

AGM

25 August 2011

President's report

It has been a busy year since our last AGM, with plenty of achievements.

The NMA is made up of many, and its success depends upon many, therefore please forgive me for singling out just a few.

Particularly I wish to give credit to our Deputy President Michael Young, who has yet again put great energy and strategic thinking into the Nillumbik Mudbrick Association. How Michael finds the time and space for all he does never fails to impress me! One of Michael's other many hats, that of Municipal Councillor, has again assisted strategic opportunities for the NMA. Councillor Michael has been able to get the NMA directly to where we could otherwise only hope to be in municipal affairs.

And what a bonus we have enjoyed with two new recruits! The input from James Neil and Barry Pearce has been phenomenal. James has contributed with the written word with impressive professionalism. Barry has shown intellect and common sense, particularly as our chief contact with the professor from Adelaide University.

Only a few short years ago the powers that be decreed that all new houses in Victoria must obtain a 4 star rating. Then it went to 5 stars. Now it's 6 stars.

Our major project for the last year has been how to achieve 6 stars for a mudbrick house. First of all, Michael & Barry obtained \$11,000 from Sustainability Victoria to fund the project. Four house designs were used (single storey with steep pitch, single storey with low pitch, double storey with steep pitch, single storey with clerestory). NMA then employed an energy assessor to provide detailed information on how to get these buildings to 6 stars.

The walls of local mudbrick dwellings show many different textures and finishes, ranging from velvet to coarse. The NMA has produced a mudbrick textures and finishes folder. This is a work in progress, with more photos to be added of other renders and finishes.

I believe one of NMA's most important directions has been arranging for testing the 'R' value of a mudbrick. Alan Grimes has worked tirelessly on this project, in conjunction with mudbrick maker Richard Provan. The end result shows that the 0.4 rating given by "the powers that be" to mudbrick is about right, but about right for a mudbrick of the lowest common denominator. With careful use of straw in the mudbrick (which should be there anyway), Alan and Richard have shown that we can more than double this rating, to 0.9. This is great news, and it shows that we probably should be considering a "standard", a specification, for a mudbrick.

Alan at the same time is developing renders which will give their own R rating. This also is great news.

The Practically Green Festival was its usual booming success last Spring and is now only two months away. This festival is held by the Shire each year at Edendale Farm in Eltham. It is a major platform where we and the community can celebrate mudbrick, among many other sustainable initiatives. Barbara Pittard has been our highly successful Ambassador at this festival, ever so nicely spruiking the wonders of mudbrick to any who came near like a spider in the web! I hope Barbara will once again be our Mudbrick Ambassador this coming October.

The Mudbrick House Tour was revived very successfully by Eltham High School last year, and is on again soon in conjunction with the Practically Green Festival. Proceeds from the Tour go to the Music Department at Eltham High School. This annual Tour had been organized by the Pantom Hill Preschool for many years, but ceased a few years ago. It now should continue strongly for years to come, with \$7,000 promised per annum from Nillumbik Council and continuing great enthusiasm from Eltham High School and, of course, from NMA.

Our first Trade Book has been a great success. With financial help from Bendigo Bank, we are in the early stages of producing a bigger and better second edition. Our Trade Book is already "the Bible" of mudbricks, and no doubt, as it gets bigger and bigger, will become even more important as a resource document within the mudbrick industry.

The NMA and Barry Pearce in particular have worked studiously with Professor Terry Williamson from Adelaide University in conducting a survey of mudbrick dwellers. This survey has brought a scientific approach to prove the anecdotal evidence that those who do live in a mudbrick house love living in it, that these houses are warm in winter, cool in summer. Apparently, the surveys returned to Adelaide University via the NMA exceed the number of all the surveys from the rest of Australia put together.

Many thanks to the Committee, particularly to our active committee members: Colin Cook (Treasurer), Michael Young (Deputy Pres), James Neil (Secretary), Barry Pearce, Tristan Sanders, Alan Grimes, Karl Apted.

Thanks to Grimes and Sons for providing the venue for Committee meetings.

Once again, we have been well assisted by Bendigo Bank, which has given \$15,000 to NMA over 3 years. Tonight we have two guests from Bendigo Bank, Barry Henwood, who recently was Nillumbik's Volunteer of the Year, and Michael Maloney, head of the new Eltham Branch & District (a district which has branches at Eltham, Diamond Creek, Hurstbridge, Doreen, Kinglake).

Onwards we go!! to our next year to better appreciation of mudbrick as a timeless building medium!!

ROBERT MARSHALL
President