

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR AGM – LESLEY PICKERING

PORT OF YAMBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Friday 9th August 2024



It has been a very solid and fulfilling year for our Society. The high level at which our Society is held by the community was evident with the very successful visit in October 2023 by the NSW Governor the Hon Margaret Beazley and her husband Mr Dennis Wilson.

Like most of you, I've been watching the Olympics and in interviews all athletes speak about the village of support that got them to Paris. We're the same – we required on-going commitment and active roles taken by many individuals who are the focus my report.

Our **visitor numbers** increased by 10 percent on the previous year to a total of 3,323 including 390 for Group tours - 12% of our visitors. More details on this later from Tour Groups Coordinator Anne Dinham.

Our **membership was stable**, with 158 members at the end of June. The great majority of our members renew annually. Membership Coordinator Anne Dinham managed the membership process and the Annual Volunteer Information Day held in March was well-attended. The social outing with member Dr John Jackson along the Yamba Breakwall in September was thought-provoking for all of us.

Financially, the EOFY statement shows a healthy surplus and we increased our term deposit. Our Treasurer Kerry Hulm will present full details later. Kerry continued her high standard of recording and reporting on our finances, including monthly reports for Committee meetings, final preparation of our annual budget and assisting me to complete grant acquittals.

The Committee managed all Society matters with 9 members until the retirement of Gai Pritchett in May, giving her more time to pursue personal and family interests. The VP position that she held was left vacant. We met each month, worked with the Museum Advisor and attended two Chapter meetings at Bangalow and Mullumbimby and undertook an asset stocktake early June. Each Committee Member also assisted me by investigating information for grant applications. The level of commitment was outstanding, with decisions about actions, in particular, the expenditure of Society funds being researched and well-discussed. Committee members offered a range of views and voiced their comments with the Society's main purpose in mind.

This year, I'm going to report first on the mainstay jobs and roles held by individual volunteers before highlighting our achievements. It's these jobs that are core to keeping the museum open and viable, the community involved, and kept us on our purpose – to tell stories about the history and people of Yamba:

- ➔ **The Collection Team** continued to meet every Wednesday in the Flinders Room. After completing 12 online workshops (funded by a grant from M&G NSW) to upgrade themselves with the new MOSAIC software program for storing information about the collection, they refined procedures, in particular the Donation process and form. Donations continued to flow in over the year with the most significant being the donation of several personal items and writing implements belonging to the son of Capt Francis Freeburn, Yamba's First Pilot, dated pre-1879. Thank you very much to the team of 5: Jan Angelo as Coordinator, Denise Patten, Brenda Salisbury, Nicole Don, Meredith Bates. They are currently completing a full audit.
- ➔ Bev Mansfield again organised our **monthly roster for the Front Desk**. The change in hours, reducing to 4 hours per day for 5 days per week (20hrs per week), has relieved some pressure to fill timeslots yet Bev works at this all the time to ensure that we stay open as well as filling in for many vacancies. I'd like to thank all roster volunteers, 26 permanents and 15 reserves. I thank them also for taking on an extra role when we agreed to become a Visitor Information Outlet for the Council. Responding to questions and giving tourism advice is not always as straightforward as it sounds.

→ Rob Knight continued to manage our **5 databases and IT equipment** including updating passwords, installing a new printer/photocopier and dealing with the crisis when our new server broke down in April and had to be replaced. Rob also continued his work on improving the quality and size of the Image Library including his guidance for Fay Brown's work on data entry of the Palmers Island School admissions register. In April Rob sourced and collected from Woolli a second-hand vertical filing cabinet for our map collection - maps can be stored in hanging position when adhesive strips are attached to the top.

→ The level of visitors reflected the significant numbers who came to view art exhibitions in the Old Kirk. Once again **Venue Hire** Coordinator Margaret Lawrence dealt with numerous enquiries and visits by local creatives, brides and their mothers, varied individuals and groups about hiring the Old Kirk and the Function Room. This is a highly valued part of our operation in terms of community engagement, marketing and an excellent source of income. In summary, in the Old Kirk there were 7 art exhibitions involving 11 artists, 2 weddings, 4 back-up weddings and 2 other events such as the Paint & Sip workshop. I'll speak later about the in-house Surfing Exhibition.

As well, the Function Room was again hired out every Tuesday for 42 weeks of the year by Hearing Australia. The audiologist and customers have very low impact, and we found that HA management was flexible to accommodate our requests to use the Function Room when required, such as a Coach tour group having morning tea. The Committee has agreed to continue this long-term hire arrangement with review. In addition, there were 5 other events held in the Function Room, eg; 21st birthday party one Saturday afternoon.

Thank you to Margaret for your reliability, attention to details, emailing and ensuring that Hire Agreements are understood and signed and that payment is made in advance, organising for cleaning, and not least in assisting with the setting up and de-installation of art exhibitions. In regard to the latter, I'd like to thank John Marcus for his technical support and good-natured patience – often required as artists work out the placement of their artworks.

- ➔ Denise Patten became the editor of the newsletter late 2023, with 4 online editions emailed to members. Drawing on her creative desktop design skills, she has created an interesting and interactive form of communication that has lifted the Society's profile.
- ➔ Gai Pritchett produced a steady flow of quality media releases and publicised our exhibitions and events through varied outlets, assisted by Graeme East's postings on FB and Instagram. As Marketing Coordinator, Gai contributed to the Council website, liaised with Council tourism officers and distributed the museum flyer to many locations throughout the Lower Clarence. Gai will continue as the Marketing Officer.
- ➔ John McNamara continued digitising items for the Newspaper Index plus writing historical items for local newspaper publication and dealing with enquiries. He has also finished compiling a new publication *Yamba Between the War Years – A History from 1914 to 1945*; it's still in draft form and will be launched later this year.
- ➔ Thanks to the following for their consistent support: our website was regularly updated both in content and design features by Phil Cousemacker, assisted by Denise Patten; Brenda Salisbury continued to wow guests with her catering and worked in the garden; Secretary Anne Dinham once again excelled in managing emails, writing Minutes of meetings, referring comments/ideas by members to Committee, whilst also organising and leading weekly historical walking tours; the Bookshop was overseen by Jude McBean – a report from Jude later; Vicki Jermyn compiled visitor numbers for monthly committee meetings; Honey Clarke managed the Library and completed a stocktake at the start of June; gardener Ron Auld worked for 2 hours every Wednesday morning; Public Officer role was again filled by Colette Mann.

All **planned projects except for one** were completed - 13 out of 14 actions, working from the Strategic Plan and additional ones as necessary. You will be familiar with these examples:

- In October 2023, the Old Kirk front steps were replaced totally, using \$1,540 from a M&G NSW stipend.
- In Feb 2024, solar lighting of the garden was installed, costing \$7,500 from Yulgilbar Foundation grant (FRRR) – 4 new poles and 5 solar panels.
- In October 2023, the restoration of the 5 maritime signals was completed and they're back as part of our permanent exhibition in the Breakwater Room – total cost \$4,400, mostly grants but also \$1,400 from our own funds.
- Since October 2023, we've reviewed 4 policies: Collection; Exhibition; Information Technology; Marketing. There are 4 policies on the list for the next financial year.
- In December 2023, the Honour Board for Life Members was installed in the museum- it's currently hanging outside the File Room. Names of our newest LMs will be added after today's awards.
- **In April** we celebrated the Plunge festival with a mammoth Surfing Exhibition. It was curated by Gai Pritchett who was closely assisted by Fay Brown and Sue Masters, as well as considerable input from the local surfing community, and exhibition design ideas from Susan Ong. These 3 members worked solidly for 5 months. It was a huge success on many levels: 388 visitors; audible and visible pride and joy shown by visiting surfers; the compiling of historical information, new photos; loans of memorabilia. It took a huge effort, the curating team reached out to a different demographic group in our community and this was much appreciated by that community.

The one project that will transfer over is restoration of the War Honour Board from Palmers Island. You may have noted that the WWII names have faded badly and cannot be read easily. We are still getting quotes and advice on how to proceed.

To conclude, I thank our current village of support and hope it will expand soon, that more members will come along to chat about how they too can do something. Our good governance and the way we manage projects and Yamba Museum give me confidence to say that we add to the GLAM sector in NSW and continue to hold a prominent place in our community. Thankyou.