Southwell Family Society Australia Inc.

**President’s Report – 2019-2020**

This has certainly been one of the most difficult years that anyone could wish to experience. If you have not been in some way impacted by fire, storm, hail, flood or pandemic then you are either extremely lucky or not on this planet. For those of you who have been impacted, I wish you well, with a better road ahead.

For our Family Society, however, it has been a reasonably successful year and quite a lot has been accomplished. Late last year the second edition of the family genealogy was completed and published (The Southwell Family in Australia 1838 – 2019). Many thanks to Pam and Jim Grace and the others who assisted with this mammoth exercise for the effort which was required to complete it. An initial print run of 300 has come close to selling out and another small print run of 80 has been ordered. It is anticipated that sales will now diminish. Given the size of the book, it is unlikely that a printed version will be attempted again. It is intended that the genealogy will be available for access and reference online and a procedure for ensuring that updates are authentic and accurate will need to be worked out.

The Society has now settled into the arrangement with the Hall School Museum and Heritage Centre (HSMAHC) under which that institution is providing storage and work areas, as well as the sale, at its regular openings, of the Society’s publications and other articles. A Memorandum of Understanding has now been signed. The joint application submitted by the Society and the HSMAHC to the ACT Government for a Heritage grant to establish a Southwell Family Archive, was successful. An amount of $7,500 was received and the majority of this amount is being used to fund a research assistant to sort, catalogue, digitise and store material (including photos) relevant to the Southwell Family Archive. The aim of this exercise is to make all of this material searchable so that the originals are able to be accessed for information and research.

A decision was taken that the genealogy would be kept separate from the Archive and will be added to the website at a later date as a separate database. It was also determined that material relating the the family prior to its 1838 arrival in Australia would be stored, but not included in the Archive.

Thanks to our Research Assistant Maren and volunteers, considerable progress has been made. The document material accumulated by the Society has now been sorted catalogued and digitised and entered into a database. Thanks mainly to Graham Wilson, a very large number of photographs has now been scanned and catalogued. I would also like to thank Alistair Crombie, Honorary Curator of HSMAHC, who has acted as project leader for the Archive project and provided expertise and wisdom in that role. The terms of the grant require completion by November of this year, and we feel we are on track to meet this.

An important element of the Archive will be establishing a means of accessing it. The Southwell Society website is being re-established to act as a gateway to the archive and also the administrative aspects of the Society and eventually the family genealogy. Again, our thanks to Graham Wilson and to Maren’s son Zeal for the considerable effort they have contributed to this enterprise.

In addition to the Society material, we are fortunate that Kingsley Southwell has made available a treasure trove of material from his immediate family. This includes information and records from Kingsley’s mother, Beryl, who was responsible for the initial work on the family genealogy and history. This material, which is identified as the Brooklands Collection, is currently being sorted, catalogued, and digitised. With the addition of the Brooklands Collection there will be access to an array of information relating to the family.

Earlier this year HSHMAC hosted an exhibition of paintings by a well-known artist Isla Patterson. The paintings featured a number of older properties, most with family connections. Family properties included were *Parkwood; Sunnyside; Homeleigh*; *Lockleigh; Wattle Park;* and the original woolshed at what was *Fairview.*

As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic the activities planned for the ACT Heritage Festival were firstly postponed, and subsequently cancelled, for the year. The planned opening of the Parkwood chapel as part of the Festival did not occur, for the first time in some years. Thanks to some volunteer attention, the chapel continues to be in quite good repair. However, there will be some grounds maintenance required during Spring.

There are a number of current Committee members who will not be seeking re-election this year. They are Jim Grace; Bill Hopkins; and Elizabeth and Wesley Kilby. On behalf of the Society, I would like to record our grateful thanks to all of them. Each, in their own way, have made really substantial contributions to the Society over many years. They will be sorely missed.

Lastly, I wish to record my thanks to the entire Committee in what has been an eventful and difficult year, for their sustained support. I must also thank my partner, Anne Lomax, for her support and becoming so actively involved in the family.

I feel that this year has bought a level of structure to the Society’s activities and I hope that this level of interest and activity can be maintained. I would also hope that the coming year brings less difficulties for individuals than the current one has.

Ralph Southwell

President