

Camperdown & District Historical Society Inc.
Annual General Meeting, 21st August 2018

Presidents Report

The past year has been a momentous one for our Society. We achieved two major objectives: Firstly to complete long planned improvements to our Heritage Centre and secondly, to publish a book about the founding Scots of Camperdown District.

Heritage Centre improvements

In 2009 we secured funding from Museums Australia (Victoria) to employ local Architect Paul McPhee to prepare plans for improvements to the Heritage Centre. The aim was to provide improved display and storage space and better facilities for visitors and volunteers. The proposed improvements included:

- Renovation of the old kitchen to provide better refreshment and meeting space for volunteers
- Replacement of the old supper room at the rear of the building to provide better display and storage space
- Construction of a new toilet block on the side of the building to provide safe and accessible toilets for volunteers and visitors.

The improvements over the years have been achieved through a close working relationship between our Society and Corangamite Shire - the owner of the building. Funding for the works has come from the Shire, our Society and external grants.

Renovation of the old kitchen was completed in 2012, but funds proved much more difficult to find for the expensive renovation of the old supper room and construction of the new toilet block.

After many submissions and much negotiation, Corangamite Shire Council approved funding of the improvements in their 2017/2018 budget. Our Society contributed \$5000.00 towards the cost of the improvements and contributed a further \$5000.00 by way of a grant we received from the Foundation for Regional & Rural Renewal (FRRR).

We are extremely grateful for the support Corangamite Shire has given us. The cost to the Shire has been substantial. I think this reflects the Council's recognition of the importance of preserving and promoting our local history and their confidence in our Society to deliver.

Founding Scots book

Our book *Scotland to Australia Felix: Founding Scots of Victoria's Camperdown District* was launched by Mr. Richard Riordan MLA, at the May 2018 Camperdown Robert Burns Scottish Festival.

The book has been a long time in gestation. Work started in 2009 sparked by the senseless vandalism of Camperdown's Robert Burns statue. Research associated with the statue's restoration brought to light the prominence of Scots in the European settlement of the district and their immense contribution to our social and economic progress.

Over the next few years our Society volunteers researched and published three booklets about the lives of Camperdown's 'Notable Scots'. The booklets proved very popular, so we decided to consolidate and expand the work about our 'founding Scots' into one volume.

In 2016 our Society was granted substantial funding from the Victorian Government and Public Record Office Victoria to publish our book.

We should feel justly proud of what we have achieved. It took hundreds of hours of meticulous research, editing and formatting to bring the book to fruition. I thank everyone who has in anyway contributed to the publication, but would particularly like to acknowledge the hard work of our 'Scots Book Committee': Rob Wuchatsch, Gillian Senior, Maree Belyea, Jan Whamond, Ray Watson and myself.

Rob Wuchatsch chaired the committee and his experience as a published author was invaluable. At times Rob drove the committee mad with his uncompromising insistence on correct grammar, historical accuracy and consistency, But Rob was right and as a result we have ended up with a very high quality, creditable publication.

So what else for the year?

I've focused on two major achievements for the year, but our Society has been active in many other areas.

Members have enjoyed our great quarterly newsletter and Facebook page put together by our Communications Officer, Gillian Senior.

Members have also enjoyed some wonderful guest speakers and field trips.

Our dedicated Heritage Centre volunteers have been busy sorting and cataloguing the collection, dealing with research requests and showing visitors around the Centre.

We had a major input to the 2018 Camperdown Robert Burns Scottish Festival. There were special openings and displays at the Heritage Centre and we again coordinated the very popular lecture series.

I want to pay special tribute to the outstanding work of Maree Belyea. Besides being our efficient Secretary and head researcher, Maree was the driving force behind the Camperdown Lions Club's wonderful heritage information signs dotted around the town. Maree and the Lions Club have received many accolades for their work. Most significantly, in June this year Maree was awarded a prestigious Lions Club International President's Medal for her role in coordinating the project. Very well deserved Maree!

In conclusion

To everyone in the Society who has contributed as an office bearer, committee member, Heritage Centre volunteer, or by simply being a member, I would like to express my sincere thanks.

Bob Lambell

President