

# *PIDHS Newsletter*

April 2026

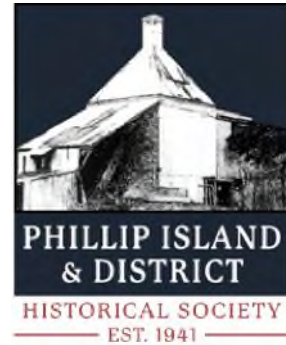
Phillip Island District Historical Society Inc.

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[www.phillipislandhistory.org.au](http://www.phillipislandhistory.org.au)

President: Doug Waugh

Secretary: Marian Wallace



(From left) Doug Waugh, Marian Wallace , Graeme Clausen, Ron Nicholson, John Buttrose, Mike Cleeland

Welcome to the April newsletter. As promised in the previous newsletter, the members who attended the March general meeting were indeed treated to an enjoyable and informative talk by Ron Nicholson, the Special Events Organiser for the Woolamai Beach Surf Life Saving Club. He spoke of the early days of the surfing fraternity on Phillip Island, the formation of the surf life saving club, and of course, the establishment of the famed Channel Challenge. Ron emphasised the wonderful camaraderie, hard work, and community spirit among the surfers, and the people of Phillip Island during the efforts to raise funds needed to keep our beaches safe. Mike Cleeland then read a poem, humorously telling the story of one creative swimmer who cleared the field of all competition by rather devious means. (See below)

## Committee news

The committee would like to acknowledge, and thank, Pam Rothfield for her excellent work writing and editing the society's interesting and informative newsletter over many years. We would also like to thank Pam for her work as secretary, and for all the very many important contributions she has made to the society. We wish her well in her new endeavours. Thank you also to Jason Cameron for his guidance and work in the interests of the society and the telling of Phillip Island stories in new ways.

The committee has seen some recent changes. Elaine Alexander, Bev Forrest and Maggie Leslie have joined the organising committee and it is going to be a busy year, for all with several events already in the planning stages. Marian Wallace has taken on the role of secretary and has worked tirelessly and heroically to familiarise herself with the complexities of her new role.

John will be producing the newsletter ... big shoes to fill(!) I hope you will be forgiving of any shortcomings as I find my feet.

## New Members

We are always looking for new members for the society. If you, or any one you know, has an interest in local history and/or a relevant area of expertise ... please join us.

## The cabinet of curiosities ... and more



Have you checked out the museum lately? Our storage unit contains hundreds of items that rarely see the light of day. A new exhibition has been mounted featuring some interesting items from our storeroom, including a portable clockwork gramophone, a pump action vacuum cleaner (!), a small flintlock pistol and associated paraphernalia, and a collection of beautiful, and now very rare, nautilus shells. Showing interesting items from our storeroom will be an ongoing feature of the museum, so keep an eye out for the next display.

Coming very soon is the 'Then and Now' photographic exhibition which will highlight some of the changes our island has seen over the years. The exhibition is part of the statewide National Trust Australian Heritage Festival.

We are all working on an exhibition looking at the changes to the landscape and the environment brought about by the early settlement and the activities of the Acclimatisation Society.

## For your diary

The next History Lunch will be held on Thursday 28th May at the RSL. The speaker will be Kirsten Weinzierl, Director of Primary & Community Clinical Services from Bayside Health.

Please let Judy know in good time if you are planning to attend.  
Judy's [email: j.gittus43@gmail.com](mailto:j.gittus43@gmail.com)

## Shark!

Down here on Phillip Island  
we're surrounded by the sea  
The salty Southern Ocean  
fills our holidays with glee

We splash around the nearest beach  
from daylight through to dark  
And only one thing stops us; that's  
when someone yells out "SHARK!"

And in the Channel Challenge  
when we swim from San Remo  
Across to Phillip Island  
through the tidal ebb and flow

The thought of Noahs Arks is never  
too far from the mind  
and competitors are always keen  
to leave the swim behind

So that's why Joe Carias  
for "a lively sort of lark"  
swam across the channel one year  
dressed up as a shark

He got a mighty dorsal fin,  
made out of fibreglass  
and entered as a swimmer  
in the Local Seniors class

He strapped the fin along his back  
and jumped into the brine  
white pointed fin protruding  
up above the waterline

Well as you can imagine  
there was panic in the swim  
As fast as Joe swam through the field,  
they swam away from him

The fin went slicing through the drink  
just like a butchers knife  
and when swimmers saw it coming  
they would freestyle for dear life

And when it all was over,  
'twas a new race record mark  
All thanks to Joe Carias  
and his Great White Pointer Shark.

Mike Cleeland