

RAVENSTHORPE HISTORICAL SOCIETY (INC.) ANNUAL REPORT TO AGM 23 MARCH 2024

It has been the most challenging year of my Presidency so far with as much to do as in the past but fewer of us to do it. Some of the things we should have done have been postponed and some will probably never be done with our present structure. However I must balance the reality of our situation against the fact that we still achieve most of our objectives as defined by our constitution and remain financially viable thanks to Madeleine. We manage the Visitor Centre/Craftshop very successfully thanks in part to volunteers who are not members of RHS.

In the first instance I would like to acknowledge the passing of Rob Lloyd, one of our true stalwarts. Rob was always there when something needed to be done; not only that he had an eye for what was required and either did it himself or drew it to our attention to it and organised it. It was an appropriate touch that a true Australian passed on Australia Day 2024.

Deb Lynass left us during the year due to a teaching position re-location. I acknowledge her enthusiasm and commitment particularly in establishing with Enid Tink, the portable 'from the past' school displays. I have had a discussion with Mat Kennedy, Principal RDHS, to continue this project. He has indicated support.

The activities for the year divide somewhat arbitrarily into the following groupings; Facilities Management, Digital Access and Technology, Extension Project, Events, Publicity, Curation, Security, Advocacy, Visitor Centre and Craft shop.

Facilities Management

- Installed former Uniting Church bell in courtyard
- Installed three concrete plinths in the Railway Station precinct with RHFF funding
- Re-located both the Shire's first self-propelled road grader from Queen Street and a horse-drawn harvester from Paul and Val Metz's property to the Railway Station precinct.
- Allkem granted us \$2,000 to produce plaques for the above. This is yet to be achieved.
- Investigated re-locating Coleman's plough from the 'White Horse' paddock to the same site as above. Access difficulties at present are delaying the shift.
- The 'Visitor Centre' sign has finally been removed from the Cultural Precinct.

Digital Access and Technology

We have installed a new EFTPOS machine to accommodate the upgrade from 3G to 4G phone service. Our difficulties with website and email access appear to be due to the means of delivery of data to our computer rather than inadequacies with our ISP iinet. Our options seem to be to wait until NBN is delivered to our building which will happen as a matter of course as it is a Shire facility or to transfer to Telstra mobile broadband for both phone and computer access.

Extension Project

We have had four meetings throughout the year with CEO Matthew Bird to advance this project. We were successful in getting past stage 1 of an application for Commonwealth funding from 'Growing Regions Program'. The Shire then allocated \$30,000 to prepare a detailed application with professional inputs from Grants Empire and Peter Hobbs and Associates Architects. The application was submitted on 15 January and a decision is imminent. The current total costing is for \$2.24m (ex GST) with \$1.74m from the grant, \$0.48m from the Shire and local sources and \$0.02m from RHS .

Curation

Enid Tink has accessioned 64 objects into our collection this year and Chenda Goldfinch has scanned an additional 174 photographs.

Events

Two Magical Mystery History Tours were held, both to Mt Madden and environs. Forty one people attended. We were particularly fortunate to have the presence of both Ken Tilbrook and Darcy Roberts, both having had a family involvement in the farming settlement of Mt Madden.

I spoke of the historical significance of the site of the new Cultural Precinct at the official opening of **the building in September.**

Advocacy

In April we wrote to the WA Minister for the Environment in our capacity as a member of Cocanarup Conservation Alliance opposing the granting of exploration licence for Lithium in Cocanarup Timber Reserve. We also wrote to the Federal Minister for the Arts supporting the continuation of funding for Australian National Library 'Trove' scanning of historical newspaper articles.

Publicity

RHS had five articles published in Community Spirit throughout the year. Madeleine maintains and updates our website and sent out some 80 -90 Facebook postings usually based on photographic themes.

Security

Following a break-in through the perimeter fence and theft of a railway signal light in June, the issue of security has come to our attention. We note that we are vulnerable to theft both from legitimate visitors and illegal entry due to the very high monetary values of collectibles we house. Actions taken to date include:

- Install sign 'We reserve the right to inspect bags.....'
- Install Perspex covers and an additional lock to Shoe cabinet
- Allkem HSEC Manager, Marika Van Der Klught, addressed our meeting in November and with her colleague Josh XXXX later inspected the premises with a view to offering financial support to manage this issue. To the present, following an inspection and quote by 'Lloyde's Power Services' Allkem may fund motion sensitive lighting in the courtyard. Further discussion on internal security with surveillance cameras is on-going.

Visitor Centre and Craft Shop

Personally, I think this is the aspect of our operations we do best and I acknowledge the great work done by all VC volunteers not all of whom are RHS members. We receive accolades, both informal from impressed visitors and the funds we receive from donations is increasing.

Total visitor numbers i.e. people through the front door, but not necessarily visiting the Museum for the past six years are: 2019 – 5544, 2020 – 3202 (down due to Covid closure), 2021 – 4521 and 2022 – 4813, 2023 - 5870. According to Ann this is our highest ever visitor figure since RHS took over the VC in 2013. Approximately one third of total visitors visit the Museum.

Membership and the future

According to me we have a total of 24 members of whom about 7 are active participants. Noticeable is an influx of new members including Mark Thompson, Alan McCall, Collin Penny, Kevin Penny, Mary and Ric Kornus and Phil Bianchi. Phil attended our last meeting. I thank Kevin Penny for recruiting these members and welcome them. Most are not locals but they have an intense interest in history of local exploration routes and the water resources available to those who used them.

We cannot ignore that our local membership is declining and ageing and this could have very serious consequences for RHS if we can't rebuild our membership very quickly. We can only do this by having a vision and a plan e.g. the extension project, as well as presenting a range of engaging activities and reporting back on them which I believe we do to the best of our ability.

Andrew Chapman, President, Ravensthorpe Historical Society. 23 March 2024.