

Donald History and Natural History Group President's Report 2017-18

I am pleased to present my first president's report to the 2018 AGM.

The past year has seen several changes, the most notable being the retirement of Lil Kirk who had been our archivist for nearly thirty years. Then halfway during the year, our treasurer, Ray Walker resigned. In his ten years as treasurer we benefited immensely from the skills and professionalism he brought to the group.

Our meetings, now held in the afternoons during winter months, and evenings during summer months, continue to attract a number of members and the occasional visitors.

The syllabus, organised shortly after our AGM, and expertly compiled by Mary Archbold, not only notifies of guest speakers for the monthly meetings, but other events of interest. This year it was decided to mail drop the syllabus around the town.

New member, John Kumm, kindly offered to take over the running of our webpage, which continues to promote our group and attract researchers.

Our Facebook page, managed by Mary Archbold, has created interest. A "Book of the Week" along with photographs from our collection are posted regularly and attracts many comments, mainly from the younger generation.

Even though we have seen a slow decline in the number of committee members and volunteers we still have a dedicated few willing to keep the Archives, Court House Museum, Agricultural Museum, and Police Camp operating. I sincerely thank those involved.

This year it was decided to open the Archives and our small Antiques and Collectable Shop from 10 a.m. till 4 p.m. on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. I would like to thank Mary Archbold, and our new archivist, Anne Walsh, who are keeping this arrangement running smoothly. I am at the Archives on a Wednesday and continue to be surprised at the diversity of requests and visitors. Thank you to Anne for compiling the 'Buloke Bulletin', and reporting our meetings to 'The Buloke Times'. Anne also promoted our group on Dave Lennon's 5.94 History Spot in March, and recently spoke at Donald Probus. Thanks must also go to our indexers, Dorothy Warner, Colleen Raynes, and newcomer, Jenny Campbell. We were grateful of a Community Grant from the Bendigo Bank that enabled us to purchase more archival storage boxes and photo albums. We also received a Maintenance Grant from the North Central Catchment Management Authority. The Archives have again been approved as a place of deposit for public records. Four Donald High School students spent part of their 'Community Week' helping at the archives and shop.

The Court House Museum committee received a donation of over 100 embroidery articles worked by a local lady around 100 years ago and promptly organised an exhibition the week leading up to Donald's All Town Garage Sale. After selecting a few pieces for our collection, the rest were offered for sale, several pieces being sold on the day of the garage sale. Our shop also sold quite a few items that day. Starting in September it was decided to try an open the Court House Museum every Friday. I wish Beth Hollis and her helpers every success, as our collection is too good to be hidden away from the public. This was evident by the exhibition held over the past few days to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the end of WW1. It was also pleasing to see St. Mary's school students making use of the museum during the year.

The Police Camp Museum continues to attract travellers and once again ran "Driver Reviver" during the Easter break. Norm Hollis and the committee are to be congratulated on the work they do at the Police Camp.

Thank you to Peter Pendlebury and his helpers who cleaned and opened the Agricultural Museum on show day.

During Heritage Week, the week leading up to the Donald Show, we opened all four facilities and our shop from 10.30 a.m. till 4.30 p.m. with limited success. Thank you to the members and volunteers who kept the doors open.

In April we had a visit from the Williamstown Camera Club members who were very appreciative of the hospitality shown to them by our members and the wonderful facilities we manage.

Although we had no official trips this year, some of our members attended various history events held in Victoria throughout the year and reported back to our meetings.

Thank you to members who represented our Group at the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies (WVAHS) AGM in Port Fairy in April and the WVHAS Midlands Zone meeting at Carisbrook in October.

Thank you to Brian Brasier, for compiling "Blast from the Past", articles taken from the "Donald Times" for our newsletter, and for organising our end of year dinner and another excellent speaker.

A special thank you to Peter Pendlebury for taking on the role of treasurer after Ray Walker resigned, and for all the work he and his helpers do behind the scenes. Finally to the Executive, Brian Brasier, Norm Hollis and Peter Pendlebury, thank you for your guidance and support during my first year as your president.