

WATERY SAUCES Oldies and Boldies

Newsletter No 47

July 2005

NEWSLETTER OF THE WATER RESOURCES RETIREES ASSOCIATION

Guess How Many AGMs

The 21st AGM – goodness me, is it that many already? – of the Association was duly held at the Public Services Club in April. Attendance, I regret to report, was somewhat disappointing with only some 20 members and spouses attending. Is it fear of being nominated for office that keeps people away? The risk is small and the opportunities for reunion – which is what the members have told the Committee they want – are obvious. As usual, those attending enjoyed each other's company.

Elections were duly held. Jim Uhlmann stood down as President after two years in office and automatically moved to the position of Past President. The meeting carried a vote of thanks to Jim for his contribution.

In consequence of this change, Vice President Gordon Wilson retired from office after long and distinguished service to WRRRA. Jim

Program for the Year

Once again, the Committee has drawn up a program for the next year. Country members may have some difficulty in availing themselves of the opportunities, but the offer for assistance with local activities is still open. Just contact John Connolly.

June 17– mid year luncheon at COTAH (too late if you missed it)

August – Annual Bowls Day at Aspley Bowls Club (see enclosed notice)

September – lunchtime social at Public Services Club (date to be advised)

November – Christmas luncheon at COTAH (date to be advised)

January/February – tour of Ipswich Railway Workshops (thoroughly recommended)

March – a cruise or a tour of Parliament House (to be determined)

April – AGM at Public Services Club (date to be advised. We hope to see lots of you there.)

These events are a great opportunity to catch up as well as an easy opportunity to see something new.

From the Editor's Chair

No doubt you have all seen the sign on the back of buses and trucks that says "If you can't see my mirrors, I can't see you."

I received a lovely letter from Roy MacArthur (see also in Out and About) in which he told me he enjoys my Newsletters, particularly the news of his old work colleagues. This view is shared by many other members. Well, like the bus drivers, if you don't let me know, I can't possibly tell anyone else what you are doing.

So please, please, let me know what you or other members are up to. It really is of interest.

By far my least preferred way of catching up on members' news is attending members' funerals.

On a much happier note, it is gratifying that we are managing to recruit quite a few new members. But don't forget to remind any of your former colleagues of the benefits of joining. Not only will they receive a copy of the Newsletter, they'll get all the news of members' activities that you are going to send me!

Until next time, au reservoir.

Ian Pullar Editor

thanked Gordon, on behalf of the Association, for his efforts over the years.

The incoming President is Eric Davis who is no doubt known to many of our members (see page 3 for biographical information).

Col Hazel has returned to the Committee by accepting the position of Vice President. Welcome back, Col!

The remainder of the Committee was unchanged, with the retiring members being elected unopposed (see listing on page 8). See, there is little risk of being dragooned into office if you attend the AGM. We hope to see more of you there next year.

In his report, Jim outlined the year's activities, which were moderately well supported. It is gratifying to recruit new members, but it would be even better if we saw more of our former colleagues at the activities. Membership now stands at 193, a net increase of 11 over last year.

During the year the activities organised by the Committee comprised the mid year and end of year luncheons at COTAH, the annual Bowls Day, a boat trip through Pumicestone Passage, a lunchtime social and a tour and picnic at Government House – not to mention the AGM which is a social occasion in itself.

Jim wished the incoming committee the best of luck for the next year.

People, like thumbtacks, are useful if they have good heads and are pointed in the right direction.

Bundy Wasn't Rum At All

In fact, the Bundy reunion was a great success enjoyed by all who attended.

At its peak (dinner on the Saturday night) there were about 120 enthusiastic reunionees competing vocally with the entertainer at the League's Club where SunWater generously sponsored our meal. Of these, just over half were locals, with about 50 coming from elsewhere (about a score from Brisbane).

The WRRRA bus from Brisbane unfortunately only had 11 on board, including the driver and his wife. But all of you city members who didn't make it missed out on a good time.

On the Friday evening SunWater hosted a barbecue at their depot. On Saturday morning the multitudes assembled for a breakfast in the park at Bargara. We foreigners didn't expect to be waited upon hand and foot so we made Eric Davis help Warren Hutton cook while we enjoyed ourselves.



Cooks Eric Davis and Warren Hutton hard at work - they know their onions!

The highlight of the trip for dam-building scoundrels like me was the visit to Burnett River Dam under construction. Although we couldn't get out of the bus, we were given an excellent tour by the Project Engineer. Roller Compacted Concrete is a relatively new technology and each project brings new developments. The conveyor system (dismantled just before we arrived) was massive. The upstream face comprises precast concrete panels with plastic seals. The RCC spillway section was having its conventional ogee crest cast over it while we were there.

On Sunday morning, the locals provided tea and toast (or bunloaf) in the park before we set off on our leisurely journey home.

The locals are to be congratulated and heartily thanked for their efforts. In particular, Warren Hutton, Trevor Tuesley and Lois and Dave Pollard toiled mightily to please us all. Thanks to all for a great reunion.

Mid-Year Luncheon

Once again, this popular event was held at COTAH where the students are always keen to serve us, though not always as professionally as they will on graduation.

A pleasant gathering was savoured by the 43 attendees on 17 June. We will be back at the same venue to celebrate Christmas.

Government House

On 7 March, the Association took advantage of the open invitation of the Office of the Governor of Queensland to inspect Government House and to enjoy the surrounding grounds. Eighteen members and friends gathered on the well-manicured lawns and were served morning tea by white-gloved valets. The site is secluded among a large variety of mature trees and shrubs that minimise the intrusion of the noise of the city and provide an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. A feature of the gardens was an extensive bed of rose bushes, all with their name plaques. Unfortunately, we were left to imagine the sight and perfume of the array when they come into bloom.

Two members of the volunteer guide service conducted us through the public rooms of Government House. The tour, which takes just over an hour, includes the Investiture Room, Reception Room, formal Dining Room, and the Governor's office. While we marvelled at the table in the dining room with its beeswax polish, the guide assured us that it looks even better when laid for a formal meal. All the while, portraits of monarchs and governors observed our passing. The impression given is very much one of vice-regal elegance.

Following the inspection, we were conducted to the recently refurbished pavilion in the garden for our BYO picnic lunch that brought to a conclusion a very pleasant excursion.

- Jim Uhlmann

Out and About

Roy and June MacArthur have been living happily at Palm Beach for just over 14 years. Roy has been a member of the Gold Coast Water Advisory Committee (and a very valuable one according to Shaun Cox, Gold Coast Water's boss). Roy has written a very interesting book *Enoggera Creek and Me* about his exploits in the area. It has been published by the Gap Pioneer and History Group. Congratulations, Roy. I hope to bring readers extracts next edition.

Lee and Denise Rogers have returned unscathed from their overseas trip to Britain, Ireland and France. They must have crossed in transit with John and Margaret Ward who were going the other way to similar destinations. They (J & M) will be catching up with acquaintances made in France where they lived for a time many moons ago.

John and Laurel Connolly will be heading off to China in November.

By the time this newsletter hits the post, Warren Hutton, Hein van der Heide and Mike Barry will have retired and joined WRRRA. Best wishes to all and thanks for all their efforts.

On the other hand, Ben Russo is still working (albeit part time) even though his eightieth birthday is drawing nigh.

Eric Davis's shoulder is mending well and he looks like getting back to tennis. Unfortunately, Judy Morwood's back gave out and she and Dave had to miss both the Bundy trip and the midyear luncheon while she had surgery.

I regret that I have to record the passing of Dorothy Fawcett. Our condolences to past president Barrie and family.

Roy Mincher, erstwhile doyen of hydrographers also died aged about 80.

Pop starlet Christina Aguilera asked, "Where is the Cannes Film Festival being held this year?"

NEW MEN AT THE TOP

WRRRA

Notice in Courier Mail: "On the 8th November, 1937, a son, to Gwen and William Davis. Thanks to Doctors and Nurses at Gatton Hospital". I was unnamed for 60 days as my mother did not want to use a name which could be shortened. So here I am Eric Thomas Davis, my friends in my teen years called me Mick, just to annoy Mum. Dad at that time was an Accountancy Lecturer at Gatton Agricultural College, we lived on the grounds of the college, the house on the bank of Lockyer Creek adjacent to the Weir (a constant worry for my Mum).

In 1942, the family moved to Rainworth, Dad being appointed to the Education Department as an accountant. I attended the small Primary School at Rainworth until Scholarship, then Industrial State High School, which was situated next to the Botanical Gardens, Edward Street. The main purpose of schooling for me was to play sport, tennis, cricket, football, table tennis whatever. Selected in the Tennis Firsts in my first year at High School, with mainly senior players, I enjoyed a successful year. However, my school work did not receive a high priority, so Dad and Mum decided that I should leave school at the end of my Junior year, and as Geometrical Drawing was my best subject, I applied for a drafting cadetship in the Public Service. I was appointed as a temporary clerk with the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, firstly under Jim Pill (Clerical Industrial Section) and later in the Records Section under Arthur Payne. The following year I commenced work as a Cadet Draftsman in the Project Planning Section. I worked in all the Engineering Sections of the Commission, except Rivers and Streams under Ken Carmichael, which I am not sure was lucky or not. Early on, I was going well with my drafting studies, so decided to enrol for Engineering.

At this stage I was working full time, attending College four nights a week, living on pies and chips, and thoroughly enjoying the Social Club activities at the Office. It was on one of these activities, the Public Service Table Tennis Competition, that I met Jan. I had waggled it from College to fill in for the Commission team and Jan was playing Table Tennis for the Education Department. We married four years later, built our home at Mt. Gravatt and the following six years produced our three children, James, Julie and Ross. As you can imagine my studies were suffering, especially as I had developed an ulcer because of my bad eating habits. When the Engineering Course was altered to a "New Course", and I found I was still four years away from qualifying as an Engineer, I aborted the Course, and began to appreciate having some time at home with the young family.

I enjoyed the 15 years spent in the Groundwater Section of the Department. It was a time of considerable expansion, including the investigation into groundwater recharge in the Condamine, Bundaberg and Burdekin areas. Time spent in the Design Section as Drafting team leader/manager, working on such projects as Condamine Minimum Energy Weirs, Burdekin Falls Dam, Tarong Pipeline, Houghton Pump Station and Peter Faust Dam, was a valuable learning experience.

In 1989 I accepted a promotion to work on the Burdekin Irrigation Project stationed in Ayr. Our children were all moving away from home and an added incentive to relocate to Ayr was the fact that our good friends from early days at the Commission, Nev

and Marilyn Caton were living in Ayr. I enjoyed the work, the fishing, and sport there. In 1992, as I was nearing retirement age, I accepted a redundancy package and returned to our original home in Mt. Gravatt, having served 37 years with the Department.

Since that time I have

- o Started a Home Maintenance Business, where I enjoyed working in between fishing trips and tennis.

- o Worked part time for the Commission in a small team led by Perry Finn, determining systems and methods to be used for valuing the assets of the Department. It was a challenge trying to locate or if necessary calculate the quantities used in the construction of the old day labour projects such as Tinaroo Falls Dam, Leslie Dam, etc and trying to determine base rates for their various types of excavation and concrete placement etc.

- o Worked for a Computer System Consultant (Phil James) contracted by the Department to design a computer system for retrieval, management, viewing and printing of all department drawings throughout Queensland.

In 2003, when this last project came to a conclusion, I decided it was really time to retire.

As I had served on the Social Committee in the Commission, it is not surprising that I found myself on the Committee of the Water Resources Retirees Association, and this year have accepted the position of President. I appreciate the opportunity of continuing friendships with many I have worked with in previous years. I will be happy to speak with anyone regarding the activities of this Committee.

I look forward to seeing you all at various functions.

Eric Davis

NR&M

The Department of Natural Resources has a new Director-General, Bob McCarthy.

An economist by discipline, Bob was previously a deputy director-general of the Department of State Development and Innovation. In this role, he was responsible for industry development and investment, resulting in the creation of hundreds of new jobs for Queenslanders.

In particular he developed the Smart State Ethanol Strategy, which is now gathering momentum, and led the government push to restructure Queensland's sugar industry.

Before that, Bob played a major role in saving the state's meat industry and its jobs by revitalising the meat-processing sector as executive director of the Food and Meat Industries Taskforce.

On the natural resource management front, he chaired the New South Wales Native Conservation Advisory Council in the late 1990s to encourage regional acceptance of new native vegetation legislation and earlier spent three years as chair of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

In the late 1980s, Bob was director of the Australian Coal Marketing and Technology Council, an influential advisory body to the Federal Government, driving such issues as industrial relations and environmental responsibility in the coal industry.

His 28 years experience across the private sector, federal and state governments will stand him in good stead as he takes on his challenging new role. We wish him luck and look forward to cordial relations with our new co-patron.

On Commission

I have been asked by a number of members to try to inform readers of the current shape and location of the old Water Resources Commission. As the current arrangements are vastly different from the old ones, I can only hope that this very brief explanation will suffice. – Ed.

Basically, the former functions that remain have been spread over a number of different areas. The current institutions also undertake numerous activities (even in relation to water) that were not on the Commission's agenda.

The functions of design, construction and operation of water systems now reside in a commercialised Government-Owned Corporation named SunWater of which Peter Noonan is the Chief Executive Officer. Most of the schemes went to SunWater, apart from some (the orphan assets) which were not commercially viable and which are owned by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (NRM).

SunWater is not necessarily the developer of Government-sponsored infrastructure (for example, Burnett River Dam was built by Burnett Water, another GOC). Engineering Services (General Manager Brian Shannon) undertakes external as well as internal consultancies. The laboratories and workshops have been closed, the Materials Lab having been sold to Main Roads.

A major focus of SunWater is on the commercial aspects of water supply, selling allocations and water and facilitating transfers of allocations.

NRM contains five units concerned with water: Water Planning (GM Greg Claydon); Water Management & Use (GM Graeme Milligan); Water Industry Compliance (GM Bob Reilly); Water Reform and Natural Resource Sciences Centre (NRSC) (Executive Director Chris Robson).

Daly Diary

You will recall that we left Bob and Chris McDonald arming themselves to deal with an invasion from the Darwin locals, encroaching on their hedonistic existence. Now read on ...

Following a busy weekend, we checked the pots with better results this time. Set off down the river with Fred at 10:30am and anchored just above the 'S' bends at No Fish Creek. Fred caught a 65cm barra and soon afterwards I caught a 68cm barra. We both caught a couple of throw backs bigger than 50cm (that hurts) and then I landed a 69cm, 4.5kg barra with an NT Fisheries tag in it. (No. A32581). Two weeks later we took the fish tag to Fisheries in Darwin. Had a good talk to Graham White about barra and he provided a certificate and a voucher for our trouble. The records show that the fish had been tagged in exactly the same spot by Wayne 'Buffalo' Ross two years earlier, when it was 51cm long.

After Fred left for Darwin, Chris and I went down the river to where yesterday's fish were caught. Hooked a 67cm barra using some small crayfish. We both caught a number of undersize barra. The river level was falling and it was getting difficult in the current to negotiate Browns rock bar without hitting a stump, which we did. Saw a 2m golden/yellow snake swimming the river.

Next day we went into the 'Eagles Nest', the Community and Daly River for supplies. Down the river at 11:30am. New buoys

WIC has taken over most of the functions of the old Department of Local Government, although the design/construction functions were phased out more than a decade ago.

Water Planning has been concentrating on Water Resource Planning rather than projects, although a new Infrastructure Planning unit is in the process of being set up.

Water Management and Use is, I hope, fairly self-explanatory and those previously involved in licensing would not be entirely lost. Water Reform is a new entity altogether, and Barrie Fawcett might not recognise the completely revised *Water Act*.

NRSC at Indooroopilly houses the surface and groundwater hydrologists along with lots of other scientists, some of whom came with DPI during the amalgamation and stayed.

Corporate services functions now reside in Corporate Link, a unit that manages the corporate functions of NRM and DPI, and which was separated when the two departments parted company.

Not only are the arrangements quite different, the disciplines have changed vastly. No longer are engineers totally predominant, especially in NRM. There you will find economists, environmental scientists, social scientists and lawyers to mention only a few.

Sign's of the Time's



placed at Browns Creek to locate the hole in the rock bar. Used some big crayfish from Fred's stash to land a 70cm barra after not knowing it was on the line. In the Daly, they sometimes don't strike but just mouth the bait. Home by 2:00 pm to clean fish etc.

The following morning we checked the pots and went down the river again. Had a 62cm barra in the boat within two and a half minutes. Caught a couple of throw-backs. Home to clean fish and then a lazy afternoon. Bob & Rhonda and Laurie & Fay, who we saw at Borrooloola on the MacArthur River, arrived today. We had a long talk till 7:00 pm. Bob (from B'la) had caught 11 big barra in one afternoon (and had photos to prove it) with Lindsay the barra king at Rutherford Creek in the McArthur mouth.

Some days later, we shifted the pots from the water hole to the Daly and went down again before lunch. Chris finally caught her Daly River barra at 67cm on the last of the crayfish. Started packing up when we got home. Washed the boat and motor and dismantled the trailer.

Up early to finish packing and left Woolianna by 10:30 am. The road had deteriorated in the last two weeks and was rough in parts. Stopped at Adelaide River for lunch. Finally set up at Lee Point van park at Darwin. Barra for dinner again tonight.

I guess it's a hard life, but someone has to do it! Thanks Bob for your account of all your trials and tribulations.

For an Australian, a hundred years is a long time. For an Englishman, a hundred miles is a long way.

The Fairweather Files

Continuing Ian Fairweather's fascinating reminiscences.

All about Bulls

The design of the South Walsh Main beyond the flume section had reached the stage where the location was finalised and detailed plans were being prepared. To enable the channel construction to proceed, it was necessary to clear the three-chain width of the channel reserve. Resumptions had not yet commenced, but as the farmers were anxious to receive some irrigation water, they raised no objections to the clearing proceeding before resumptions, through land carrying stock. The successful tenderer was Rankin Brothers and they elected to clear the full width, in two passes, by the ball and chain method that required the removal and re-erection of fences. A condition of the contract was that the contractor was responsible for the safety of all stock in the area of the works. Farmer Vince Wood, who had been successful in combining the dry farming of tobacco with cattle, had a bull that was important to his enterprise and the contractor was being very careful about this bull.

It was during the duration of this contract that Henry Hannam arrived to take up the position of Project Engineer. Up till then, there had been no problems with stock. When I brought Henry to Mareeba, there was a message that Vince Woods would be in the office at 8am reportedly very upset as apparently his bull had got out and had been killed by a train. I sent a message for Rankins to be in the office at the same time.

We were in the office bright and early, before the Rankins came in.

"Have you seen Vince this morning?" I enquired.

"Yes."

"Didn't he try to shoot you?"

"Why? He gave us a friendly wave as we drove past."

"He is very cranky, you let his bull out and it got killed."

"How many bulls has he got?" asked one of the Rankins.

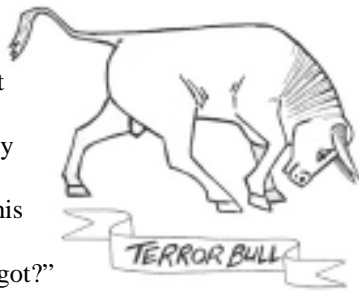
"Only one as far as I know. Why?"

"Well when we came past the yards this morning the bull was there"

At that point Vince came in, looking rather sheepish and subdued. After the introductions to Henry, he was asked, "About this bull of yours Vince, what is the story?" Vince looked around, then replied, "It is like this. Yesterday when I went down to get the mail from the train, I noticed a fire up the line. I enquired of the guard what it was. He told me that my bull had been hit and it was being burnt and as I didn't recall seeing the bull at the yards when I drove past earlier, I never stopped to investigate. I raced down to Mutchilba looking for you, in fact I wasted the whole afternoon. When I got home there was my bull in the yard."

"So there is no problem," said Henry heaving a sigh of relief, echoing my feelings.

"That is right I am sorry for my outburst." We parted good friends. It might have been a different story if the bull had been killed.



Camp Cooks

Over the years I have had many meals in survey and construction camps, I always found the survey camps had a good cook, some of the construction camps were not always so, but nevertheless we never starved, as if all else failed there was always plenty of bread, butter, Golden Syrup and big mugs of strong black tea.

My first introduction to a construction camp was Nullinga. One of the famous things about the camp at Nullinga was the camp cook who had been nicknamed 'Tragedy'. On enquiring why such a name, I was informed that the reason was obvious; "It was a tragedy that the bastard was ever born". I must admit he didn't do a very good job when he cooked corned beef and onions, although he should have been good as he tried it out often enough. In a letter I wrote some time later, when there was a shortage of onions, I commented that the men at Nullinga would go hungry, as that seemed to be the only thing he tried to cook.

Saving Tree Blazes

The Mareeba Dimbulah Irrigation area was set out on a mile square grid, with a tree blazed at each corner of the grid with the north and east coordinates.

One day the Mareeba office got a phone call from a farmer, informing that he was clearing land. There was a tree in the area he was clearing that had an IWS blaze with some letters and numbers. Was it important? He was advised not to destroy it. A few days later he pulled up outside the office in his truck, came in and announced he had saved the blaze, it was outside in his truck and where did we want it.

I had a similar experience. In November 1953 I made a trip to Ingham. Apparently the Commission was involved in some drainage investigation at Abergowrie and I went there to seek out information, particularly rainfall. The Catholic Church had an Agricultural College called St Theresa's. The College apparently had good rainfall records and the purpose of my visit to the College was to obtain a copy of these records. The rector was Monsignor Vandeleur and when I pulled up in the car with the Irrigation Commission sign on the door, Monsignor Vandeleur rushed out to meet me but before I could get out of the car, he said, "It was not my fault, I told him not to touch it". I was mystified. "What are you talking about?" I said

"That tree on the river bank, with the IWS blaze on it."

"Well, what about it?"

"We have a contractor clearing and I told him not to touch it, he pushed it over, but I made him cut out the blaze and not burn it. It was not my fault." It appears that this was one of the AMTM trees. I told him I did not know anything about the tree and that all I wanted was his rainfall records. That settled him down, but every now and again he would come up with the bit about it not being his fault.

I wonder how many such trees, across the State, were cut down without our knowledge? I have no recollection of the final outcome concerning the drainage investigation but no doubt a suitable report was written.

This brings to an end Ian's stories. Thanks, Ian, for your very valuable contribution. - Ed.

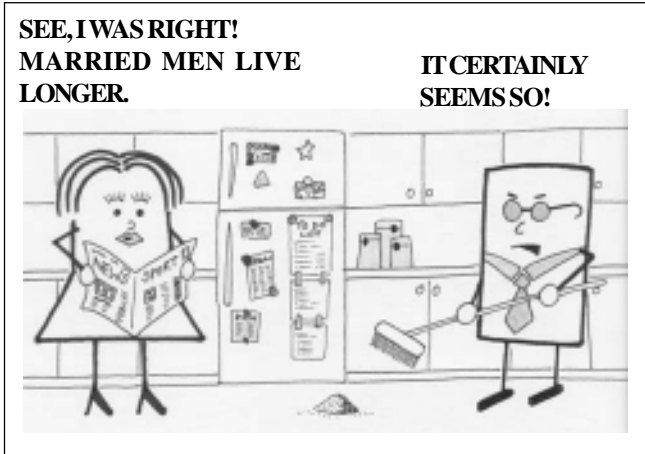
The optimist says, "This is the best of all possible worlds." The pessimist says, "I fear that is the case."

HEALTH *and beauty*

Longevity

Recent studies have demonstrated conclusively that married men have a greatly increased life expectancy over their unmarried equivalents. Apparently, as *The Age* reported on 21 March 2005, love may ward off the inevitable effects of aging, such as degenerative disease and even death.

But experts hasten to add that men shouldn't interpret this conclusion as a call to "marry early and marry often". Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that multiple marriage can lead to an earlier demise – especially if the wives find out.



Exercise those Brain Cells

What is the next line in the following sequence?

- 1
- 11
- 21
- 1211
- 111221
- 312211
- ?



Answer to Last Edition's Puzzle

The possible factors of 36 and their sums are :

- 36, 1, 1 = 38
- 18, 2, 1 = 21
- 12, 3, 1 = 16
- 9, 4, 1 = 14
- 9, 2, 2 = 13
- 6, 6, 1 = 13

Obviously, extra information is only needed to separate the factors with the same sum (i.e. 13) The piano player is the oldest, the 9 year old, while the twins are both 2.

Said Hamlet to Ophelia,
 "I'll make a sketch of thee.
 What kind of pencil will I use –
 2B or not 2B?"
 - Spike Milligan

All those who believe in psychokinesis, raise my right hand - Steven Wright (US Comedian)

Much Ado about \$0.

In March 1999, a man living in Kandos (near Mudgee in NSW) received a bill for his as yet unused gas line stating that he owed \$0.00. He ignored it and threw it away. In April he received another bill and threw that one away too.

The following month the gas company sent him a very nasty note, stating they were going to cancel his gas line if he didn't send them \$0.00 by return mail. He called them, talked to them, and they said it was a computer error and they would take care of it.

The following month he decided that it was about time that he tried out the troublesome gas line, figuring that if there was usage on the account, it would put an end to this ridiculous predicament. However, when he went to use the gas, it had been cut off.

He called the gas company who apologised for the computer error once again and said that they would take care of it. The next day he got a bill for \$0.00 stating that payment was now overdue. Assuming that having spoken to them the previous day, the latest bill was yet another mistake, he ignored it, trusting that the company would be as good as their word and sort the problem out.

The next month he got a bill for \$0.00. This bill also stated that he had 10 days to pay his account or the company would have to take steps to recover the debt. Finally, giving in, he thought he would beat the company at their own game and mailed them a cheque for \$0.00. The computer duly processed his account and returned a statement to the effect that he now owed the gas company nothing at all.

A week later, the manager of the Mudgee branch of the Westpac Banking Corporation called our hapless friend and asked him what he was doing writing a cheque for \$0.00. After a lengthy explanation the bank manager replied that the \$0.00 cheque had caused their cheque processing software to fail and the bank could therefore not process ANY cheques they had received from ANY of their customers that day.

The following month the man received a letter from the gas company claiming that his cheque has bounced and that he now owed them \$0.00 and unless he sent a cheque by return mail they would take immediate steps to recover the debt.

At this point, the man decided to file a debt harassment claim against the gas company. It took him nearly 2 hours to convince the clerks at the local courthouse that he was not joking, but they eventually assisted him in drafting statements.

The matter was heard in the Magistrate's Court in Mudgee and the gas company was ordered to:

[1] Immediately rectify their computerised accounts system or show cause, within 10 days, why the matter should not be referred to a higher court for consideration under Company Law.

[2] Pay the bank dishonour fees incurred by the man.

[3] Pay the bank dishonour fees incurred by all the Westpac clients whose cheques had been bounced on the day our friend's had been.

[4] Pay the claimant's court costs; and

[5] Pay the claimant a total of \$1500 per month for the 5 month period March to July inclusive as compensation for the aggravation they had caused their client to suffer.

And all this over \$0.00.

This story, reported on the ABC, can also be viewed on the ABC website.

- Thanks to Eric Davis for this contribution

More Origins

In ancient times, storage vessels were usually made of earthenware and potters made a reasonable living. Naturally, numbers of vessels became cracked during the firing process. Unscrupulous salesmen simply filled the cracks with wax and sold the apparently watertight vessels regardless. The genuine articles, however, were *sine cera* (without wax) and this term, in time, became *sincere*.



The term ‘an old chestnut’, meaning a stale joke, originated in a play *The Broken Sword* by William Dimond, first produced in Covent Garden in 1816. In the play, Captain Xavier tells the same jokes, with variations. One of the jokes concerns a cork tree. In exasperation, Pablo finally corrects him. “A chestnut. I have heard you tell the joke twenty-seven times and I am sure it was a chestnut.”

Apparently, the term ‘daylight robbery’ is not derived from the obvious effrontery of a felon committing a crime openly during the day instead of skulkingly at night. It seems that it arose because England introduced a window tax in 1696 to offset the cost of forged coinage. The younger Pitt increased the tax in 1782 and again in 1797. A special edict exempted from the tax those houses with fewer than seven windows. In response, houses were designed with fewer windows and existing houses had some of their windows bricked up – what the Scots called ‘blin windies’ or blind windows. It is believed that in protest against this tax, house owners angrily referred to it as ‘daylight robbery’. The tax was abolished in 1851.

The proof of the pudding is not in the eating but in the heating. Puddings which have a leavening agent in them, such as yeast, will rise, or prove, when they are heated (or heat as they leaven). It’s a matter of what one hears. And remember that the deadly snake only came to be an adder, having formerly been a nadder.

A Matter of Perspective

‘Boss, boss, we’ve got an insurmountable problem.’
 ‘Hold it there. In this organisation we don’t have problems, we only have opportunities. Now, what were you saying?’
 ‘Boss, we’ve got an insurmountable opportunity.’

• Signs of the Times

In Bali – according to *The Age* 21-03-05



Logan’s Ghost

Captain Patrick Logan, Commandant of Moreton Bay Penal Colony, acquired a reputation for cruelty and brutality hard to match in the grim annals of convict history. Cases of convicts dying under the lash became commonplace and floggings from 50 to 100 lashes were more often the case than not. A convict absent in the bush for more than 24 hours was automatically declared a bushranger and on capture could expect death or, as a minimum punishment, anything from 300 to 600 lashes.

One convict named Stimson, soon after his arrival, absconded and on recapture received his 300-600 lashes. He made for the bush a second time, was again recaptured and again flogged. What determination, stupidity or bravado engendered yet a third attempt at absconding, we do not know. But there was to be no further attempt. He died on the triangles.

One day Commandant Logan was returning home alone from one of his customary excursions to Limestone Hill when he was startled to notice standing by the track ahead of him, a figure wearing the familiar yellow clothing of a convict. He sensed a vague recollection of the face, but knew it was an absconder who had to be dealt with.

He commanded the figure to walk ahead of him, whereupon it reached out and grasped at Logan’s stirrup. Logan struck at the man with his riding crop but the lash cut right through the figure and struck his horse a stinging blow. The horse plunged wildly and bolted. Later that evening, according to the *Moreton Bay Free Press*, Logan recalled that the spot where he was accosted was precisely the place where Stimson had last been recaptured.

In October 1830, he and a small party of a free-servant and some convicts went on another exploratory mission. For some reason, on the return journey he sent the others ahead and then failed to make the rendezvous. A search party traced his horse’s hoof prints and found Logan’s mutilated body. It is believed he was taken by surprise and murdered in a bark hut on 17 October.

At midday on 18 October, convicts on the north bank of the Brisbane River saw Captain Logan on horse-back beckoning from the south side for the ferry-punt to come and collect him. When they reached the south bank the figure had disappeared. They identified the spot as the same spot where the convict Stimson had released Logan’s stirrup and disappeared. The convicts claimed that they knew Logan’s figure too well to have been deceived, but at the time they saw him, Logan’s body, with head brutally bashed, was lying in a shallow grave miles away.

– adapted from *Australian Ghost Stories* edited by Frank Cusack

Marriage is a wonderful invention – but then again, so is a bicycle repair kit. – Billy Connolly

Book Club

Life of Pi by Yann Martel, published by Canongate Books, Edinburgh.

This book was given to me for my birthday, it was not one I would ever have selected, but I found it very thought provoking, and I have learned something about the behaviour of animals/humans. I presume the material is factual, but maybe you may have other thoughts.

The book won The Man Booker Prize, 2002 (whatever that is).

After the tragic sinking of a cargo ship, one solitary lifeboat remains bobbing on the wild, blue Pacific. The only survivors from the wreck are a sixteen-year-old boy named Pi, a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg), a female orang-utan... and a 450 pound Royal Bengal tiger.

Pi was named after a swimming pool, his full name Piscine (pronounced Pissing) Militor Patel. Pi, as you can imagine, was often teased about his name. The book is funny in parts, very gory in parts, some may say quite spiritual, and has a twist in the tail. When I turned over the last page, I realised I was sorry the story had ended. If you find this book and decide to read it, let Ian know what you think.

Jan Davis

Credits

My thanks are once again due to Helen; to my daughter Jean Yates; to Trevor Lynam who printed this; to the contributors; to Scott Spencer; Peter Noonan, Natasha Gajda and Katrina Mack who made it available to departmental staff; and to Harvey Yates for his cartoons.

A Short History of Planet Earth by Ian Plimer, Professor of Geology in the School of Earth Sciences at the University of Melbourne, won the Eureka science book prize in 2002.

In this book, Plimer traces the history of earth from its condensation 4,550 million years ago from recycled stardust through its dynamic evolution to now. He pieces together evidence to postulate that for at least the last 2,500 million years, the continents have been pulled apart and stitched back together. He puts forward evidence that during the unravelling, huge quantities of volcanic water, carbon dioxide and methane are released into the atmosphere and greenhouse conditions prevail.

With an abundance of persuasive evidence, Plimer argues that there are 400 million supercycles of greenhouse/icehouse conditions related to the pulling apart and stitching together again of continents. Each time, sea levels rose and fell more than 6 m. He argues that on all scales of observation and measurement, sea level and climate are not constant and that change is normal, driven by a large number of natural forces.

Plimer's story spans earth's history. Yet, he is at pains to remind us that whilst the current community may believe that

climate variability and change are not normal, by using the past as the key to the present, we are facing the next inevitable glaciation.

Plimer's story puts us, the human population, into an interesting perspective in historical events and you are left wondering what control we really do have over the rest of the history of the planet Earth.

Garry Grant

Alexander McCall Smith is the author of the *No. 1 Ladies Detective Agency* series.

These wonderful books, set in Botswana, feature Mma Precious Ramotswa, the traditionally built woman who founded the agency and who solves minor crimes in a gentle but incisive fashion.

Film Director Anthony Minghella (who is co-producer of a planned TV series) reported, "I was enchanted by the character of Precious Ramotswa and the sly humour of Alexander McCall Smith's writing, his deft evocation of a culture."

If you like a good gutsy thriller with lots of corpses and clues, don't waste Precious time. But if you like a leisurely read with lots of gentle humour and warmth that illuminates a different culture, then here's a wonderful place to go.

Ian Pullar

Trafalgar

October this year marks the 200th Anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar when Admiral Horatio Nelson famously raised his telescope to his blind eye (with his one remaining arm) so he couldn't see the French/Spanish navy before winning his celebrated victory. He then fell victim to a sniper's bullet, exclaiming, "Kiss me Hardy" (or maybe "Kismet, Hardy").

A recent survey showed that 10% of Britons think that the Battle of Trafalgar was fought in the London Square of that name!

On the last weekend of June, the Brits staged a reenactment of the battle between the Blue and the Red navies so the losers would not be offended!

There is an Australian connection. Not only is there a town of Trafalgar in Victoria, George Rose, after whom Rose Bay in Sydney was named, was Nelson's Executor, charged with the task of taking care of Emma (Hamilton) and little Horatio.

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Current Office Bearers of the Association are given below for the information of anyone wanting to contact them.

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