



**NATIONAL
TRUST**

ANNUAL REPORT 2020

MORNINGTON PENINSULA BRANCH

2020 has not been a year many of us will want to remember affectionately and the Branch sympathises with everyone. It has indeed been a long hard and at times a depressing year for many.

March saw the beginning of the Covid19 restrictions and for the National Trust generally the beginning of a very difficult year with all properties closed to the public and the cancellation of the Heritage Festival. These closures have been particularly heavy on both finances and volunteer involvement. Our own branch after an enormous amount of hard work and organisation by Events Manager Adrienne Herring had to bear the cancellation of a great variety of Festival Events due to the Covid19 restrictions as well as all the work put in by Victor Sullivan towards an Open House event in Mt Eliza. As I write this in December it all seems such a long time ago.

Our Heritage Awards, like many other widely anticipated Peninsula events also had to be cancelled and it is especially disappointing for us as 2020 celebrates a decade of the awards. Optimistically we are looking to presenting a Decade + One in 2021.

Introduction to ZOOM has given great cohesion to our branch committee. This has enabled monthly discussion sessions to take place and consider heritage matters that arose. Although the committee is grateful for this technology, face to face meetings are favoured as the ideal and we celebrated meeting together again at our November meeting.

Heritage Review Area IV covering the Wards along Western Port conducted the first two consultations in July and August. With committee colleague Sue Welsh we looked at over 200 nominations in three categories and submitted our recommendations to the Shire. The next stage, after all comments offered by community stakeholders have been taken into account, will present a much-reduced list of nominations for final consideration. The Shire is to be commended on this initiative which completes a Heritage Review of the whole of the Peninsula and places an enormous workload on the Strategic and Heritage personnel.

A strong letter of objection to the Ryman Consortium's proposal to develop the Moondah property as a retirement/aged care facility in Kunyung Rd Mt Eliza was lodged on the basis of detrimental effects to heritage values and inappropriateness for such a development outside the Urban Growth Boundary. The Council unanimously rejected the planning application and a VCAT hearing has resulted. One thousand and

sixty-eight objections were lodged with Council. A compulsory VCAT conference has been held and the hearing is set for nine days in March and April 2021. Sixteen objector groups are appearing and have formed themselves into a 'think tank' aimed at best outcome. The Council had already proposed a Planning Scheme Amendment (C270morn) to the Minister for Planning to alter the present Special Use Zone to Green Wedge Zone for this property, the branch submitted a letter of support for Council's proposed amendment to the Minister.

Significant Landscape development applications have come in at a steady pace despite Covid19 restrictions. The 5km zone was restrictive and much attention to Google Maps came into use. Fortunately, Adrienne Smith was within proximity of several applications and I thank her for her diligence in pursuing these. This year we managed 25 Inspections. I would also mention here the approachability and excellent knowledge of the planners in response to enquiries.

Committee members Sue Welsh & Rooney Fields have been working on documentation to have the Mulberry Tree at Trust property Mulberry Hill classified. To our amazement we discovered that only the house and property were classified leaving the tree without classification credentials.

Some interesting local matters have kept the committee on their toes and turned some of them into what I describe as super sleuths. Following our restoration of John McLure's gravesite in 2019, I proposed the possibility of tracing his family connections on the Isle of Skye in Scotland; a nice connection with the National Trust. McLure was tutor to the McCrae boys between 1842 and 1851. While Adrienne Herring took the role of 'Chieftainess' many others joined in and it certainly kept the committee involved in the twists, turns and cul-de-sacs of ancestry. The final result is yet to be determined but the connection between the McCrae Homestead and Scotland is in place. I have asked Adrienne to say a few words later regarding her research a little later.

The other enquiry was to a gentleman by name of Watson Eaton after whom Eaton's Cutting in Red Hill (opposite Red Hill Consolidated School) is named. Once again mystery shrouded this gentleman's life on the Peninsula and working with the Dromana Historical Society, where his headstone was discovered in storage, has not been able to unravel the mystery to any conclusion to date. Thanks again to all the sleuths with these projects, Adrienne Herring, Val White and husband Malcolm, Penny Carnaby, Sue Welsh, Adrienne Smith and Rooney Fields for keeping the committee enthralled in what otherwise would have proven a very dull period.

It is great to see The Shire's restoration work continuing at The Briars Homestead and Hutch and plans getting closer to opening the Homestead again in the earlier part of 2021. The branch moved into the Hutch in 2005 as a meeting place after meeting in the foyer of the information centre for a couple of years. We were housed in the room now known as the Seed Room where a piece of the ceiling timber was missing and one could see blue fragments of wallpaper on the underside of the shingles which disappeared from view when the timber was replaced. When work began on the Hutch mid-year I asked if the builder had come across the wallpaper to which he responded that he hadn't planned on taking the wall timbers off. That situation changed and great excitement, lo and behold what was underneath, and retaining its colour well – the wallpaper. We are including this little article in the Trust's next magazine.



I am indebted to a terrific committee for their support through the year and by the Board and Staff at Tasma Terrace, always willing to listen and help. It is with a sense of pride to close off a year knowing that something has been achieved for heritage on the Peninsula.

Thank you all for joining the committee today and reviewing its activities for 2020 and roll on 2021 (Covid normal please!)

Judy Walsh
President
Mornington Peninsula Branch