

RAVENSTHORPE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REPORT TO AGM MARCH 2023

It has been an interesting year with both challenges most of which are still ahead of us, some changes in membership as well as some achievements.

In the first instance I must acknowledge the untimely passing of Marshall Bacon, then our most recent and one of our youngest members. Marshall brought with him a great interest in outdoor activities as well as his particular interest and expertise in mechanical things. He is sadly missed and his passing is our loss.

The activities for the year divide somewhat arbitrarily into the following groupings; Facilities Management, Technology Development, Extension Project, Events, Publicity, Curation, Visitor Centre and Craftshop.

Facilities Management

- Installed new Museum sign
- Relocated Matt Waddingham's old stove in the gaol exercise yard to avoid damp ground
- Relocated the Floater mine boilers from Mt Short rest area to Railway Historical Precinct noting that re-development of this site has the support of Shire CEO.
- Cattlin Shed gutters and damaged roofing were replaced

Extension Project

A series of four meetings throughout the year with Shire CEO Matt Bird, Natalie Bell and Consultant Paul Murray re-aligned the project considerably in that a detailed three staged proposal costed and drawn up by Ian Goldfinch and Madeleine Norman after a great deal of effort was deferred and replaced by a consultant's concept plan at the insistence of the Shire. RHS was represented in these matters by Ian Goldfinch (project manager), Madeleine Norman (treasurer) and myself as President. The plan was costed at \$40,000 with contributions of \$20,000 from Ravensthorpe-Hopetoun Future Fund, \$10,000 each from RHS and Shire and is a work in progress.

Technology Development

We invested in an automatic cloud back-up system by Back-Blaze, as well as a new modem and power back up device this year.

Curation

Deb Lynass and Enid Tink devised and produced a series of travelling, outreach school boxes to present appropriate historical household objects to modern school children who probably have never seen objects such as hand powered egg beaters, hair clippers etc. Other curatorial developments were:

- Conversion of the hard copy version of Keith Quartermaine's 'A History of Ravensthorpe Mining' into a digital format by Meredith Lee-Curtis.
- Ross Quartermaine also donated his father's research archive to RHS including many very valuable photographs. Taken together these two items are, in my view, a most significant achievement for us.

- Men in Sheds (Ian Goldfinch in this case) with assistance from Colin Hughes made and installed a new glass-fronted firearms display case which has pride of place on the west wall.
- Enid Tink accessed 52 objects since our last AGM noting that some accessions were multiple ones, for example one number for a series of farm implement workshop or use manuals. The standout object accessed this year might well have been sack trolley with the lift mechanism that was rescued from a Perth road verge collection. Chenda Goldfinch has digitised 174 photographs since our last AGM.

Events

- Two Magical Mystery History Tours were held, the first in May which was repeated in October; Hawks Nest, Cattlin Mine, Railway Station site, old cemetery and former spongelite quarry were visited. The tours were attended by 55 people.
- Southern Scribes and RHS hosted a book talk by John Robertson, author of 'Sealed Souls' in Hopetoun in July.
- Rob Lloyd invited Larry Bowling to do some metal detecting for us in July to substantiate that the Blacksmith's Tree is in fact the one we think it is and this was confirmed.
- In November we hosted a thank you lunch for all Visitor Centre volunteers with their spouses at Julia Bell's Camel Farm which was accompanied by a visit to Julia's recently opened and outstanding Camel Museum. This occasion also saw the launch of the booklet 'Schools of the Shire of Ravensthorpe, Past and Present' written by Madeleine. It is the seventh in this popular series and was funded by Allkem.
- In December we held a sundowner send-off for Ian and Kerry Dickinson in the Cattlin Shed. Kerry and Ian left for Donnybrook in February 2023.

Publicity

RHS had six articles published in Community Spirit throughout the year

Management of Visitor Centre and Craft Shop

Personally, I think this is the aspect of our operations we do best. We receive accolades, both informal from impressed visitors and more formally such as the honourable mention in the travel Section of the 'West Australian' last year as well as the recent weblog indicating a visit here to be one of the 10 'must dos' when in Ravensthorpe. Madeleine's treasurer's report speaks for itself. In particular, Museum visitor numbers are up on last year, same with sale of national parks passes and income per visitor as well as donations, up from \$2091 to \$2,800.

Total visitor numbers i.e. people through the front door, but not necessarily visiting the Museum for the past five years are: 2019 – 5544, 2020 – 3202 (down due to Covid closure), 2021 – 4521 and 2022 - 4813. As Madeleine points out the visitor centre component is now a most significant part of our operations and one we must maintain. It is essential that the 'Visitor Centre' signs come down off the new building as soon as possible; because they send an ambiguous message to the travelling public which could divert would be visitor/customers.

Membership and the future?

According to me we have a total of 18 members of whom 11 are active participants. I recently attended the AGM of Friends of FRNP who have 200 members; in spite of this, they too have difficulty filling committee positions. The Cocanarup Conservation Alliance has 120 individual and 13 group memberships. It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this difference in support.

We cannot ignore that our membership is declining and ageing and this could have very serious consequences for RHS if we can't rebuild our membership very quickly. We can only do this by having a vision and a plan e.g. the extension project, as well as presenting a range of engaging activities and reporting back on them which I believe we do.

Andrew Chapman, President, Ravensthorpe Historical Society. 12 March 2023.