

Donald History and Natural History Group President's Report 2018-19

I am pleased to present my president's report to the 2019 AGM.

The past year has seen the passing of three of our members who held important positions over many years - Lois Davidson, Museum Curator, Ron Falla, Historian, and Lil Kirk, Archivist. The Group has benefited immensely from their dedication and commitment to the preservation of the district's history.

Following on from the Court House Museum exhibition to mark the Centenary of the Armistice we welcomed guest speaker Pam Cupper, co-author of "Gallipoli, A Battlefield Guide", to our annual dinner.

The past year saw attendances at meetings averaged 17 with numbers boosted by visitors on several occasions. Talks covered a wide range of topics including:- Changes to the fanning system; Fifty-nine years at the "Times"; Recollections of working in the local telephone exchange; Family histories; Memories of Georgie Ah Ling; Local environmental water sites; and Creation of a tourist destination around an historic woolshed. Having a guest speaker at nearly all of our meetings is unique to the history groups in our zone.

John Kumm who manages our Website at <https://donaldhistory.org.au> has recently been entering podcasts of talks presented at our meetings onto the site.

In April several members journeyed to Wentworth to visit Lil Kirk and enjoyed the hospitality of her daughter and son-in-law, Christine and Ian Bailey, and the Wentworth History Group.

Our August meeting was replaced by a tour of the Watchem area led by local, David Nicholls. We also visited the Johnson and Goodwin graves at the cemetery and Cr. Graeme Milne showed us around the former Catholic Church, now owned by the Watchem community, before we retired to the hall for a sumptuous afternoon tea.

In September we arranged a film afternoon in the Litchfield hall. This included photographs and film of events linked to the Litchfield community. Thank you to the locals for their hospitality and delicious afternoon tea.

The Archives open from 10 a.m. till 4 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday continue to deal with a steady flow of enquiries. We have been fortunate to receive a generous bequest that enabled us to upgrade our computer system and install a split-system air conditioner. A donation of three new office chairs was also much appreciated. Thank you to indexers Colleen Raynes, Jen Campbell, and newcomer Susan Hunt, and a special thank you to Dorothy Warner who has retired after several years helping with indexing. At the request from members of the community, the old enamel thermometer that had been housed at the Court House Museum is now reinstated to the wall alongside the Archives door when the Archives are open. Thank you to Leo Tellefson who carries this out. This year two year nine students spent part of their 'Community Week' helping at the Archives.

Our Antique and Collectable shop continues to raise funds for the Group. Once again we opened the shop during Donald's All Town Garage Sale and had a very profitable day.

The ‘Winter Warmer Walkers’ visited the Court House Museum in August to view the ‘Keeping Place’ Aboriginal artefacts, and after being shown around the museum enjoyed the hospitality provided. We had a recent visit to the museum by Buloke Shire Councillors and staff who were impressed by our collection and sympathetic to the challenges we face in preserving it for future generations.

Three members represented our Group at the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies (WVAHS) AGM in Swan Hill in April and three members attended the WVAHS Midlands Zone meeting at Serpentine in October.

To celebrate Heritage week we had a stand at the Donald Show with a display of museum items, photo albums and publications for sale. Our website was also available to view. The Agricultural museum again opened for show day and attracted a good number of visitors.

In October two members took part in a workshop in Wycheproof conducted by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria (RHSV), History Victoria Support Group. The RHSV would like to know what support we might need in the Archive or Museum sections and are interested in organising more workshops or seminars in country areas.

This year we were successful in receiving a North Central Catchment Management, Victorian Landcare Grant. This will enable us to revegetate the site of the former Cope Cope Community Hall and the block alongside. The project will also highlight the history and heritage associated with the area and will include awareness of indigenous cultural heritage, especially in relation to Lake Nurrumbeet, on whose bank these sites sit. The Buloke Shire has erected suitable signage pointing to the A. A. Dunstan Memorial Gates at the Cope Cope hall site after a request from the Group.

I would like to sincerely thank members who volunteer their time either keeping our Archives, Court House Museum, Agricultural Museum and Police Camp running smoothly or promoting and preserving our local history.

Finally to the executive, Norm Hollis, Peter Pendlebury, Brian Brasier and Harold Flett, thank you for your support during the past year.