# Watery Sauces Oldies and Boldies

**Newsletter No 63** **November/December 2010**

Newsletter of the Water Resources Retirees Association

## A HAPPY FESTIVE SEASON TO ALL!

Another year has rocked around and the Committee wishes all our members all the best for the Festive Season and the hope that 2011 (already!) will bring you all lots of enjoyment in your retirement.

The Association itself has received a most welcome Christmas present. Peter Jones (who has only recently joined us) has very generously agreed to take on the vital role of Secretary of the Association—much to the relief of John Connolly who, after eight years of distinguished service, was anxious to hand over the reins. We welcome Peter and wish him well in his new job. A brief biography of Peter can be found on page 4.

In an earlier than usual Christmas celebration, members of the Association gathered for the usual Christmas luncheon at COTAH on 11 November. Although the numbers were down somewhat on the usual high level of support, those attending enjoyed themselves as usual.

Among the highlights of the gathering were the diabolical trivia questions devised by Terry Loos (my table could only answer 13 of the 22 questions correctly, while Geoff Eades' table won first prize with a mere 16). For those of you who think you can do better, a selection of the questions is reprinted on page 9.

We were privileged to have as our special guest Peter Boettcher, CEO of SunWater (his predecessor Peter Noonan being one of the listeners) who presented a very interesting talk on the current development of a new dam on Connors River, some of which is reproduced on page 7. We are very grateful to Peter for making the time available to come and mix with us and to keep us informed of a modern world driven by commercial factors and rather different from the one with which we were familiar.

### From the Editor's Chair

*At long last, the drought has broken and the dams in south-east Queensland are full. And so we progress to the next stage of the hydro-illogical cycle where the populace resent the drought measures that have been put in place and the increase in water bills. It is, in their view, all because the government didn't act sooner—which might just have resulted in earlier increases in prices!*

*I have suggested to my current employer, the Queensland Water Commission, that there is an obvious solution to their difficulty in recruiting technical staff. All that is needed is to obtain the email addresses of the correspondents to the* Courier-Mail *editor who, on a daily basis, offer the most obvious solutions to the water supply problems. There is clearly no need for experience or technical expertise!*

*Until next time, au reservoir.*

**Ian Pullar, Editor**

We were also very privileged to be entertained once again by members John Connolly and Col Cooney who presented a bracket of two Christmas carols in Barbershop style. I never fail to be impressed by the talents and diverse interests of our members.

*Two carollers: Col and John in harmonious form*

*Two CEOs; two Peters: Boettcher and Noonan*

*Three diners: Ian Pullar, Don Beattie and John Moreton*

Photos pkf Terry Loos

## Out and About

Ian Ferrier was one of the dozen or so members who visted the Hydraulics Lab on 13 July, along with Hein ven der Heide and Brian Shannon. A number of hydraulic models were on display including one of Wyaralong Dam. Ian reports that it was an enjoyable trip and all the attendees were grateful to SunWater, and particularly Russell Paton, for hosting it.

The annual Bowls Day was held at Aspley on 6 August. The number of attendees – 7 players and a total of 13 for morning tea and/or lunch – was a bit disappointing, especially for Norm White who once again excelled himself in organising the event. It was, however, a fine sunny day and all had an enjoyable time playing a few ends and catching up with the doings of former colleagues.

By arrangement with Queensland Water Infrastructure, 21 members of WRRA visited Wyaralong Dam (under construction) on 21 October. Our host for the tour was Dave Murray, a former employee of WRC/SunWater/QWI who now works for SMEC and has a major managerial role in the Alliance undertaking the construction (QWI, McMahon, Wagners, ASI, SMEC, Hydro Tasmania and Paul C. Rizzo Associates). The dam is a Roller Compacted Concrete structure 38.6 m high, with a capacity of 103,000 ML. It will provide 21,000 ML/a into the Water Grid at a cost of around $380 million, which includes the relocation of the Beaudesert-Boonah Road (shortened by 5 km). The project is well ahead of schedule and will be able to store water by the end of the year. It was very impressive and well worth the visit. We are most grateful to Dave for his guidance and to Geoff Eades who undertook the arrangements.

The inspection was followed by a convivial luncheon in Boonah where us silly old f...s could chatter about old times, the future and what was wrong with modern society.

The visit was certainly tinged with nostalgia for me. When the site was selected in 1990 for future development, I had the dubious honour of conducting the public meetings to inform the landholders of the decision. Not surprisingly, they were not impressed although they couldn't stop themselves from displaying the normal consideration and hospitality of country people. I was invited into several homes to talk with people who had no reason to welcome me or my message. One landowner philosophically compained, "Not you lot again! I was resumed when you built Wivenhoe Dam and moved to the Burnett where I was resumed for Bjelke-Petersen Dam. And now this! I won't be giving you my forwarding address!" The name Wyaralong is taken from one of the properties within the inundation area, at the request of the owners.

On the same day as the Wyaralong trip, a function was held to mark the retirement of Errol Bietz. Since Errol was not pleased when I announced in Newsletter 44 that he hit 65 on 9 June 2004, I won't tell you his age on retirement. We wish him well and thank him for his great contribution over the years to water engineering.

Also on the retirement list (but in this case from DERM) are Russ Robson and Paul Mills. Russ Robson plans firstly to tackle a long list of domestic tasks that have accumulated across 2010, because of a ruptured Achilles tendon and an absence travelling in the UK, Austria and Greece. He and Judy will also be called upon to assist their younger daughter and son-in-law in their shift back to Brisbane from a rotation placement in Cairns, and enjoy a few weeks of home visit by their older (London domiciled) daughter. Most important is the rehabilitation of the ankle so as to get his tennis legs back and allow some domestic travel.

Paul's immediate plans are to attend, with Robyn, the Harrietville Bluegrass Music Festival in Victoria, to spend Christmas with his daughter who is coming home from London for the occasion and then to settle down to making five string banjos and singing with friends.

I am always fascinated by the diverse hobbies and passions we all have. For example, on the Wyaralong trip, Don Gardiner told us of his fascination with family genealogy – an interest shared by many retirees.

Other recent retirees include Tom Crothers (who was General Manager in Water Allocation and Planning) and Geoff Stallman and Ken Wright who were part of the Local Government group incorporated into QWC twenty years ago. Geoff was a senior engineer while Ken won fame and respect as the wielder of video and still cameras at public meetings, workshops etc. Former draftsmen who have retired recently are Lindsay May (who moved from drafting to accomodation management) and Roy 'Pottsie' Wheeler who embraced IT management. Our WebMaster, Jon Henry, has also retired. Happy retirement to all our former colleagues.

Two faces that will be missed from gatherings of WRRA are John and Jill Moreton. Two of their doctor offspring are now employed at Dubbo hospital, so Mr and Mrs Trump have packed their bags and chattels and moved to that fair city. Trump assures me that his new residential address is not the Central Plains Zoo!

Warren and Joan Hutton are still living in Bargara and also using their house in Brisbane when visiting three children and five grandchildren. Their youngest daughter, Belinda, moved to Bargara about 18 months ago with twin 3 year old daughters who are spoiled rotten by their grandparents. Since retiring, Warren has been fitted with a defibrillator which fortunately has not needed to cut in to date. But he is feeling well and living life to the full. They do a fair amount of travel mainly in Australia and plan to visit Great Britain again next year, this time driving themselves. Warren has provided the article to be found on page 5.

In September, as part of his involvement with the Mission Beach Rotary Club, Bill Souter was the host for a young vet student from East Timor named Mario de Jesus, showing him around dairies, chicken farms and vet clinics. He couldn't resist showing his protegee his old stamping ground, the MDIA. Bill was full of memories and anecdotes from his years there.

Recently I have been privileged to have professional dealings with a very distinguished "old boy". Colin Apelt, now Emeritus Professor, was an employee of the old Irrigation and Water Supply Commission from 1952 to 1954 when he won a Rhodes Scholarship which took him to Oxford and launched his very distinguished career.

But the final word of this column I cheerfully cede to Terry Loos. Not only does Terry dredge up endless numbers of impossible trivia questions (again see page 9), he remains passionate about sport (still a member of the Thursday night Tennis Club) and the idiosyncracies of the English language. He was delighted to savour a wonderful spoonerism on watching the cyclists at the start of the Tour de France in the Netherlands – bikes on dikes!

## Vale Carlo "Charlie" Paolucci 4 February 1931 - 26 July 2010

Carlo "Charlie" Paolucci was an Italian immigrant who played a key role in the development of more than seven major dams in Queensland over almost 20 years.

He arrived in Australia from Sillano, Tuscany, Italy in 1952 at the age of 21, trying his hand first at cane cutting around Cairns and labouring on a tobacco farm at Mareeba and a peanut farm at Kairi.

But it wasn't until the construction on a new dam at Tinaroo started that Charlie found his life's work and passion.

Charlie became very good at building dams, and was revered within the industry for his knowledge and work ethic.

He was first employed by the Queensland Irrigation and Water Supply Commission (IWSC) as part of the rock-drilling crew on the foundations of Tinaroo.

He revelled in the international community and embraced the stories of the men he worked alongside.

He felt the "spirit of Tinaroo" never left him.

When the last concrete was poured at Tinaroo in 1959, Charlie was transferred to Moogerah Dam near Boonah.

Moogerah was a complex thin arch concrete dam which required great control of formwork and concrete placement.

Two years later the dam was finished and Charlie had cemented his place as a key staff member for IWSC.

His next job was at Borumba, a concrete faced earth and rock dam near Gympie, completed in 1964.

From Borumba, Charlie went to Leslie Dam near Warwick where the formwork from Tinaroo Dam was used to build another concrete cavity (sic) dam completed in 1965.

By now Charlie was a foreman, and he moved on to supervise works at Wuruma Dam near Eidsvold and nearby Proston Weir.

By 1970 Charlie was the Works Supervisor, firstly appointed to Atkinson Dam near Gatton and later Maroon Dam near Beaudesert.

In 1971 Charlie took then wife Loretta and their two children to America with him on a job to make precast concrete items for a firm in Boston, where his sister Maria already lived.

As much as he loved his American experience, he yearned to return to Australia and the Far North.

He came home in 1973 to a job on the Mareeba-Dimbulah Irrigation Area, completing the channel construction.

The first thing he did was crush some gum leaves and smell them. In 1980, he was appointed Water Superintendent in charge of water distribution and maintenance.

He felt this was his perfect job, using his life's experience to benefit the community.

Charlie designed the Paolucci Clamp for repairing leaking pipes without interrupting supply to farmers.

He won an award for outstanding service and he never stopped trying to think of ways to do things better.

Charlie investigated, documented and proposed a number of visionary projects, including the Johnstone River Diversion Scheme in 1983 with colleague Keith Turner and six potential micro-hydro stations with engineer Richard West.

He retired in 1990 but he retained a strong interest in his life's work.

He was proud when one of his proposals became reality in 2004 with a power station going in at Tinaroo Dam Wall.

In his personal life, Charlie was a great story teller. He told sad stories about his early years in war-torn Italy, when he was starving and seeing atrocities committed against people he loved.

He also told joyful stories about the travelling life building Queensland's key dams and building trust between farmers and government departments in his water superintendent's role.

Charlie was an active member of the Mareeba community, working with Rotary and the local swimming and soccer clubs.

In retirement, he loved music, bocce and ballroom dancing with his dear fiend Olga Valese from Atherton.

Charlie died on July 25, 2010 at the age of 79.

He will be sadly missed by generations of farmers and all his friends in the Far North.

Charlie is survived by his sister Maria in Boston, US, and his beloved children Maree and Albert and their families.

**- Cairns Post, September 27, 2010**

*and later reprinted in the Courier-Mail*

## Making it on the international scene

*I received the following missive from the well-known international traveller John Hillier (who is not to be confused with the John Hilliard the* Courier-Mail*, in its usual inimitable fashion, renamed him!)* - **Ed.**

We have just returned from time in South America, both cruising (Valparaiso to Rio, via the Panama) plus land time. I thought that you might be interested that, because of the Chilean earthquake, we couldn't fly into Santiago as the airport was closed for several days, so our travel agent sent us to Buenos Aires, then after a few days across to Santiago. The airport was open, but using tents rather than their new damaged terminals. What was interesting was that we flew Aerolineas Argentinas ( the Argentinean Airline), rather than Lan Chile which we were booked on, as they had cancelled all flights from Australia, and we had our cruise ship to catch. As the plane took off from Sydney they display the map Sydney to Auckland etc. The map of Australia that was displayed had three names on it – Sydney, Brisbane, and (MOST IMPORTANTLY) The Great Artesian Basin!! The name was positioned west of Brisbane. I was probably the only one on board who knew much about the GAB, but groundwater and the GAB are finally making an international mark!

Walter McCaskell ("Wally") Urquhart passed away on 8 October, 2010, aged 76 years, after a long illness. Wally was a former Works Supervisor with the Department of Local Government and then QWRC. Among the projects he supervised were the Kowanyama sewer project and the Mornington Island water supply.

## Our New Secretary - Peter Jones

Peter is among the ranks of many engineers whose connection with the Water Resources Commission (and its earlier life as the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission) stretches back to his university days as a scholarship holder. He completed his studies at Queensland University in 1967, graduating with Honours and commenced his working life in February 1968. During the 70s, he undertook part time studies at James Cook University leading to the award of Master of Engineering Science in 1977.

His first posting was to Construction Branch serving in Head Office and on the projects. The majority of his time with the Commission was spent in the construction area. He served on the major projects at Beardmore Dam, Ross River Dam Stages I and II, Callide Dam Stage II in the early planning stages, Baralaba Weir and Wivenhoe Dam. Additionally, he had time on other works, such as Palm Island Dam, Redbank Creek Weir and Cania Dam as well as undertaking the construction planning for Glebe Weir. An unusual assignment during those years was to set up the team, led by Les Warren and Ces Christensen, to complete an upgrade of Doomagee Airfield.

Outside of construction, Peter also worked in Designs Branch on the hydraulic model study for the Kolan Barrage, flood routing studies and the preparation of the contract specification for the Boondooma/Tarong pipeline. A period of about 12 months was spent attached to the Emerald Irrigation Office where the primary work being undertaken was the design of Selma Main Channel beyond the Capricorn Highway (he returned to Emerald some years later to complete the concrete lining of part of this channel), drainage design and farm layout.

In October 1981, Peter left the Water Resources Commission and joined the (then) Coordinator-Generals Department where he spent the rest of his working life. He had a varied life in that Department, being involved over the years with projects as diverse as Expo 88, Brisbane Airport International Terminal, Cape York International Spaceport, several Defence projects, Queensland's participation in Expo 90, Osaka, Japan, the Bradfield Scheme review in the mid 80s, urban developments (including Yeerongpilly and North Bank), several international event proposals and a secondment to the Brisbane City Council for 18 months as part of the team which conducted Brisbane's unsuccessful bid to host the 1992 Olympic Games.

Peter retired from the workforce in December 2009.

He is married to Dianne whom he met at University. They have one child, Gavin, and three grandchildren.

*Peter informed me that the principal reason he chose to leave the Commission was that he and Diane felt they had had enough moves! Welcome back, Peter* - **Ed**.

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## A Missive from our Nomadic President

We are half way into our trip now.

After tossing around several travel plans (before we left home), we decided to continue our Murray River Trek (having done the Albury to Mildura section in March-April this year), now that there is even more water in the Murray River.

We picked up the Murray again at Renmark and then followed it down to Wellington (just south of Murray Bridge), where it spills out into Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert. At the southern end of Lake Alexandrina (near Goolwa) it flows through a line of barrages into the Coorong Wetlands and then through the technical Mouth of the Murray into the Ocean.

The river at Renmark was running "a banker", with all adjacent wetlands well and truly flooded.

*The River Murray at Renmark*

The flow indicator, just downstream of Renmark, showed that some 30,000 ML/day was going down the river. It also showed that the "normal" minimal flows into SA are between 3,000 and 7,000 ML/day – so SA was certainly getting a bit more than usual. However this is nothing compared to the 350,000 ML/day that came down in 1956.

The big issue down here for the irrigators, greenies, local and State Governments is the recently released Guide to the Murray Darling Basin Management Plan. Rob Freeman as CEO, and his boss, the Chair of the MDBA, are getting a real pasting from all concerned. It is only a "Guide" to a proposed plan, but all are already reading it as the "Final Plan" !!

We have recently spent a week in Victor Harbor – a beautiful seaside locality with lots of local attractions.

We have now reached our farthest point from home and will be heading SE along the coast line to Mount Gambier and then the Great Ocean Road, before we turn back north to head for home (arriving about 26th November).

*It's a tough life, but I guess someone has to do it. So thanks to Hein and Francoise van der Heide for their efforts.* - **Ed**.

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**A Plea from Peter**

From time to time I get news that may interest members, for example, invitations to retirement functions or notices of funerals.

The simplest and quickest way to circulate this is via email. But at present we only have email addresses for about one third of our members, so the others miss out.

If you would like to be added to the email address book, please email me at secretary@waterysauces.org.au

**Peter Jones - Hon. Sec.**

## Memories of Emerald – by Warren Hutton

There have been many articles published in this newsletter over the years about the early days of the Emerald office as many readers served in this wonderful part of Queensland. I too did a stint in Emerald and please allow me to recount some of my experiences in the very early days in the IWS.

As a third year Cadet Water Advisor based in Toowoomba I was transferred to Emerald in 1969. I was offered a choice between Emerald and Biloela and not having been to either centre, chose Emerald mainly because it sounded more exciting. As a mature 20 year old, I packed up my new bride Joan and even newer 9 month old daughter Karen in our old FJ Holden painted British Racing Green, and headed off to see what this place Emerald had in store for me and my young family.

### The Trip

Car baby seats in those days looked like a miniature high chair which simply hooked over the front seat, no tie downs whatsoever and certainly no seat belts. We had also made up a bed in the back seat of the FJ so that Karen would be comfortable when she went to sleep. In this enlightened era you would just about be jailed for endangering your child in this fashion but in 1969 there was nothing else available.

From Toowoomba we took the inland route though Ban Ban Springs then Biloela and onto Rockhampton which we reached after a gruelling 10 hour drive. While the FJ was my pride and joy it drove like you were in a 44 gallon drum going over Niagara Falls. The road conditions were not good to say the least with the shoulders of certain sections of road being so high you virtually needed a step ladder to get back on the road.

We spent our first night in Rockhampton with the intention of meeting the staff of the Regional Office under whom I would be working the next day. I duly went into the office where I met Sam McCall, Norm White and Alex Marshall and many others. Sam McCall was the Regional Engineer and spoke with a broad Irish accent. It soon became apparent that I only understood about one in every five words that Sam said. After this initial meeting we continued on to Emerald.

A couple of day after my arrival in Emerald Sam rang me and proceeded to talk earnestly to me. Face to face, I could only pick up every fifth word and over the phone it became worse. I waited for Sam to stop speaking and then said "Mr McCall, about my travel expenses". Sam blew up and said quite clearly" What do you think that I have been talking about for the last five minutes?" I had the privilege of working in Brisbane with Sam many years after this incident and by then I could understand every word Sam said but at the time I began to think that my stay in Emerald would be even shorter that I had anticipated.

### The Town

When we had passed though Biloela, we had noticed that it boasted a rather large shopping centre and plenty of facilities. Emerald ,on the other hand, had decidedly less in the way of shops and facilities. I began to think that I had chosen the wrong town.

Meat was very good and cheap in Emerald, particularly if you bought in bulk. However groceries and other household items were expensive and you had very little choice. Occasional trips to Rockhampton saw the car filled to the brim with groceries.

One of the major disadvantages of living in Emerald for us was the distance you had to travel to get back to our home towns. Joan was from Toowoomba and my family lived in Chinchilla and as with many young couples we were constantly travelling backwards and forwards for weddings, birthdays and special occasions. We would not hesitate to get into the car with our child and head off to Toowoomba on Friday, attend a wedding on Saturday night and drive to Emerald on Sunday.

On one occasion Joan, Karen and I travelled down to Chinchilla with my cousin Len Evans who was working as cadet Land Ranger for the Lands Department at the time. (Len later worked for the Department of Natural Resources as a Valuer.) Coming back on Sunday night we ran over a wild pig who, when it went under Len's car spilt the diff and stranded us in the Arcadia Valley.

After many hours on the roadside, Joan Karen and I managed to get a lift back into Emerald from a passerby. We arrived in Emerald at dawn after travelling at 10mph in order to avoid hitting the hundreds and hundreds of kangaroos on the road.

While the town itself was lacking in certain creature comforts the Departmental housing provided was in my opinion, top class. With the start of construction of Fairbairn Dam the IWS had constructed quite a number of brand new permanent houses in different parts of Emerald. Four of these new homes were built in Racecourse Road which at this time was on the outskirts of town. I was allocated one of these houses and as a 20 year old I was quite excited to be moving into a brand new home.

It did not matter that you had to provide your own floor covering and there was not one bit of grass or garden or that it was not air-conditioned. We scraped together odds and ends of second hand furniture including an old washing machine with a hand wringer and proceeded to enjoy life in Emerald.

Many years later, in my role as Regional Manager for State Water Projects in Rockhampton, one of the occupants of these very same houses applied though me to build a deck on the house stating in the submission that the house was far too small. Having lived in these houses, I was sure that there must have been a misunderstanding on the size of the house but on inspecting the house 30 years later I saw that the three bedrooms that had no built- in wardrobes were compact to say the least. My memories of the house were updated dramatically.

*To be continued. Many thanks, Warren.*

*Finally, an error message that actually offers a solution…*

**Answers to Terry's Trivia on page 9.**

1. (iii) 3.9m 2. (i) 37 litres 3. (iii) tall buildings 4. (iii) 12 astronauts 5. (i) Madagascar 6. (v) a herd 7. (iii) 300m 8. (i) Switzerland 9. (iv) English 10. (iv) six 11. (ii) Venus 12. (ii) 1977 13. (iii) blood pressure 14. (iii) a whale's whatsit 15. all five.

## Travels in South Africa - by Lee Rogers

Most years since I sort of retired, Denise and I have spent a month in Europe where there is of course so much to see and enjoy.

In March this year, our destination was very different – Cape Town and the Cape Provence of South Africa. This came about because our youngest son had moved from Edinburgh with his girlfriend who is South African to live in Cape Town, but continue to work over the internet on an IT project for the Scottish Department of Agriculture.

And so it was with much anticipation of seeing Table Mountain that we flew into Cape Town. The view from the plane coming into land from over the Atlantic Ocean was absolutely stunning. Being over 1,000 metres high, the mountain towers over the city area and indeed it is mostly quite flat with a thin blanket of cloud on top spilling over the edges – so like a table cloth.

The view out to sea from the balcony of our son's apartment in the suburb of Sea Point was equally stunning with Robben Island out to the right in the distance. The prison on the island is infamous in that during the apartheid era, Nelson Mandela was imprisoned there for 27 years. Two years after his release he became President and argued tirelessly that all of the nation's people, black and white, should come together in what was described as the "Rainbow Nation".

Apart from seeing the city sights we were lucky enough to time our visit to fit in a Super 14 Rugby game at the famous Newlands stadium which is totally enclosed rather like Suncorp– but where the stands rise much more steeply – and with a Sunday sunset symphony concert in the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, again with Table Mountain as a stunning backdrop.

The scenery to the south of the city heading towards the Cape of Good Hope is magnificent, with the jagged mountains close to the city giving way to a flatter landscape towards the cape which is all within a national park. The cape itself is quite modest compared with the towering Cape Point just to the east which has two lighthouses – the highest often being in cloud, in which case the lighthouse lower down can still be seen.

A short drive to the north of Cape Town is the historic town of Stellenbosch, famous for its cape gable architecture and with every building painted white. Jagged mountains almost surround the town which is also a famous wine district. The 'wine farms" we visited were all very elegant with beautiful buildings and gardens and pleasingly, cellar door prices much cheaper than in Australia. And of course we visited quite a few more "wine farms" along what is called Route 62 which further inland leads to the much drier landscape of the Little Karoo. A highlight here was to stay overnight at a game resort where we saw many giraffe, boks, zebra, rhinoceros and hippopotamus as well as hand feeding three quite friendly elephants.

In this drier country ostrich are farmed in large numbers, not for their feathers these days but for their meat and for their skin which makes a fine leather.

The highway extending east of Cape Town follows the coast line for many kilometres, this section being known as the "Garden Route" which is puzzling since the wide sandy beaches and rolling surf seemed far more obvious than any gardens.

One cannot but be aware of the difficulties facing the country. It seems that many of the white population have less confidence in the ability of the now black dominated government than when Mandela became President and apparently many of the black population have yet to enjoy any improvement in their circumstances.

Nevertheless we thoroughly enjoyed our stay and sincerely hope that the people of South Africa have a peaceful and prosperous future.

*Thanks Lee for the chance to enjoy your travels, albeit vicariously* - **Ed.**

## More memories of Beardmore days

**- by Phil Sternes**

In Lee Rogers' tribute to Barry Lennon *(Newsletter 59)*, he spoke about the installation of the gate guides at Beardmore Dam and the complexities which surrounded that activity. Prior to this of course the piers, to which the guides are attached, had to be constructed. This part of the job also had its own particular set of issues.

In the course of construction it was discovered (by Gordon Gracey I think) that the distance between the wingwalls was about an inch greater than plan. It was a bit of mystery how this occurred but was generally thought that the culprit was a disturbed survey control point.

The survey member of the gate guide troika, George Toone (seen in typical setting in the picture below), was therefore adamant that there could be no compromise with the control for the gate piers as they were constructed. Unfortunately the left bank downstream area where control would normally be established was going to be under water because of the need to pass flow through the river outlet.

After what I remember as a rather robust discussion between George and Alan Taylor about this situation and what level of resources should be applied to this task, a set of piers were constructed which enabled George to do his setups (see attached picture). This worked admirably but always elicited the question from visitors as to what purpose they served. A modern day Stonehenge perhaps?

Anyway, at the end of construction, the piers had to be removed which was no mean feat because of the quality of IWS workmanship. It's interesting to reflect on this photo in a modern day workplace health and safety context with George perched on his little concrete island peering through his jigger.

## Memories of Beardmore – part 2

I remember, too, another robust interaction between Alan Taylor and another staff member, also concerning the gate infrastructure at Beardmore.

George Rees, who revelled in the title of "Erecting and Inspection Officer", came out to Beardmore to supervise the gate installation by contractors Perrin Engineering. George could be quite feisty and this day, after a difference of opinion with Perrins, he came flying up to the workshop office to phone Brisbane and report another indiscretion on their part. He was chasing Laurie Brace who was unavailable.

With obvious frustration George then asked to speak to Bob (Hitchcock) who was also unavailable. Close to losing it, he asked to speak to Alan Taylor who was available.

The conversation began with a "Now Alan!" George then managed to get a couple of rapid-fire sentences into the phone relating to how the contractor needed to be taken in hand by the powers that be before he fell silent. He remained this way for a few more seconds during which time he turned even more crimson before he delicately replaced the handset with a "Goodbye Alan", left the office and roared away.

Even I knew that you didn't begin a conversation with Alan Taylor that way.

*Thanks Phil for both contributions.* - **Ed**.

## CSG WATER

*Members will be aware of the ongoing controversy over current proposals to extract coal seam gas. It is interesting to observe the alliance of farmers and "greenies" who are opposed to developments.*

*DERM has obviously been involved in the issue and the Government has now created a section within the Queensland Water Commission to manage it. The newly appointed General Manager is Randall Cox. One of Randall's staff is Chris McKenna, son of that long-serving water man, John. Terry Loos kindly provided the following excerpts from the Queensland Government Blueprint for the LNG industry for the information of members.* - **Ed.**

Coal seam gas (CSG) is primarily methane, which is adsorbed and maintained in coal measures. To produce CSG, the groundwater contained in the coal measures must be removed to create a pressure void into which the gas migrates. As a result, a significant amount of water, typically saline, is produced. The quantity and quality can vary considerably between wells and regions. The Surat Basin between Dalby and Roma and up towards Wandoan and Injune is the current focus.

There are currently eight liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects proposed in Queensland with a total capital expenditure in excess of $40 billion. If all of the projects were to proceed, more than 50 million tonnes per annum (Mtpa) of LNG would be produced. In 2007–08, approximately 13.5 gigalitres (GL) of CSG water was produced in Queensland. With the potential growth of the CSG/LNG industry, more realistically, it is possible that the CSG water production may be in the order of 200GL/yr for a 30 Mtpa industry. Assuming an average TDS of 3000mg/L at 90% removal (by RO treatment) 200 GL/yr would mean 540 000 tonnes per year of salts.

So, how are the adverse impacts on water production bores and springs, and on the GAB generally being minimised? Is the water being treated to drinking water quality standards? Is it being beneficially used? Is it being re-injected? If it is to be discharged to rivers how are natural flow patterns being protected? What will happen to the salts? What on earth is 'fraccing'? What legislation applies? What are the roles of DERM and of the Queensland Water Commission? Who cares?

If you do, and you wish to find out more, the following website aims to answer all the questions you've thought of and more:

www.lng.industry.qld.gov.au

## Connors River Dam

Members of WRRA who attended the Christmas lunch were privileged to be informed by our co-patron, Peter Boettcher (CEO of SunWater) of a major project to supply water to the coal region of central Queensland. A dam on the Connors River has been "on the books" for many years, but it is only now that there is a huge international demand for Queensland metallurgical coal that there are sufficient customers for a business case to stack up.

The project will comprise a 374,000 ML capacity roller compacted concrete dam on the Connors River near Mt Bridget some 110 km due east of Moranbah and 70 km south of Sarina to cost $300 million with a 133 km long $500 million pipeline to deliver 50,000 ML/a of water to a smaller holding storage near Moranbah. From there, the water will be distributed to customers through a water grid.

SunWater already have customers lined up for more than 80% of the available water supplies which is a far cry from the normal situation in the "olden days".

An additional 280 km pipeline will deliver up to 30 000ML/a westward to the Galilee Basin.

Preliminary designs of the dam and pipeline have been completed and the Environmental Impact Statement is complete. A supplementary EIS is nearing completion.

One feature of the environmental management requirements is the provision, not only of a fish passage, but also of a turtle passage to cater for the local "bum breathing" turtle. This will be the first of its type anywhere in the world.

Another interesting feature is that there is no opposition to the dam from the affected landholders, unlike the situation at Traveston. There are also only a handful of affected landholders, unlike the hundreds at Traveston.

**Dishwashing**

In July, aquatic scientist Sheree Marris was interviewed on 4GR Toowoomba. She quoted data from a survey into the the electricity and water usage in Australian households conducted by an independent agency.

Results show that hand washing of dishes uses five times more water than dishwashers and 60% more energy. By contrast, Marris notes that nine out of ten people believe dishwashers consume more energy and six out of ten believe hand washing uses less water.

*So now you know. Just one word of caution – make sure your dishwasher is pretty full before you turn it on.* - **Ed**.

# HEALTH *and beauty*

## Secrets of Longevity

At long last science has come up with the answer to life's greatest problem. If you want to live longer, move out of that high rise building and go and live in a basement.

It has taken more than a century, but scientists have finally proved than Albert Einstein was right – time passes more quickly up high. In 1907, his General Theory of Relativity showed that time runs more quickly at higher altitudes because of weaker gravity

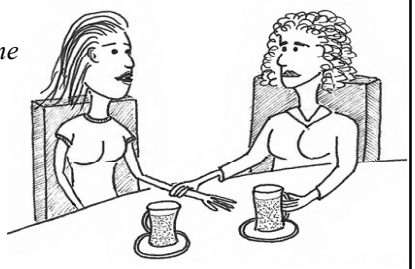
Researchers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology in Boulder, Colorado, have recently carried out bizarre experiments using the most accurate atomic clocks ever invented and have shown that the clocks run faster when elevated. The phenomenon of gravitational time dilation, identified by Einstein, is shown by putting the atomic clocks in jets and flying them at high altitudes. As predicted by the guru, clocks flown at 30,000 feet run faster than those on the ground. The fact that the atomic clock moves more quickly signifies actual time is speeded up.

So people living on the top of a tower block certainly age more quickly than those living at the bottom. Standing on your head might also be a good idea because in the normal position your head ages more quickly than your feet. But anyone hoping that a lifetime in a basement is the key to longevity will be disappointed. The effect is so small it would add just 90 billionths of a second to a 79-year life span.

Quite separate research has shown that being tall can be a disadvantage in the longevity stakes too. Tall people are more prone to heart attacks than short people – probably because blood has to be pumped through greater distances and against greater heads. Perhaps someone should have warned Hajnal Ban before she took herself off to Russia to have her legs lengthened.

*"My husband never lets me forget that he is so much taller than me."*

*"Then cheer up – you're sure to outlive him."*



**A Sign of the Times:**
In a UK outdoor sporting goods catalogue:
**Now is the winter of our discount tents.**

Another key to longevity, according to researchers at Wayne State University, USA, is to smile a lot. Broader grins and wrinkles round the eyes reflect an underlying positive outlook on life and this translates into better long-term health. Photos of 230 people were studied. Those pictured smiling broadly (or with the wrinkles to show they customarily did) lived to 80 years on average. Those with partial smiles lived to 75 and those not smiling didn't even make it to 73.

There is no doubt, however, that the best promoter of longevity is birthday parties – the more birthdays you have, the longer you live. And, asked to what she attributed her longevity, one centenarian responded, "To the fact I haven't died yet."

Now this next medical tip may not be of great use to the majority of our members. Gentlemen, don't use your laptop computer on your lap, even with a protective pad. Laptops significantly turn up the heat on a man's testicles and high scrotal temperatures are linked to reduced fertility. If you have to have it on your lap, do sit with your legs apart.

Even if this information is too late for you, you should pass it on to your sons or even your grandsons as it may be vital for the preservation of the species. According to the *Sunday Mail* of 21 November, now that women have overtaken men in virtually every field – they are now doing better in school, better at parking, better at navigating and even better at becoming Prime Ministers – in the very near future "men will be required to keep sperm at operating temperature and will have no other function".

## I'm going to buy the Christmas turkey ... I may be gone some time

On 19 December last year Scotswoman Kay Ure set out to buy the Christmas turkey, but still hadn't got home by Boxing Day. The problem was that Mrs Mure lives with her husband in a lighthouse off Scotland's north-west tip. He drove her 11 miles to where their boat is moored, she crossed the Kyle of Durness and caught the bus to Inverness. But heavy snowfall blocked her return. She stayed in a friend's caravan. Her husband spent Christmas Day with their six dogs as company. (Presumably Santa didn't get through either!)

**Christmas can be an elf hazard.**

## Exercise those Brain Cells

Knights were always true and knaves were always false. So when the fair maiden was approached by two men, she didn't know if either of them could be trusted. Innocently (and somewhat apprehensively) she asked, "Is either of you a knight?" When one of them replied, she knew the answer to her question.

Do you?

**Solution to last edition's puzzle**

If: 2 + 3 = 10
6 + 5 = 66
7 + 2 = 63
8 + 4 = 96
Then: 9 + 7 = **144**
(Simply add the digits and multiply by the first.)

## How Come – ?

Christmas celebrations (such as we will all enjoy very soon) are traditional, each Christian country having its own customs, although there has been much borrowing over the centuries. Some of the origins are fascinating.

Christmas Day itself is celebrated on 25 December to mark the birth of Jesus. Probably this is not the actual birth day which some scholars now believe fell on 20 May. December was chosen by the church in the fourth century to counteract the Saturnalia, the pagan festival celebrated with revelry at the winter solstice in honour of Saturn, god of vegetation and husbandry.

The Christmas tree also has its origin in paganism connected with the winter solstice. The evergreen leaves together with the candles were used as a magic rite to ensure the return of vegetation and the victory of light over darkness. The old Norse tradition endured right through germanic culture and was really only adopted in the English-speaking world because Queen Victoria married her German cousin. In 1841, the Prince Consort, to surprise the young Prince of Wales and his older sister, had a Christmas tree erected in Windsor Castle. The royal example was copied and the custom spread around the world.

The exchanging of presents dates from Roman times. When the pagan tradition was Christianised, it was said to relate to the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh carried by the Magi.

The custom of the Christmas stocking originally had no connection to the Holy Day but to St Nicholas (the original of Santa Claus). The legend goes that Nicholas, who was renowned for doing good works, especially in secret, heard of three girls who were so desperately poor that they were tempted to sell their bodies. One night he went unnoticed to their home and dropped three coins through their smoke hole (chimneys were not then in use) which landed in the stockings they had hung up to dry.

For centuries the boar's head and the goose (as in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol)* were the main course for Christmas dinner. The turkey was imported from the USA to Europe where it quickly 'gobbled' up the old diet because of its succulent meat.

The Father Christmas tradition is much more modern. In 1822, two days before Christmas, Dr Clement Clarke Moore, professor of Oriental and Greek Literature at the New York General Theological Seminary, read his two small daughters a poem he had written called *A Visit from St Nicholas*. He had no intention of publishing it, but a year later a friend sent it to a New York journal where it was published and became internationally famous with the lines '*Twas the night before Christmas* now imprinted on every brain along with the sleigh and the reindeer.

Recently scientists (probably from the Bah-Humbug School of Physics) have set out to debunk the Santa myth. They calculate that Santa would need to make 152 million house calls, equating to 900 visits per second. He would need to travel at 265 times the speed of sound. If each gift weighs 1 kg, the sleigh is stocked with 380,000 tonnes. If each reindeer can pull 200 kg, Prancer and Dancer would need 1.9 million fellow pullers at the start of the journey.

But why let physics get in the way of a good story – one which brings so much joy to so many children? Yes, Virginia, there must be a Santa Claus.

### AN IRONY

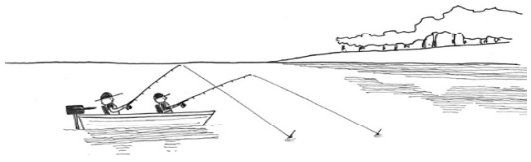
Easter was a pagan festival
Until it was expediently christianised:
An irony – perhaps the best of all –
Is Christmas now is almost fully paganised

## Terry's Trivia

*Some trivia from Terry's Christmas luncheon quiz. The answers are on page 5.* - **Ed.**

1. Since its restoration in 2001, the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa (height 55m) is now off centre by: (i) 18.9m (ii) 5.3m (iii) 3.9m (iv) 0.5m
2. The total amount of water in the body of an average adult is: (i) 37litres (ii) 10 litres (iii) 20 litres (iv) 50 litres
3. What is batophobia: (i) fear of bats (ii) fear of batting (iii) fear of being near tall buildings (iv) fear of deep places
4. How many astronauts have walked on the moon: (i) 8 (ii) 10 (iii) 12 (iv) 14
5. Which nation produces two thirds of the world's vanilla: (i) Madagascar (ii) India (iii) Sri Lanka (iv) Tanzania
6. The collective noun for gnus is (i) a colony (ii) the six o'clock (iii) an implausibility (iv) a herd
7. As of 2010, the tallest dam in the world is Nurek Dam (eartfill) on the Vakhsh River in Tajikistan. Completed in 1980, it reaches a height of: (i) 200m (ii) 250m (iii) 300m (iv) 350m
8. The world's tallest concrete dam is the Grande Dixence Dam on the Grande Dixence River in: (i) Switzerland (ii) Ukraine (iii) Sweden (iv) Bhutan
9. The official language of Ghana is: (i) Portuguese (ii) French (iii) Adangme (iv) English
10. The flag of the Republic of South Africa has how many colours on it: (i) three (ii) four (iii) five (iv) six
11. Which planet has its day longer than its year: (i) Mercury (ii) Venus (iii) Mars (iv) Jupiter
12. Elvis Presley died on 16 August: (i) 1967 (ii) 1977 (iii) 1987 (iv) is still alive
13. Viagra was originally invented by the US drug company Pfizer for the treatment of: (i) varicose veins (ii) angina (iii) high blood pressure (iv) damaged knee cartilege
14. A dork is: (i) a useless invention (ii) a Himalayan mountain goat (iii) a male whale's reproductive organ (iv) your first husband
15. Which of the following happened in 1989: (i) the Exxon Valdez ran aground (ii) the Berlin Wall came down (iii) the Tiannanmen Square rallies (iv) a major earthquake in San Francisco (v) the invention of the World Wide Web*

** The World Wide Web is notable for the fact that its abbreviation (WWW) has more syllables than the original term*



*"I never knew true happiness until I got married. And then it was too late."*

## Book Club

Further to our previous exchange about book reviews, this ain't one. But perhaps it could be termed a book alert.

Editors S Levitt and S Dubner have produced a couple of volumes; *Freakonomics* and *Super Freakonomics*. Both are extremely good reads, a rarity for economists.

They look into the statistics associated with a number of well known everyday topics with interesting, surprising and often humorous results. I won't go into details other than to say the second volume contains a chapter "What do Al Gore and Mt Pinatubo have in Common?" which presents some very interesting, even exciting information on the climate change debate.

**John Cantor**

Barry Maitland is an Australian architect (he lectured my brother at Newcastle University nearly 40 years ago). He is also highly regarded as a writer of crime fiction. The vast majority of his crime novels are set in and around London and feature DCI David Brock and DI Kathy Kolla. The first of these, *The Marx Sisters,* was first published in 1994.

The latest contribution, *Dark Mirror,* is the eleventh in the Brock and Kolla series. The plot concerns the apparent suicide in a public library by arsenic poisoning of a young student who is researching the life of the Pre-Raphaelite painter Dante Gabriel Rosetti and his associates. Is her death in some way connected with his life? Having recently watched a fascinating BBC dramatisation of the Pre-Raphaelites, I found this layer of the novel particularly intriguing.

The plot is ingeniously devised, the characters are well realised and the detectives actually do do quite a lot of detecting – unlike many other fictional sleuths who seem to allow events to take their course.

If you are looking for a good read in this genre, I thoroughly recommend Maitland.

He has also written a crime novel set on Lord Howe Island, *Bright Air,* in which the setting adds to the enjoyment.

**Ian Pullar**

## Credits

*My thanks are once again due to Helen and Jean; to Graham Bauer who printed this; to the contributors ; to Natasha Carson and Rebecca Wall who made it available to departmental staff; and to Harvey Yates for his cartoons.*

## Travellers Tales

**What goes round …**

His name was Fleming, and he was a poor Scottish farmer. One day, while trying to make a living for his family, he heard a cry for help coming from a nearby bog. He dropped his tools and ran to the bog. There, mired to his waist in black muck, was a terrified boy, screaming and struggling to free himself. Farmer Fleming saved the lad from what could have been a slow and terrifying death.

The next day, a fancy carriage pulled up to the Scotsman's sparse surroundings. An elegantly dressed nobleman stepped out and introduced himself as the father of the boy Farmer Fleming had saved. "I want to repay you," said the nobleman. "You saved my son's life."

"No, I can't accept payment for what I did," the Scottish farmer replied waving off the offer. At that moment, the farmer's own son came to the door of the family hovel.

"Is that your son?" the nobleman asked.

"Yes," the farmer replied proudly.

'I'll make you a deal. Let me provide him with the level of education my own son will enjoy. If the lad is anything like his father, he'll no doubt grow to be a man we both will be proud of." And that he did.

Farmer Fleming's son attended the very best schools and in time, graduated from St. Mary's Hospital Medical School in London, and went on to become known throughout the world as the noted Sir Alexander Fleming, the discoverer of Penicillin.

Years afterward, the same nobleman's son who was saved from the bog was stricken with pneumonia. What saved his life? Penicillin.

The name of the nobleman? Lord Randolph Churchill. His son's name? Sir Winston Churchill.

Someone once said, "What goes around comes around."

*You don't need that! Just put me on a golf course and I'll find water!*

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