

CEO'S REPORT
2008 AGM
FRIDAY, 22 NOVEMBER AT 10.00AM

Dear Members

This year has been an extremely rewarding and hectic one.

December saw the relocation of the Administration Offices from the Albany Convict Gaol to the Police House on Duke Street and, in turn, the Photographic Department and IT Department relocating to the Albany Convict Gaol.

Although initially there were concerns about this move, it has proven to be a very wise decision. The Photography Department has had a marked increase in its awareness as it is now more accessible to the public and the Administration is far better served with the extra room at the Police House.

The Christmas period was extremely gratifying for the Society with one of our best years ever in terms of visitor numbers. The last twelve months has also proven to be extremely productive in terms of tour numbers. We have had nearly all cruise lines that have visited Albany come through our venues and school bookings and group tours continue to grow rapidly. We have introduced a new system to deal with this.

In February, we began to work towards the renovation and refit of the Brig Amity. This is now all but complete and we are hoping to have the internal fitment completed before Christmas.

May saw us receive the Management Order for Patrick Taylor Cottage, the Police House and the adjacent block of land next door, thus giving the Society tenure over these three sites and ensuring our future security. We will now begin to acquire Grants to undertake the landscaping and site upgrade that is required at PTC.

Also in May, we celebrated the Society's 40th year of managing the Albany Convict Gaol site. This was celebrated by two events, one being a Civic Reception hosted by the City of Albany and the other was a Dinner at the Country Manor Hotel. Both of these events were extremely well attended.

Recently I attended a meeting with the West Australian Museum regarding discussions of the AHS taking over the management and running of Mouchemore's Cottage, adjacent to the Brig Amity. The West Australian Museum finds itself unable to look after this site due to limited resources given to the Albany Branch. They therefore feel that it would be not only to their, but also the Cottage's advantage, if the Albany Historical Society were able to assume responsibility for this site. The WA Museum is currently in the process of signing this building over to the AHS.

I also recently have held a meeting with the National Trust in regard to Strawberry Hill Farm. The AHS has put two proposals to them regarding the future management of this property. We expect further correspondence in relation to this matter early in the New Year.

This year has seen the formation of the Albany Historical Society's Adventurers' Club, co-ordinated by Lorraine Middleton. This new initiative has been extremely well received. However, its success is totally reliant on you, the Members, supporting it. Lorraine expends many hours and a lot of energy, planning and booking events for the Adventurers' Club to undertake. It is imperative that if we wish the continued success of the Adventurers' Club, then each of us must support these events.

Earlier this year, I had the honour to be nominated for a Regional Achievement & Community Award. This event is held annually and has many corporate sponsors. Whilst originally nominated for one category, the Horizon Power Leadership & Innovation Award, much to my surprise, the Judges deemed my application suited to be also judged under the Curtin University of Technology Regional Service Award. After a long drawn-out process, judging took place on 1 October 2008 and I was then advised that I was a Finalist under both headings. The Awards Ceremony Dinner was held at the Parmelia Hilton Hotel in Perth on 7 November 2008 and I was presented with a Finalist's Certificate of Achievement in each of the Horizon Power and the Curtin University Awards. This has been a most worthwhile exercise and has helped to showcase the Society to a wide audience around regional areas of WA.

In September, Lorraine and I attended the Royal West Australian Historical Societies Conference. This year it was hosted by the Katanning Historical Society. During the course of this conference, I was elected to the Affiliated Societies Committee of the Royal West Australian Historical Society. This is a great honour for the AHS and goes some way to showing the new regard in which the AHS is held by the Royal West Australian Historical Society.

Our website has undergone a major upgrade in the past twelve months and the number of visitors continue to defy our expectations. The AHS website is now one of the top five visited for this region and has been nominated for an award that will be held during the course of 2009.

Every year, I stand before you and thank the loyal and dedicated group of volunteers without whom this Society would cease to function. This year being no different, I on behalf of the Committee, offer our sincerest thanks to every one of you for your tireless efforts in not only supporting the AHS but helping to showcase our wonderful city to the world.

There is a group of people without whom I could simply not function. They are without doubt the backbone of this organisation and to each of them I offer my sincerest gratitude. Their dedication and loyalty is unparalleled. They are truly an inspiration.

I also wish to thank and acknowledge the Heads of Departments for their contribution.

Colin Aspinall, Head of Photography for always being there, even when he's not working and having to drop things to come in for customers' requests.

A special thank you to Chris Roberts for his tireless work both at the Gaol and the Amity and in our Photography Department. Chris has amazing photographic skills and has developed a wide range of historic greetings cards which continue to sell at a rapid rate and are most popular.

Ian Lund, Head of IT, for his continual support and work in keeping the Society's computers running and also for lecturing the 2009 Summer School course on behalf of the Society.

To Betty Terwindt-Elliott, our Curator, for her continuing work with the Collection.

To Joan Blight, our Researcher, for her enthusiasm and energy in tackling new requests.

I thank Judith Swain for her enthusiastic support both in Committee and with the Members' Magazine.

I also thank Julia Mitchell for her sterling work as our Publicity Officer as well as for her counsel and advice throughout the year. Her 'History Mysteries' weekly column is a favourite amongst Albany Extra readers.

Doug Lane, for his tireless contribution and enthusiasm as Roster Co-ordinator for the Brig Amity. Doug has contributed in the last twelve months over 1,000 hours as an Attendant on the Amity.

Jack and Margaret Warner for their enthusiasm and their contribution to the Society over the last two years but especially in the last twelve months and their generous gift of several thousand dollars' worth of tools and machinery. Jack's skills range from building shelves and fixing picture frames. A very handy person to have around!

Thanks also to Jenny Summerbell who has been Roster Co-ordinator at the Gaol during the past year and has kept things running smoothly.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish to acknowledge our outgoing President, Mr Peter Haywood for his term as President over the last three years. Peter has always been reliable and dedicated and has done much to promote the Albany Historical Society. It has been a pleasure to have worked alongside him. We wish him all the very best for the future and know that he will continue to be an Attendant at the Gaol and keep a watchful eye over all of us.

Firstly, to Ray Shorrocks, Head of our Maintenance Department, for his tireless efforts in keeping our museums and attendants in good order and supplied with ample tea and coffee.

To our Treasurer, Arthur Speller, who is without doubt one of the hardest working and dedicated people I have ever known. I thank you for your friendship and your support.

To Sue Horton, for her countless hours of work, not only in the rebuilding of the Co-op, but also her contribution to the Society. I know that both Loranne and I find her indispensable to the AHS.

Jason Howard, for his unwavering support and help and always being there to lend a hand when we need him.

To Craig Anderson for his friendship, his tireless work and being one of my closest and most trusted colleagues and friend.

To Lorraine Middleton, for her unwavering support, loyalty and friendship, and without whom the AHS would be a much poorer organisation.

During the course of this year, we have worked extremely hard on preparing for the Centenary Commemoration of the Great White Fleet. The Albany Historical Society was foremost in making this event a reality as it has been a project that I have been working on for two years in secrecy, due to United States security requirements. I must acknowledge Craig and Noeline Anderson, Sue Horton, Lorraine Middleton and Roger Cunnington, amongst others for their tireless work in preparing for this event.

I wish to advise Members of our new Research Officer, Crispin Travers, who has kindly agreed to help Joan Blight in undertaking research requests. Crispin is a Volunteer at the Albany Convict Gaol. He also has University degrees in history and, I believe, is proving to be a great asset, not only to the AHS but also the Albany History Collection at the Library.

I now turn to the Co-operative Store and to the amazing and dedicated people who have transformed the Society's shame into something that we can all be very proud of. Pam and Dave Northern and Eddie Summerbell are without doubt, this year's heroes. No-one has worked as diligently and in such difficult circumstances as they have. They have given to the Society through back-breaking sweat-pouring work, a great asset. The AHS, for more than 15 years, has hidden the Co-op away from prying eyes in the hope that it would not be talked about. I know myself that last year when the Albany Advertiser ran a story over several weeks regarding the shameful and eyesore-ridden buildings around our town, that with every edition, I expected to see our Co-op. Thankfully, this will never be the case after the work that these people have done. I would ask all the Members to please give Pam, Dave and Eddie a standing ovation! Thank you for the bottom of my heart!

Lorraine will shortly be moving amongst you to hand out Membership Forms for the Albany Historical Society. The Society is the largest affiliate to the Royal West Australian Historical Society but we still need more members. I believe that if each of us takes one form we can all find amongst our family or friends, someone to join the AHS. This is now more vital than ever as there is a lot of development planned in sensitive and historical areas of our city. The more members the Society has, the more seriously our voice will be taken by the powers that be.

As you will have seen as you came in, Lorraine has copies of our new in-house books and memberships for sale. Please see her if you wish to make a purchase.

Andrew Eyden
CEO
November 2008