

2024 | No 161
Autumn

Friends Of Churchill Island Society Inc.

FOCIS

NEWSLETTER

Registration Number: A0021907W ABN: 78667051020 PO Box 852, COWES VIC 3922

DATES

2024

**COMMITTEE (11.00) &
GENERAL MEETINGS
(1.30)**

Saturday May 4

Speakers: Dan Kallstrom and
Kate Adams

Saturday August 10 (AGM)

Saturday November 9

WORKING BEES

Saturday March 2, 8-10

Saturday June 15, 8-10

Saturday October 5, 8-10

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The year ended with our *Christmas 1899* drama and carol singing. We thank the actors and singers who brought considerable enthusiasm to the performance and to Cecily who directed the program. Perhaps the day selected was not the best and the audience not best suited to the content. However, it was a good final event for a busy year.

It was very satisfying to see Charlie and Nellie offering wagon rides to visitors in the school holidays. Our purchase of Charlie brought in Dean to help train Nellie and we now have two magnificent working Clydesdales.



The piano in the dining room is played regularly and we are organising its first annual tune.

On 2 February we attended the Victorian Community History Association awards at the Arts Centre in Melbourne. *Whispers from the Past* was submitted for an award and I am able to announce the outcome. We were awarded a commendation in the Historical Interpretation section. Cecily and I received the certificate which will be displayed in the visitors' centre shortly.





Over the summer, I had several informal meetings with Andrea and Kerri, volunteer coordinator. I am pleased to confirm that we can now log on to MyImpact for working bee hours and for FOCIS organised events such as the Bushdance. Anyone volunteering should be registered as a Nature Park volunteer which can be done online and should also have a Working with Children check. This can also be done online quite quickly and is free of charge. It is Nature Park policy that all volunteers should have this even if you do not come in contact with children (as in a working bee). Anyone having problems with this should contact Kerri

volunteers@penguins.org.au

or Chloe may be able to help. Kerri is offering an induction day for new volunteers in the historic precinct on 27 March.

Chloe is organising a meeting for Churchill volunteers on 14 February to look at local issues and she and I are looking at the Information booklet, last revised in 2011 on 23 February and the MyImpact history files.

Nature Park is implementing a new management structure and has some new appointments. Those which impact on Churchill Island are Dan Kallstrom who has been appointed Attraction Manager Koala Conservation Reserve and Churchill Island and Mark Anderson, General Manager, Tourism. Dan will attend our May general meeting with Kate Adams who will update us on the Reconciliation Action Plan.

Our general meeting on 3 February featured Dr Andrea Cleland outlining the plans for the Museum Reaccreditation due in 2025. We were grateful to

Andrea for spending the day with us and, even so she did not complete all the stages involved.

FOCIS members were active and enthusiastic in their participation. We contributed to a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) about the museum. We concluded that Churchill Island was a unique asset and that we should reassert the plans for the museum space that had been many years in consideration. There were also suggestions for audio guide stories in various rooms of the house. The reaccreditation process will continue to be a major item in the months ahead.



Our next catch-up meeting (14 February) will hopefully include them. We need to follow up the screen for the visitors' centre (or possibly elsewhere) included in the current budget. manage

It is the beginning of the year and we need to define objectives. The Museum space needs to remain top priority but will we organise further dances or performances?

My thanks to the committee members for their solid support, each and every one of them.

We were pleased to hear just before going to press that restoration work to be undertaken with the Heritage Fund grant, will commence shortly. There has been a problem in finding a suitably qualified organisation to undertake this work but Miinerva Heritage with Dr Gary Hill will be on site from next week. We are concerned that the Cellar does not seem to be included in the initial agreed works. The Lovell Chen Report of 2015 listed the drainage problems as serious and are still outstanding. Gary has asked to see some of our historic photos to determine materials used in the original buildings.

David

TREASURER'S REPORT



Tom's full report can be viewed online at focis.org.au

Tom reported that total assets at 31 October were \$49,608.26 an increase of \$664.73 over the previous quarter. The heritage Fund stands at \$7243.61. Investments (the Museum fund) now total \$41982.63.

Membership numbers unfortunately have fallen. Lapsed members numbered 79 and total membership is now 197 paying members and 19 non-paying members. Not long ago we reported an increase in members but we are now losing some in spite of remaining very active.

Tom has included a report on long term members below.

FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY

As we embark on a new year filled with exciting events and endeavours, we take a moment to express our gratitude to those members who have contributed to the recent update of our membership records.

Updating our membership records with the date each member joined the Society is an important step in maintaining accurate and comprehensive information about our members in accordance with the requirements of The Act that governs Incorporated Associations in Victoria.

More importantly, it enables us to acknowledge and celebrate the unwavering dedication of our long-term members. Your steadfast commitment to the Friends of Churchill Island Society has been a cornerstone of our success, and we are deeply grateful for the years of support you have generously given.

Although we do not always have an exact date joined for each and every member, we've done our best to provide a reasonable estimate of the date first joined for our longer-term members.

We now recognise these members who have achieved the milestone of 40+ years of membership:

- Beverley Chambers
- Anne Davie OAM
- Doug and Linda Dendle
- Terry and Robyn Holman
- David and Barbara Wilkinson

These members have achieved the milestone of 30+ years of membership:

- Coral Bourke
- Christine Grayden and John Eddy
- Tony and Helen Marxsen
- David and Pat Maunders
- Brenda A. Peake
- Jenny Sutton
- Michael and Faith Tampion
- David and Carolyn Van Dort
- Jeff Walton
- Laurence Yeoman

These members have achieved the milestone of 20+ years of membership:

- The Ault Family
- Clive and Lynda Catlow
- John and Jennifer Dawson
- Roger and Sue Hollingworth
- Craig Jackson
- Ken and Marilyn Millar
- Sue Swann
- Lee Tierney
- Linda and Ian Treeby

Please let me know if there are any errors or omissions: membership@focis.org.au

Thank you for your enduring support, and here's to many more years of shared passion and camaraderie.

With heartfelt appreciation,

Tom O'Dea, Membership Secretary

FARM REPORT



Dear FOCIS members

Welcome back and hope you had a great start to the new year. We're very happy to welcome Mark Anderson on board as our General Manager Tourism and the appointment of Dan Kallstrom to the role of Attraction Manager Koala Conservation Reserve and Churchill Officer. I'm also pleased to announce Chloe Dann will be leading our team onsite as Farm Lead with me continuing in my current role as Attraction Supervisor. I believe the new organisational structure will bring a lot of benefits to the day-to-day operation of Churchill Island and continue to increase opportunities to promote what we do here at Churchill Island Heritage Farm.

We experienced high levels of visitation with our international markets starting to bounce back. The December visitor's survey recorded Churchill Island visitors as receiving a 93% satisfaction rating of 'Value for Money' and 96.6% Average Satisfaction Score for the 61 visitors who were surveyed about their time at Churchill Island.

The wagon rides and farm demonstrations have been a big hit with both horses working really well together. Ticket sales have been really positive and we even had days that rides have been sold out.



The restoration team continues to make great progress. It's great to see the Crump Spreader coming along nicely. It was also great to have a Christmas themed 'Whispers of the Past' and much thanks to everyone involved for making this happen.

Cheers, Pete

CURATOR'S REPORT



Congratulation on the latest performance of Whispers of the past and attendance at the Victorian Community History Awards ceremony (at the time of writing I'm not aware of the outcome but fingers crossed!).

Most of the time since my last report have been focused on ongoing collection care and cleaning up the Volly Hut. We have some great new shelving which gives us the ability to better organise and sort through our archival material. I'm also very grateful to our new volunteer Robyn that Cecily has encouraged to get on board to help organise our costumes. If you have a costume that needs to be laundered (particularly any shirts or blouses) or need to be mended please place them in the reusable shopping bags on top of the bar fridge. I have also been slowly working on uploading the images to Victorian Collections of the objects that volunteers digitised during the Collections and Community Resilience Project run by AMAGA Victoria.

I had the wonderful opportunity of conducting an oral history interview during December with Ted Jeffery and Judy Dickie to record their significant and special memories about their family connection to both Churchill and Phillip Islands. Ted and Judy are siblings – their mother was Reita Cleeland of Woolami House and father was Ted Jeffery who worked alongside his brother Bob Jeffery to develop Churchill Island into a top dairy farm. Judy's son, Warren Dickie is a key member of our team on Churchill Island continuing the close connection and legacy of his grandfather's contribution. I'm looking forward to working through the interview material in due course and adding this to our archive. It complements material already held in our archives and recently added to by David and Cecily to record memories of the association of FOCIS members with Churchill Island.

display in the function area of our Visitor's Centre and I will take the opportunity to give a bit of background about the significant contribution to our archive of the photographs, film, objects and memories of Arthur Evans.

As a teenager, Arthur Evans struck up a friendship with Ted Jenkins who attended a different private school in Melbourne. Ted's father purchased Churchill Island for his son who had become a paraplegic. The Jenkins period covers 1936 to 1963. Arthur Evans and a circle of friends would regularly visit Ted Jenkins, only paused during the Second World War when Arthur Evans served in New Guinea. Arthur Evans maintained a link with Ted's nurse, Sister Margaret Campbell who was bequeathed Churchill Island and remained there from 1963 until it was sold in 1973.

Arthur Evans recorded extensive photographs and retained objects that he donated to Phillip Island Nature Parks (through Sally O'Neill and Christine Grayden) as he recognised the importance of their value to the history of Churchill Island. These include five 8mm (one of which is super 8mm) films that cover the period between 1942-1955. Arthur Evans bought his first 8mm Kodak movie camera in 1942 and a W120 in 1951. We are very grateful that these films have been digitally reproduced with the support of FOCIS. The wonderfully edited film 'Life of Churchill Island' is available to view from the FOCIS website

You can read more about "A typical visit" by Arthur Evans on pages 82-83 described in his own words in *Churchill Island History and Her Story 3rd edition*. Or view the article about Arthur Evans through Phillip Island District Historical Society on Victorian Collections and many of his photos in our own collection also available at Victorian Collections under Churchill Island Heritage Farm.

Best wishes, Andrea

RESTORATION REPORT



Jeff reports that the team is awaiting delivery of wood to complete the carriage for the cannon.

Signage for the dray has been completed to the draft stage and should be on display soon.

There is no progress on the wool wagon.

FOCIS WISH LIST FOR 2024-5

These are from the last general meeting and ongoing:

- Museum reaccreditation and progress towards a museum space
- Employment of full-time horticulturalist
- Installation of touch screen (in budget)
- Writing audio stories to be played in or near house
- Audio story about Margaret Campbell
- Restoration of cellar
- Revision of historical information for volunteers
- Musical contribution to Community Day
- New Newsletter editor
- More active members

SOCIAL VALUE OF CHURCHILL ISLAND

With the upcoming restoration work about to begin, it is good to remind ourselves that the Lovell Chen Conservation management Plan of 2015 remains a useful document for understanding and conserving Churchill Island.

The report included a section of the relationship with FOCIS:

4.5 Social value: Social value is described in the Burra Charter Practice Note as follows:

Social value refers to the associations that a place has for a particular community or cultural group and the social or cultural meanings that it holds for them. Social value is a current value, a contemporary heritage value which is associated with a defined group or community of people.

The Friends of Churchill Island Society (FOCIS), formed in 1980, fits the latter category and has maintained an ongoing attachment to Churchill Island. FOCIS has undertaken research, managed events, performed maintenance and other works on the island, and has been a strong lobby group for the island. A number of the group's members have familial links to previous owners of the island, and after 40 years in existence have approximately 250 members. Such numbers and the now long-term involvement in the island is an indication that there is social value in the associations FOCIS has with the island. To provide a quantifiable basis for consideration of social value for the purposes of this CMP, Christine Grayden, Secretary of the Friends of Churchill Island Society (FOCIS) and Churchill Island curator, invited members to respond to the question, 'Why do you value Churchill Island?'²¹¹ Of the 20 respondents, a majority referenced the natural beauty and amenity of the island, and the tranquillity of the setting. While there were some references to the nineteenth century buildings and historic aspects of the island, these were generally secondary considerations. There will be other members of the community with an attachment to the island, but this has not been demonstrated in any formal way, or by other means of recognition.

Comment The attachment to Churchill Island on the part of FOCIS members is of social value at a local level.

CHRISTMAS 1899

FOCIS's pre-Christmas entertainment took us back to 1899. A short play showed Samuel and Margaret Amess preparing for Christmas at Churchill Island. A major event was carol singing performed by the Phoenix Singers. Guests sat at a table and were entertained. Samuel, played by Mike Cleland, recited a poem.

The program was directed by Cecily Woodberry.



Two performances were given in the shearing shed on 23 December.



A SHEEP IS SHORN

Robyn Holman has been an outstanding volunteer with Churchill Island for over 40 years. You may have seen her demonstrate the wonderful craft of spinning wool in our Shearing Shed.

Robyn grabbed the opportunity to work with 10 kilograms of fleece that came from just one sheep shorn on Churchill Island!

The Corriedale sheep from Grantville had not been shorn in two years and eventually was shorn on Churchill Island during the first COVID lockdown.

Robyn recalled how Farm Manager Pete Officer rang her up and asked her to come and have a look at this magnificent fleece. Robyn felt quite privileged to be able to access Churchill Island which was closed to the public at the time and have a look at three fleeces shorn from three different sheep.



Taking two of the three fleeces home, Robyn set to work spinning the first fleece into magnificent yarn. After the process of

spinning, Robyn washed the hanks of wool and recalled them looking very impressive, drying on the line. She went on to say, "It took me three weeks of concerted spinning to make a kilo of wool yarn which amounted to 17 balls of wool. You need approx. a kilo of wool for one jumper. It takes me a couple of months to knit a jumper. From the same fleece I then knitted multiple beanies and two other jumpers.

Interesting fact: Homespun wool is usually 2 single threads plied together. The length of single thread spun for this jumper amounts to approximately 3 kilometres of hand spun wool!!

I still have the second fleece to go! Churchill Island offers heritage demonstrations of farming activities including sheep shearing and an extensive heritage collection of shears, shearing machinery, a wool press and other historic farm machinery from seeders and ploughs to wagons.

The sheep still lives in Grantville and is due to be shorn again in December...

We are very lucky to have Robyn share the wonderful craft of spinning that she learnt from an old friend on a farm at San Remo, many years ago. Robyn is one of a group of dedicated and passionate volunteers at Churchill Island who brings old time craft, lost trades and history of the island into the present day.

Andrea.

Friends of Churchill Island Society Inc.

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FOCIS

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which we live