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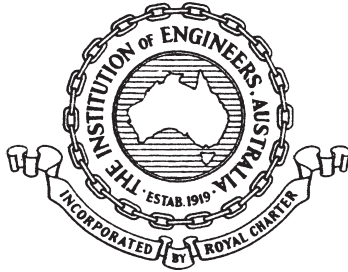
Out of Hours Work ... and Play

While the aphorism ‘all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy’ may be universally true, work can be enriched through serious extracurricular activities as well as more frivolous ones. Commission officers have a well-deserved reputation for working hard and playing hard, particularly out of hours.

The most obvious example of out of hours work by officers is the effort put into professional associations and learned societies throughout Queensland and, not infrequently, on the national scene. The astute reader will have noticed passing mention of a number of these such as the Institution of Engineers, Geological Society, Institute of Surveyors, Association of Hydrogeologists, Water Research Foundation, Australian Water and Wastewater Association and Society of Accountants. Naming only these guarantees that many worthy societies will remain unacknowledged even though their contribution to the collective human wisdom may be immense. And the contribution of Commission officers will be equally unrecognised.

At the risk, however, of offending other organisations and contributors, we mention briefly, because of the unique role of Commission officers, the Water Panel of the Institution of Engineers. The highlight of the Queensland conference is the Hydrologic Games held at the conference dinner where the other states are challenged to a quiz with such questions as “Which two rivers join to become a creek?” Successive Commission officers have manfully shouldered the onerous responsibility of organising the games.¹

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*Crest of the
Institution of Engineers Australia*

Officers have also, on many occasions, attended meetings of advisory committees, River Improvement Trusts, irrigators associations, public meetings, shed meetings, meetings with individuals, with industry associations, with local governments, with special interest groups and many others. Whilst many of these occurrences have been pleasant socialisation among friends, on occasion they have been considerably more tense and traumatic. Officers have experienced verbal abuse and physical threats from weapons including stockwhips and guns. It is sometimes galling when abusive attendees at meetings object to “attending in their own time”, whereas the public servants get paid!

Less traumatic have been addresses to groups such as school students and service clubs. Officers have also delivered lectures at universities, either as specialist guest lecturers or in delivering components of set courses. On occasion, officers have been required, at great personal sacrifice, to travel overseas on learning experiences or to contribute to world-wide organisations such as the International Commission on Dams and the International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage.

Commission staff have made a meaningful contribution to the water industry, both formally and informally. The following sections provide an account of some of the more significant formal arrangements within the water industry.

In the early 1950s, increasing interest was being expressed in interstate liaison between water authorities, particularly in respect of assessment of resources. The Institution of Engineers arranged for periodic conferences to be held and this led to the formation of the Water Resources Conference and the Underground Water Conference. In July 1962, Commonwealth and State Ministers concerned with water resources recommended that the Australian Water Resources Council be formed. The (Commonwealth) Department of National Development provided the permanent secretariat.

Arthur McCutchan, who was appointed First Assistant Secretary of DND, had, as one of his initial tasks, to set up the AWRC along the lines of the American equivalent.

The primary objectives of AWRC were to identify areas of Australia with inadequate information, foster measurement and assessment, promote collaboration in research and promote education. The structure of the AWRC was:

- a Council of State and Commonwealth Water Ministers
- a Steering Committee of the State and Commonwealth Water Department Heads
- a Research Advisory Committee
- Technical Committees of representatives of the authorities.

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Initially, three Technical Committees were formed: Technical Committee on Surface Water (TCSW); Technical Committee on Underground Water (TCUW); and a Water Research and Education Steering Committee (WRESC). Later other committees were formed – Technical Committee on Water Quality (TCWQ), Planning Technical Committee (PTC) and the Flood Plain Technical Committee (FPTC).

Fred Haigh, Frank Learmonth, Don Beattie and Tom Fenwick served on the Standing Committee during their terms as Department heads.

Arthur McCutchan, Harry Stark, John Ward and Peter Bevin served on TCSW with Arthur, John and Peter having periods as Chairman. Bernie Credlin, Alec Vitte, and Col Hazel were members of TCUW with Col as Chairman for a time. John Morse, Lee Rogers and John Ward served on the PTC with John Ward having several years as Chairman. Peter Bevin was on the FPTC. In 1984, John Morse had the responsibility for organising a National Conference on “Non-Point Sources of Pollution” for the Planning Committee.

About 1991, the whole structure of the AWRC was changed to the Agriculture and Resource Management Committee of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ).

The AWRC made significant progress in Australia in improving the techniques for data collection and analysis of surface and groundwater. In conjunction with these improvements came standardisation throughout Australia in these fields. Many ‘state of the art’ publications were produced on water resource issues. Likewise, the PTC and FPTC paved the way for significant progress in planning procedures that incorporated economic, environmental and social issues. TCUW invited an American expert to Australia on at least two occasions, leading to the establishment of the Groundwater School.

All the people who served on the Committees of the AWRC devoted much of their own time to reading the volumes of literature handed out prior to each meeting and undertaking tasks within their own States following meetings.

There is no doubt that Australia is the richer for the work of many talented and dedicated people during the 25 years of the AWRC.²

The Dumaresq–Barwon Border Rivers Commission (BRC) was constituted by an agreement in 1946 between the New South Wales and Queensland Governments and legislation in both States.

The Commission is responsible for the conservation and equal sharing of the waters of the Dumaresq River upstream of Mingoola, the regulation of the Border Rivers downstream of Mingoola and the equitable distribution of the waters of the

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Border Rivers Commission logo

streams which intersect the Queensland–New South Wales border west of Mungindi – known as the ‘Intersecting Streams’.

The Acts and schedules were substantially amended in 1968 to provide for the construction and operation of works such as Glenlyon Dam and for BRC to recommend to the Governments on flows of water available to the States from the Intersecting Streams. There were further amendments in 1992, to give BRC control over non-Artesian Basin groundwater in the Border River Valley, and to permit river improvement works.

Works commenced in 1947 with the start of weir construction and the investigation of the Mingoola dam site and other weir and dam sites. When the Mingoola site was found to be unviable, attention turned to the Glenlyon site, which was subsequently developed. The last of the weirs constructed, Boggabilla Weir, was built in an excavation adjacent to a loop in the McIntyre River, which was then rerouted through the weir. This actually resulted in a relocation in the State border and a territorial gain for Queensland!

The duties of the Commission include: measurement and studies of flows in the rivers; regulation and distribution of water resources; construction and maintenance of dams, weirs, regulators or other works for storage; regulation and distribution of flows; operation of storages and other works for the sharing of waters in accordance with the agreement. The States have also entered into an informal arrangement whereby, since 1971, compensation flows are passed through Beardmore Dam on the Balonne River in Queensland for stock and domestic supplies and maintenance of flow in the Balonne Minor, Culgoa, Birrie, Bokhara and Narran rivers in Queensland and New South Wales. Sharing of this water between these rivers is managed by a series of regulators built, maintained and operated by the Commission.

The cost of the Commission’s activities is shared equally by the two States. However, as the Commission does not directly employ any staff, its investigation, construction, maintenance and operation responsibilities are performed, at cost, by the relevant State departments.

The Commission consists of three Commissioners, one of whom is appointed by the Queensland Government, one by the New South Wales Government while the third, who must be a person not in the service of either Government, is appointed jointly by the Premiers of the two States as Chairman. Each is appointed for a term not exceeding five years (but can be reappointed for an extended term). A Commission of only three people is close to the ideal committee (especially when two are sick).

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Queensland Commissioners of Water Resources were always the State's representatives. The chairmanship traditionally alternates between the States³.

Recent Queensland secretaries and accountants (the positions follow the chairman to his State of origin) have been John Connolly and Ian Hoskins, and then Warren Hutton and Ray Sutherland.

A Management Committee comprising staff from these departments provides the linkage between the Border Rivers Commission (BRC) and the activities of the two State departments. It also considers issues in dispute for recommendations to the Commission. This Management Committee was first appointed in about 1986. Previously there were a number of specific committees, each reporting separately to the Commission. The Management Committee is where the interstate battles and hard issues were always thrashed out through friendly determination to reach solutions to divisive issues. Commissioners frequently attended these meetings as advisers/observers.

One of the interesting features of the BRC is that the Act provides that decisions of the Commission must be **unanimous**, presumably so that one State and its selection of chairman can't gang up on the other State. That never appeared to have been a problem in Dave Morwood's time, but might well have led to some less than ideal consensus decisions. *The procedure to break a 2:1 vote is that the States appoint an independent arbitrator, and if they can't agree on whom the arbitrator should be, then it is the Chief Justice of Tasmania. The prospect of having a Taswegian deciding how much water NSW should get at Goodooga or wherever probably would not appeal to the Premiers, so their Commissioners felt some pressure to reach agreement. Mostly, the correct answer is patently obvious once three people at Commissioner level have thought about it for a while.*

A lot of issues were naturally settled in 'out of session' friendly discussions between Commissioners. These people would be good friends and also know each other from Australian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (ANCID), Australian National Committee on Large Dams (ANCOLD), Murray–Darling Basin Commission (MDBC), Institution of Engineers committees and so on. So it has been a friendly body, in spite of some quite bitter initial disagreements about cross-border flows, perhaps mostly in the Intersecting Streams.

Formal Community Consultation Committees were first established in 1992–93, following requests from local people, particularly in NSW. Less formal discussions had been held for many years before that.

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Most of meetings were held in Sydney and Brisbane, which is obviously more convenient and economical for busy Commissioners. Since Glenlyon Dam commenced, at least one meeting a year has been held there, with a most pleasant overnight stay at Fred Haigh Cottage (and no shortage of port) and generally discussion and lunch with the local water users afterwards. Other meetings have been at areas of interest – Goondiwindi, St George, Charleville, Menindee (45°C).

A question that has frequently arisen concerns overlaps with the MDBC. Physically this overlap is real, because the original Murray River Commission was expanded to the Murray–Darling Basin to encompass the whole catchment after the BRC was created. There was potential for conflict. That was minimised by maintaining good relationships between the two authorities. In effect, MDBC informally agreed to leave matters solely between Queensland and NSW to the BRC and BRC agreed to comply with what Queensland and NSW had agreed to in MDBC. It has been suggested that if BRC did not exist, MDBC would want a similar body to be formed to deal with the local problems!⁴

The Murray–Darling Basin spans four States, covering 15% of Australia, but provides 75% of Australia’s irrigation water. A quarter of the Basin is in Queensland, from Toowoomba and Tambo to the NSW border. The Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council (MDBMC) and its subsidiary Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) were formed in 1986 to take a whole-of-catchment approach to the management of the natural resources of the Basin. Their formation was an evolution from the River Murray Commission, which had been in place for many decades.



*Murray-Darling
Basin Commission
logo*

The States along the Murray River had managed various agreements since 1915 to deal with the sharing of the waters of the southern part of the Basin. The agreement was originally based on works to improve navigation and irrigation and this slowly evolved to a major emphasis on water conservation works. In 1982, an amendment to the agreement authorised the Murray River Commission to monitor and consider water quality in its operations.

At first, Queensland declined to join the MDBC, but, as Integrated Catchment Management began to be seriously considered, it became clear that the whole-of-catchment approach should be pursued. At this point, Tom Fenwick sent Peter Noonan, together with Peter Johnston from the Department of the Environment and Heritage and Paul Truong, a soil conservation scientist from DPI, to join in a three-day Salt Action study tour in northern Victoria. This historic event was held on 6 to 8 December 1989. The three northerners were looked upon initially as some form of aliens, with questions such as “Why has Queensland stopped all water flowing down

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the Darling River?” It took many years for the southern members of the Basin community to get to understand the geography and hydrology of the northern part of the catchment and to understand that Queensland is not able to magically fix the problems such as salinity caused by those in the southern sections.

After that meeting, Tom Fenwick and Peter Noonan commenced the negotiations to see Queensland join the MDBC under the auspices of Ed Casey, the then Minister for Primary Industries. At the Ministerial Council meeting on 30 August 1991, the conditions upon which Queensland would join were discussed and, at the meeting of 28 May 1992, it was approved that the Basin community would operate as if Queensland was a member from 1 July. It took several years for the legislation to finally pass all five houses of Parliament, but the never-ending round of meetings was locked into the diaries.

Tom was Queensland’s lead Commissioner until he retired, and Peter Noonan was the initial ‘contact officer’ who managed the daily interface between the Basin activities and Queensland. Peter undertook a second stint at the role when he became General Manager Water and Catchment Management and passed the role to Chris Robson when he became Executive Director. Other Queensland Commissioners included Frank van Schagen and Scott Spencer. The meetings were referred to by some as one of the best travelling clubs in Australia. Locations besides the capital cities and Canberra included Griffith, Mildura, Goolwa (near the mouth of the river in South Australia), Toowoomba, Shepparton, Hahndorf and Horsham. Since there were generally local visits associated with the meetings, those involved got a good insight into many communities in south-eastern Australia. *It was always useful, also, to have Tom Fenwick driving, as he didn’t need a map to drop into a fabulous winery on the way back to the airport.*⁵



Peter Noonan

The Australian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage (ANCID) was formed in March 1953 as the Australian branch of the newly formed international body ICID. The International Commission on Irrigation and Drainage had been formed in 1950 to improve national and world-wide supply of food and fibre for all people.

The objectives of ICID are to stimulate and promote the development and application of the arts, sciences and techniques of engineering, agriculture, economics, ecology and social sciences in managing land and water resources. It aims to achieve this by focusing on improved irrigation, drainage, flood control and river training



Australian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage logo

and to stimulate needed research leading to the use of modern techniques. ICID has 66 member nations with substantial involvement of the large irrigation nations from the sub-continent, Middle-East and Europe.

ANCID is fundamentally a society of water service providers and, until the mid-1980s, this generally constituted the State Government authorities meeting with the Commonwealth Government and a small number of water boards such as the First Mildura Irrigation Trust. The agendas for the early years were heavily weighted to the technical aspects of design, construction and maintenance of irrigation area works. Issues such as waterproofing of concrete-lined channels, erosion control below check structures and the appropriate roughness coefficients to use in the design of drains were very important.

With the split-up of the State authorities led by Victoria from the mid-1980s, a new group of players became involved. This started with the irrigators who sat on the early boards of the corporatised Rural Water Commission and people such as Duncan Malcolm and Christine Forster brought a new outlook to the industry. At the same time, a new breed of State public servants started to focus on a combination of policy issues as well as the technical and industry aspects. In 1989, the annual conference in Berri, South Australia, had a session on water policy for the first time and the nature of ANCID began to change.

The major activity of ANCID in the 1990s had been the annual conference which rotates around Australia. Attendances of up to 350 now include not only an increasing list of independent water service providers, but also irrigators interested in the direction of the industry, researchers and professional industry providers.

The annual conference is now accompanied by a trade display and always includes a full day of tours in the middle of the conference to get attendees down to the grass roots level. During the 1990s, environmental issues were prominent on the agenda along with rational economics and associated government policy directions.

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The conferences during the last decade have often had parallel streams of papers with the policy and technical aspects both having an important place. A successful conference in 1996 was arranged in Townsville led by Peter Gilbey and the 2000 conference was hosted in Toowoomba.

Management arrangements have changed to some extent over the years, but there has generally been a chairman, vice-chairman and secretary supported by State-based committee members. Commissioners of the day were members, with many holding senior posts. Fred Haigh and Don Beattie were both very strong supporters of ANCID. Tom Fenwick and Peter Bevin were vice-chairmen in the 1990s. Peter was also a member of several ICID committees. He travelled to The Hague for the ICID Congress in 1993 to expound Integrated Catchment Management to the world and gained international interest in the impact of policy approaches to the water industry on water use efficiency as distinct from the traditional approach of pursuing technical ways of saving water.

Many southern stalwarts of the irrigation industry were leaders of ANCID, such as David Constable and Geoff Wright. Many other Queensland staff were also involved such as John Cantor, who supported several Commissioners and was a member of working groups.⁶

The Australian National Committee on Large Dams (ANCOLD) has made a major contribution to the distribution of knowledge on dams among dam-owning authorities in Australia and, indeed, the world. ANCOLD was formed in 1937 through the Standards Association of Australia and at the request of the International Commission on Large Dams (ICOLD). ICOLD itself had been constituted in 1928 in response to the obvious need for exchange of information among the various countries involved in the construction of dams.

The original ANCOLD comprised the eight State authorities principally involved. Bill Nimmo of the Stanley River Works Board was a foundation member. In 1948, he became Chairman of ANCOLD and held that post until 1961 when, realising that the organisation was unviable under the existing constitution, he moved to reconstitute it. ANCOLD has continued to thrive since that date although the early emphasis given to design and construction has been expanded to include a wide range of issues including environmental assessment and management, community consultation and operational issues.

Management is through a Committee comprising a chairman, senior vice-chairman, junior vice-chairman and past chairman supported by a secretary and a treasurer. The last two positions are customarily held by officers of the organisation by which



Australian National Committee International Commission on Large Dams logo

the chairman is employed. Although the positions are elected for three year terms, the outgoing executive usually gives a lead and arranges for the nominations to come from different States in a logical progression.

The position of vice-chairman was held by Fred Haigh in 1961–62 and 1962–63, Frank Learmonth from 1971–72 to 1975–76 and Alan Wickham from 1979–80 to 1981–82. (Brian Shannon currently occupies the post but that is post-history).

Alan Wickham was Chairman from 1982–83 to 1984–85 and served as vice-president of ICOLD for the term 1986 to 1989. While Bill Mitchell of the Hydro-Electric Commission of Tasmania was ANCOLD Chairman (1979–80 to 1981–82), Lee Rogers served as ANCOLD Secretary and Brian Shannon as Treasurer. Under Alan Wickham's Chairmanship, Ian Pullar was Secretary and Denis Connellan, Treasurer.

ANCOLD holds an annual meeting, conference and study tour. These are normally hosted by State Government departments on a rotational basis. At about 10 yearly intervals, the conference is held in New Zealand. These get-togethers are always characterised by lavish meals and morning and afternoon teas, leading to the undeserved claim that ANCOLD is really an acronym for Australian National Club for Large Dinners. On a far more serious note, the field inspections and technical papers are of tremendous educational value and the contacts made lead to the growth of expertise in dam engineering. The papers presented at the technical sessions are published in the ANCOLD Bulletins, along with the occasional other paper, and form an invaluable body of knowledge.

ANCOLD also has a major role in the development of guidelines on various aspects of the dam business through working committees. ANCOLD members also serve on technical committees of ICOLD and help to develop international guidelines.

As the Australian water industry has moved away from the design and construction of dams, so too has ANCOLD moved its emphasis from straight dam engineering to give much more emphasis to environmental management and social issues in the operation of water infrastructure. A much wider range of disciplines is therefore represented at conferences. They were also expanded during the 1980s, when a decision was made to allow accompanying persons to attend the annual conference and study tour. This has certainly added to the social aspects in some respects.⁷

One of the traditional features of the Commission has been its camaraderie. While this was probably stronger in the smaller country offices and in the earlier years when the staff was both smaller in number and more closely physically aligned, the mateship has continued throughout. This account will not attempt to enumerate the innumerable family functions, fishing trips or sporting competitions individually. Suffice it to say that they have been a major feature of Commission life. Nor will it be able to deal adequately with activities in the Regions, a few snippets of which have been included in other chapters. Suffice it to say that country staff have contributed enormously to the esprit de corps of the organisation and to the well-being of local communities. George Pearce, for example, was awarded Life Membership of the Longreach RSL in recognition of the time he gave unsparingly to its affairs.⁸ The esprit de corps is typified by the well-attended and much enjoyed Commission reunion organised in Bundaberg by Roy and Iris Maxted in 1992.

Probably the most persistent custom has been the 'few beers on Friday nights' or 'a few beers when you were out on a job'. But even this has been curtailed by the contemporary drink-drive laws. Much of the folklore of the organisation concerns people having perhaps something a little more than 'a few beers'. Indeed, many of the tales contributed to this history concern the exploits of the legendary drinkers, and some of them have found their way into previous chapters. On the principle that you can never have too much of a good thing (though this may not be at all appropriate in this context), here are a few more.

On one occasion Keith Turner stopped to help one of the Mareeba draftsmen who had run out of petrol but was otherwise reasonably well tanked up. In syphoning petrol from his vehicle to the draftsman's Keith got petrol on his lips, face and front whereupon the draftsman asked, "And how many miles do you get to the gallon?"⁹

Alan Vizer had a date to take a nurse to the Mareeba Post Office Ball – THE event of the year – but first he had to drive her to Cairns and back. He dropped her at the hospital to get dressed, saying as he left, "See you at 7." He went home and thought he'd just have a little nap. He woke at midnight. Next morning (Saturday), she was on duty so he couldn't see her to apologise. But he met Greg Chettle in the pub at 10.30 a.m. who gave him great advice, and then more good advice until half past five at which time he went to see her.¹⁰

Alan Vizer, of course, has been known to have a drink or two on rare occasions. He occasionally found it difficult to pass the Bellevue Hotel on his way to the Central Technical College when he was an evening student. On one occasion he, Don McCulloch and a few others including Bruce McAllister, were having a beer when the police came in. All were under 21 and in trouble. But Bruce, aged all of 16, said to the police, "Don't worry about it. They're with me." And the police left!¹¹

Merv Brand, when he was at Boonah, had a little old car. One night the light on the front didn't work and he got out to have a look at it. The next thing the Police Sergeant arrived. The Sergeant asked what the trouble was. Merv said he had some light trouble and moved over to let the Sergeant look. But he'd forgotten that he had no left arm, and that combined with a couple of beers caused him to overbalance. The Sergeant told him to get in and go straight home to the dam – a far cry from what would have happened today.¹²

The drink-driving laws have certainly had a marked impact on social behaviour. Even hardened cane cockies have been heard to say, "I'm driving so I'm drinking elephant beer." (A popular brand of light beer used an elephant as its advertising motif.) This is a far cry from previous times when people have stated proudly, "I had to drive home. I was too drunk to walk."

There is naturally considerable debate about the drinking prowess of numerous staff members and there is no mechanism for awarding a prize. But when Ian Pullar went to Longreach in January 1974, he met Eric Kusay, who weighed in at 23 stone and who would have got short odds in the Champion stakes. But Eric was overwhelmed by the prowess of skinny Ron Afflick (Affo), who had recently come to Longreach as Safety Officer. After he had finished the day's instruction, he had gone with the Commission staff to the club where he had systematically drunk them all (including Big Eric) under the table. He was running out of opposition when the railway shift knocked off at 10 p.m. Affo responded to the challenge and proceeded to drink them all under the table.¹³

It is, of course, possible to socialise without drinking to excess. Eric Davis recalls *back in the old days we were all a group, the typists, the drafting section and all the young ones. We did a lot of things together. We'd go away to Tallebudgera Camp about three times a year; Heather Murdoch, Jan Green, Dottie Adams and all us young blokes, Norm (White) and I, Boyd Hoskins, Mal Wright and Norma. Eileen Rossi adds Alan Vizer, Don McCulloch and June Heaney and Wally Neill (who later married) to the list, and remembers we had a great time. Eric also remembers we had a picnic once at the Glasshouse Mountains, and we played soccer and tennis. We all went by train. Eileen also recalls we used to go swimming at Ithaca at lunch time. Some, like Stan Ross and Gerry O'Hanlon, were a little bit older and engineers didn't socialise as much. But I was friendly with them. We had a theatre club and used to go out to the theatre as most places did in those days. The social stuff fell apart a bit when we went to Margaret Street.*¹⁴

There were, nevertheless, numerous informal activities during lunch breaks or entirely out of hours. People such as Jimmy Leadbeater played chess. In the mid-1960s a lunch-hour contract bridge group was formed by Lee Rogers, Bevan

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Faulkner, Peter Buchanan and Kevin Mills. This group lasted for over thirty years. Because its members comprised such future leaders as Tom Fenwick, Lee Rogers and Peter Noonan as well as Trevor Sleep, Bevan Faulkner, Jack Haren, John Clark, Brian Shannon, Harry Stark and Ian Pullar, it was sometimes referred to as 'The Ginger Group'. But other clubs, such as the Five Hundred Club formed in Rivers and Streams and patronised by Dave Morwood, John Cantor et al., were equally ubiquitous. According to Dave Morwood *numerous players came and went. I recall, in no particular order: Reg Fox, smart as paint, who always kept his cards covered so that spectators couldn't see them and give body language messages to the opposition; Grabam Jobling, a top player who got quietly as mad as hell if you loused things up for him; Tony Horton, similar style to Jobling; John Cantor and Warren Hutton; Terry Burgess, a really top player who used to know what cards I had better than I did; Frank van Schagen; Terry 'Hopper' Daly; Peter Thompson (the clerical one). And there were more, many more. Usually there were at least four spare players on a given day. Harry Stark used to call around to watch, probably when there was no bridge. He used to say there are two types of players of lunchtime cards. Those who play to relax from the hard work in the morning and the majority, who play for the only mental stimulation of the day. I guess he was right. I was in the first group of course.*¹⁵

Jack O'Shea recalls *we even had an Investment Club going at one stage. About 20 of us decided to put in small amounts of money each week, and we invested in shares like BHP and so on. I don't know whether we ever made any money, and I don't remember how we ever bought the shares, because we must have bought them in some collective name - I don't remember.*¹⁶ Bernie Credlin was a member of this club, along with Ken Carmichael, Reg Fox, Col Taggart, Eric Davis and Garney Johnson. He recalls *we made a small profit when we wound up after a few years. Decisions to buy were made on a show of hands and sometimes we got carried away. We bought Poseidon shares when they were on their way to \$300 and they became worthless. Courage Brewery was another investment (?) and I doubt BHP ever again reached the price we paid for them. Our broker was the flamboyant Robin Corrie. He pushed gold shares very hard and displayed his passion and our gullibility by driving a gold-painted Rolls-Royce.*¹⁷

One significant initiative aimed at promoting esprit de corps was the Commission magazine. This first saw the light of day in 1952 when Dave Wilmott produced a couple of editions of *Splash* providing news and views of various parts of the Commission. Two of Billy Kearton's cartoons are reproduced elsewhere in this book. Mareeba Office took up the challenge (under the direction of the transferred Dave Wilmott) and produced its own version, *Trickle*.¹⁸

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Soon after Dave Wilmott left Bundaberg and returned to Brisbane, he started producing the *Quarterly News*. Originally, this was simply what it was – it had snippets of news from various locations about the State. Gradually, however, it grew and became rebadged as *Aquarius* in 1972. Dave remained Editor for years, struggling with the difficulties of acquiring timely contributions and then reproducing them using the primitive technology of the day. There was a dearth of electric typewriters, so one of the senior typists had to find the time to type the material on specially formatted master paper for reproduction in the print room (where Keith Ruddell was the printer). Photographs could only be reproduced using metal plates until a cheaper (but inferior) paper plate technology was introduced.

Dave Wilmott was a one-man-band until he managed to acquire a bit of help. *Aquarius* attempted to provide a change in format with less emphasis on local gossip and more on general interest and humour. In 1977, Dave took long service leave and Peter Cochrane, Ian Pullar and Bob Kay undertook a Guest Editorship for one edition. Shortly after, Dave elected to relinquish the role altogether, before heading off into retirement. The Guest Team became the incumbent team for a few editions. Jon Henry edited the March 1979 edition, just prior to the relocation to Mineral House. The magazine lapsed and, despite a later attempt to revive it, it became a thing of the past.

In his retirement, Dave Wilmott was asked to write a short history of the Water Resources Commission, but the organisation decided that it would not be completed or published. Dave made his resource materials available to the present authors, for which they are most grateful.

Out of the informal social activities grew the Social Club, which organised activities over a wide range. During the 1960s there were about 350 people in Head Office, of whom about two-thirds were members of the Club.¹⁹ Jack O'Shea²⁰ *likes to think that the Social Club had a bit to do with encouraging that co-operative spirit. We mixed after work and had that kind of contact at a social level, where you got to know someone's wife and kids and all that sort of thing. Every so often we'd organise a picnic somewhere. It might be down at Cash's Crossing, and we'd say, "There's a picnic at Cash's Crossing on Sunday. Just come along with the family." You'd just turn up. We did that, I suppose, on an average of two or three times a year.*

There was an annual subscription to the Club. As Jack explained *the staff put in only about the equivalent of a dollar a week, and that bought Christmas presents for the kids* (presented by a 'volunteer' Santa at an afternoon function), *and we had a*

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*Christmas party at the end of the year and all that sort of thing.*²¹ The end of year dinner-dance was the highlight of the year and was held in any number of venues – Cloudland, an auditorium on the top of Finneys (now David Jones), Wests Rugby Club, *Whispers* in the Valley, the Italian Club and many, many others. As Bevan Faulkner, Secretary of the Club from 1960 to 1966, said, *finding places that could accommodate more than 300 people was a challenge.*²² And there were always arguments about the venue, whether the non-drinkers should subsidise the drinkers and whether the music was too loud. Alan Vizer was once *taking a young lady to a dinner-dance at the West End School of Arts, and she had to ride by train from Wynnum, and I was well on the way and I was running late to get to the station, and I raced out of the School of Arts, which had a very steep lot of steps. I missed the first step, and I'm hurtling down at an angle of about 45 degrees forward, and I crashed into this guy who caught me with both arms under the armpits, and I looked up and said, "Thanks very much – Mr Haigh!" A dreadful embarrassment! I was a cadet, of course, then, and it was a rather terrifying experience, I can tell you. I became sober very quickly.*²³

Jack recalls *because I was President, I used to sit with Fred and his wife, and invariably there was some music, and I am an absolutely hopeless dancer, and the highlight of (my wife) Patrea's year was Fred Haigh asking her to waltz, because Fred was a superb waltzer. She's got very happy memories of Fred, waltzing around the Christmas party.*²⁴

While the dancing may have been the attraction for some and the chance to catch up with the spouses of work colleagues the highlight for others, a few were more interested in the limelight. Eric Davis relates *when I was on the committee, we had dinner-dances organised. Some of the very early ones, we used to put on skits, for want of a better word. I remember one at West End, when we had a bloke called Tommy Budden who was the President at the time, and there was Lyle Duignan, and we did this skit dressed up in tu-tus as fairies, with big wings and everything. I remember Lyle Duignan just about disappeared over the end of the stage, he was so full. We just stopped him from going over. I don't think we did that too many years. The typists used to do the choreography for us and tried to get some routine going that we were supposed to follow, but by the time it came to the night, after we'd been for a few drinks, I don't think anyone could remember what they were supposed to do. It had to be absolute tripe and nonsense, really. If you tried to put on something like that today, you'd get boo-ed off in about two seconds, get everything thrown at you. But it was a highlight in those days.*²⁵

In 1983, Ian Pullar, who had some experience as a writer/director, was asked to devise a play for presentation at the dinner-dance. This was done, using a cast of

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volunteer staff, with sufficient success for him to be asked for another production the next year.²⁶ The play was set in a courtroom where a clerk was charged with “grave dereliction of duty in that he did permit a quantity of foolscap paper – to wit, three sheets – to go missing, unaccounted for.” It light-heartedly lampooned the rules of Stores and Supply, much to the amusement of Grahame Bertram, the Officer-in-Charge. But either the play or its introduction, which quoted verbatim a ludicrous instruction from the Secretary, must have offended someone of substance, because it was made clear to the Club that no successor would be required.

The Social Club sponsored many other activities including a canteen (until someone pilfered the profits) and many lunch hour activities. *At one stage*, recalls Eric Davis, *we had four or five tables for table tennis, dart boards and even carpet bowls. It petered out over the years, but it was pretty popular at the time.* No doubt the move to Mineral House brought these activities to an end. Among the best of the table tennis players were Kevin Mills, Joe Milinkovic, Barry Mewburn and Greg Quinn.²⁷

Other activities were also pursued. At one stage, reported Eric Davis, *we used to go over to Musgrave Park in our lunch hours and play cricket. We'd bring along a pair of shorts, get changed quickly, jump into a couple of Commission cars (the two drivers were into the cricket, too). You couldn't do those things these days.*²⁸ Norm White continued, *the car pool changed a lot of that. In those days it was pretty easy to get a car, if you knew the drivers. There weren't as many vehicles around in those days, and not as many people, either.*²⁹

During the 1980s regular volleyball competitions were held in the City Botanic Gardens.

The Club also sponsored teams that took part in serious competitions – Warehouse Grade or similar. One year the cricket team won the A Grade competition, with some quite good players. One of the stars of the team was Tom Fenwick, who was a little slimmer in those days. Eric Davis, Neville Caton and Bruce Burke were among the better-performed players. A co-opted player (of some merit) was Bill Morris,³⁰ who owned the sandwich bar frequented by Commission staff and who became a regular member of the social tennis group that has played on Thursday nights for many a long year.

The Commission has also produced the odd player of very high standard. Ron Oxenham, the Queensland spin bowler, has been mentioned in Chapter 4.

John McLean, who was wicket-keeper for Queensland during part of the 1960s and '70s, worked in Construction Branch – though the term ‘worked’ is used somewhat euphemistically.

OUT OF HOURS WORK ... AND PLAY



*Commission football team
'The Sharks'
and their logo*

The Club also sponsored The Sharks, a Rugby League team. In 1959, there was a very active team with good support from people like Stewie Robinson. Bill Sharp attended matches frequently. Lyle Duignan was the Captain-Coach. Stan Wilcox was one of the players. Graham Swan, who became the Agent-General in London, was the Manager. The only members of that team still around are Alan Vizer, Eric Davis and Bevan Faulkner. The team were minor premiers in the Public Service competition and were lining up for the first semi-final. Alan Vizer laments *we had only 12 starters, would you believe, after working all season for this. We couldn't get 13 guys to front up on the Sunday and we got beaten, so we had to play off to get back into the Grand Final. The following Sunday we again had only 12 players, but they weren't the same twelve! I couldn't believe it. Anyway, we lost.*³¹

The team won in 1960 and possibly 1961. Several players made it to the Queensland Public Service side – Lyle Duignan, Dick Wilson, and Stan Wilcox (State Stores). But there was insufficient interest to mount teams for some time.³²

Alan further relates *we had a football team in the State Public Service competition in about 1974 and our first game was at Kallangur. Fred Haigh came out and I was very impressed that he went round and spoke to all the players before the game. Being Fred, there were a couple he didn't know, and he couldn't think who Warren Hutton was and he asked me "Do I know that chap?" I said, "It's Warren Hutton." "Hello, Warren," he said, as though he'd never missed a beat. I might add that he came to every game. I even saw him standing in a mud paddock in pouring rain, where there was a bloke injured, and Fred holding an umbrella over him. Now, that impresses people.*³³

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The 1974 team had Mick Garvey as captain-coach, Jim Dalrymple as president and Alan Vizer helping in an unofficial capacity. *We entered in C Grade and won the premiership. Don Cock, Allan Murray and Warren Hutton played in that side. We were promoted to first grade the following year but most of our players dropped off. If the score was 66-nil, we'd had a good day. We also had a team in third grade. In 1976 we got Johnny Smith, a former Bulimba Cup player, to coach us. We got a lot of players from outside the Commission because of him. Mick Garvey broke his leg in a trial game and didn't play again that season. Brian Murnane played. Wayne Bennett had a run and played one game for us. A really talkative guy. I was President and I said "Giddy Wayne" and he grunted. That's the total of my conversation with him. We won the first grade premiership and came third in C Grade. The following year we folded.*³⁴

One of the Sharks players was Ed Donohue, who recalls *one Sunday I played a key role for the Sharks – I scored a couple of tries and kicked a goal and that sort of thing – and the next day I was sitting at my desk. Fred (Haigh) didn't walk around the office much and if he did he went and saw the Chief Engineer and came back. This day he came down and saw Stan Ross and on his way out he stopped and it was the first time I had ever spoken to Fred. We chatted for five or ten minutes and then he went upstairs. It got too much for Stan Ross and he went down the back to John Gilmore and said "John, what did Fred want with Ed?" John said, "They were just talking football."*³⁵

Ed Donohue tells another football story. *I played A Grade Rugby Union in Brisbane and we asked Ita Buttrose if she would like some footballers to pose nude for Cleo. We were the centrefold of the September edition of 1975. John Gilmore (now an Executive Director in the Environmental Protection Agency) was the other one of the Commission staff in the shot.*³⁶

Perhaps the ultimate in sporting stories is told by Pat Walsh. *When we were at Millaroo, they decided to have a cricket match against the Colts football team in Ayr. Jacky Clive, who was one of the truck drivers, organised it. There were 18 men a side. Most of them at Millaroo were New Australians and they didn't know one end of a cricket bat from the other. The match was written up in The Sunday Mail by Jack Riordan because one of the Colts bowlers took 10 wickets for none including a hat trick twice. Strange as it may seem, Colts won by only a few runs because we actually had a few batsmen like Ronnie Black, who made a half century. Others didn't have a clue. Mick King fell over twice on his way out to bat!*³⁷

OUT OF HOURS WORK ... AND PLAY

Of course, the epitome of comradeship must be the existence of the *Watery Sauces Oldies and Boldies*, officially known as the Water Resources Retired Officers Association. This august body was formed in 1985 and has maintained a significant membership of both city and country dwellers. The impetus for the body came from people who were still working at the time. Bernie Credlin suggested to a Commission Executive Meeting that such a club be formed. Don Beattie pursued the idea by contacting the heads of Main Roads, State Government Insurance Office and the Public Service Association for more information. George Pearce played a major role in following up these contacts.

The Association seeks to maintain social contact among retired officers, to promote awareness of the activities of the current Department and, above all, to preserve the spirit of comradeship that existed within the Commission.

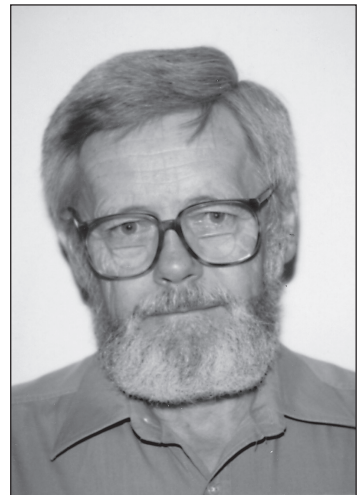
To do this, the Association holds a number of functions in the course of a year including sporting events (bowls and golf mostly), outings including bus trips, picnics and the like, as well as a mid-year and end-of-year dinner or luncheon. Attendance at these is naturally variable, but sufficient for the functions to be maintained.

An annual general meeting elects a committee comprising president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and three other members and a newsletter editor. The annual meeting is addressed, by invitation, by a serving member of the Department, who reports on current activities and organisation. Each year the oldies seem to shake their heads more and more in bewilderment at the changes that have occurred and the fact that the new Department and the old Commission (even of the late 1980s and early 1990s) seem to have so little in common.

The informal title was the inspiration of the founding President, Noel Ullman.³⁸ It may have been triggered by the address on a letter from a country client soon after the change from IWSC to QWRC – ‘The Watery Sources Commission’. The Commission (and subsequently the Department) have continued to support the Association through provision of meeting facilities and assistance with correspondence. People such as Wayne Stewart and Carol Davison have cheerfully provided their personal assistance.

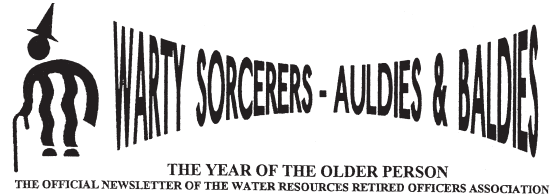


Norm White



Barry Fawcett

WATERY SAUCES



Headings from newsletters of the Oldies & Boldies

A major feature of the Association's activities is the production of the Newsletter which, apart from its invaluable service of keeping members informed about other former officers, has provided so much material for this book. Stan Ross and Bernie Credlin, as successive editors since 1989, are owed a great debt for their sterling efforts in producing this much-awaited, regular gem. The witty and clever transformations of the old QWRC logo are the work of Norm White and his daughter Leanne.

Inevitably, in time the *Oldies and Boldies* will reach their use-by date as the supply of retirees who identify with the Commission dwindles. But in the meantime, the members will soldier on – perhaps getting older and bolder – but certainly very proud of the part that they and the Commission played in the development of Queensland and their contribution to the well-being of the population, particularly in rural areas.

Perhaps the attitude of the Commission staff to the inevitable change is best summed up by Kevin Devlin. *What is my attitude to the fact that the organisation has been subsumed? I'm in two minds, really. I can see that the organisation was obviously no longer sustainable, and I've often asked myself were the people who presided over that proud of the fact that they were the people who drove the nail into the coffin? I remember once when I'd had a few glasses of red, I asked Tom Fenwick almost that question – I phrased it much more politely. It's an interesting question, but I can see there was no answer. The organisation had run its path, but you can only be glad for the fact that over that period of time, the people who were involved in it – as you and I have been – have something that we look back on with pride.*³⁹