

## Camperdown and District Historical Society President's Report 2023-2024

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As mentioned in last year's Presidents Report, Rob Wuchatsch stepped down after 5 years at the helm. I'd like to start by thanking Rob for his good work, his guidance during his tenure, and his continued support on the Committee.

Kicking off the year with a well-attended **Annual Meeting** on 8 August 2023. Our Guest Speaker, Alistair Tune shared his knowledge from over 20 years of experience in dry stonewalling, offering interesting insights and learnings from his career.

On Saturday 21 October we welcomed members of the **Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies** to Camperdown for a Southern Zone meeting. (*Western Victoria has three zones, Southern, Midlands & Wimmera*). The meeting was well attended by our neighbouring societies, offering a wonderful opportunity to exchange knowledge and stay up to date with evolving technologies.

Unfortunately, our **Local History Weekend** on 11 and 12 November did not go to plan. Our keynote speaker and tour leader, Allan Willingham was unable to join us due to serious injuries sustained in a car accident the week prior. Allan is still recovering, and we continue to wish him well. His contributions to our group are invaluable and deeply missed, and we look forward to having him back with us soon. Although the Saturday seminar was cancelled, Sunday's tour of historic properties in Camperdown and the visit to **Dalvui Homestead in Noorat** went ahead successfully, thanks to the unwavering leadership of Maree Belyea and Bob Lambell. We are so lucky and grateful for their dedication. We also extend our thanks to Emily Mercer from the Camperdown Neighborhood House and Bob Lambell, for their work in organising the event.

On 5 December, we held our annual **Christmas picnic at Puunyart**, the home of our late life member, Jim Wilson. We had the pleasure of viewing part of Jim's collection and were warmly welcomed by Sophie and Andrew. They shared insights into the property's current developments and its rich history.

In December, we awarded two small **history bursaries** to students at the Camperdown College (senior campus) and Mercy Regional College to support their studies and further encourage interest in local history.

In March, members enjoyed a behind the scenes look at the **Camperdown Theatre Royal**. Guided by the President of the Camperdown Theatre Company, Toby McKenzie, we were taken on a 'backstage,' 'under stage' and 'projection area' tour. Toby provided an engaging overview of the theatre's history, its inner workings and the exciting plans to usher the theatre into its second one hundred years.

The first weekend in April, I had the pleasure of representing our group at the 2024 **Western Victorian Association of Historical Societies Annual General Meeting** and weekend gathering of Societies in Nhill. This involved the three zones of Western Victoria, being Southern, Midlands and Wimmera. Each Zone had a short bi-annual meeting catching up on activities for the previous six months before the Annual General Meeting. Over the weekend, Nhill members took the opportunity to showcase both private and community collections of local history. One of those, the Nhill Silos project, may never reach full restoration (for financial and safety reasons) but it will preserve an important part of Nhill's history.

On 16 May, Maree Belyea and I attended a regional seminar hosted by the **Royal Historical Society of Victoria** in Mortlake. The full-day event, part of a series held in regional areas, featured four guest speakers who shared insights on preserving and promoting local history and recruiting support for historical societies.

On 25 May members and friends visited the Langs' property, **Titanga at Lismore**. We enjoyed an informative tour that covered the history of the property, as well as details about the historic

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buildings, farm operations and tree plantings in the immediate surrounds of the homestead. Initiatives in land preservation and tree plantings began at Titanga in 1886, exactly one hundred years before Landcare Victoria kicked off near St Arnaud in 1986.

In June, our committee and member volunteers were actively involved in preparing for and helping with the many activities across the **Robert Burns Celtic Festival** weekend from the 21st to 23rd. Although we do not run the festival, our involvement greatly enhances it, though it does stretch our resources. Once again Bob Lambell coordinated and arranged four high-quality speakers for our trademark **History Talks** on the Saturday.

We also contributed to the festival's promotion, with reprints of the 'Robert Burns Statue' pamphlet and also this year, we did a reprint of the 'Our Inspiring Women' pamphlet.

Connecting with local secondary schools, we were able to facilitate visits and presentations on the First Nations People of our region. These educational sessions assist students with valuable insights and will help us to foster a deeper understanding of the cultural and historical significance of the First Nations communities in our area.

Thanks to a dedicated team of volunteers, our centre remains open every Tuesday and on the first Sunday of the month. While entry is now free, we maintain a donation jar, and the contributions received have maintained the previous level of income. During open days, volunteers are actively engaged in sorting, researching and recording sourced information to ensure it is stored and accessible to everyone. We welcome visitors to explore our resources and collections at any time. A heartfelt thank you to our volunteer helpers always goes a long way too - boosting our energy and enthusiasm.

To David and Penny Conn of Dalvui, Andrew and Sophie Wilson of Puunyard, and the Chris and Andrew Lang families of Titanga, we extend a very big thank you for the privilege you granted our members and friends during our visits to your properties. We so deeply appreciate the rich history you shared with us.

A heartfelt thank you to our Secretary, Maree Belyea for meticulously managing the paperwork, and to Kevin Murray, our Treasurer for maintaining our finances with precision. I also extend my gratitude to all my fellow committee members and volunteers for your dedicated efforts and the vibrant activity you help to generate within our society.

A special mention goes to committee member, Gillian Senior, who, at over 90 years of age, has decided to step down after thirteen years' dedicated service - eight of which were spent as our newsletter editor and five more as part of the newsletter team with Angela Preiss and Rob Wuchatsch. We sincerely thank Gillian for her invaluable work and friendship and look forward to her continued involvement.

From the activities listed above, it's clear that this year has been another busy one for the Camperdown and District Historical Society. We have consistently maintained close connections at both the zone and state levels to ensure best possible outcomes and have continued to deliver a valuable service to the region. Congratulations and thank you to all.

**Lyle Tune, President**

12 August 2024.