



Newsletter No 12

Spring 2021

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Donation of portraits Museum Founders



Refitting History displays



Collection Assessment

President's Note

The past two years have seen very different conditions on the Island, as in the rest of the world. For the Museum, as for most businesses on the Island, it has been a boom and bust cycle. When COVID 19 hit Australia in 2020 the whole of Lord Howe Island went into lockdown from March 20, with a Health Order restricting people movement onto the island only to residents and family. The museum was closed. Local restrictions on movement were eased in June and Café lessee Stephen and Janet Sia had the Coral café open through 2020 when allowed (and take away when not allowed). This provided a great venue for locals to meet up and socialise in the very quiet time. Many residents took the opportunity of no tourism to catch up with people, and also explore the Island on walking tracks.

For the Museum it was a difficult time – as the income for the museum relies almost entirely on tourism. This income is in the form of donations plus rentals for various parts of the museum such as café, audio-visual room and shop. Income was greatly reduced, but there were still the fixed overheads of insurance, electricity, cleaning and maintenance to pay.

When the island did open to tourism in October 2020 the island very quickly filled to capacity, and the museum

President's Note continued.

and café were very busy – bookings for the café evening meals had to be made days in advance, and even bookings were necessary for evening lectures, as seating was restricted to 20 persons.

As always, the museum relies on volunteer supporters to man the reception and sales desk, and the committee would like this opportunity to thank all of our volunteers who do this.

Since the return of Delta strain of COVID to Sydney in 2021, the museum was closed, but the Coral café has been doing takeaway coffees and lunches most days; plus, dinners three nights a week. Again, a great service for the community. With the easing of lockdown in some regions of NSW from the weekend of 11th September the café and restaurant is open for business to sit-in customers, so come on down and enjoy the facilities. The easing also means people can visit the museum, we will endeavour to have it open some days.

With tourism not expected to be underway for a month or so, it is an ideal opportunity if you have some spare time and would like to help out at the museum you can come on down. There are a number of jobs, from cleaning exhibits, mounting some paintings, typing handwritten pages on a computer, entering objects on the eHive website, cleaning a model sailing ship, painting a wall, cleaning glass library cabinet doors, and more. Come on down, or contact President Robyn Warner or Curator Ian Hutton.

When tourism is back in full swing at the end of October we will be looking for volunteers to sit on the reception desk, usually for a morning or an afternoon session. Our volunteers do enjoy this, the museum is a centre of activity, meet the tourists and catch up with locals. Contact Robyn Warner or Chris Murray if you would like to join the team.

The AGM for 2020 was postponed due to all the uncertainty around COVID and changing restrictions, and the committee will be working to hold the AGM in November this year.

Robyn Warner

“The collection very strongly demonstrates historic significance at an international, regional, and local level”

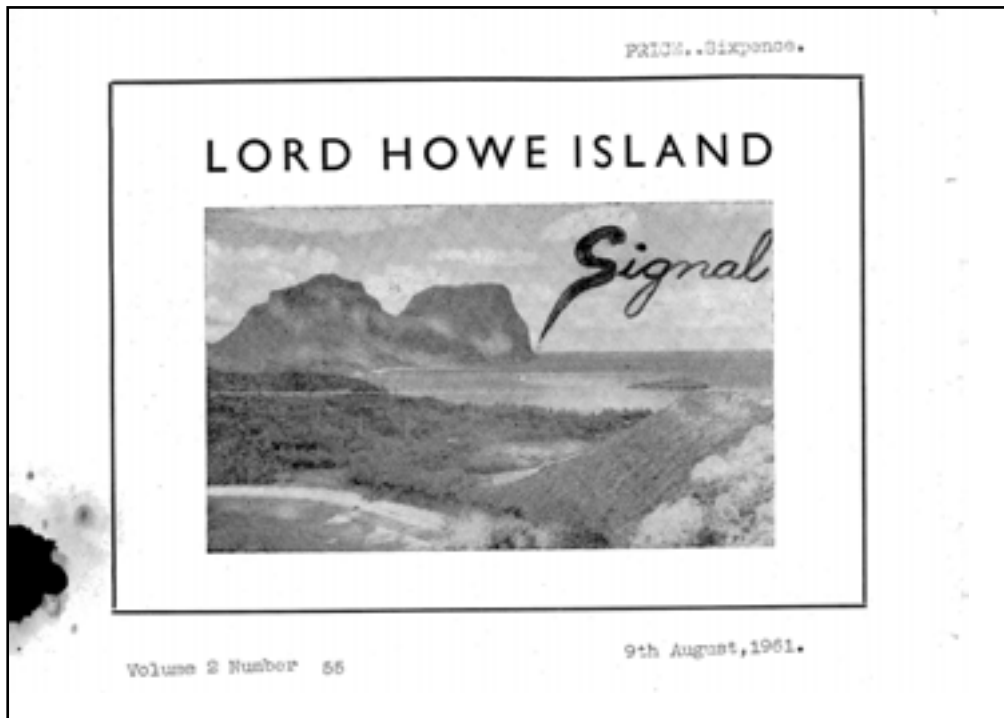
In 2020 the museum was successful in obtaining a grant from the State Library to have a museum specialist visit and carry out a Significance Assessment for our Museum collection. Melanie Piddocke, from Queensland Museum, visited in June 2021 and spent a week going through all collections with the Curator to log and assess the various collections. (Many of these collections were outlined in our newsletter of Spring 2018). Melanie has sent us the draft report, for us to check and comment on; and soon the final report will be presented. This will be a valuable document to use to access other grants to carry out restoration and conservation of objects.



“The collection very strongly demonstrates historic significance at an international, regional, and local level. As a whole the collection represents many of the crucial developments in the island's history, and its wider place in the Pacific. Key events and figures are well represented. Items which particularly exemplify this criterion are those relating to the first settlement period of the island, items connected with subsequent settlers who constituted the first permanent residents, and crucial industries such as the Kentia palm seed trade and tourism.”

Signal newspapers archived

Since our last newsletter the committee have completed the scanning and archiving of all the local newspaper Signal. The scanning was made possible with two sponsors. Through a community grant from Lord Howe Island Board the museum purchased a high-quality high-speed scanner. Peter van Dijke, who plans all of our computing and digitisation projects, set up the software and workflow so that volunteers could carry out fast, reliable scanning of Signals. The complete set of Signals is now on the museum server, and available to the public and researchers via a computer and an iPad. The scans are saved as a searchable PDF, which means with the software available at the museum, anyone can type in a word, or a name, and within one second all those Signals with that name or word are listed, with the word highlighted in yellow. This is a very powerful tool for researchers. And for the Island community – very easy to see island events, history, family, relatives, visitors and major events. Do come down and avail yourself to this resource.



Artefact cataloguing

Another project commenced in 2021 is that the Museum joined the eHive system to catalog the artefacts held at the museum, Information about each object, including where it was made, its history and ownership on the Island, its size and materials made from etc. is uploaded onto the web-based site eHive.

The Museum does holds hundreds of items relating to the Island history. Some artefact cataloguing had been done in 2002, but the software used had become redundant. This new cataloguing on eHive will allow the museum objects to be recorded, with some of the information available to the public worldwide. Volunteers Bronwyn Tofeano, Cindy Shick and Emily Riddle are assisting the committee on this task. To view some of the object catalogued so far, go online to eHive website and in the search window type Lord Howe Island museum.



New History Gallery Design

In February 2020, our State member Leslie Williams announced to the Museum committee that we were successful in receiving a grant through the NSW Stronger Country Communities Fund to redesign the James Dorman History Gallery and present The Family of Lord Howe Island. Preliminary background planning was undertaken. The Curator and committee drafted a plan to create a dynamic display to highlight the various themes of Lord Howe Island's history. Various community members and groups were involved in workshops to identify these themes. The final layout chosen was to present the themes in a chronological order as people moved through the gallery, with some ongoing themes relevant to all eras in the centre of the room, on new walls to be constructed as part of the design.



Bill Retmock and Esven Fenton assisting with artefact details

The first stage of actual physical work for the project was to paint the room, as it was nearly 20 years since the original building and painting of the museum. We contacted our painter, Brian Leslie, from Port Macquarie about painting this gallery. However, with the COVID travel restrictions in place from March 2020 this had to be put on hold. Eventually when some tradesmen were allowed in with a "work/sleep bubble" we were able to arrange the visit by Brian in August 2020. This painting was no easy task, for two reasons – one is that it is a very tall room and scaffolding and very long paintbrushes were essential. The second



State member Leslie Williams announcing the SCCF grant to committee

reason was the gallery contained many objects and fittings, and every single one had to be removed – and stored somewhere. Fortunately, we had the help of some community supporters including Jack Shick, Craig Thompson and Leon Brice. Also, with the museum closed we were able to place objects temporarily in the Environmental gallery, taking up all available floor space. As part of the planning process, several locals came down to identify and add information about various artefacts to be used in the displays. The biggest task was to remove the two large flying boat models that were suspended from the ceiling. For this job we enlisted the expertise of Ken Lees, who with Leon Brice managed to safely remove the models off the wires holding them onto the ceiling. Chris Murray gave the models a good clean – not easy after them having been high out of reach for twenty years.

With the gallery cleared, Brian was able to get in and prepare the walls – patching holes, cleaning, and then start the painting. When painting was completed Mark McKillop from Capella Lodge gave the floor a clean-up polish with Capella's equipment. Then the flying boats were re-installed – in different locations, to match the new design layout. This was a much harder task than removing the flying boats, and each one took a whole day to fix in place, with Ken and Leon on the job. The committee is pleased with the new locations, as the models are more visible to the viewer from the floor.



above: Ken and Leon removing the model Sandringham flying boat

below: hoisting the wooden boat vertically.



Another critical part of the new design was what to do with two very large objects that were taking up a lot of floor space for their significance in the overall story of Lord Howe Island. One of these was the restored wooden boat that belonged to Uncle Willie Thompson. It was built in 1910 on Norfolk Island using NZ Kauri timber, and restored in 1990. Leon had a lightbulb moment – why not mount it vertically? Sounds very unusual, but after a week or two discussion it was decided to give it a try and with the help of Dean Hiscox and Ken Lees, the boat was raised and attached to cross beams near the ceiling. It looks good, and the craftsmanship of its construction is more visible. Then the other large item was the restored float of a Sandringham

flying boat. This was off a Sandringham that was beached in 1963, and a new float was installed, while the damaged one was stored at the Board area. Some forty years later it was taken to Edinburgh Air Base and restored by RAAF apprentices and returned to the Island. Anna Thompson had the idea to mount this vertically too – so with help of supporters Craig Thompson, Ken Lees, Michael Nobbs, the task was done.



Leon and Ken refitting the model Catalina flying boat

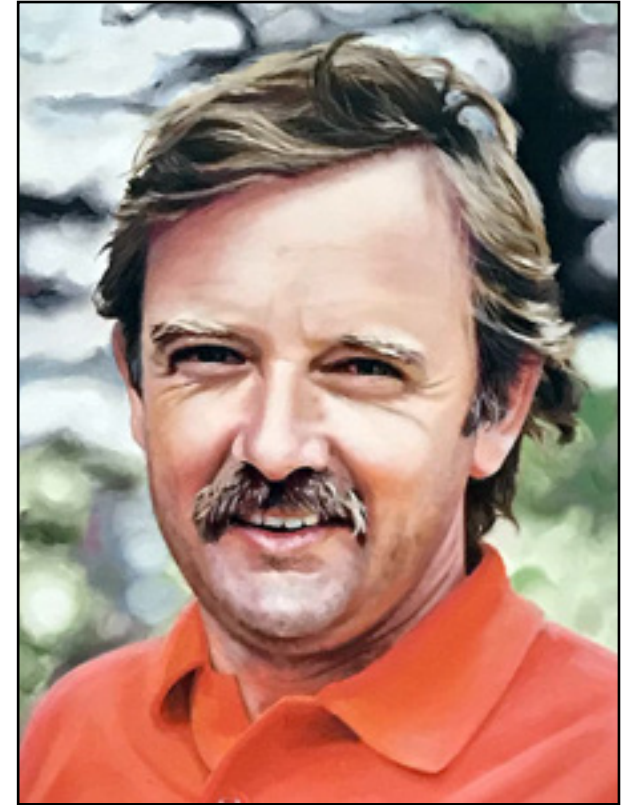
The redesign plan has a new internal wall for displaying objects, and Ken Lees was contracted to complete this task. The design plan has been refined, with main themes and objects identified. One of our sponsors, Penny Clive, offered her exhibit designer from the Detached gallery in Hobart. Michael Bugelli was briefed, and made a visit in May 2021 and met with the committee who all were very impressed by his design concept which would give the room a very contemporary look. After some months design work and preparation back in Hobart, Michael was about to return when the COVID travel restrictions came into place again in July. We are hoping before the end of the year Michael will be able to return and with committee and supporters, we can move this forward.

A separate component, but integral to the overall project, is the development and design of a completely new website. Colours Digital have been contracted to do this, and the Curator and committee have been closely working with Colours Digital to provide direction, text, information, images etc for this new website. The new website is nearing completion should go online 1st November and will present the Family of Lord Howe Island to the world.

Portraits donated.

Since the last newsletter we have had two paintings donated. Local artist Anna Thompson has a talent for portrait painting and in March 2020 she donated a very life-like portrait of Ian Kiernan, who with Jim Dorman and the committee set up the Lord Howe Island Museum Trust to raise the money and build the new Museum.

The museum committee was impressed and commissioned Anna to also do a portrait of Museum founder Jim Dorman, with the aim of finding a sponsor for this. Fortunately, we did find a sponsor very quickly – Beatrice Claflin, the daughter of Dean Claflin. Dean was a good friend of Jim and had worked with Bill Lambourne on a number of museum projects in the 1980's, including completion of a wonderful scale model of the *SS Morinda*, which forms part of the permanent shipping displays in the Historical Gallery. The two portraits add to the museum art collection, and each will hang above the door into the respective gallery - the James Dorman Historical gallery, and the Ian Kiernan Environmental Gallery.



Lord Howe Island Museum on Instagram

The Museum now has an Instagram page and it is proving popular with locals and others. Recent posts have been celebrating the many original art pieces that the museum holds. These range from local school children's art, murals in the Environmental gallery by local artist Margaret Murray, ships by Australia's foremost maritime artist Jack Earle, and number of visiting artists including one by Lucienne Rickard, daughter of our treasurer Kevin Rickard.

Future posts will highlight some of the artefacts, photographs and documents held in the Museum archives. It is hoped the Instagram page will help promote the Museum, its activities, and collections.

view on Instagram at : **lord_howe_island_museum**

Shipwrecks around Lord Howe Island



Map showing shipwrecks

Earlier this year the Museum Curator completed a number of video interviews with resident Clive Wilson about shipping at the Island. Clive has been involved with boats and shipping all of his life, and was able to relate many fascinating stories about all phases of shipping, plus snippets of early boating history he recalls hearing from the older residents when he was a child. These interviews are part of the video digital archive at the museum. Also, from the interviews a map was made detailing all the major and minor shipwrecks to the Island, this is currently on display in the History Gallery, and will be a part of the new display in some form.



Bachelors Wife 1951



HMS Nottingham 2002



Freedom Song 2012



Jacques del Mar 1954

Beach Bins

At four of the Island beaches there are see-through bins for beach walkers to deposit any man-made rubbish items they find on our beaches. Looking through to the contents of the bins you will see all sorts of objects – pegs, bottles, shoes, toys, fishing floats, toothbrushes, rope. It is amazing what ends up in the ocean and onto our beaches.

In 2010 the Museum and Marine Parks initiated the formation of a local *Plastic Action Group* on the Island. Prompted by studies done here on how the ocean plastic was being picked up by our shearwaters, causing death and potential health issues, a number of community members got together to create an informal *Plastic Action Group* to try to raise awareness in the community and inspire businesses to make changes to plastic waste. There were some good stories to come out of this – the group prompted installation of two water filler stations for the island – one opposite Anchorage by the LHI Board, and the other at the airport terminal sponsored by the local QantasLink agents. The group produced a take away flyer about the plastic issue and tips on how anyone can help, plus from 2015 to 2020 annual seabird calendars highlighting the issues. Many lodges initiated their own changes such as carry bags and re-usable water bottles for guests; cafes began changing to cardboard packaging for take away foods; the school children had a grant to replace plastic straws with paper ones and now Island cafes use only paper straws;

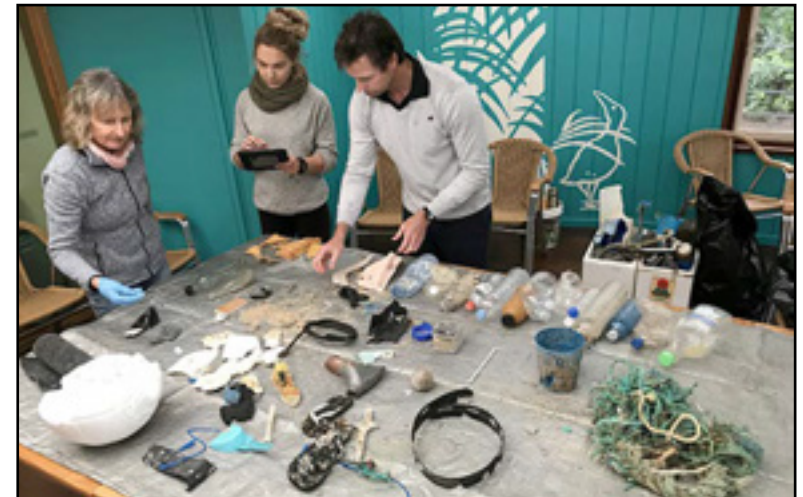
In 2018 the group discussions were looking at ways to raise broader awareness of ocean plastic and came up with the idea of clear see-through bins to place at beach locations with a sign indicating they were for beach plastic only. The hope was that this would highlight what was actually out in the ocean and being washed up on our beaches, plus encourage people to remove plastic off the beach- not only here on the island, but at their own local beach. The museum found a sponsor, Detached Organisation in Hobart, to purchase four bins. These have been out at beaches and locals and tourists have been inspired to collect plastic items on their daily beach walks and place in these bins.

The collected items are not just taken to the waste facility; the contents are bagged and taken to the museum where volunteers sort the plastic as part of the Australian Marine Debris Initiative AMDI. The plastic items are sorted into categories such as domestic, toys, fishing items, water bottles, food containers, footwear, plastic cutlery items, etc. This data is entered into the AMDI Database via the Tangaroa Blue website or app. This data can be used by researchers and lobbyists to see what are the most common items finding their way into the oceans, and lobby for changes to packaging, use of plastic etc. Already there have been wide changes as a result of the scheme – for example many States are now pledging to ban plastic items in the take away food industry; there are helium balloon bans in Victoria and at the Sunshine Coast, and container deposit schemes in all States.



Left - one of the see-through bins located at Lagoon Beach near the Aquatic Club. Other bins are at Blinkie Beach, Cobby's Corner and Neds Beach.

Below: one of the workshops at the Museum sorting the collected plastic into categories.



Want to help ? If you are having a beach walk exercise, take a bit of plastic off the beach and place in the clear bins. If tourists ask what the bins are for, you can tell them why, and the impact ocean plastic is having on our seabirds. You can assist in a bigger way assisting with collection of the bin contents, or join in on sorting workshops. Contact Ian Hutton, Cindy Shick, Emily Riddle, Scruffy Smith or LHI Marine Parks staff.

Support for publication of a new book

A new book to be published in 2022 explores the life and times of Lord Howe Island's most talented naturalist, Allan McCulloch.

"The Life and death of Allan Riverstone McCulloch" reveals the highs and lows of this brilliant scientist and illustrator, who first visited the island in 1902 with Edgar Waite of the Australian Museum.

McCulloch returned often, staying with island families to celebrate Christmas and collect specimens for the Australian Museum. Later in life, he retreated to the island to recover from bouts of mental illness. He would soon be sitting in the sunshine, writing articles on his portable typewriter, or taking photographs of island life, or painting some of the amazing marine life from the island.

The Lord Howe island Museum holds several works by Allan McCulloch, including paintings, sketches, photographs and scientific illustrations.

Following McCulloch's tragic death in Honolulu in 1925, his friends arranged for a memorial to be erected at Signal Point, where it stands to this day overlooking the coral lagoon where he spent many hours studying its fishes and corals.

Author Brendan Atkins has woven a fascinating narrative to reveal the talented life and tragic death of this forgotten figure in the history of the island.

How you can help

This fascinating biography is scheduled to be published by New South Publishing in mid-2022. You can help by donating to its publication cost. The museum will assist with connecting the donors with the author, and collecting the donations on behalf of the author. Donations to the Museum are tax-deductible.

The author will provide to the donors:

- a complimentary copy of the book
- an invitation to the book launch
- acknowledgement in the book.

To find out how you can support this important publication, please contact Curator of the Lord Howe Island Museum on:

curator@lhimuseum.com or phone 02 6563 2111



Museum President Robyn Warner and author Brendan Atkins at the library



Two watercolour drawings by Alan McCulloch that the LHI Museum holds

About the book

Publisher – NewSouth Publishing

Publication date – mid-2022

Paperback with many illustrations.

RRP \$34.95

About the author

Brendan Atkins worked as an environmental scientist for 16 years before moving into publishing. He first became interested in the life of Allan McCulloch as editor of the Australian Museum magazine (2006–2015). In 2020 he visited Lord Howe to undertake further research, talk to island residents and present and a talk at the museum. He now lives in Katoomba.

MEMBERSHIP

Lord Howe Island Museum

We encourage you to renew your membership or become a new member by completing the application form and returning to the museum:

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PO Box 11
Lord Howe Island
NSW 2898
email: curator@lhimuseum.com

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individual \$11
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business \$55
donation \$

For bank deposits
Lord Howe Island Historical Society and Museum
BSB 062001 Account 00928037

All donations over \$2 are tax deductible

Thankyou for your support

Visit the museum to enjoy our displays, shop, cafe, Visitor Centre, and chat to our desk volunteers.

Discover the fiery origins of Lord Howe Island from a volcano seven million years ago. See the fascinating processes that plants and animals used to cross vast ocean distances to colonise the island. Investigate the evolutionary processes that led to the development of many endemic species.

Learn about the Island's unique environment and cultural heritage at regular audiovisual lectures, or attend presentations by visiting scientists.

Contribute to the development of this world class museum by donations or sponsorship of specific projects. All donations are tax deductible.

Support the museum by becoming a member. Membership form enclosed or available online.

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