



LHI Island Museum

A short history

by Chris Murray



LORD HOWE ISLAND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In the mid 1970s, a small group of Island residents led by Jim Dorman formed the Lord Howe Island Historical Society to encourage the preservation of valuable artifacts, photographs documents and collections relating to Lord Howe's cultural and natural history.

In May 2003 Jim Dorman received the Order of Australia Medal for his dedication in establishing the first museum and the successful rebuilding of this facility between 1998 and 2002. Jim passed away on Wednesday 2nd July 2003 and will be greatly missed.

As a result of dedicated work by Jim and a voluntary committee, the first Museum was opened in 1978 in a building generously provided by the local sub-branch of the R.S.L., which no longer needed a permanent hall. Owing to the continuing work of Jim and his volunteers, the first Museum soon housed impressive displays of historical and environmental material, open to visitors from 2.00pm to 4.00pm seven days per week.

However, by the early 1990s, it had become apparent that more space and a better designed facility would enhance all aspects of the Museum's operation. It was also recognised that a chronic fragmentation of visitor information services on the Island could be overcome by combining the existing small visitor centre inside the Museum complex, providing better resources, more information and extended hours of operation.



Work on the project commenced with the assistance of architect Mike Tomaszewski, and the involvement of the Lord Howe Island Board, the local government authority. The Board provided a secure site for the new facility by establishing a special reserve dedicated for the purposes of a Museum. Two plans were considered to be unacceptable, but the third plan was approved in principle by the Board in July, 1997.

At this point, fund raising for the new building received an extraordinary boost when the C.E.O. of Clean Up Australia, Ian Kiernan, agreed to act as fund-raising coordinator. A special Australian Tax Office registered Trust was established to source government funding and private sponsorship. Since then, the Trust has received generous grants from:

- The Commonwealth Department of Environment and Heritage
- The Australian Museum
- The NSW State Ministry for the Arts
- The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Environment Australia

- The NSW Premiers Department
- The Commonwealth Department of Transport and Regional Services

In addition, as a result of tireless efforts by Ian Kiernan and Jim Dorman, private sponsorship also produced some extraordinary financial donations and also in-kind contribution of building materials. To date over \$1,000,000 in cash and kind has been raised to complete the building, which was officially opened on the 17th February, 2002. Of this, some \$25,000 has been subscribed by the small community of 130 island families, and the balance from mainland government and private sponsors.

The new facility is an outstanding addition to the Island's cultural and environmental heritage, and provides a significant boost to its economy. Its role can be summarised as:

- Comprehensive information for visitors to the Island with environmental displays about the World Heritage Environment.
- Centralised booking and reservation service for visitors for all local environmental and historical tours.
- Historical displays going back to 1788 when the Island was discovered by HMS Supply of the First Fleet and covering 166 years of continuous settlement since 1834.
- Learning and scientific centre holding valuable archives, photographs, records with a reading/research room having computer facilities, photocopying and internet access.
- An audio-visual centre where interpretive video and slide presentations can be given on a daily basis relating to the Island's unique history and environment - particularly useful for wet weather entertainment when other activities are difficult.
- As a venue for special events for visitors and residents including art, craft and photographic exhibitions, book launchings, lectures and presentations by visiting scientists and others.
- Workshop, conferencing and office facilities which assist with 'in house' training programs for local tour operators and hospitality industry employees.
- Information and booking service for prospective visitors to the Island from mainland Australia and overseas.
- Outlet for merchandising of quality books, maps, souvenirs etc. providing a much needed income stream for the Historical Society and Tourism Association which, are now starting to benefit from this additional revenue.
- It is an extraordinary asset to all visitors and the Island community for years to come, serving as a major cultural focus and asset for residents and visitors alike.



Ian Kiernan and Jim Dorman

The Lord Howe Island Museum wishes to acknowledge financial support from the following government departments and agencies.



Natural Heritage Trust

Helping Communities Helping Australia
A Commonwealth Government Initiative



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORT
AND REGIONAL SERVICES



Department of the Environment and Heritage



NEW SOUTH WALES GOVERNMENT
PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT



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