**Committee Presidents Report**

**Acheron Mechanics’ Institute Inc.**

**Annual General Meeting**

**6th November 2022**

**Welcome all**

In my role of your President of the Hall’s Committee, I can report that the year 2021/22 has been a year of recovery, being the first year since 2019 that activities have not been disrupted with restrictions imposed upon our community by the Covid19 pandemic.

Significantly, this year we have been able to re-establish a secure financial situation so to enable us to plan further improvements and upgrade to our facilities.

The Hall was used for community activities throughout this year which included meetings, receptions, recreation, entertainment and sporting activities. These usages were mostly by the local community, and it is pleasing that the people of Acheron appreciate that their Community Hall is there for them to use.

The activities of the Hall have been well managed over the past year and I can report that the Hall’s buildings are structurally sound and looking pristine.

**Finance & Treasury**

At the end of June 2022 our Cash reserves were $11092, down, $19708 from June 2021. The difference is largely the Grant monies which were received in 2021 which had yet to be drawn down to cover the costs of painting the exterior of the Hall. The level of cash reserves held at June 2022 are down by around $1500 when compared to the normative levels of cash reserve of previous years.

In my opinion this is a pleasing result, given the disruption to fundraising Covid has inflicted since 2019.

That our cash reserves had not gone dramatically backwards in real terms indicates that our fund raising was at least covering our costs and that we were not living on our cash reserves. Currently, as of the 1st of November our cash reserves are $14247.

We are planning a stage two upgrade of the toilet block and some of this money is reserved to fund this project, leaving adequate cash reserved to meet normative recurring costs.

The changes made to our banking to allow the payment of invoices and re-imbursements electronically is working, well. The new accounting programme is working out well. There is a monthly cost for this product, as an outright purchase is not offered.

The audit of the AMI books for the year 20210-2022 has been undertaken by MKR Accountants and have been found to be in order.

 *Page 1*

On your behalf I thank Sue Moran for the great job she does as treasurer. It takes time to keep track of the money, pay the bills, balance the accounts, do the banking and report to the Committee on our financial position.

**Usage**

This past year the Hall continued to be used by the Acheron community. Covid 19 did prevent some functions and meetings from being held. When necessary, refunds of bonds were re-paid.

The Hall was used by various local groups including a book club, a table tennis group, a Fishing Tour & Guiding group, a star Gazing group as well as for meetings, anniversaries and weddings.

With regard to hiring the Hall out, the Acheron Hall Committee’s position continues to be as a low key participant in this commercial business, whilst focussing on the needs of our immediate community.

We have revised our hiring costs and deposit requirements upwards by a reasonable amount. This follows and is inline with recent cost increases for the services for which we have to pay.

We need to thank Barbara Gamble, our Vice President and Hall Booking manager.

The booking of the Hall requires quite a lot of work and Barbara does it with aplomb, looking after the money, keeping track of dates, organizes Hall cleaning, and on occasions, doing some herself, going down to the Hall to show people around and being there in an emergency. Thank you so much Barbara.

**Committee Meetings**

There were five committee meetings held during the year. Agendas were forwarded by email prior to the meetings and minutes were distributed by email afterwards. Attendees and apologies were recorded. One scheduled Committee Meeting had to be cancelled.

Our thanks to our Committee Secretaries, Jan Fallon & Larraine Redshaw.

Jan and Larraine do a fantastic job, preparing for meetings, recording minutes, checking post, legal matters, correspondence and other tasks, which all take time and require knowledge and application.

Thankyou Jan. Thank you Larraine.

**Fundraising**

During this past year we have been able to return to a more normal fundraising programme. However some of the innovations introduced during Covid restrictions have been retained to support the traditional methods. A bit of a mix of tried & true plus some new ideas. *Page 2*

This year Covid restrictions were lifted and The Acheron Hall Winter Dinner was held in August. This was the first time the dinner could take place since 2018. Whilst the annual August dinner is primarily a social occasion for Acheronites, it does raise valuable funds. This year donations of auction items were only sought from local Acheron businesses. An amazingly generous contributions were received and the resulting auction was very successful. Altogether the Acheron Community really stepped up with financial support.

The dinner was equally successful as a social event which allowed Acheron residents and friends to relax and enjoy great company and wonderful food in an essentially a Community gathering.

The Catering was excellent. Our local residents Alan & Lisa Harding and their team from The Grant Street Grocer provided us with exquisite food which made a huge contribution to an unforgettable and wonderful evening.

This past year we were able to partake once again in The Alexandra Easter Fair where the Committee had a stall selling gourmet Dobson’s potatoes. This is an event which is good fun and does raise valuable funds for the Hall. Another benefit in participating in this event is that it helps to raise the awareness level of the Acheron Hall within the Murrindindi community. We thank the Dobson family for their generosity in donating their excellent potatoes to sell at this event.

Hiring out of the Acheron Hall continued during this past year. This activity helps raise money and is self- promoting as the local community makes use of the facility. Mostly residents hire the hall for weddings, anniversaries and other family related celebrations.

In 2021 we sold tickets in a raffle, for which the prize was a high quality print on canvas of a Marian Rennie painting. The winning ticket was drawn Saturday night the 11th of December at our annual Christmas party. Our local Murrindindi Councillor, Damian Gallagher officiated. The winning ticket was held by local resident Jacki Ashe. Ticket sales continued up to the final evening and we raised $2000. The prize was donated to The Acheron Hall for fundraising, by the artist, local resident Marion Rennie. Marion has also donated other prints of her paintings, one of which is to be hung within The Acheron Hall. I would on behalf of the Acheron community like to thank Marian for her most generous gifts.

We also need to thank the fishers who fish the Goulburn River from the property of Geoff and Bronwyn Dobson. Geoff and Bronwyn have an honesty box, placed where the fisherman enter the river, which asks for a donation for the Acheron Hall. The fishers are very generous and a nice little cash contribution comes in to help pay the running costs of the Hall. Thankyou Geoff and Bronwyn for your help here.

We purchased some more Sedona cleanskin wine during the year. We label it as ‘The Acheron Hall Wine’ and offer it to the local community, as a fundraiser. *Page 3*

The latest purchase has all been sold and we are investigating making another purchase. This activity makes a good return on our outlay to buy the wine and it also generate good-will and gets the Acheron Hall talked about. The labels proudly display a picture of the Hall and thank the purchaser or drinker for their support. We also gratefully thank Sedona wines for their support with this fundraising project. We are looking to continue with this activity in the future.

Sales of the book “Acheron – A History of the District” have finished with no more copies available. A reprint of 20 copies would cost around $1000.00. After 8 years demand for the book has almost ceased.

**Maintenance, Plant & Equipment**

We are now considering another project, stage two of the toilet block upgrade. We have organised a local tradesman to carry out rendering the exterior of the toilet block. Additionally we are investigating laying tiles over the concrete floor of the toilet block. We have improved the drainage from around the toilet block but we continue to have a problem.

I would like to mention here the good work that David Gamble does. When something breaks, he fixes it. He goes down to the Hall to do lots of smaller jobs that you probably wouldn’t notice.

We have yet again revised our arrangement with now a combined groundsman and hall cleaner. We continue to share the cost for mowing all the grass surrounds of the Hall, the CFA and the Tennis Club, so it will be maintained in a neat and usable manner. The cost for this service has increased dramatically as there are few people available to undertake this task on a part-time basis.

During the year a working bee was held to maintain the garden and the surrounding grounds, car park and road reserve area. Additionally, various Committee members plus others carried out individual tasks at other times.

During the year the old two door refrigerator broke down and the freezing compartment failed. A replacement two door fridge/freezer was purchased.

Our outdoor surveillance and lighting is currently being updated.

We sometimes find that people who hire the Hall cannot manage to turn on the electricity or turn in off incorrectly. A plan to make labelling instructions clearer is in hand.

We have a resident wombat who seems reluctant to relocate from under the Hall to somewhere else. There is a relocation offer which the wombat is currently considering.

Our Committee members tasked with looking after the buildings and equipment are David Gamble and John Turner. They have carried out their tasks with great skill and always in a helpful and friendly manner. We thank them for their contribution. *Page 4*

Additionally there are other Committee and Community individuals who turn out to help. At working bees or just when something needs to be done. Our thanks and appreciation go to these individuals.

**Communications**

The Acheron Hall Committee communicates to residents using an online mailing list for emails, a website, and a news-letter. These tasks are managed and carried by Elizabeth Thorp, our Committee’s graphic designer and communications person. Beth also designs our wine labels and organises printing and labelling.

Updating the mailing list, checking incoming emails to the Hall’s email address, sending out Community notices, publishing the newsletters and maintaining the website. Well done Beth and thank you.

The policy continues of only using our communications for subject matter which involves the Acheron Hall, the Acheron C.F.A. and the Acheron Tennis Club, with whom we liaise regarding their requirements. Other issues of community concern may sometimes be included.

The Hall continues to maintain its membership with the Mechanics Institute of Victoria.

**Christmas Party**

The annual BYO CHRISTMAS PARTY was held ion 11th December 2021. This event is an excellent opportunity for friends and neighbours to catch up and for new residents to meet with their community. Last year there was a particularly good turn-up. Children are welcome to attend and meet Father Christmas.

We are looking forward to another enjoyable evening at this year’s Christmas party on Saturday night, 10th December at the Acheron Hall, from 6.00 pm. All welcome.

**Acheron Tennis Club**

The Acheron Tennis Club is active and continues to operate as an individual entity, at arms’ length from the Hall, but within the AMI’s legal identity. The Acheron Tennis Club is self-funded. During the Covid19 lockdowns playing tennis has not been possible. The Tennis Club committee continues to maintain the facility and grounds. The major upgrade is complete with just a few small items outstanding.

**Acheron CFA**

This close relationship with the Acheron CFA had been maintained with the Hall’s Newsletter and mailing list being used to communicate CFA news, notifications and messages to the Acheron community.

 *Page 5*

**McColl Lane Tree Project**

This project is an individual initiative of local resident Bev Dick. Not an Acheron Hall Committee project, but a project which the Committee supports and in which some of our Committee members participate.

Commencing in 2019 and after two and a half wet years, Bev reports that the plantings along McColl Lane and the Maroondah Highway have grown fantastically. The September flowering display was brilliant. Lots of yellow wattle blooms.

2022 works have included ongoing mowing, slashing, weeding, spraying, replacing dead trees, and trimming.

The involvement of Upper Goulburn Landcare is very helpful and their volunteers, on working bees, make use of the Hall for tea breaks.

Bev has expressed her appreciation and thanks to the many local residents who volunteer help and for the Shires support and help with spraying.

Anyone interested in getting involved please contact Bev Dick.

We would like to thank Bev for her vision, her Community mindedness and hard work.

**Committee**

This past year we have had an excellent Committee. It’s been a recovery year. They have kept positive despite the challenge of Covid. Always hard working, willing and competent. No doom and gloom.

I have already mentioned and thanked Committee members tasked with particular roles, and now I do need to acknowledge the contributions made by others. So Anita, Bronwyn, Maryann and John with Judy, your efforts are valuable and appreciated. Thankyou.

I say every year that the advantage of a larger committee is that not everyone is available all of the time, and a larger Committee allows people to fill in and take some of the load.

I also wish to acknowledge the contributions of some helpers. Murray Ross, you have been extremely helpful and supportive. As have you been Paul Redshaw. Joanna Willey is always there to help. Please forgive me if I’ve overlooked someone, I know there are others.

Thank you so much.

Every Member of Committee has been able to contribute their expertise and their energy in their own particular way. We have been a great team. As a result we have managed to achieve a lot, and I think I can say we have all enjoyed the experience. “You have all done a great job. Thankyou.

 *Page 6*

**Conclusion**

At this time I can say that we are in good shape, both structurally and financially. Looking forward to next year, we hope to get back to the normal use of the Hall and to be able to continue with energetic fundraising activities.

Our Committee’s ongoing task continues to be to maintain and improve our Hall, so our community’s use of it is further enhanced.

In making an end of year report my aim is to provide an over-view of our situation, policies and objectives for the benefit of the incoming Committee and the Acheron community.

I hope it will be of value.

This is my last report as your Committee President. After sitting at the end of the table for eleven years I feel that it is time for a new President. Someone with new ideas and a new vision for the future.

I will not be putting myself forward to be considered as President for the coming year. I will however, stand to be considered for Committee, but not for an executive role.

During my time as your President it has been my privilege to work with a fantastic Committee, a wonderful group of people who made my role enjoyable and rewarding. I am proud of what we have been able to achieve and to do in this time. There have been highlights such as the Centenary celebration with the production of the Acheron History Book, the installation of insulation in the ceiling, the upgrading of the interior lights, the cyclic painting of the Hall, twice.

And not to forget the smaller projects such as the purchase of a commercial dishwasher. And also the very enjoyable everyday projects such as working bees or the Acheron Hall Wine bottling and labelling. And of course the fantastic Acheron Hall winter dinners with all the theme dress-up and entertainment. And me trying to remain in control as the MC of the evening.

I have enjoyed every minute. And I look forward to many more exciting projects, but with me contributing in a different role.

I will continue to give the in-coming Committee the same support that they have extended to me during my time as your Committee president.

Thankyou

John Thorp

Committee President

Acheron Mechanics’ Institute Inc.
2021-2022