



Friends of Black Rock House Inc.

December 2020 Newsletter

**A VERY MERRY
CHRISTMAS
and Happy New Year!**





Hello Friends of Black Rock House,

Well done to you all! We have struggled through this challenging time in world history.

Black Rock House has been closed for Mid Week Tours, Open House, Historical Ghost Tours and the Paranormal Tours, although we have had two outdoor private events in the past week.

The Committee meeting in November was held in the ballroom following COVIDSafe rules.

The plans for the decking and the plans for the wallpaper restoration in the "library/office" have been submitted to Heritage Victoria and we are patiently waiting for news.

Over the last school holidays, we had terrible trouble with teenagers climbing on the castellated wall and onto the roof of the House, breaking the roof tiles and allowing the rain to pour into the House ceilings and walls. The eagle-eyed neighbours and diligent Committee members have been fantastic, the police have promptly attended and the newly inducted Bayside City Council Mayor Cr Evans is swinging his weight and the Council behind our problem. Thank you all so much!

Bayside CC have also applied to Heritage Victoria for security cameras and lights at the back of the House near the fig tree.

Merry Christmas and a safe, healthy and happy 2021

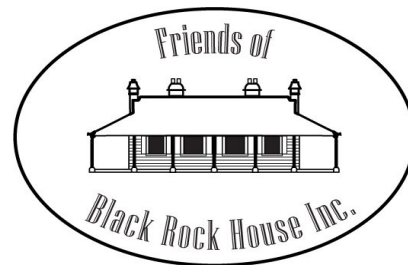
Carolyn Brown OAM
President



VALE

We were greatly saddened with the news that long-time Friend **Don Bamford** passed away in October this year. He and his late wife Roma, rented the Drawing Room side of BRH in the 1970s and were such dedicated Friends that they "doubled" up on Don's motorised wheelchair to attend functions! What a wonderful loving couple!

They also gifted the Majonica Tea Pot in the Ballroom Showcase.



"FRIENDS NEWS!!!!"

Glenyss Bohn is moving into a beautiful new apartment. Eryl Harris' **Frank** is recovering from a successful hip operation and we are delighted that Eryl's daughter **Kate** and granddaughter **Ella** are enjoying being "Friends". Life Member **Jim Richardson** enjoyed a few days in Sydney. Our youngest Tour Guide **Madison Scharenguivel** and twin brother **Beau** are taking three days to celebrate their 18th while their grandfather and "Friend" Don Hoy is happy to be home after months in hospital. President **Carolyn** enjoyed her *foray into Local Government but has quickly realised that politics aren't her passion!

*foray – a brief but spirited attempt to become involved in a new activity or sphere



A.G.M. - Reports

Held on Saturday 10th October at 2pm.

President -

This Annual General Meeting is being held via ZOOM technology.

What a strange year it has been! We had a wonderful nine months of activities and then we were hit with a world-wide pandemic! Our beautiful Black Rock House (BRH) had to be closed to visitors and events as the deadly virus swept the world. Our House has weathered two World Wars, the Depression, the "Spanish Flu", a World Economic downturn, thunderstorms and heat waves but her spirit lives on in all of us!

While in lockdown, I have been busy organising the decoration of the old 'staff' room into a Study/Library Ebdon style and era. We contracted wallpaper experts Artifact Conservation for their expert knowledge and of course Heritage Victoria and Bayside CC are involved. Bayside CC are also progressing with the refurbishment of the stables, the cellar door and decking outside along the Servants Quarters/Ballroom.

Each Committee Member has written their report and, as we are on Zoom, they will be reporting live! If you could not attend the Zoom Meeting, I urge you to make a cup of tea/coffee, find a place in the sun and read their reports.

Treasurer Debbie Gruneklee and Malcolm Brand – will present a comprehensive Financial Report.

Secretary - Sandra Collins

Mid-Week Tours and Publicity - Tracey Scharenguivel

Membership - Claudia Ahern

Archives and "Dust and Sweep" - Gudrun Gawantka

Maintenance - Rob Collins

We welcome a report from our special guests Sarah Chumacero and Ragnarr McPhee of the Black Rock House Paranormal Tours.

We sincerely thank Chris Tanner for his pro bono work with BRH and we thank Leanne Goethel who keeps our website up to date with webmaster Julia Sykes-Turner.

Our thanks also to David Dodd, Cheryl Richards and Julie Herbert who, in pre COVID times, ran the most successful "Historic Ghost Tours" – your love of Black Rock House is greatly appreciated.

We are SO lucky to have a young, vibrant Committee absolutely devoted to Black Rock House.

Finally, but most importantly - thank you to you, the volunteers who help with the Sunday Tours, Ghost Tours, Mid-week tours and the Dust and Sweep team – your love of Black Rock House and support for its preservation for future generations not only shines through but is working!!

I move the adoption of my report
Carolyn Brown O.A.M.

Treasurer - Debbie Gruneklee & Malcolm Brand

The audited financial statements for 2019-20 financial year are presented below. 2019-2020 has been successful financially for the Friends of Black Rock House despite having limited opportunities for the house to be opened in the second half of the year. The year finished with a surplus of \$4,298.78. We are incredibly grateful to our strong band of members for their support and encouragement and to the Bayside City Council for their financial assistance through Arts and Cultural grants.



We also receive many generous donations and the work of volunteers results in a number of revenue-raising activities. At the end of the year we had total funds of \$30,974.94 with most of these funds committed to bringing to life a 1850's library/study room as an additional feature for visitors to the Black Rock House. We are grateful to Chris Tanner from TWB Chartered Accountants for giving of his time to audit the accounts.

Secretary - Sandra Collins

We have had many unprecedented changes to the way we live during this past year due to COVID. This of course has affected Black Rock House and our ability to open-up the House to the community.

During these challenging conditions it's wonderful to see so much ongoing support for Black Rock House from our Friends community and we thank you all for your enquiries, your donations and for your membership. We eagerly await the easing of restrictions so that we can again open-up the House for all to enjoy.

I can confirm that the Friends of Black Rock House are a resilient lot and that we continue to oversee the welfare of Black Rock House despite these tough times. We have been creative and have continued to communicate and hold regular Committee meetings successfully using zoom as we will for the AGM.

We welcomed two new Committee members this year. Malcolm Brand seamlessly took over the Treasurer's role whilst Debbie Gruneklee had a short break during the year and Claudia Ahern took over the duties of Catering and Membership Secretary. We welcome you both and thank you for all your hard work.

Mid Week and Weekend Tours – Tracey Scharenguivel

We hosted 19 tours up to March 2020 then unfortunately closed our doors due to Covid-19 restrictions. We actually had to cancel booked midweek tours for the months of April, May and June totalling 47 visitors.

There were 931 visitors to the house for midweek tours and 488 who visited on Sundays for our tours and Devonshire tea. With the cancellations, rebooking's plus attendance on Sunday open house; we could have had the potential for another 300 guests.

Our first Open house in January was a fundraiser for the bush fire relief, our way of helping out all those people who had lost homes, lives and businesses. It was a huge day and quite overwhelming to see so many people support this important cause. We served our famous Devonshire tea, sold souvenirs and visitors offered donations. We were delighted to hand over \$1000 to the Bruthen Fire Brigade for their much need Fill pump to accommodate the local region. Our tours have been varied from senior citizen groups to school groups, walking clubs to local retirement villages. Comments are always very pleasing from visitors and they often return with friends on Open House Sundays.

Some visitors remember the house when they were children and love to share a tale; some are new to the area and recently heard of this magnificent house by the sea.

We are very lucky that we have a wonderful volunteer group, dedicated and with a wealth of knowledge of the house and its gardens. Our morning teas have become quite successful and our Devonshire teas are almost a sell out each month.

Below are the groups and numbers of visitors who attended the house over the past year:

July –

Coffee with a Cop 44, Probus Waves Beaumaris 13, Ghost Tour 13

August –

Rosebud Police Senior Citizens Register 42, Stella Maris PS 50, Ghost Tour 13

September –

Lyceum Club 'Rambblers Circle' 18

October –

Chesterville Retirement Village 13, Coffee with a Cop 45, Regis Sandringham 12

November –

The Friends of the Johnston Collection 16, Firbank Old Grammarians Association 18, Val Ionian Club 16

December –

BRH 40th Celebrations 166, Christmas Carols 300

February –

Coffee with a Cop 40, Noble Park Probus 22

March –

My Support Hub 10, Black Rock PS 80



Archive Report – M.G. Gawantka (Life Member)

This year, July 2019 to June 2020, has seen unusually little Archival activity. The planning of Ebdon's library in that room curtailed new development and naturally the Corona Virus added to the equation.

At the end of 2019 the room was cleared so that tradesmen could work unencumbered.

Incidental filing of matter that came to hand, was the only archiving that I carried out. However, we will need to be more ruthless in discarding of material, which is not pertinent to the House when relocating, as the space available may be more restrictive. This said, it will be rather exciting to have the new "Library" completed next year and then move the archives into their permanent home.

Dust and Sweep – M.G.Gawantka (Life Member)

I inherited “Dust and Sweep” in October, on the resignation of Liz Ferguson. We had a great bunch of enthusiastic helpers who came religiously to dust and sweep, the Friday before Black Rock House opening (first Sunday of the Month).

The extremely thorough cleaning of the kitchen also the shutters and windowsills another month was noticed by all. This last half year due to the Corona Virus the House has not been open to the public thus no “Dust and Sweep.”

It was sad that we had to “farewell” one of our loyal helpers. Connie Lotrionte unfortunately lost her battle with cancer. She will be greatly missed.

I hope that when we are reopening, I still have a loyal following. However, please phone me if any member has a couple of hours to spare, the last Friday of the month.

Thanks to those enthusiastic volunteers who have enjoyed helping in the past.

Publicity & Events – Tracey Scharenguivel

The House was open for visitors only 8 months this year due to COVID-19 striking. There were many events that were scheduled in the planner, but they’ve all been moved to either different dates or on standby for when we reopen.

Mid 2019, we approached the newly formed *Neighbourhood Watch 3193 Beaumaris & Black Rock* and asked if they’d like to hold their “Coffee with the Cops” community forums at BRH. They happily accepted and BRH is delighted to support such a valuable community-run asset to the Bayside area. Run by Philip Lovel and Geoff Bransbury, they usually have around 40-50 people attend from the local community. We offer tea, coffee and biscuits and it is quite an informative session with guest speakers and the local constabulary attending, sharing crime updates and tips on how to keep safe.



Our ghost tours were again a sell out with David Dodd and Cheryl Richardson volunteering along with Julie Herbert welcoming visitors and catering for the three nights. I can’t thank these volunteers enough for giving up their time to share interesting facts about BRH ‘After Dark’.

Our catchment for visitors has increased significantly with different groups holding events at the house including fashion photo shoots, refugee advocacy & support groups, and the Bayside Seniors Festival. We also opened the house to a private Christmas party and Neighbourhood Watch Christmas party. We had our ‘Thank You’ to the FofBRH volunteers in December with chef Bert Dana again working his culinary magic, which was well received, we thank you Bert. In January we hosted a family book launch for a local resident whose family hadn’t been together for over 40 years but coincidentally had personal ties to BRH!

Sandringham Festival was again a success and we shared stories of the house with the community. Carolyn Brown OAM and tour guide, Madison Scharenguivel were interviewed on 88.3 Southern FM on the day and people were lining up to have their photo taken with us in costume. A great day had by all.

We hosted our 2nd Halloween Haunt on 31st October and were overwhelmed with the response from the community. It was a steady stream of ghost, ghouls, goblins and witches and at our last count we clocked over 1,050 visitors on the night. FoBRH committee dressed up along with a couple of volunteers. The Bayside Dog Owners group joined in the fun, parading their furry friends in costume around the block, with a few prizes handed out at the end. Thank you to all who participated and made it a successful night.

Our last Open house for the year coincided with our 40th Celebrations of the house being open to the public. We had food vans, live music and a gallery of historic photos in the ballroom. 88.3 Southern FM was live and, hosted by Leanne and Paul Goethel, interviewed past and present ‘Friends’. The Mayor of Bayside opened the proceedings and everyone had a wonderful time reminiscing and sharing their memories of the house.

Our last event for the year was our annual Christmas Carols with Haley Davis, Jess Oliva and local primary schools Black Rock and Beaumaris North. We were lucky to have warm weather and it was great to see friends, parents, siblings and neighbours attend as well as our friend and supporter Brad Rowsell, MP and of course Santa who arrived in a red convertible. Thanks to Malcolm Brand for offering his car and his son Tim for driving. Everyone had a great time and thanked the ‘Friends’ for hosting such a fun family night once again.

It has definitely been a roller-coaster of a ride this year and I for one can’t wait to see everyone again and have a laugh, share stories and toast to a new year!

Maintenance Report – Rob Collins

As a member of the committee I am involved in many of the activities we undertake at Black Rock House, but my particular role is to liaise with Bayside City Council on maintenance issues. Having one person tasked with contacting the council about maintenance shares the load and stops duplication of effort.

Obviously, in such an old house we need to be vigilant and act quickly to prevent small problems escalating into more serious damage. By regularly checking, especially after storms or graffiti damage, we can notify the council and they are then able to send contractors to remedy the situation.

We are able to attend to small problems ourselves (e.g. since the last AGM I have replaced light bulbs, tightened up loose locks, applied weather sealing strips to some doors and solved the problem of a burglar alarm which was sounding intermittently at night).

Larger items such as leaking ceilings, blocked gutters and drains, cracked windowpanes and graffiti damage are the responsibility of the council as the building's owner.

Most of 2020 has been different due to COVID-19 restrictions which have severely limited our access to the house. Indeed, I have not even been able to drive to the house for quite a while due to the regulations governing movement. Luckily some committee members who live closer have been able to check the outside of the house as they take their allowed exercise walks. When restrictions are finally eased, we can get back to properly using and caring for this great old house which gives pleasure to so many people.

Membership Report – Claudia Ahern

In 2019-20 BRH had 139 active members. Our members were mainly the suburb of Black Rock and the surrounding suburbs of Beaumaris and Sandringham and two thirds of our members identify as woman. More than half of our members regularly volunteered as tour guides, cleaners or helped out with our Devonshire teas and other hospitality opportunities. This is so very kind of you to give up your time for the House. We can't thank you enough.



Ratification of Friends of BRH Committee 2020-21

President:	Carolyn Brown
Vice President:	Eryl Harris
Secretary:	Sandra Collins
Treasurer:	Debbie Gruneklee
Committee:	Tracey Scharenguivel Malcolm Brand Rob Collins Claudia Ahern Bertram Dana
Webmaster Ex Officio:	Leanne Goethel

HALLOWEEN 2020



Spoonville communities popped up everywhere over Covid 19 and we were approached by a neighbour to create a Spooky Spoonville at Black Rock House.

We started off with a couple of spooky spoons that neighbours placed in the front gardens at the beginning of October and we ended up with over 80 creative spoons by Halloween. It was a bit of fun for the families who love walking past the house.



Halloween 31st October 2020

This year at Black Rock House was a more sedate affair than past years. A few committee members gathered in the gardens to celebrate Halloween and enjoy each others company after many months communicating via Zoom.

We still had a few visitors pass through the gardens as they went door knocking in the neighbourhood and they look forward to returning to an even bigger and better Halloween in 2021.

2021

Happy New Year

Dates for your diary -

January 10 Sunday 3pm - Private function with Devonshire Tea.

January 15 Friday 1.30pm - Committee Meeting

January 30 Saturday – COVIDSafe Training for all Volunteers at the House – Tour Guides, Reception and Catering – times to be advised.

February 5 Friday 1pm-3pm – DUST & SWEEP

February 7 Sunday 1pm-4pm – OPEN HOUSE

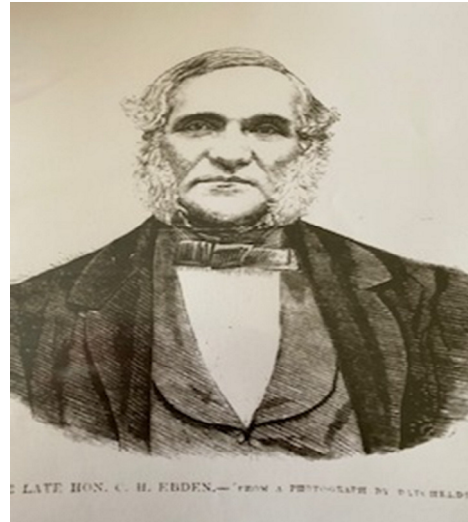
February – costume & textile display in the Ballroom.

March 5 Friday 1pm-3pm – DUST & SWEEP

March 7 Sunday 1pm-4pm – OPEN HOUSE

April 2 Good Friday 1pm-3pm – DUST & SWEEP

April 4 Easter Sunday 1pm-4pm - OPEN HOUSE



From the book “Witness to Things Past” by John Hetherington. Pages 75-81 “Black Rock House” quote:

Charles Hotson Ebdon was a man who knew what he wanted, and in 1856 he wanted a house overlooking Port Phillip. Two years earlier he had bought 127 acres of virgin scrubland stretching back from the cliffs, twelve miles or so south-east of Melbourne, and he gave orders for his house to be designed and work to begin there. So Black Rock House rose in what was in springtime a fairyland of native heaths, flowering scrubs and other wild-flowers, the haunt of countless birds and small animals, and far from any building more sophisticated than fishermen’s huts on the foreshore and dairymen’s and market gardener’s shanties inland. It seemed an odd place for a man like Ebdon to build such a house; he was dandified in dress and lordly in manner; a kind of colonial Beau Brummell, and might have been expected to choose a site in less primitive surroundings. Most of those who knew him thought him not a bad fellow, but his affections inspired sly winks when his back was turned. Some of his hearers were impressed by his aristocratic airs, however. Among these was a young aborigine, one of Ebdon’s personal servants, who slavishly copied everything of his master did and said, even to the half-stifled yawn of boredom and, in a convincing imitation of Ebdon’s impeccable accent, the languid pronouncement, “I’m going home to England directly”

Yet Ebdon was not just a foppish poseur. **unquote**