

Tasmanian TCA Women Recognised

No one has ever disputed that TCA has dynamic members. Recently in Tasmania three of our dynamic female members were recognised by entry to the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women. Timber Communities Australia congratulates Jean Heather Burgess, Carol Aileen Grey and Christine O'Connor. Information from the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women on the three women is below. For more information you can go to their website at:

http://www.women.tas.gov.au/honour_roll/members.html



Jean Heather Burgess

Awarded for service to the community

Born: 31 March, 1930

Entered on Roll: 2007

Jean Heather Burgess was born in Queenstown and moved to Recherche Bay with her family when she was three years old. She has spent most of her life living and working in the Huon Municipality. Her family, the Heathers, has a proud heritage with the region's timber industry, and has operated sawmills at Moss Glen and Cockle Creek. Jean married Sid

Burgess in 1950 and has six children - five sons and a daughter.

Jean began work at her father's sawmill during World War II. At 15, she was racking the laths used in lathen plaster walls. At 16, due to the shortage of male workers through the war years, Jean started working in the bush. Under the supervision of their father Jean, her sister Nancy and brother George, would go into the bush and fell giant stringy bark trees to supply the mill. They used only cross cut saws and axes, with Jean taking the left-handed axe position.

The felled timber was extracted by a log hauler and carted along a tramway by tractor back to the mill. The family built the tramway which extended almost two kilometres into the forest. When not working in the bush, Jean worked in the mill. The flywheel for the mill is still at Cockle Creek, with an interpretative display which features articles on the mill and extracts from an interview with Jean.

As an adult, Jean has been involved in many community activities. Her involvement with the Pensioners Union has been long standing. She was Secretary, and is currently President of the Pensioners Union of Esperance. She has been an active member of the Huon Eldercare committee and involved in Meals on Wheels and community transport. Through Jean's community leadership, the Tasmanian Government has assisted in the provision of a car to provide community transport in the region.

The Huon Valley community holds Jean in high esteem and her involvement in, and promotion of the area is ongoing. She was a member of the Southern Spinners group that produced the interpretative tapestry on display at the Tahune Airwalk.

She is involved in the Geeveston Streetscape project that is beautifying the town centre and restoring pride in the town after harsh economic times. Jean also volunteers at the local heritage centre and is part of the Geeveston Green Jacket group, a voluntary non-profit group which provides a rostered guide/greeting service to the Esperance Forest and Heritage Centre. She was active in the Friends of the Community Bank Committee that established the first community bank in the State.

Jean has a deep knowledge of the area's environment and is an active member of the Huon Resource Development Group. She has always displayed an optimistic outlook for her community and has made a major contribution to the community's self esteem.



Carol Aileen Grey

Awarded for service to the community

Born: 24 December, 1949

Entered on Roll: 2007

Carol Grey was born in Scottsdale, Tasmania, in 1949. She grew up at Harrymount on Benham Estate. One of 12 children, only seven of whom survived, Carol grew up in a house with no electricity – although the family did have lamps. Her mother, a trained schoolteacher, was a resourceful woman who taught her children through distance education, and then they were sent to relatives to complete their high school. Carol and her siblings never felt disadvantaged - they were rich in knowledge of the world through books. Every few months a large bundle of books arrived from the State Library. Carol's mother would read to the family of a night like a serial, a few chapters each night. Carol says her mother instilled in them to care for others and to always be honest.

When Carol left school she trained as an auxiliary nurse, before marrying Mervyn Williams at the age of 18. They had three sons: Dale, Roger and Glen.

Merv died tragically in 1999, leaving a traumatised Carol to run their sheep farm, Wattle Grove. Up until this point, Carol had not had much "hands-on" experience around their 500-hectare farm. However, she not only turned the farm around but achieved the highest tribute in superfine wool growing, the Zegna Trophy, in 2004.

In 2005, Carol won the Marcus Oldham Rural Leadership Scholarship. Following this, she started the South Esk Discussion Group – a group intent on improving the town. In April 2006, Carol established the Greater Esk Tourism (GET) Inc, which is growing quickly and now has members from Rossarden, Avoca, Upper Esk, Mathinna, Fingal and St Marys.

The tourism potential of the area is beginning to be tapped and Carol has been described as "a magnet", attracting people to her ideas. Her work through Women in Agriculture has created networks that are continually developing and strengthening.

GET has many initiatives planned, including: restoring the old school building, a history trail around each town, tree planting and beautification projects throughout the valley.

In June 2006, Carol and her partner Peter Hazell opened the Billy Bag gift shop in Avoca's main street. The tourism venture sells a selection of Tasmanian and mainland products, unusual imported goods including a life-size pig, and of course Superfine Merino wool socks. The shop looks like a pioneer's cottage, in recognition of pioneer women of Tasmania.

While doing all of this, Carol has also continued to be a farmer alongside Peter. Carol's time is concentrated on getting the fledgling business to a point where she can employ a local full-time staff member. Though they are in drought conditions, Carol maintains her positive and strong commitment to others and the community. She acknowledges her faith in God has been a great strength to her. Carol is proud that her three sons are all in caring/human services professions.



Christine O'Connor

Awarded for service to the community

Christine O'Connor was born in Burnie where she still lives. She has spent the past 20 years as an advocate for Tasmanian families dependent on the timber industry for their livelihoods, and North-West families in particular.

Christine's advocacy for the timber industry and its dependent families and communities has centred on advancing social justice and creating inter-generational equity. She advocates sustainable and renewable forestry to create jobs, giving those working in the industry, and their children, a viable future.

Whenever the need arises, Christine travels to the national capital to represent the North West community. Politicians at both state and national level acknowledge her significant contribution as an advocate for her community. She recognises the 'multiplier effect' of industry development, having been in a family business that provided an essential service to the offices of timber, pulp and paper companies in Burnie. Christine was aware that her family income, and that of her employees and suppliers, directly depended on a sustainable timber industry.

Christine currently works part-time in a shop in a small rural community on a tourist route, and is always ready to inform visitors of the pride she has for her region and the State.

Christine continues to make a positive and major contribution to the development of her regional community. She has hosted meetings, forums and tours to advance the region and its people. She has acted as a spokesperson in national, state and regional committees. She has been involved in the development of an empowerment process entitled 'Women in Timber' creating skills, knowledge and attitudes for other women to succeed in representing communities and advocating their aspirations.

Christine's efforts are all voluntary and in many instances have cost her lost income or business opportunities. In some instances, she has used family income to travel to meetings and to represent her community.