It gives me great pleasure to present the President’s report for 2015–2016.

In September 2015 we held a very interesting seminar in conjunction with the Annual General Meeting. Dr Thomas Gunn spoke on the topic: Reel or real? Writing the history of the Launceston Film Society. His talk looked at the challenges of using oral histories when written records are missing, and then what happens when the written records are found which contradict the oral material: in particular, the need to decide between memory and record. Dr Terry Whitebeach talked about her DVD and books based on oral histories of South Sudanese refugees. Her paper, From Loa to Launceston & from Kenya to Kingston: An Oral History Project with South Sudanese Refugees (Tasmania 2011–2014), looked at the refugee experience, and especially why she used different literary forms to disseminate the accounts for different audiences. Finally, Dr Jai Paterson spoke about Launceston’s Gasworks site, or oral history without recordings, where a quick project, requiring oral history, focuses less on the importance of the individual interviewee and more on the humanity they bring to what would otherwise be a purely industrial story.

The Launceston Historical Society has joined with us to organise this year’s September seminar, with speakers Brad Williams, Jill Cassidy and Margareta Pos.

Our other major event for the year was the May workshop, held this year in Launceston. As always there was a wide range of participants and projects for discussion and the day was a success. As usual, several participants became members.

The new website has proven its worth. As our organisation comes up first when ‘oral history’ and ‘Tasmania’ are googled we are naturally seen as the main oral history group for the state, which of course we are. People can look up our upcoming activities and we have had increased workshop attendance as a result. Moreover, as we now have an email contact address online we received a quite unexpected query from the United Kingdom asking for a contribution to that country’s Oral History Journal, which runs a section entitled International Work. Elaine Crisp provided a short article about her nursing project.

We are pleased to have made the decision to pay for our host to make website changes. The committee members did not have the time to take this on and our host makes the changes promptly. You may have seen that we are in the process of putting all the past issues of Real to Reel on the website, although we wait a year before uploading each issue in order to keep faith with our members. So far all issues from April 2009 to April 2015 have been
uploaded and they are searchable using a search engine. Earlier issues need to be re-formatted and the very earliest need to be scanned, so this will be an ongoing project.

There is a general move in all organisations towards electronic communications, and the number of members requiring a hard copy of Real to Reel has been steadily declining. Moreover, earlier this year three members of the committee did the training for STORS, the Stable Tasmania Open Repository Service run by the State Library, so there is no longer the need to send a hard copy of Real to Reel to the Library. As a result, and encouraged by the increasing cost of postage, we decided to no longer produce a hard copy for our members. We anticipate that this will not be a problem, as for several years the newsletter has been formatted for easy printing. It should be noted that the Library’s electronic copy will also have no public access for twelve months. The same decision has been made by Oral History Australia so you will see that this year’s Journal will also be electronic.

Our digital recorder, the Fostex, has given us ten years of sterling service without missing a beat until earlier this year when it required a minor repair along with some new headphones. The opportunity was taken to update the accompanying User Guidelines and it should continue to give good service to our members.

You may remember that after the 2013 Annual General Meeting the secretary’s computer died and as a result the minutes for that meeting have been lost. As a result, at last year’s meeting it was decided that the committee members would prepare substitute minutes to the best of their ability; these minutes will need to be confirmed this year.

After many years of great service Terry Fritsche stood down as Minutes Secretary in May. I wish to thank her for her contribution, and to Alison Johnston who took over the role until this AGM. I would also like to thank Lana Wall who as treasurer keeps a firm watch on our finances, and the rest of the committee Elaine Crisp, Andrew Parsons, Leonie Prevost and Pauline Schindler for their hard work and assistance. Finally, I thank the whole committee for their role in backing the award to me of the Hazel de Berg Award for Excellence in Oral History at last year’s Oral History Australia conference in Perth. And as always I would like to thank the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery for its continued support.