

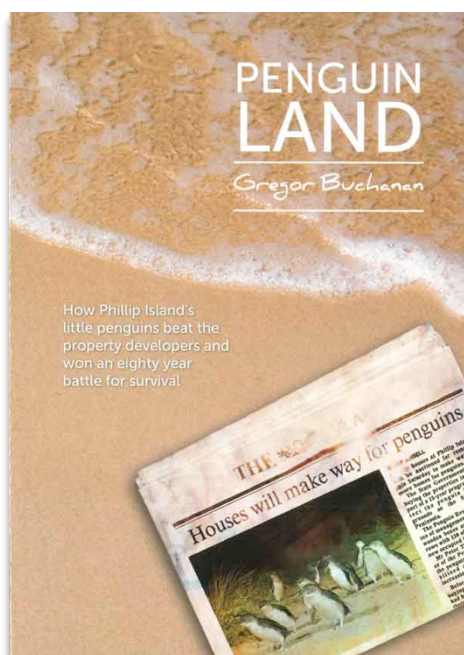


Historical Society

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October 2023 Newsletter

Welcome to our latest Newsletter.



The Society held its AGM on 21st September at the Phillip Island RSL and were delighted, once again at the wonderful attendance of its members. It is just so heart-warming to see the support our membership offers the committee by attending these meetings and the enjoyment gained by the social interaction offered with the lunch beforehand. The Minutes for the meeting have been uploaded on our new website. However, I have included both the President's and the Secretary's Reports in this Newsletter.

Attendees were treated to a talk by Gregor Buchanan, author of a wonderful book titled *Penguin Land*. Greg gave us insights into the background of the historic buyback of a township, Summerland, which was transformed into a wildlife reserve for our little penguins. His detailed account of how this world-first

initiative unfolded, spearheaded by Premier John Cain, left the audience amazed at the dedication and vision that went into securing the future of these adorable creatures.

I'd like to take a moment here to thank the committee for this year. It's been a very busy year for us, but all members of the committee have contributed so well and shared the load – asond a big thank you to you all.

I would also like to especially thank Bev Forrest, who has stepped away from the committee this year, after years of dedication, especially with the cataloguing of our endless collection of artefacts. To the cataloguers, a number of whom are not committee members – thank you also for your support – your vital work does not go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated!



Entrance from car park – showing Museum entrance on the right hand side.

Finally, I would like to thank our two new committee members for putting their hands up this year – that's Jason Cameron and Cheryl Overton. Neither are strangers to our Society – and we promise we will be gent with you!

The hot topic at the moment is the launching of our new museum to the public on the 2nd November in the brand-new Cowes Cultural



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Centre. The committee is working furiously to ensure that the new museum is everything we had hoped for and more. With our five digital stories now completed, we were able to give attendees at our AGM a sneak preview of what visitors will see on the digital displays in the museum.

The month of October will be a frenetic one for the committee – as we work towards deadlines to complete the curating of the museum's opening exhibits, and thereafter move our operations from the Chapel Street abode, where we have been sharing the Genealogical Society's rooms for the past three years, to our new research premises on the first floor of the new Cultural Centre. My, how time has flown!

Off-site storage of our collection also offers us new challenges – something that we will face and conquer!

HOME PADDOCK STORIES PHILLIP ISLAND AND BEYOND



LAURIE DIXON

I am sure members will be interested in a couple of books which will be launched this month. The first is Laurie Dixon's *Home Paddock Stories – Phillip Island and Beyond* and the other is David's Rathgen's book titled *No Place Quite Like it* on the lives of landscape artist Walter Withers and his wife, Fanny Flinn. Details about the launch of both of these publications are on the following pages.

A big welcome to new members who have recently joined: **Greg Buchanan**, past President of the Bass Coast Branch of the National Trust. Greg is a passionate historian and a great asset to our Society – Welcome Greg. We also welcome **Jason Cameron**, who has been absolutely amazing with his production skills for our digital video which will be launched in the museum. Jason is a history buff and has lived on and been connected with Phillip Island for many years. We also welcome **Lorele Hince**. Lorele is a descendant of the wonderful Charles and Margaret Grayden clan – and has a great interest in the island's history. We also welcome **Patricia Olsen** to our Society.

If any members would like to give me a bit of background on their connection to our island history – it would be greatly welcomed!

In this edition I have included a story on the naming of Walpole Street in Cowes, which I wrote for Phillip Island Vibe magazine some time ago.

Enjoy

Pamela Rothfield



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HOME Paddock STORIES PHILLIP ISLAND AND BEYOND



LAURIE DIXON

You are warmly invited to
Laurie Dixon's Home Paddock
for the launch of his book

HOME Paddock STORIES: PHILLIP ISLAND AND BEYOND

Phillip Island identity Laurie Dixon brings local
history to life with personal anecdotes in his home
paddock stories.

2.00pm
Saturday December 2, 2023
Shearing Shed
Otira
236 Ventnor Beach Road, Ventnor.

Refreshments and finger food.

RSVP: Jenni Dixon - 0412 518 366
jennidixon48@gmail.com
Sally Whitehead - 0439 830 132
waveski2@bigpond.com

Books available \$35 cash sales only



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NO PLACE QUITE LIKE IT

the Family History
of Walter Withers
and Fanny Flinn

INVITATION to the launch of
David Rathgen's
NO PLACE QUITE LIKE IT

at the
Genealogical Society Rooms
56 Chapel Street Cowes

at

1.30pm Friday 27 October 2023

Books will be available for sale @ \$65 per copy

David Rathgen 0411 118 706



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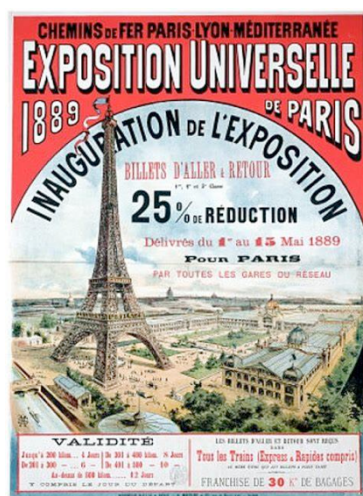
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The Naming of Walpole Street Cowes By Pamela Rothfield

This picturesque street, stretching in a north-south direction from Chapel Street in Cowes down to the Esplanade, leading to the beautiful Cowes beach, bears the name of Reginald Herbert Robert ('Robert') Seymour Walpole. The son of a clergyman, Robert was born in Balderton, Nottinghamshire, England.

Official documents described Robert as a gentleman, who at the age of 22, emigrated to Australia from England in 1875, alongside his brother Horace, following four years spent in the United States. Initially, he worked for the Bank of Australasia in New Zealand for three years and then returned to Australia, seeking employment on remote cattle stations. His life took a significant turn in 1882 when he married Jane Sophia Kent, daughter of a civil engineer in Launceston.

In 1883, Robert, who by this time was well connected, was appointed as the Secretary of the Calcutta Exhibition in India, marking the beginning of his career as an event organizer.



Robert's career flourished as he was chosen to serve as the Commissioner for Victoria at two prestigious World Fairs: the Centennial International Exhibition in Melbourne in 1888 and the Paris Exhibition in 1889. It was at the 1889 Paris Exhibition that the iconic Eiffel Tower was unveiled, serving as the entrance arch to the World Fair.

In 1903, Robert assumed the role of Secretary of the Victorian Employers' Federation and played a pivotal role in establishing the Employers' Federation of NSW the same year. Additionally, he was instrumental in founding the Australian Women's National League and the Anti-Socialist Alliance.

Described as a tall and slender man, Robert earned the nickname 'Tallpole' and became a notable figure in Melbourne. However, his confrontational style and abrasive demeanour made him unpopular. In fact, he acknowledged in 1908 that many regarded him as 'the most unpopular man in Australia.' Consequently, the Victorian Employers' Federation sought to limit his public presence in organizations like the Australian Women's National League.

In 1908, Robert and his wife Jane settled on Phillip Island, where they constructed a charming summer residence, which they named '*Buena Vista*' located in what we know



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today as Warley Avenue. They made this their permanent home around 1915, along with two of their daughters.

Tragically, one year after their permanent move to Phillip Island, Robert's wife, Jane passed away at the age of 59 due to influenza and pneumonia at their cherished *Buena Vista* home.



Robert continued to reside at *Buena Vista* (pictured left) until 1922 when, possibly due to declining health, he relocated to Heidelberg to live with his daughters, Florence and Gladys.

In 1923, the generous philanthropists Mr. and Mrs. William E. Thompson, who were great benefactors of Phillip Island, acquired the lovely *Buena Vista* home. They donated it to the people of Phillip Island for use as a

hospital and renamed it Warley Bush Nursing Hospital.

Almost four decades later, in 1962, when the new Warley Hospital was constructed, the original Walpole home was relocated to the nearby Genista Street.

Robert passed away in July 1928 at his daughters' residence in Heidelberg and was laid to rest beside his wife Jane in the Cemetery on his beloved Phillip Island.

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Christmas Dinner 2023



We have confirmed the date for our Christmas function this year. The get together will take place on

Friday 8th December at St Philip Parish Hall

6pm for a 6:30pm start.

The dinner will be catered for by Jayne Messendorf, who will be no stranger to many of you and for those who are unfamiliar with her outstanding fare – you're in for a treat.

We are hopeful of offering some live music for this year's end of year function as well. The dinner will cost \$45 per head and we would ask that drinks are BYO. Please RSVP to Judy Gittus at: **j.gittus43@gmail.com**

As usual there will be a special Xmas hamper door prize and it promises to be a wonderful night to celebrate the achievements of our Society throughout the year. We hope everyone can make this special evening.



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SPECIAL BALLOT

The Grand Opening of the Cowes Cultural Centre
is set for

Wednesday 1 November 2023 at 6pm,
featuring an exclusive invitation-only event arranged by the
Bass Coast Shire Council. Council officers have informed
me that a limited number of event tickets will be made
available to the community. In keeping with the tradition of
Phillip Island dating back to 1868 the selection process for
these tickets will be conducted through a ballot system.

Registration for the ballot should be made
at: [https://www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/about-council/news-
listing/new-cultural-centre-ballot](https://www.basscoast.vic.gov.au/about-council/news-listing/new-cultural-centre-ballot)

And as with all ballots – tickets will be selected at random. Good luck to you all.

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Our Website. www.phillipislandhistory.org.au

Our email address: hello@phillipislandhistory.org.au



Don't forget that the Phillip Island and District Historical Society depends on increasing our membership for its secure future. A healthy membership ensures that we can continue to catalogue our collection, as well as embark on various projects which preserves and shines a light on our region's history. Spread the word! Single Membership \$30 Family \$40

Newsletter written and edited by Pamela Rothfield

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President's Report Year ended 30 June 2023

Today, I want to focus on the challenges and opportunities that are there for the Historical Society in the following year.

I refer to the Secretary's Report for an insightful and detailed account of the Society's activities for the year ended 2023 – and there has been a lot going on. Likewise, the Treasurer's Report will feel the pulse of our financial health.

The big news is, of course, (as all diligent readers of our local paper will note), the museum, our museum, will be 'open for business' to the public from the 2nd November 2023.

There is not any news that is more welcome for our Society.

I think that it is important to pause here for a moment and note two very important points;

1. We have a permanent museum space in the prime piece of council real estate in Cowes and,
2. We have a permanent research area (including a valued compactus) in that same piece of real estate.

As all of us would appreciate, this is not the case for most historical societies across Victoria. Looking not too far into the future, the Historical Society will be the sole curator of the Museum. This means that primary responsibility for the museum – both financial and organisational will be ours. Challenges and opportunities in one sentence.

We also face the standard challenges that are part of every volunteer, not for profit organisation: maintaining and increasing an active and interested membership and making sure that our financial viability is secure.

Some time ago, I was asked what I thought was the role of an historical society. I had read a fair bit of complicated descriptions, but I think that two words about cover it: '**Preserve**' ie preserve our own history through cataloguing, digitising, storing and collecting relevant items so that we become an easily accessible resource for research and '**Present**' ie to present our own history in our museum and other events and through publications, including but not limited to online and print.

I think that includes an awful lot of good, exciting, interesting and rewarding projects. I am looking forward to the coming year. I believe that the best is yet to come.

Doug Waugh

President



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Secretary's Report 30 June 2023

The fiscal year concluding on June 30, 2023, presented the Society with several notable challenges as we diligently worked towards the museum and research room fit-out, as well as the launch of our opening exhibitions.

We are thrilled to announce the successful completion of our five digital stories, all well within budget and delivered on schedule. This achievement wouldn't have been possible without the outstanding contributions of Jason Cameron, who served as the producer, editor, and director for these five remarkable videos.

Throughout the year, we hosted a couple of events that not only garnered significant attention but also earned praise for our Society. First among these was the 'Gathering of Neighbours', which took place in January. This event featured an art exhibition, live music, and family-oriented activities at the Rhyll Hall and Park. Thanks to receiving a Federal Government grant for the event, we were able to transfer beautiful historical images onto canvas, a gesture that was warmly received by our audience.

Another noteworthy event was our participation in the National Trust's Heritage Week celebration. During this occasion, we organized a re-run of the Pioneer Palaces Tours of Rhyll, complete with morning and afternoon tea, offering participants a glimpse into the historical homes of Rhyll. These tours sold out, not only providing our Society with much-needed funds but also engaging the community in our mission.

In addition to our event successes, we were fortunate to secure a Federal Government Volunteers grant for equipment, the allocation of which is yet to be finalized.

Furthermore, we received two grants from the Bass Coast Shire. One of these grants was for shelving in our storage unit, while the other supported the development of our wonderful new website, which I am delighted to report is now operational. Notably, the Bass Coast Shire has covered our storage unit expenses until December 31, 2023, however thereafter we must carefully consider our future off-site storage needs and find an affordable solution.

During the year, our Society submitted a proposal to the Council concerning the installation of historical signage to recognize sites of historical value on Phillip Island and San Remo. We are pleased to report that the Council has expressed its commitment to include this project as part of the signage review scheduled for 2023/2024.

Membership-wise, we are delighted to have welcomed 16 new members to the Society during the year. Our monthly articles in the Phillip Island VIBE magazine continue to be well-received, drawing positive feedback from both locals and visitors. The fact that these articles remain in coffee shops and other outlets for a month provides excellent exposure for our Society. Additionally, we maintain regular communication with our members through bi-monthly newsletters and contribute local historic stories to the Rhyll Reporter, a monthly online publication.

Looking ahead, the upcoming year holds great promise for our committee, as many of the most challenging tasks with respect to the new museum have been successfully completed. We are eager to ensure that our museum remains relevant and exciting, and we encourage anyone interested in contributing to the development of exhibits and community events to consider joining us on the committee. Pamela Rothfield, Secretary 2023.