

President's Report for the AGM – 7 May 2019

It's hard to believe that an entire year has elapsed since our last AGM. So much has been accomplished during that short time. Our Society has grown in numbers & in strength – we have gathered momentum as we strive to offer new & improved services to our members.

The worldwide interest in genealogy, fuelled by our fascination with our own personal family history, continues to grow. As we research & learn about our forebears we inevitably become aware of the history which surrounded their lives. Our knowledge & understanding of the world increases & our lives are enriched through this experience. So much information is at our fingertips waiting to be discovered & this is where Family History Societies excel. Volunteers & members alike pool their expertise to assist one another & visitors to our rooms who seek the treasures hidden within our collection & the guidance of seasoned researchers. It is such a pleasure to help others uncover the background of their family's journeys. At times we are like detectives hot on the trail of a riveting mystery!!

So, just what have we achieved during the past twelve months? Looking back over my monthly meeting reports for the year I began making notes & soon discovered I needed a much larger sheet of paper.

On the publication front we have had two items launched during the past year. *Copeland Goldfield* was launched during June & has proven very popular, sales have far exceeded our expectations. In August the Journals & Bulletins compilation was also released. This is a wonderful collection of all our past journals, newsletters & bulletins in one convenient location. The 125th Anniversary Booklet is currently in the process of being printed, & *They Sent Me North: female convicts in the Hunter* will follow soon after.

Many new initiatives were trialled during the year & some old ones were reinstated, such as library borrowing. We have trialled a different format for our monthly meetings where reports are now available on our website & on the noticeboard in the front office for members to read at their leisure. In their place during meeting times we now have items of genealogical interest & an opportunity for members to participate to a greater degree.

Our Library Orientation Sessions have been a great success with many members now feeling much more confident in their own ability to locate information & to research effectively. This has resulted in a number of members feeling comfortable enough to offer their services as volunteers on the library duty roster for which we are very grateful.

Our Facebook Group flourishes & provides a wonderful opportunity for members to keep in touch with Society happenings as well as having contact with things of historical significance further afield. Our website is also an up to the minute reflection of our Society. Both of these online presences have afforded us many new members during the past year – people are keen to be part of a Society which is forward thinking & provides opportunities for greater knowledge & pleasant social interaction.

The past few months have seen some significant improvements in our Society rooms. Our new kitchenette was very welcome & our tidy new storeroom space is just awaiting the installation of our shelving & our safe for added security. We have an excellent new data projector & Management Computer, as well as stylish new curtains & monitor covers in the Blue Room. Broken or surplus items have been removed or are in the process of being removed to make way for new resources & a much tidier presence.

We have much in store for the remainder of this year. We will continue to hear many interesting guest speakers & experience many pleasant excursions. Our annual Sandgate Tour & the 125th Anniversary Celebrations of the Mechanics' Institute are almost upon us. These will be followed by our Convict Bonnets Exhibition & publication launch at the Lovett Gallery in late July.

I would like to thank each & every one of our members who have worked so hard during the past year for our Society, whether individually or as a member of one of our groups (Planning, Library, Snippers, Publications & 2020 Conference Working Party) – I have purposefully not named names because there are far too many people to thank individually. I would, however, like to make special mention of the outgoing Management Committee Members & thank them for their dedication during their terms of office & wish them well. I know we will continue to see them at future events & meetings. Our incoming

Committee, to be elected shortly, will continue the work during the 2019-2020 Society year.