

Nomination of Elaine McCallum for an RHSV Award of Merit

Elaine McCallum, a member of the Birchip Historical Society Inc., is an outstanding volunteer for the achievements she has attained and I wish to nominate her for an Award of Merit for 2024.

She first became involved in 1992 when she was asked to type up information that our President had tape recorded by reading extracts about the railway line coming to Birchip written in the Wycheproof and Donald papers in the 1880s and early 1890s, before the *Birchip Advertiser* began in May 1891. A week later he died and Elaine, never having met him before, kept her promise. None of us could type or were still working. Cr. George Gould OAM began compiling a book called "A Century of Rail" to Birchip in 1993. As Elaine began researching the microfilm of the *Advertiser* for more railway history she was frustrated with the difficulty of finding information, so started indexing. After starting classes and buying a small Apple Macintosh Personal Computer (now a museum object) for herself, she indexed 1892 to 1945. Our society did not have a computer.

After that mighty effort, she researched information about the Birchip Shire Council breaking away from the St Arnaud Shire and forming in 1895 to last until 1995. However, Mr Gould was on dialysis three times a week and Elaine took the notes to him in hospital where he wrote up most of the book on a word processor. The Shire Minute Books had been burnt in the 1960s so information was gleaned from the papers.

In 1998 Elaine was the volunteer winner of the Museum Industry Recognition Award for these achievements. In 1994 Elaine became Archivist and in 2004 Treasurer of the Birchip Historical Society Inc.

Added to all this, besides continuing indexing, she was cataloguing, labelling every artefact, room, cupboard, display cabinet, filing cabinet, shelf, drawer and box in the Museum and Archives buildings. Objects and documents are either added to a display or stored carefully. She backs up computer files, stores them separately, drives 100 km round trip to Donald if a computer needs attention, and has supervised and trained VCAL and Advance 9 students doing some volunteer work in the Museum and Archives. Elaine spent 15 hours per week for 6 months supervising each of two separate "Work for the Dole" ladies who did typing. During Covid she was the only one allowed by the Shire to check weekly the mouse and insect traps.

It takes up to 100 hours to index a year of papers and because software becomes obsolete and computers need updating, she has redone all the papers from 1891–1945, the *Birchip Guardian* 1950–1973, and the *Donald-Birchip Times* 1974–1993 and has started on 1994. Elaine types up and emails every week to the *Buloke Times* extracts from 100 years ago from the *Birchip Advertiser*.

Besides all this, she is one of three researchers for people tracing their Birchip ancestry and for local sports and community organisations celebrating centenaries or anniversaries, and shows visitors through the Museum, in which she has organised many of the displays.

Nominated by Dorothy Reid, Vice-President, Birchip Historical Society Inc.

April 2024