

Donald History and Natural history Group

President's Report 2021-22

I am pleased to present my fifth president's report to the 2022 AGM.

We ended 2021 with our annual dinner, the first for two years. Guest speaker for the evening was Adam McNicol co-author of "The Mallee" a journey through north-west Victoria and "The Wimmera" a journey through Western Victoria. These books are available for purchase at the Archives.

This year attendance at our monthly meetings held on the second Monday of the month from February to November averaged 22. We also welcomed several new members.

Guest speakers during the year included: - Bill Pearse who showed a film of the 1963 Back to Donald procession; Bob Baker's recollections; Allison Cashin from Jasper and Co.; Andrew Borg, Buloke and Northern Grampians Landcare Network; Anne Walsh, the Caine family history and Laurie Moore from Ballarat who gave an excellent presentation on the establishment of the Avon Plains Mining Co. Following this meeting members and several visitors travelled out to the site of the old Avon Plains goldmine on land now owned by Warakirri Cropping.

In August, instead of holding a meeting at the Court House Museum, Karen and Sam Goldsmith made their home on the banks of Lake Gil Gil available. Karen spoke about establishing her plant nursery, "Goldy's Patch", before inviting members to look through.

In September we again arranged to hold a meeting away from town, meeting at the rebuilt shearing quarters at Guthrie's. Chris Guthrie spoke about his project to showcase the history of Rich Avon station before showing us the various outbuildings and historic woolshed.

Our trip this year was a visit to Natimuk where 14 members met with members of their Historical Society who showed us around various sites of interest. We then travelled out to Mt. Arapiles before heading home passed the wind turbines at Murra Warra.

Six members attended the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies (WVAHS) Annual General Meeting and zone meetings in Warrnambool in March. The Midlands zone meeting and Executive meeting that were to be held in Donald in October 2021 were cancelled due to COVID concerns. Our group chaired the zone meeting in Warrnambool instead. This year the Midland zone meeting schedule for the 29th October in Nullawil was cancelled due to floods across the region.

Our excellent website at <http://donaldhistory.org.au>, detailed reports in the "The Buloke Times" and our monthly newsletter "The Buloke Bulletin" continued to highlight the work we do promoting and preserving our local history.

The Archives have been kept busy with a variety of inquiries and requests. Visitors were most appreciative of the members who offered to show them the blocks of land where their ancestors lived and farmed. Although we have volunteers indexing our newspapers, we still require help to catalogue the many donated acquisitions. During October a year 10 work experience student spent a few days at the Archives indexing and cataloguing.

Our Antique and Collectables shop, opened when the Archives were open, continued to raise funds for the Group. We also had a profitable day when we opened the shop during the Whole of Town Garage Sale in September. Donations of items for our shop are greatly appreciated.

Thanks to the Courthouse Museum and our comprehensive photograph collection an excellent display was provided for the 140th Donald Show. We also took the opportunity to offer our publications for sale. The agricultural museum opened for Show day and attracted a good number of visitors, the engines that were operating proving popular.

In preparation for the placement of a board commemorating the life of Georgie Ah Ling the rail trolley at the front of the Courthouse Museum was located to the Lions Club Train Park.

Several VRI Honor Boards given to the Group found a home with the Dimboola VRI. They have been photographed and added to our photograph collection.

A request to the Shire resulted in the installation of a split system air conditioner in the Courthouse. This has made conditions more comfortable for members and visitors.

We were represented at Donald's "Welcome to Newcomers" evening by one of our newest members, also a relative newcomer, who promoted the benefits of joining our Group.

Our October meeting saw the final steps taken to merge the Donald History and Natural History Group Incorporated and the Donald Music, Literature and Arts Society Incorporated, the merged body to be known as the Donald History Society Incorporated.

I sincerely thank the executive, members, and those in the community who volunteer their time to keep our Archives, Court House Museum, Agricultural Museum and Police Camp maintained and running smoothly.