



Introduction

Melbourne's Living Museum of the West has experienced another diverse and challenging year. The expectations of the community associates expressed were met or exceeded.

predicted grants. Detailed performance indicators such as numbers of exhibitions, numbers of workshops and numbers of lectures far exceeded expectations in some cases pointing to more intense person to person activity in the ecomuseum year. The operation of a museum, any museum, can be a complex business and activity is not necessarily closely tied to financial turnover.

This year we aimed to look for new audiences, integrate art, culture and heritage, develop partnerships, reflect the diversity of the community, promote local heritage, be a reference centre and base for Aboriginal culture, extend the Resource Centre, expand the web site, upgrade staff skills and do all this while earning a substantial portion of our own income.

These aims were achieved in a variety of ways and strengthened ties with the local community and beyond.

By its very nature a community ecomuseum works with other organisations, groups and individuals.

Through our own experiences and interpretations of the English migrant experience offered a glimpse of family and friends who participated in the



History walk.



Julie Armstrong-Roper



'Still Here', Yarraville Festival.



CSR towers, Yarraville.



'Still Here', Western General Hospital.



CSR towers, Yarraville.

Exhibitions

uals to achieve these aims. They are achieved through an ongoing engagement with the immediate social environment and the issues concerning local identity. The job of the Living Museum is to bring its knowledge and experience of local history, heritage and culture to bear on these issues. Production and display of exhibitions are a key museum activity addressing several aims.

This year our exhibitions went interstate, international, to schools, to hospitals and even into the Central Business District of Melbourne. 'Hear Our Voices', developed by Helen Laffin, told stories about women in Melbourne's western region. The exhibition was launched early in the year by The Minister for the Arts, the Hon. Mary Delahunt MP, at the Living Museum. The exhibition then travelled most of the year, visiting the Women's Centre in Melbourne and other museums in Beechworth, Sunbury and Eden, NSW.

'Ten Pound Packages' was an exhibition by Museum Associate Julie Armstrong-Roper who created a display of her own experiences and interpretations of the English migrant experience offered a glimpse of family and friends who participated in the



School visit.

exhibition. The British Consul came to open it and the show went to England. The exhibition produced by Aboriginal Cultural Adviser, Larry Walsh, titled 'Still Here' is about the history and contemporary experience of Aboriginal Victorians and is always on the move. This year it was borrowed by councils, libraries, a hospital and schools. This exhibition has been used extensively to complement an event or a series of events and in the year 2000 was background to a major multicultural reconciliation program organised by Maribyrnong City Council.



Larry Walsh and students.



Plant rescue.



School workshop.



'Hear Our Voices'.



NAIDOC week.

Events

Many events are associated with exhibitions. Exhibitions produced at the Museum or invited to tour at the Museum are usually promoted with an opening and launched by an appropriate public figure. One exhibition held at the Museum on loan from the War Museum in Canberra, Too Dark for the Light Horse', was opened by our Federal member, Nicola Roxon. This particular exhibition relates to both our Aboriginal Program and our geographical position with regard to the Australian munitions industry. Often our exhibitions are borrowed to enhance the event of another organisation, such as 'Still Here' for reconciliation events. An interesting museum development was the request for our staff and associates to attend and work for other organisation's events. Usually this took the form of a talk or tour relating to our knowledge of the local region or the 'ecomuseum'. This year there has been an increased request for 'Smoking ceremonies' and other protocol input relating to reconciliation. Our Aboriginal Cultural Adviser, Larry Walsh, handled most of the direction of the Aboriginal Program on a consultancy basis.



Joy Murphy, International Women's Day.



Newmarket Saleyards reunion.



International Women's Day.



History Society event.



Planting Day.



International Women's Day.



Tank farm, Hobson's Bay Heritage Study.

A group of ethnic women organised a picnic for International Women's Day where they performed dances for the wider community. This was a particularly moving day as it was opened by Wurundjeri elder, Joy Murphy, who has had a long association with the Living Museum. The Western Region Group of Historical Societies was host this year to a bicentennial conference of the state's historical societies. The Living Museum is a member of this group and provided facilities and talks and tours for the conference. Other events arose from working relationships

The Museum's development of heritage elements in Pipemakers Park has given the park a greater sense of cultural context for events. This is important as most of our museum events have a strong cultural and symbolic relevance. They are in effect promoting the sense of an ecomuseum. Some of the bigger events in 2000 were usually in partnership with other organisations. A large Arbor Week gathering was organised with Parks Victoria and Greening Australia. Planting days were organised with the Migrant Resource Centre and school groups as a way of educating by participation in restoration of the environment.

The Department of Human Services asked us to organise a NAIDOC week event because of the Museum's established relationship with the Aboriginal Community.

Tours, Conferences, Seminars & Workshops

during the year with groups like the Western Young People's Independent Network and the Inner West Region Migrant Resource Centre.

Two important seminars were held in the immediate landscape with a short talk and tour. The park could be seen as a sort of walk-in ecomuseum drama, with a stage set in which to plant things in and learn in.



School visit.

The activities we describe as events are often associated with tours, seminars, conferences and workshops. Talks on plant use in Aboriginal culture were part of some plant days and workshops. A wide range of groups of all ages came for talks and tours about Aboriginal culture, the history of the area and the site and the environment. Primary schools, secondary schools, tertiary classes, environment groups, Probus groups, tourism guides, even a special delegation from Shanghai were some of the participants for talks and tours. A series of curriculum workshops were held at the Visitor Centre because



Pot chain, Planting Day.



Mosaic workshop.

of the wealth of material on hand about local history and Aboriginal culture. Writing workshops and dance workshops were held at the site because of the sense of history and heritage that has been developed. Things discussed in a seminar or workshop at the museum can be illustrated in the immediate landscape with a short talk and tour. The park could be seen as a sort of walk-in ecomuseum drama, with a stage set in which to plant things in and learn in.

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Consultancies

The Museum's accumulated knowledge of the region is acknowledged in the request for Museum consultancy services for the identification of local heritage. Legislation has meant each council must work out a heritage policy as part of planning policy. The Museum's Industrial Archaeologist, Gary Vines, has been kept very busy over the past few years working on a number of heritage stud-



History Society event.

ies. Several of these coming to a close this year were consultancies for the cities of Brimbank, Hume, Maribyrnong and Hobson's Bay. This is another way the Museum engages with the community, bringing its accumulated knowledge and networks to bear on current issues.

Work of this nature has been very important to this museum. Heritage studies involve a thorough analysis of all aspects of heritage within any given municipality and require a team effort with other specialists. So in the process the Museum's resource base is expanded. Park being a museum it to be constantly researching and planning activities to be done all the time to promote



Mosaic workshop.



Buddhist Temple, Maribyrnong Heritage Study.

Major Projects

The Museum received a Federation grant to create an exhibition about the munitions industry in the Maribyrnong Valley and surrounding region. This project has a working title 'Australia's Arsenal'. The issue of defence is fundamental to the birth of a nation and this region has been the centre of Australia's supply of munitions for its armed forces for most of the hundred years of Federation. The steering committee for this project is run by former managers in the munitions industry. The outcome of this project will be a major exhibition that illustrates the extent of the study side of the armed forces effectively there has ever been seen before.



Curriculum in-service.

sources. This work could not be carried out without the participation of the local community. It is this research in these projects and all our projects that is fundamental to the workings of the museum and a basis for all the other activities.

ARTS VICTORIA



Maribyrnong City Council