

Avatar's Abode Archives Annual Report July 2020

The main purpose of the Archives Committee is *“to safeguard and preserve for future generations, the precious artefacts, relics and archival records of Avatar Meher Baba's life and advent, especially pertaining to His visit to Avatar's Abode in 1958. The Committee also aims to preserve items, relics and records associated with the cultural and architectural development of Avatar's Abode, and to share and enhance appreciation for all these irreplaceable links to Meher Baba's human form and His time at Avatar's Abode”*.

The visit in 2016 by Sue Chapman from the UK Meher Baba Association and her training of a small group of volunteers initiated a period of intensive work on the Avatar's Abode Trust Archives. The physical preservation of precious collection items and digitisation of documents has been the focus over the past four years. As this work has proceeded, we have been actively working on ways in which the collection can be better shared with the wider Baba family. The launch of our online digital documents archive, and online photographic site are significant steps in realising this goal.

Another major project this year was the purchase of three new museum quality display cabinets to enhance our preservation and display of precious items from the collection. This project is explained in detail in a separate article in the September edition of the Meher Baba Australia newsletter. Our wonderful team of over 25 dedicated volunteers including 7 committee members support a wide range of archiving activity. Over the past four years they have demonstrated a continuing enthusiasm for, and commitment to this work.

Archiving work has included:

- Document Rehousing
We completed the rehousing of the Francis Brabazon collection totalling over 23,000 pages. This is now stored in 51 archival boxes. This year we also began rehousing documents from three other collections.
- Document Digitisation
Once documents have been cleaned and appropriately stored, we scan them as archival format PDF files. Reg Love has overseen the scanning of over 80% of the documents in the Francis Brabazon collection and we expect to complete the scanning of this collection over the coming year. An example of how this work has assisted with other activity is the planned publication of a new edition of *Stay With God* by Francis Brabazon which has drawn on important information discovered when we scanned the original handwritten and typed manuscripts.
- Document Transcription
Over the past year 10 volunteers have transcribed, and triple checked handwritten correspondence between Francis and others and some of Francis' unpublished poetry. Over 160 documents, ranging from 4 line poems to 75 page manuscripts have been transcribed.
- Online Archival Documents Database
We have begun to upload scans of original documents from the collection, many of them handwritten to a searchable online archival documents database. Some of these have been transcribed and uploaded to help with readability. These can be viewed via a link on the Avatar's Abode Trust website at https://avatarsabode.com.au/avatars_abode_trust_archives.html

- **Archival Publications**
One volunteer continues to maintain and add new items to the publications collection. This collection now contains over 800 volumes, 344 pamphlets plus many periodicals and sets of Baba newsletters. Will Graham from USA has updated a global bibliography of works by and about Baba. He has found the Avatar's Abode Trust Archive an invaluable aid in completing this bibliography.
- **Relics and Artefacts**
A grant of \$5000 from the Sunshine Coast Council Heritage Grants program in 2019 has assisted in the purchase of new display cabinets for the archive room in Baba's House. With the Trust committing funds to this purchase and a successful fundraising drive which raised \$6750 from 24 donors we were able to purchase three Australian made museum quality cabinets. With this purchase the preservation of some of our most precious display items is significantly improved. Jeanette Isaacs-Young continues to manage the preservation, conservation, and display of artefacts and relics. Many items that have been on long term display have now been placed into storage. In future displays will be rotated to assist in long term preservation.
- **Audio-visual collection items**
The assessment and cataloguing of all audio visual items in the collection commenced in May. Over 700 reel-to-reel magnetic audio tapes, VHS video cassettes, compact audio cassettes, video tape, CD's and DVD's have been catalogued. A consultant is developing a plan to help manage the transfer of the collection items into a suitable digital format over the next 10 years.
- **Online Photographs**
The Avatar's Abode photographic collection now totals over 2300 photos. Gusi Carpenter continues to work on the photographic database, adding and updating information on each image. This year we started sharing these images with the worldwide Baba family on Zenfolio and they can be viewed at <https://avatarsabodecollection.zenfolio.com/> or from a link on the Avatar's Abode Trust website at <https://avatarsabode.com.au/>.

The opportunity to work on the archives is a rare privilege. It brings us into intimate contact with those items in the collection that bear the fragrance of His visit to Avatar's Abode and the love of His Australian lovers. If you are interested in volunteering to assist with the work of the archives team contact us on avatarsabodearchives@gmail.com for more information.

David Bowling

Archives Committee Convenor