

# WATERY SAUCES Oldies and Boldies

Newsletter No 59

July 2009

Newsletter of the Water Resources Retirees Association

## Scott Free!

*Members will be aware that, following this year's state election, the government restructured the Public Service, reducing the number of departments to 13 through amalgamations. The Department of Natural Resources and Water was merged with the Environmental Protection Agency to form the Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM). John Bradley was appointed acting DG and Scott Spencer, the former DG was designated Associate Director General. - Ed.*

After the Government's decision, Scott announced that he would leave the public service on May 15<sup>th</sup>.

I was one of more than 100 who attended his farewell at the Public Service Club on May 14<sup>th</sup>. This was a joyous occasion with many of the speakers referring to Scott's work ethic, his enthusiastic approach to work, and to play, his ability to see the essence of complex problems and his considerable networking skills. His passionate support for the Collingwood AFL club was also mentioned by a number of speakers who found Scott's passion somewhat puzzling given Collingwood's modest success over recent years.

Scott's professional background was Economics and the early part of his career was with the Department of Primary Industries where he dealt with the many marketing boards that existed at the time. The very significant reform of these arrangements was referred to as one of Scott's very significant achievements in the early part of his career.

The merger of the Water Resources Commission with the Forestry and Primary Industries departments after the 1989 election created the circumstances in which a number of us first met Scott who even then seemed likely to move up to higher positions. Scott's first significant involvement with water matters was when the Regional Infrastructure Development (RID) group was created within the new department resulting from the merger of the water and land groups with the former Lands Department under Tom Fenwick after the 1986 election. Water development and water reform seemed to be the highest priorities at the time with the Coalition's Water Infrastructure Task Force initiative and the National Water Reform initiative gaining momentum.

Tom was "spot on" selecting Scott to bolster the RID group and I for one certainly felt encouraged whenever Scott was involved. He seemed to grasp the whole range of water issues with ease and always seemed to find ways of moving issues forward. From 1989 onwards, the department was reorganised at frequent intervals and Scott spent periods with the Resource Management Group and with the Premiers Department. It was no surprise to many of us when Scott emerged as Director General after Bob McCarthy (Terry Hogan's successor as DG) was transferred to the Department of Infrastructure during the last reorganisation. Among his many onerous duties, Scott found the time to be Patron of WRRRA.

During Scott's term as DG, the Department continued to provide secretarial support to the Association and Scott or one of his senior staff often attended our AGMs or our lunches at COTAH.

On behalf of members, could I again say thanks to Scott; it was a pleasure to work with you and we appreciated your support as our Patron. Best wishes to you and your family in the years ahead.

At the farewell, I encouraged Scott to join the Retirees Association – I sincerely hope that he does.

**Lee Rogers**

*P.S. Bob McCarthy, former DG of NRM, has also chosen to leave the Public Service after the recent reorganisations. - Ed.*

### From the Editor's Chair

*I would like to add my personal best wishes to Scott Spencer to those of President Lee. In the early days of RID, I answered directly to Scott and still relish the experience. I certainly welcomed his appointment as DG and am sorry to see him go into retirement.*

*I have been told that when the Department of Natural Resources was merged into the new Department of Environment and Resource Management and John Bradley was appointed acting CEO, Scott's wife Muriel went out and bought tickets for an overseas trip!*

*I'm sure they will both enjoy the travel, just as so many other retirees have done. And I trust they will get as much pleasure from their retirement as I hope our members continue to do.*

*Until next time, au reservoir.*

**Ian Pullar, Editor**

## Out and About

The Pullars have returned from their trip to UK and Italy - and a most enjoyable trip it was too. I have included a couple of stories elsewhere although, on the advice of John McKenna who is becoming increasingly jealous about all the tripping members seem to do, I'll limit the news.

Overall the news is limited because I have been out of contact and members have omitted to forward their items of interest.

The Marleys thoroughly enjoyed their pilgrimage to ICOLD in South America, having tacked on more in Europe before, and more in SA (including Macchu Pichu) afterwards.

Peter Gilbey is currently drowning fish bait on Cape York, while Greg Claydon is planning his European trip for 2010, taking in Oberammergau as that is the year for the next performance.

## Annual General Meeting

The AGM was attended by only 17 members and partners. Despite the aspirations of several committee members, the only changes were Geoff Eades replaced Heather Clarke as Vice President and Hein van der Heide joined us as a committee member.

## Mid-year Luncheon

We ventured to the COTAH Restaurant at Southbank for the mid-year luncheon. Although the numbers were disappointing with only 26 members and guests attending, an enjoyable time was had by all. It was pleasing to have SunWater's CEO, Peter Boettcher join us for the first time since he became our Co-patron. Greg Claydon ably represented the Department of Environment and Resource Management and, like Peter, gave us an entertaining and informative address.

A feature of the occasion was a trivia quiz with questions set by Terry Loos. The Peter Gilbey syndicate won the prize for the most correct answers (20 out of 21).

## Program for 2009-10

- \* 7 August - Bowls Day at Aspley (notice enclosed)
- \* 20 October - gathering at Portside with possible film
- \* November (date to be advised) Christmas luncheon at Cotah
- \* February (date to be advised) lunch get-together at the Public Service Club
- \* 22 April AGM at Public Service Club

## Travellers' Tales

*Another few from Terry Loos ...*

### Brno

During the Thirty Years War, 1618-1648, the Swedes were besieging Brno and the Moravians were close to surrendering. It then became known that the Swedes had set themselves a deadline of capturing the city by noon the next day or else they would give up. The locals saved themselves by instructing the bell-ringer at their Sts Peter and Paul Cathedral to ring the bell twelve times at eleven o'clock. The Swedes heard the bells and withdrew. Still today the bells chime 12 at 11 am.

### Cesky Budovice

This town in the southern Czech Republic claims to have brewed the original Budweiser beer. So they now have a court case running against the US brewers. (*When the judgment finally comes down, one of them will be sadder budweiser*).

### Smart Hungarians

Hungarians have invented and discovered many things. The relatively inconspicuous University of Technology and Economics has produced four Nobel prize winners. Enrico Fermi was once asked if he believed that there was a super-intelligent race out there somewhere in the universe and if so, what chance they would land on earth? He replied, 'They already have - they are the Hungarians'.

However, Hungary has lost several wars and ceded territory. It is the only country that is entirely surrounded by what it once was.

*...and one from our recent rip to Italy ...*

### A tale difficult to digest

Frederick II (1196-1250) became King of Sicily at the age of 4 and Holy Roman Emperor subsequently. In adulthood, he suffered badly from indigestion and stomach complaints for which his doctors could provide no relief. A new physician asked what he did immediately after his regular large midday meal. The king replied that he rode to hunt, just as his father Henry and his grandfather Frederick I had done. The physician suggested that a post-prandial rest might aid his digestion. Initially Frederick scoffed at the idea but, being naturally curious, he decided to conduct an experiment. He brought two condemned prisoners from prison, had them bathed, groomed and sumptuously dressed before presenting them with a huge midday meal. After the meal, one was sent to ride and hunt and the other requested to sleep. After some hours when one had returned from the ride and the other had awoken, Frederick had them both put to death and the contents of their stomachs examined to see which had the better digestion. It was, of course, the sleeper. So Frederick decreed that henceforth his entire court would sleep after dinner - the origin of the siesta which is still practised today.

Very sadly, I have to report the passing of several people.

Editha, wife of erstwhile Commission Secretary Colin George Taggart, died in May.

Bob Dwyer, former Senior Draftsman in Designs Branch, died in May at the age of 80. The many tributes at his funeral testified to the high regard in which he was held in his church and community. It happened that his funeral at Belbowrie took place in torrential rain and attendees took hours to get home because of extensive flooding.

On June 5, the death also occurred of Barry Lennon at the age of 75. Barry worked on a number of Commission projects including Beardmore Dam (see a note on page 3) and Bundaberg Irrigation Area as a Mechanical Foreman. His father Frank was also an employee of the Commission, having been a Works Supervisor, originally on the Border River Weirs immediately post World War II. He later served in Goondiwindi, returning to construction at Coolmunda Dam. He stayed on there as Storage Supervisor until his retirement to Toowoomba in 1977 where he died in 1993.

Marlene Brand (wife of Merv Brand, Construction Cost Clerk) died of lung cancer on 22 June. Marlene was always active in organising social activities on the construction camps.

## Thirty four years later ...

*Pat McCourt and his wife Ros have joined the ranks of overseas travellers as Pat recounts below. - Ed.*

I'd been working for eight years in the Department of Local Government by 1974 and I felt like a change, so I started looking around. The Hong Kong Waterways Authority was hiring engineers at the time and wanted people with a background in municipal water supply and sewerage, and environmental management. I'd done a bit of all of that, and I decided to apply for a job even though I was in the last year of my engineering degree which I was studying at night at the Central Technical College. This eventually became the Queensland Institute of Technology, and later the Queensland University of Technology. To my great surprise, I was offered a job. I wrote back to say that I wasn't quite an engineer yet. This didn't bother the Authority as they promptly replied that they knew all that; I had been passing my subjects and would surely pass my last year; and that I had a firm job offer.

I read this letter one night in my boarding house. I had also received another letter telling me that I had passed my final engineering year. I decided that I would not accept the job in Hong Kong because I simply didn't have the courage or confidence. I can clearly recall thinking that night that I may very well regret my moral cowardice. However, this experience sparked an interest in China that never left me, and I have read a great deal about one of the most ancient of civilisations over the last three decades.

My wife and I were having a yarn last year about what to do with my holidays, and I suggested that we go to China. And so, 34 years late, we flew into Hong Kong in October. Hong Kong can be translated as "Fragrant Harbour", and the occasional odour from that magnificent harbour made me wonder if the Chinese had been keeping it that way just for me to arrive at last and begin improving the water quality. Of course, the name has nothing to do with my delusional ideas. It is thought to reflect the manufacture of incense sticks which was an industry on part of the island a longer time ago than when I was considering a career change.

We stayed at the Eaton Hotel on Kowloon side which lies up Nathan Road near Pak Hoi Street and Gascoigne Road. Hotel tariffs in Hong Kong/Kowloon aren't cheap. But the Eaton was very good

during our four days there, and the staff treated us well. We had organised a tour of Hong Kong island before we left home, and it was well worth the money although the much vaunted laser show at night along the harbour was disappointing. We got around quite a bit ourselves by cab, bus, and underground rail. Cabs are especially cheap, and the rail service is extremely efficient and easy to use. Ocean Park is well worth a visit, and there are pandas there too. Dave Dewar's tip about waiting until you get to China to exchange Aussie dollars for Hong Kong dollars and Chinese yuan is spot on. Also, don't expect ATMs in mainland China to always have money in them. All our hotels exchanged currency at reasonable rates.

Then it was off to Shanghai where we visited the famous Bund, Yu Gardens, a cruise on the Huangpu River, and a trip into the country to the canal town of Wuzhen. We also went for a ride on the Maglev train which has a top speed of around 413km/hour. We travelled to Xian to see the terracotta warriors; the Little Wild Goose Pagoda; the old city wall; and prowled around the bazaar in the Muslim quarter where we bargained furiously like old China hands. "Xian" means the City of Western Peace. Using a slot toilet there provided a diverting experience.

Beijing had the Imperial City with a large picture of Mao Zedong on the front wall; the Temple of Heaven; the Great Wall at Joyongguan Pass; the Summer Palace; and Tiananmen Square. Visiting the Great Wall requires some degree of physical fitness as it has to be climbed, not walked. I have no idea how soldiers ran up and down the very steep battlements clad in armour and carrying swords, spears, and shields. We also took in some classical Chinese theatre in Beijing and Xian at which our party were the only ones applauding the excellent acts. The quality of the museums wherever we went was of an excellent standard. Then it was back to Hong Kong and home after two very enjoyable weeks.

So what am I doing with myself? I'm planning retirement in July this year after 43 years of work, although I'll probably do some part-time work for a while if someone is desperate enough to take me on. I've got no complaints or regrets about my career, and I rate my 10 years in the Commission and DPI very highly. I've spent about the same time in local government with Pine Rivers Shire Council which was amalgamated into Moreton Bay Regional Council, and I have enjoyed engineering life there equally well.

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## Barry Lennon Remembered.

I had the privilege of working with Barry at Beardmore Dam in 1970-71. John Moreton had moved to Maroon Dam and I became the Project Engineer for the later stages of construction. The stainless steel plates for the 12 spillway gates and for the bulkhead gate which were fabricated at the Rocklea Workshops began to arrive and I started to contemplate how they might be installed to the very high level of accuracy specified on the drawings.

Someone mentioned that Barry might have been involved in installing similar plates for Coolmunda Dam so over to the workshop I went to see whether he had any ideas. He had more than ideas! He proceeded to show me a set of steel templates he had already made which would check whether the surface of each plate was in exactly the correct position relative to each of the other plates. On each template, there were two small notches to be lined up with tensioned piano wires extending vertically from the top to the bottom of each

pier so that the plates would be in exactly the right position for the 20 foot high by 42 foot wide gates. Added to that, Barry had hand made a set of spanners that could easily reach around behind the plates to the adjusting bolts that were to hold the plates in place. But he made it clear that the Project Engineer had to check that every plate was in position within the specified tolerances.

And so for some months, we followed a routine; George Toone would set the marks for the piano wires, and Barry and an offsider, clambering up and down the scaffolding erected beside every pier, would install the plates. I had to check them with Barry's templates and a straight edge.

Barry probably thought that the ultimate test would be when the gates were installed and the dam filled – would they be drop tight?

I fully expected that they would be and they were! Very well done Barry Lennon.

**Lee Rogers**

## Reminiscences of the Early Days of the Emerald Irrigation Area

*Continuing the memoirs of Peter Bevin and Bob McDonald.*

### **Staff matters in those early days**

On the engineering side, Wilton Boyd started things off as the first design engineer in late 1968. Over the following years, there was a series of young engineers fresh from university on rotation to learn the ropes and students on vocational training (including Chris Robson) - all trying to come to grips with the climate, the dust and flies, the layout of the country side and the sticky black soil. Later, relatively more experienced engineers like Peter Jones, David Shaw, Doug Flanders and Tim Smith did their share of channel, pipeline and farm layout design work. Tim also worked on construction at Fairbairn, and returned later as the District Engineer in Emerald.

Graeme Woods was the first Senior Draftsman in 1969 but he left when he decided to do a commercial pilot course and fly passenger planes. Bob (McDonald) was appointed to the position at the end of 1970 and the final occupant from early 1973 was Neil Whittaker. At just over 24 years old, Neil was then probably the youngest person ever to be promoted to that level. Later on, Neil completed his Bachelor of Business, moved through various areas of the public service, and recently was Acting Director General, Department of Corrective Services.

Recruiting staff in Emerald was not easy, as most school leavers were not in the mood to hang around in dry old Emerald. A recruiting trip to the high school at the end of each year was not always productive as students always anticipated they would get university entrance qualifications. When this didn't happen, a second approach was more successful. We didn't have many 'experienced' people in the office and anyone over 30 was regarded as an 'old person'.

We were fortunate that Ken Hyland approached Norm White in Rocky for a job as a draftsman and before he knew it he was out with us providing some much needed drafting support. However, Ken also departed to do a pilot's course and flew for many years (maybe he is still flying?) with the Aerial Ambulance out of Rocky. We know from the TV news that Ken once skilfully dropped a faulty single engine plane with a road accident victim on board into a pineapple field while flying from Rocky to Brisbane - because he gave the reporter a serve when he asked what happened. When he was in the Emerald office, he also served as an auxiliary ambulance officer, and would from time to time, be called away to some horrific road accidents on the mind numbing country highways around Emerald to tend to the badly injured. No need for counselling as he had the ability to come straight back to work as though nothing had happened.

In the drawing office, John Wright, Wayne Reinke (afterwards a long time Ayr office worker), John Daniels (now a Senior Manager in DPI), Miles Day (never seen again), Eileen Ansty (Wright) who later worked in Eton for many years, all passed through the Emerald Office. One young cadet draftsman, Gordon (Goldie) Paton transferred to us from Bundaberg and spent many

years in the Emerald Office providing useful services before moving onto Head Office. Likewise, we think that around that time Jon Burchill also followed a similar path as Emerald then offered opportunities to young draftsmen keen to advance their careers.

Relieving officers were hard to get and when we did get them they would be invited from house to house for dinner most nights. Some couldn't stand the strain of continual late nights and other effects. Apart from some welcome visits from Stu Robinson, Don Beattie and Stan Ross, we seemed to be fairly isolated from the hierarchy in Brisbane at that time. Commissioner Fred Haigh was a regular visitor to both the dam under construction and the design office in Emerald.

The culture changed many years later when water started flowing in the channels. Water Officers and maintenance staff arrived on the scene and the requirements for design staff contracted.

### **Staff housing and accommodation**

The availability of a new house at a reasonable rent (less than \$8 a week from memory) was often a decider in attracting staff to work for us in the office. The IWSC (as it was in those days) built perhaps eight or ten houses with one being allocated to single staff.

Fortunately, the likes of Keith Mackenzie and Dennis Howarth-Crewdson made sure the single staff house was kept spick and span so we had no problem in maintaining its use for that purpose. Keith was yet another staff member who left us to become a pilot - what was there about this group that so many left for such a new life? Evaporative air-conditioners were an absolute necessity on hot summer nights when temperatures didn't fall all that much below 30 degrees. And for the same reason a lot of us took out a season's ticket at the town swimming pool.

Bob remembers that floor varnish was provided to us by the department but we had to punch all the floor nails, putty the holes and paint it ourselves. Old photos of the Racecourse Road houses remind us that there was no vegetation on the hot dry ground when we arrived. We constructed our own gardens and lawns from scratch.

The distribution of houses around the town was a good idea - and probably helped us to integrate into Emerald life just that much easier. In fact, on reflection, staff did integrate very well by joining and supporting many service clubs and the like around town. *To be continued ...*

### **Lord and Master**

Naturally one expects the staff of an organisation to show due respect for the senior officers, but is it possible that DERM has gone just a little too far recently? A staff member was instructed that she was to act as Executive Assistant to Assistant Director General Christ Robson.

## Sternes' Smatterings

*Continuing Phil Sternes' memories of 40 years of service. - Ed.*

### Gone bananas

It's fair to say that when I started with the IWS as a labourer in 1969 going to work in the minister's office was not something one could've expected even if one was actually aware that such a person as "The Minister" existed. But that happened in September 1991 during our DPI days when I replaced Warren Hutton as ministerial liaison officer for water, land use and fisheries. Fisheries was in the mix because, as the then minister Ed Casey said, "Fish swim in water."

Now things weren't nearly as cut and dried as I imagined they would be and this soon became obvious. Warren was dealing with an issue in the Daintree where a fellow, who in a past life had been an art dealer in London, had set up an organic banana farm. Warren briefed me on the issue which was a request by this person to be exempt from the provisions of the particular act which regulated hen quotas in Queensland.

This gentleman apparently had 5,000 chooks on his banana farm which he said were there to provide weed control and fertiliser for the bananas. Of course the by-product of this component of his farming system was a lot of eggs which to avoid waste, he wanted to sell. Now the production of eggs was then controlled by one of those orderly marketing mechanisms beloved by generations of rural producers and to sell eggs one had to possess a quota for a given number of laying hens. Anything over 20 could not be kept for commercial purposes without purchasing a quota and our erstwhile banana farmer was not in the possession of an appropriate quota and was apparently unwilling to make the costly purchase of one to legitimise his production.

Things dragged on for the couple of weeks during the handover period between Warren and me with correspondence flying backwards and forwards without anything being resolved. Warren returned to the Department, obviously relieved that he didn't have to handle this one anymore. Then the issue died or so we thought.

Unbeknown to us the Hen Quota Committee, which sat in judgement on these matters, had decided to act and had issued a directive for the gentleman to dispose of his excess chooks or have them seized. Forewarned, the former art dealer alerted the 7:30 Report who were on hand to film the raid by an officer of the Hen Quota Committee and the Mossman police. Much dramatic footage was shown the next night on TV together with emotive commentary about the heavy-handed nature of bureaucracy both from the reporter and our wild-eyed former art dealer.

Then the phones started ringing. All that day and most of the next, people called in from all over Australia condemning the "brutality" associated with the removal of the offending chooks (the footage of the raid had shown one dead chook as evidence). One nice American backpacker in Melbourne spent an hour on a public phone pleading for intervention on behalf of the chooks and offering all sorts of remedies to resolve the situation.

Then it all blew over except for an exchange of views between the Chair of the Quota Committee and the Minister about the bad publicity generated and the lack of warning that the raid was to take place. This left me wondering what the hell this had to do with water and indeed fish.

On to the next issue - or so I thought.

One day I received a call from the electorate secretary of an MP in the Cairns area about a complaint she had received from a resident of the Daintree. Apparently the son of this person had supposedly been affected by the aerial spraying of bananas on a neighbouring property and she wanted to know what could be done to ameliorate the situation. I undertook to talk to a relevant person in the Department, find out what was going on and check whether things were kosher.

The electorate secretary then conveyed to the complainant that a Phil Sternes was looking into the matter and would be back in touch with some information. Whereupon the complainant informed the electorate secretary that she had once been the girlfriend of a Phil Sternes. When the electorate secretary informed me of this I did indeed remember a person of the name given from my school days though not in the capacity she stated.

The electorate secretary then invited me to contact her directly and convey the information I'd obtained so far. This I did and after a catch-up about old times we proceeded to business. Apparently she was camped in a caravan with the son who was being affected by the aerial spraying that was taking place on her neighbour's property. This was owned by no less than the former London art dealer and now organic banana grower and frustrated chook herder.

A few weeks later I received a call from a DPI agricultural chemical inspector who had been out to the property and conducted an audit of the chemical use. Everything appeared above board though the chemicals being used were of a synthetic nature. This didn't exactly tie-in with the supposedly organic nature of the business.

I called my now reacquainted friend with this information, however she decided she didn't want to make any waves as her son often played with the young daughter of the neighbour and was prepared to let the matter rest. While speaking to her I heard a disturbance in the background and she interrupted the call to investigate. Picking-up the call again she informed me that she had visitors and that it was always wise to check who was calling because they didn't wear clothes around the camp.

All of a sudden I was lost for words. Here was I sitting in a high rise in Brisbane wearing collar and tie with the trains coming and going from Roma Street Station close by and talking on the phone to a naked woman deep in the Daintree rainforest. Quite surreal indeed.

In the wash-up I conveyed the substance of all that had happened back to the electorate secretary who subsequently informed me that it had been a topic for discussion at the monthly electorate secretaries lunch and had generated much mirth. Not the notoriety you want and so much for organic bananas.

In a postscript to this, some months later again an article appeared in "The Bulletin" about a major art heist in the Daintree. Apparently a large number of art prints supposedly worth between \$550,000 and \$2.5 million had been stolen from behind a sofa in the home of you guessed it, our former London art dealer. The saga of the chooks got equal billing as apparently they had not yet recovered from the ordeal of the raid: "the birds have gone off laying". To my knowledge the prints were never recovered and I suppose the chooks are still running free in the Daintree.

*To be continued ...*

## Travelling Round

*Continuing the adventures of Hein and Francoise Van der Heide. - Ed*

### Broome to Denham – August 2008

After travelling some 600km along the edge of the Great Sandy Desert (minimal vegetation cover along the way), we came to Port Hedland. The WA Resource Boom was very evident here. Iron Ore loading facilities dominate the skyline. In the harbour, four iron ore carriers can be loaded at once with as much as 170,000 tonnes of ore per ship, with a turn around of 24 hrs – subject to the tides. Almost every building in the vicinity is covered with a layer of red dust – ‘Pilbara Red’.

Although it was a 400+km round trip, we drove down to see the iconic ‘Marble Bar’. In the 1920s the town recorded some 160 successive days where the max temp was over 100 F (38.7 C), thus claiming itself to be the ‘hottest town in Australia’. Just out of town is the ‘marble bar’, which is actually a (quite spectacular) jasper bar in the creek, which was assumed to be marble when it was first sighted.

Then onto Karatha and Dampier, with similar iron ore loading facilities as at Port Hedland. Apart from seeing more of the WA resources boom areas, we also went inland to see the Millstream & Chichester NPs. Again great escarpment views, waterfall plunge pools and spring fed ‘oasis’ streams in this dry and rocky red/brown country that only has a rainfall of 250mm per year (Dec to Feb).

We then back-trekking to Port Hedland and went inland to Tom Price to visit the Karijini NP. Tom Price, along with the adjacent Town of Newman, are the sources of the iron ore. We did a tour of the massive Tom Price Mine site, where they are now digging out 28M tonnes of ore a year. Everything is on a large scale – the ore trains are some 2.5km long consisting of over 230 ore carriages, holding a total of more than 30,00 tonnes per train. A train can be loaded in a bit over an hour, which then takes 5 hours to get to Dampier – all operating at 24hrs per day.

A complete change was the Karijini NP. We viewed and walked (clambered) down into a number of gorges to see waterfalls, red escarpments, pristine spring fed pools and rocky creek beds – another great ‘WOW’ factor. Unfortunately we also had to climb back up – with some sections being fairly challenging.

After leaving Tom Price we spent a week in Exmouth. Definitely one of the places we want to come back to. Exmouth is on the eastern side of Exmouth Gulf - a huge expanse of water (some 50 x 80 km). To the west of Exmouth is the narrow (20 km wide) Cape Range NP, which becomes the Ningaloo Marine Park off the west coast – surely ‘a piece of paradise on earth’. We saw whales in both the gulf and in the ocean. The NP has some fantastic canyons carved into the range. On the northern tip of the peninsula is a naval base covered in 300 m high communication towers. One of the highlights would have to be the beaches on the western side – crystal clear water and white sand - with Turquoise Beach being the top spot. The other highlight – which we didn’t do – is to go snorkelling on the reefs, which are literally just metres offshore. The reason is that it was still winter time, although the air temp got up to some 25 deg – the water was still freezing (unless you were from Melbourne, etc.). At the southern end of the Marine Park is a significant gorge carved back into the range, with the novelty that it is navigable (some 3 to 6 m deep) but it is salt

water, as it is open to the ocean – a relic of previous falling and rising sea levels.

We then spent 3 days in Coral Bay (just over 100 km south of Exmouth) – another beautiful (and as yet unspoilt) part of the world. It is another place that is hard to get into, as people from Perth pack up and camp in Coral bay for 2 to 3 months of the winter period. As the Bay is also a Marine Park, the fish are almost tame and come into shore (expecting to be fed) when you wade into the water.

On to Carnarvon, where we enjoyed the historical aspects of the town & district. Then a 70 km trip north along the rugged coastline where there is a memorial cairn to the sailors lost on the HMAS Sydney. It was believed that it was due west of here that the Sydney sank, but the remains of the Sydney were recently found off Steep Point (see later), which is some 150 km south of here. There were also some significant blowholes just to the south of here – fairly spectacular, even with a moderate ocean swell.

Our next stop was Denham, in the World Heritage listed Shark Bay. At the southern end of the Bay is Hamelin Pool, an old Telegraph Station where calcified sea shells (only 5 to 10 mm in size) were quarried as building stone at the turn of the century. The calcified layer is more than 6 m deep in places, and adjacent beach areas consist solely of these sea shells, which as a renewable resource are ‘harvested’ for their lime content. Hamelin Pool also is one of the few places in the world where there are still living Stromatolites – some of the earliest form of life on earth – this is due to the super saline nature of the water at the southern end of the bay.

Monkey Mia is just 25 km east across the Peron Peninsula from Denham – nice, but because of the massive numbers wanting to see the feeding of the dolphins, the whole experience is somewhat ‘controlled’ and thereby over-commercialised.

The highlight for me was a trip to Steep Point – the most westerly point on the Australian Mainland. It is only some 50 km west of Denham, but it is all across the waters of Shark Bay. We were aware of a small tour operator in Denham who runs irregular trips to Steep Point, but he needs 4 people before he will consider doing the trip. It is a 12 hr, 400+ km trip, which costs \$170 pp – so takers need to be ‘like minded’. Anyhow after a fair bit of ‘on again : off again’ we did make the trip, and we did stand on the most western point of the mainland! However there was a mishap on the way home, when the steering arm bracket broke as we negotiated a steep and rocky section of the coastal track. The LandCruiser wouldn’t be going anywhere without significant repairs. A SatPhone did get through to the NP Ranger, who was over an hour’s drive away. The Ranger picked us up and transported us back to his house. Phone calls were made to get us back to Denham by sea, air and land – all proved fruitless on the Sunday night of Father’s Day, until they finally were able to contact a friend who agreed to drive out from Denham (a 2 hr trip). We finally got back to Denham at 11 pm and a 12 hr day had turned into an 18 hr day – but a ‘good time was had by all’. *To be continued ...*

## Who's Who in the Zoo

*Members appear to somewhat confused by the multiplicity of agencies with a role in the (government sector of the) water industry. In an attempt to clarify the situation I am publishing this article which explains the role of the various agencies. My gratitude to Greg Claydon and particularly to Pushpa Onta who provided the text. - Ed.*

### **Department of Environment and Resource Management (DERM)**

DERM combines the former Department of Natural Resources and Water and Environmental Protection Agency and is responsible for securing the quality and supply of water and preparing for the impacts of climate change. Its core functions include water resource planning and allocation; development of regulatory frameworks and policies for sustainable water management; regulation of water and sewerage service providers, drinking water and recycled water quality and referable dams; regional water supply planning, water infrastructure planning and drought contingency outside South East Queensland (SEQ); and water monitoring, accounting and other water management matters such as pricing and trading systems, and protection of environmental assets.

#### **Queensland Water Commission (QWC)**

QWC's role is to ensure sustainable water supplies in SEQ by developing long term regional water supply strategies, implementing regional water security programs including establishing the SEQ Water Grid and facilitating infrastructure development, implementing water restrictions, and managing water demand. It also ensures compliance with programs and water restrictions, regulates operations of the Grid, and provides advice on water pricing, institutional reform and drought emergencies in SEQ.

#### **SunWater**

As a Queensland government-owned corporation (GOC), SunWater provides a range of services including infrastructure (storage and distribution) ownership, water delivery, operation and maintenance of water infrastructure and engineering consultancy services. SunWater supplies approximately 40% of the water used commercially in Queensland via 23 water supply schemes supporting regional Queensland communities.

### **The Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP)/Coordinator-General (CG)**

DIP/CG is responsible for detailed planning and delivery of major new infrastructure, and oversight of contracts and delivery including environmental impact assessment.

#### **Queensland Water Infrastructure (QWI)**

QWI is a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) established to progress the feasibility and potential design and construction of several major water infrastructure projects in SEQ. These projects include Wyaralong and Traveston dams, Cedar Grove weir (completed) and Bromelton Offstream Storage (completed).

### **The Department of Local Government, Sport and Recreation (DLGSR)**

DLGSR administers state subsidies to the Local Governments' water and sewerage infrastructure projects.

#### **Queensland Health**

QH sets health related standards for water quality and manages public health incidents.

## **SEQ Water Entities**

A number of State Government owned water entities established under the *South East Queensland Water (Restructuring) Act 2007* have been operating since 1 July 2008 and are briefly described below. The new institutional arrangements in SEQ will also include the Local Government owned SEQ Distribution Entity (Interim) and three Retail Entities (expected to be established by 1 July 2010). An alternative water reform model proposed by the Council of Mayors (SEQ) is currently being considered by the State Government.

### **SEQ Water Grid Manager (SEQWGM)**

Its role is to maintain regional water security by supplying water at the required level of service throughout the SEQ region. SEQWGM oversees operation of Grid functions and flow of water around the Grid. It purchases bulk water and water transport services, and sells water to retail businesses.

### **Queensland Bulk Water Supply Authority, seqwater**

Its role is to capture, store and treat water through ownership and management of dams, weirs and treatment plants throughout SEQ. It supplies water to SEQWGM and some rural customers. It is also responsible for catchment management and water quality for these assets.

### **Queensland Manufactured Water Authority, WaterSecure**

It manages the Gold Coast Desalination Plant and the Western Corridor Recycled Water Project, and supplies manufactured water to the SEQWGM and power stations.

### **Queensland Bulk Water Transport Authority, LinkWater**

Its role is to manage, operate and maintain bulk water assets inherited from SEQ councils. Currently, LinkWater moves water from dams and other water sources through some 500km of potable bulk water pipelines, including 23 water reservoirs and 14 pump stations.

### **SEQ Distribution Entity (Proposed)**

Collectively owned by SEQ councils, it will own and manage the distribution network including water and sewerage reticulation pipes, reservoirs, pumps and sewerage treatment plants.

### **SEQ Retail Entities (Proposed)**

These Local Government owned businesses will provide water supply and sewerage disposal services to SEQ households and businesses. They will charge for, bill and market water and wastewater services. They will purchase treated water from the SEQWGM and contract and pay the distribution business to deliver water and wastewater services to customers.

## **Changes at the Commission**

In the previous Newsletter, it was reported that John Bradley, former CEO of QWC, had been appointed Acting Director-General of the new Department of Environment and Resource Management. He is still acting, pending a permanent appointment to the position.

The three former Commissioners, Elizabeth Nosworthy, Jamie Quinn and David Green have completed their contracts. The government has appointed a sole commissioner in their stead. She is Mary Boydell, formerly from the Gladstone Area Water Board. QWC has also been in the news concerning its budget.

Barry Dennien, who joined the Commission from Brisbane City Council, is acting in the position of Grid Manager.

# HEALTH *and beauty*

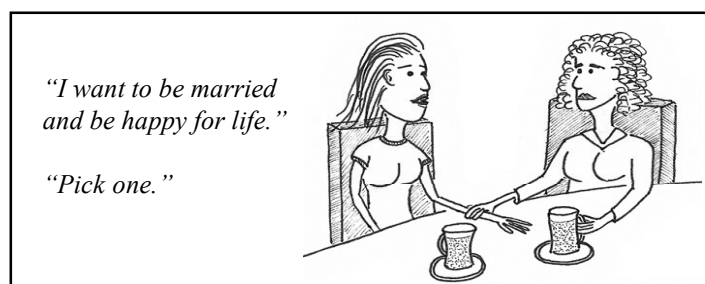
There is still no cure for the common cold and, over the years, some of our members must have concluded that the same could be said for a malady which afflicted them even more frequently – a hangover. Of course mankind has had millennia during which it has sought a cure and, as a special service to those members whom age has not wearied and are still in need of same, I offer some suggestions they might care to try – apart from ridiculous suggestions like abstinence.

Mexicans swear by menudo (boiled tripe) first thing in the morning. Fatty, high-calorie foods like menudo have long figured among the most popular homespun hangover cures. The ancient Romans ate deep-fried canaries. The Greeks, on the other hand, found relief by eating sheep's lungs. Among the ancients generally, eating boiled cabbage before a binge was widely thought to be the best preventative. One prescription from the Mediaeval period touts the combination of eel and bitter almonds.

Sicilian men used to rely on eating dried bull's penis to shake off the haze from a long night on the vino. We can be thankful to the Italians for all kinds of good things including wine – but a great hangover cure probably isn't one of them.

But as far as historical hangover cures go, probably the most repulsive is drinking rabbit-poop tea. There are tales of all sorts of heroes of the Wild West tending their hangovers with this vile concoction. Even though it was good enough for Billy the Kid, members would probably still prefer the worst hangover in the world!

*The Times* on 12 May 2009 reported that British medical scientists, through experimentation, have found that acupuncture has achieved substantially better results in treating back pain than conventional methods. The only problem is that patients subjected to placebo acupuncture using toothpicks that don't actually pierce the skin have achieved equally good results!



## Exercise those Brain Cells

Grsmr kxcgob sc mybbomd?

- (a) Ylfsyecvi xyd drsc yxo.
- (b) Pybqod sd.
- (c) Iye kbo k qyyn qeoccob.
- (d) Kxydrob sxknoaekdo kddowzd.



In maths, an amicable pair consists of two numbers each of which is equal to the sum of the divisors of the other. The smallest ones, 220 and 284, were regarded by the Pythagoreans as symbols of true friendship.

## Spin

*We hear a lot these days about politicians employing spin doctors and in fact, many of us former beurocrats would have to admit to gilding the lily for the government of the day. But nothing in my experience comes anywhere near the following story sent to me by Ian Ferrier. - Ed.*

It just all depends on how you look at some things...

Judy Wallman, a professional genealogy researcher in southern California, was doing some personal work on her own family tree. She discovered that her ancestor Remus Reid, was hanged for horse stealing and train robbery in Montana in 1889. On the back of the picture Judy obtained during her research is this inscription: 'Remus Reid, horse thief, sent to Montana Territorial Prison 1885, escaped 1887, robbed the Montana Flyer six times. Caught by Pinkerton detectives, convicted and hanged in 1889.'



Remus Reid was also the great-great uncle of Congressman Harry Reid. So Judy recently e-mailed Harry Reid seeking more information about their great-great uncle. Believe it or not, Harry Reid's staff sent back the following biographical sketch for her genealogy research: "Remus Reid was a famous cowboy in the Montana Territory. His business empire grew to include acquisition of valuable equestrian assets and intimate dealings with the Montana railroad. Beginning in 1883, he devoted several years of his life to government service, finally taking leave to resume his dealings with the railroad. In 1887, he was a key player in a vital investigation run by the renowned Pinkerton Detective Agency. In 1889, Remus passed away during an important civic function held in his honor when the platform upon which he was standing collapsed." NOW THAT's how it's done, Folks! That's real POLITICAL SPIN

## Solutions to last edition's puzzle

The problem was to find the next member of the sequence  
 $10^3$   $10^{12}$   $10^{48}$   $10^2$   $10^0$  ?

The sequence is A, B, C, D, E, F as represented by  
 $10^3$  or thousand, the smallest number in the English language containing an A;  
 $10^{12}$  or an English **B**illion;  
 $10^{48}$  an o**C**tillion;  
 $10^2$  a hun**D**red;  
 $10^0$  on**E**.

The next letter is an F so the number must be **4**.



## A Senior Moment

*The following was sent to me by John Morse whose son came across it in the Painswick Times, published in the Cotswolds, in England. - Ed.*

*In these straitened times, we might all perhaps spare a thought for those poor bankers and the customers they have to put up with. The following letter was actually written by a 98 year old lady to her bank.*

Dear Sir

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my cheque with which I endeavoured to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, three 'nanoseconds' must have elapsed between his presenting the cheque and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honour it. I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my Pension, an arrangement which, I admit, has been in place for only eight years. You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity and also for debiting my account £30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank.

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant financial ways.

I noticed that whereas I personally attend to your telephone calls and letters, when I try to contact you, I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, re-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become. From now on I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person. My mortgage and loan payments will therefore and hereafter no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank by cheque. addressed personally and confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate.

Be aware that it is an offence under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope.

Please find attached an Application Contact Status which I require your chosen employee to complete. I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative. Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Solicitor and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof.

In due course, I will issue your employee with a PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me. I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modelled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my account balance on your phone bank service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further. When you call me, press buttons as follows:

- 1 To make an appointment to see me.
2. To query a missing payment.
3. To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there.
4. To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping.
5. To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature.
6. To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home.
7. To leave a message on my computer (a password to access my computer is required. A password will be communicated to you at a later date to the Authorized Contact).
8. To return to the main menu and listen to options 1 through 8.
9. To make a general complaint or inquiry, the contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service.

While this may, on occasion, involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will pay for the duration of the call.

Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement. May I wish you a happy, if ever so slightly less prosperous, New Year.

Your Humble Client

*It almost makes you feel sympathy for the bank, doesn't it? But then again ...*

## A Sign of the Times

On a highway billboard:

**All those who hate speeding tickets,  
raise your right foot.**

## How Come – ?

Commonly, immediately before a theatrical performance, well-wishers exhort the actors to "break a leg." While this is intended as a wish for good luck, it sounds quite the reverse. So what is the origin of this extraordinary phrase? It appears that no one really knows and a number of explanations have been put forward.

Some claim that the expression originates from the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln in Ford's Theatre on 14 April 1865. His murderer, John Wilkes Booth, a renowned Shakespearean actor, broke his leg when jumping onto the stage to make his escape.

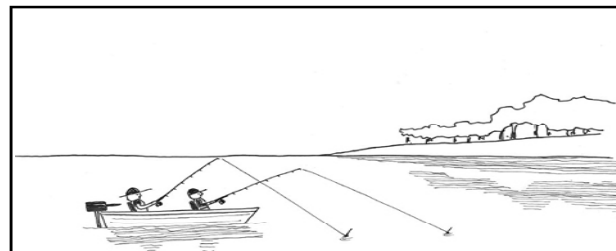
In fact the phrase was known centuries before that event. Perhaps the expression arose because the measure of success of a performance was the number of times the actors had to take a bow in response to the applause, greatly increasing the chance of breaking a leg.

Others would have it that it was a back-handed wish (like many Australian sayings) as an example of black humour.

Apparently Germans enlarge on the malediction, wishing the actors to break their necks as well! The reasoning appears to be aimed at deflecting the jealous forces that are always present and only too anxious to spoil any venture. A good luck wish would alert them and provoke them to do their nefarious work, while a curse would encourage them to turn their attention elsewhere. The underlying principle is that if you wish evil, then good will come.

Yet another explanation is that if the actors please the audience, they will rock with laughter and break the legs of their chairs!

You can take your pick of these explanations. Just remember that to wish actors "good luck" prior to a performance will bring them grief just like mentioning the name of "the Scottish Play".



*"My wife and I have been slowly drifting apart."  
"That's terrible!"  
"Especially when I'm so impatient!"*

## Book Club

While we were in England where my interest in history and the crime novel genre was well known to our hosts, I was given *Revelation* by C. J. Sansom to read.

The novel is set during the latter part of the reign of Henry VIII. Religious tensions abound following Henry's dissolution of the monasteries, with conservative clergy vying with protestant reformists for supremacy and each denouncing the other as heretics. Having disposed of Catherine Howard, wife number five, the king has turned his attention to Catherine Parr, a widow known to have reformist tendencies. She is uncertain whether it is more dangerous to refuse or accept the king's suit.

Against this background, hunch-backed lawyer Matthew Shardlake agrees to represent a mentally ill teenage boy locked in Bedlam for his maniacal public praying. For this offence, the boy runs the risk of being burnt as a heretic.

When an old friend and colleague of Matthew's is found with his throat cut and a spate of similar crimes is discovered, the lawyer finds himself embroiled in the chase for a serial killer obsessed with the Book of Revelation.

Both the plotting and characterisation are attended to in meticulous detail, making this Tudor mystery as gripping as any modern thriller. The book has been praised by many a reviewer. It is the fourth in a continuing series featuring Master Shardlake. I will certainly be on the lookout for its predecessors.

A contemporary English novel which also deals with royalty is *The Uncommon Reader* by Alan Bennett. We had the pleasure of hearing it read by the author as a talking book. The following blurb is taken from the CD's jacket.

"It was the corgis' fault. When they strayed through the grounds of Buckingham Palace, the Queen discovered the City of Westminster travelling library.

"The Queen had never had much time for reading – pleasures always come second place to duty – 'though now one is here I suppose one ought to borrow a book.' She is about to discover the joys of literature, albeit late in life.

"One book leads to another and the Queen is soon engrossed in the delights of reading. However, this uncommon reader creates an uncommon problem. The royal household dislikes the Queen's new interest; it makes them uneasy. Books are devices that ignite the imagination. And devices like that are likely to explode."

The story is redolent with typical Bennett wryness and most enjoyable.

**Ian Pullar**

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## Playing About

While we were in London, we inevitably found our way to the west end, where we joined a guided tour of the Theatre Royal Drury Lane (it is actually in Catherine Street as it has been rebuilt many times but the old location stuck). After a twelve year ban on theatres under Cromwell's Commonwealth, the Theatre Royal was established in 1663 under the auspices of Charles II (who of course was rather fond of one Nell Gwyn who worked there). The theatre survived the Great Fire of London but burned down a year later. It was taken over by playwright/politician Richard Brinsley Sheridan who built a huge theatre on the site. To protect it from fire, he installed a vast water tank above the stage and an iron fire curtain. Some 14 years later, the theatre burned down because nobody had remembered to fill the water tank and, from lack of use, the fire curtain was inoperable because of rust. P.S. Ever since, during interval, fire curtains are lowered and raised in London theatres.

We also attended several productions, one of which is as good a piece of theatre as we have ever seen (and we have seen plenty). The play is titled *Warhorse* and is based on a children's novel by Michael Morpurgo. It tells of a Devon boy who raises and trains a foal which is acquired, along with thousands of others, to take part in World War I. The boy is determined to save Joey and eventually, despite being under-age, reaches the Western Front where horses are being slaughtered as they charge the heavily armoured German positions.

In the play, the horses are puppets, brilliantly created and manipulated. With a large cast and the most imaginative effects, the whole production is superb. If you are in London, don't miss it. It is so good that the English couples sitting on either side of us actually spoke to us during interval!

**Ian Pullar**

## Credits

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