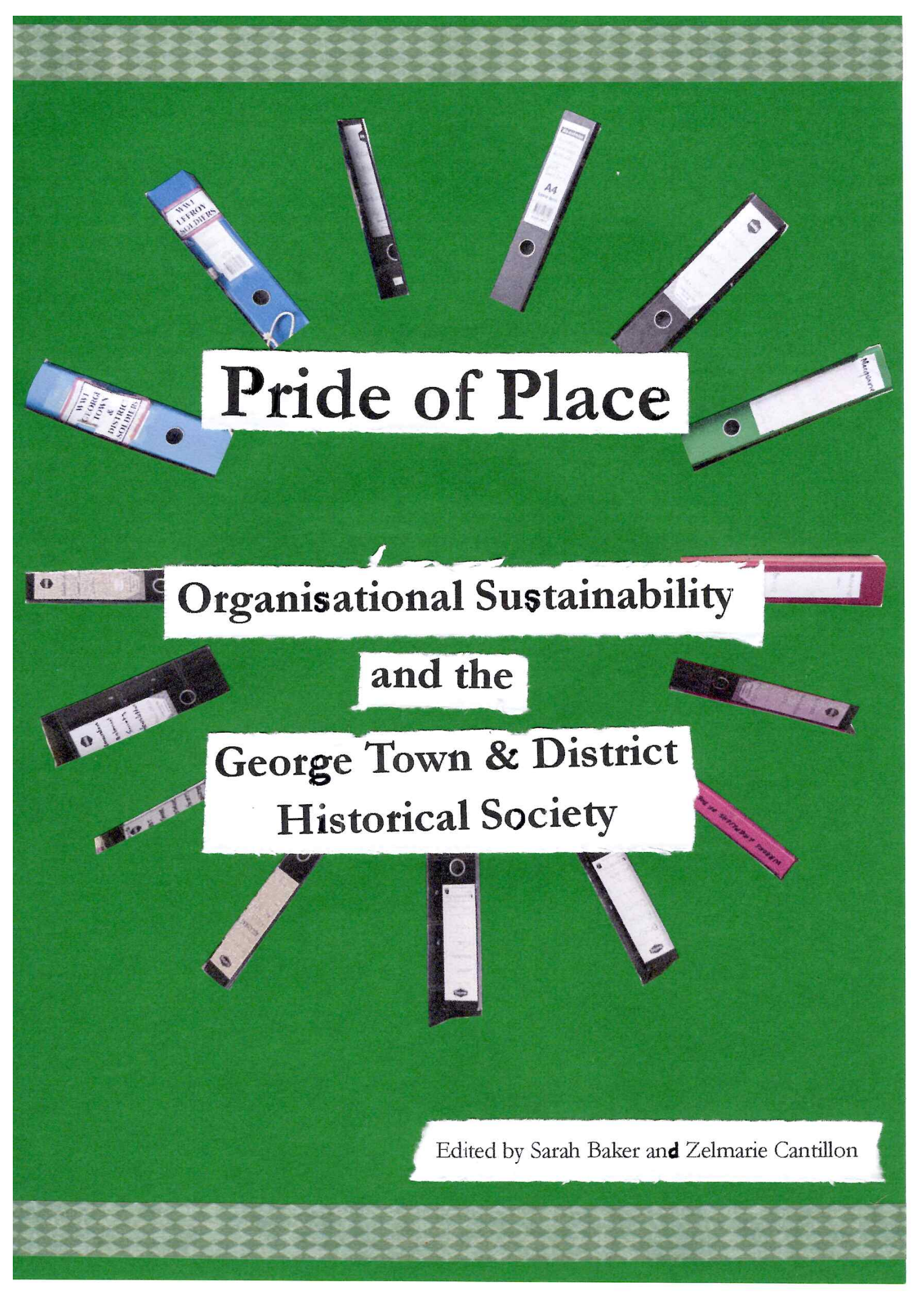




Pride of Place

Organisational Sustainability

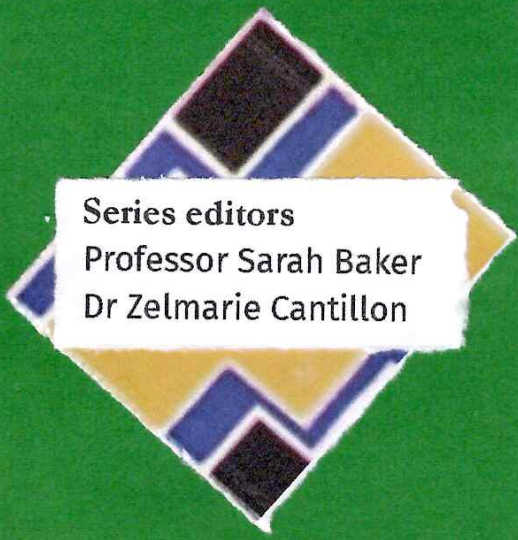
and the

George Town & District
Historical Society

Edited by Sarah Baker and Zelmarie Cantillon



Sustaining Community Heritage zine series



Series editors

Professor Sarah Baker

Dr Zelmarie Cantillon



The Sustaining Community Heritage zine series emerges from an Australian Research Council-funded project, 'Co-creating a sustainable future for the community heritage sector'. This project explores the organisational sustainability of Australia's volunteer-managed galleries, libraries, archives, museums and historical societies which serve important functions in shaping public history through the collection, preservation and display of local, everyday and marginalised heritages. However, the sector faces a sustainability crisis. Mounting pressures pose a threat to the long-term futures of volunteer-run heritage institutions, putting at risk the diversity and accessibility of the nation's historical record. In this project, we collaborate with representatives from community heritage institutions across Australia to co-develop strategies for recognising value, measuring organisational sustainability and creating benchmarks for sustainable practice.

The zines in this series capture the work of the project as it unfolds, enabling volunteers in community heritage organisations to communicate their experiences and knowledge creatively and accessibly. We approach the zines as a way to facilitate a networked, co-designed understanding of organisational sustainability from a range of institutional contexts. The zines in the series identify challenges, but they also seek to build on existing resources, capabilities and ambitions already in place for the pursuit of viable futures.



For project updates and other issues of this zine series, see:

<https://communityheritagetoolkit.com/>

**Pride of Place: Organisational Sustainability and the
George Town & District Historical Society**



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Published by Community Heritage Press

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Ethics

This project has received full ethical clearance from Griffith University's Human Ethics Committee (GU ref no: 2025/199).

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Pride of Place: Organisational Sustainability and the George Town & District Historical Society

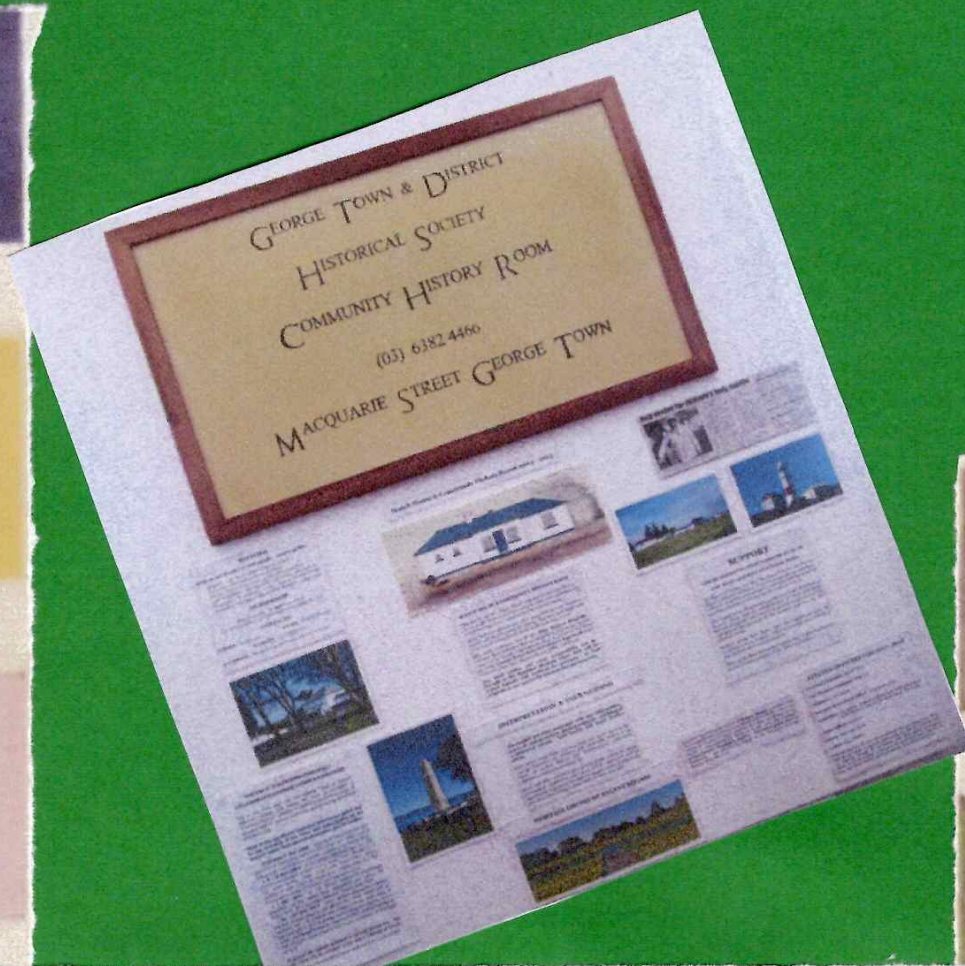
Editorial

About the George Town & District Historical Society

Founded in 1997, the George Town & District Historical Society is a custodian of local history for the communities surrounding the north-eastern reaches of the Tamar River in northern Tasmania. The Society has developed a collection of printed materials, photographs, oral histories and research databases, much of it housed at the Low Head Pilot Station Maritime Museum (see other zine in this series).



Beyond activities of collecting and archiving, members organise biennial history conferences, produce publications and public displays, lead history walks and excursions, and support genealogical research through family history resources. Situated in one of Tasmania's earliest colonial settlements, the Society's work reflects the layered history of George Town – a place that has served at different times since 1804 as an administrative centre, holiday destination, fishing village and industrial town. Through monthly forums, guest speakers and community events, the Society continues to foster public interest in the stories, people and places that have shaped the region across generations.



The title *Pride of Place* reflects the Society's commitment to fostering interest in, and understanding of, this history of the George Town region. This commitment is also one of advocacy: volunteers work to ensure that the region's history is recognised within broader historical narratives and that George Town is not, as one volunteer remarked, "left off the map".

Pride of Place also speaks to a dimension of the Society's organisational sustainability. Volunteers reflected on the challenge of attracting new members, engaging the local community and inspiring others to value the region's heritage. Their work suggests that sustaining the Society depends on cultivating a sense of connection, curiosity and pride that will encourage people to participate in the organisation's future.

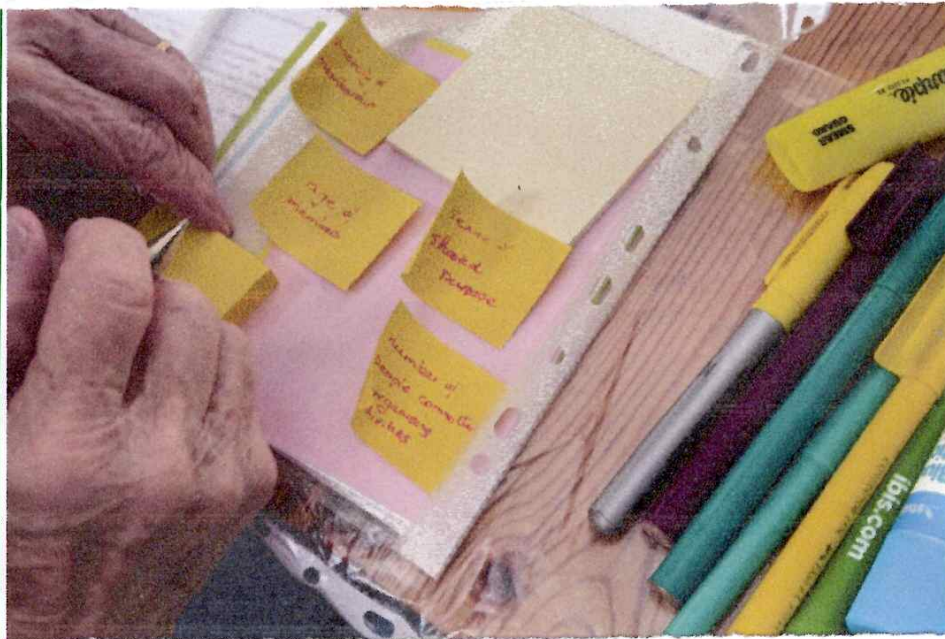
Organisational sustainability, then, is about creating the conditions in which both the stories of a place – and the community committed to telling them – can continue to thrive.

Outline of this zine: What's inside?

Content for this zine was created during a two-hour workshop held on 14 May 2026. Two participants – Des (Chairman) and Lorraine (Secretary) – volunteer for both the Low Head Pilot Station Support Group and the George Town & District Historical Society. Of the other participants, Craig is the Vice Chairman of the Society and Anne is a member of the committee. Sarah, one of the project's co-leads, facilitated three activities aimed at encouraging the participants to think creatively about organisational sustainability.



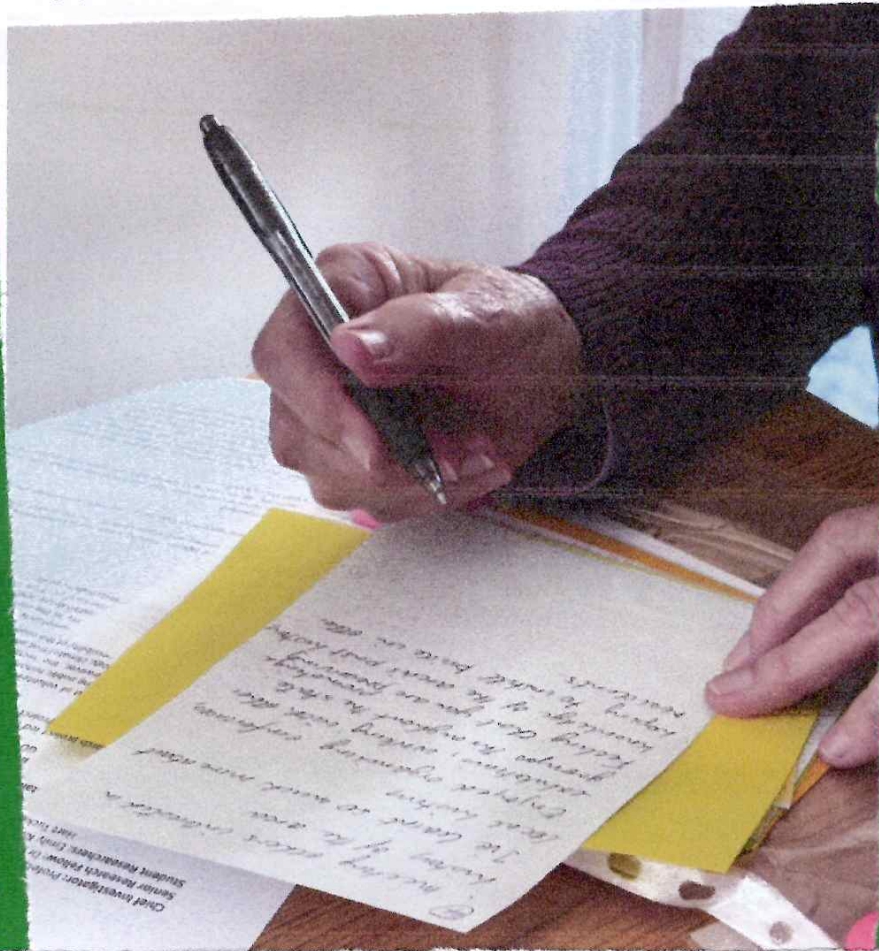
The first activity invited participants to jot down on sticky notes as many words as possible that came to mind when they thought of 'organisational sustainability'. They were then asked to think about relationships between these words and to arrange the sticky notes on a piece of card in ways that might capture those connections.



In the next activity, participants were invited to collectively consider the organisational sustainability trajectory of the Historical Society from the past and into the future. They looked back on past hurdles to maintaining a thriving organisation and on aspects that supported the Society to develop and maintain a strong foundation. They were then asked to look ahead to future challenges the Society might face moving forward and what they could change in their practices to overcome those foreseeable hurdles.



Finally, participants engaged in an activity where they responded to a series of writing prompts. They chose to reflect on what feelings would be elicited if the organisation was to fold, the rewards of being a volunteer and why they persevere.



Also dispersed throughout this zine are excerpts from an interview undertaken with Des, as well as snippets of discussions that took place during the zine workshop.

Sarah Baker
Zelmarie Cantillon



Peter Cox

Chloe Martin
& The Grove
provided free
meeting place

Looking back, what has been propelling
George Town and District Historical
Society towards attaining a long-term
future?

Small groups
of dedicated
people





George Town & District Historical Society Inc.

13th Biennial Conference

Convicts & Convictism in northern Van Diemen's Land/Tasmania

Sarah: So with the Historical Society, I'm guessing, the money comes from annual memberships?



Des: Yeah. We do also have a very generous patron.

When: Sunday 12th November 2023

Where:

Sarah: Oh okay, that's good. So they help support the events that you're putting on? nes St.

(Turn right into Agnes Street
the to

Des: Yeah, she's from New South Wales [but has a] family [history] back here from the early days.

Speakers & Topics (order will be as follows)

Sarah: Did you pursue that patronage, or did they come to you?

Maureen Martin-Evans *Convict Road and Probation Stations of northern VDL (archaeological focus)*

Des: No. She came down to a conference first. [With her patronage], we're pretty well off. We've got nothing to spend our money on much. We've got all the equipment. We could probably do with - our old projector's that big, you can get little projectors like that nowadays.

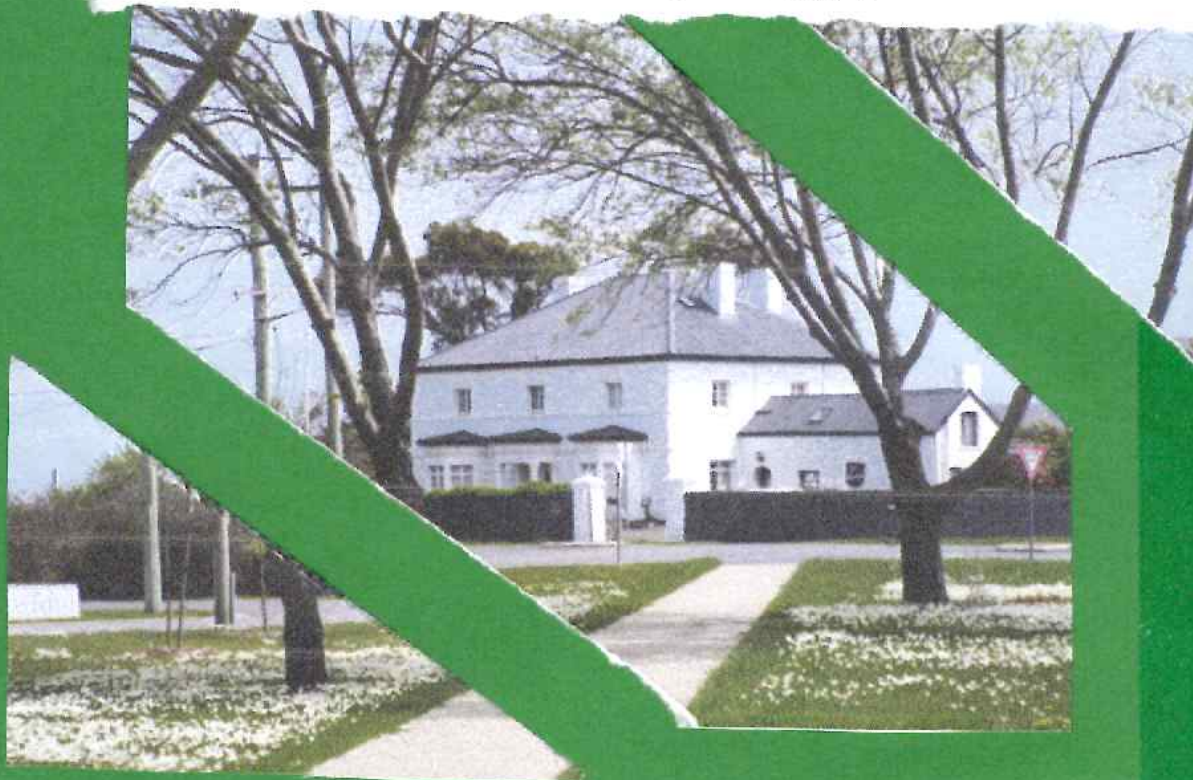
*d Launceston
vict site*

orial

Regist
contact
Ph 63 8:
Email: info@georgetownhistory.org.au

Des: Things like that. We've got a good PA system, a portable one with batteries and things in it. We've got most of the stuff we want. And we don't have to pay for where we have our meetings.

Sarah: That's at The Grove [an historical building in George Town]?



Des: Yeah. The lady [Chlo Martin who purchased The Grove in the late 1960s] used to be our treasurer for a long time, but she died, so her boys have let us use it.

I persevere with the Historical Society because .

- I enjoy the talks given by members and visitors.
- I enjoy our biennial excursions to other historic towns
- the biennial conference is well really well organised (primarily by one person, with the rest of us giving a bit of support).
- I would like to see greater involvement of current members & potential members in planning developing ~~as well~~ or increasing the scope of our interests.



I enjoy learning about
the local history of George
Town and meeting
the various people involved.

Des: We went to Hobart, to conferences down there. Because Peter Cox used to say, "We can't let them get away with just doing southern stuff". ...

Lorraine: Yes, the same with a Female Convict Research Centre. When they said they were going to have meetings and we said, "well, we have to make sure that the George Town [female factory] is included in it." ... So we went down every month [to Hobart where] they used to have the meetings. ... Now they only have them once a year and that big sort of seminar. ... They do publications as well, and they did a book on the Cascades female factory with people writing stories. And they'd done Ross, and they'd done Launceston, and they weren't going to do this one, but anyway, I think we had Alison Alexander on our side and she said, "just leave it to me". And we did do it. ...

Des: They like to forget us down south.

Lorraine: But it was really, you know, to make sure that we weren't left off the map. We went to quite a lot of trouble to do that. We still go to the seminars.



Meeting others interested in
history of the area.

I've learnt so much more about
local history - on site, reading,
from others.

Enjoyed organising conferences,
exhibitions, working with other
groups throughout the state.

Feeling that you are ^{promoting &} preserving
knowledge of the area's past history.
hoping to instill pride in other
residents. (GTDHS)

Sharing pride in the museum &
its history. (LHPSMM)



Distance

Local
Council

Looking back, what have been the hurdles to
George Town and District Historical Society's
viable future?

Examiner
ceasing
publication
of G. T. supplement

COUNCIL
not always
supportage

Finances

Community
Applique

Community
ageism

LOOKING AHEAD, WHAT ARE THE FORESEEABLE HAZARDS GEORGE
TOWN AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY MIGHT FACE THAT PUT
THE ORGANISATION AT RISK?

Ideas 4
discussion

Aging Advers.

ENOUGH PEOPLE
TO ORGANISE

Founders Festival

*Celebrating George Town and its heritage
throughout November and December 2019*

MON 11
18
&
25
GUIDED HISTORY WALKS AROUND GEORGE TOWN with GT&DHS (approx 1 ½ hr)
10am START at Watch House FREE.
Please wear appropriate shoes & dress.
No walk if too wet. Ph [REDACTED]

MON 18
GT&DHS' "IN THEIR OWN WORDS" - readings from the 1820 Royal Commission in Historical Records of Aust. reveal what was happening in George Town. A light supper is included.
7 - 9pm - Bass & Flinders Centre - \$5
RSVP: Ph [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Tune in to TAMAR FM 95.3 for full details of all events, follow 'George Town and District Historical Society' on Facebook or use the contact details included on each event.

MON 2
GT&DHS MEMBERS' CHRISTMAS DINNER
6.30 for 7pm at The Pier Hotel. \$37.50
BOOK: Lorraine [REDACTED] by MON am 25 NOV

MON 27
IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS - GUIDED HISTORY WALK AROUND GEORGE TOWN with GT&DHS (approx 1 ½ hr) - 10am START at Watch House

Sarah: Community ageism. What do you mean by that?

Craig: Well, you know, generally, historical societies like ours, get left to older people. "Oh, no, no, no. We're too young for that. Let the old people take care of it."

MON 13
IN THEIR FOOTSTEPS - GUIDED HISTORY WALK AROUND GEORGE TOWN with GT&DHS (approx 1 ½ hr) - 10am START at Watch House FREE. Please wear appropriate shoes & dress.

OCTOBER 2017 (on the fringed)
OCT 18
till
MON
11 DEC
EXHIBITION - CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF THE GEORGE TOWN & DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY
10am - 4pm Mon - Fri; 1pm - 3pm Sat & Sun
Watch House - \$3 entry or \$5 annual pass
Lorraine Wootton 08 82 4412

Founders Festival

*Celebrating George Town and its heritage
throughout November and December 2017*

... we have a committee meeting usually once a month, sometimes every second month, ... [at] which we organise things. We [also] have monthly meetings, and those monthly meetings are always a talk from someone. And then every two years we have a conference, and the off-year we used to run a two-day excursion. ... This year we only ran a one-day. ...



monthly meetings, sometimes a bit above, sometimes a fraction below. We average around 20 at the

Papers of the George Town and
District Historical Society
Biennial Conference

Sunday 12th November 2006

problems is our membership has dwindled a bit. They keep dying. We had two die last week. ...

And, of course, one of the



George Town & District Historical Society Inc.

Celebrating 20 Years!

of meetings...excursions...conferences...commemorations...
newsletters...conferences...collaborations...preservation...
publications...interpretation...collections...research...
historical walks... and the list goes on!

Sarah: For the Historical Society, what do you think the key challenges are?

Des: Well, probably keeping membership up, because we're losing them. We get new ones, we've got a few new ones this year. We've got quite a few members in other parts of the state and the mainland, but of course they don't come to our monthly meetings. ...

VENUE:

Watch House Gallery
Macquarie St, George Town

FROM:

Wed 18 October until
Mon 11 December

ADMISSION: \$3 single entry
or \$5 for an annual pass

10am - 4 pm weekdays
1 - 3 pm Sat. & Sun.



Sarah: In terms of the Historical Society, what would be the top five priorities for maintaining organisational sustainability?



Des: Well, as far as sustaining the Historical Society, it's simply having enough members to attend the - while you can attend meetings, that's the way we run. It's just a meeting every month.

Occasionally we do publish a book. But it's not a big organisation.



Dedication.
Reliability.
Genders

Organization

Location

Sources

Local
Support.

FOUNDERS Festival

*Celebrating George Town
and its heritage*

In the

Dedication: to be a volunteer you've got to demonstrate a degree of dedication.

Reliability: if you put your name down to volunteer, you've got to be reliable.

Readings from reports of the

Genders: from the point of view of my experiences with [another nearby maritime museum], we could do with more blokes volunteering.

*specula
port, t*

Organization: how the group you are volunteering for is organised – whether it is organised.

Presented by the George Town & District Historical Society Inc.

WHEN: 7

Location: becomes important because very often volunteers ... come from a long way away.

WHERE

Sources of volunteers: Where do we get volunteers from? Are they local? Are they out of towners?

COST: \$5 includes light supper ...

RSVP by Fri 17 Nov to Secretary, L. Wootton

Ph

And local support: How well is the organisation supported locally?

Presented by the
George Town & District Historical Society Inc.

In their own words

Sarah: What about for the Historical Society, if you step down [as Chairman]?

Des: We'd just get another – I don't know, we haven't got a big committee at the moment. ... But I don't know. We've got one member I reckon could be a chairman, but I don't know whether they would be interested. As I say, we've got a good treasurer. Lorraine's the secretary.

Sarah: Is it hard to get people to put their hands up to be on the committee?

Des: Yeah, yeah, reasonably hard. We usually talk them into it, but no, we're usually chasing to get the last couple of people. See, a lot of the Historical Society are older people, some of them are older than me and I'm old. ... and they don't want to become involved.

WHERE: The Grove, 25 Cimitiere St

COST: gold coin donation towards supper

Due to COVID, please RSVP to Secretary, L. Wootton

Make resources
more available
to more people

Looking ahead, what does George Town and
District Historical Society need to do differently
to overcome the foreseeable future challenges?

Can we have
a special
section in
local library

Anne: I think we could do more with the local library.

Lorraine: I've been thinking lately because when we went to Queenstown, they had a family history, local history, sort of section in [the library]. And, you know, then they had meetings and things in there.

Des: It's a wonder the [George Town library] has got a small section because years ago, they gave everything away.

Anne: I mean, they have Monday morning crochet groups, you know. We should be able to have a section with history reference books.

Lorraine: I think that's a great idea.

Sarah: And so how would you action that? What would be the type of thing that you would need to do?

Anne: We'd need to talk to the library. We'd need to get a proposal together. And I haven't a clue what books [the Society's] got.

Lorraine: Yeah, I mean, if you put [the Society's] books in the local library, you probably need to keep some out here [at the Low Head Pilot Station Museum] for our reference to help people.

Sarah: Do you have duplicates in the collection? Or mainly is it just single –

Lorraine: No, only one....

Anne: Launceston have got the local studies collection. We should be able to have an equivalent local studies collection here. ... With the library it wouldn't be a whole lot of work, because it'll only be a matter of adding onto their catalogue, of course.

Sarah: Oh, that's a really interesting suggestion.

Anne: I actually didn't know that the historical society had a collection of books.

Lorraine: No. Well, it sort of happened because we had [the Society's collection] in the Watch House. And then, you know, there was no where else to take it [so it went to the Museum].

Sarah: Could they borrow books from the Watch House?

Des: It wasn't really a borrowing place.

Lorraine: Just sit down there and read.

Des: But occasionally we do.

Lorraine: Occasionally, someone would.

Des: We sign things out. But it's not a good idea because you lose them.

Sarah: And if you've only got the one copy.

Des: And some of the books were lost from when they were in there. Very hard to keep track of them. ... You'll have to come out, Anne, to look at all the books we've got at the museum. We've got a big library up there.

Sarah: So the Historical Society doesn't have a physical location?

Des: No, no.

Sarah: But it has artefacts?



Des: It doesn't have many artefacts, we've avoided that. We've got a few artefacts [stored] out at the Pilot Station which belong to the Historical Society. There's a few in my shed but not many, only a few pictures, and a few things like that. We keep away from the artefacts. ...

I've done a terrible lot of work over the years with setting up databases for all sorts of things to do with the history of the area. And I did that because the first 11 years we were back living here I used to look after a little place in town and we used to use that as the base for our history. We had a computer in there, I had a couple of people help me and we set up all these databases, records. The records are up there in folders. <points to folders in the Pilot Station Museum office> That's the Historical Society there. ... That's a Historical Society one as well. So they're all records and a lot of it is on the computer. ... And also I've got another bookshelf in the archive room [of the Pilot Station Museum] which is just Historical Society books, which we've got lots of books.

Sarah: Right. So you don't have a physical space just for the Historical Society?

Des: No.

Sarah: But here at the museum you're able to store things?

Des: Now, I don't know what happens when I'm gone. They can be shifted somewhere but where you shift them, I don't know. I've got a lot of stuff in my sheds, in the garage as well. People that have died have given me heaps. ... I've got a few boxes down there that people have brought records and things to me. Some of them I haven't sorted out yet, they're in boxes. But one of these days – we go through them slowly.

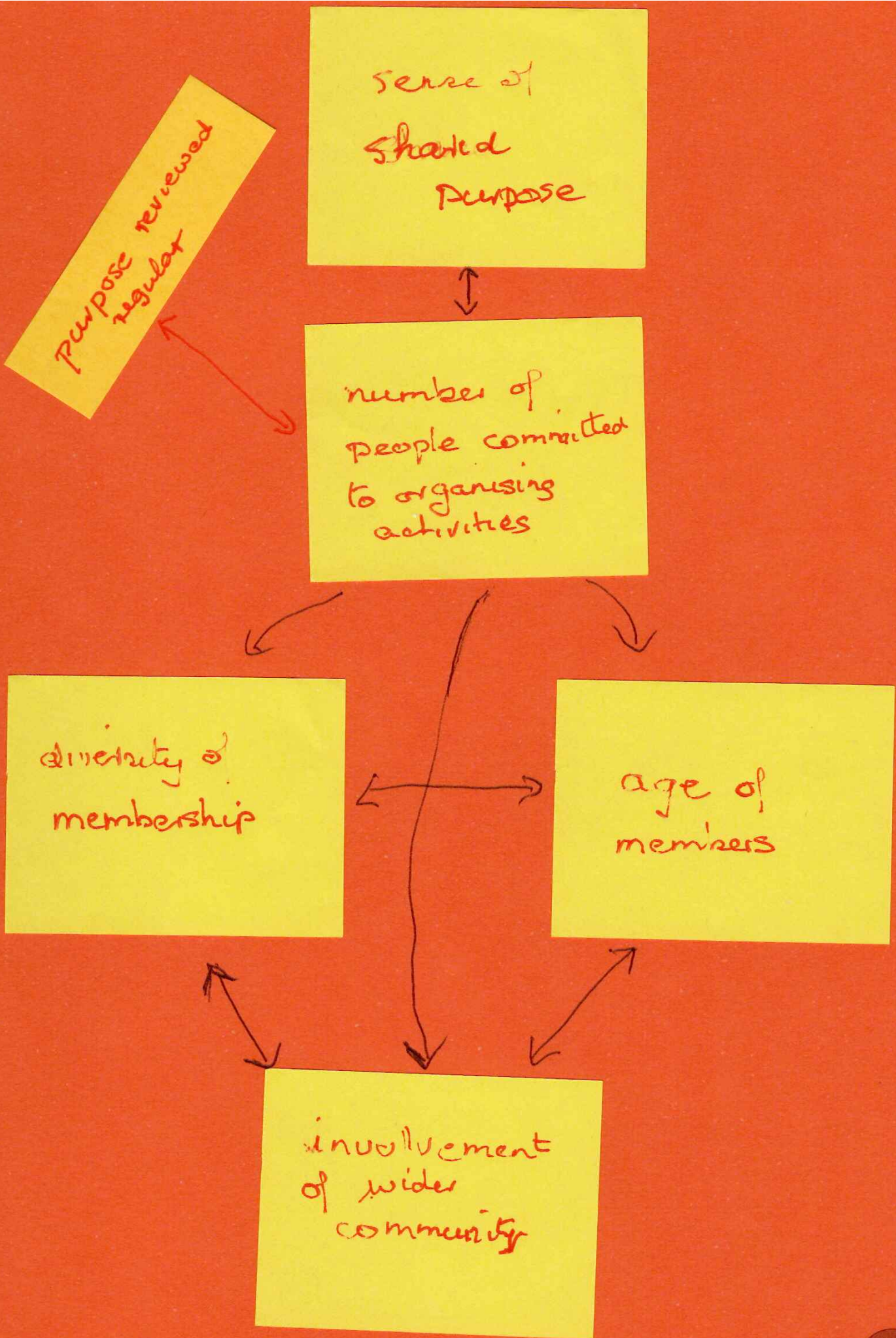
Sarah: So if the Historical Society were to fold, presumably the Support Group would just continue having its materials -

→ Low Head Pilot Station Support Group
(see other zinc in series)

Des: Oh well, if the Historical Society folded, I'd probably leave the stuff here until someone wanted to get rid of it. That won't happen in my time. But if in 15 years' time you got someone in here, they might want to throw a lot of stuff out.



→ betrayed, sad,
sorry, dismaged.



Sarah: How do you get the involvement of the wider community?

Anne: That's the question.

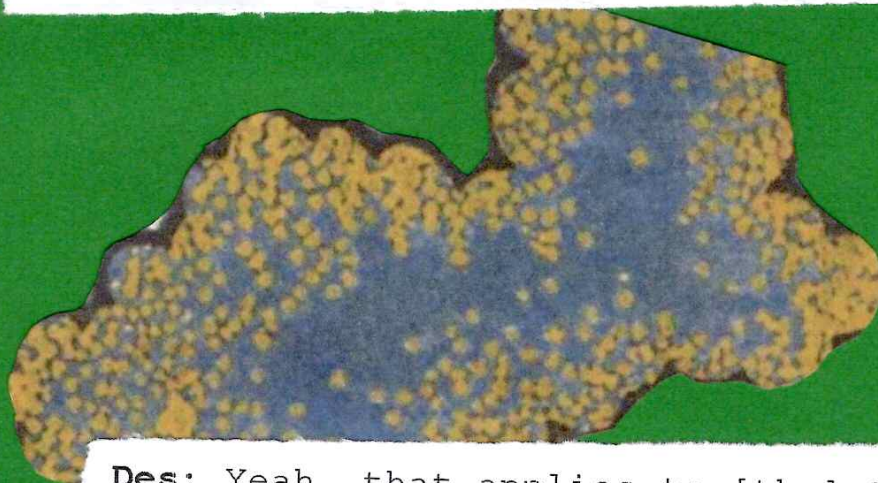
Sarah: Because that then, I guess, flows into potential new volunteers as well.

Anne: Commitment.

Sarah: And it's not just about the number of people committed to organising activities but the quality of what people can bring to the organisation and their capacity and the extent of their possible engagement. So putting their hands up to be parts of committees and things like that?

Lorraine: Yes, but we haven't really had a problem with getting enough people on the committee, but then you feel you have to involve other people as much as you possibly can. So we have our monthly meetings - the speakers are not always committee members. A few others that'll contribute that way. But, I mean, you have to recognise that a lot of people are just happy to come along to the meeting that someone else has organised. And just enjoy what they enjoy, I suppose. Luckily, every year we've had a couple of interested people that would like to go on the committee and keep it going. ... you do all you can to get more people to come along. Not everything attracts everyone. We've had our conferences; they have been a really good thing. But most things, it's more people

from outside [the area] that come than your locals that -



Des: Yeah, that applies to [the] executive [too]. In most of the organisations we're involved with, most of them are outside people that have come into George Town to live.

Lorraine: And that's where you're getting your new members from as well. ...

Anne: I just wonder ... if we had a bit of a focus on the **Bell Bay history**, whether we'd get people who came to George Town for Bell Bay or Comalco [aluminium smelter] ... and pick up more [locals]. I mean, they are going to be older anyway. ... Because I think the colonial stuff, though I'm absolutely fascinated with it, may seem a bit remote, you know.

Lorraine: It's bad news, really. Yeah. For years, we've been trying to make people proud that [George Town was] so early, but lately it's been pooh-poohed really. No, it's really difficult. ... **I** worked in the Watch House for years, and the Historical Society ran that for, what, 11 years?

: ... But you couldn't get the locals to come in. ...

craig: Is there an [issue] with [the] socioeconomic dynamic of George Town?

Lorraine: There hasn't always been. ... No, the earlier times with the **industry** that was here and **the** bosses lived in the town.

Anne: That's the **im**portant bit.



Acknowledgements

Thank you to the volunteers of the George Town & District Historical Society who engaged with this research. Your willingness to share experiences and offer your views on the sector's organisational sustainability are central to creating a zine series that captures viable futures for community heritage organisations.

Special thanks to Lorraine for being Sarah's main point of contact for the research and for helping to arrange the zine workshop. Thanks to Des and Lorraine for providing their shack as a space to run the workshop and Lorraine for catering the pre-workshop sustenance.

Some images used throughout the zine were provided courtesy of Lorraine, with the organisation also providing use of brochures. Others were taken by Sarah during fieldwork or sourced from databases of public domain images.



Compiled by Sarah Baker

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