

Wonthaggi Woodcrafters Inc

Roy Fischmann Life Member 2013

First I wish to thank this club and its members for extending the honour of a life membership for which I am most grateful. I joined this club in 1993, now 20 years ago and have endeavoured over that time to be an active and supportive member, serving as a committee member for 7 years from 2005 till 2011 and as your Vice President for 5 years from 2007 until 2011.

Over the last 20 years I have seen many changes ranging from attending my initial club meetings held in a small room at the Wonthaggi Uniting church with only about 8 to 12 members present and receiving handwritten newsletters through to the first class club facilities this club now provides.

To give members an insight to these changes I would like to quickly refer to some highlights I have seen over the years:

Your club was founded in 1989 by 3 people - namely Past President George Hill with his brother in-law Harry Oates and Okke Huitema, with Okke becoming your first President. On March 22nd 2014 we will be celebrating this clubs 25th anniversary. I trust this date is duly noted by the committee.

This club has had lady members since its inception in 1989 with our first Treasurer being Yvonne Phillips who held that position for 7 years and also was a capable woodcrafter in her own right. We have since had a number of skilled lady members who have contributed much over the years.

As mentioned, I joined in 1993 and other long term members who joined the club in the same year were Eric Thorpe plus Ron Snooks who re-joined having had to previously resign because of the demands of his farm. As a matter of interest the total club assets at the end of 1993 were \$105.95

1994 saw our last handwritten newsletter replaced by a printed one and the club was first involved with the Wonthaggi Show and the Newhaven Quilters which helped promote the club more widely. Gulio Marcolongo joined us and In December of that year we moved to a larger meeting venue at the Wonthaggi Pigeon Club premises.

In 1995 the club exhibited at Churchill Island for the first time and later in the year had initial discussions with the BCAEC then known as the CDLC, regarding possible club relocation using existing meeting rooms located at our current address.

In 1996 the possibility of having our very own clubrooms were first discussed at a club meeting in April along with the need for our own club logo with members asked to submit ideas for a logo design. In December the same year, the club decided to have their first Christmas shop. This event I will never forget, for when we were still trying to set up the shop in Graham Street people were coming in to purchase display items as we placed them on the tables. Even though the shop was only open for a few weeks, closing after Christmas day, the club sold \$7984 of member's woodwork.

The first "Down-Under Turnaround" was held in 1997 and during the year at the instigation of Past President George Hill, building plans were agreed to be drawn up for the future construction of our very own clubrooms, which today is your workshop next to where we are now. The second club Christmas shop was also successful selling \$6395 of member's woodwork and the Christmas shop has now become an annual fundraising event for the club. 1998 saw the April meeting approve the purchase of our first club wood lathe and after the last meeting at the Pigeon Club



premises, all meetings from July were held in existing buildings here at BCAEC. For those who remember, Eddie and Lois Green joined the club with both of these members being successful at the Australian Woodworking Exhibition.

The February 1999 meeting saw further discussion with BCAEC on the need for our very own clubrooms and workshop and with the plans previously drawn up by George Hill, a working bee was organised for April where members pitched in to clear a site allocated for the future building. In the month of November we held our first successful exhibition and demonstration of woodcraft at Cowes.

2000 was the year when the first club life membership was awarded to Past President George Hill who put up his own monies to pay for some materials so as to ensure our first clubrooms. A more deserving recipient you will never find, in fact without George's leadership over many years this club would not exist today.

Building plans for the new clubrooms were submitted to council in 2001 but were not approved until June 2002 when the building of the new clubrooms and workshop commenced with members supplying all the labour and grant monies paying for materials. By August the building was up and the plumbing and electrical work completed by members, plus the veranda was finished and later in the year the club workshop was finished with an official opening on the 4th of December by Vic Wood a prominent Woodcrafter.

In February 2003 the grant monies for the clubrooms finally arrived and George got his personal monies back. In March members installed the first two wood lathes ready for work plus the club purchased a thicknesser. August saw the first evening woodwork classes commence, but they were discontinued in October due to lack of support.

June 2004 saw an invitation received by the club to visit the Koondrook Woodworkers for a BBQ lunch, which was deferred until August when it was decided to help this small club. As you are all aware, visiting Koondrook is now an annual event on our club calendar. Club members also agreed to purchase a DVD/Video for the presentation of training films at our meetings.

Hartley Tobin, then our newsletter editor, introduced colour into our lives in 2005 by producing seasonal editions of the newsletter in colour, with this improvement well received.

In 2006 the club library was upgraded and a successful grant of \$3295 was received to purchase more equipment for the workshop, also a tri fold promotional club brochure was produced for the first time. In August, club members visited Koondrook for a weekend for the first time. But in July/August a cloud appeared on the horizon because very high rent increases by the BCAEC caused the club to consider moving away from this venue and the committee sought other site options.

John Di Stefano was still busy in 2007 applying and obtaining more grants to upgrade our club workshop equipment. Very special thanks are due to John for his sterling work in this area plus our newsletter started to appear in colour each month. Because of continued rent problems club committee members met with a representative from the Men's Shed organisation in December.

In 2008 the August meeting was cancelled due to a huge and violent storm with many trees down and poor driving visibility and this cancellation was possibly responsible for a later change to daytime meetings. Because of unresolved excessive rent problems with BCAEC, further discussions were held with the Men's Shed organisation who proposed the construction of a shed in Wonthaggi with the original arrangement being for this club to be equal partners in the project. However, in December because of many reasons, the club decided to pull out of the Men's Shed project. In October John and Kaye Hatton decided to join the club and we thank them both for that decision, for they have both contributed much to our club.

In 2009, with the BCAEC rent problem now rectified, club members agree to proceed with the construction of new separate club meeting rooms adjacent to the existing workshop. Giulio Marcolongo, now an overseas celebrity in woodturning, provided Wonthaggi Woodies with a demonstration day on bowl turning. Wonthaggi township also

celebrated 100 years. In September the club evening wood turning sessions were re-introduced plus a building permit application was lodged for the storage infill between the two club buildings.

2010 saw both Billie Moat and Eric Thorpe honoured with club life memberships and in September it was decided to change over to daytime club meetings. October saw the new club meeting rooms, now finished, being officially opened by the Bass Coast Shire President Peter Paul at a Club Open Day held to mark the occasion. That event is well remembered by the club plaque so professionally made by Ken McKenzie for the occasion. Bernie Bambling joined the club and has since proved a valuable member with his construction expertise, demonstrated by the now completed building infill storage area. In November of that year John Di Stefano obtained a nice DVA grant for \$4540 to obtain more club equipment.

In 2011 we saw Ray Oram turn his skills to demonstrating the Scroll Saw and in February we welcomed Alan Hurst, who is doing such a superb job in editing our newsletters plus Kaye Hatton commenced to re-catalogue our club library. The club decided to appoint a competent Safety Officer in Lionel Wood, who has also become a most efficient club Secretary.

John Di Stefano created a club website in February 2012 to ensure we are all technically up with the times and Hartley Tobin retired as newsletter editor after so many years, for which we all thank him very much for a job well done. Lionel Wood makes BBQ arrangements with Bunnings in April which will benefit the club and in May the club proposes to erect honour boards to recognize past club executives and life members, that once again are so superbly made by Ken McKenzie.

So here we are in 2013 and as we all know what is happening this year, I will conclude my reflections of the past 20 years. But before I do that, I wish to mention a few members who to me have been a great example to others by their efforts and I refer to:

Ron Snooks, for his professional approach to improving and promoting Kids Corner which is such a great income earner for the club.

Okke Huitema, the perfect engineer and woodcrafter, who gives his time so generously to maintain club equipment and help other members with his wide knowledge of timber.

Hartley Tobin, who is such a superb woodturning teacher, newsletter editor and inventor of projects that challenge so many members to do better with their woodturning.

Eric Thorpe, for his exceptional ability to always be available to ensure that Christmas shops and other venues are organised, opened/closed, cleaned and managed plus the generous donation of his time to various club projects over so many years.

Tony Stephens, for his many successful social nights at a variety of venues which help bind this club together, for without such social events where members can relax and mix with their partners you do not have a club as good as this one.

Alan McNaught, the wonder man with geometric patterns in vases and repeat winner at the Australian Woodworking Exhibition. We are all so proud of you and you are a great example to all other members of this club.

Michael Bladen, the money keeper who puts in so many hours behind the scenes, is a quiet achiever whom this club is most appreciative of for his diligent financial control plus he is a pretty good turner.

To the present and past Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers and Committee members I also congratulate you on a job well done for without your time and dedication, this club would not be as successful as it is today.

I have deliberately mentioned some of our members in this presentation who have so generously contributed to the success of this club and apologize if I have overlooked anyone, but I say to all members both old and new that everyone has something to contribute. We can all offer our experience whatever it may be and even if it is only coming to these meetings on a regular basis, it helps build this club into one of the best woodcraft clubs available, a club that is often envied by others.

In concluding, I ask a question and that is, “ What is the first thing that a buyer or judge of woodwork sees when they look at members work and the answer is the finish? “ ... and that is where I am now.

Thank you one and all and I wish you every success in the future.

Roy Fischmann

8th August 2013