

HISTORIC NEW ITALY IL GIORNALE

SUMMER 2019/2020

CIAO E BENVENUTI AL GIORNALE!

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Summer has arrived with a vengeance and I have successively thought of several themes for this message. These have been eclipsed by the local and more widespread bushfires. Since our site was seriously threatened I think that a report is necessary.

Regionally our fire (known as the Myall Creek blaze) started in the Tenterfield district in early September. It spread towards the coast and by late October was in our area. We were initially threatened by flames from the north but the threat eased when the front made a wide arc to the west and south of our site. Then as it became obvious that we were still surrounded by unburnt bush and the fire could return, the panic button was pushed.

Although the site is covered by fire insurance, the Museum's and much of the Pavilion's contents are irreplaceable. Added to this situation was the fact that beyond fire extinguishers the site does not have any fire-fighting facilities. Therefore the decision was made (November 14th) to empty the Museum plus part of the Pavilion and store the items largely off-site.

The empty/removal process involved over thirty volunteers (Rural Fire Service, SES members, neighbours and descendants) and took place in the evening. It involved the packing of the items into labelled boxes and loading them into various cars, a truck and even a horse float. Some items were relocated to our less fire prone hall.

The Museum, Pavilion and Gift Shop were then closed to the public, pending the abatement of the fire threat.

At about dawn on Wednesday 27 November, a combination of changed wind circumstances, low humidity and an abundant fuel supply facilitated the return of the fire from all four directions in quick succession. The site was showered with embers as flames came to the edge of the car park, the Park of Peace, the Pacific Highway and Swan Bay Road. There were spot fires on site but due to the magnificent efforts over several hours of neighbour Adrian

Murgo and several other nearby residents, these spot fires were extinguished and the site was saved. This was critical in saving our buildings at a time when the RFS could not get any personnel or equipment to New Italy to fight the fires.

The photos here and on page 2 track these events.

We are lucky that while the fires came awfully close, our only real losses were a dam water pump (*see below with replacement*), some poly pipeline and a few fence posts.



Realising that the fire threat had now passed, a working bee to re-install the Museum took place on Monday 2 December. The Gift Shop was also unpacked and opened for business. Since then the Pavilion has been re-installed, cleaned and is now open to the public. It's wonderful to see the start of regrowth in the burnt out areas.

Full praise and a big thank you, must go to all involved in the evacuation and refit operations. With a high level of enthusiasm and co-operation these unrehearsed procedures have produced a great deal of satisfaction. Well done everyone. Let's hope that such measures are never again necessary.

I take this opportunity to thank one and all for their efforts throughout 2019. It has certainly been one of change and challenge. A big thank you to Jo Kijas for her many years of dedication to New Italy, its people and its story!

Hoping all have enjoyed a peaceful and Merry Christmas. **We hope you will join us to celebrate New Italy and its extraordinary history on our Anniversary Day - Sunday 5 April. Wishing you all a very happy and safe 2020!**

Thank you **John Barnes, OAM**

NIMI's thoughts are with the business and residential communities of Richmond Valley Council area and beyond, who have been affected by these disastrous bushfires. Our recent experience has offered many lessons important to future proofing places like Historic New Italy. Water access and availability, ground management and a disaster preparedness plan are all needed.

The forced closure combined with the ongoing upheaval of the highway upgrade, all come at a cost, putting pressure on existing running costs.

When next visiting New Italy bear this in mind. Give generously at the Donation boxes provided OR if you are off-site go to New Italy website - newitaly.org.au - Donation page.

New Italy Museum Inc. is registered with the ATO as a Deductible Gift Recipient and cash donations of \$2 or greater may entitle the donor to an income tax deduction.

HISTORIC NEW ITALY AND THE FIRE SEASON: 12 NOVEMBER - 5 DECEMBER 2019



A VERY SPECIAL THANKS !

New Italy Museum Inc. would like to give a huge shout out to New Italy neighbours and friends, Arthur Green (*left*), Kerry and Adrian Murgo (*right*) for their extraordinary efforts during the recent bushfires. Without their presence on-site and timely assistance, putting in fire breaks and responding to spot fires, we would have had a very different story to tell.



RECENT EVENTS THE NEW ITALY FASHION PARADE

On Saturday 7 September a well-attended Fashion Parade and Lunch featuring Italian linen clothing supplied by etika boutique (Lismore and Ballina) was held in the New Italy Hall. Guest speaker Dr Adele Wessell (Southern Cross University) entertained us with her talk on how Australians invented spaghetti bolognese. Many thanks to all who helped make this a wonderful event.

HIGHWAY SERVICE CENTRE UPDATE

It is understood that a Development Application is being prepared with a view to lodgement with the Richmond Valley Council early in 2020.

AGM REPORT

NIMI's 2019 AGM was held at New Italy on Sunday 3 November. This meeting was chaired by President John Barnes OAM and was well attended by members. John reported on the many aspects of NIMI's operations, noting that in spite of the major Pacific Highway upgrade disruptions throughout the entire year, the committee and other volunteers had worked tirelessly to ensure the New Italy Museum and its facilities continued to progress in many ways. John noted that the "... highway redevelopment has been a challenge, but its completion and improved site access will be an even greater challenge as we strive to cope with the expected increased patronage and all it entails."

A new committee was elected comprising the same members from the 2019 committee, with the exception of Ellen Barnes. Sadly, Ellen decided to step back from her committee role which she has been performing for many years. A vote



The New Italy Museum Inc committee.

of heartfelt thanks was moved in favour of Ellen, noting that she will continue to stay involved with NIMI through her volunteering work with Casa Vecchia Gift Shop and the Museums Group.

2019 REGIONAL STAKEHOLDERS FORUM



Historian and New Italy friend, Kate Gahan with Leonie Lane at the IMAGINE awards after the Regional Stakeholders Forum, Powerhouse Museum.

On 29 November and on behalf of the Museums Group, Leonie Lane presented a paper at the 2019 Regional Stakeholders Forum held at the Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 'Regeneration of the New Italy story: bringing together descendants, community and expertise' about the development of the Museum site and its recent upgrade.

COMING EVENTS ANNIVERSARY DAY DATE SAVER



HISTORIC NEW ITALY
CELEBRATING 139 YEARS OF SETTLEMENT AT NEW ITALY
ANNIVERSARY DAY
Italian Lunch
LIVE MUSIC

10^{AM} (FOR 10.30^{AM}) SUNDAY 5 APRIL 2020
REMEMBER DAYLIGHT SAVING ENDS 2ND 5 APRIL 2020

HISTORIC NEW ITALY
PACIFIC HIGHWAY, SOUTH OF WOODBURN

MASS • CELEBRATE WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS • NEW MUSEUM DISPLAYS
PASTA LUNCH MENU • 'TASTES OF NEW ITALY CAFE' OPEN • SALAMI WHEEL
PRIZES TO BE WON • GIFT SHOP OPEN • CHILDRENS ACTIVITIES & MORE...

FREE ENTRY

Visit us at www.newitaly.org.au
FACEBOOK New Italy / Historic New Italy
For more information info@newitaly.com.au

Photograph from the New Italy Museum archive: Giacomo Piccoli with New Italy residents

THANK YOU GERT BRILSKY

Born in Hamburg, Germany in 1952, Gert came to Australia with his family in 1954. He grew up in the Port Kembla area and then worked in the engineering department of the steelworks for some 25 years.

Settling locally 20 years ago he was employed by Richmond Waste as a engineering foreman. One of his many roles was the maintenance of the water supply system at New Italy plus many other welding and mechanical duties on this site. Over time he has built two salami wheels, tank ladders, door ramps, sign frames and drain covers to name a few things.

A quiet "no-nonsense-lets-do-it" character, Gert has now decided to retire to the Sunshine Coast where he will no doubt pursue his passions for surfing, fitness and handyman activities. On behalf on New Italy Museum Inc., we thank you and wish you all the best. Aden Bryant continues his good work.

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT NEW ITALY...

NEW ITALY MUSEUM



Top left: Jo Kijas in the New Italy Museum,
Bottom left: Museums advisor Joan Kelly,
Top right, middle and bottom: Volunteers, Ellen Barnes, Evelyn Read, Dot Randle, Judy McCormack, Leone Stibbard, Leonie Lane, Cheryl Walters and Cynthia McKeough re-installing the family cabinets and displays.

It is one thing to survive a bushfire emergency, but it is another thing to lose a much loved volunteer and Museums Group team member, Jo Kijas! Jo has been with New Italy for 11 years - two as Community Liason Co-ordinator and nine years as a Museum volunteer! She has made many important contributions to New Italy, including publications and the recent upgrade to the Museum. She has shared her professionalism, her oral history skills, fresh research leading to new and innovative ways to tell the New Italy story. Many New Italy volunteers have been enlisted by Jo overtime! Even though she will remain busy at Southern Cross University as Adjunct Lecturer in Community History (and other ventures), we hope we will be able to catch up over a cup of tea and more, in the near future.

Yes we did survive the fire emergency, the extraordinary pack up and then the re-install. The New Italy Museums group is back and ready for 2020!

We are buoyed by a successful Museums & Galleries 2019 Project Development Grant for New Italy Museum. This will enable us to employ Museum Advisor, Joan Kelly, to revise and extend the Significance Assessment of the New Italy Museum Collection. Many will remember Joan from her involvement at New Italy in 2007/08. Updating our Significance Assessment is a crucial activity in light of recent object donations and is a key recommendation from the review from Museums & Galleries NSW Standards Program. We look forward to the follow-up visit by reviewers Tamara Lavrencic and Joanna Nicholas, postponed due to the bushfire emergency at the end of 2019.

We have new displays to put in place. New volunteers would be most welcome! We do great morning teas Mondays in the Community Hall!

Leonie Lane • New Italy Museum • booyongd@bigpond.net.au

ITALIAN PAVILION



A big thank you to Giovanni Foltran and Ellen Barnes (*far left*) for their attention to detail re-installing the three large Alpini displays in the Pavilion.

The 11 components of the beautiful Minturnese wedding costume were reassembled and our bride was returned to her former glory with invaluable assistance by the donor family, Elio and Ives Astone (*left*). Many thanks to all!

Leonie Lane • Italian Pavilion • booyongd@bigpond.net.au

THE CASA VECCHIA GIFT SHOP



The bushfire is well and truly behind us now and we've been open for business since the 29th November. It was a very anxious time while we were closed. We used that time to place new orders and one is due to arrive this week, direct from Florence - Fratelli Traversari's micro mosaic brooches and crosses. Always very popular - so don't miss out! Also arriving this week is the Baci Milano's outdoor tableware adorned with Sicillian art work. A talking point at any gathering.

Hope to see you here at Casa Vecchia real soon!

Gail Williams • Casa Vecchia Gift Shop • giftshop@newitaly.org.au

JOIN or RENEW NIMI MEMBERSHIP www.newitaly.org.au/about-us/membership
CONTRIBUTE TO 'IL GIORNALE'

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