



The Penguin

Newsletter of Phillip Island Conservation Society Fourth
Quarter,
December 2008



Newsletter

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Dates for Your Diary 2009

Sat Jan 10: Children's Environment Morning "Energy".

Hoping to have the CERES Energy Trailer subject to gaining a BCSC Community grant. Otherwise, energy activities inside.

Heritage Centre Cowes 11 am-12 noon.

Sat Jan 10: PICS A.G.M. Heritage Centre, Cowes, 8 p.m. Annual reports, election of office bearers, voting on amendments to the PICS constitution.

Sun Jan 11: Working bee Red Rocks. Rubbish collection, tidying up of plantings.

Sun Jan 25: SPECIAL EVENT: "A Scottish Celebration" by the PICS performance group to celebrate Robbie Burns's 250th birthday. See Article inside.

Sat Feb 14: Children's Environment Morning. "Reduce, reuse, recycle" - Bags. Heritage Centre Cowes 11 am - 12 noon.

Sat Feb 21: Seasonal Walk Ventnor Common. Park at Ventnor Recreation Reserve (Pony Club) 2 p.m.

Sun Mar 1: Clean Up Australia day Meet at Five Ways 10 a.m.

Sat Mar 14: Children's Environment Morning "Earthworms" Heritage Centre Cowes 11 am-12 noon.

Sat April 11: Children's Environment Morning "Insects".
Heritage Centre Cowes 11 am-12 noon.

Sat April 18: PICS General Meeting Jane Jobe, Convenor, Bass Coast Roundtable of the Mornington Peninsula and Western Port Biosphere, followed by meeting. Heritage Centre, Cowes, 8 p.m.

Sun April 19: 5 Ways working bee Meet 10 a.m. Finish 12 noon.
Weed control and rubbish collection.

Sat May 9: Children's Environment Morning "Spiders". Heritage Centre Cowes 11 am-12 noon.

Sat May 16: Seasonal Walk Nobbies boardwalk and South Coast Rd. Meet outside Nobbies building door. 2 p.m.

Sat June 13: Children's environment morning Chemistry experiments. Heritage Centre, 11 a.m. - 12 noon.

Sat July 4: PICS General Meeting Heritage Centre Cowes. Urban Landcare officer Lisa Wangman will talk about the exciting local 3 year project: Sustaining Coastal Communities. 8 p.m.

Sat July 5: Red Rocks Working Bee: planting day. 10-12 noon.
Meet at car park.

Sat Aug 15: Seasonal Walk: Fishers Wetland and adjacent forest (rd in to Churchill Isld) Meet at car park on left before CI bridge. 2 p.m.

Sat Aug 29: BCSC Environment Groups get-together, organised by PICS. PINP will be our hosts at the Education Pod, Penguin Parade. 4 p.m. Tour of research, animal hospital and nursery facilities. Finger food evening meal. Speaker from PINP. All welcome.

Sat Oct 3: PICS General Meeting: Daniel Murphy, PI-born botanist with the National Herbarium. 8p.m.

Sun Oct 4: Red Rocks Working Bee: weed control and tidying up.

Sat Nov 21: Seasonal Walk: Cape Woolamai club house to granite quarry return. Meet at car park, 2 p.m.

Sat Jan 9 2010: AGM

Barb Martin Bush Bank: Sales and volunteers - every Wednesday plus 1st Saturday of each month 10 - 1. Phone Anne Davie 5956 8216.

Friends of Koalas (FOK) Habitat Days: First Saturday of every month at 10 a.m. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407

Koala Count at the Koala Conservation Centre, second

Tuesday of every month at 10am. Contact Patsy Hunt ph 5952 2407

Biosphere - Bass Coast Round Table meets at San Remo on the third Friday of every month at 8 p.m. Contact Jane Jobe, convenor, ph 0409 530 898.

Friends of Churchill Island (FOCIS): Phone Sec Jill Allen: 5956 7109, or email: nellaa32@waterfront.net.au. Meeting dates: 19.1.08; 29.3;24.5; AGM 26.7 - 1 p.m., Visitors ' Centre, Churchill Island.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members,

Less than a fortnight until Christmas! Here at Phillip Island we have received just about the best Christmas present we could have hope for: soaking rain! The New Year means that our Annual General Meeting is close at hand. Within the last few days you should have received a letter giving notice of possible changes to the PICS Constitution. It is proposed to reduce the number of Vice Presidents from two to one, to recognise the position of the Minute Secretary, and to reduce the number of Committee Members by two.

Please give serious thought to standing as either an Office Bearer or Committee Member. Generally speaking the Committee meets monthly. This year, we have met at 10.30 a.m. on the second Monday of the month at the Parish Hall, but where and when the Committee meets is up to its members to decide. Please don't rule yourself out as a possible member just because you don't live at Phillip Island. People from different places bring different view points and different ideas, and its important for us to be aware of environmental issues in places away from Phillip Island.

2008 has been a BUSY YEAR - you will hear all about it at the Annual Meeting. 2009 promises to be equally busy! In mid-January comes the Planning Panels Victoria hearing to rezone the land on the north side of Ventnor Rd from Anderson Rd almost to Justice Rd for residential development, including a retirement village. Soon after that should come the long-awaited Hearing of the Structure Plan for Silverleaves, Cowes and Ventnor. This is VERY IMPORTANT as it will set the boundaries for residential development.

In the meantime, make the most of the coming holidays! If you're on the island for the Australia Day holiday please come along to our summer fundraiser - a Scottish Celebration! See the article elsewhere in the newsletter.

Our With best wishes for a peaceful and happy Christmas and lots of enthusiasm for conservation in 2009.

With best wishes,

Margaret Hancock, President.

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Red Rocks Coast Action

Thanks to John, Robyn, Robert, Ross, Gary and Christine who helped out on Sunday 28th September, with a big weed control morning. We were greatly assisted by arborist Nick Harrison who was funded by BCSC to wield the chain saw for the day on boxthorn and Pittosporum along the fire track, with John as his offsider. Robyn and Robert, and Ross and Gary, formed cut and paint teams while Christine picked up several large bags of rubbish (a never-ending job!).

Exciting news is that builder Brian Westwood is now working on the final extension of the western staircase down to the beach and hopes to finish by Christmas. BCSC will then put protective fencing on the dunes to protect our last plantings and help stabilize the dunes for future plantings; and an order has been placed with Barb Martin Bush Bank for 2009. This is being funded jointly by an Envirofund grant and funding from BCSC. The next Red Rocks working bee will be 10 a.m. on Sunday Jan 11, which will be for rubbish collection, weed control and tidying up of older plantings.

Christine Grayden

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EDO workshop with Brendan Sydes

On Friday 21 November a group of 15 PICS, Landcare, PINP, Bass Coast Shire, WESBOC, and Coast Action personnel met for a full-day workshop on Native Vegetation law. This was the third in a series of Environment Defenders Office workshops which PICS has hosted in 2008; the other two were Biodiversity law and VCAT. All have been well-attended and much appreciated by all attendees and all had excellent presenters.

The Vegetation law workshop covered: definitions, reservation on public and private land, legal protection and exemptions, Management of Victoria's Native Vegetation - a Framework for Action, Bioregions and Ecological Vegetation Classes, native vegetation and planning, offsets and net gain, overlays and

threatened species legislation. It was a lot to get through in one day, but fortunately we were provided with a folder full of back-up information, much of it directly relevant to Bass Coast. A spare folder is available for perusal. Contact me on 5956 8501 or email cgrayden@waterfront.net.au giving your postal address.

Christine Grayden

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SEASONAL WALK AT McHAFFIES LAGOON

Despite a buffeting by strong southerly winds and a little rain, seven PICS members joined Bob Davie in a fascinating tour of this historic site, part of the 80 acre property owned and managed by Bob and Anne Davie since 1985.

Bob led our group to the site of the old McHaffie homestead, the first white settlement of a permanent nature on Phillip Island. We sheltered in the lee of ancient cypress trees planted by Ferdinand von Mueller, and beside a weather-beaten pear tree planted by Mrs McHaffie. The homestead site sits above a small freshwater lagoon (not McHaffies Lagoon) formed behind the extensive dune system, and which Bob says has never in his knowledge dried up. The presence of such a reliable supply of fresh water was probably, he believes, the reason for the McHaffies making their home here. Further to the south is the much larger lagoon, which actually bears the name of the first settlers.

The extensive dune system lying between the sea and the farmland forms a barrier to drainage to the coast, and hence is responsible for the existence of the lagoons. Soon after purchasing the land, Bob and Anne had the mains water connected to the property, allowing them to fence off the lagoons and the dunes, excluding stock and permitting the natural dune vegetation to regenerate vigorously. Extensive removal of boxthorn has also been done, in conjunction with Phillip Island Nature Park and Landcare. There are several significant aboriginal sites there as well, and a muttonbird rookery. Once the boxthorn removal is completed, revegetation of bare areas of the dunes will be undertaken.

We headed off to inspect the dunes more closely. A handsome stone plaque under a medium sized Banksia looked interesting, so we sent Bob over the electric fence to report the details. The plaque was erected in 1992 by descendents of the McHaffies to mark the 150th anniversary of the arrival of the settlers, and the date of a re-enactment of the landing. The Banksia was also planted then.

We followed Bob along a track through and over the dunes. This is one of the few substantial areas of indigenous

vegetation left on Phillip Island, and we noted the thick growth of Coast tea-tree, Seaberry Saltbush, Coast Beard heath and Sweet Bursaria. Fox and rabbit control needs constant attention here. We paused at the top of the high dune to admire the view of Woolshed Bight, and out to the Nobbies, Cape Schank and up the Peninsula coast. In the early days of settlement, visitors would be rowed into this beach from Stony Point, disembarking on the flat rock platform. All produce from the Island, such as wool bales and crops, left on barges pulling in here when the tide was right and the weather fair.

Looking south, Bob pointed out the location of the outfall from McHaffies Lagoon where in very wet seasons (perhaps a thing of the past!) large volumes of water could flow out across the beach. On the headland above stands starkly and incongruously, the tiny relocated church from San Remo, now used as an occasional chapel for weddings, etc.

As we headed back out of the dunes, Bob mentioned that this area would be well-remembered by some long-time residents of the Island as the place where Phillip Island Youth Club camps were held. Our last destination was McHaffies Lagoon itself. The lagoon had been substantially modified by previous owners. At the north end, a sizeable dam was dug and used to irrigate vegetable crops. At the south end where about a third of the lagoon is covered by a public reserve, a levee bank and fence were constructed to mark the free-hold boundary. As a consequence, the lagoon would regularly dry out, as the disturbance to the impervious layers allowed water to soak away into the dunes. After acquiring the property, Bob and Anne undertook restorative works which involved digging two large holes to bring up the clay and using this to seal the floor of the lagoon. Two islands were also formed within the lagoon and planted out, while the main bird-feeding areas of the shallows were left untouched. The results of this intervention have been very gratifying, though the lagoon has not had enough rain to fill it yet. The islands are thickly vegetated, and we saw numerous water birds, including breeding swans with cygnets, ibis, ducks and spoonbill, feeding among the dense water-weeds.

We came away from our walk with a strong sense of the high conservation significance of this unique area, for its landscape, wildlife and historic values. We are lucky that such excellent stewards as Bob and Anne Davie are in charge at present, and we can only hope that when that responsibility passes on to others, that these values will continue to be respected. Some level of formal protection may help support a desirable long-term outcome.

John Eddy

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Bass Coast Environment Groups Get-together

This year the Get-together was held at Corinella, with the organisation in the capable hands of the Corinella Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management. We met in the Corinella Community Hall, where some groups had set up informative displays, giving an overview of the vast range of activities in which conservation groups in our area are involved.

The before-dinner walk presented the 25 participants with a difficult choice: either guided around the sights of the foreshore south of the town, or take the tour of the northern coastline. Most PICS members chose the south, a route that took us to the coastal pathway via Cuthberts Road. The old cliff-top track was not safe, so was repositioned inland, and has been accompanied with substantial plantings. Volunteer work supplemented much of the work done by skilled contractors, with funds coming from the management of the foreshore caravan park and boat ramp. We were most impressed at how well the various shrubs and small trees had established and grown in only a few years. As it turned out, we did stray onto the northern coast at the end of our walk. We enjoyed views of the mangroves and of French Island, and, again the vigor of plantings established by the management committee.

We gathered again at the hall, and sat down to a tasty and plentiful dinner, enjoying the pleasant surroundings of this excellent community facility and the company of like-minded conservationists. Afterwards we listened to short presentations from most of the groups present.

1. Bass Coast branch, National Trust - Ross Lloyd

Ross gave a Power Point presentation of landscape issues in the area, finishing with the win in VCAT against over-development of the Pyramid Rock area by the Linfox group.

2. Corinella Foreshore Reserve Committee of Management - Anwyn Martin

Anwyn also gave a Power Point presentation summarizing the recent award-winning work of the Committee of Management on this foreshore.

3. WESBOC - Elizabeth Shaw

Elizabeth emphasized the great diversity of habitats for birds our area contains, and outlined the range of surveys, group walks and other activities her group is involved in. Recently the name has changed from "Bird Observers Club" to "Bird Observation and Conservation".

4. Mike Cleeland

Mike presented some plant specimens for identification, which he had collected along our walk. He outlined the particular differences between boobialla and the weed species

boneseed; between Chilian Needlegrass and the native spear grasses; and between native and introduced pigface. He also mentioned a new monitoring program to cover saltmarshes and the effects of climate change on them.

5. PICS - Margaret Hancock/Christine Grayden

Margaret described the main activities of the Society during 2008, with VCAT hearings and the 40th birthday with publication of our history being paramount. Our seasonal walks continue to be enjoyed. Christine then commented on the success of our Children's Environment Mornings.

6. Bass Valley branch, South Gippsland Conservation Society/ Rare fauna group - Meryl Tobin.

The branch is currently in recess, but Meryl is trying to reactivate it. Major concerns include the protection of native vegetation in the sand quarry areas and supporting the mangrove work of Dr Tim Ealey. Meryl also spoke of the many sightings of large animals which could be large cat species.

The informative and enjoyable gathering was concluded with a Power Point presentation by Denis Cox, Port Phillip East Coast Action/Coast Care Facilitator from the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Denis gave a detailed overview of the origins and evolution of Western Port vegetation.

Since there was no get-together in 2007 it was quite a big job for the Corinella group to pick up the pieces and put on the get-together for 2008, and we thank them heartily for their efforts.

John Eddy

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Children's Environment Mornings

The season kicked off with a session run by Christine on "Birds and their Nests" with 16 children present. The next session unfortunately coincided with the Relay for Life weekend with most of the children involved at the Cowes recreation centre, and only 3 customers for John Eddy who had done a great deal of work for a "Pond Life" session. However, the children and their parents greatly enjoyed it! For December we had Marg Healey from the animal hospital at the PINP come and talk to 26 children and their parents/carers about looking after injured and oiled birds and mammals. It was a fantastic talk, even though Marg protested she NEVER talks to children! The session finished with the children making possum masks. We are hopeful of gaining an \$800 Bass Coast shire community grant to fund CERES to bring down

their energy demonstration trailer for January. If not we will have a range of energy-related activities indoors. Unfortunately we won't know about the grant until end December, so it doesn't give us or CERES much warning. The committee voted this year to transfer \$100 of general funds into the CEM designated column, and that money has been spent on excellent materials for this season's art/craft work that accompanies most sessions.

Christine Grayden

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SPECIAL FUNDRAISER - SCOTTISH CELEBRATION

PICS member and poem-teller Malcolm Brodie, who was the brains behind our two fundraising performances of The Rime of the Ancient Mariner decided that the PICS performance group could put another performance together to celebrate Robbie Burns's 250th birthday on Sunday January 25 January 2009. Planning is now underway. The performance will include small bagpipes, poetry reading, performances of well-known Scottish songs by the Gippsland a capella group Real Women, a rendition of the life of Robbie Burns, and a good old sing-a-long of some Scottish favorites. Two solos by my sister, Billie Broadfoot (a professional performer of 35 years' experience) will be another highlight of the show. The performance will go for about an hour and start at 2 p.m. at St Philip's Parish Hall, Thompson Ave Cowes, and will be followed by a traditional Scottish afternoon tea of shortbread, Dundee fruit cakes and scones and jam and cream. All that for \$5 per head! Come along to support PICS, and bring all your friends and visitors. A raffle will also be held, drawn at 4 p.m.

Enquiries: Christine Grayden, ph 5956 8501.

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HOODED PLOVER REPORT

Twenty two Hooded Plover nests were recorded to the 11th December.

- 11 have failed and
- 11 are currently active: Crazy Birds, Silverleaves, Woolamai SLSC, Forrest Caves (west), Farm Beach, Thorny Beach (east), Summerlands (east), Flynn's Reef,

Colonnades (east), Hutchisons Beach, Thorny Beach (west), so it could be a busy summer for Hooded Plover Watch volunteers and rangers.

The Crazy Birds pair at Surf Beach still has 2 chicks that are nearly three weeks old. The chicks are healthy and 'nest progress' signs have been erected at access points. The chick shelters have not been used very much in this instance, perhaps because of the natural shelter in the area. 'Hooded Plover Watch' volunteers have been rostered each weekend to assist in protection. This beach is a designated dog walking beach however as of December 1st walking times have been restricted to 7-10am and 5-8pm.

Great News!! The chick at Silverleaves is approximately three and half weeks old and was the first to be banded this season (photo 10/12/08) and should fledge before Christmas.

Jon Fallaw, PINP.

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WHICH FISH ARE SUSTAINABLE?

Fish makes such a simple, delicious and healthy meal, but which fish are sustainable? The September 2008 Park Watch, quarterly journal of the Victorian National Parks Association suggests we try not to eat Shark or Ray, sold as "flake", because they are long-lived, have few young and are in decline around the world. More sustainable species include Australian Salmon (not to be confused with Tasmanian or Atlantic salmon, which are not sustainably fished), Whiting, Ocean Jackets, Flathead, Kingfish, Mullet, Yellow-tail Kingfish and Arrow Squid. For a more detailed list buy a copy of the Australian Marine Conservation Foundation Society's *Sustainable Seafood* Guide \$10 from VNPA - or ask for a free summary card. Tel 9347 5188.

From Nepean Conservation News, Nepean Conservation Grp Inc.

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To Order "An Island Worth Conserving: A History of the Phillip Island Conservation Society 1968-2008"

Send \$20 per book + \$5 per 1-2 copies postage to The

Treasurer, PO Box 548, COWES, 3922. Cheques and money orders to be made payable to Phillip Island Conservation Society Inc. Include your name and address. Thanks!

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Minutes of General Meeting held July 5, 2008

1. Welcome. The President, M. Hancock, opened the meeting at 8.10 pm, welcoming everyone, in particular the guest speaker Dr André Chiaradia of the Phillip Island Nature Park <http://www.penguins.org.au>

2&3. Attendance and apologies. as per attendance book.

4. Minutes of the previous General Meeting, 5 July 2008, as circulated in the Newsletter. *Moved:* J. Jansson, *seconded:* O. Bolitho, *carried.*

4. Business Arising.

Amendment C85 - Directions Hearing to be held in Wonthaggi, October 13. The Hearing is to commence at a location to be advised on November 17 and is expected to last 3 or 4 days.

Desalination - Objections due in by September 30.

The book 'Climate Code Red : the case for emergency action' by Philip Sutton and David Spratt, Scribe Publications, 2008 <http://www.scribepublications.com.au> is available at the Cowes Newsagency.

6. Correspondence.

In: Container Deposit Legislation postcards from Colleen Hartland MLC, Greens Victoria
<http://www.electedgreensvictoria.org.au>

National Library of Australia <http://www.nla.gov.au> - Legal Deposit receipt regarding 'An island worth conserving'.

Register of Environmental Organisations - acknowledgement of statistical return <http://www.environment.gov.au>

'Come for a walk' - funding available.

Bryan Westwood - Red Rocks quote, \$18,480.

The Honourable Timothy (Tim) James Holding, Minister for Water - acknowledgement of PICS objection to the proposed desalination plant.

Out: M. & G. Johnson expressing PICS thanks and regret at losing them from the Committee.

The Honourable Timothy (Tim) James Holding, Minister for Water, objecting to the proposed desalination plant.

Bass Coast Shire Council <http://www.basscoast.vic.gov.au> - C85 submission.

P. Hunt and M. Schinkel re desalination objection.

'Come for a walk' - application for signage in Red Rocks BBQ area.

Bass Coast Shire Council <http://www.basscoast.vic.gov.au> objecting to the removal of vegetation on the Rhyll foreshore.

A copy of 'An island worth conserving' was sent to the Victorian Community History Awards
<http://www.vic.gov.au/culture-sport-recreation/heritage-history/victorian-history/victorian-community-history-awards.html>

Moved: J. Jansson, seconded: M. Cleeland, carried.

7. Treasurer's Report.

General A/c # 06 3835 10022884

Opening Balance, 1.7.08: \$22,535.99

Plus Income:

- Subscriptions: 80.00
- Donations: 230.00
- Book sales: 375.00
- ATO GST refund: 48.00

Total Income: 733.00

Less Expenditure:

- Advertising: 171.68
- Public Fund transfers: 210.00
- PICS HIS trnsfr to Public Fund: 962.60
- Red Rocks Coast Action Plants: 225.00
- C Grayden reimbursement: 109.30
- Clean Ocean Foundation subs: 35.00
- Parish - projector hire: 20.00
- Room hire, BCSC X 2: 43.50
- G Collins reimbrt postage: 55.00

Total Expenditure: 1,832.08

Balance (subject to September statement): 21,436.91

Encumbered Funds:

Five Ways revegetation project (almost complete):

80.00

Red Rocks Coast Action (Envirofund grant):

15,500.00

Children's Environment Mornings: 107.40

VCAT Appeals reserve: 607.90

Total encumbered funds: 16,295.30

Available Funds: 5,141.61

* Owed to C Grayden - postage (\$22.55), ink (\$43), paper (\$4), Children's Environment Morning supplies (\$85.69) Total \$155.24

Public Fund A/c # 06 3835 10089114

Closing balance as at 31.8.08: 3,274.84

Moved: C. Grayden, seconded: J. Jobe, carried.

8. General Business.

1. **Meet the Candidates** - It is traditional for PICS to ask the first question. Suggestions included the need for questions with a conservation focus, and that candidates be questioned on their familiarity with the Cowes/Ventnor/Silverleaves Structure Plan C85.

2. **Structure Plans** - delayed until 2009.

3. **Coast Action** - Working Bee at Red Rocks, Sunday September 28.

9. **The guest speaker**, Dr André Chiaradia of the Phillip Island Nature Park, talked about his recent trip to Spain, funded by the Penguin Foundation, to study changes in the penguin food chain. He described his visits to desalination plants while he was there. Spain has 350 desalination plants.

10. **Vote of thanks** was given by J. Eddy and applauded by those present.

11. **Next Working Bee** Sunday September 28, 10 am, Red Rocks.

Next Committee Meeting Monday October 13, 10.30 am, Parish Hall.

EDO Workshop on Vegetation Law Friday October 24, 10 am - 4 pm, Heritage Centre Meeting Room.

Meet the Candidates Forum (Shire Council elections) Friday November 7, 7.30 pm, Heritage Centre Meeting Room.

Bass Coast Shire Environment Groups Get-Together Saturday 8 November, 4 pm -, Corinella Public Hall.

Walk Against Warming Saturday November 15, Federation Square, Melbourne.

Seasonal Walk Saturday November 22, 2 pm McHaffie's Lagoon.

Next General Meeting & PICS A.G.M. Saturday January 10, 7.30 pm, Heritage Centre Meeting Room.

Next Working bee Sunday January 11, 10 am, Red Rocks.

12. The meeting closed at 9.30 pm.

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Download the [Membership Renewal Form](#) and send it in today if you have not renewed your subscription, or if you want to become a new member.

The [Public Fund](#) donation form can be downloaded for your contribution to this fund. Feel free to share these with a friend or neighbour.

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PICS CONTACTS

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