

NEWSLETTER



ROSE'S AND THORNS.

December 2020

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Hello everyone,

It's been a long time since our last newsletter. Like every person and organization in Victoria, the Group has been heavily impacted by the dreadful worldwide pandemic. The newsletter was not issued while strict lockdown restrictions were in place, as we were unsure of the conditions under which we would be able to operate. Now that restrictions have been eased somewhat, the group is now returning to family research, while observing social distancing, and the wearing of masks, as prescribed by the Government.

From now on, if there are any inquiries for family research, or inquiries in general, the rooms are open on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to 4pm, or contact us on the Website, or email our secretary Wendy Webster – secretary@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org or our president Bill Willett – president@benallafamilyresearchgroup.org

This will be a very brief newsletter, as I just want to keep in touch until we run into Christmas. **We will finish up for the year on Wed. Dec. 16th and resume on Tues. Jan. 19th.** In the new year, hopefully we will be in Covid normal mode, and I can issue a Roses and Thorns in more of the usual detail.

During the closure, we sadly witnessed the passing of several valued members of our Group.

Joan Hooper was a much loved and valued life member, collecting and indexing vast amounts of local history. I have been asked to include eulogies from two current members.

Firstly, from Beryl Ilsley.

Beryl Ilsley, St. James, and Joan Hooper, Devenish, were “rusted on members” of the Benalla Family

Research Group for over 36 years. Joan was a dedicated historian, recording the history of Devenish, indexing numerous books and data held by the Group. Over the ensuing years Beryl and Joan shared many car travels, memories of life's experiences, and shared interests, culminating in both being made life members of the Benalla Family Research Group.

From Dawne Tonks

Joan Hooper, resident of Devenish, historian extraordinaire of the district, died in May 2020. She was a loved member of the Benalla Family Research Group. Joan became an avid researcher, and recorded all things pertaining to this area, and was bestowed a life Membership by the Group in September 2017. She has left a legacy of researching local family histories, and collating and indexing an astonishing amount of history of this area.

With her longtime friend Beryl Ilsley, they travelled into Benalla each week for over 36 years, to be part of the Group. Joan researched not only the Benalla area, but also the former Tungamah Shire and current Shire of Moira with Beryl. These shires gained much from their research.

Her own family, the Anderson's, and the Hooper's were also fully researched. Joan's untiring dedication, her strength of purpose and exceptional knowledge of this district will be remembered by many past and current members of the Family Research Group.

Joan was the life of the party when it came to our Christmas gatherings, taking part in and organizing with Beryl, skits for us all to be part of. They were truly very happy and remembered times. Dressing up as one of our ancestors, be it convict, policeman, butcher or baker, or part of the military of that era, was also encouraged by Joan. Trips to historical areas of this region was another of her must do things and also trips to PROV in Melbourne.

Joan, the late Beryl McFarlane and I travelled to Melbourne one time, to search the Melbourne General Cemetery (what a task!!) to hopefully find and record some of our own ancestors buried there. All had some success – and photos were taken of our finds. We sat on someone's gravestones to have our lunch and discuss our finds, and to ponder on the past.

Thank you, Joan, for being part of our Group, and for the wonderful research you diligently carried out, your legacy and contribution to our Group for current and future genealogists.

Our secretary Wendy Webster's mother Sheila Burnell was a valued member who also passed away. Our condolences to Wendy and her family.

Margaret Hair was another member of the Group who passed away, and our condolences go out to Margaret's family also.

And very recently our ex-president Rupe Cheetham's wife Gwen passed away. Our condolences go out to Rupe and His family.

Once again, I apologize for the brief nature of this newsletter. Hopefully in the next edition, I can include more of the normal contents, such as research news, additions to the library, stories resulting from family research, etc.

Before closing, let me promote our 2021 calendar, which is now on sale. Our calendars of Old Benalla and district are available from Benalla West Post Office, Millers Department Store, Benalla Library, Devenish Hotel, and the Benalla Visitor Information Centre.

Bye for now, John Crawford, Editor.

Presidents Report. 2020.

What an off again – on again year this has been.

Firstly, I must thank all the crew for the effort they have put in for the last nine months in particular. It has not been easy for anyone at any time from March right through till now.

As for me, chasing up all the off again, on again restrictions imposed on all groups and organizations was a nightmare. Nowhere could I find anything specific to small groups like ours that gave us any indication as to when we could resume our normal activities. Our Govt Rep. Steph Ryan finally came up with an answer and sent an email direct to me that we could go ahead and get back to some sort of normality.

Wendy and the researchers have continued all the essential research necessary from their homes and in their own time, in between all the worrying about their own health and that of their families.

Our secretary, Wendy W, has also done all the necessary secretarial work from her own computer at home to keep the group up and going, and in touch with the membership.

Carole and I have been watching the money side of things from our respective homes through our internet banking setup, which has been a valuable tool for the group.

Neil has been into the rooms on several occasions to research and to print off the calendars he had made up for the group on his own equipment at his own home, in his own time. These are now available at the rooms and several shops in the town.

The rate book translation and indexing has had to be put on hold during the lockdown period but will get some more attention once we are back to near normal.

During the year we lost a couple of dear friends and members of the group in Joan Hooper of Goorambat, Margaret Hair of Benalla, Sheila Burnell from Coinda and Gwen Cheetham, an ex presidents wife. They will be missed by all but their work, especially Joan's collection, over many years, has been saved and is available to research from our rooms.

Two more of our members, Judi Ryan, our Librarian, is now home after having a replacement knee operation, and Ray Sellers is recovering in hospital from an accident caused by his dog.

The Annual General Meeting has been put off until now simply because we were not allowed to have a meeting during lockdown. But the figures and calculations were completed at the end of April as usual, so the financial report is current as at 30th April, 2020. This will allow us to have our AGM next year back at the last week in May as usual. Because of the longer year, all Office Bearers of the group have agreed to continue in their current positions until the next AGM for ease of management and I sincerely thank them for that simple agreement and hope that you all today acknowledge them for their commitment and help.

As we move into a more normal period in this covid 19 pandemic, things will hopefully get back to what we craved and were used too.

Bill Willett.

A New Resource in Progress.

Wendy Maxwell is compiling a folder on the different convicts that are buried around Benalla and districts. There are eight in the Benalla cemetery, two in the Winton cemetery and possibly another two still to come. It is a very interesting and informative collection of data, and shows the connection of colonial England with our local area. It is a project in progress, and any other information that could add to the data would be greatly appreciated.



Christmas and New Year Greetings.

May you all have a very Merry Christmas and a safe, Happy New Year, with your loved ones if possible.

Our Sponsors.

Thanks are extended to our loyal sponsors for sticking with us over the Covid 19 pandemic.

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