

Donald History Society Inc.

President's Report 2024-25

I am pleased to present my eighth president's report to the 2025 AGM.

In December, members of the Meyer family travelled to Donald for our annual luncheon held at the Jeffcott Hotel. Guest speaker Vivienne Davidson, spoke on the role her ancestors, Johann August Meyer and his wife Charlotte played in the development of the Donald Township. Following lunch an information board erected at the front of the Courthouse Museum telling the story of these pioneers was unveiled by descendant, John Meyer. His generous donation allowed us to erect both this board and another at the memorial cairn located at the site of the Meyer's original "shanty".

Guest speakers for 2025 included: - Dougal McAlister, Regenerative Agriculture, a conservation and rehabilitation approach to food and farming; Isabelle Flett, the history of St. Andrew's Church in Woods Street; Rhonda Russell, the life of her father George Wood; Beryl Milne the history of the Fairmark shirt factory; John Kumm, the importances of the Men's Shed in the community; Jenny Campbell, the history of community gardens and the establishment of Donald's community garden and Anne Walsh, 100 Years of the Litchfield Hall.

Following on from stonemason, Jim Petrie's talk last year we visited his workshop in Watchem, where he demonstrated on a block of stone he is shaping into a sphere. After a meeting and afternoon tea at the Watchem Hall, we visited the old Watchem Bowling Club where the Watchem Progress committee plan to organize a museum. They have already gathered many items relating to the history of the town and surrounding district. We have invited them to visit our Archives, Courthouse Museum, Agricultural Museum and Old Police Camp.

Along with the Swanwater West Cemetery Trust we hosted a barbeque, tour of the cemetery and afternoon tea at the Donald Courthouse Museum. The event titled "Digging up the Past" celebrated the cemetery's history and showcased work recently completed by the Trust.

A lot of work has gone into cataloging and organizing displays in the museum this year. During History Month, the museum was opened every Friday during October from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Georgie Ah Ling, Donald's market gardener, collection being a feature.

Representatives from our Society attended the Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies (WVAHS) Annual General meeting and Zone meeting in Geelong in April and the Midlands Zone meeting at Pyramid Hill in September.

This year the Archives had some overdue painting and renovations done. Thank you to everyone, especially our latest volunteer, Lynette, who helped with the mammoth task of shifting and reinstating the contents.

As all of our members are well past retirement age it would be most appreciated if some of the younger members of the community could spare an hour every now and then to help us with the running of the Society and the preservation of the district's valuable history.

The Archives are open Tuesday and Friday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. or we can be contacted by email at donaldhistorysociety@gmail.com