

# WATERY SAUCES Oldies and Boldies

Newsletter No 55

March 2008

Newsletter of the Water Resource Retirees Association

## Noonan Becomes a Nomad

Peter Noonan, at the tender age of 55, has ventured into retirement, membership of the WRRRA and a nomadic life along with his wife, Adrienne.

As mooted in the last Newsletter, Peter's retirement from his position of foundation CEO of SunWater is now a reality. Chairman of the SunWater Board, Phil Hennessy, hosted a farewell function for Peter at Riverside on 29 November.

An array of speakers spoke of Peter's career and the high esteem in which he is held by government and the many clients with whom he has dealt over the years. The speeches were supplemented by visual displays of photographs covering both his private and professional life.

Among the tributes was an address by Peter Boettcher, who has been acting in Peter's position pending a permanent appointment. Some of this address is included here, though obviously in a very abbreviated form.

"As we all know Peter Noonan is logical, a man of strategy, of policy and negotiation. Peter has a fantastic policy mind, he considers issues deeply, has the capacity to foresee outcomes of decisions before they occur, and adjust strategy when it is necessary to do so. For SunWater, these attributes have been key to the organisation's survival, and also to its future prosperity. By way of example I will refer to one of Peter's more controversial organisational strategies.

"At the corporatisation of SunWater, Peter instituted a purchaser/provider business model. This was not unusual for the time as there were a number of organisations that had pursued this model in the name of efficiency and accountability. What was unusual at this time was the retention of a significant engineering capability within SunWater. Other water businesses around the country were shedding their engineering staff, however Peter believed passionately that the key to SunWater's future success was to retain a depth of engineering skills, and he saw the purchaser/provider model as the key to doing that.

"At the time, this was not well understood by others, and Peter had to defend to many the chosen course, including myself. Of course, in hindsight (for the rest of us) this kind of strategic thinking has now been proven prophetic, as SunWater is now recognised as having a unique capability and strength as a designer, builder, owner and operator of water infrastructure. And I would go on to say that

had this strategy not been employed, defended and retained, then SunWater would not have been able to deliver on the Burdekin Pipeline project, and would not be the proponent for either Nathan or the Connors River dams.

"So thank you Peter for your vision, your strategy and your dogged stubbornness in the face of a world of critics, for this is but one example of a range of core strategies upon which the future success of SunWater is assured.

"Peter, you have guided the SunWater organisation and its people through difficult times, from conception through to adolescence, we now stand as an organisation that is mature, capable and confident. One which will prosper into the future and will provide a rewarding and challenging place of work for future generations to come."

WRRRA joins in wishing Peter all the very best for the future.

### From the Editor's Chair

*Following the next Annual General Meeting, which is just around the corner, the incoming Committee will have the task of drawing up a programme of activities for the next twelve months. Obviously the Committee members will want to do the best they can in meeting the wishes of the membership at large.*

*In previous years, the Committee has to some extent planned in the dark and there has been very patchy attendance at the scheduled functions. Could it be that the wrong functions are being chosen? Could it be that members want only a very limited programme?*

*In order to provide answers to these complex questions, the current Committee has devised a questionnaire and asks that you, the members and potential participants, provide guidance to future deliberations. Please take the time to fill it in, make any other suggestions and send it back.*

*Your comments regarding the Newsletter would also be useful, though I confess that, judging from the previous level of response, I should not get my hopes up. I can only hope that silence means consent!*

*Until next time, au reservoir.*

**Ian Pullar, Editor**

## New Members

Three “old boys” saw fit to join us other oldies and boldies during the last four months. Peter Noonan has got a lot of coverage on page 1 which will suffice here.

Peter Gilbey was once a Victorian (and still barracks for Geelong) but was a North Queenslander for many years. Over the past few years he has been carrying out duties in both Townsville and Brisbane. Recently he and Lesley moved to Hervey Bay preparatory to possible retirement after his 60<sup>th</sup> birthday at the end of the year. He is currently Director of Water Supply Planning (and thus the boss of Lee Rogers who works part time for the department – and me, as I have rejoined).

Peter Zinn was an engineer in Head Office from 1962 to 1991 at which stage he chose early retirement. I recall his involvement in establishing cableways etc.

## Christmas Luncheon

The Christmas luncheon referred to above was held at COTAH in November and attended by 45 members and spouses. Because of refurbishments at COTAH, we had new environs. Despite the inferior view and acoustics, a good time was had by all. Our special guests were Peter Noonan (for his last appearance as Co-Patron) and Chris Robson, representing Scott Spencer.

## Correspondence

*My daughter Margaret, co-author of the Peoples' History received this email which should interest many members.- Ed*

I believe you may have mentioned my Dad in your book. He was Chief Surveyor for Irrigation and Water Supply from the mid to the late sixties. At 86 he is as remarkable as he ever was. His first wife, my mother, died in 1965 and Dad later married Angela Keogh also of the department. She died a few years ago. Dad has continued to keep active and to maintain his high intelligence and sense of humour. He has almost 60 blood descendants and finds satisfaction in researching the threads of our family tree.

With regards,  
Trish Hatcher

## Out and About

Roy Maxted reports that he has been a bit slack lately after having his total large bowel (colon) removed in June with five weeks in hospital and twelve days in intensive care. He is now on permanent medication but is generally OK and back doing voluntary work at Vinnies and St John's – as long as he is not too far from a toilet! We wish Roy (and Iris) all the very best.

Trevor Tuesley (who apparently is well and enjoying himself) reports that Bob Sainsbury is now in a nursing home in Ipswich.

He also reports that Peter McMahon has recently retired from SunWater even though we have yet to receive his application for membership. Some of us, particularly Col Hazel, well remember the day when just before Christmas one year, various members of Construction Branch received bottles of scotch from a well-known contracting firm. The only P.McMahon in Construction was Peter – Pat was in Designs, so the bottle couldn't possibly have been intended for him!

On the subject of Col Hazel, he is currently rewriting (in conjunction with three others) the lecture notes he prepared for Groundwater Schools way back in the '60s. Old dogs don't always need to be taught to learn new tricks.

After his trials and tribulations of overseas travel as reported in the last Newsletter, Mike Marley has returned from an untraumatic but very enjoyable Christmas trip to the UK.

I ran into Brian Watson of SunWater recently. He told me that Andrew Lusi (Engineer) and Glen Milward (Draftsman) had joined the ranks of retirees at the end of 2007 and that Brian himself is planning a similar destination in the near future – just as soon as he fixes the valves on the Teemburra diversion! Best wishes to all!

Another Retirees Get-Together was held at the Public Services Club on 7 February. Around twenty members (including wives) attended and President Lee reports that as usual nostalgia reigned supreme.

Please remember the AGM to be held at the Public Services Club on 24 April (notice of meeting enclosed). We'd love to see lots of you there – and to shout you lunch!

With deep regret, we have to report the passing of a number of our members.

**Dan Geaney** passed away in November. Jo Cannell was his niece and she and husband Peter provided him with a house on Boyne Island and latterly helped manage his affairs and palliative care. Dan would be known to many people who served on the numerous construction sites where he worked.

**Bob Marshall** was also an administrative officer on construction sites. He passed away on 10 October at the age of 83. It is not long since we reported the death of his wife Nora.

**Alan Taylor**, former Chief Construction Engineer and, before that, Project Engineer on several sites, died on 16 November, just four days after his ninetieth birthday. Alan had suffered a stroke in May 2006 and although he had largely recovered his faculties, he required care in a residential nursing facility. He suffered a second stroke on 3 November, from which he never regained consciousness.

**Roger Callaghan**, who was a cost clerk at most of the construction projects from the '60s to the '90s, passed away at Home Hill on 19 December from cancer. He was 68. His funeral was held at Caloundra on 4 January.

All these gentlemen devoted practically all their working lives to the water industry in Queensland and will be remembered with affection by their friends and work colleagues on various construction projects and at Rocklea and Head Office.

We have also been advised of the death of **Alec Morris**, former Secretary of the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission, on 31 October 2007 at the age of 86. There will be more on Alec in the next newsletter.

In late news, **Daniel Rowley** passed away on 1 March at the age of 92. Dan was an administrative officer who served in a number of branches in Head Office including Records, Mechanical and Accounts. He retired in 1980.

## A Letter from Liege

*I was delighted to receive a newsy letter from Andy Winkler. It was so entertaining, I want to share (most of) its contents with members. - Ed.*

*Dear Jan*

*Thank you for sending the Newsletter to me in Germany. I only worked a short time for the Irrigation and Water Commission. Because Australia is a dry continent, I was aware of the importance of water management, but it is only since receiving Newsletters that I became aware of what important work this talented team of intelligentsia are doing for our wonderful country.*

*I read with interest about the travels of some of our members. It doesn't matter how well read or intelligent you are, travel broadens your horizons even more. Because I was self employed, I had more opportunity to travel. I must have travelled over one million km. Been around Australia more than once and my 13 year old car has travelled over 400,000 km. For the past ten years I have been coming to Europe nearly every year and staying for six months at a time.*

*Mike Marley's "travel trials and tribulations" were very interesting. Since the so-called Democratic Communism, Russia descended into a corrupt, inefficient country. I visited the Iron Curtain countries in '82 and '87 and they went out of their way to be helpful to western visitors. I came in a hired car from Germany and when we got lost, they even gave us an escort to our destination. But you weren't allowed to take photos of certain areas. They loved dollars and German marks and wouldn't accept their own currency.*

*You mentioned your trip to Turkey. Did you visit the ancient Hittite capital Hattusas, not far from Ankara? My father worked on what is called the Baghdad Railway up to about 1927. He used to tell us kids of remnants of the ancient civilization whose structures were still a marvel to look at although badly damaged by earthquakes. My father always told me to visit all that's left of the ancient civilizations and, as I was interested in archaeology, I was very keen. But I left it too late. When I had the money, I didn't have the time. I had an itinerary all worked out, starting with the Hittite capital in Anatolia. By the way, Paul Winkler, an Austrian archaeologist (no relation) discovered the Hittite library of over 20000 clay tablets. However, they couldn't read them until they found bilingual documents. The Hittite language was no longer a mystery and now they knew that the Battle of Kadesh was not a victory for Ramses. The Hittite Empire was on a par with Egypt and was the first to smelt iron.*

*As I mentioned before, I left Australia to attend my class reunion. Two days before the reunion, I discovered that I couldn't do up the fly of the favourite old suit I had brought as I seemed to be carrying a spare tyre. As it was the weekend I couldn't buy another. Still worse, I couldn't go to the funeral of our neighbour.*

*We are now at my sister's place in Liege, Belgium. I just missed my eldest son who called in two weeks ago. He is a captain in the Merchant Navy. I haven't seen him for a few years.*

*One reason I can't fulfill my lifelong dream of visiting the Middle East is financial and the other is health. Several years ago I had a bypass operation. I feel good but my wife says I shouldn't take any risks. The Middle East is very unstable anyway.*

*I have had some compensation for not visiting these archaeological sites. In the middle of Liege they are excavating the foundations of the old Cathedral of St Lambert. Lambert was the Bishop of Liege. He was very hard on his people and was murdered in the year 705. However his followers built the biggest cathedral at that time. It was later destroyed by stupid revolutionaries and the building materials were reused in several other churches. Now they have excavated the foundations and gone much lower. They laid bare a Roman Villa with all mod cons – baths, heated rooms and running water. It is enormous and must have been the residence of the Roman Governor of the province. The walls are over a metre thick. The mosaic floors are a work of art. The bedroom is as big as our modern ones with an en suite. The excavations are now 12 metres underground and have revealed human habitation dating back 9000 years. It is all lit up and easy to absorb with a guide provided who speaks the language of the visitors. Our guide spoke the type of English that we three Australians would say couldn't speak English. I am hard of hearing so it would have been better to have the French guide as I speak French. In this house we speak four languages. Liege is a colourful old city with a great historic past. Excavations in the area have revealed human habitation of at least 300,000 years.*

*Greetings and best wishes. Keep up your good work.*

*Andy*

## The Morwood Memoirs

*Continuing Dave Morwood's memorable memories of events in the Burdekin in the 1950s.*

### FLEXIBLE WORKING

At one stage we were carting lots of deco from a pit at the south end of Dalbeg, building roads all over the area. We had a couple of our own trucks and a team of hire trucks from Ayr, with "salt of the earth" owner drivers. Loading was done over a side-on "chinaman", with a small dozer.

Sometimes trucks got accidentally overloaded a bit, which naturally didn't please the drivers. And my instructions were to keep them working flat out, as they cost a lot of money. Eventually the drivers staged a strike, over the harsh treatment, probably justified.

Merek Kotek came up from Clare, where he was the overall boss at that stage, to help to get them going again. As Merek and I drove to meet the strikers, he said to me in his inimitable way. "Now Davie, I vill say zome zings you vill not laike, and you vill SHUT UP!" "OK Merek"

Conference starts with "Well boys, what has this bloody fool Dave been doing to you?" Chorus of complaints, followed by lots of promises of better treatment, and instructions to me to ensure no overloading, no harassment by checking of travel speeds and times etc. OK! all back to work. Problem Solved.

On the way back to the office, "Well done Davie. Now keep, after the bastards. And get yourself some binoculars so they don't know you're watching them." Merek Kotek was a genius.

### NOGOOD

Frank Walski was a plant operator, and a good one. His English was fluent, if not always in fully accurate syntax. I'm including this story because of its impact at the time, not because I wish to "laugh at" people's problems with a second language.

Frank eventually graduated to driving a grader, and later still the Aveling-Austin grader which was a new-fangled beast with a row of hydraulic levers instead of normal grader controls, which enabled independent direction and two-way tilt control of each wheel independently. Frank was good and he became skilled at using it. I had a go and had it looking like a sick, drunken, double jointed giraffe in no time flat.

Doug Kelly was our very well mannered, always unflappable, highly skilled, mechanical workshop manager. One day I was in the workshop with Doug, perhaps discussing how to reduce the number of rats and mice, when Frank drove the grader into a vacant bay, jumped down and announced, "It's no good f@#\$%ing." The ever calm Doug says, "I dunno Frank, I think it's pretty good". Frank says, "You are silly bastard Doug, I telling you it's no good f@#\$%ing". He's now very angry. Doug says, "What do you reckon Dave?" Dave reckons, "I agree with Doug." Frank: "What would you f@#\$%ing know you're only a f@#\$%ing engineer!" Dave: "I think he's had enough Doug." Doug: "OK Frank, sorry. We'll have a look at it and fix it for you." All very non-PC in those days!

### RISING FAST

On 19<sup>th</sup> October 1956, we knocked off work on Friday afternoon, in the Burdekin River bed, installing the Dalbeg Pump Station suction pipe. We had at least an air compressor, concrete mixer, tractor and loader, plus whatever I can't remember. It was the middle of the dry season, so we left it all there.

About 7am on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>, I went down to read the river gauge. The river had come up 40 feet (remember feet?) over night. There had been no rain at Dalbeg, but heavy rain the day before up the Bowen River that we hadn't heard about. We didn't hear about much, as we had no phone at Dalbeg.

All the machinery was under nice brown silty water. Our trip to town was cancelled. The equipment was saved, but needed a fair bit of disassembling, cleaning etc before it could be used again.

It was Richard's first birthday, and for years after that it always rained on Richard's birthday. In fact much later, in Head Office, I would take any small bets against rain on 20<sup>th</sup> October, and nearly always won.

And worse still, again years later, Bill Sharp added the information that Rising Fast won the Caulfield Cup for the second year in succession on that day. Bill was wrong (WHAT??!!) Rising Fast won the Caulfield Cup in 1954 and 1955. But don't let facts spoil the story.

### RICHARD'S ZERO BIRTHDAY

We were based at Dalbeg when Richard was born. A fortnight before, we had been to Ayr (60 miles away), for a check up and discussion with Dr Taylor about arrangements. He assured us that we would have plenty of time, at least 2 hours, after first signs of arrival to drive to Ayr, being a first birth and all that.

On THE morning I went to work as usual about 7a.m., 100 metres to the office, a drive around the works etc., and back to some work in the office. I came home for lunch as usual about noon and unusually, it wasn't ready. Judy was calmly standing at the sink washing lettuce. "What's wrong?" "I think the baby's coming." "When did this start". "About when you went to work". Lunch was a slice of bread and a leaf of lettuce, and we left immediately. There was plenty of time, but I didn't waste any more of it on the road than I could help. Mother and baby are still doing well!

*To be concluded next edition. Thanks Dave for this wonderful contribution - Ed.*

## Yarns

*In response to my call for "yarns" Mick Garvey submitted the following. - Ed*

Several years after his rugby league playing career peaked with playing Bulimba Cup for Ipswich, John Richardson decided he should regain some fitness and began running in the evenings.

One evening bordering on darkness he was out for his run around the suburban streets, when he came to an intersection where two cars were stopped at the lights. Not wishing to stop running and lose momentum, and anybody who knows John realises this is considerable momentum, he decided to cross the street running between the two cars. In the fading light he failed to see that the first car was towing the second. Needless to say he tripped on the tow rope and the tall timber came crashing down. Sprawled on the ground and in shocked dismay John saw the traffic lights turn green and towing recommence. With the agility of Allan Langer, John managed to scramble from in front of the towed car and escaped unscathed, other than for gravel rash, to recount his adventure to work colleagues the next day.

## Egyptian Elegance

*Gentle hints do sometimes work. I mentioned that Grahame and Joyce Bertram had visited Egypt and in no time flat Grahame responded with the following article. I can only endorse his view that Egypt is well worth a visit. -Ed.*

In October 2006, Joyce and I flew into Cairo from Madrid, were met by local Insight representatives and, after clearing Customs, were whisked into the centre of Cairo to the Conrad Hotel, a very modern four star hotel overlooking the Nile River. [In 696 AD, Gohar Al Sikkily, the Fatimid commander, built a new city which is now the Capital of Egypt. Cairo has a population of some 11 million people on weekends but rises to 20 million during the normal working week – a similar population to all of Australia ].

Purified water was an essential commodity to us non-locals for cleaning teeth, taking necessary prescription medications, etc. Bottled water, though readily available, was somewhat expensive, but a **must** to ensure ongoing good health.

From Cairo, we flew to Abu Simbel, after a brief stopover at Aswan, some 1160 km from Cairo. This Temple is considered the most beautiful and imaginative construction of the greatest and most whimsical pharaoh in Egyptian history. The Temple is dedicated in theory to Amon-Ra, Harmakis and Ptah, but in practice it was constructed for the greater glory of its builder, Ramses the Great [Ramses II]. This Temple facade consists of four colossal statues of Pharaoh seated on his throne. Each statue is 20m high, measuring 4m from ear to ear and 1m along the line of the lips. The overall facade is some 31m high and has been carved out of a single piece of rock. Penetrating into the heart of the mountain, i.e. behind the facade, one reaches the sanctuary where formerly stood statues of the triad to whom the Temple was dedicated together with one of Ramses himself. It was here that what was called the “Miracle of the Sun” took place. Twice a year, on 21 March and 21 September at 5.58 a.m., a ray of sunlight would penetrate the 65m between the entrance and the shrine and bathe Amon-Ra and Ramses in light. As minutes passed, the ray of sunlight would fall on Harmakis. After about 20 minutes the light disappeared. Ptah [God of Darkness] was not illuminated during this remarkable occurrence.

Following construction of the Aswan High Dam, some 320 km downstream, inundation of the Temple was feared. UNESCO arranged for a firm from Sweden to commence the huge task of relocating the Temple in 1965. Relocation was completed by the end of summer in 1965. Truly a gigantic and certainly a worthwhile task to preserve such a special and beautiful Temple. A world acclaimed modern day engineering feat.

After Abu Simbel, we returned, by air, to Aswan to the Sofitel “Old Cataract Hotel” built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Thomas Cook. In the late afternoon, we enjoyed a Felucca [sail boat] cruise around Kitchener Island which has been made the site of the Botanical Gardens. “High Tea” was enjoyed by all on the tour in the river gardens overlooking the Nile and the fleet of tourist ships, feluccas and other water craft.

Next day we toured the Aswan High Dam. Construction started in January 1960 using USSR expertise and supervisory staff. The artificial lake, Lake Nasser, extends 500 km upstream, with a capacity of 157 000 million cubic metres making it the world’s second largest [first is the dam on the Zambesi River in southern Africa].

This p.m. we boarded *M.S. Tower* – capable of accommodating 120 to 150 guests. Our group of 35 were the only ones aboard so we had the run of the ship for the three days cruising. Places of interest during the cruise were: Temple of Isis on the island of Philae; river-side Temple of Kom Ombo – dedicated to the crocodile god “Sobek” and the falcon-headed “Horus”; at Edfu we visited the Temple of Horus; luxury cruising then to Luxor, visiting the west bank to see the huge Colossi of Memnon and the Temple of Hatshepsut; the Valley of the Kings, where archaeologist Carter discovered Tutankhamen’s secret tomb. The immense Karnak Temple, dedicated to the Sun-God Amon, was a late p.m. trip to see the illuminated splendours. [That evening, all of the tour group participated in a Galabea party in traditional Egyptian attire following an Egyptian dinner. Several acts were performed by local entertainers including a belly-dancer.]

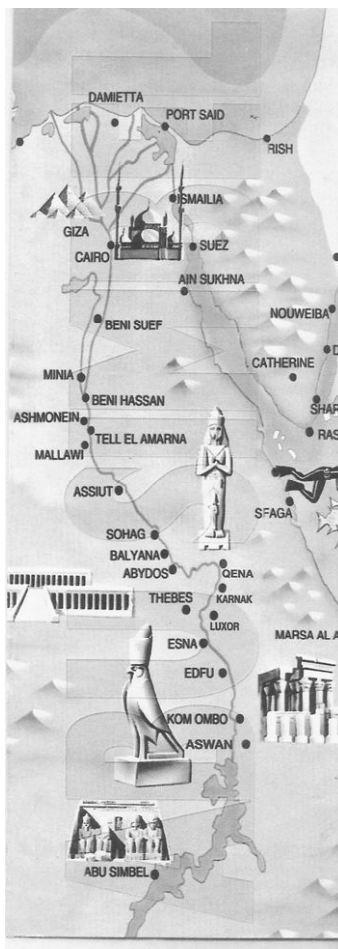
While in Luxor, along with some of the group from the tour, we took the opportunity to experience hot-air ballooning – 4 a.m. start, mini coach to the launch area, 20 into the basket, take off together with 14 other balloons, 1500 feet altitude, crossed the Nile River, glimpsed the Valley of the Kings, landed in a sugar cane plantation and back to the ship for a hearty breakfast. First time in a balloon – just magical!

We returned to Cairo by air [all Egyptian Air aircraft were of top quality and the aircrew were very competent with smooth takeoffs and landings]. The p.m. gave us an opportunity to experience Cairo traffic [three lanes each way, median strip, five lines of vehicles in each direction.] After 30 minutes trying to cross the street in front of the Conrad Hotel, I gave up and took to the lesser streets with markets, markets and more markets. Bargaining is a way of life here and it is quite an experience – start at one figure, as ticketed, then halve it and haggle from there!!!

Our last two days of touring took us to the Egyptian Museum [treasures of the Tomb of Tutankhamun and other antiquities], to Sakkara to see the Step Pyramid of King Zoser, the oldest pyramid in the world, dating from 2700 BC, to Giza to see the enigmatic Sphinx and the magnificent Pyramids and a sound and light show illustrating the ancient history of Giza.

After one of the most memorable periods of our travels, we boarded a Singapore Airlines flight to Brisbane via Dubai and Singapore. [Now Dubai is a story all on its own.]

By strictly using bottled water throughout the Egyptian tour and eating locally produced yoghurt at each breakfast meal, we experienced no ill health and had a great time with lots of lasting memories.



## More Intrepid Travel

In a recent newsletter, I set out to explain why travel in small groups with the Intrepid Travel group suited Denise and me so much.

And so with a group of English, New Zealand and fellow Australians, Denise and I spent August (2007) travelling through Middle Europe and the Balkan States of the former Yugoslavia, another of the many trips offered by Intrepid Travel.

Our group met up with Steffan, our youngish and very capable German leader, in Vienna and travelled through ten countries visiting Prague, Krakow, Bratislava, Budapest, Belgrade, Sarajevo, ending in Dubrovnik on the Adriatic coast with stops in many smaller centres along the way. As with all Intrepid trips, a range of activities including bike riding in a beautiful forest area in southern Czech Republic and hiking in the incredibly rugged Tatus Mountains on the border between Poland and Slovakia provided variety amongst the days spent in historic cities. Our last few days on the Adriatic coast including a day cruising around the Bay of Kotor, with some swim-

ming in beautiful clear waters providing a relaxing conclusion to a fascinating trip.

All of these countries have much to offer, history, wonderful architecture, spectacular scenery as well as excellent beer – half a litre for not much more than a Euro. Great when it's hot which it was for much of the trip.

But each of them has suffered from invasion, occupation and, in the Balkans, from internal conflicts where fighting between Serbian, Croatian and Muslim peoples only ended in 1999. Evidence of the conflict is still to be seen in Belgrade, most tragically in Sarajevo and in Dubrovnik. But now much has been repaired, tourists have returned and people seem to be happily getting on with their lives.

Australia was described by the writer Donald Horne as 'the lucky country' – it certainly has never had to endure the difficulties faced by the countries of middle Europe and the Balkans and hopefully we never will.

In 2008 – with Intrepid to Turkey, we hope.

**Lee Rogers**

## Travellers' Tales

### From Morocco



*Park'n Ride Fez style*

*Photo courtesy of Grahame Bertram*

### From Scotland

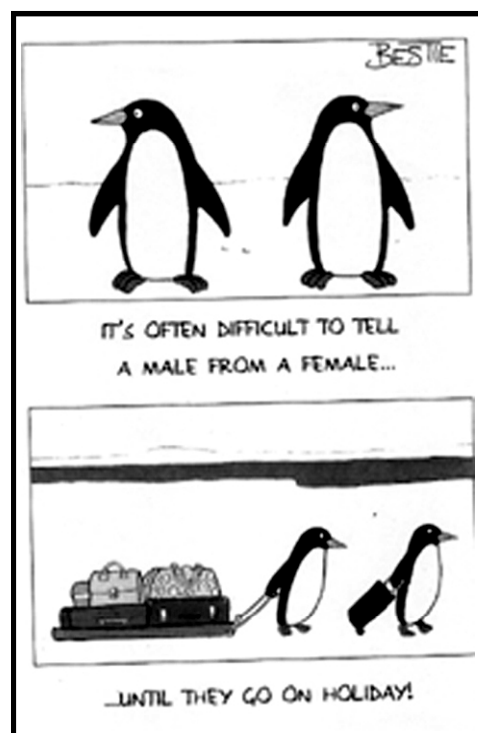
Have you ever wondered why the Scots chose as their national emblem, the thistle, which is considered a noxious pest in Australia? (You may remember that former Prime Minister Menzies was a Knight of the Order of the Thistle). Well, I'll tell you anyway.

In 1263, under the command of King Haakon IV of Norway, the Vikings were attempting to conquer the Scots under King Alexander III at the Battle of Largs. The sneaky invaders tried to enter by stealth under the cover of darkness when one of them trod on a thistle and reacted. History doesn't record what he said – it may have been "Bother!" or "Gott in Himmel!"; we'll never know. But it alerted the Scots who were able to repel the invaders.

This tale is reminiscent of the geese who similarly saved Rome from invasion and were consequently held sacred.

### From Beijing

Some years ago, an international consortium wanted to compile a film documentary on a colony of very rare bears in a remote Chinese province. After a great deal of diplomacy, the authorities, convinced that they would gain great kudos, gave permission and welcomed the film team with a great banquet at which they were served with the province's most prized delicacy – bear's paw!



## Camping InTent

It is popularly believed that men are much keener on camping than women. But a recent survey has found that well over 90% of women are happy to sleep under the stars – provided there are five of them.

Members will be aware from previous editions of NRW's interest in the Regional Water Supply Strategy for South East Queensland which was taken over by the Queensland Water Commission. The draft strategy is to be released very soon. The development of strategies for other regions has remained with NRW. The Central Region strategy was released in December 2006 and a draft strategy for Far North Queensland was issued in September 2007. Strategies for North Queensland, Mackay-Whitsunday and Wide Bay-Burnett are currently "on the drawing board".

Recent flood rains have had their impact on regional staff. The Mackay region received more than 600 millimetres in just six hours. About 2000 homes were inundated by flood waters and around 1000 cars have been written off in the area. The heavy rain caused a torrent of work for NRW water monitoring and testing officers in the field, taking water samples and monitoring flood levels in local rivers and weirs. Around half a dozen NRW staff members received considerable damage to their homes and were forced to take flood leave so they could try to repair the damage. The Mackay office escaped damage, but water came up through the drain pipes

and flooded the QG fleet garage. The local NRW depot was flooded with about a foot of water. Some estimates put the rain as a 1 in 200 year event.

When Fairbairn Dam overtopped, many staff in Emerald were evacuated to high ground as a precaution and whilst there was some damage such as the loss of a septic system, fortunately none of their properties was flooded. Floodwaters did not reach the office itself although the car park and a storage shed were flooded.

Rockhampton office and staff were basically unaffected by two floods and extremely heavy rain.

The floods, of course, had their positive side as almost four sydarbs – over 2100 billion litres – have flowed over the Queensland border into the Southern Murray Darling Basin since late last year.

Long term officer Graham Swann has announced his retirement after 44 years service, commencing with IWS and working in the Farm Water Services Advisory section and more recently as a Natural Resource Officer. We wish him well.

And Bill Huxley's long-term meritorious contribution has been recognised through his being awarded an Australia Day Medal. Congratulations Bill!

## Earth Hour

You have the opportunity to 'do your bit' to reduce human contribution to climate change by supporting Earth Hour.

At 8 pm on 29 March 2008, millions of people in some of the world's major capital cities will unite and switch off their lights for one hour. The aim is to deliver a powerful message about global warming – the need to reduce our energy consumption if we are to seriously address the emission reductions needed to avoid the worst predicted outcomes.

## SunWater Snippets

Despite the fact that no replacement CEO has yet been appointed, SunWater continues to thrive, as busy as (or busier than) ever.

In collaboration with six of the biggest coal mining companies in the Bowen Basin, SunWater has constructed a 218 km pipeline from the Burdekin River to the Moranbah area at a cost of \$280 m. This is a major achievement.

SunWater has recently carried out works to improve the spillway capacity of Fred Haigh Dam and Bjelke-Petersen Dam. It has also undertaken a major project to mitigate the impact of floods on Canberra, the nation's capital through the installation of flood control systems.

On the books for potential future development are a number of major projects, some of which would resonate with even the oldest of our members. These include:

- Nathan Dam on the Dawson River. This was proposed by a private enterprise consortium, but SunWater now has the running. The lake would inundate Glebe Weir.
- Nullinga Dam on the Walsh River near Mareeba. This was the alternative to Tinaroo Falls Dam. Feasibility studies are in progress.
- Connors River Dam (Mt Bridget). A dam could provide additional supply for the northern Bowen Basin and to the east for agricultural purposes.

- Raising Kinchant Dam near Mackay. Feasibility studies are in progress for augmentation of the Pioneer area's rural and urban supplies.

- Raising Eden Bann Weir and a new Rookwood Weir on the Fitzroy. These projects could supplement supplies to Rockhampton and adjacent areas and allow further supplementation to Gladstone via a new pipeline.

- Water for Bowen. Studies are continuing on a business case to deliver water from the Burdekin Irrigation Area to Bowen for urban, industrial and agricultural purposes. It could also free up water from Peter Faust Dam earmarked for Bowen to serve Proserpine and the Whitsunday coast. Bowen has been identified as part of the Northern Economic Triangle because of its proximity to the deepwater port of Abbot Point and large area of land suitable for industrial development.

SunWater is also continuing to carry out design studies for Queensland Water Infrastructure Pty Ltd on the Proposed Traveston and Wyaralong dams.

It is interesting to note the *Courier-Mail's* report that a number of consortia are positioning themselves to undertake the construction of these dams even though they have yet to be approved.

**There are three sorts of people in the world - those who can count and those who can't.**

## HEALTH *and beauty* Thinking turned on its head

"You are old, Father William," the young man said  
"And your hair has become very white,  
And yet you incessantly stand on your head –  
Do you think at your age that is right?"

"In my youth," Father William replied to his son,  
"I feared it might injure the brain,  
But now that I'm perfectly sure I have none,  
Why, I do it again and again."



So Lewis Carroll wrote in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. But it now seems that Father William and Carroll were wrong. Practitioners of Chinese medicine and yoga have long taught that standing on your head can boost memory and alertness.

According to the *Courier Mail* of 23 October 2007, scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology now believe that standing on your head may help you think. They believe that blood flowing through the brain may affect the way nerves transmit signals to other parts of the body. The theory is borne out by brain scan studies of the sensory homunculus – the brain's detailed map of body parts such as fingers, toes, arms and legs.

If the theory is true, it could be used to treat brain diseases including Alzheimer's, schizophrenia and epilepsy.

Now doesn't that turn conventional wisdom on its head?

Don't research scientists have a wonderful life exploring possibilities? Further research (*Sunday Mail* 28 October 2007) reveals that a passionate kiss can lower blood pressure and cholesterol levels, effectively cutting a person's risk of stroke.

One can only speculate on a court's attitude to a defence against aggravated assault that claimed an altruistic motive in attempting to lower the victim's risk of stroke!

Queensland doctors saved the life of an Italian tourist by feeding him rum, vodka and whisky for three days via a tube to his stomach – and he didn't even finish up with a hangover.

The 24-year old from Milan was brought to the Mackay Base Hospital unconscious and fighting for his life after swallowing a large amount of ethylene glycol, a poisonous substance found in anti-freeze.

Treatment is usually via purified pharmaceutical-grade alcohol which acts as an antidote. But when hospital stores ran out and bottle shops were closed for the night, the doctor had to raid his own home liquor cabinet. "He managed to get through three bottles of my finest, but that got us through until the bottle shop opened. We were feeding him three standard drinks an hour for three days via a nasogastric tube. He was extremely unwell. Ethylene glycol can cause renal failure." The unconventional treatment proved effective.

*I doubt that even the most hardened of Water Resources drinkers would go to such lengths. – Ed.*

**Life is a sexually transmitted terminal condition.**

## Questions for those 50 and Over

Q: Where can women over the age of 50 find young, sexy men, who are interested in them?

A: Try a bookstore under fiction.

Q: What can a man do while his wife is going through menopause?

A: Keep busy. If you're handy with tools, you can finish the basement. When you are done you will have a place to live.

Q: How can you increase the heart rate of your 50+ year old husband?

A: Tell him you're pregnant.

Q: How can you avoid spotting a wrinkle every time you walk by a mirror?

A: The next time you're in front of a mirror, take off your glasses.

Q: Why should 50+ year old people use valet parking?

A: Valets don't forget where they park your car.

Q: Is it common for 50+ year olds to have problems with short term memory storage?

A: Storing memory is not a problem; retrieving it is a problem.

Q: As people age, do they sleep more soundly?

A: Yes, but usually in the afternoon.

Q: Where do 50+ year olds look for fashionable glasses?

A: Their foreheads.

Q: What is the most common remark made by 50+ year olds when they enter antique stores?

A: "I remember these".



*The bad news is the operation has only a 40% chance of success.  
The good news is there's a 60% chance you won't have to pay.*

## Exercise those Brain Cells

*The puzzles in the last two Newsletters have been by way of a gentle introduction to the one below which, I have to admit, is one of the more difficult puzzles in my collection. But don't be deterred – it is soluble. – Ed.*



You are confronted by three gods, one of whom always tells the truth, another of whom always lies and the third of whom may tell the truth or may lie. You are allowed to ask each god one question (i.e. three questions in all) and are allowed no other speech or threat.

Devise a suitable series of questions to enable you to determine which god is which.

## Solution to last edition's puzzle

Simply ask either native which way would the other tell you to go to Sumplace – then go the other way. One native will truthfully give you the liar's answer; the other will falsely tell you the honest answer.



## How Come - ?

Australia is now in a politically unique position with Labor (left wing) governments federally and in every state and territory. But what is the origin of the left and right wing terminology?

In the British parliamentary tradition, the government members sit on the right of the speaker (even if they are left wing) and the opposition on the left. The right and left wing terms originated not in Britain, but in France.

In 1789, the French monarchy was fighting for its survival and in a last attempt to save it, the king tried to show his willingness to listen to the people. He convened an advisory body, something that had not happened for almost 200 years, and invited representatives of all social classes.

As at dinner parties, where the guest of honour sits on the host's right hand, those of higher social status were assigned the right hand seats while the common people, 'the third estate' had to take what seats remained – those that were left were on the left.

Those fighting for equality – the radicals – were on the left, while the nobility on the right were naturally conservative and trying to conserve their traditional rights.

Even the term 'wing' had a meaningful beginning. 'Wing' was a military term, used in battle and hence entirely appropriate to politics.

In the age of political correctness, it is interesting to take a moment to consider the poor press left-handers have received over the ages. Apart from obvious pejorative terms such as 'cack-handers' or 'molly-dookers', they are branded as awkward – having 'two left feet' or (from the French) 'gauche' – or nasty as in 'sinister' (from the Latin). By contrast those who are dextrous derive their description from 'dexter', the latin for right hand.

Yet clearly not all left-handers are awkward as demonstrated by the disproportionate number of left-handed batsmen and tennis players. I once read that left handers have a natural advantage at hand-eye activities because the reaction time is reduced by not having to swap messages to the opposite side of the brain.

Some anthropologists claim that the predominance of right handed people originates through evolution from primitive times. As the heart is on the left-hand side of the body, the left hand held the shield to protect it, while the right hand became more dextrous at wielding the offensive weapons. Natural selection than gave preference to right handers.

It is also thought that the development of a clammy hand during times of stress could be evolutionary. Humans, like their simian relations, once lived in trees. To fall off when under threat from predators below, could be fatal. So nature provided glands that secreted moisture to reduce slippage. Now regarded as unpleasant, a clammy hand is the last vestige of our tree-dwelling ancestors' eternal quest to hold onto life at all costs.

### Indispensability

To claim you're indispensable  
Is wholly indefensible.

A fact that's much more faceable –  
You're uniquely irreplaceable.

*In a similar vein, Malcolm Pegg said, "Show me the indispensable man and I'll sack him!"*

## A Sign of the Times

On the sweets menu at the Newcastle Golf Club  
**Profiter Rolls**

*Sydney Morning Herald 12 Nov 2007*

## PC Gone Mad?

A bakery in Dorset has been ordered by the trading standards department of the County Council to rename its "robin tarts" and "pig tarts" because they contain no poultry or pork. The claim was that customers are entitled to know what's in the products.

What are the implications of this stupidity for a whole range of well known products – such as "shepherd's pie", "fairy bread" and even "spotted dick"?

The European Community seems to have taken out a patent on political stupidity. A couple of years ago Brussels issued an edict prescribing the maximum bend allowed in bananas (like the bend in a bowlers arm) and recently carrots were defined as fruit because the Portuguese make jam from them.

## Memories

*I was reminded recently of a tale of our former highly esteemed leader and colleague, Bernie Credlin.*

Many years ago, two up and coming engineers applied for a vacancy at the next level. Bernie chaired the selection panel and the appointment was duly made. The disappointed applicant (let's call him Jack – not his real name), after a deal of soul searching decided that the decision could not have been clear cut as where the appointee had certain strengths, he believed that in at least some areas he was stronger. So he approached Bernie and asked what the appointee had that he didn't. Bernie's reply was succinct – "The job!"

On another occasion when Bernie was my branch head, he said to me, "What did you do that for?" Cheeky young fellow responded, "If you like it, it's called initiative. If you don't, it's called stupidity."

## You Would Read About It

*as I did in the Courier Mail on 18-11-2007*

## Senseless in Seattle

SEATTLE: A man trying to loosen a stubborn car wheel nut blasted the wheel with a shotgun, injuring himself badly in both legs.

The 66-year-old had been repairing a Lincoln Continental for two weeks at his home near Seattle in the US and had taken all but one of the wheel nuts off the right rear wheel.

"He was determined to get that nut

off," sheriff's deputy Scott Wilson said. From about arm's length, the man fired the shotgun and was "peppered" in both legs with buckshot and debris, with some injuries as high as his chin.

"Nobody else was there and he wasn't intoxicated," Wilson said.

The man was taken to hospital with injuries the deputy described as severe but not life-threatening.

## Book Club

Is there anything Bill Bryson can't write about? His *Shakespeare* is illuminating and (as usual) highly entertaining. As Bryson himself points out, *the amount of Shakespeare ink, grossly measured, is almost ludicrous. The Library of Congress in Washington contains about seven thousand works on Shakespeare. Shakespeare Quarterly logs about four thousand serious new works each year. This book was written not because the world needs another book about Shakespeare, as because this series (Harper Press Eminent Lives) does.*

What Bryson does above all else, is point out how little we really know about English's greatest writer – he was born in Stratford-upon Avon, produced a family there, went to London, became an actor and writer, returned to Stratford, made a will and died. Virtually everything else about him is conjecture.

Yet Bryson is in no doubt – Shakespeare's plays were written by Shakespeare.

A somewhat different view of the authorship is discussed in *The Shakespeare Secret* by JL Carrell which is a thriller in much the same style as *The Da Vinci Code*. Fast paced, it deals with multiple murders and international chases.

But these are interleaved with scholarly discussions and historical facts relating to the life and times of Shakespeare who may or may not have been the author of the greatest plays ever written, including at least one lost play which was co-authored. I particularly liked the literary explorations.

For those interested in who Shakespeare was and who wrote his plays, I thoroughly recommend *In Search of Shakespeare* which was a major BBC TV series, available on DVD. It is described as "a historical detective story" and was written and presented by Michael Wood.

Over a number of episodes, Wood explores Shakespeare's times, the political background, his loves, his career, his 'lost years' and his plays. It's wonderful!

**Ian Pullar**

**A Sign of the Times**  
On a US Highway Billboard:

**ILLITERATE?**  
**Write for Help**

I have just finished reading *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas* and it is one of those books that you want to tell everyone about as soon as you've read it. It says on the dust cover that to give some clues about the book would spoil the reading of it and it is important that you start to read without knowing what it is about. It is written by John Boyne who takes you on a journey with a nine year old boy. It is a compelling read that stays with you long after the last page.

**Marilyn Caton**



*What's your favourite fairy story?  
The one you told Mum when you  
got home at 3 a.m.*

## Credits

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Outside of a dog, a book is a man's best friend.  
Inside a dog, it's too dark to read.

- Groucho Marx

As a result, the website for the National Library of Victoria is *insideadog*.

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