

Donald History and Natural History Group

President's Report 2020-21

The year 2021 again witnessed disruptions throughout our community with several events cancelled due to COVID restrictions. Fortunately we were able to follow our program for the year with only a few changes. Attendances, as expected, were slightly down at our monthly meetings held on the second Monday of each month from February to November.

At our first meeting for the year John Kumm, whose talk was cancelled last year, spoke on the Cato family history.

In March we welcomed Trevor Campbell who gave a presentation and his recollections of 50 years of Donald Apex.

In April "Women in Rural Business" was the topic presented by Stacy Morris, and in May Sharon Tonkin's "Reflections in Changes to Nursing" was well received.

At the last minute the Heart Safe Community Session scheduled to follow our June meeting didn't go ahead, so photos taken during the development of our Cope Cope project at the site of the old hall in 2020 were shown.

Our guest speaker for July, Ged McLoughlan, gave a detailed description of the McLoughlan Duck Enterprise.

Unfortunately our August meeting and planned visit to the Guthrie project at Rich Avon was cancelled at the last minute due to a snap lockdown.

Following our September meeting members put on a short play much to the amusement of those present.

Our guest speaker for the October meeting had to cancel, so we showed photos of some of our past trips.

Our trip this year was a visit to Learmonth where we met with members of their Historical Society who showed us around various sites of interest.

Three members attended the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies (WVAHS) Annual General Meeting and zone meetings in Stawell in March. A highlight of the day was a tour through the old Stawell hospital and a bus tour around the town. Unfortunately the Midlands Zone meeting and Executive meeting that was to be held in Donald in October was cancelled.

In September a visit to the site of the old Avon Plains gold mine at Banyena with Laurie Moore from Ballarat had to be rescheduled for next year. Laurie is compiling a history of the mine and also has an interest in the early settlement of the area.

The Archives managed to open most Tuesday, Wednesday and Fridays from 10 am to 4 pm during the year. Inquiries were numerous and varied due to our excellent website, Facebook page, and detailed reports published in the "The Buloke Times". Book sales were also steady.

Our monthly newsletter "The Buloke Bulletin" available at our meetings, or from the Archives, can also be found on our website at <http://donaldhistory.org.au>.

Our volunteers continue to index the "Times" newspapers. The "Donald Express" and early "Donald Times" card indexes have now been added to the computer index.

Donations to our Antique and Collectables shop located next door to the Archives continue to help fund various historical projects. We have quite a few regular customers.

During the year Alison at Look First Op Shop and the Donald Garden Club gave generous donations to the History Group. This will enable us to erect new signage at the Courthouse Museum.

Several items were donated to the History Group this year. The remaining members of St Joseph's Catholic Community at Nullawil donated a side alter from their recently closed Church. A centre alter and two side alters were crafted in Donald by R. C. Price, cabinetmaker, for the Nullawil Catholic Church in 1928.

An engraved writing desk and engraved silver slaver among items bequeathed to the group by the family of the late Ida Bourke were sent on to the appropriate Historical Societies.

In April our Archivist trailed opening the Courthouse Museum at 11 am and 2pm on the three days the Archives were open, participants' pre booking and paying at the Archives. It is hoped we can put this plan fully into action next year. Donald has an amazing Museum and should attract many of the tourists that stop in town.

Thank you to the executive, members and the community who have helped in any way to keep the Archives, Courthouse Museum, Agricultural Museum and Police Camp maintained and running smoothly in another difficult year.