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FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIAN HISTORICAL SOCIETIES INC

NEWSLETTER

No. 34 – December 2011

Hon Editor, Esther V. Davies

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



FAHS President Don Garden

The FAHS has had a busy and successful year within the limits of our human and financial resources. As I have commented previously, our limited income is a major challenge for the FAHS in such ways as restricting the hours for which we can employ our Executive Officer, limiting our capacity to commission authors to prepare further training manuals for the website, and in restricting the capacity for the Executive to travel in performance of their duties. In our submissions to government, we have emphasized the need to be able to employ more staff time for such matters as liaison, writing submissions and coordinating training matters.

There are four matters that I wish to report to members of the community history movement.

- **Australian Heritage Partnership.** As there is currently no Ministerial advisory committee representing community heritage, I have been meeting with Jane Harrington of Australia ICOMOS and Dr Graeme

Blackman from the Australian Council of National Trusts to discuss matters of common concern. In order to give our relationship a more formal structure and recognition, our three organizations have now formed The Australian Heritage Partnership. We plan to meet regularly and to consult on matters of mutual heritage interest.

- **National Cultural Policy.** The FAHS is very supportive of this important initiative, but are concerned that cultural heritage should be fully recognized as part of our national heritage in the policy. We made a submission to the NCP which is available on our website. I urge you all to read it – it is indicative of the issues with which the FAHS Committee is concerned.
- **Presentations and awards.** In recent weeks I have made two award presentations. The first was a Fellowship to Professor Reg Appleyard on the nomination of the RWAHS. The second was a Merit Award to Mrs Linda Emery on the nomination of the RAHS. In November, Dr Ruth Kerr presented a Fellowship award to Professor Kay Saunders, on the nomination of RHSQ. Esther Davies presented the posthumous Merit Award for David Meyers to his partner Susan Hall at the CDHS annual Christmas dinner on December 5th.
- **Collection software.** FAHS is concerned at the variety of software packages currently being use across the country to manage collections. Many of these have limited capacity or other problems, and some are very expensive. Portability and compatibility are just two of the challenges. We have asked Minister Crean for a small grant to enable FAHS to undertake a study of the software that is being used and to scope a suitable package that will meet the needs of societies. So far there has been no result, but it is an issue that we are pursuing. The matter also formed part of our submission to the National Cultural Policy.

Finally, I wish to thank Marita Bardenhagen (Tasmania) and Judy Rechner (Queensland) who have recently resigned from the Committee, and to welcome Stephen Sheaffe as a new delegate from RHSQ.

Don Garden

FEATURE ARTICLE: *Back from the Brink – saving an historical society - Maitland and District Historical Society (New South Wales)*

Editor's Note The article below is an abridged version of a talk presented by Ruth Trappel, President of the Maitland and District Historical Society, to the Delegates of the RAHS and Members of the Maitland and District Historical Society on Friday 28th October 2011. It was sent to me for possible publication in the Good News section of the Newsletter. However, on reading it, I felt so inspired by the courage and tenacity shown by the members of the Maitland Historical Society, especially Ruth Trappel, that I decided to use it as the Feature Article. Many of us in local historical societies have felt a sense of anxiety, if not despair, about the future of our societies and I am sure that we will all find this a heart-warming story. ED

Ruth Trappel's story

“The 3rd March 2009 was to be the final meeting of the Maitland Historical Society, the society was to be wound up and the constitution had been amended. The inventory was all but complete and the collection was to be dispersed. I had such grave concerns that, if the collection was dispersed from Maitland, it would be lost to us forever. At the meeting the last four members were present. There were also eleven historically minded locals who wanted to join. The previous year they had been told that, as the society was closing, it was not possible. The eleven approached me the week before the meeting, stating that they did not want it to close down. I gave them all application forms, told them to fill them in and include their joining fee. I could not guarantee that they would be successful, but it was worth a try. We were unsure of how to proceed, but accepted the applications. We now had a group who were committed to revitalize the Maitland Historical Society. The President and the Secretary/Treasurer both declined any position due to ill health. Margaret and I were then asked to take on the President's position, she declined as it was 2 pm and this was her 3rd meeting of the day, I also declined, as the thought of going home and telling the family that I had taken on another position would have caused WW3. After some persuasion from the new group, who wanted someone who knew the collection to go forward with it, I agreed to be their lynch-pin and President for the first year to get them on their feet. Two and a half years later I am still there.

Over the years MDHS had used several meeting sites, the last of which was the Cultural Centre but in 2002 the Council sold the building. All the groups had one week to vacate the premises. All of our collection was packed into more than 20 crates. We felt that we would find premises within the next three months. This proved impossible. In the next few years, membership numbers decreased till there were only four members at the three monthly meetings.

After the new group took over, we needed to find somewhere to meet and display our collection. We searched far and wide without success. One suggestion was The Barracks next to the Gaol. We did negotiate along with the Family History Group, but when the Council decided that the rent would increase by 10% per year until it reached commercial rates and that we would not be permitted to have displays, we walked away shaking our heads.

Fr. Matthew, the local Catholic Priest told us that he had the old Parish Library and Offices vacant. We thanked him and asked the cost. It was \$5000 per year and the site was to be re-developed in two years, so it was not a long term lease. After 18 months of looking for somewhere to go, we moved into the rooms in September 2010 and retrieved our collection from the Morpeth Museum after 8 years in storage.

We are very fortunate and grateful that one of our members became our benefactor and gave us \$10,000 to cover the first two years rent and get us on our feet. This has been a tremendous help, as initially we did not have enough money in the bank for insurance. Five thousand dollars per year is a lot of sausages to be cooked

at the local Bunnings store. We also have been given photocopiers, computers, desks, chairs, bookcases, map cabinets and so much more, for which we are most grateful.

For on-going funding, we have secured grants from a variety of sources; from the Maitland Council, the East Maitland Bowling Club and the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous affairs. These grants have enabled us to purchase such necessary items including a laptop computer, digital and video camera and a projector, and screen. We have also been able to buy Mosiac software to catalogue the collection and pay for training for three of the members.

We have earned money through various ventures, including updating the Heritage walks in Maitland, manning stalls at major events, conducting historic walks, book sales and providing assistance and information for the publisher of the Maitland Show 150th anniversary booklet. We also manned a stall at the Maitland Show to promote this book.

In the past three years, we have maintained a high profile in the local community, being actively involved in a variety of activities including Steamfest, and the "Hunter River Stories" oral history project at the Maitland Library. We also have an ongoing project identifying all the blocks and homes and businesses on the High Street at different stages from first land grants to current titles and we are represented in the Heritage Group attached to the Maitland Council.

Members have made a variety of contributions ranging from donations of photographs and film, writing short histories, cataloguing the collection and editing the bi-monthly bulletin for the society. Volunteers have displayed enthusiasm for all aspects of the work of the museum including catering and setting up displays. All of the members, and there are now over eighty members, enjoy researching and learning our local history and sharing their pet projects with others. We are very proud of our achievements in the last 2 ½ years, and with our profile and public recognition continuing we will only go from strength to strength. The next thing that Maitland needs is a proper Museum.

Ruth Trappel
President, Maitland and District Historical Society Inc

Further information about the history of Maitland and the MDHS can be found on the [MDHS website](#). ED



The Governor-General visits the Maitland and District Historical Society's 150th year publication display. 19 February, 2011

GOOD NEWS STORIES FROM HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Editor's Note It is often said that good news is not news. However, it is always cheering to hear success stories from some of our many regional and local historical stories. Here are two such stories. If your local historical society has similar good news stories, please let the Federation know. ED

Esperance Bay Historical Society Inc.(WA)

New Maritime Section Extension -Esperance Bay Historical Society Inc.(WA)

The Society has had a remarkable year. Most notable has been the official opening of the extensions to our museum. Built to accommodate the pilot boat donated by the Port, it has become our Maritime Section. Total floor space in the museum is now approaching 1500 square metres. A mountain of work was needed to arrange the items in this extremely large additional space.



The pilot boat and other display items in the new extension to the Esperance Bay Historical Society museum

Kew Historical Society (Victoria)

They Saved their Historic Courthouse - Kew Historical Society (Victoria)

With persistence and lots of hard work Kew Historical Society (KHS) saved the famous Kew Court House and Police Station for future generations.

The Court House Complex, which originally included the Post Office, is located in the heart of Kew at the junction of High Street and Cotham Road. A stunning example of the English Queen Ann style, the buildings were built in 1887-1888 during the period of Marvellous Melbourne. Back in 1986 when the Magistrate's Court had ceased operations a decade earlier and the building was rapidly deteriorating, the KHS started lobbying for use of the space as a Local Museum. Letters were sent over the years and then in 2002 the police moved to new premises leaving the buildings vacant.

With the likelihood of the complex becoming a 'drive-in bottleshop and pokie venue', much soul searching was done and with the guidance of members, Peter and Dione McIntyre, well known architects, a new concept of a local Cultural Centre was conceived. State members, notable patrons and local dignitaries were co-opted for the cause. Hundreds of signatures of support from the locals and Boroondara Council was finally convinced to buy the site, if the KHS raised the restoration costs.



Kew Court House Community Cultural Centre opened 25 June, 2011

In 2006 the sale document was finally signed by the Boroondara Council and fundraising began in earnest. Large and small donations from the public – monetary and in-kind donations from businesses and individuals, jam sales, musical and theatrical performances in the court room and slowly the funds grew, then at the last minute a very large anonymous donation was made which brought the total to over \$500,000 as the Council deadline fast approached. The remaining funds came from Federal - the Commonwealth Government's Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program, State funds - a Heritage Victoria Grant and a Victorian Government Community Support Grant, and from the City of Boroondara's own funds.

The buildings are now restored with a new slate roof and a new future. The court room has been transformed into a bright open performance space, while the Police Station houses an Art Gallery and workshop area for disabled artists downstairs, with specialist offices upstairs, including one for the Kew Historical Society, where items from its collection are on display.

The group of hardworking members of the Kew Historical Society along with 3,000 locals enjoyed the Opening Celebrations on Sunday 26th June, 2011.

If you are in Melbourne please visit us at the Kew Court House, 188 High Street, Kew on Tuesdays 10.00am to 4.00pm and Saturdays 10.00am to 2.00pm. Tours by appointment. Information available from Judith Vimpani, Secretary, info@kewhistory.com Phone 0425 737 704

FAHS Annual General Meeting, held at History SA, Torrens Parade Ground, Adelaide, 8 August 2011

One of the main items of business for the AGM was the awarding of the annual **Fellowship and Merit Awards for 2011**.

An **FAHS Fellowship** was awarded to **Emeritus Professor Kay Saunders AM** for her outstanding contribution to history teaching and research with an impressive list of publications which embrace national and Queensland history. Professor Saunders has also demonstrated a deep and abiding commitment to furthering the standing, recording, preservation and promotion of Australian history.



Emeritus Professor Kay Saunders AM receiving her FAHS Fellowship Award from Dr Ruth Kerr

FAHS Merit Awards – Two Awards for 2011

A posthumous award was made to the **late David Meyers** for his meritorious contribution to the work, including their respective administrations, of the Canberra and District Historical Society (CDHS) in the ACT and Queanbeyan Historical Society and Museum (QHSM) in New South Wales. David also made a significant contribution to the history of the folk music and culture of the Australian Capital Territory and of the Monaro Region of New South Wales. The award was presented by FAHS Junior Vice-President, Esther Davies, to David's partner, Susan Hall at the CDHS annual Christmas dinner on December 5th.



The late David Meyers

Ms Linda Emery received an FAHS Merit Award for her meritorious contribution to the documented history of New South Wales and her contribution to the management of the Berrima Historical Society's photographic and archives collections and for a meritorious contribution to promoting the history and heritage of Norfolk Island.



FAHS President Don Garden presenting Linda Emery with her 2011 FAHS Merit Award at the RAHS State Conference

A somewhat belated presentation was made by FAHS President Don Garden at the WA State History Conference in York of a **Fellowship** Award to **Emeritus Professor Reg Appleyard**. This award actually dates from 2010.



FAHS President with Emeritus Professor Reg Appleyard at WA State History Conference 2011

The meeting also received annual reports from the President and the Treasurer, and also heard annual reports from each of the States and Territories. The [President's Annual Report](#) can be accessed on the FAHS website. The next AGM will be held in Darwin in July 2012. The AGM was followed by a quarterly General Meeting.



AGM delegates at Torrens Parade Ground: Left to right: John Davies (FAHS EO), Helen Henderson (RWAHS), Alan Roberts (CDHS), Ruth Kerr (RHSQ), Don Garden (FAHS President), Robert Nicholson (RWAHS), Colin Beard (HSNT), Margaret Anderson (History SA), David Carment (RAHS), Esther Davies (CDHS), Judy Smart (RHSV), Ian Jack (RAHS)

NEWS FROM OUR CONSTITUENT ORGANISATIONS

Editor's note: A quick trawl through the journals of our constituent members has revealed a treasure trove of interesting and exciting events. A small selection has been chosen to illustrate the diversity of activities happening in historical societies around the nation. ED

Canberra and District Historical Society

Recent CDHS activities include the continuing program of monthly talks and an excursion entitled "Remarkable Trees of the Westbourne Woods" which also involved the planting of a cutting from the "Merryvale Tree" to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Dame Mary Gilmore at "Merryvale" Crookwell on 16 August 1865. The Society has also conducted two two-day workshops, in conjunction with the Canberra College of Advanced Education, on the history of post 1913 Canberra and on the writing of history. The Editor, with former FAHS delegate Julia Ryan, also ran a workshop for primary teachers on "Teaching the National History Curriculum through Local History".

One of the important recent fundraising and public outreach activities was the Society's recent Spring Fair, held outside our rooms in the Curtin shops, and the associated Open Day. The accompanying photograph shows some of the participants including CDHS councillor Tony Corp extolling the virtues of a rather large teddy bear. **NB the small single-story building on the right of the picture is the home of Canberra and District Historical Society.**



Canberra and District Historical Society Spring Open Day, 22 October, 2011

Historical Society of the Northern Territory

The major events for the Society this year have been the activities associated with the commemoration of the Commonwealth Government's takeover of Northern Territory administration (from the South Australian Government) one hundred years ago.

These events included the 1911 Centenary Seminar in Darwin in March and the Historical Society's 2011 lecture series, which had the broad theme of the Commonwealth take over. Earlier this year the Historical Society published two regional histories dealing with Housing and Development in Darwin. One by Dr Mickey Dewar, *Darwin, No place Like Home: Australia's Northern Capital in the 1950s through a social history of housing*, and the other by Dr Eve Gibson, *Beyond the Boundary: Fannie Bay 1869-2001*. Dr Dewar's book was chosen for the 2011 Northern Territory Chief Ministers History Book Award.

HSNT has for many years had an annual field trip, usually on a long weekend in July. Sites of historical significance that involve camping and remote driving are usually chosen. This year the Society convoy ventured to the Victoria River Downs Station to be shown around the historic buildings of this celebrated pastoral property.



At camp - Judy Boland, Jane Farr & Bev Phelts, Historical Society of the NT's Field Trip to Victoria River Downs Station, 21-24 July

History South Australia

SA State History Conference, 5-7 August 2011

In Perspective: Rethinking South Australia's History, this year's special State History Conference to mark 175 years since the official foundation of the Province of South Australia, was held from 5 to 7 August at the National Wine Centre, Adelaide. It was held in conjunction with *Bringing Together*, the inaugural national Australian Council of Professional Historians Association conference. A total of 224 delegates attended, and heard papers on a range of topics across the two conference streams. Many of the State History Conference papers took the opportunity offered by the conference theme to present new perspectives or research as thought-provoking papers on topics including identity, migration history, planning and architecture, and Aboriginal rights. Delegates followed with engaged questions, and lively discussion continued into breaks. Papers in the ACPHA stream focused on professional practice, covering topics as diverse as working on the history of natural

disasters to e-publishing and using film for historical interpretation. Evaluations showed that delegates who attended sessions across both conference streams appreciated the opportunity to do so, and even those who remained predominantly within one stream supported the running of the conferences concurrently.

This year we extended an invitation to join us to the many historians in other parts of Australia who have lived or worked in South Australia, or worked on South Australian sources. As a result, we welcomed many interstate presenters and delegates, including eminent historians who contributed to the wide-ranging discussion. The FAHS meeting scheduled in Adelaide resulted in FAHS delegates being able to play a part in the conference. Conference presenters, sponsors and FAHS delegates enjoyed the generous hospitality of Governor and Mrs Scarce at a vice-regal reception at Government House on the Friday evening, and many also enjoyed the conference dinner at the Wine Centre on Saturday evening.

Papers and audio of recorded sessions from the State History Conference will be available at History SA's new website in early 2012. Go to: www.history.sa.gov.au



Scenes inside the wonderful National Wine Centre during the SA State Conference

Royal Australian Historical Society

The Royal Australian Historical Society's State History Conference, 28-30 October 2011

The RAHS's annual State History Conference was held in the historic and picturesque city of Maitland. The theme, "*Of Droughts and Flooding Rains*" - *Australian Disasters: Research, Recording, Recovery*, was particularly relevant given Australia's recent natural disasters and the challenge they pose for community historians. Maitland has experienced its own disasters in the form of severe floods.

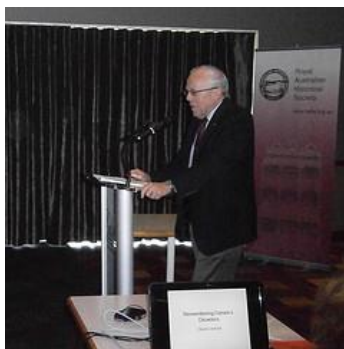
About 150 people from many parts of New South Wales attended the conference, the main venue for which was the East Maitland Bowling Club. There were pre-conference tours on 28 October to the new Newcastle Museum, the Maritime Centre at Lee Wharf and the Australian Museum of Clothing and Textiles at East Maitland. That evening delegates were welcomed to Maitland at a function hosted by the Maitland and District Historical Society at its impressive premises.

The following day, Robyn Parker, the New South Wales Minister for Environment, Minister for Heritage and Member for Maitland in the Legislative Assembly, opened the Conference and presented 2011 Heritage Grants. The FAHS President, Don Garden, then presented an FAHS Merit Award to Linda Emery of the Berrima Historical Society. A variety of topics were covered in the following presentations. These included memories of Darwin's disasters, archaeological work at the mass graves of First World War Australian soldiers at Fromelles, preparations for the Australian commemoration of the First World War's centenary and the history of flooding on the Hunter River. The day finished with a guided walk along the Hunter River bank and a dinner.

The final day of the conference, 30 October, started with a business session followed by the presentation of RAHS Certificates of Achievement and Cultural Grants. The day's presentations again covered much ground, including Local Environment Plans, significance assessment of collections, Maitland's Jewish Cemetery and the Inverell District Family History Group's recovery after its premises were destroyed by fire.

The conference was judged a great success, with its organisers receiving much unsolicited praise. This was largely due to the efforts of the RAHS's Affiliated Societies Committee, the Maitland and District Historical Society and the RAHS staff. Next year's conference is in the Cooks River area of southern Sydney.

David Carment



RAHS President David Carment



Book sales at the RAHS conference

Royal Historical Society of Queensland

The Annual General Meeting was held on 8 September 2011. In her presidential report Carolyn Nolan spoke of the extensive damage to the Commissariat Store and its precinct in January because of the William Street water main bursting and the subsequent evacuation and return to the building in July. She also expressed RHSQ's gratitude for the support provided by the Department of Public Works to the Society in providing rent free accommodation in the Mansions, by the National Trust of Queensland in providing their Board Room for Council meetings and the State Library of Queensland which generously made lecture rooms available.

The Clem Lack Memorial oration was presented that evening by Robert Riddel, a highly regarded Queensland architect, who spoke on Robert (Robin) Smith Dods (1868-1920) - one of the most significant early twentieth century Australian architects. President Carolyn Nolan was re-elected along with Vice Presidents and seven Councillors.

A very successful tour was made by 16 members to Maryborough in late October. The Society was warmly welcomed by the City Council and the two historical societies in the town including the Family History Society. Members travelled to and from Maryborough by Tilt Train and a bus was hired in Maryborough.

Daphne Mayo "Let There Be Sculpture" Exhibition Queensland Art Gallery. November 4 to January 15. This exhibition, which highlights the work of Daphne Mayo (1895–1982), one of Queensland's most significant twentieth century artists is guest-curated by Dr Judith McKay, a Fellow of the RHSQ and a John Douglas Kerr medallist. Mayo was an outstanding sculptor and creator of some of Brisbane's grandest monuments, as well as a passionate advocate for the arts.



Daphne Mayo carving the Brisbane City Hall tympanum, 1930 | Courtesy: Daphne Mayo Papers, UQFL119, Fryer Library, University of Queensland | Photograph: Berenice Lahey (Cribb)

Royal Historical Society of Victoria

Victorian Community History Awards Presented by the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Public Record Office of Victoria



Gunditjmara elder Denise Lovett with Gib Wettenhall at the awards ceremony in Queens Hall, Parliament House on 20 October.

Royal Western Australian Historical Society

The Royal Western Australian Historical Society steps up for the Royal Show (WA)

With permission, this is a modified version of an article originally published in History West, vol. 50, no. 10, November 2011.

More than fifty volunteers answered the Society's call to help at its exhibition at this year's Royal Show in Perth. The exhibition was housed in the David Buttfield House, built in 1929 as a display centre for building

products by Millars Timber and Trading Company. The interior showcases display the wonderful quality of the timber and workmanship typical of its day. The house has been restored and is now home to the Royal Agricultural Society's Hall of Fame, established in 1999. Portraits of the 52 inductees hang on its walls.

The exhibition, which included photographs and costumes from the Society's collections, was the joint effort of the Museum and Library Committee volunteers, and volunteers were in attendance for all the opening hours of the Show, each working a four-hour shift. The display attracted about 4,000 visitors many of whom spent quite considerable length of time browsing the display of photographs which were mounted on ten display boards. A selection of books on Western Australian history were available for sale; these sold well.

Other exhibitors in the building included the Genealogical Society of Western Australia. Their volunteers were on hand to answer visitors' questions on various aspects of family history. Mr Andy Michailides, owner of The Finishing Touch in Fremantle, showcased his photograph restoration and framing skills.

This is the fourth year the Society has held this exhibition. It has become a most valuable means of promoting the organisation and Western Australian history to the public, particularly showgoers from country areas.

Val Hutch



Photo: RWAHS exhibition in the David Butfield House at Perth Royal Show 2011

Tasmanian Historical Research Association

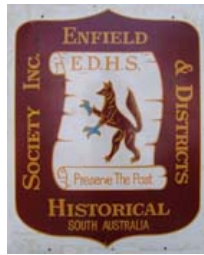
Our regular lecture program has continued. On 13 September 2011, Bob Sharman presented '*History of the Tasmanian Historical Research Association*'. This was at a special 60th Anniversary dinner members' meeting held at the Cascades Visitors Centre. Since 1967 the Association has hosted the Eldershaw Memorial Lecture at which a distinguished Australian historian speaks. Peter Eldershaw (1927-1967) was a founding member of the Association and was editor of its *Papers and Proceedings* until his death. He was made an honorary life member in 1958. An outstanding archivist, he played a leading role in framing the *Tasmanian Archives Act 1965* - a milestone in Australian archival legislation. On 11 October, the Eldershaw Memorial Lecture was given by Professor Tom Griffiths, who is the W. K. Hancock Professor of History in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University and a leading environmental historian. He spoke about '*Black Days: Bushfire in Australian History*'. On 8 November, Peter Hughes's lecture was titled '*Decorative Arts in Tasmania*'.



Professor Tom Griffiths, 2011 Eldershaw Memorial Lecturer

HISTORICAL SOCIETY ODD SPOT

Logos or crests. Does your historical society have a logo or crest? Please let us know. ED



NOMINATIONS FOR FAHS MERIT AWARDS 2012

Nominations for the FAHS Merit Awards for 2012 close on **30 June 2012**.

Information about the awards (including a list of previous recipients) is available on the [FAHS website](#).

The **guidelines** (in PDF format) and **nomination form** (in PDF and DOC format) can be downloaded from the website.

Please consider nominating a member of your society – successful nominations help raise the profile of all volunteers in local history.

A GENTLE REMINDER

Are you passing this *FAHS Newsletter* (and its sister publication, the *FAHS e-Bulletin*) on to those within your historical society who may be interested in them?

The FAHS tries to send the e-mails to the current President or Secretary, but it is not always easy to keep up with changes in office-bearers which may have taken place. If you are not the most appropriate person for us to be sending them to, we would be grateful if you would let us know of an alternative, so that the publications can reach as many of your members as possible.

A FINAL QUOTE

Historians are like deaf people who go on answering questions that no one has asked them.
Leo Tolstoy



Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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