

## **Bundanoon History Group Inc.**

### **Presidents Report 2020 - 21**

Here is my report up to December 2020.

Well this last year has been my final term as your president. It's been a year when our membership topped 135, and a time when we have been presented with some unique and unprecedented challenges.

I believe, that looking back at 2020, we can be proud of what we have achieved. Whilst Covid-19 forced us to close the Old Goods Shed and cancel all events, many other BHG activities continued behind the scenes.

In **2020** for me, there were four **Highlights** that stood out amongst many:

- i) the Bushfires Archive Project – capturing a legacy of the Morton Fire for future historians;
- ii) Ralph Clark's monthly Captain Cook bulletins - reminding us of Cook's voyage to Australia, some 250 years ago;
- iii) in September restarting our Monthly meetings at the Bundanoon Social Club - great to get the show back on the road;
- iv) creating the Bundanoon Heritage Trail – a History Group legacy that enhances the visitor experience to Bundanoon and for everyone in the community to enjoy the heritage of where we live.

I'll say more on these later, as we look back on the year in more detail.

First though, lets acknowledge the diversity and talent we have within this Group. Because of Covid-19, all our of our speakers last year were home-grown. They **all** came **all the way** from Bundanoon.... a few even had to cross the Railway line,.... and each and everyone gave an excellent presentation.

Now lets remember back to **January 2020**, ... school holidays, family time, traditionally no meetings..... but a traumatic start to the decade. Bundanoon narrowly dodged a bullet from the Morton Bushfire, and huge areas of the Morton National Park were burnt out, plus some houses, leaving ecosystems maybe lost and damaged forever.

The Morton Bushfire was a significant event in Bundanoon's history, and has since been well recorded for the Archives by the Bushfire Project.

**February** – on 10th February, the Morton fire was officially declared “out”. No more evacuations, and a big drop in anxiety levels. At the February meeting, Philip Morton gave us a well-researched talk on “the early history of the Meryla Pass and locality. A beautiful and historic area that's always been a source of mystique.



At the **March** AGM, we voted in the same Committee as the previous year, except for Helen Clark. Helen, after five years as the Archive Team Convenor, was moving to Tasmania. Tassie's gain was our loss.

Helen was constantly working quietly and efficiently behind the scenes, and is well remembered for her work curating the Heritage Trail, and many historical display panels in the Old Goods Shed.

After Helen stepped down, Ian Smith took over the role of Archive Convenor. It's a job that Ian, supported by his team has done admirably. And just so that we didn't get bored, Ian became the driving force in our Archives Digitisation project –which will go on for some considerable time in the future.

Following the AGM, we enjoyed Christine Cassin's account of Elizabeth Broughton's tale of survival in the early 1800's. "Betsey Broughton", rescued from a Maori massacre; ended up in Peru; later returned to NSW; and even later became the wife of local explorer Charles Throsby.

**April** turned out to be another fraught month. 4 weeks after the AGM, we were catapulted into lockdown, the first wave in the global Covid19 pandemic. Confined to home, shopping online, a shortage of toilet paper - as Glenn sales shot up in the supermarket, so the BHG shut down. Everything was cancelled and the OGS closed. We adjusted to the new way of keeping in touch via Zoom.

The BHG remained under the Covid19 cloud for the next 5 months. No face to face meetings, nothing....except a monthly Newsletter. We bumped up the Newsletter content and waited for things to get better.

Covid-19 also put the dampers on the Captain Cook 250<sup>th</sup> celebrations. Over a number of previous meetings we had enjoyed Ralph Clark's updates on Cook's historic voyage, 250 years earlier, and a special talk was planned for the April meeting.

All was cancelled. Fortunately, Ralph continued to keep us up to date and mailed us the Captain Cook Newsletters over many months..... which everyone admired and enjoyed. Thank you Ralph.

Fast forward now to **September**, when social distancing, sanitizers and wearing of masks had become a way of life. With less stringent Covid regulations we held our first Group meeting in 6 months. Not here, (the Hall had a 20 people limit), but in the Bundanoon Social Club, allowing up to 40. We were grateful to Steve and Amy Press for organising the Social Club, and getting us up and running once again.

Our guest speaker was Harvey Grennan, ex Sydney Morning Herald journalist. Harvey entertained us with his many stories and anecdotes, first as a journalist and later as Press Secretary to the Minister for Transport NSW. Back in the 1960s and 70s.

In **October**, Marina Beaumont told us about her expat life in Singapore and Malaysia in the 60's. As Singapore became an independent sovereign state, Marina gave a fascinating insight into the communal and racial tensions she experienced at that time.



Also in October we welcomed new Committee members Steve and Amy Press but lost Jewel Hillier who resigned as she and Ken were moving away.

Now on to **November**. Another relaxation in Covid regs, and we were back into the Hall for our monthly meeting.... although no mingling and no morning tea! Francesca Beddie, project co-ordinator of the Morton Bushfire Project shared a number of insights gained from the material collected about the fires. The project started in February and for the rest of the year the team worked hard, gathering oral histories, newspaper cuttings, photographs, social media posts and video. We are indebted to them all for the massive amount of work they have done. A special thanks to Francesca, and also to Beryl Seckington, who has catalogued, copied and backed up the masses of material collected. We are proud to have:

- completed 32 oral history interviews;
- made 2 videos, one which was displayed in the Good Yarn shop window, and one now in the National Museum of Australia
- created a Bushfire Display Panel mounted on the Old Goods Shed
- secured a \$1,500 Grant from the Oral History Society NSW

Thanks to everyone involved and their contributions to this project.

Finally on to **December**, when we broke with tradition. Instead of holding the Christmas lunch in the Hall, we were hosted by the Southern Highlands Carriage Club. It was a superb rural setting and we were treated to a world-class display of carriage driving by Gail Baine and her husband Barry. As usual, the Lions Club put on a great spread and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

**So that's 2020**, now, I just want to say a few more words about the Heritage Trail and the Archive team:

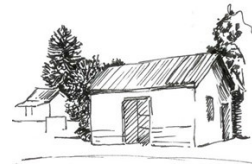
- **Heritage Trail** It's taken 2 years .....we have spent \$7,666.... we have scaled mountains of beaurocracy, red tape, and delays, but the finishing line is in sight. The signs are fabulous and all will be in place before Easter..... otherwise you can impeach me!

- **Archive Team** ... thanks to the Archive team (Ian, Carol, Graham and Beryl) for doing such a great job managing the Collection ( 14,845 items and 2,700 high res photos), ....it's a very big ask. And thanks to Peter Goulding and his team who always do a great job managing the Old Goods Shed where everything is stored.

**So that's it .....2020 confined to the bin.**

**To conclude** it was a massive year in so many ways.

None of it could have been done without you the members, our hardworking Committee, and the many many others working behind the scenes. As we have a busy meeting ahead, I am going to skip over the list of acknowledgements, but you will be listed in the next Newsletter but I want to thank you all so much for your hard work.



Secretary Irene, and Treasurer Graham are stepping step down from their executive roles this year. You will be missed. Your contributions are part of the success enjoyed by the Bundanoon History Group over many years, thank you.

Finally, for me, it's been an honour and a privilege, to serve as your president for these past 3 years. Thank you.

**David Brennen**

President  
1 March 2021

**Addendum of Acknowledgements:**

Thanks to Peter Goulding and his team ( Neil Wright, Don Gray and Graham Morgan) for managing the Old Goods Shed.

Thanks to Beryl and Robert Seckington for managing the History Group website, backups, databases, QR codes, and the myriad of other technical stuff that you do.

The Oral History Project continues, now ably co-ordinated by Jim Rooney. Thanks also to Linda Emery, Philip Morton and the Berrima District Historical Society for storing our Oral History backups.

Thanks to Ralph, Pam, Don, Di, Peter and Kerry for organising the Christmas luncheon, and Ralph for organising guest speakers.

Thanks to everyone who has contributed to the Newsletter and especially to Irene and Philip Morton for picking up the Editor's deliberate mistakes.

Thanks to Sandra Nicholls for once again auditing our accounts.

Thanks to John and Rosemary for managing the Hall, ready for meetings.

Thanks to Graham for continuing to maintain our membership records.