

## **Bundanoon History Group Inc.**

### **Presidents Report 2021 - 22**

Here is my report for 2021, my final year as president and a year that I will remember, as full of unpredictability.

I have always maintained that the strength of the BHG is because of its members, it's hardworking Committee, and the community we live in. And despite 2021 being a continuation of the Covid-19 pandemic, our group has continued to grow in many ways.

In 2021 the our membership reached the highest ever, topping 165. But it's not just about numbers; our recent actions and deeds have continued to increase our standing within the community.

In **2021** the following three **Highlights** stood out amongst many:

- i) *Firstly*, in April we launched the Bundanoon Heritage Trail, the result of masses of hard work, which was well received within the community.
- ii) *Secondly*, despite the pandemic, throughout the year we have strived to maintain a level of normality, "keeping the show on the road". Yes, the Old Goods Shed was closed, but we only cancelled two members meetings, and still managed well supported visits to the Sunnataram Forest Monastery, Golden Vale Homestead, Windellama and held a drinks event at Gambells Rest.
- iii) *Thirdly*, whilst unable to hold our usual fundraising activities, the finances have been well managed and we start the new financial year in a robust position - the Bushfires project won a grant of \$1,500; we raised \$2000 at the Mothers Day Raffle; we donated \$900 to others; and after 20 years of a \$10 membership fee, we raised the fee to \$20, ensuring a financial margin of stability for the coming year.

Myself, and Treasurer David will say more on these later, but lets look back on the year in more detail.

**January** is traditionally the holiday month, except this year it was a holiday in the middle of a global pandemic. The good news was that in NSW, case numbers were dropping and the BHG was already prepared with its Covid Safety Plan and QR Code. We were all looking forward to the year ahead, albeit with the need to operate within the evolving pandemic constraints, imposed by the Federal and State governments.

**February** - Our first meeting of the year was at the Sunnataram Forest Monastery in the great Hall when our Speaker, Dr Carolyn Cosgrove presented us with a well researched talk on the Edenholme Guest House, the site on which the



Monastery is now built. This was followed by one of the best ever Thai Curry lunches, plus a tour of the Monastery and gardens by Abbot Phra Mana and Kim McSweeney. It was a hot summers day and great to catch-up with everyone, although Covid restrictions had limited our numbers.

February was also memorable for the Bushfires Project when our video on the Morton 2020 Bushfire was accepted into the Archives of the National Museum of Australia; and we also won a \$1,500 grant from the Oral History Society of NSW.

For the **March** AGM we were back in the Hall but Covid restrictions meant no morning tea. We voted in our 2021 Committee, welcoming David LeCheminant, and Steve Press, as our new Treasurer and Secretary. My huge thanks to Graham Morgan and Irene Brewster who had done these roles so admirably over the previous three years.

Following the AGM, our Guest Speaker was local historian and author, Dr Narelle Bown. Narelle had recently published a local history of *The Aborigines of the Southern Highlands of New South Wales*.

Now onto **April** and another Covid changing month. Loosening pandemic restrictions allowed us back to the Hall, no need to register in advance, and most important of all, we served morning tea. Yours truly gave a presentation on the History of Golden Vale Homestead..... the Sutton Forest property owned by the National Trust. My talk was an introduction to a self drive visit to the Homestead the following week, followed by a sausage sizzle in the gardens.

April was also the month we launched the Bundanoon Heritage Trail. Almost 3 years in the making and costing \$9,000, it was our gift to the village. Chris and Erica Peterson unveiled the final sign on a raw Thursday afternoon. We also launched the Heritage Trail Brochure, cleverly designed by Ralph Clark, we are already into the second edition and will soon be planning a third.

**May** was another normal month in the Hall and local resident John Hines, shared his memories of growing up in Penrose and Bundanoon. A talk made even more special since John's family were one of the first settler families in the area, arriving in the mid 1800's.

May will also be remembered as the month that brought a smile to Treasurer David's face, thanks to the Mothers Day Raffle, ably organised by Trish Arbib. With prizes donated by our community, the raffle raised around \$2000. Our main source of income for the year.

The BHG also had a self drive visit to Windellama, south-east of Goulburn on 16 May. As usual, Ralph Clark and his team planned it with meticulous detail, complete with a car trail quiz of local landmarks on the way. 45 members and friends turned up and everyone had a great time.

In **June**, Philip Morton was our guest speaker who gave a fascinating look back in time, illustrated by photos from the Berrima Archives. Before the meeting we



hosted our traditional fundraiser for Australia's Biggest Morning Tea. It was a good result and we donated \$550 to the Cancer Council NSW.

June can also be remembered as the month when the Covid pandemic notched up a gear. We thank fuzzy government rules and a Sydney airport limousine driver, who unleashed the more contagious Delta variant into the community. Sydney, and later all of us were put back into lockdown and the **July and August** meetings cancelled.

In **September**, still unable to meet in the Hall, we held our first virtual meeting on Zoom. Bud Townsing gave an excellent talk illustrated by amazing photographs taken by Gus Nicholas in the late 1800s. The talk was well supported and we were pleased to share it online with the folks in the Berrima and District Family History Society

Also in **September**, Ros Dale, long time Berrima resident gave a Zoom presentation to the BHG and the Berrima Society on the Heritage listed Berrima jail.

**October** was another Zoom meeting when we shared a couple of history videos, and then fast forwarded on to November.

In **November**, armed with mask and double vaccination certificates we were allowed back in the Hall, .... still no mingling, but we did serve morning tea! After four months, it was great to be back together again and we were treated to a combined talk from the Archive team on some of the significant buildings in Bundanoon.

We also had a Drinks and Nibbles event at Gambells Rest one late November afternoon, when around 50 members turned up.

Finally, on to early **December**, and our traditional Christmas lunch. We were lucky with the timing, just a couple of weeks before the super virulent Omicron mutation hit NSW and the number of infections rocketed skywards, breaking all records. We were hosted once again by the Southern Highlands Carriage Club. The weather was touch and go and because the ground was too wet, the carriage driving display cancelled. Fortunately, the rains held off and Santa, (who looked a bit like Don Gray), managed to drop in and enhance our festive cheer. As usual, the Lions Club put on a great spread and we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

**So that's 2021**, done and dusted. A pandemic year of uncertainty, delineated by Covid virus mutations. And despite all of this the BHG has continued to thrive.

Peter Goulding, and Don Gray have done a wonderful job looking after the maintenance of the OGS, something that we can't afford to neglect as it's where our precious archives are stored. And Rodent Control Officer, Graham Morgan, has kept the local vermin out for yet another year. The Archive Team, led by Ian Smith, diligently continue behind the scenes managing the Archive collection. A much valued service for the whole community.



Also, thanks to social media, the BHG is now reaching out to an audience way beyond our membership of 165. Over the past year:

- the Web site was visited by over 15,000 people who looked at almost 100,000 pages of content, regularly updated by Beryl and Robert Seckington.
- our Facebook Page has around 500 followers, looking at news and local history items, regularly posted by Steve Press and Cat Ayers

We continue to Advocate on local Heritage matters:

- We worked with Council's Heritage Officer researching and proposing local additions to the Shires List of Heritage properties, a list last updated in 2010.
- We made submissions to Council regarding development proposals at Rochester Park, the Old Argyle Road, and the retirement homes on Old Wingello Road.
- We suggested to Wendy Tuckerman, State MP, that the Pill Factory is included in the newly launched NSW "Blue Plaque" initiative.
- ..and the Heritage Trail keeps growing – new signs are in the making for the Tennis Club and the Bundanoon Hotel (celebrating it's 100<sup>th</sup> year), with more planned in the pipeline.

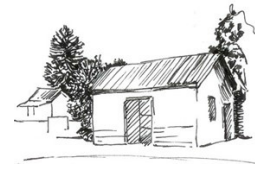
I am also pleased to report that the Oral History project, started by Marianne Ward in 2006 continues to thrive.

- We now have a team of 17, ably co-ordinated by Jim Rooney. Eight newcomers were trained up by Jim late last year.
- And Francesca Beddie remains busy curating the Morton Bushfire interviews. A new video is on the way, funded by the NSW Oral History Society Grant.

Lastly, it would be remiss of me not to mention next month's much anticipated trip to Norfolk Island. Organised last year by the indefatigable Ralph Clark and his sub-committee, the tour instantly attracted new members to the group. It was the best travel bargain on the market, sold out fast, and yet another example of the energy and optimism within this Group.

**To conclude** it has been another significant year and none of it could have been done without you, our members, the Committee, and many others behind the scenes.

There's not time to acknowledge everyone but I must mention Ralph Clark, Don and Di Gray, David LeCheminant, Steve and Amy Press, Peter and Kerri Goulding, Beryl and Robert Seckington, Graham Morgan, Ian Smith, Carol Cosgrove, Francesca Beddie, Jim Rooney, Cat Ayers, Trish Arbib, Harvey Grennan, Pam Davies. You have all been amazing. Thank you all so much for your hard work.



Now, as I look back to when I became President four years ago, the planet has become a much more dangerous place. We and the world have changed. From the fires of 2019, to the floods of today. From the global pandemic, to the unprovoked and indiscriminate Russian bombing of the Ukraine over the past 12 days. Documenting and understanding history becomes ever more critical.

Despite all of this, for me it has been a most rewarding and enjoyable time. It has been an honour and privilege to be your President. Thanks for making me feel so welcome and for your support and encouragement.

Thanks again everyone.

**David Brennen**

President

7 March 2022