching at Ripon College. I see Flo occasionally as she lives quite close.

Are you still in touch with the colleges? I remember how proud we were when they named boarding houses after us at Newstead College: Ward and Lawrence. Perhaps some of the old girls keep in touch.

How does the mission fare at Negombo? Is Reverend Charles still bringing people to the Lord? How are young Charles and Dorothy?

I must get this to the post. So much to do. I trust that you are all in good health and hope to hear from you soon. God bless you all.

Your loving sister, Minnie

FOCIS

Group of Sketches by Minnie Lawrence,
early 1900's



FOCIS member Robyn Holman and her friends are adding a wonderful experience in the shearing shed on Churchill Island. Robyn dresses up in period costume, and she and her other spinning volunteer friends take their spinning wheels and demonstrate how to spin some beautiful wool yarn from fleeces in the shed. They frequently have a cluster of people of all ages gathered around entranced, and also amazed at the process. The visitors love to feel the softness of the fleece and see the woollen yarn produced. And of course, Robyn and her friends are more than happy to tell the visitors all about the wonders of spinning.

Photo shows Robyn in the foreground and Ruth at the back, in the CI shearing shed recently.

Eva Roberts spinning in Amess House with friend watching, circa 1980s. Eva was an early FOCIS member who often demonstrated spinning at Churchill Island. Eva had been a badminton champion in her younger days and had even represented Australia as captain/manager of the team that travelled to Indonesia in 1959!



FOCIS

I am delighted to be joining the Churchill Island team as the new Museum Curator. Churchill Island is a favourite place to visit with my family and we love to spend time in the garden and exploring all its wonderful spaces. Getting behind the 'grills' in Amess House and Rogers Cottage to engage more closely with the objects and their history has been particularly fascinating. I have a keen interest in exploring and preserving the memories and significance of places, in particular through oral history. My passion led to completing a PhD in History (2019) at the University of Melbourne on Greek migrant memories of home. I am also working on local oral history projects with the Phillip Island & District Historical Society, and as a volunteer with Phillip Island Nature Parks. I look forward to working in partnership with FOCIS to learn more about this amazing little island. I can see Sam, the previous curator, has done a fantastic job and I hope to pick up where she has left off.

Andrea Cleland

Our new curator



Photo: PINP



**2020
postponed but
not forgotten**

"Membership renewals are now due. New members always welcome. To join online go to focis.org.au and follow the Membership tab on the menu.

Our membership fees are very reasonable!

You can also donate there, with all donations over \$2 tax deductible.

Membership enquiries contact Tom O'Dea on
membership@focis.org.au"

FOCIS

FOCIS Churchill Island Tipping Dray reconstruction project

A tipping dray is the Ute of the horse drawn world. Used by farmers, town and shire councils, tradesmen, stockmen, rabbitos, carters, the military and more. A tough, versatile piece of horse drawn equipment built in their thousands with very similar designs, a competent blacksmith could make the ironwork and the woodwork is simple and robust. The tipping mechanism simple to operate most technical part of the dray are the wheels made up of hub, spokes and a rim made of separate parts, and an iron tyre. Some parts like wheels were contracted out and templates were used to ensure parts were of the the correct standard dimensions.



The photo above is our dray when donated. The photo to the left is the last pic we have of CI's dray in more less rolling condition after it was taken off display for safety reasons. Research says it was part of the public works equipment on Phillip Island and used by the road making crews. Taken by an ex staff member of the CI crew, It will be very useful as a reconstruction reference.

Unfortunately our dray is no longer, and the remains looked like this (right). when rescued. Mostly rotten wood and rusty ironwork. Most of the metal and some salvageable wooden parts will be conserved and reused, others will provide measurements and templates for new parts and recreated by the island's staff blacksmith and local crafts persons, and volunteers.



reused, others will provide measurements and templates for new parts and recreated by the island's staff blacksmith and local crafts persons, and



Roughed out parts of the tipping section are already in the Amess Barn, our working space, awaiting adaption to existing metal fittings and recreation of others by the Island's Blacksmith. The wheels were in a sad state and only suitable for static display under cover but FOCIS has sourced similar aged wheels in excellent condition and is awaiting some work by an outside firm to detach them from another construction.

Our thanks to the staff and management of Churchill Island for finding some space for the project, the enthusiasm and cooperation of their staff and Peter, the island's blacksmith.



Wanted

FOCIS NEWSLETTER EDITOR

The FOCIS newsletter needs a new editor. Jeff Cole has been editor for 6 years and it's time for some new ideas and a new presentation. The position is a committee one but with Zoom meetings now common actual attendance is not always essential. If you are interested contact cheryl@focis.org.au



The Friends of Churchill Island Society
Newsletter

If undelivered return to FOCIS
PO Box 852. Cowes, 3922

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