

Donald History Society Inc.
President's Report 2023-24

I am pleased to present my seventh president's report to the 2024 AGM.

We ended 2023 with our annual dinner. Guest speaker for the evening was Doug Bradby, a history teacher with 30 years classroom experience, who now works with students at the Gold Museum, Ballarat. Doug has also found time to write several history books which he had for sale on the night.

Guest speakers at our monthly meetings have included Shane O'Shea, O'Shea family history; Colleen Tonkin, her time as a hairdresser; Jim Petrie, the stonemason trade; Peter Barbetti, recollections of a train engine driver; Sam Goldsmith, organizing festivals and events; Brian Brasier, the lead up to the 1924 football grandfinal and Gavin Young; Donald State School.

Two meetings have been held at different venues. In April we travelled out to Corack to view the Sands memorial plaque placed at the site of their original selection, before returning to the Corack Hall for our meeting. This was followed by a scrumptious afternoon tea provided by local residents. In August we met at the Donald railway station. Our archivist, who is researching Donald's railway houses, spoke following our meeting. We then walked along Walker Street to view some of these houses.

At the end of April, we hosted a Pole family reunion. Proceedings started with morning tea at the Courthouse Museum, before taking descendants on a tour of the Archives and Old Police Camp Museum. Several publications were sold and information on their various lines of the family supplied. A Pole Family publication was also presented to the Society.

Our Archives, open three days a week, regularly sees visitors calling in. Some leave with more information on their families, or the district, and sometimes we are gifted with information or items we didn't have. We have also completed a totally upgrade of our computer system this year.

Our Op-shop was opened for the Whole of Town Garage Sale, and along with running a raffle we raised a tidy sum. The same day we opened the Courthouse Museum for visitors to view our extensive collection.

The purchase of a laptop for the Courthouse Museum has allowed us to begin the transfer of catalogue sheets to the FileMaker Pro program we use at the Archives. A huge task, but we have to start somewhere. A thank you to our archivist who arranged an afternoon at the museum to hear "Jim the Fiddler" play his violin. Some of the locals who attended had never been in the museum before.

Members again opened the Agricultural Museum on Donald Show Day and were impressed by the interest shown.

A generous donation from a descendant of the Meyer family will allow us to erect an information board at the front of the Courthouse Museum describing the role played by pioneers, Johann August Meyer and his wife, Charlotte in the development of the Donald township. We also arranged to relocated the old memorial cairn which marked the site of Meyer's original "shanty" after it was moved to make way for agricultural purposes. The donation will also allow signage to be placed at the memorial cairn.

Three members attended the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies (WVAHS) Midlands Zone meeting at Birchip in September. Earlier in the year two members travelled to Nhill for the WVAHS Annual General meeting and Zone meeting.

Although we have 35 paid up members at present, with an average of 15 attending our meetings, we only have a very small number of dedicated volunteers. If anyone can spare an hour every now and then to help with cataloguing, indexing, organising a Facebook page, etc., it would be most appreciated.